

不凡

宋代美學一千年

BEYOND COMPARE
A Thousand Years of the Literati Aesthetic

Hong Kong, 26 November 2018

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CHRISTIE'S 佳士得

THE ANCIENT SPINDLE-LEG TABLE

Curtis Everts

Blue Oaks Farm

Autumn moon, 2018

In ancient China, prior to the introduction of chair-level seating, low tables suited for mat-level sitting were the common form. Evidence from excavated burial objects as well as visual reference materials also reveals various styles of low tables, including one with slender comb-like legs attached with a base stretcher. After more than a thousand years, tables of similar style appear elevated to chair-height use. However, not long after the Song dynasty, this once ubiquitous form disappeared; and with few examples surviving to modern time, this type has also been more or less consigned to oblivion. Notwithstanding, the recent discovery of a rare example with curved spindle-legs (曲柵足) dateable to the Five Dynasties era provides an excellent opportunity to shine light on the history of this ancient table form.

Since the Zhou dynasty, various types of stands and/or low tables were associated with sacrificial rites for the placement of ritual foods, wine vessels, etc. Ministering to ancient tradition and inspired from ancient classic texts, these early forms continued to be illustrated in books and paintings of later periods. Such is a Ming dynasty compilation of *Sanlitu* (Illustrations of the three ritual classics), which depicts a *fangzu* (房俎) and a *juzu* (俎) (fig. 1); the *fangzu* is described with supplementary text as a low table in use during the Zhou dynasty with multiple supports joined with a base stretcher; the *juzu* is also described as a low table in use during the late Shang period (Yin period) with multiple curved legs like the winding branches of the *zhiju* (枳棋) tree. Likewise, *Kaogongji zuanzhu* illustrates a table (*an*) with multiple curved legs and everted ends. Archaeological findings and depictions in paintings from the Zhou dynasty onwards suggest that such low spindle-leg tables with straight or curved legs were a common form that existed for centuries.

By the Han dynasty, tables of this form had become assimilated into the activities of secular life. Three tables with curved legs depicted on an excavated Han dynasty tomb brick illustrate various scenes from daily life. Similar depictions found on other brick carvings and wall paintings typically illustrate their use in food preparation, dining, or simply placed in front of the sitter as an armrest. And following the relatively unified era of the Han dynasties, the kingdom broke up into smaller independent states; and although this period was relatively chaotic from a political point of view, continuity is evident within the furniture tradition. A low pottery table excavated from a Three Kingdoms (220–280) period tomb in Shandong province is of the same curved leg form, and its exposed mortise-and-tenon joints also reveals the standard construction technique for attaching legs to tabletop; several wall paintings from the same period that were unearthed at Jiayuguan in Gansu province illustrate banquet and culinary scenes with the same

五代/北宋 黑漆曲柵足翹頭案

柯惕思

二零一八年中秋於藍橡農莊

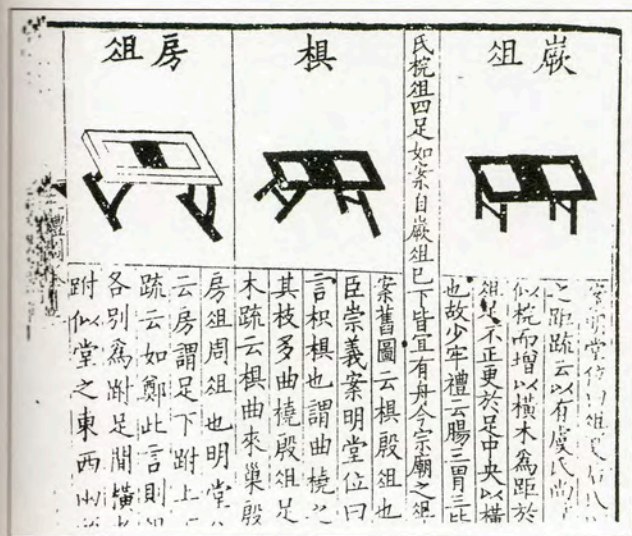


fig. 1 Fangzu and juzu illustrations, Sanlitu, Ming dynasty.

