

## **Alternative Letter Styles & Kneeling Meditation Stools**



### **Introduction:**

In Western Europe we are very familiar with day-to-day, Roman-derived alphabet but of course around the rest of the world there are a huge number of different letter styles, different 'alphabets'. Some derive from brush use, some from pen; some sit above the line, some below; some are vertical, some horizontal - an amazing array. A few obvious readily seen examples might be Chinese or Japanese, Hebrew, Tibetan or Arabic.

The point of this workshop is to show you how the techniques of carving Roman letters can be applied to the others. You may need to modify or stylise them a little to make them work with a gouge rather than, say, a brush but it can be done.

**Warning:** I have carved scripts and characters without any idea how to pronounce what I am seeing, let alone understand what they mean, or even what shapes are aesthetically pleasing. I always fear misplacing a stroke and changing the meaning to something embarrassing! *It's crucial you have your work checked (or given you) by someone who understands what you are carving.*

I've used the symbol Om (Aum) as my paradigm, first as you will see in yoga circles in Devnagari (used by Sanskrit); and then as used in Tibetan Buddhism. You can readily find a large number of examples of these symbols to compare online. And what better to add them too but kneeling meditation stools.

Again, my point is to show you that it doesn't matter what the letter, symbol or character you are carving, they are just shapes, as are the familiar Roman letters at bottom. The techniques of carving are only so many, just applied where needed.

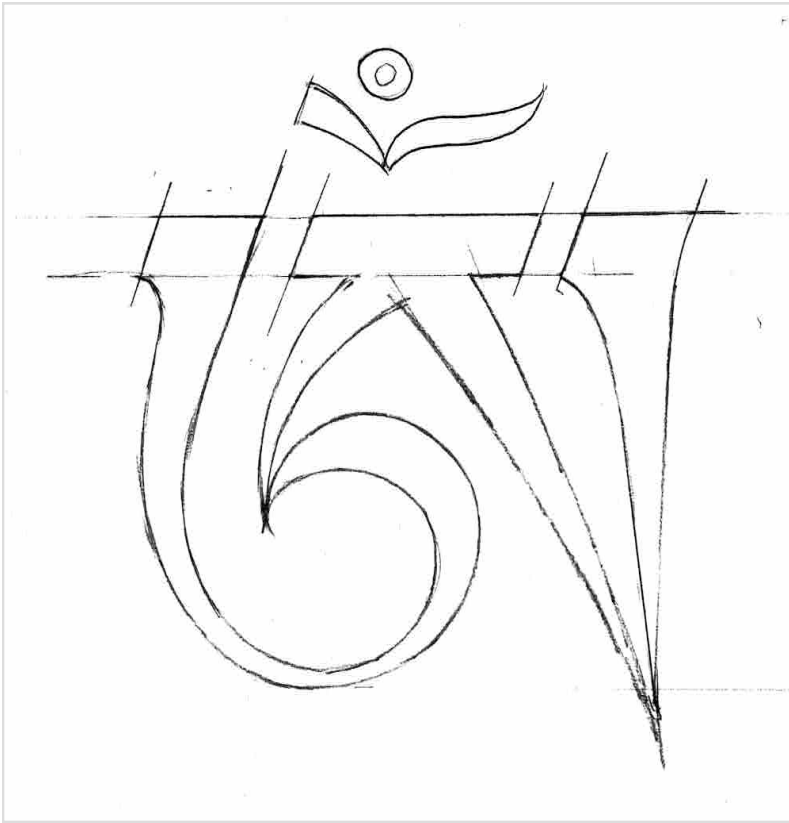
### **The Characters:**

Following are my drawings for the characters as I carved them. Both were 4in. (100mm) high, which the tool list fitted nicely but print/enlarge them to whatever size you want.

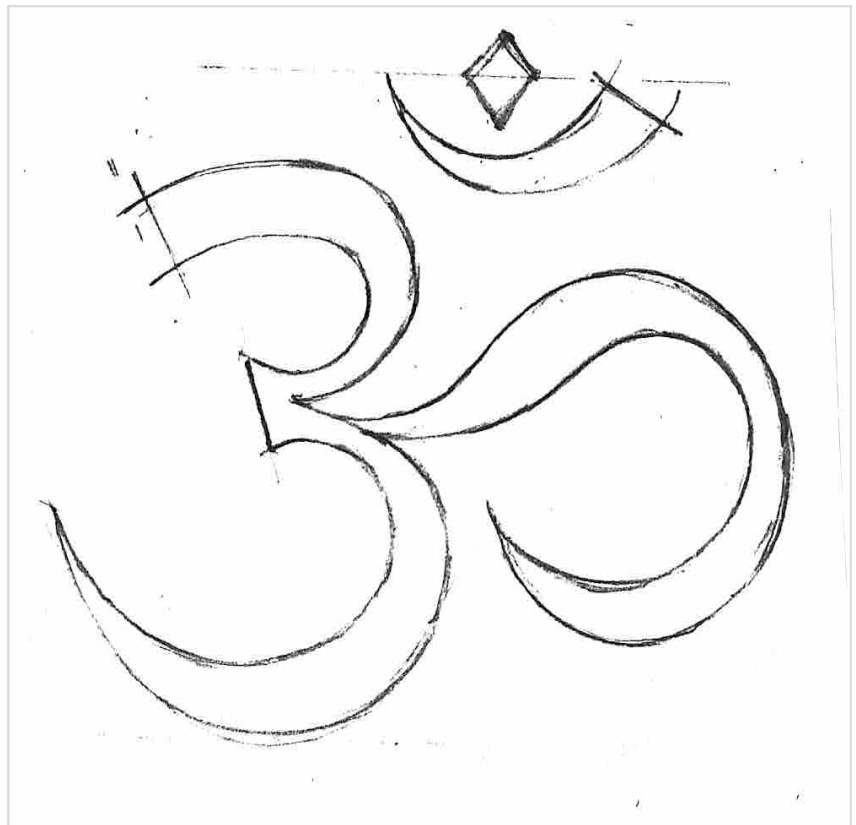
The stool itself tilts so the knees rest on the floor and take some of the weight without the edge of the stool digging into the backs of the thighs. Remember to put the symbols so they are viewed the right way up as the opened stool is approached from the 'front'.

