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## SOCIAL RITUALS

*Manners and everyday rituals serve to mold interpersonal relations and orient people in everyday affairs. Although people may not consider such gestures as bowing, shaking hands, or motioning for others to go first as anything more than politeness, the habits of deference and respect they ingrain cannot help but extend into other realms of social life.*

*Confucius attributed great power to ritual, once stating that "The whole world would respond to the true goodness of [a ruler] who could for one day restrain himself and return to ritual." Xunzi, as seen in Selection 6, also had high regard for the power of ritual to mold behavior. Highly precise rules for the performance of rituals were compiled in the late Zhou, with different rules for different ranks of society: rulers, nobles, high officials, low officials, and gentlemen (shi). The Book of Etiquette and Ritual preserves many of the rules for gentlemen. The chapter given below contains the procedures to be followed when one gentleman calls on another. Even though some of the specific rules given in this selection, such as the kinds of gifts to be given, quickly became outdated, the general outline remained influential for many centuries.*

### THE CEREMONIES FOR VISITS BETWEEN GENTLEMEN

In winter one presents a freshly killed pheasant and in summer a dried one. The bird is held up in both hands, the head to the left.

THE VISITOR: I have desired an interview for some time, but have had no justification for asking for one. Now his honor So-and-so has commanded me to visit.

THE HOST: The gentleman who introduced us has ordered me to grant you an interview. But you,

sir, are demeaning yourself by coming. Please return home, and I shall hasten to present myself before you.

THE GUEST: I cannot disgrace you by obeying this command. Be good enough to end by granting me this interview.

THE HOST: I do not dare to set an example of how a reception of this kind should be conducted, and so I persist in asking you to return home, and I shall call on you without delay.

THE GUEST: It is I who do not dare to show that

example, and so I persist in asking you for an interview.

THE HOST: Since I have failed to receive permission to decline this honor, I shall not press it further. But I hear that you are offering me a gift, and this I must decline.

THE GUEST: Without a gift I cannot dare to come into your presence.

THE HOST: I am not worthy of these ceremonies, and so I must persist in declining.

THE GUEST: If I cannot have the support of my gift, I dare not pay you this visit; so I persist in my request.

THE HOST: I also am decided in declining; but as I cannot secure your consent, how dare I refuse?

Then the host goes to meet the guest outside the gate, and there bows twice, answered by two bows from the guest. Then the host, with a salute, invites him to enter. The host goes in by the right side of the door, the guest holding up the present and entering by the left. When they enter the courtyard the host bows twice and accepts the present, the guest bows twice as he hands it to him, and then starts going out. Then the host invites him to carry out the visit, and the guest returns and complies. When the guest leaves, the host escorts him outside the gate and bows twice.

When the former host pays his return visit, he takes the other's present with him. He says: "Recently when your honor demeaned himself by visiting me, you commanded me to an interview. I now ask permission to return your gift to the attendant."

THE HOST: Since I have already secured an interview, how could I now refuse to grant one?

THE GUEST: I do not dare to ask for an interview; I only presume to request permission to return the gift by your attendant.

THE HOST: Since I have already obtained an interview by the help of this gift, I must persist in declining to receive it back.

THE GUEST: I dare not listen to such a speech, so I will press my request through your attendant.

THE HOST: Since I cannot secure your consent to my declining, I dare not but obey.

Then the guest enters, carrying the present. The host bows twice and receives it, the guest bowing twice as he gives it. On departure, the host escorts him outside the gate and bows twice.

When a gentleman visits an official, the latter declines altogether to receive his present. At his entrance the host bows once, acknowledging their difference in rank. When the guest withdraws, he escorts him and bows twice.

When a gentleman calls on his former superior, the host formally declines the visitor's gift: "As I have not been able to receive your consent to my declining, I dare not persist in it."

Then the guest enters, lays down his gift, and bows twice. The host replies with a single bow. When the guest leaves, the host sends the attendant to return the gift outside the gate.

THE ATTENDANT: So-and-so sends me to hand back your gift.

THE GUEST: Since I have already obtained an interview, I venture to decline to receive the gift.

THE ATTENDANT: So-and-so has issued his commands to me, and I cannot myself take the initiative in this matter. I must press his request on you.

THE GUEST: I am the humble servant of his excellency, and am not capable of observing the ceremonies of a visitor with his host; so I venture to persist in declining.

