Abstract

Tseng Kuo-fan (1811 - 1872), was a scholar-statesman and military commander of the late Ching Dynasty. He emerged as a national figure through his successful suppression of the Taiping Rebellion (1851 - 1864). By doing so, he had helped to preserve the downgrading authority of the Ch'ing Dynasty, and was thus awarded great honour that he was due. However, sometimes he was criticised for his conservatism, obstinacy and cruelty in his treatment of the rebels. The pros and cons of his political, military and intellectual achievements have been coexisting during the past decades, and he was probably one of the most controversial figures whom needs an overall evaluation from all the angles of our contemporary viewpoints. This Academic Exercise intends to do so, emphasising on Tseng's ideas of statecraft. It is divided into six chapters: the first chapter surveys the life and career as well as the academic thought of Tseng. The second chapter analyses Tseng's political views during his times in Peking (1838 - 1852). The third chapter examines the efforts of Tseng in organising the Human Army (Hsiang-chün). The fourth chapter explores the confrontations between the Hunan Army which was led by Tseng and the Taiping Forces in both ideological and military fronts. The fifth chapter studies Tseng's thought on foreign matters. The final chapter serves as the conclusion of this academic exercise, in which Tseng Kuo-fan's ideas of statecraft as well as the merits and demerits of his whole life to the Chinese nation are evaluated and assessed at the best knowledge of the author.