乾隆御覽用例
Some Combinations of Emperor Qinzong’s Seals

乾隆五璽
Set of Five Seals

乾隆七璽
Set of Seven Seals

乾隆八璽
Set of Eight Seals

乾隆御覽
Qinzong yulan zhizhou (valued collection examined by Emperor Qinzong)

金龍賞璽
Jinlong shangzhi (emperor’s great appreciation)

三希堂鈐璽
Sanxi tang zhuzhou (originally owned by the owner of Sanxi Tang)

宜書齋
Yishu zhai (used for poverty)

The term ‘Shuji’ came from the Book of Han. In the early Han dynasty (206BC – AD220), Chancellor Xiao He (257BC – 192BC) built the Shuji Pavilion to the north of Weiyang Palace in Chang’an for storing literature from the Qin dynasty (221BC – 207BC). Nianing the official register of works of calligraphy and painting at court after ‘Shuji’ illustrated Qian Qing (1644 – 1911) emperors’ admiration for ancient Chinese culture. The compilation of the three volumes of the Shuji buji spanned the reigns of Qianlong (1711 – 1796; reign 1736 – 1796) and Jiaqing (1796 – 1820; reign 1796 – 1820), taking over 70 years with the contribution of 31 officials who approved, selected and documented over ten thousand works of calligraphy and painting. The Shuji buji organized non-religious imperial works systematically, including works created by previous Qing emperors; works passed down from previous dynasties; works sent by officials as tributes and works created by Emperor Qinzong or Emperor Jiaqing. Works with Taoist or Buddhist themes were recorded in the Muhuan zhuban.

In 1949, Low Chuck-niew (1911 – 1995), owner of the Xubiuzhai, came to Hong Kong as manager of the Four Seas Communications Bank. At that time, he learned there was an exodus of Chinese art objects from China via Hong Kong, which was a thriving market for the trade in Chinese antiques, including items from the imperial collection. Mr Low was perturbed when he saw many of the objects being sold overseas. His anxiety over the dislodgement of large quantities of significant Chinese cultural heritage spurred him on to collect historic paintings and calligraphy. Mr Low acquired 13 works previously owned by Emperor Qinzong, stumped with the seals of the Shuji buji. The works include 2 Buddhist sutras dating from the Tang dynasty (618 – 907) an illustrated work attributed to the Song dynasty (960 – 1279); 5 calligraphic works by Ming (1368 – 1644) masters and 7 paintings from the Qing dynasty. Among the 13 works, 11 had been hived in the Shuji buji and were later categorized as the ‘Northeast works’. These 13 pieces fell into various categories of the Shuji buji, including ‘set of five seals’ and ‘set of eight seals’. Works found in the first and second volumes of the Shuji buji and Muhuan zhuban. Some of these works were later appreciated by Emperors Jiaqing and Xianfeng (1856 – 1867; reign 1850 – 1911) and stamped with their seals of examination. Several works in Mr Low’s collection had also been the treasures of other private collectors in different periods. These 13 pieces in the Xubiuzhai Collection that are related to the Shuji buji, including works by Emperor Qinzong, illustrate how antiquities from the Qing imperial collection crossed the world via Hong Kong in the last century, showing the crucial role the city played in collecting and preserving Chinese antiquities in the past.

In 1989, Low Chuck-niew donated his Xubiuzhai Collection to the Hong Kong Museum of Art, most of which are works by masters of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In 1992, an exhibition gallery designated as the Xubiuzhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy was designed and constructed within the museum. Since then, over 20 thematic exhibitions, including A Gift of Heritage (1992), Collecting and Inheriting (2000), A Landscape Journey (2010) and A Journey into Chinese Painting (2013), have been held to display this collection of masterpieces, and to pay tribute to a great man whose legacy provides everyone with a share of the valuable cultural heritage of China.