

Evolverment of Hongmu Definition and Consumption

1. Definition

1.1 Evolvement and identification of Hongmu definition

(1) Zhen Huaide (1769-1825) in Qing Dynasty described in his *General History of Jiading* :
“Hongmu, with its leaves shaped like dates and white in color, is suitable for making tables, wardrobes and cabinets, and freights often return with a heavy load of Hongmu. Generally, Hongmu is cheap but Padauk and Cam lai are higher priced.”

(2) Zhao Ruzhen in National Republic of China (before 1949): *A Guide to Antiques*

- “Wood with red color can be named as Hongmu. Rosewood is the name of a genus and doesn’t refer to red-color wood. Apart from Sandalwood, Rosewood is best in quality and texture.”

(3) Gustav *Ecke:Chinese Domestic Furniture*

- ① a sub-species of *Pterocarpus indicus*
- ② *Dalbergia latifolia*
- ③ *P. dalbergioides*
- ④ *P. macrocarpus*
- ⑤ *Adenanthera pavonina*, belong to *Adenanthera*, *Mimosaceae*

(4) Wang Shixiang: *A Study of Ming-Dynasty Furniture:*

“Hongmu can be divided into old Hongmu and new Hongmu. Old Hongmu is similar to red sandalwood, but shiny dark, light in color and less dense in texture and density. Old hongmu has aroma but less dense than scented rosewood. New hongmu is reddish yellow in color and have the texture. New Hongmu resembles scented rosewood in some cases and now are imported in large quantity.”

(5) Local standards in 1990s

Region	Tree species
Shanghai	red sandelwood, padauk, rosewood, ebony, wenge, amboyna
Guangdong	Red sandelwood, <i>Dalbergia odorifera</i> , <i>D. nigra</i> , <i>D. cochinchinensis</i> , <i>D. oliveri</i> Gamble, <i>D. cultrata</i> , <i>D. bariensis</i> , <i>D. fusca</i> , <i>D. emarginata</i> Roxb, <i>D. louvelii</i> , ebony, <i>Pterocarpus indicus</i> Willd, <i>P. dalbergioides</i> Benth, <i>P. macrocarpus</i> , <i>P. cambodianus</i> Pierre, <i>P. pedatus</i> Pierre.

(6) National Hongmu Standard (GB/T18107-2000)

- ① Definition
- Heartwood of *Pterocarpus* spp., *Dalbergia* spp., *Millettia* spp., *Cassia* spp., *Diospyros* spp., whose density, texture and color meet the requirements set in the National Standard. Besides, other species that are not included in the Standard can be also called as Hongmu if they meet the requirements on density, structure and color.

② 33 species, 8 genus, 5 families:

Category	Species
Red sandelwood	<i>P. santalinus</i>
Rosewood	<i>P. cambodianus</i> Pierre., <i>P. dalbergioides</i> Benth., <i>P. erinaceus</i> Poir., <i>P. indicus</i> Willd., <i>P. macrocarpus</i> , <i>P. pedatus</i> Pierre.
Scented rosewood	<i>D. odorifera</i>
Blackwood	<i>D. cultrata</i> , <i>D. fusca</i> , <i>D. emarginata</i> Roxb., <i>D. louvelii</i> , <i>D. melanoxylon</i> , <i>D. nigra</i> , <i>D. spruceana</i> Benth., <i>D. stevensonii</i>
Mahogany	<i>D. bariensis</i> , <i>D. cearensis</i> Ducke, <i>D. cochinchinensis</i> , <i>D. frulescens</i> , <i>D. granadillo</i> Pittier, <i>D. retusa</i> , <i>D. oliveri</i> Gamble
Ebene	<i>Diospyros</i> , <i>Diospyros crassiflora</i> , <i>D. pilosanthera</i> Blanco, <i>D. poncej</i> Merr.
Ebony	<i>D. celehica</i> , <i>D. philippensis</i>
Wenge	<i>Millettia laurentii</i> , <i>M. leucantha</i> Kurz, <i>Cassia siamea</i> Lam.

