

# Types of Furniture in Liao Dynasty Images

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## Abstract

In this paper, the furniture in Liao dynasty images is comprehensively and systematically arranged and summarized. According to the standard of function classification, the types of Liao dynasty furniture are divided into tables, seats, beds, furniture for storage and others. Summarize furniture modeling, style, structure and so on. It is concluded that the furniture is mainly mortise and tenon frame structure and decoration is common in structural parts. In-depth analysis of the relationship and cultural connotation between furniture and surrounding food and utensils is convenient to understand the rich diet life of the Liao Dynasty and the nomadic life of leisure.

## Keywords

Liao Dynasty, Image Analysis, Types of Furniture

## 1. Introduction

Research on furniture of various ethnic groups in China has begun to take shape, among which Mongolian furniture has been studied for more than 40 years. Scholars who study Mongolian furniture believe that traditional Mongolian furniture inherits the style of northern nomadic furniture (Zhang, 2015). In recent decades, the research on furniture of nomads in the north gradually started.

Based on the research opportunity of the furniture of ancient northern nomads, a large number of furniture images can be found in the murals and paintings left by Liao Dynasty and some unearthed objects. Such images with furniture mainly focus on food, travel, entertainment and other life themes, reproducing the colorful material life of Liao people. It provides practical materials for understanding the politics, economy, culture and customs of Liao Dynasty, and lays a good foundation for further research on the cultural characteristics of furniture in the image.

## 2. Overview of Liao Dynasty Furniture

More than half of the tomb images are not clear, so it is difficult to identify the image. In the furniture that can identify exterior modelling, form makes tall and short differ. These reasons make it difficult to define the type of furniture. According to the above problems, this paper adopts two basic classification principles: firstly, furniture is classified according to its function in different scenes; secondly, furniture is classified according to its shape and scale.

In different scenes, we can identify the furniture with the functions of bearing, storage, sitting, lying and so on. Therefore, it can be divided into tables, seats, beds, furniture for storage. In addition, there are a number of scattered furniture, distributed around the four types of furniture, this article classifies them as other classes. In furniture of each kind of function, visible appearance is similar again, but tall or the furniture figure that dimension has a difference.

In the research process of this paper, a large number of sitting postures in the form of pendant sitting, mat-level sitting, etc. Height is the principle when distinguishing the tables corresponding to the sitting position. The pendant seat is relative to the table, and the mat-level seat is relative to the case. The specific distinction of other furniture is detailed in the corresponding content of the article.

## 3. Types and Characteristics of Furniture

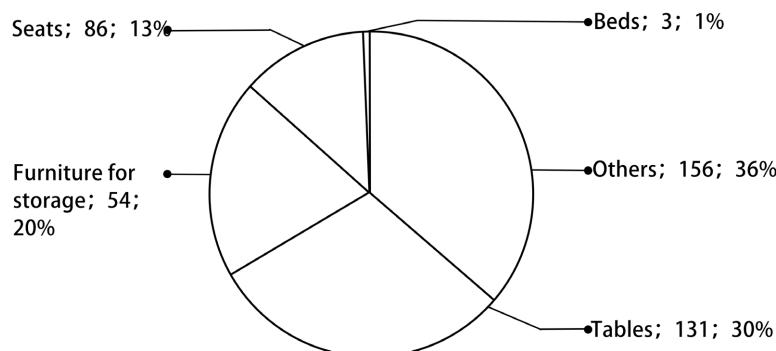
The furniture in the images of the Liao Dynasty includes tables, seats, beds, furniture for storage and others (**Chart 1**).

### 3.1. Tables

In Liao dynasty images, there are two types: table and case. Table kind furniture as a whole and modern table kind use means have the place of similarities and similarities, cooperate to stand or pendant to use. Case furniture is one of the main representatives of low-sitting furniture, serving as cross-legged, kneeling and jizuo.

