

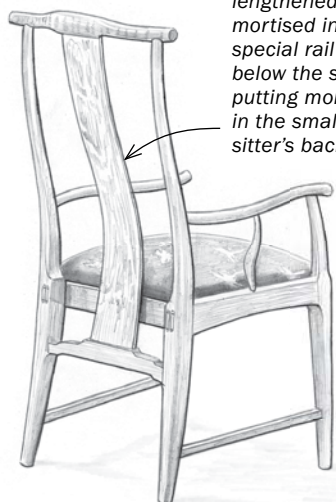
# how they did it

## Chair fuses best of East and West

CHINESE AESTHETICS MEET CONTEMPORARY COMFORT

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

John Cameron's new chair (see the back cover) blends the distinctive styling of a Chinese Ming Dynasty chair with the comfort and structure of a contemporary Western one. Cameron found a superb example of the "official's hat" armchair in his well-thumbed copy of Wang Shixiang's landmark book *Classic Chinese Furniture* (shown above). He closely followed the upper part of that chair in his own design. But for reasons of comfort and strength, he designed the lower half more in line with a contemporary Western chair. He replaced the mitered seat frame, round legs, and glueless joinery of the Ming chair with a robust system of seat rails double-tenoned into legs and reinforced with hidden corner blocks under an upholstered seat.



Back splat is lengthened, and mortised into a special rail well below the seat, putting more flex in the small of the sitter's back.

Crest rail is lower than in the original, placed behind the sitter's shoulders for increased comfort.

Back posts gradually transition from round at the top to rectangular at seat rails, then back to round at the floor.

### MING DYNASTY "OFFICIAL'S HAT" ARMCHAIR

Solid-wood panel is covered with caning.

Round legs pierce the mitered frame of the seat.

For added strength, back splat is bent-laminated instead of sawn from solid wood.

Foot rest

Spandrels let into the legs and seat frame are both decorative and structural.

The arm support, locked in place by a metal pin and a set screw from below, can be taken out to remove the slip seat.

Upholstered slip seat replaces flat wooden seat in Ming chairs.

Seat is lower and narrower than the Chinese original, which was designed for use with a foot rest.

Western system of seat rails tenoned into the legs replaces the traditional Chinese mitered seat frame pierced by the legs.

Wood is white oak instead of darker exotics.

