THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KINMEN INFLUENCING THE FURNITURE CULTURE

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Abstract: This study aims at the impacts of the Kinmen’s historical development on its overall furniture development. The methods include Document Analysis and Ethnography Research. The results indicate that there are two certain times, the Qing Dynasty and the Quest, that influence the development. From a political perspective, the style of furniture was united due to the rule of the Qing Dynasty. In a social aspect, the size of furniture varied according to the ranks of the official. Multiple forms of furniture were observed in the houses of businessmen at the time, as well. The other period was the Quest while a lot of Kinmen residences travelled to the Southeast Asia and came back after becoming illustrious and built majestic “fan zi lou (foreign buildings)”. They also brought back the popular furniture, which were stilled in these buildings, from the Southeast Asia and made the culture of Kinmen’s furniture more various.

Keywords: History of Kinmen, Culture of furniture, Development of the Culture

1. Introduction

Kinmen (Figure 1) is an island located between Taiwan and China that has long been influenced by its geographical location and political and military factors. This has enabled it to preserve a large part of Hokkien (South Fujian) culture, such as traditional tribes, residences, ancestral culture, traditional faiths, overseas Chinese culture and battlefield culture. Taiwan and China are relatively lacking in this area. Many important assets were destroyed during China’s Cultural Revolution in 1966, whereas Taiwan’s accelerated urbanization and modernization in recent years led to the improvement of architectures and objects. Therefore, it is Kinmen that has been able to preserve relatively more objects, preserving southern Fujian culture along with them. The main compositions of traditional tribal space in Kinmen are three types of constructions: ancestral shrines and temples, southern Fujian residences, and foreign buildings [1]

Figure 1. Location of Kinmen

As residencies developed into traditional villages through time, the furniture within these villages also evolved. Furniture is an object that involves user behavior, and although it cannot speak, it involves different aspects of life, including dining, clothing, housing, transportation, education and entertainment. It is a carrier of life and culture. Thus, furniture is a living fossil that we can only understand through an indirect approach, searching for documentation and evidence and conducting careful observation. Therefore, “history” including events and actions of human beings of the past plays an important role
in this study.

For this reason this study uses Kinmen’s history to discuss the development of Kinmen’s furniture, proposing its influence on the culture of furniture based on social phenomena during the Qing Dynasty and the Quest. Research results will serve as reference for subsequent studies on Kinmen.

This study first employs document analysis to gather and explain literature on Kinmen history. Ethnography research is then applied, including a field survey on 66 pieces of furniture in national or county historic architectures in Kinmen; the samples are photographed, measured and drawn. This study also interviews five local craftsmen on the historical background and crafting of Kinmen furniture, as well as relevant affairs in daily life. The purpose of these two methods is to find the overall influence of historic development on the culture of furniture. Regarding the limitations of this study, furniture are wooden products and will deteriorate after time, especially with Kinmen’s long history. The field survey only found furniture from during the Qing Dynasty and the Quest. Therefore, this study only analyzes furniture from those two periods.

2. The Qing Dynasty Of Kinmen Influencing The Furniture Culture

This study focuses on two periods when discussing the influence of Kinmen’s historic development on furniture – the Qing Dynasty and the Quest:

The reign of the Qing Dynasty for over 200 years had had great influences on the overall development of Kinmen. In the aspects of constructions and furniture, the Qing styles had also been passed on. The development of Qing-style furniture is completely different from that of Ming-style furniture. Ming-style furniture is simple in shapes and lines, with delicate structures without fancy decorations. Qing-style furniture is famous for its decorations. Carving, infixing, and depicting methods are very important. However, because of the unique historical development of Kinmen, furniture has been changing along this development axis. The trading factor is the most significant. A lot of furniture is from China and southern areas.

According to the description above, this study collected information regarding constructions built during the period from the Qianlong reign to the Guangxu reign of the Qing Dynasty and furniture inside them for analyses and discussions, in order to explore the development of furniture in Kinmen, which will be described later in details.