#### 1) Table and its structural characteristics

In the image, obvious frame panel structure can be seen on the desktop, and similar conclusions have been drawn from the research of the real furniture.



**Chart 1.** Scale of sample number of collected furniture images.

The desktop has a frame, and the mature eight-figure lattice tenon technology is adopted at the junction of frame and frame (Zeng, 2008). Table leg structure can be divided into frame type, box type, folding type three.

The frame-type furniture in Liao Dynasty has become the mainstream. The frame-type table is formed by the structural parts of table leg, cheng Zi, ailao, kazihua, jiaoya and yatiao. Most of the legs are separated by cheng Cheng, and some are separated by short and old feet, pot door, etc., which increase the firmness of furniture and make it easy to put more and heavier articles. There is also a special combination of Short Lao between Shuang Cheng. In the murals of Liao tombs, the table may have had the function of storage, and the baffle style of the table is similar to the drawer surface of modern traditional furniture.

Folding structure table legs (**Figure 1**) are overlapped on the left and right sides respectively, and the intersection points are used as axes. After folding, the front and rear legs can basically fit together, and the folding structure is the same as hu bed and chair. The tabletop in the image is thin and “the corners of the table are tied to the top of the legs with cords” (Liu, 2002).

Box panel is the starting point of traditional wooden furniture in China (Zhang, 2014), but it is gradually fading in murals. A total of 102 table samples were collected, and only 2 cases of box plate were left. In the image, side plates are enclosed between the legs of the box plate (**Figure 2**), with legs leaking from the bottom of one piece. Different from modern box-type table in use, there is not enough knee space left on the side of the table in the image, which is only used for standing or side sitting.

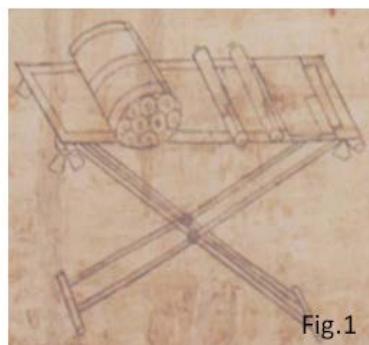


Fig.1

**Figure 1.** Tomb M10 in Xiabali, Xuanhua, Liaoning.



Fig.2

**Figure 2.** Tomb of Liao at the construction site of Shuozhou Municipal Government, Shanxi.

The image can also be seen with a fence above the desktop ([Figure 2](#)) or a handle mounted on both sides of the wiper head. Add handles to facilitate movement, and raise the fence to prevent items from falling. Between the columns are columns with high columns, the capitals are carved into balls, and the front fence has an exit, which looks like an opera stage or a terrace in front of a raised building ([Liu, 2014](#)).

## 2) Case and its structural characteristics

The shape of the table and the case are similar, and the height of the support can be judged by the use environment. In order to facilitate the study, the low support is classified as the case here. In the image, there are fewer types of case structure than table structure, only frame structure. The surface is flat, and there are hengcheng, ailao, jiaoya, yatiao, tuoni, ladang and other structural parts. Table furniture legs are mainly straight legs, but also have eight legs ([Figure 3](#)), curved legs and other styles. The middle leg of the eight-leg case supports the table top. There is already a tilted head in the Liao tomb murals, and this style was popular in the furniture of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

## 3.2. Seats

There are six types of seats in the image: chair, benches, pier, huchuang, couch and mat. Mat shop on the ground, because the mural is vague and unable to identify, here only do statistics, do not do too much description.

### 1) Chair and its structural characteristics

During this period, the back chair became popular, and slouching on the chair became a common way of life. A few armchairs can be seen occasionally. In the development of Chinese furniture, the Liao Dynasty had developed to the high sitting period. The Khitan people have retained the habit of cross-legged, and there are two kinds of sitting positions: pendant and cross-legs ([Figure 4](#)).

