SUMMARY

The political thought of Mencius has its own special features. Regrettably, it has never brought about any revolutionary changes to the Chinese politics for the past two thousand years, albeit it has emphasized a lot on democracy and the election of rulers. It is a misfortune that such useful ideas were not practised in the Chinese society. Instead they were being misconstrued as feudalistic thought that only served the ends of aristocrats. This study aims to construct a framework for Mencius' political thought so as to clarify these misconceptions. It also highlights the uniqueness of Mencius' thoughts that can serve as a reference to current socio-political development.

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 states the purpose of study and common misconceptions about Mencius' political thought. Chapter 2 discusses the special features of the background that help to formulate his political thought, including frequent wars, heavy taxes, inadequate land allocations, competition among various schools of thought, and influence from a prominent teacher. Chapter 3 explores the elements of 'humanity' (仁) and 'righteousness' (义) in Mencius' political thought. Based on his belief in innate human goodness, Mencius advocates governance with 'humanity' and 'righteousness' which can then bring peace to a country. Chapter 4 deals with Mencius' belief in assets distribution among subjects. He stresses that a good government should be responsible for the livelihood of its subjects and the responsibility can only be fulfilled through proper allocation of farmland to the people. Chapter 5 examines the democratic spirit of Mencius' political thought. Centered around people, Mencius' thought emphasizes respect for public opinion, capable and responsible government and governance by law and order. These features mirror various elements of modern democracy. Chapter 6 concludes Mencius' political thought. Considering it being formulated over 2,000 years ago, his political thought that is people-oriented and not centred around the ruling class, stands out, among the various schools of thoughts in his time, as one of the most outstanding of its kinds.