THE ATTENDANT: Since So-and-do has ordered me, I dare not take it upon myself to make decisions in this matter, but persist in this request.

THE GUEST: I have repeatedly declined, without receiving his honor's permission to do so. How then dare I not obey? [He thus bows twice and receives the present back.]

The lower officials, in visiting one another, use a live wild goose as a present. It is wrapped in a cloth, its feet bound with a cord, and is carried like the pheasant. In visits among the higher officials, a live lamb is presented. It is wrapped in a cloth, with the four legs bound in front. The head

is held to the left as a fawn is held. The ceremonial is the same as that observed in visits exchanged between gentlemen.

At their first interview with the ruler, visitors carry a gift, holding it on a level with the girdle. Their deportment shows a respectful uneasiness. When commoners have an interview with their ruler, they do not assume dignified carriage, but hurry along both in advancing and retreating. Gentlemen and officials lay down their present and kowtow twice. To this the ruler responds with a single bow.

If the visitor is from another state, the usher is sent to hand him back his gift, saying: "My unworthy ruler has sent me to return your present."

The visitor replies: "A ruler has no ministers beyond his own borders, and therefore I dare not refuse to do as he commands." Then kowtowing twice, he receives it back.

Anyone who sees his ruler on business stands directly in front of him when he faces south. If that is impossible, then the minister faces squarely east or west, and not in whatever direction the ruler happens to face. If the ruler is in the hall, the minister goes up the steps nearest the ruler, without making any distinction between direction.

Except to answer questions, in addressing the ruler a person composes himself before speaking. In speaking with the ruler, one talks of official business; with an official, of service to the ruler; with older men, of the control of children; with young people, of their filial and brotherly duties; with the common man, of loyalty and geniality; with those in minor offices, of loyalty.

In speaking to an official, one begins by looking him in the face; toward the middle of the interview one looks at his breast, and at the end of the interview one's eyes are again directed to his face. The order is never changed, and is used in all cases. In talking to one's father, the eyes are allowed to wander, but not higher than the face, nor lower than the girdle. If one is not speaking when the other is standing, one looks at his feet, and, if he sits, at his knees.

When one is sitting in attendance on a great man, should he yawn, stretch himself, ask the time

of day, order his dinner, or change his position, then one must ask permission to retire. When one is sitting in attendance at night, if the great man should ask the time of night or start eating pungent things to prevent sleepiness, one may ask permission to retire.

If the ruler invites a guest to dinner, after the ruler makes an offering, the guest begins the meal by first tasting all the foods. He then drinks and awaits the ruler's command before beginning to eat. If there is anyone in charge of tasting the food, then the guest waits until the ruler has eaten before he eats. If the ruler gives him a cup of wine, he gets off his mat, kowtows twice, and then receives the cup. He then returns to his mat, sits down, and pours a libation. When he has emptied the cup, he waits until the ruler has emptied his, and then hands back his empty cup.

When he is leaving, the guest takes his shoes, goes quietly to one side, and puts them on. If the ruler rises on his account, the gentleman says: "There is no reason why you, ruler, should get up, but your servant does not dare presume to decline the honor." If by any chance the ruler should escort him to the gate, he does not dare to look at him, but goes away immediately after taking his leave. In the case of an official, he declines the honor of being escorted. When he goes down the steps, and the ruler follows, he declines again. When he is escorted to the door, he declines for the third time.

Should a retired official call on a gentleman and ask to see him, the gentleman requests permission to decline. Not receiving it, he says: "I am not in a position to be visited by his honor, but not being able to secure permission to decline, I hurry to wait on him." Then he anticipates the visitor by going out and bowing to him first.

Unless a man is sent on a mission by his ruler, he does not call himself an official of his ruler. A gentleman calls himself the "old one" of his ruler.

When bearing a present of silk, one does not walk with great strides but deports himself with an anxious uneasiness. A person carrying jade steps carefully, lifting his toes and dragging his heels.

In speaking of himself to his ruler, a gentleman or official calls himself "Your servant." A speaker residing at home within the capital calls himself "Your servant of the marketplace well"; and if in the country, "Your servant of the grass and

fields." A commoner calls himself "Your servant the grass-cutter." A man from another state calls himself "Your servant from outside."

*Translated by Patricia Ebrey*