ABSTRACT

*Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (《说文解字》), compiled by Xu Shen (许慎, 58AD – 147 AD), of the Eastern Han Dynasty, was the first dictionary to analyse and explain in detail the form, sound and meaning of almost ten thousand Chinese characters. It included Xiao Zhuan (小篆), Gu Wen (古文) and Zhou Wen (籀文), the three main types of characters used in the Eastern Zhou, Qin and early Western Han Dynasties. The objective of this paper is to make a comprehensive study of *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*.

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter One provides the introduction and a brief description of the approach of the study. Chapter Two deals with Xu Shen’s life and his aims of writing *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. Chapter Three and Four focus on the contents and methodology of *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* respectively. Chapter Five discusses the influence of *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* on etymology, phonetics, semantics, studies of the ancient society and dictionary-editing, while the limitations of *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* will also be examined. Chapter Six highlights the major findings based on the discussions of the previous chapters.

Undoubtedly, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is an important work and it will provide a major source of reference for related fields of academic research.