

## Ancient Chinese Sitting Furniture

The furniture culture in ancient China characterized a lifestyle at ground level. Woven mats, used for sleeping as well as sitting, were a standard of measurement for rooms. People also created armrests that were placed on the mat for comfortable and relaxed sitting. During the centuries after Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), Buddhism flourished in China, and simultaneously, a greater variety of seats began to appear. However, only until the late Tang and Five Dynasties periods (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries), the raised seating mode of living had fully blossomed within aristocratic circles. Furniture types were more varied during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the design and craftsmanship became more elegant, yielding to practical and aesthetic demands, this eventually brought about a new era of Chinese furniture making: Ming and Qing classical furniture.

Sitting furniture, one important category of furniture, is more closely related with people's daily life. There are two main kinds of sitting furniture in ancient Chinese furniture, the stool (bench) and chair; each has its own different varieties. Evolved through a long history, they have been more refined with specific functions and aesthetic appeal.

### Stool (bench) Category:

1. Stools (*wudeng*): Square stool (*fangdeng*), Rectangular stool (*changfangdeng*), Long stool (for two people) (*errdeng*), and Drum stool (*gudun, xiudun*)
2. Benches : Small bench (*xiao tiaodeng*), Long bench (*tiaodeng*)
3. Folding stool (*mazha*)

### Chair Category:

1. A chair without armrests: Side chair (with high back and protruding crestrail), also known as Lamp-hanger chair (*dengguayi*).
2. A chair with armrests:
  - Official's hat armchair (*guanmaoyi*) in two varieties:
    - Northern official's hat armchair (*sichutou guanmaoyi*), also known as Yoke back armchair, and Chair with protruding crestrail and armrests.
    - Southern official's hat armchair (without protruding ends) (*na guanmaoyi, fangyi*).
  - Rose chair, or low-back armchair (with vertical back and armrests) (*meiguiyi, wenyi*).
  - Qing-style armchair (with a back and side of paneled screen form) (*qingshi fushouyi*)
  - Four special varieties of the armchair are:
    - Round chair, or Horseshoe-back armchair (*yuanyi, quanyi*)
    - Folding round-back chair (*jiaoyi*)
    - Throne chair (*baozuo*)
    - Reclining chair (*tangyi*)



square stool  
(*fangdeng*)



rectangular stool  
(*changfangdeng*)



long stool for two  
persons  
(*errdeng*)



drum stool  
(*gudun, xiudun*)



small bench  
(*xiao tiaodeng*)



long bench  
(*tiaodeng*)



folding stool  
(*mazha*)



side chair, lamp-  
hanger chair  
(*dengguayi*)



northern official's hat  
armchair,  
yoke back armchair  
(*sichutou guanmaoyi*)



southern official's hat  
armchair  
(*na guanmaoyi, fangyi*)



rose chair, low  
back armchair  
(*meiguiyi, wenyi*)



Qing-style armchair  
(*qingshi fushouyi*)



round chair, horse-  
shoe back chair  
(*quanyi, yuanyi*)



folding round-back chair  
(*jiaoyi*)



throne chair  
(*baozuo*)



reclining chair  
(*tangyi*)