- **2. Summary**

- (1) Broad and narrow meaning of Hongmu
- ① Hongmu in narrow meaning
- Beijing: old Hongmu refers to *D. cochinchinensis*
- Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai: red sandalwood, rosewood and mahogany ②
- Hongmu in broad meaning: other hardwood in addition to several traditionally referred wood species.

(2) Old and new Hongmu

① Old Hongmu: Beijing: *D. cochinchinensis*
Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai and Guangdong
include red sandalwood and scented rosewood
into the list of old Hongmu.

② New Hongmu

D. oliveri

D. bariensis

(3) Advantage and disadvantage of Hongmu Standard

- ① Define Hongmu for the first time from the legislative perspective
- ② Regulated previously chaotic Hongmu market, clarify the type, genus and family, species, origin and basic features of Hongmu, which provides the scientific basis for the correct understanding and utilization of Hongmu.
- ③ The uncertainty in definition and limitation in wood testing leave a gap for speculators to enter the legal market, e.g. sell the wood with similar features as the genuine Hongmu.
- ④ Numerous species listed in the Standard creates chaos for testing organizations and also arouses the suspicion among common consumers against Hongmu and Honmu furniture, influencing the reasonable and regulated development of Hongmu market.
- ⑤ More species included in the list of the Standard will play a promoting role in the loss of rare species and its resources across the globe.

2. History

When did furniture enter people's life in the history of China? Literatures and unearthed articles show that furniture began to be used from the Zhou Period (Western Zhou: BC 11 century-BC 771; Eastern Zhou: BC 770-BC256). Seats were then the mostly used and seen furniture, and besides there were lacquer and wooden, e.g., the unearthed furniture from Chu Tomb in the War State Period. The furniture in the Zhou Period mainly include seats, beds, screen, etc. In Jin and Han Dynasties, more types of furniture were manufactured and used. Before Tang Dynasty, there were few types of furniture with lacquer furniture as the dominant, and people were fond of carving and paints on furniture and furniture and.

(1) Jin Dynasty (265-420)

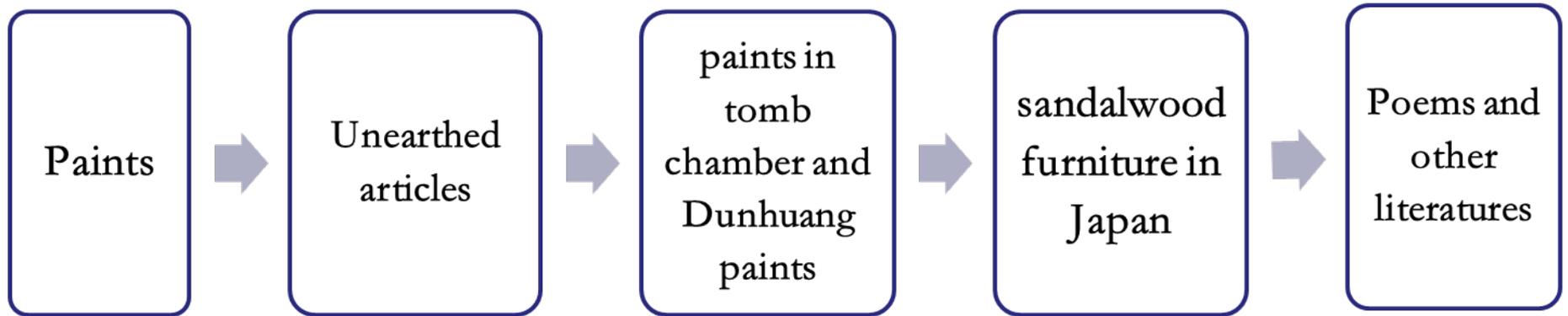
Cui Bao wrote in his Note for History:

“Sandalwood is produced in Fu Nan and Li Yi, with the reddish purple color”

(2) Tang Dynasty (618–907)

Chen Zangqi (713-741) described:
“Lvmu,produced in Annan and Nanhai, red in color and similar to sandalwood, mainly processed for beds.”