The literature of furniture was divided into 2 categories: one is studies on related research areas and the other is explanations of furniture categories. About cultural researches. Cookson A. & Ishimura S. [4, 5, 6] discussed the rattan chair trading in the 17th century in 3 parts, including a comparison of the Ming-style chairs and the British rattan chairs during 1660~1700, a discussion of the rattan chair trading between China and Japan, and the influences of the Chinese high-back chairs on British rattan chairs in the early years. Also, Lo Tsai-Yun, Miyazaki Kiyoshi, Yang Jing, Ueda Akira [7, 8] studied red-painted wooden beds in Taiwan. Their discussions include two parts: the first part discussed the manufacturing techniques and the second part discussed the styles of red-painted wooden beds in Taiwan from 1880 to 1960 to find out different styles in different periods. And some other scholars also explored furniture in Taiwan. Chen [9, 10, 11, 12, 13] had published books related to bookcases, dining tables and chairs, dressers, armchairs, and stools. Jian [14] wrote a book about traditional furniture in Taiwan. According to the description above, there have been a lot of people in the research field of furniture studying furniture on Taiwan Island. However, the number of studies related to furniture on the off-shore islands. For furniture in Kinmen, there has been only one related study by Li [15], which covers all the aspects but the insight is not deep. Thus, this study planned to explore the historical development part in hopes of revealing the face of the culture of furniture more completely.

As for literature of explanations of furniture categories, there are various categorizations for furniture in the Ming Dynasty based on functions. Wang [16, 17] mentioned that furniture can be categorized based on functions into 5 categories, including chairs and drum stools, tables, beds (with footrests), cabinets and shelves, and "others" for those made for other purposes with different functions. Hu [18] believed that furniture in the Ming Dynasty can be categorized into 6 categories, including lying furniture, sitting furniture, daily life furniture (all kinds of tables), storing furniture (cabinets, closets, boxes, and cases), shielding furniture (screens), and others. In Hu’s [19] book, furniture in the Ming Dynasty can be categorized into 5 categories, including beds, chairs and drum stools, tables, cabinets and closets, and shields. And Jing and Shun [20] categorized furniture into chairs and drum stools, tables, beds, cabinets and shelves, and others. Lu [21] categorized furniture based on functions into 5 categories, including
chairs and drum stools, tables, cabinets and closets, and others.

The categorization in this study was determined from the aspect of humans and objects. Furniture is mostly used for humans and objects. The most closely related human behavior is sitting. Furniture in the sitting furniture category such as chairs and drum stools are often seen in living rooms or kitchens in general residences. This is why this category was named sitting furniture. And lying furniture includes bed and couch bed which are closely related to lying postures of humans. Thus this category was named lying furniture. And corner-leg table, stand, shelves, narrow waistless tables, and recessed-leg tables are where objects are put. Thus this category was named carrying furniture. Storing furniture includes objects such as cabinets, boxes, and cases, which are used to collect items. Thus the name of the category is storing furniture. Screens and curtains cannot be placed in any of the 4 categories above. In this study, they were included in the "others" category. In a word, this study categorized traditional Chinese furniture into 5 categories based on functions, including sitting furniture, lying furniture, carrying furniture, storing furniture, and others.

The sample size of this study was 9. They were all national or county heritage, including Huang Family Youtang Garden from the Qianlong reign period, Mansion of Provincial Graduate Cai, Former Residence of Yang Hua, and Pubian Chou Residence from the Jiaqing reign period, and Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House, Residence of Scholar Wu, Mansion of General Lu, and No. 17 and 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian from the Daoguang reign period.

Among them, the ones related to civil and military officers include: Mansion of Provincial Graduate Cai, Former Residence of Yang Hua, Residence of Scholar Wu, Mansion of General Lu, and No. 17 and 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian; while the ones related businessmen include Huang Family Youtang Garden, Pubian Chou Residence, and No. 17 and 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian.

