

A brief analysis of the historical development and change of ancient Chinese etiquette

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Abstract: The initial origin and development of ancient Chinese etiquette experienced the transformation from quality to style. The so-called quality is the direct revelation of human's original nature, without any decoration, which is also reflected in the rough and simple use of ritual. At first, human beings are simple, and interpersonal communication is all based on sincerity and straightforwardness, without adornment. Zheng Xuan said in his book on the Six Arts: "The prosperity of self-written contract. Pu Luhao quality, the face is not flattering, the eyes are not slanderous, the king and subjects are treated like friends, but they are honest." At this time, the gift is just a natural revelation of the inner order of people, there is no certain rules to speak of, let alone external institutional constraints. All kinds of rites at this time are no different from those used in daily life. In the "ritual" this description: "The beginning of the Fu Li, the beginning of the diet, its burnt millet 稗 dolphin, dirty honour and cucuts drink, 蕢 cell and earthen drum, still if can be to respect the ghosts and gods." At this time, the Chinese civilization is like a naive child, all acts with innocent innocence of the heart. This paper discusses the historical development and change of Chinese ancient etiquette.

Key words: ancient etiquette; Historical development

Civilization develops gradually, just as a child grows into an adult. As straightforward ways of dealing with each other begin to fail to meet the increasing complexity of human relationships, there is a need for rules and regulations. Out of the fear of the gods and the earth, the ancients made social rules first of all to imitate the natural order, and its purpose was to manage the world affairs and human relations. The process of the gradual perfection of the etiquette system is the process of the simple nature of human being being gradually cultured. When the external decoration and the internal nature perfectly match and blend, it is the day when the polite gentleman grows up, and it is also the world of civilization. It can be said that the germination and growth of ancient Chinese civilization in the early days were mostly concentrated on the ritual and music system of the world.

Little is known about the specific appearance of the initial rites, and most of the stories have been lost in the long history. What is known today about the ancient rites is that men and spirits co-existed, were narrated and recorded under the same order, similar to ancient Greek mythology. With the development and progress of human civilization, the new chapter of people-oriented is slowly opened. Gradually, human rights replaced theocracy, secularity replaced religion, history replaced myth, rationality replaced superstition, technology replaced witchcraft, and all kinds of primitive rituals full of mystery gradually evolved into the original etiquette.

Three thousand years earlier than the Western Enlightenment, China entered the era of humanity and began to create a civilization of its own. A unified political system was formed very early in China, and the governance of the world depends on the experience passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the developed system of chronicling history was born and improved very early. They have accumulated the experience and wisdom of tens of generations of ancestors since ancient times, and formed the most primitive classical system.

The people-oriented and well-developed system of chronicling history enabled the ancient Chinese etiquette to develop continuously and improve with the progress of The Times. The system of rites and music made by the Duke of Zhou marked the perfection of the rites. This period was known as "three hundred classics and three thousand Ququ rites". Almost all the classics such as the Analects of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi discussed issues related to rites. Although all kinds of ritual processes have been lost in a long time, almost only exist in the seventeen fragments of Yili, which are still basically the lowest level rites. However, the spirit of ritual culture recorded in these Chinese classics has lasted for more than two thousand years, providing spiritual guidance for all the later rituals.

In the Qin Dynasty, the rites of the six States were summarized and revised. Although they may not be in line with the rites of the Zhou Dynasty, the system of respecting the king and suppressing the ministers and the effectiveness of the court in providing assistance followed the tradition. However, after the wars at the end of the Qin Dynasty, the classics were lost seriously, and not only the system and classics of the Qin rites, but also a large number of ancient rites of the three generations were lost. At the beginning of the Han Dynasty, Shusunong, on the basis of the Qin system, worked out the basic system of the Han Rites, but the enactment of the specific ritual laws was stopped because of Shusunong's death.