Understand the furniture of Tang Dynasty from 5 aspects



The furniture of Tang Dynasty is mainly lacquer furniture, with the aesthetic feature as magnificent and splendid.

Besides, the literature records are in consistent with antiques: sandalwood furniture began to be used in Tang Dynasty, which provides a clear evidence for the origin of hardwood furniture in China

(3)Wu Dai (907-960)

Wu Dai is a very short historic period, but leaves a very heavy stripe in China's art development history and is also the first turning points of China's furniture development history, stressing simplicity over complicatedness

(4) Song Dynasty(960-1279)

- Paints in tomb chamber
- Song paints

(5) Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Early Qing Dynasty (1644-1736 (13th year of the reign of Emperor Yongzhen))

The best furniture in Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty is defined as Ming Style Furniture by Mr. Wang Shixiang. “Ming style furniture has the broad and narrow meanings. The broad meaning covers all furniture produced in Ming Dynasty including furniture from common hardwood, furniture used by common people, and furniture manufactured with valuable wood materials and refined carving and lines. The narrow meaning specifically refers to the refined and beautifully shaped furniture manufactured with valuable wood materials in Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty. The 200 years from Emperors Jiajing and Wanli in Ming Dynasty to Emperors Kangxi and Yongzhen (1522-1795) in early Qing Dynasty when the furniture were made can be undoubtedly acclaimed as the Golden Time of Traditional Furniture in terms of either quantity or art value.”

Main features of Ming style

- (1) Simple, elegantly and freshly shaped;
- (2) Scientific and reasonable in structure;
- (3) Intellectuals involvement in furniture design;
- (4) Less stress on carvings, and more emphasis over natural color and texture;
- (5) More focus on lines;
- (6) Birch and scented rosewood as the main material, and sandalwood, ebony, cypress and other hardwood are also used for furniture making. The furniture made of scented rosewood is acclaimed as the exemplar of the furniture in this period.

Ming style furniture inherits and keeps the basic shape and design of the furniture of Song Dynasty, with diversified types and materials, and particular attention is put on the scientific and reasonable internal structure. This is a wonderful achievement and progress that have been not recognized yet even now. Ming style furniture put more focus on self, personality, livelihood, unification of material and humans and intellectuals involvement, representing a peak time of China's tradition furniture

(6) Qing Dynasty (after Emperor Yongzhen)(1736-1911)

Qing style furniture has no clarified definition. Mr. Hu Desheng concluded the following features of Qing style furniture.

- ◆ The overall size and part size are larger and heavier than Ming style furniture
- ◆ Magnificent and splendid decoration, with carving and colored painting as the main techniques. Qing style furniture leaves the impression as dignified, refined, luxurious and splendid, in strike contrast to Ming style furniture as simple, natural, beautiful and cozy.

Qing style furniture originates in the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723-1736) and reaches its peak in in the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736-1797), and its main features include:

- ①Pursuit of valuable and rare materials: sandalwood, Hetian jade, ivory, emerald, turtle shell, etc.
- ②Pursuit of extremity of technique
- ③Pursuit of complicated decoration
- ④Pursuit of spirit, vigor and shape

(1) Two turning points in the development of Chinese furniture

Wu Dai: from complicatedness to simplicity

Emperor Yongzhen Reign: from simplicity to complicatedness

(2) Impact of Qing style furniture on modern Hongmu furniture

Valuable materials over scientific structure;
decoration and technique over perfect shaping

3. Current Situation

- (1) Overview of Hongmu furniture development in China over the 40 years
- (2) Main characteristics