First of all, the 9 mansion samples all have something in common, which is that there is a hall (or ancestral hall) in each of them. Furniture inside includes shrines for ancestors, shrines for Buddha, long tables, and eight immortals table. Generally, people in Kinmen would place a long shrine and a eight immortals table in their space for worshipping in their hall. On the left side of the long altar is the shrine for ancestors with tablets of ancestors inside. On the right side is the shrine for Buddha for worshipping Guanyin Fozu, the God of Land, and the Kitchen God. There are 4 small doors on the shrine for ancestors. Before the doors there are hallways. People, flowers, and birds are carved on the doors. The shrine for Buddha is open. It is built with a piece of glass to prevent wind blowing. These two shrines are like a pair and made of China fir or sandalwood. There are usually incense burners, candleholders, and offering tables before them (Culture and History Storeroom, Jincheng Junior High School). Among all the worshiping furniture samples, a special one is narrow rectangular table with recessed leg. Most long tables are flat or with flanges. However, the Former Residence of Yang Hua (Figure 2) and the Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House (Figure 3) are exceptional. In the aspect of sizes, a general table with flanges is usually 2050–2360mm long. However, the ones in the Former Residence of Yang Hua and the Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House are 2775mm and 4030mm long. These large sizes are very rare. The one in the Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House is the largest. Ciou Liang-Gong was promoted to the Captain General in Zhejiang (a military officer, first-class) in the 14th year of the Jiaqing reign. Yang Hua was promoted as the Su Song Zhen Commander in Chief (a military officer, second-class) in the 14th year of the Jiaqing reign. Thus, it can be inferred that sizes of table are related to ranks. Overall, the lines of the trestle tables are simple. The small tables on both sides support the table boards. The hidden drawers can be used to store things. The lines of the other two long and narrow tables are also simple. The styles are steady and elegant. There are dragon patterns (Figure 4) and meander patterns (Figure 5) on the threaded rods as decoration. The trestle tables and Narrow rectangular table are very rare in Kinmen.

Furniture from the other categories includes sitting furniture, lying furniture, carrying furniture, and storing furniture, also differs in mansions of civil and military officers and businessmen.
First, in the sitting furniture category, a special one is the 5-screen armchair (Figure 6) in the Former Residence of Yang Hua. The design is of the Qing style. There are 3 screens as the back and one screen for each arm. That’s why this chair is said to be “screen-style”. The back board is rather short. The decoration is rather simple. Under the seat there is a beam waist. The ends of the legs are of the shape of a hoof and bent inside. Also inside the Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House two stools preserved (Figure 7a and Figure 7b). One thing special about them is that they are made of ceramics with opens on both sides so that they can be carried by hands easily. Other sitting furniture is mostly long benches (Figure 8a and Figure 8b). They are often used when eating or doing leisure activities.

![Figure 6. A 5-screen armchair](image)

![Figure 7. A drum stool](image)

![Figure 8. A long bench](image)

Source: Drawn by this study.

The lying furniture is mostly canopy beds, also known as “red-painted wooden bed”. The canopy bed stands on 4 legs (2 pairs) under its bottom. Above the bed there are 4 pillars for support. 3 sides of the bed are low screens. Above the 4 pillars is the top, creating a shape of a canopy. Sometimes they come in 8 pillars(Figure 9) instead of 4. However, inside businessmen’s mansions there is something different. For example, the bed inside the Pubian Chou Residence (Figure 10) is of the form of a 4-pillar canopy bed. The decorations on the bed skirts are spindle-shaped (Figure 11a) and the legs are machine-shaved (Figure 11b). The design is rather new. Thus the furniture may be made in a later period when furniture was influenced by foreign cultures. The reasons will be explained later.

![Figure 9. A 8-pillar canopy bed](image)

![Figure 10. A 4-pillar canopy bed](image)

The carrying furniture includes corner-leg table, stand, shelves, narrow waistless tables, and recessed-leg tables. The most unique ones are stands and shelves from businessmen's mansions including the Huang Family Youtang Garden, Pubian Chou Residence (Figure 12 and Figure 13a), and No 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian (Figure 13b). One piece in the Huang Family Youtang Garden is damaged. And the dressing table with miscellaneous objects on it (Figure 13c) is decorated with spindle-shaped patterns. Its legs are cylinders made by the cutting technology.

![Figure 12. A basin shelf](image)

![Figure 13. A dressing table](image)

Source: Drawn and photographed for this study.

Also, the furniture inside Pubian Chou Residence and No 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian is not classical furniture. Traditionally, dressing tables are made with copper mirrors, small mirror boxes, dresser, and dressing boxes. This fact can be observed from past Chinese picture books and rolls. In literature, Wang [16]mentioned that mirror platform were popular in the Song Dynasty. They can be seen in Han-Chen Su’s “Lady at Her Dressing Table in a Garden” from the Song Dynasty and Shen Wang’s “Xiu Long Xiao Jing Tu” from the North Song Dynasty. In the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty, these shelves had still
been used by people.

The source of larger mirror furniture may have been related to trading. According to the history of Kinmen, Kinmen relies heavily on shipping because the area is small, materials are rare, and the population is small. The Economic Records of the Records of Kinmen County says that “in the 46th year of the Qianlong reign, … Wu Zhou is an isolated island with less farmlands. People make a living by selling fish and salt. Agricultural products include sweet potatoes and peanuts. Lives are hard. Firewoods, grass, rices, and grains must be shipped from the mainland.” Most of materials were shipped to Kinmen from the outside.