圖一 明《三禮圖》所示房俎、棋俎。

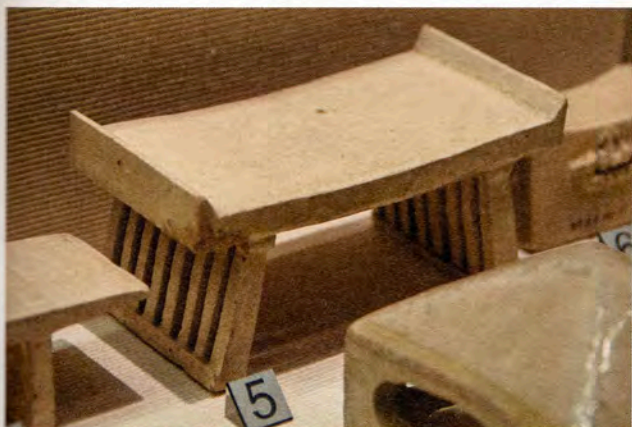


fig. 2 A small glazed ceramic table excavated at Anyang, Henan province. Sui dynasty tomb dated 595 AD.

圖二 河南省安陽隋朝 595 年張盛墓出土的小瓷案。

坐椅傳入古代中國之前，為席地而設的几案尤為普遍。出土墓葬文物及圖文記載顯示，几案的風格富於變化，其中一款具修長的柵足，下裝托泥。一千多年之後，近似的几案已增至與椅子相配的高度。但自宋代以降，這種廣泛使用的形制很快銷聲匿跡；加上傳世之作在近代難得一見，同類的几案已漸為世人遺忘。惟其如此，近來發現的一例珍罕五代曲柵足翹頭案，正是為這類歷史悠久的几案溯本求源的大好時機。

自周代以來，各式几案常在祭祀儀式中用來置放供品、酒器等物。後世的書籍、繪畫中，仍有這些早期形制的身影，一則是為了薪火相傳，二來也是以古為師。明代《三禮圖》便是一例，書中有房俎和棋俎（圖一）的圖示：根據房俎的解說，「周以房俎，其制足間有橫有拊，似乎堂後有房也」；而棋俎為「殷俎，曰棋，讀曰矩，曲撓七足，枳棋之樹，其枝多曲，殷俎足似之。」此外，《考工記纂注》亦繪一曲柵足翹頭案。證諸考古發現和周代以降的畫作，此類直柵足或曲柵足矮案曾經一度極為普遍，前後風行數百年之久。

及至漢代，此類几案已融入世俗生活的各個範疇。出土漢墓磚畫有三例曲足案，背景為日常生活的諸多場景。至於其他磚畫和壁畫中的描寫，近似几案一般為烹煮、進食而設，或當作據案而坐的憑几。漢室基本上已一統天下，但亡國後江山再次四分五裂；當時雖時局動盪，但以傢具傳承來說，其發展進程仍一脈相承。山東出土的三國（公元 220 至 280 年）墓葬文物中有曲柵足矮瓷案一例，其外露的榫卯採用的正是接合腿足與案面的標準樣式；甘肅省嘉峪關曾出一批三國壁畫，其飲宴場面也設有同類几案。再者，甘肅出土的五胡十六國（公元 304 至 439 年）古墓壁畫中，也有柵足案的描寫，足下接起伏有致的托泥。此外，隋代古墓亦曾出土一例白釉瓷案，其制式為較早期的翹頭案（圖二）。

除了用作几案，此形制還可權充其他用途，上文提到的憑几便是一例。此外，它還可用作坐具；以《女史箴圖》長卷中皇上探訪妃子一幕為例，其平頂帷帳牀前便有為皇上而設的曲柵足條几。此畫傳為活躍於晉代（公元 265 至 420 年）的顧愷之所作，至於此畫的斷代，以及是否為顧氏原作摹品，學者仍有爭議，但對於此乃唐初之前的作品已有共識。毋庸置疑的是，畫中條几的風格，應與顧氏生前通用的制式相差無幾。

form of table. And likewise, a wall painting discovered in a Sixteen Kingdoms period (304–439AD) tomb in Gansu reveals the multiple leg form with a clearly delineated base stretcher of undulating profile. A white glazed pottery table excavated from a Sui dynasty tomb also exhibits a relatively early form with everted ends (fig. 2).

