SUMMARY

Wang Fuzhi (Wang Fu-Chih, 1619-1692 A.D.), better known by his literary name as Wang Chuanshan, was a Confucian philosopher who lived in the turbulent years when the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) was defeated by the Qing (1644 - 1911 A.D.), and the Chinese race was subjugated to the Manchurian. After the fall of the Ming dynasty, Chuanshan, as an ardent patriot, retired to the mountains in his native place, and spent the remainder of his life in seclusion, refusing to surrender himself as a subject to the new regime. It was during the years of his seclusion that Chuanshan wrote and compiled voluminous works on the classics, philosophy, history and literature.

Traditional Confucianists believed that moral cultivation and service to the state and society should be regarded as a two-pronged life objective of every Confucianist. At a period in history, where socio-political chaos, economic deterioration and racial suppression prevailed, the search for the ways and means of re-establishing social order, re-building political and economic institutions and restoration of racial sovereignty had thus inevitably become the primary concern of the intellectuals of that time. Wang Chuanshan was of no exception. It is the purpose of this thesis to systematically present Wang Chuanshan's detailed examination of the factors which led to the decline of the Ming dynasty, and his proposals for social, economic and political reforms that would contribute to the building of a strong government, able to sustain racial independence.

Chapter One consists of a brief account of the man and his works, in which particular attention is paid to those aspects that a strong sense of Chuanshan's state-society service commitment can be
evidently delineated.

Chapter Two traces the philosophical background on which Chuanshan based his ideas of statecraft. Chuanshan’s criticism of Wang Shouren and Zhu Xi’s theory of Neo-Confucianism and his allegiance to the philosophical ideas of Zhang Zai are being explored.

Chapter Three comprehensively deals with Wang Chuanshan’s investigation of the malfunctions in the government machinery of the Ming empire and his proposals for political reform. In Chuanshan’s opinion, absolutism was the root for social imbalances and it would ultimately lead to the erosion of all socio-political institutions. Therefore, the central theme of his proposals for political reform is the advocacy of an equal distribution of authority and the institutionalisation of the mechanism of checks and balances in the framework of government.

Chapter Four explores Wang Chuanshan’s proposal for economic reform. Chuanshan pointed out that excessive land taxation imposed by the Ming Government had made life unbearable to the peasants. This had led to a large scale annexation of land by the large landowners from the common peasantry, creating an acute social imbalance in which the rich became richer and the poor poorer. Hence, Chuanshan proposed a policy of discriminatory taxation in which large landowners would be heavily taxed and the common peasantry would enjoy a concessionary rate of taxation. He hoped that by so doing, social equilibrium could be restored.

Chapter Five carefully examines Wang Chuanshan’s ideas on self-preservation of the people and their culture. Chuanshan argued that the differentiation of species and races was a fundamental principle of nature. As different races evolved from different
geographical locations, this shaped the distinctiveness of each and every race. Hence, every race of people must confine itself within its own native land. Any form of invasion or intrusion into the land of another race would then be a violation of the fundamental principle of nature. By so arguing, Chuanshan had essentially denied the legitimacy of the Manchurian regime which ruled the Chinese land.

Chapter Six studies Wang Chuanshan’s military thought. Chuanshan proposed a grand defensive plan which divided the whole mainland China into eighteen military regions, according to their geographical terrain and natural resources. He envisaged that through multi-lateral cooperation and support among the regions, China would be able to maximise the use of its human and material resources to defend itself against the invasion of the barbarians.

Chapter Seven discusses Wang Chuanshan’s ideas on education. He asserted that the national education syllabus must be closely related to the practical needs of governing the nation. He also stressed that practical training should take precedence over merely acquiring knowledge through books. Chuanshan perceived that these are the ways to ensure that every student who goes through such a system of education will be useful to the state and society.

The final Chapter serves as a conclusion of the thesis. Chuanshan’s ideas of statecraft are thoroughly evaluated and assessed in the context of the intellectual climate and historical conditions in which the philosopher lived.