Back then, trading between Kinmen and China was very common. China was on its way to open up (the Five Ports Trading Treaty). Thus a lot of merchandises and technologies were introduced to China from western countries. And Kinmen was indirectly influenced. Large dresser was from the western world. It was brought to other areas through trading with western countries and colonization. It is not surprising to see this type of furniture in Kinmen.

Storing furniture includes closets, cabinets, bookcases, and others (boxes and cases). A special one is a bookcase (Figure 14). It comes with double-open doors, one drawing in the middle, and long legs. On the doors there are inscribed by a literatus (Figure 15). It is from the later period of the Qing Dynasty. There is also a medicine cabinet (Figure 16), which is in the form of a long-leg cupboard with color combination of red and black. On the drawer the names of all kinds of Chinese medicines can be seen.

![Figure 14. A Bookcase](image1)

![Figure 15. Some inscription by a literatus](image2)

![Figure 16. A medicine cabinet](image3)

Source: Photographed and drawn by this study.

3. The Quest Of Kinmen Influencing The Furniture Culture

There had been 3 waves of overseas immigration [22]. The first wave of large-scale immigration was during the Tongzhi period to the south. “There weren't enough cultivated lands, so jobless people from Kinmen moved to places such as Lu Song, Shi Li, and Kalapa. The second immigration to the south was between 1912 and 1929. According to the Records of Kinmen County, at that time the South Sea area was more prosperous than China. The third immigration trend was from 1937 to 1945 when the Japanese invaded China. During the piece between 1945 and 1949, a lot of Kinmen residents followed their predecessors’ footprints and travelled south. After 1949, Kinmen became a battlefield during the confrontation between the Nationalists and the Communists. This was the end of the immigration era. Afterwards, people had mostly immigrated to Taiwan.

Hui-Cheng Lin [23] quoted a behavioral scientist regarding the idea source of traditional constructions. “Clothing is the extension of one’s skin, while mansion is that of his limbs.” However, the words failed to express the meaning. Because in China, to build a traditional construction, the focus is more on ideas and concepts, including the concept of ethics, social statuses, ideals of education, and religious ideas. In other words, traditional constructions are places for settling down, physically and spiritually. Thus, presentation of a construction shows the meaning of it or the family living in. Thus, after overseas Chinese in the South Sea area got rich, they often wired their money back home to not only support their families but also build constructions which can make their ancestors proud. That was why a lot of “Fan zi lou” had been built. “Fan zi lou” are foreign buildings in Kinmen. The exterior designs came from the South Sea area. However, due to the restrictions on materials and implementation technologies, the styles were still different from those of the buildings in the South Sea area.

A lot of literature had talked about processes of constructions [24, 25]. Parts of the western buildings which still exist nowadays had been constructed by artisans from Xiamen and Gulangyu with supports from local artisans. Thus the technologies had been passed on to them. Some constructions built in later periods were not built by overseas Chinese but local artisans in Kinmen. One of the interviewees of this study Master Shen belongs to the Wenzhou school. When craftsmen were constructing buildings, they would also help make furniture, such as shrines, worship tables, beds… etc. A classic construction from the earlier period is the Chen Jing-lan Western House. Li [26] suggested that the blueprint of the Chen Jing-lan Western House should have been brought back to Kinmen.
from Singapore. Materials used such as China firs and red bricks were imported from China. An elder in the village recalled that during the construction he often saw three-masted sailboats anchor along the shore near Chenkeng. On the ebb, building materials were carried ashore by mules. That was a thrilling sight. The craftsman interviewed for this study also mentioned: “all materials for building houses were purchased in Zhangzhou Shima, such as wood and bricks. Kinmen had very few materials at the time.” Although there is no record of who built other western buildings, from the exteriors of these constructions one can still see the combination of eastern and western styles.

There are about 100 “fan zi lou” in Kinmen. However, most of them are no longer in use. Some of them had been abandoned when their owners moved to the South Sea area, while others had been damaged during the World War II. Thus, the samples used in this study are those with original furniture well-preserved inside them. A total of 4 historical constructions were picked, which are Xu Yun-Xuan Western-Style House, Former Residence of Cai Kai-Cheng, Former Residence (Memorial Hall) of Huang Tian-You, and Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House.

