Synopsis

Sixteen century Ming China is a fascinating topic with many areas worth studying. However, tremendous dimensions of the scenerio are still left untouched. Hai Rui (1515 — 1587) is one of the figures worths a detailed study. Faced with the utmost turbulence in society at that time, Hai proposed a series of remedial measures. Not only making proposals, he actually tried his best whenever and wherever opportunities were available. Although he failed to become one of the top-ranking officials, his words and actions certainly reflect what a Confucian scholar could and ought to do.

However, his image has been distorted for political purposes at one time. Thus, a comprehensive study of his political thoughts needs to be done. Recently, abundant primary and secondary sources have suddenly been made available and thus such a study becomes feasible. Prime concern is put on reflecting his political thoughts in this study. The word 'political' is taken to its broad sense. Three main areas are studied, political, economic and ethnic.

There are seven chapters in this study:

Chapter One: broadly reviews the past literature. The aim, significance, scope, methodology and limitations of the study are also discussed.

Chapter Two: gives a brief account of his time to set the scene.

Chapter Three: summarizes the major events in his life.

Chapter Four: focuses mainly on his discussion on what an emperor should behave as well as what a responsible government official should do.

Chapter Five: discusses his proposals on rectifying the fiscal and postal system.

Chapter Six: accounts for his views on solving the ethnic tension on Hainan Island.

Chapter Seven: gives a brief summary of the previous chapters.

It is hoped that such a treatment will give a true picture of his political thoughts though a more detailed study is needed to give a more sophisticated account.