Chair furniture consists of backrest, seat surface, legs and feet. There are two types of leg-foot structure: frame type and folding type. Both of them have some structural parts such as cheng zi and jiaotuo. Compared with the image of the top of the backrest, it is found that the head of the head usually changes in shape, head direction and degree of bending. The head has a straight back and a bow back, and can be bent up or back, and can tilt back. The back of a chair appears "S" form style, the likelihood is to decorate, also may be to satisfy the comfort



[Figure 3.](#) Tomb No. 1 in Qijia Village, Aohan Banner.

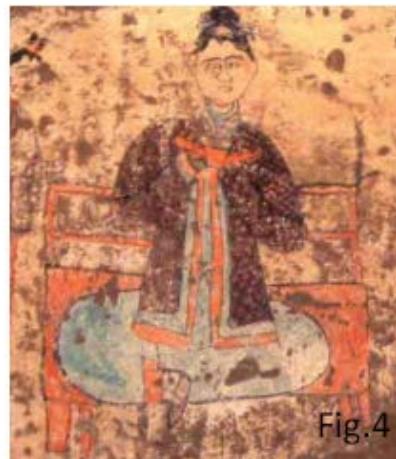


Fig.4

**Figure 4.** Tomb of Liao in Shengle Ancient City of Hohhot.

when using. Seat surface structure occasionally visible seat surface “big edge and wipe head are head for ‘ten’ cross MAO” (Liu, 2005). This pattern, known as the “riding tenon”, is also used in modern yurt furniture.

In addition, in 53 chair kind furniture, only 2 cases add step stool (**Figure 5**), step stool lower part has facilitate stable, bearing outside apostrophic leg foot.

## 2) Benches, pier, huchuang, couch and its structural characteristics

These four types of seats are simple in style and few in number, so they are uniformly described. In these four kinds of seats, in addition to the couch, the other seats can be hung foot and sit. The whole seat surface can be divided into round, square. There are two kinds of benches: round and square. The legs of the round benches are narrow and thin. There are jiaoya on the inside of the legs and there is an occasional combination of yuan cheng between the legs. The square stool is in the corner-leg style. A corner-leg stool is broad and heavy. Round pier simple shape, cylindrical enclosing. The couch that can be identified in the image is similar to that of the Tang Dynasty. It is larger in shape and has a box-type structure, consisting of jiaoya and kunm, etc. The huchuang surface in the image seems to be composed of many soft lines. We can see the folded and combined style. The soft seat surface naturally bends and sags after folding.

### **3.3. Beds**

There are 3 cases of horizontal tools in the image, which are basically table-shaped. Because the interior of the tapestung bed is not recognizable, it cannot be inferred as a bed, but it has been defined in archaeological reports as a bed. The bed is painted with a blue pillow on the right side, a ring on one end of a fancy button, with an orange butterfly ribbon on the ring, a blue brocade quilt in the middle, and a blue bag on the left side, with an orange ribbon on the mouth (Liu, 2013). The other two cases were fenced beds unearthed from tombs with fenced beds. The base and the bed are fixed without mortise and tenon, and can be moved freely (Xiang, 1979). The bottom of the other bed is a kunmen waist style.



**Figure 5.** Tomb no. 1 in Xiawanzi, Aohan Banner, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia.

### 3.4. Furniture for Storage

The size and style is similar to each other, ranging from one layer to multiple layers. Top styles include curved top, flat top and lu top. The base is connected to each other or used separately. When part of the base is placed on the ground or the table top, it is supported and raised by the waist base and the inclined base. In addition, there are also corresponding metal ornaments, such as the opening and closing of the facade to add face leaf, copper lock, corner metal wrap Angle, the side is easy to use ring, handle.

### 3.5. Others

Other kind furniture basis uses a function to be able to divide for wear stage kind furniture, screen, dish, food box to wait.