The owners of these four historical constructions had all been in business or to the South Sea area. Yun-Xuan Xu was in the building material business. He imported materials from Xiamen to Kinmen and sold them in Kinmen. Kai-Cheng Cai left to Sumatra, Indonesia. After he had earned enough money, he opened “Guang Da Hang”. Tian-You Huang went to Singapore when he was young to study medicine. He returned Kinmen at 29 and had lived there since. His residence is the only “Palladian” construction in Kinmen. Shi-Yin Chen went to Singapore and Indonesia in 1903 and started a business related to local products. In 1932 he returned home and built his house. The styles of these four constructions are all combinations of eastern and western features. It is the same for furniture inside them. First of all, in the space for worshipping, everything was still designed in accordance with the traditions without much change. However, recessed-leg tables are different. Especially, the tables in the Former Residence of Cai Kai-Cheng (Figure 17) and the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House are both patterned with complex and splendid decorations. The decorations had many varieties and even covered entire pieces of furniture; decorations were symmetrical on both sides of a piece of furniture. In this case the decoration is based on the story of hiring talented in Weishui (Figure 18); both sides have carvings of a dragon and flower, which are painted with gold paint to create an appearance of splendor.

As for sitting furniture, there are Master chairs in both the Xu Yun-Xuan Western-Style House and the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House (Figure 19a and Figure 19b). Traditionally, in halls and living rooms, furniture shall be arranged according a central axis. Furniture shall be on both sides of a hall. Usually a set means eight chairs and four tables. These chairs are so-called “Master chairs” or “scholar chairs”. If in a hall there are four chairs and two tables, it is called half-hall arrangement; and complete-hall arrangement with eight chairs and four tables [14]. There are four Master chairs with two tables (half-hall) in the Xu Yun-Xuan Western-Style House. These chairs are square chairs with stories sculpted on them. In the Xu Yun-Xuan Western-Style House, another half-hall set of Master chairs (Figure 19c) is located by the entrance. Their styles are simple with sizes smaller than general ones. And the materials used are simple, too. The cutting technology was already applied to create these chairs. Inside the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House, there is a complete-hall set of Master chairs. Overall the furniture is square with splendid marquetries. The top rail is curved, the back splat is a openwork carving. As for the bottom part, under the seat there is a waist. The apron panel is inlaid with sculptures. There are flowers inlays sculpted around the narrow waistless tables.
As for lying furniture, the samples are from Former Residence of Huang Tian-You (Figure 20a) and Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House (Figure 20b). The one from the Former Residence of Huang Tian-You is a canopy bed with 8 pillars. The one in the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House is also of this form but with simpler design. The bed was decorated with mainly geometric patterns.

As for carrying furniture (corner-leg table, stand, shelves, narrow waistless tables, and recessed-leg tables) and storing furniture (closets, cabinets, bookcases, and others (cases and boxes)), a lot of them are from the South Sea area, especially the ones in Former Residence of Huang Tian-You and Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House. In Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House, there is a round table (Figure 21) and three dressers (Figure 22a ~ Figure 22c). In Former Residence of Huang Tian-You, some table, closet, and dresser from Singapore (Figure 23 ~ Figure 25). In the aspect of exteriors, the ends of some legs and pillars are spindle-shaped and some patterns with spindle shapes can be found in decorations. Or some legs are twisted baluster legs (popular during the later period of the Renaissance and the Baroque Era). At that time, the countries in the South Sea area were almost all colonies of European countries. Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, and Straits Settlements (now Maleka, Pulau Pinang, and Singapore) were colonies of the UK. These colonists had brought their ways of life into their colonies. And overseas Chinese returning home had brought local products with them. That’s why we can see this type of furniture inside these “fan zi lou”.

As for sitting furniture, there are Master chairs in both Former Residence of Huang Tian-You (Figure 20a) and Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House (Figure 20b). The one from the Former Residence of Huang Tian-You is a canopy bed with 8 pillars. The one in the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House is also of this form but with simpler design. The bed was decorated with mainly geometric patterns.