It's important to have plenty of blank, uncarved space so as not to create an uncomfortable surface, hence just the one central character.

## Tibetan Om (Aum)



## Yoga Om



## **Tools:**

- Double bevel lettering chisels: 1 1/8in. (30mm); 7/8in. (23mm); 5/8in. (16mm) - but you'll find other width can be made do. Check against your drawing.
- Fishtail Chisel: 1/2in. (14mm)
- Skew Chisel and 60deg. V tool, both X 3/8in. (10mm)
- Gouge #3 x 1/4, 1/2, 3/4in. (6, 14, 20mm)
- Gouge #5 x 5/8in. (16mm)
- Gouge #6 x 1/4, 7/8, 1in. (6, 23, 25mm)
- Gouge #9 x 1/4in. (6mm)

## **The Stools:**

### **Wood:**

For the stools you need a hard, strong wood. I'm using Oak.

### **Design**

Drawing with dimensions follows.

It's quite straight forward carpentry; a table saw is really best if you have one. Do have a look through my method below and note some of the options you have.

The stool as I have it here would seem to fit most people kneeling to meditate. However, it would be a good idea to mock up some sort of platform to make sure you get the right height of the stool legs for your own anatomy.

Use substantial hinges, 4in. (100mm) brass or steel.

### **My Approach/Method:**

1. Cut 3 pieces from the same board.

See the note about end overhang, below, before cutting.

2. Cut both ends of the feet at an angle of 15 deg.

15 deg. is enough. More increases the stress on the hinge joint.

3. Fit the hinges while everything is square.

Recessing them is neatest but you can just screw to surface. You want a firm, snug fit at the joint when the legs are opened, no gap.

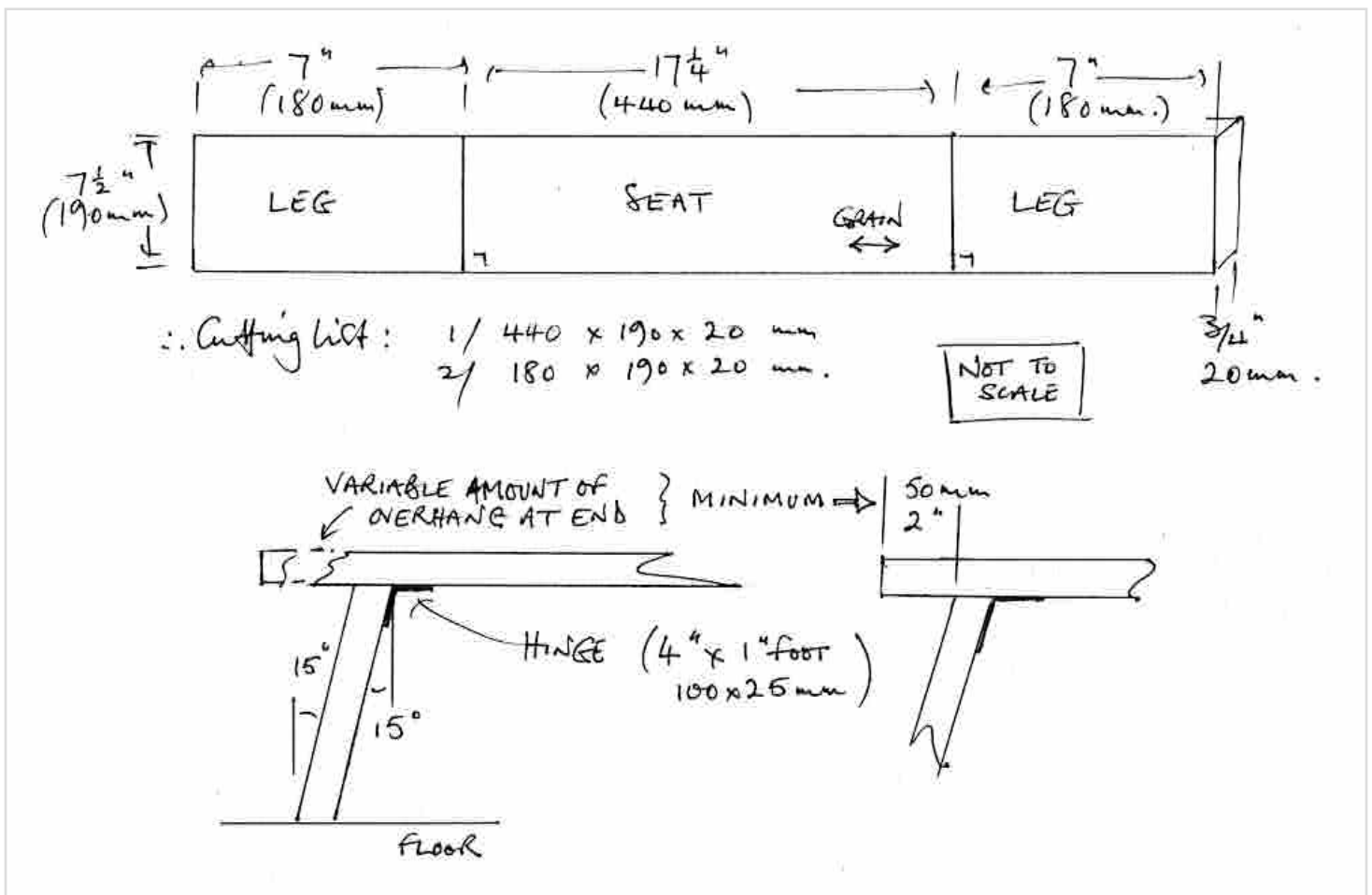
You now should have a basic stool with folding legs.

