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The significance and application of the ceremony of capping in modern times

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Contents

- What is the ceremony of capping
- The reason of to restore the ceremony in modern times
- The adjustments when facing challenges

· At twenty, he was capped.¹

男子二十而冠——《禮記·內則》



· In capping we have the introduction to all the ceremonial usages, and that it is the most important of the festive services.²

冠者，禮之始也，嘉事之重者也。——《禮記·冠義》

^{1,2} James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885), p.427

Treating him as a grown-up man, they would require from him all the observances of a full-grown man. they would require from him the performance of all the duties of a son, a younger brother, a subject, and a junior. ³



³ James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885),p.427

- Some of adults rely on their parents' financial support.
- Some modern adults lack the experience of handling adult matters.
- The ceremony could help them increase ability.

- In ancient times, the age of hold the ceremony of capping was 20 years old.
- In modern times, 18 years old is more appropriate.

Ancient times:

The man would be given a new courtesy name.

Modern times:

It would require some restrictions and regulations.

Ancient times:

To determine at the ancestral temple whether the date and the list of guests selected for the ceremony were appropriate.

Modern times:

Replace divination with praying in front of the ancestral tablets.

Ancient times:

To place the cap on the head of the young man three times.

Modern times:

Repalce cap with other items, such as medals.

Ancient times:

The material used for the pibian cap皮弁冠 was white deer skin.

Modern times:

Select environmentally friendly and animal-friendly materials for the design.

Ancient times:

The people invited to the ceremony included **high ministers, great officers, and the old gentlemen of the country.**⁴

Modern times:

May include teachers, respected role models, important local figures, relatives and friends, female family members, such as aunts, brothers (including cousins), and etiquette instructors.

⁴ James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885),p.426

During the ceremony, the man presented himself before his mother, and his mother bowed to him; he did the same before his brothers and cousins, and they bowed to him - he was a man grown, and so they exchanged courtesies with him. ⁵



⁵ James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885), p.426

Conclusion

The significance of restoring the ceremony in modern times

- learn to socialise
- Maintain good relationships with others
- Independently prepare banquets and attend social events, rather than relying on his parents like a child.
- Learn to dress appropriately and present himself properly
- Leave behind his childhood identity, and step into the adult world.

Thank you for listening

Bibliography

James legge, *The sacred books of China* (London: The clarendon press, 1885)

The significance and application of the ceremony of capping in modern times

1

Good morning, everyone. Today my topic is about the significance and application of the ceremony of capping in modern times 冠禮.

2

I will introduce what it is, explain why we need to restore the ceremony of capping in modern times, and talk about how we can make adjustments when facing challenges during the organisation of the ceremony in modern times.

3

The ceremony of capping is an important old ritual in ancient China. We can find records of it in The Classic of Rites 《禮記》 and Yili 《儀禮》. When a man reached 20 years old, he would need to attend the ceremony prepared for him.

The meaning of the ceremony of capping is that it is the beginning of all other ceremonies. In ancient China, the wedding ceremony should be held only after the ceremony of capping.

The purpose of the ceremony is to show and remind the man who has reached 20 years old that he has become an adult. This means that a new stage has begun, and he needs to fulfil his adult responsibilities. He can have adult rights from now on, and he will learn how to enter society like a true adult. After the ceremony, his parents will treat him as an adult and give him enough respect.

4

The process of the ceremony can provide new experiences and opportunities to practise for his adult life. He will gradually learn how to handle responsibilities and believe that he has the ability to do so. He will become more independent and increase his confidence in the future. Just as *The Classic of Rites* says,

Treating him as a grown-up man, they would require from him all the observances of a full-grown man. they would require from him the performance of all the duties of a son, a younger brother, a subject, and a junior.¹

5

The ceremony of capping should also be restored in modern times. Nowadays, many adults do not go to work, but rely on their parents' financial support. The reason is

¹ James Legge, *The sacred books of China* (London: The clarendon press, 1885),p.427

that they cannot break the habit of relying on their family and lack responsibility as adults.

Some modern adults still lack the experience of handling adult matters, such as social interactions. The ceremony could help them increase this kind of ability.

Therefore, the ceremony of capping is still worth promoting in modern times.

6

According to a comparison between the ancient process of the ceremony of capping and the actual situation in modern times, we can now talk about the challenges and methods of adjustment.