As described above, the Quest had an important effect on the development of furniture in Kinmen. Immigrants sought only to satisfy basic needs for living, and sent whatever they had left over home for people in their hometown, including donating money to build schools (Jinshui Elementary School), defense towers (De Yue Lou), and Fan Zi Lou, which were to show their wealth and naturally had strict requirements on furniture. In the case of Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House, the architecture not only has a Western outer experience, but also furniture as well, including three mirror shelves (Figure 22a ~ Figure 22c) and a bed, especially the mirror stand (Figure 22a), which had many spindle-shaped decorations at the upper parts, shell shaped decorations on the handles of the drawers, and “Western lotus” decorations on the lower wooden part of the drawers. In addition, there were also master chairs, which were supposedly purchased in China based on the form of the chairs and the inlaying technique. Inlaying techniques were truly applied to furniture in China, and archeological data shows that implements with inlaid stones were found in the Hemudu Site from 4000 years ago [27]. The variety of inlaid materials grew even larger in the Qing Dynasty, in which Guangdong was famous for the mother-of-pearl inlay. According to prior paragraphs, Kinmen lacked resources and had even fewer trees. Kinmen was surrounded by sea and convenient sea transport, so most objects were shipped to Kinmen from other places. Exquisite, resplendent furniture with mother-of-pearl inlay were mostly brought to Kinmen by wealthy overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia or China. Therefore, the
importance of immigrants who were successful in foreign countries on the development of furniture in Kinmen goes without saying.

4. Discussion

A summary of the results above. The influences of the historical development on the culture of furniture are discussed from four aspects, the political, the social, the economic trading, and the questing (sailing) below:

The first aspect is the political. The most important roles which determine cultural development are dynasties and rulers. The Ming Dynasty ended. The Qing army entered China (and started the Qing Dynasty in the middle of the 17th century, 1664~1910). Because the rulers of China were of a different race, they worried about not being able to reign for a long time. Their policy for the Han people was “suppressing their national consciousness and feeding them with stereotyped literature”, creating a trend of examinations so that scholars had to spend all their time completing with each other in wording by making imperial exams more complex [28]. Therefore, there wasn’t much space for science development, while art also went downhill. Even though there had been promotions, the result wasn’t idea [29]. In the imperial court, due to the promotion of art, the styles of lacquerwork, china, and enamel were complex, detailed, and splendid. As for sitting furniture, besides being sumptuous, it is also complexly decorated with all kinds of materials. Colors used were bright [28]. Hu [18] indicated that the rulers was willing to spend efforts and time pursuing splendid and heavy furniture in order to show their positions were as steady as rocks and mountains. In the Qing Dynasty, in Kinmen what was influenced the most was furniture. For example, the 5-screen armchair in Former Residence of Yang Hua, the bed in Huang Family Youtang, and the bed and closet in Li Family Abode, Sishancian are some splendid decorations. The dressing tables in Pubian Chou Residence and Li Family Abode, Sishancian are all splendid and heavy.

The second aspect is the social. Scholars were intellectuals. Their social statuses were high. After the Sui Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty after imperial exams were popular, there was a saying that “ten years of oblivion in school may bring you fame overnight”. A lot of poor people had made their ancestors proud through imperial exams. In ancient China, there was a policy of “encouraging agriculture while restraining business”. The social status of merchants finally got higher in the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty. In the Ming Dynasty, merchants could make donations to buy an official position. Their children could participate in imperial exams. And business laws had been made. This aspect was very significant in Kinmen. “The Ming and the Qing Dynasties is the prosperous period of imperial exams. Military commanders appear one after another. A total of 43 presented scholars are from this period. There is a saying ‘In less than 100 people, 36 are officials” [30]. Military commanders included provincial commanders and garrison commanders. In Kinmen there is a saying that “there are 3 provincial commanders within 9 miles and 1 garrison commander within 100 steps.” It is obvious that in Kinmen during the Qing Dynasty there were a lot of military commanders [31]. The owners of 6 of the constructions used in this study, included Xuan Hong Historical Residence, Mansion of Provincial Graduate Cai, Former Residence of Yang Hua, Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House, Residence of Scholar Wu, and Mansion of General Lu, were civil officials or military officers. All the other owners were businessmen. No. 18, Li Family Abode, Sishancian is a special case. The owner was Shi-Ta Li. He began his career in Singapore when he went there to start the “Jin Yu Mei Jiu Ba Hang”. Then he made a donation to get a position “Wu Pin Tong Zhi Feng Zheng Da Fu” [32]. Through observing different social organizations, it was found that furniture used was influenced as well. For example, tables in first-class (Liang-Gong Ciou) and second-class officers’ (Hua Yang) homes were larger than those in common people’s homes. And most designs of businessmen’s furniture are with some western features and splendid decorations. The dressing tables in Pubian Chou Residence and Li Family Abode, Sishancian are some examples. And the designs of the four research samples from the R.O.C. period are with variety because overseas Chinese had brought back some local furniture from the South Sea area, leading to the result of having both eastern and western furniture in their homes.