Besides use as a table, this form was also adapted to other uses, such as the aforementioned armrest. The utilisation as a seat is also apparent in a scene from the hand scroll *Admonitions of the Court Instructress*; therein a long narrow bench with curved, spindle legs is drawn up close to a canopy bed for the emperor as he visits one of his consorts. The painting bears attribution to Gu Kaizhi, who was active in the Jin dynasty (265–420); and although there is some debate regarding its date and whether or not it is a copy of Gu's original work, it is generally agreed to be a work of no later than the early Tang period. In any case, the style of the long bench follows closely the pattern that was contemporary to Gu's lifetime.

In the Tang dynasty painting *Fu Sheng Expounding the Classics*, the form is seen as a low writing table—set out with inkstone and brush as the aged Fu gazes upon a scroll document (fig. 3). Fu was a Confucian scholar who had hid a copy of the *Shang shu* (Classic of History) during a time of book burning in the Qin dynasty and later tutored the Han emperor. This low table is similar to earlier examples with curved legs and everted flanges. Another painting by the Five Dynasties (907–960) painter Wei Xian, *Scholar in Landscape*, depicts a scholar studying in a hut, seated behind a low writing table with everted ends and spindle legs (fig. 4), very much like the lacquer table offered at Christie's.

Between the Tang and Song periods, with the gradual shift from mat level tables to chair height tables, tables of similar style with longer legs began to appear. Depictions in paintings suggest that these elevated structures often required additional stabilisation. A scene in the Southern Song painting *Odes of the State of Bin* depicts a scholar sitting at a writing table with *ruyi* shaped decoration around the top; and while the long legs of the table are of the ancient pattern, they are also stabilised with a cross tie between the base stretchers and diagonal braces that reach to the underside of the tabletop. And in *Brushing a Plum Blossom*, a literati scholar sits at a large painting table with low everted ends and *ruyi* decorated aprons; here the S-shaped spindle legs are more closely spaced and also stabilised with diagonal cross braces. These two paintings clearly suggest the adoption of the ancient low form to chair-level table height.

Throughout the Song and Yuan dynasties, these ancient table forms were also associated with Buddhist and Daoist traditions. Several examples appear amongst the scroll set *Five Hundred Luohans* painted during the Southern Song period; in one example from the one-hundred scroll set, a *luohan* presides over a ceremony for the deceased while sitting at long red lacquer table with everted ends and gracefully shaped cabriole legs. In the Southern Song painting *Heavenly Official*, the Daoist deity Tianguan kneels upon a raised platform in front of a low table with multiple legs (fig. 5). In Yuan dynasty wall paintings at Yonglegong, Daoist



fig. 5 Low table, after Lee Yu-kuan, *Oriental Lacquer Furniture*.

圖五 李汝寬《Oriental Lacquer Furniture》案子圖例

及至明代，古式柵足案基本上已消失無蹤，繪畫或出土文物方面的線索亦幾近於無。但明末清初著作中仍有一些零星記錄，證明此類制式尚不至於湮沒無聞。文震亨曾曰天然几貴乎「飛角處不可太尖，須平圓，乃古式。照倭几下有拖尾者，更奇，不可用四足如書桌式。」到了明代，日本人仍沿用從中國引進的唐宋几案形制，而江南文人亦對日本漆傢具青眼有加。周二學對這款早期几案讚譽不絕：「畫案，有宋元退漆、斷紋，周邊嵌銀絲方勝，不用四足，即案面拖尾著地，一邊略飛卷，便看畫承軸，制最奇別。」「拖尾」這一古雅之說，應是形容古時的柵足。它也為腿足外捲的几案原型提供了一些線索，就此可證諸明代《伏生授經圖》中的明式案，此例的靈感很可能來自圖四所示的早期制式。無論如何，這款几案雖以古風遺韻備受十七世紀方家推崇，而當時或許尚有數例傳世的宋代古案，但能流傳至今者少如鳳毛麟角。

