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The Association of Classical Chinese Furniture in Beijing

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It is with great pleasure that we introduce the following article by Tian Jiaqing, secretary-general of the Association of Classical Chinese Furniture in Beijing and editor of the Association's publication, *The Study of Ming and Qing Furniture*.

The Association began unofficially in 1988, with the aim of furthering the study and appreciation in China of the art of classical Chinese furniture. On July 16, 1990, the first formal meeting was held in Beijing, at which time the organization was solemnly founded and the first board of directors was formed. In honor of the occasion, they wrote calligraphic inscriptions



*Tian Jiaqing secretary-general
of the Association*

that expressed their valuation for classical furniture and their sense of responsibility for preserving China's cultural legacy. We reproduce here Yang Yanwen's inscription, which may be translated as: "Appreciation of the classical and natural style relaxes and delights one's soul."

The well-known scholars, collectors, and connoisseurs who formed the Association—including Wang Shixiang, Zhu Jiajin, and Shishuqing—were strongly influenced by the publication in China of Wang Shixiang's writings on Chinese furniture, which increased their awareness of this aspect of China's material culture. Their growing interest was soon accompanied by a growing concern. Fine pieces of antique furniture were leaving China in great numbers, and those pieces that remained had been subjected to a century of neglect and ill treatment by uneducated or indifferent owners. A sense of

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Left: Members of the Association of Classical Chinese Furniture in Beijing. Shu Yi, president of the Association, is fourth from the right, back row.

Facing page. Inscription by Yang Yanwen, member of the Association of Classical Chinese Furniture in Beijing.

urgency has arisen within members of the Association, who feel that time is running out. In his calligraphic inscription, Yang Naiji, a scholar of Chinese history, culture, and folk art, and professor at the College of Chinese Tourism, pointed out the inevitable results of these trends. "If we of this generation do not firmly grasp the opportunity to collect and study, then future researchers will have to follow in the footsteps of 'Master Xuanzang' [a monk in the Tang dynasty who went to India for original Buddhist scriptures] and go to the West for real knowledge."

The Classical Chinese Furniture Society has been developing a relationship with its sister group in Beijing since early 1990. In July 1991 Shu Yi, the president of the Association, presented the Society with a jade seal inscribed with the names of both groups to commemorate our common interest. Articles will be regularly translated and shared between this journal and the Association's Chinese publication, *The Study of Ming and Qing Furniture*.

The Association is making a major effort to popularize these historic relics by organizing the first exhibition of Chinese classical furniture from private collections in China, to be held in the Zhi Hua Temple in Beijing, September 28 through November 1991, in conjunction with the Antique Festival. Together with the Organization of Beijing Antique Shops, the Chinese Classical Furniture Association will display thirty to forty pieces of Ming and Qing furniture. An academic symposium will occur during the same period. The Society is assisting

with the publication costs of the exhibition catalogue.

In addition to its publications and exhibitions, the Association has long-range plans to develop a restoration center in Beijing where furniture can be properly restored. Through these efforts, its members hope to rekindle within the Chinese people an appreciation and respect for the tradition of classical furniture. We look forward to a long lasting relationship with our friends in Beijing, which will strengthen and deepen our understanding and our common interest in one of China's cultural legacies, classical hardwood furniture.