The third aspect is the economic trading. During the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, Zheng’s people were devoted to restore the Ming Dynasty. They fight against the Qing government using their power on the sea. In 1661, the Qing government implemented the sea restrictions. In 1685 after Taiwan was restored, the restrictions were cancelled. Chen [33] suggested that trading was still popular on the sea near the coastal areas even thought there were restrictions. Kinmen was very lack of goods and materials. Thus this situation was very important for Kinmen. Take furniture materials for example, there weren’t a lot of trees in Kinmen. Furniture was usually made of acacias. Another common material was China trees. Farmers back then usually made their tools with these trees.
Best woods had to be imported. Another choice was to buy a complete set of furniture and bring it back to Kinmen. Lu [21] mentioned that furniture trading was very popular in the Qing Dynasty. The range of trading was broad. Especially, in the late period of the Qianlong reign, some domestic furniture stores had been opened to sell furniture. Besides, a lot of furniture had been exported to west Europe or American countries. Or artisans from Xiamen and Gulangyu were invited to Kinmen to make furniture. Thus, styles of furniture at that time are mostly Qing styles. After the R.O.C. period, goods required in daily lives were still imported. Thus there were a lot of small boats traveling between Kinmen and Xiamen. Lo [34] used two examples. For example, the “Kinmen Shipping Company” was formed by overseas Chinese in Singapore, Jing-Lan Chen and Guang-Ping Wu, in 1992, for shipping between Kinmen and Xiamen. The famous temple wall-painting master Tian-Zhu Lin in Little Kinmen (Lieh Yu) was originally from Annan, Fujiang. His family had made a living with cottons, oysters, and salt for several generations until his father Qian Lin’s generation. His father switched to the trading business. He owned a two-masted sailboat named “Da Chun”. It sailed among Kinmen, Xiamen, and Shima with shipments including local products from Zhangzhou, fish products, western products, southern and northern products, and groceries. The samples used in this study were mostly from China or made by artisans (Former Residence of Yang Hua, Pubian Chou Residence, Ciou Liang-Gong Historic House, and Li Family Abode, Sishancian) except for long benches and stools which were made of local materials. Therefore, both in the early days and nowadays, economic trading has directly influenced inheritance and exchange of the culture of furniture in Kinmen.

The last aspect is the questing. After the five-port trading, China made Xiamen into a commercial port. In the chaos, poor people in Kinmen one by one left their homes and sailed to the South Sea area to make a living. Then the ones who got rich returned home and built grand western buildings (fan zi lou) to make their ancestors proud and to show off their social statuses. They also brought some local goods from the South Sea area when they went back home. One of the goods they brought back was furniture which was used for their western buildings. For example, in Former Residence of Huang Tian-You, 3 pieces of furniture were brought back from Singapore. The designs of them were western (with twisted legs). The researcher interviewed a local old man and talked about the furniture brought back from Singapore. He said, “Items brought back from Singapore include the iron bed ”. According to his words, questing was also an important factor which influenced the culture of furniture in Kinmen.

5. Conclusions
This study employs document analysis and ethnography research to explore the influence of historical development on the culture of furniture. The effects of each period in history on the culture of furniture in Kinmen are concluded based on analysis and discussion results. First, during the Qing Dynasty, designs of furniture in Kinmen were of Qing Dynasty styles because Kinmen was under the autocratic government of the Qing Dynasty. For example, the Former Residence of Yang Hua features heavy materials and emphasized fancy decorations. From a social perspective, social status also affected furniture, in which the size of furniture varied according to the rank of officials. For example, first-class and second-class officials had different sized sacrificial tables that were decorated to be more resplendent. More Western style furniture appeared in the homes of businessmen, because they had more opportunities to bring what they see, hear about and come in contact with in the outer world back into their homes.

Finally, during the Quest many Kinmen immigrants that became wealthy returned to build “fan zi lou (foreign buildings),” and brought back furniture popular in Southeast Asia, e.g. Western mirror stands, round tables, tables and closets in the Chen Shi-Yin Western-Style House and Former Residence of Huang Tian-You. Many components of the furniture were made using cutting technology and had “Western lotus” decorations.

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7. References