In the Wenjing era, Huang Lao's art was respected but rites were neglected. It was not until Emperor Wudi of Han dethroned hundreds of schools, and respected Confucianism and the six classics, that a relatively perfect ritual system was finally formulated in the Han Dynasty, and the details were revised constantly, such as the wedding ceremony of Guanglu Doctor Liu Xin in Emperor Ping's imperial decree. Today, the details of the Han etiquette notes are few known, can only be glimpsed from some wild history novels, but its general such as official titles, temples, sacrifices, hunting can still be glimpsed from historical books.

During the Six Dynasties, the land of China fell into a chaotic period of division and turmoil. Although noble families still regarded themselves as gentlemen of rites, they could only keep the surviving Ququ rites, and the rites and even rites and meanings were lost in

practice. The classical inheritance pedigree that had been extended since the Spring and Autumn period also ended in this period. In this era background of the collapse of the Chinese civilization order, rites and laws naturally can not be immune. There are many historical materials circulating about the stories of the Six Dynasties today, among which there are many descriptions of the ceremonial system at the national level. Although the nobles of the Six Dynasties were not good at the general rites, they attached great importance to the details of Ququ rites. For the convenience of reference, they compiled a large number of practical daily etiquette manuals, called “Shuyi”, which described the details of various rites in the most concise way. Only two kinds of early Shuyi have been handed down to the world, but fortunately, a large number of documents stored in the Sutra cave of Mogao Grottoes a hundred years ago have come to light, providing valuable original historical materials for today’s research on the details of etiquette from the Six Dynasties to the early Tang Dynasty. At the same time, it is a pity that these instruments are now in exile overseas, and so far, there is still a lack of systematic and large-scale collation and research on them.

After Sui Dynasty, the evolution of various rites and legal systems was orderly, and the historical records were very rich and detailed. In the early Tang Dynasty, a comprehensive and systematic sorting out of the six dynasties and miscellaneous Confucian classics system, which also laid a documentary foundation for the revival of ritual studies. The Tang generation successively formulated the rites of Zhenguan, Xianqing, Kaiyuan and the Six Classics of Datang. The Kaiyuan Rites were compiled on the basis of the two attempts of Zhenguan Rites and Xianqing Rites, aiming to replace the Yi Rites, with as many as 150 volumes and all five rites, and became the model for the national rites of later generations. Only in the middle and late Tang Dynasties, there were equivalent laws of the Kaiyuan Rites and Qutai New Rites, and their influence spread far overseas. Bohai, Silla, Japan and Goryeo all requested the Tang Dynasty to write Kaiyuan Rites, and the system of rites and music in Japan drew on Tang rites in an all-round way. The Six Codes of the Tang Dynasty took the Zhou Rites as the law, comprehensively sorted out the state and world order, and became the model for the establishment of government organs, the division of official responsibilities, and the regulations of administrative forms in successive dynasties for more than one thousand years. For example, the system of “three provinces and six Departments” was formally established as the fundamental system of the national government organization in the form of a written form for the first time.

The Kaiyuan Rites and the Six Rites of Datang compiled during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang Dynasty embodied the essence of the study of flourishing rites, and were the two peaks in the history of the study of rites. However, contrary to the achievement of the theory of rites, there was a low point in the practice of rites in the Tang Dynasty. The learned people in the court and the opposition even regarded the ritual at home as a rare thing, and even laughed loudly when they heard the ritual of others (Liu Hedong’s “Answer Wei Zhongli on the Teacher’s Tao Book”). The Tang Dynasty failed to take advantage of the prosperity of the world and rebuild the ritual system which had been completely destroyed since the Six Dynasties.

The Song Dynasty was the era of the revival of Confucian classics, including the study of rites, because the Confucian classics in this period were mostly rational, so it was also called Daoism or Neo-Confucianism. The Northern Song Dynasty inherited the Kaiyuan Rites and compiled the Kaibao Rites and Taichang Yingge Rites successively. Among the folk, there were such family rites as Shuyi and Hengqu Legacy. Although they were only practiced at home and among their peers at that time, they were the beginning of the comprehensive revival of ritual practice and the beginning of the transmission of ritual culture from the aristocratic elite class to the common people.

