Summary

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the book titled *Hanxi’s Anatomy of Chinese Calligraphy* by Ge Shouzhi (Hanxi), a Qing dynasty scholar who lived in the Qian Long reign as its main objective, together with a discussion of the methods of execution of the brush (yun bi), use of the brush (yong bi), character-structure (jie zhi) and inclination of the brush (bi shi) – essential elements of the study of calligraphy – as recorded in books on calligraphy published from the Han, Wei, Jin, Tang through to the Song and Yuan dynasties. Through records of ancient scholars’ publications on calligraphic theory, especially those of the Jin, Tang and Song Yuan dynasties and through footnotes by Ge, this thesis seeks to provide an analysis of how Ge Shouzhi established his own perspective on the study of calligraphy based on the system developed by the ancients.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter One deals with the life of Ge Shouzhi and his purpose of writing *Hanxi’s Anatomy of Chinese Calligraphy*. Through examining the life of Ge and the friends and companies he kept, the researcher attempts to explore why he had chosen to write a book on calligraphy in his thirties. Scholars of ancient China, particularly those from the Ming and Qing dynasties, devoted themselves entirely to the study of the Four Books and Five Classics, in order to score at the imperial examinations to obtain official positions. Ge Shouzhi was no exception. Unfortunately, despite his fine essays, he had no luck and since he only passed the examination at the county level, was honored with the position of *xiu cai*, never winning an official position. Nevertheless, in feudal China, the value of calligraphy was equivalent to that of classics; writing a book on calligraphy was no less a serious and honorable engagement, hence the birth of this book.

The second chapter discusses the way Ge Shouzhi viewed those methods of the
brush and character structure of the different dynasties. It is further divided into four sections. One of them elaborates on the theories of calligraphers from Wei and Jin till the present on the execution of the brush, and a summarized analysis of these theories of execution; one on the execution of the brush - mainly the eight strokes method – as well as other methods and how they relate to the art of calligraphy; one on the character structure invented by the great Tang dynasty calligrapher Ouyang Xun and how it influenced succeeding generations of calligraphers.

The third chapter deals with the views Ge Shouzhi held on the essence of calligraphic study as expounded by Sun Guoting of the Tang dynasty in Treatise on Calligraphy and Jiang Kui of the Song dynasty in Sequel to Treatise on Calligraphy. Both authors share similar views on aspects of calligraphy, such as the execution of the brush, the use of the brush and temperament of the calligrapher, with Jiang providing a deeper insight into them. Basically, Ge is in agreement with the views on calligraphy of Sun and Jiang, though on the issue of Jiang’s stance against the Tang calligraphic method, he chose to adopt a neutral position.

The fourth chapter focuses on remaining issues, with a critique of Hanxi’s Anatomy of Chinese Calligraphy in regard to its structure, and the limitations of Ge’s time and its effect on his theory of calligraphy, bearing in mind his feudalistic background. It was obvious he was inclined towards establishing his own system of thought on calligraphy, but had not the courage to step beyond the norms set by his ancient predecessors. Even then, as a worthy book of theory of calligraphy, it is considered a work of merits.