ABSTRACT

The late Ming and early Qing periods have been viewed as the 'renaissance' of pre-modern China. And the statecraft thought of this time is one of the most widely discussed topics by modern scholars.

In this paper, we start with discussing the term 'statecraft thought'. However, we disagree with the traditional definition, which we find to be too narrow to restrict itself to the editing of essays composed by ministers. Also, we disagree that the emergence of 'statecraft thought' is merely due to opposing the Wang Yang Ming's school of the Mind.

It is the tradition of Chinese intellectuals, including the Neo-Confucians, to emphasize and exemplify the significance of morality in creating and maintaining social order. However, when the state faces more direct and severe military and economic challenges, the pragmatic approach of tackling contemporary problems is emphasized.

With the fall of the Ming dynasty, all attempts to restore social order failed. Scholars who strove in vain to stop the Manchurians' invasion and who were opposed to serve the new monarch, start to re-examine the reasons for the fall of their dynasty. 'Statecraft thought' at this time took on a different form; neither did it rely entirely on morality or constrained itself to pragmatic realism. It looked into more sophisticated issues of statecraft: working on political ideology, suggesting principles of ruling the state and constructing the idea of a perfect Confucian society.

Statecraft thought of this period emerged because of the Confucians' tradition that is deep-rooted among scholars. Although it turned its focus later, it returned to the tradition in the end. Therefore, no 'renaissance' did really occur.
The whole presentation of 'statecraft thought' happened within the Confucians' tradition and scholars had failed to make a breakthrough.

Therefore, besides discussing the time frame for the period 'late Ming and early Qing' era, the thesis examines definition of 'statecraft thought' in the first chapter. This is followed by an overall view of the two different approaches of 'statecraft thought', namely the 'moralistic' (道德) and the 'pragmatic' (事功), in the second and third chapters respectively.

In chapter four, a situation that combines both 'moralistic' and 'pragmatic' ideas is discussed. Before reaching a conclusion, the last chapter concentrates on discussing the political ideas of scholars who drew their inspirations and experiences from the fallen dynasty and engaged in extensive study of Chinese classics and history. They have hoped to find a way to create an ideal society in accordance to the Confucian ideology.

In conclusion, the thesis points out that the 'renaissance' of pre-modern China could not have taken place, not only because of reasons mentioned above, but also due to a lack of interaction with new ideas from the west.