Rare wood and furniture greatly speculated

Change in the volume and price of scented rosewood in 2004-2012

Year	Log		Squared timber		Newly harvest		Leftover material		Major material	
	Vol. (t)	Price (yuan/500 g)	Vol. (t)	Price (yuan/500 g)	Vol. (t)	Price (yuan/500 g)	Vol. (t)	Price (yuan/500 g)	Vol. (t)	Price (yuan/500 g)
2004	800	350	500	400	500	50~100	100	20~50	400	40
2005	860	600	500	800	500	50~200	200	20~60	300	50
2006	1000	600~1500	350	1500	700	100~450	350	50~100	200	40~70
2007	1000	1000~5500	400	1500~6000	800	200~600	400	50~150	150	40~85
2008	700	2000~7000	300	2000~8000	500	500~1000	200	100~300	80	100~350
2009	200	2000~8000	100	5000~10000	300	800~1500	80	200~500	50	350~1000
2010	80	4000~15000	30	8000~15000	100	1000~3000	50	500~1500	30	700~3000
2011	20	5000~2000	10	8000~20000	30	1500~3000	30	1000~2000	30	1000~4500
2012	10	5000~22000	5	8000~25000	10	3000~5000	10	1000~2000	30	500~5500
Total	4070		2195		3400		1420		1270	

Change in new furniture made of scented rosewood 10000 yuan

Type Year	Rose chair (pair)	Square table (piece)	Round- backed Armchair (pair)	Backed arhat bed	Chair (pair)	Waistless Side Table
1998	0.05	0.08	0.20	5.00	0.10	1.80
1999	0.06	0.10	0.30	10.00	0.50	2.80
2000	0.12	0.30	0.80	15.00	0.80	6.00
2001	0.30	0.60	1.00	18.00	1.80	18.00
2002	1.20	0.80	3.5	20.00	2.50	25.00
2003	2.60	1.50	13.00	25.00	8.00	40.00
2004	6.00	3.20	18.00	35.00	10.00	45.00
2005	8.00	5.00	20.0	50.00	13.00	60.00
2006	10.00	8.00	36.0	120.00	18.00	130.00
2007	12.00	15.00	40.0	280.00	28.00	260.00
2008	15.00	26.00	50.0	350.00	35.00	400.00
2009	25.00	36.00	90.00	500.00	50.00	500.00
2010	35.00	50.00	140.00	780.00	65.00	650.00
2011	40.00	65	170.00	900.00	80.00	800.00
2012	50.00	70.00	190.00	1020.00	96.00	900.00

(2) Furniture manufacturing is dominated by modelling and replication, especially the Qing style furniture. Furniture innovation is deviant from the expected path, and new style furniture has not been shaped yet.

A: New Chinese model, New Classic, in seek of novelty, valued materials and heavy decoration and carvings

B: Innovate on the basis of respecting traditional excellent furniture in an attempt to create a new style of Chinese furniture

(3) Lack of culture

(4) Overexpansion of Hongmong Market

① Added lists of import ports

Time	Ports
1980s	Ruili, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shanghai, Tianjin
1990s	Tengchong, Yingjiang, Ruili, Xishangbanna, Dongxing, Beihai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, Zhangjiagang, Qingdao
2000s	Zhangmu in Tibet, Liuku, Tengchong, Yingjiang, Ruili, Zhangfeng, Xishangbanna, Simao, Linchang, Pengxiang, Dongxing, Qinzhou, Beihai, Haikou, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Putian, Ningbo, Shanghai, Zhangjiagang, Qingdao, Tianjin

② Continuing overscale of Hongmu trading market。

③ Continuing scaling up of Hongmu furniture production

A: More non-traditional processing points have emerged, including Tengchong, Ruili, Xishuangbanna, Kunming, Pengxiang, Dongxi, Nanning, Haikou, Shenzhen, Putian, Fuzhou, Dalian and Shenyang;

B: Speculative capitals get involved in Hongmu furniture production;

C: More investors enter Hongmu market from other sectors

D: Constant expansion of working force and investment scale

Summary

For nearly 40 years, no scientific, reasonable and civilized path has ever been found for the development of Hongmu and Hongmu furniture in China. Hongmu furniture manufacturing is still engrossed in rare materials and high price, pursuing the large size, complicated carving and decoration, fine polishing or novel shapes. From these furniture, we are totally incapable of catching sight of the traces of traditional excellent Chinese furniture.

However, there are some scholars, entrepreneurs and craftman who inherits the traditional essence of furniture making and take ceaseless efforts to explore and establish a new style of Chinese furniture