4. Refine the stool, which means taking it all apart for the moment:

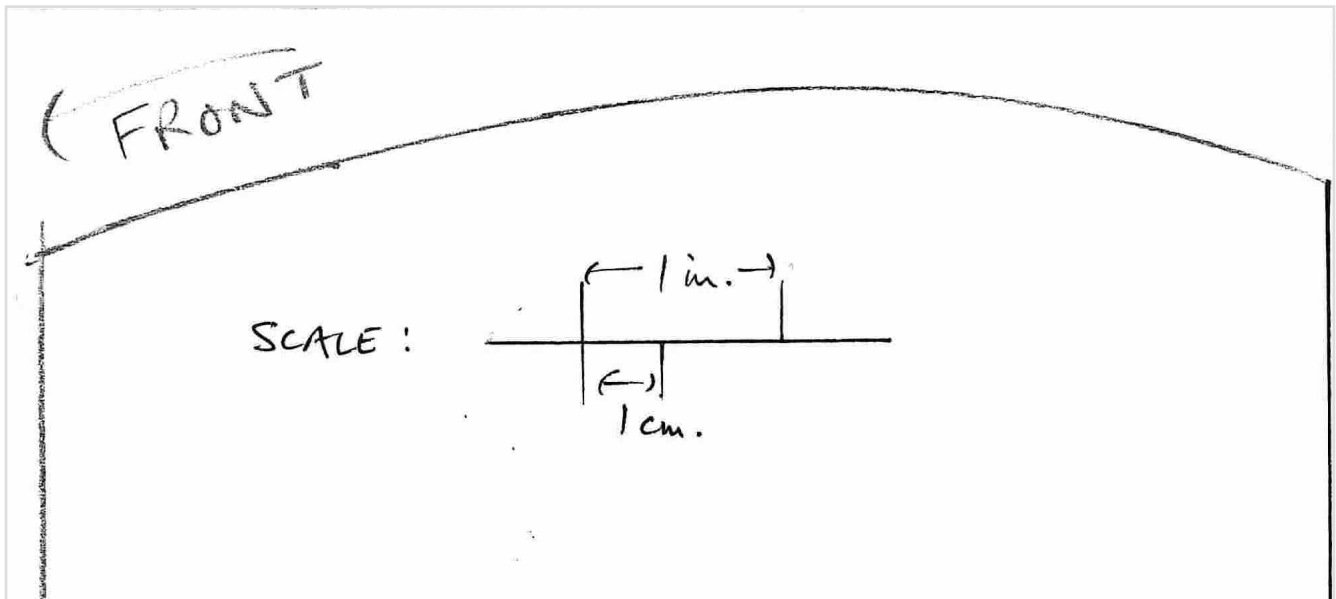
- Round over the front edge - at least. You can shape the seat.
- Make the legs narrower; cut decorative holes in them
- Curve the bottom of the legs so you have a sort of rocker. See template below.  
(This makes sitting on the stool as well as getting up from it more ergonomic.)
- Make the overhang the overhang longer or curved.
- Use colour, in the letters, the edges, the holes...

I suggest you think through all this and do some drawing before you start.

### Dimensions:



## Template for the curved 'rocker' foot:



That's it!

You should have all you need but if you do have any questions feel free to post in the comments section below the accompanying videos on the [WoodcarvingWorkshops.tv](http://WoodcarvingWorkshops.tv) website.

All the best with your carving!

Chris