The southern crossing of the Song Dynasty regime led to a great change in the mainstream life of the people. The high table and high stool replaced the low seats, and the chair replaced the sitting on the ground. This was followed by various changes in ritual behavior, for example, standing posture gradually became the norm, so kneeling posture was gradually only retained in the major rituals; Banquets evolved from the separate dining system of sitting on the side to the potluck system of sitting in the center, and the ritual of eating different foods at the same banquet gradually died out. The system of etiquette is not rigid rules and regulations, but an ethical order that keeps pace with The Times and constantly ADAPTS to the latest life situation.

The compilation of the Family Rites was the most important achievement in the Southern Song Dynasty. Since the Qin and Han dynasties, scholar-officials under the feudal system had gradually disappeared as a special ritual system. In later generations, officials were equivalent to doctors and officials to scholars. However, unlike the title of scholar-officials, which usually lasts for life once acquired, officials and officials were only posts, and once removed they could return to the status of common people at any time. In particular, there was no clear distinction between officials and officials, so they were treated as plebeians in the civil system. In the past, when the plebeians wanted to perform rites, they followed the practice of officials, while later officials followed the practice of plebeians. However, the formulation of rites lagged far behind the reality of this social class change, and until the end of the Tang Dynasty, the rites only included the system of official officials, but did not make laws for the plebeians. It was not until the Southern Song Dynasty that “Family Rites” came into being, filling the gap of thousands of years of rites for the common people. From then on, the folk devotee of rites did not have to follow the norms specified in the Yi Li, but had clear laws and regulations in their daily life.

In the Ming Dynasty, the theory of ancient etiquette ushered in a great development, and its influence is even today. Ming Dynasty Hongwu three years compiled the “Ming Ji Li”, its style inherited from the northern Song Dynasty “Zhenghe Five rites of New rites” and more complete and detailed, in the description of each ritual, first enumerates the change of etiquette since ancient times, points out the basis of ritual sources, and then gives detailed ritual notes, is one of the most successful official rites in history. During the reign of Hongzhi in the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Xiaozong of the Ming Dynasty vigorously promoted the rites, and the world rose up the wind of good rites, so that even remote areas could do “Crown and funeral rites, and use Zhu clan rites” (“Guizhou Toujing New Zhi”). After the “Great Rites”

event in the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, Xia Yan, a scholar of the Ministry of Rites, published a book entitled "Please make the meritorious officials share and make the subjects worship their ancestors and set up a family temple to be dispersed", which was recognized by the Jiajing Emperor and vigorously promoted. Therefore, ancestral halls were established all over the world and all used the "Family Rites" system. This ignited the intellectuals at that time to annotate the enthusiasm of the "Family Rites", so that the "family Rites" wind throughout the countryside. On the other hand, after Hongzhi, Zhengde, Wanli three dynasties, twice continued to revise, a detailed review of the changes in the political rules and regulations of the Ming Dynasty, is an important theoretical achievement of ancient etiquette at that time.

In the late Ming Dynasty, the traditional etiquette system gradually disappeared. In the Qing Dynasty, Manchu etiquette became the mainstream etiquette of the ruling class at that time, while Han etiquette could only survive in the folk life.

Before Qin and Han Dynasties, the evidence of specific movement details in ancient Chinese etiquette was mainly based on written descriptions and terracotta figures, while after the Six Dynasties, there were murals. However, the text is often vague, while the terracotta figures or murals only retain a momentary gesture, and the shapes are often accompanied by exaggeration and deformation, so the restoration based on this is highly controversial. In the Song Dynasty, when the ancient imperial examination system was relatively complete, children from poor families could not rely on family influence to master rites, but had to rely on self-conscious learning. Therefore, different from the children of the nobility, they began to make meticulous records and studies on the ancient rituals. Among them, the detailed written records, together with many highly skilled and vivid pictures, have left us a large number of detailed and reliable evidences. In addition, the available materials of the Ming Dynasty can also refer to the inheritance of neighboring countries, which became more and more detailed. The results of collecting lost documents in the Qing Dynasty were very rich and impressive, which left a number of valuable wealth for future generations to study Chinese ancient etiquette.

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