上文闡述了古代柵足案漫長的嬗變之路，以說明這件佳士得珍品的歷史脈絡。除出土文物之外，作為日用傢具傳世的近似例屈指可數。李汝寬撰著的《Oriental Lacquer Furniture》中，收錄了一件品相接近的珍罕漆案（圖五），作者將之斷代為唐代製品。佳士得拍品案底之漆料，經碳十四檢測為五代之物，這一結果與其形制的悠久歷史及風格演變皆不謀而合。此外，南宋《十王圖》所描繪的案子，也為佳士得拍品特有的柵足樣式提供了生動的佐證。

近十年來，早於明代的傢具在市場上紛紛亮相，其斷代俱以銘文或漆料的碳十四檢測為依據。相比之下，這件佳士得珍品仍一枝獨秀、罕貴無匹，看來此物定將成為中國傢具史上柵足古案的經典之作。

deities also appear before high altar tables of similar form. And in one the *Ten Kings of Hell* scrolls by the Southern Song artist Jin Chushi, a king passing sentence on the souls of the dead sits at writing table; the spindle legs are of a rather unusual articulated style, and were it not for the Christie's low table of similar style, one could easily conclude they were simply a fanciful design of the artist!

By the Ming period, the ancient spindle-leg table virtually disappeared with little-to-no evidence in paintings or excavated material; however, a few writings from late Ming and early Qing period literati reveal that it was not entirely forgotten. In Wen Zhenheng's comments regarding the selection of a painting table he states, "The everted flanges must not be too sharp, but smooth and rounded, then it is according to the antique pattern. And those similar to the style of Japanese tables with "scroll-like trailing tails" (*tuowei*) are most exquisite; do not use those with four [independent] legs like a writing table." During the Ming dynasty, the Japanese were still using patterns borrowed from Tang and Song China, and Japanese lacquered furnishings were also highly favoured by the Jiangnan literati. Zhou Erxue also relays reverence for this early table form: "Regarding painting tables, there are Song and Yuan dynasties works with crackled lacquer and frames decorated with silver inlaid lozenge patterns. Do not use four legs, but support the top with "scroll-like trailing tails" that reach to the ground; the ends should be slightly upturned to retain the scroll ends when viewing paintings. This style is most wonderful." The archaic term *tuowei* suggests the pattern of "scroll-like trailing tails" like the ancient multiple-spindle leg support. And as seen in the Ming dynasty version of *Fu Sheng Expounding the Classics*, which was likely inspired from the earlier version illustrated as fig. 4, this term also provides some indication of the ancestor for the scroll-leg table. In any case, while highly revered during the 17th century as an archaic form and at which time there may have existed a few Song period works, examples surviving to modern-day are virtually non-existent.

Here above, the long history of the ancient spindle-leg table has been brought to light to provide historical context for the rare piece offered by Christies in this sale. With the exception of excavated pieces, those surviving from daily use above ground can be numbered on a single hand. Another rare example with lacquer coating of similar quality was published by Sammy Lee in *Oriental Lacquer Furniture* (fig. 5), and to which he attributed a Tang period date. Lacquer sampled from the underside Christie's table has been carbon dated to the Five Dynasties period—a date that coincides with the form's long history as well as its stylistic development. And moreover, the table depicted in the Southern Song *Ten Kings of Hell* scrolls also provides a telling reference for the unique style of leg articulation that appears on the Christie's table.