The type of furniture of this period is rich ceaselessly, division of labor is more clear. Appeared the lamp frame with refined function, clothes hanger, wine frame, drum frame, basin frame, etc. There are two types of frame type and box type furniture in tomb. In the frame type, except for the saddle for the herringbone crossbar, the other crossbars are a font. The drum stand and basin stand are similar in shape, consisting of three parts: seat ring, cheng and leg. The legs are connected to the seat ring, and there is cheng between the legs. There are two types of box structure: wine rack and chess table. On the side of the box, there are kunmen, yaban and other parts. Part of the box is a xumi waist style.

The screen in the murals of Liao tombs is larger in shape. Besides the vertical floor screen, it is also commonly painted on the wall of the tomb as the background screen. Screen by screen heart, rectangle big frame two parts are composed. Due to the mottled blur under the wall, only one case of multi-valve round foot could be recognized by the vertical screen.

Small food boxes can be seen in the image, mainly round, flower and other styles of multi-layer stacked boxes. According to the record of Sun's entry into Liao as an envoy to congratulate khitan's mother on her birthday, it is written



Fig.6

**Figure 6.** Jifang Mountain, Balin Left Banner, Chifeng City.

that “wooden utensils were used to store Tibetan food” (Hu, 1956), so it is speculated that such food boxes were made of wood and therefore classified as furniture. Modern Mongolians also often use wooden eating utensils, and it is reasonable to use strong wooden utensils as eating boxes in the murals of Liao Tombs.

The function of the plate in the mural is similar to that of a bearing tool. It can be used as a bearing tool for a long time or often moved. The size of the plate in the image is about twice that of an ordinary food plate. It is placed on the table or on the ground in the image and is held by one or more people.

#### 4. Furniture Decoration

Under the development of central Plains furniture in song Dynasty, Liao dynasty furniture absorbed and borrowed the decoration of Furniture in Song Dynasty. Different from the complicated furniture in the Tang Dynasty, the furniture in the Liao dynasty image is simply decorated. Some structural parts are decorated with cloud shape, tooth shape and grain shape. Leg foot besides round leg and square leg, there are hoof leg, curved leg, inside and outside flip leg. Several pieces of furniture are decorated with tapestries (Figure 5), metal corners, painted and tassels (Figure 6).

#### 5. Conclusion

The above five types of furniture are in addition to other types of furniture. The table accounted for the largest proportion, followed by seats, furniture for storage, beds. The Liao dynasty paid attention to food culture. Tables mainly hold food, tableware, etc. At the same time, the multiple servants surrounding the tables also highlight the central position of the table. The number of tables is more than that of seats, which shows that the proportion centered on desk is more than that centered on desk and chair.

The proportion of others furniture is more than the tables, all kinds of life scenes can be used, the volume is not large but indispensable. This kind of furniture reflects the rich and luxurious living standard and leisurely nomadic life of the tomb owner. Lampstand, clothes hanger and other daily life furniture have everything. In addition to the daily use of furniture, there are chess, playing music and other recreational items and the use of horse hunting saddle. In addition, wine culture is also very important. In the image, the wine bottle (chicken leg bottle) has its own wine rack. The screen not only has the function of basic separation and decoration, but also has the function of deep-seated ritual custom and power symbol. In the book of Rites, only the emperor uses an axe and the screen is a symbol of power and status. Screen often appeared in Liao Dynasty, often placed in the last or front, indicating that screen was commonly used by the dignitary, screen symbolized the identity and status of the tomb owner.

The study of the furniture in the image is helpful to broaden the integrity and culture of the research content of the ancient ethnic furniture in the Mongolian Plateau. Enrich the treasure house of furniture culture, and have more new views and understandings on the material and cultural life of Khitan nationality in Liao Dynasty. It is helpful to perfect and supplement the research of Mongolian plateau ancient ethnic furniture. It is conducive to promoting the spread of nomadic culture, grassland culture and national culture, and protecting and carrying forward excellent national culture.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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