The first important thing is deciding what age is appropriate to hold the ceremony. In ancient times, the age was 20 years old, but in modern times, we could adjust it to 18 years old. Because 18 is also the age when most people graduate from high school. Generally, people face two different paths: one is to go to university, and the other is to enter society and start working. Whatever option they choose, they will face a completely different adult world from before, so it's important to train them in the skills they need to enter society.

7

In the ancient ceremony of capping, the man would be given a new courtesy name, which represented a new identity. From that moment on, people would call him by this name.

The difficulty in applying this in modern times is that modern society is unlike ancient times — everyone now has only one name, given at birth and registered with the government. If they were to take another name, it could easily cause confusion between their given name and courtesy name, such as confusion in signatures.

However, if we to apply this tradition, but it would require some restrictions and regulations, such as specifying the occasions on which the courtesy name can be used and the documents on which only the given name can be used. This helps to clearly distinguish between the given name and the courtesy name, avoiding confusion.

The benefit of being given a new courtesy name is that it can help the man recognise that he has entered a new stage of life. The use of the courtesy name could influence how other people treat him in a new way, and at the same time, he will also use the courtesy name to shape a new self.

8

Next is the process of the ceremony of capping. In ancient times, before the ceremony, people would first select a date for the ceremony and make a list of guests they

wanted to invite. Then, they would consult the ancestors at the ancestral temple to determine whether the date and the guest list were appropriate.

If we restore this process in modern times, the ancestral temple could be replaced by ancestor tablets worshipped at home, because few families today own ancestral temples. Secondly, the methods of divination are not described in detail in *The Classic of Rites*, so people can choose their preferred method of divination or explore ancient texts that record traditional methods. Another option is to make a guest list and replace divination with praying in front of the ancestral tablets.

9

In ancient times, the ceremony would invite respected elders to place the cap on the head of the young man three times. The man would be given a cap and clothing that were increasingly magnificent, which meant granting him different rights and helping him to open the door to adulthood. This can still be achieved in modern times, and the importance of this ritual is indispensable. However, the design and materials of the clothing used would need to be different from those used in ancient times.

The cap and clothes used in the ancient ritual are not easy to purchase or wear in modern times, so the clothing also needs to be designed for modern convenience. In ancient times, different types of clothes and caps represented different rights. Today, we can also use three types of clothing made from different materials as symbols. The design should emphasise the differences between each capping stage. However, there are no strict requirements for the specific materials used — people can choose freely according to convenience.

The selection of clothing can match different uses, all related to adult life, such as formal occasions like banquets or offices, or clothes connected to the man's future career plans.

The material design of caps also needs to be adjusted. For example, in ancient times the material used for the pibian cap 皮弁冠 was white deer skin, but in modern times, it is necessary to select environmentally friendly and animal-friendly materials for the cap design. Another option is to replace the cap with other items that match the clothes. Modern people are not used to wearing hats in social situations, and hats must be removed during some important ceremonies. Therefore, hats are no longer a classic symbol in modern times and could be replaced by other items, which do not need to be expensive, such as medals.

The selection of clothing colours can also be different from ancient times. Because the colours of ancient times are difficult to replicate completely in modern times, we can choose colours that are important and formal in the modern environment, such as black. We can also choose colours that suit the purpose of the clothes.

10

In ancient times, the ceremony was held in the ancestral temple to show respect for ancestors and the importance of the event. In modern homes, due to limited space and the fact that most families do not have an ancestral temple, the location needs to be adjusted. We can book a formal hall and move the ancestor tablets to the hall for the ceremony.

The people invited to the ancient ceremony included **high ministers, great officers, and the old gentlemen of the country**² In modern times, guests to be invited may include teachers, respected role models, important local figures, relatives and friends, female family members, such as aunts, brothers (including cousins), and etiquette instructors.

11

Mother also need to attend this ceremony, during the ceremony, the man **presented himself before his mother, and his mother bowed to him;** ³ Through the ceremony, they would also begin to treat the man in a new way — as an adult.

12

The significance of restoring the ceremony in modern times is that the man can cultivate the necessary skills for adult life by personally preparing for the ceremony. From now on, he will leave behind his childhood identity, and step into the adult world.

13

This is the end of my presentation. I'd love to hear any suggestions. Thank you for listening.

² James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885), p.426

³ James Legge, The sacred books of China (London: The clarendon press, 1885), p.426