Over the past decade, an increasing number of examples of pre-Ming dynasty furniture have come to light based upon evidence from furniture inscriptions as well as C14 lacquer dating. Nonetheless, it cannot be considered an exaggeration to qualify the Christie's table as "exceptionally rare"—and one that is surely destined to find its place in the history of Chinese furniture as a rare example of ancient spindle-leg form.



fig. 3 Important Cultural Property, Attributed to Wang Wei (699-759 or 701-761), *Fu Sheng Transmitting The Book of Documents*, Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, Abe Collection.
圖三 重要文化財(伝)王維「伏生授經圖」大阪市立美術館藏(阿部コレクション)



fig. 4 Detail of *Scholar in Landscape* hanging scroll, Five Dynasties, by Wei Xian. Collection of Palace Museum, Beijing.

圖四 故宮博物院藏五代《高士圖軸》(衛賢作)局部所示案子。

唐代名畫《伏生授經圖》中也有一件近似的矮書案，案上置筆硯，年邁的伏生正展卷觀讀（圖三）。伏生乃一代名儒，秦始皇焚書坑儒之際，他將《尚書》暗藏壁中，後為漢帝之師。畫中矮案曲足翹頭，與較早期的例子如出一轍。另一幅五代衛賢繪《高士圖軸》，畫中老儒在書案前讀書，矮案同樣曲足翹頭，與佳士得拍賣的漆案相似（圖四）。

唐宋年間，為席地而設的几案，逐漸增至與座椅相配的高度，形制相近而腿足較長的几案於焉應運而生。從當時的畫作看來，几案增高後常須額外的固定配件。南宋《幽風七月圖》有一幕描寫高士據案而坐，案下飾如意牙條；其腿足雖呈古風，但托泥與連接案底的斜枴之間，安一橫枴以作固定。《寫梅花詩意圖卷》繪一文人閒坐大畫案前，案頭微翹，下飾如意牙條；其三彎腿的柵距更密，而且用類似的交叉斜枴固定。從這兩幅畫看來，古代矮案的形制顯然已按椅具高度加以調整。

縱觀宋元兩代，這批古意盎然的几案與釋道二家亦淵源甚深。若干近似例見於南宋《五百羅漢圖》；此作整套百幅，一者描寫主持戰沒者供養的羅漢，其身前正是一張朱漆三彎腿柵足翹頭長案。在南宋《三官圖軸：天官》中，天官在台座上據案而坐，案下亦接曲柵足（圖五）。元代永樂宮壁畫中有多名仙人，其身前也有近似的高供几。南宋金處士《十王圖》中，有一冥王在案前審判死者；其曲柵足的樣式頗不尋常，若非佳士得是次拍賣的矮案風格相若，觀者很可能會斷言此乃畫家憑空臆想之作！

THE PROPERTY OF A GENTLEMAN

8001

A HIGHLY IMPORTANT AND EXTREMELY RARE
LACQUERED SPINDLE-LEG TABLE

FIVE DYNASTIES-NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY (907-1127)

The plain rectangular top with beaded edge on the sides is set with everted flanges. Supported on each narrow side by elegantly curved spindled legs, the whole is raised on thick trapezium shoe feet. The table is covered overall in a thin layer of viscous black lacquer suffused with network of characteristic fine crackles.

19 ½ in. (49.5 cm.) high,

41 in. (123.5 cm.) wide,

14 ¾ in. (37.5 cm.) deep

HK\$3,000,000-5,000,000

US\$390,000- 640,000

PROVENANCE

Acquired in Japan in the early 2000s

The dating of this lot is consistent with the result of a C14 test, conducted by Rafter GNS Science, sample No. PH/RC11/233, 28 March 2011.



五代/北宋 黑漆曲櫺足翹頭案

案面長方形，側面上下邊沿起陽線，兩端安翹頭，下接曲櫺足各五支，
呈彎型足。通體髹黑漆，結實透亮，裂紋如皮膚肌理，露披胎麻布。

來源

2000年代初購於日本

此拍品經 Rafter GNS Science 碳 14 檢測（測試編號 No. PH/RC11/233；
2011 年 3 月 28 日），證實與本圖錄之定年符合。

