

High-Ranking Officials Stand on the Shoulders of Low-Ranking Officials, Mountains Stand on the Ground

December 05, 2005

(Minghui.org)

King Xuan of Qi called for an interview with Yan Chu. King Xuan of Qi said, "Yan Chu, come here." Yan Chu said, "Your Majesty, you come here." King Xuan looked angry.

All of King Xuan's guards blamed Yan Chu. "The king rules a nation. You, Yan Chu, are just a subject of the kingdom. The king asked you to come over, and then you asked the king to come over. What kind of behavior is this?" Yan Chu said, "If I go there, I am greedy for power. However, if the king comes here, he treats a gentleman scholar courteously. It is better to let our king obtain the fame of treating a gentleman courteously, rather than to let me suffer the reputation of currying favor with powerful people."

King Xuan still looked angry, and said, "Is a king more honorable, or a gentlemen more honorable?" Yan Chu answered, "A man of learning is honorable. A king is not honorable." King Xuan asked, "What do you mean?" Yan Chu answered, "In the past, Qin started a war with Qi. The king of Qin decreed: 'Anyone who dares to cut firewood within 50 steps of the grave of Liu Xiahui (a famous virtuous gentleman), will be sentenced to death. Never forgive!' He also ordered: 'Anyone who obtains the head of the king of Qi will be conferred nobility and rewarded with gold.' From this point of view, the head of a living king is less valuable than the grave of a

virtuous gentleman." King Xuan could not reply, but he was still very offended.

The guards said, "Yan Chu, Yan Chu! Our king rules the country with a thousand carts. He appreciates civility and music.

Benevolent, just and wise gentlemen from different places all admire the king and come to work for him. All the people in the world respect him. All things on earth are prepared and ordinary people obey him. Even the best scholarly gentleman is just an ordinary person, who has to walk for transportation and to work for a living. As for common gentlemen, they live in cheap and poor areas and guard homes and gateways for a living. The rank of gentleman is very low."

Yan Chu said, "It is not true. I heard that during the ancient times when Dayu was the Emperor, more than ten thousand feudal lord's states stayed intact. Why? They had high morals and entrusted scholarly gentlemen with heavy government responsibilities. Because of the concept of respecting virtuous and talented people, Yushun, a farmer from a poor rural village, could become an Emperor. There were still three thousands feudal lord's countries while Shangtang was Emperor. Now only twenty-four feudal lord's countries remain. Isn't this because improper polices bring disorder to the world? When a country is about to fall apart, it is impossible for a high-ranking person to become an ordinary person living in rural and poor area.

"Therefore, the book *Yi Zhuan* said, 'If a person of high rank does not have talent or morals, and only wants to pursue personal fame, he (or she) must be extravagant and arrogant, and will eventually bring disaster. A person who is without talent or morals, who only looks for fame, will be weakened. A king without kind and

generous policies, who only looks for fortune and luck, will suffer distress. A person who makes no contribution, but still accepts compensation, will be defamed and suffer from misfortune. A person cannot be famous if he (or she) claims credit without making a contribution or behaves arrogantly. People cannot achieve success if they only talk without working.' These words are good advice to people who want to be famous without any contribution. For this reason, King Tangyao had nine assistant officials. King Yushun had seven teacher friends. King Dayu had five assistants. King Shangtang had three major supporting officials. Since ancient times no person has become famous without any reason.

"Therefore, a king should not feel ashamed to ask questions or learn from low-ranking people. Emperors Tangyao, Yushun, Shangtang, and King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty, who had high moral standards and were praised by the later generations, were all like this.

"Laozi said, 'High-ranking stands on low ranking. Mountains stand on the ground.' Feudal lords or kings all call themselves orphans, or widowed people; probably they understand that their positions are based on low-ranking people. Orphaned and widowed people are those who have difficulties in living or have very low status in society. However, feudal lords and kings used those titles. Don't they mean to lower themselves and respect virtuous ordinary people? Just as Tangyao passed his throne to Yushun, Yushun passed his throne to Dayu [*Dayu solved serious flooding problems and saved a lot of lives*], and King Cheng of Zhou entrusted Zhou Gongdan with national responsibilities. They were all called virtuous and enlightened rulers by later generations. The facts demonstrate how precious and respectful virtuous gentlemen are."

King Xuan sighed, "How could I disregard virtuous gentlemen? Widowed person me is really ashamed of myself. After hearing Sir's comment, I know that disrespect of virtuous gentlemen is the behavior of a villain. I wish Sir could accept me as your student. If Sir stays with me, Sir will have delicious foods and a cart for transportation. Sir's wife and children will have beautiful clothes to wear and good food to eat."

When Yan Chu heard these words, he asked to go home, and said to King Xuan, "Beautiful jades come from far-off mountains. After sculpture, their natural color is destroyed. The carved jade loses its perfection. Virtuous gentlemen came from rural areas. They accepted positions after being recommended by other people. I am not saying that they are not honorable anymore. I just mean that their bodies and minds do not belong to themselves anymore. I wish that I could go back to my rural village. I would enjoy late meals or poor dishes just as much as eating meat. I could walk just as if riding in a cart. Living without any sin or guilt, I could be self-sufficient. I would enjoy a quiet and inactive life. It is for you, King, to listen to advice and make decisions. It is for me, Yan Chu, to hold my loyalty and give frank advice. Your Majesty should understand my intention. I wish King will let me walk home." Therefore, he left after paying respects to his King.

Yan Chu was content. He chose to return to ordinariness and truthfulness for the rest of the life. This story is from the book "Record of the Warring States" [*The book was compiled in the Former Han Dynasty*]. It stated that rulers must not be arrogant or proud, should accept advice from and trust virtuous gentlemen, and should understand the law that ordinary people are more important than the ruler of a country. The ancient feudal lords and kings, although high-ranking and with great power, all knew that they

relied on low-ranking people. They humbly called themselves, "orphaned person" or "widowed person." It is very important for rulers of countries to remind themselves to maintain a humble mind and a modest quality.