

Letter of Shame Template



Transcript

Yesterday, having drunk too much, I was intoxicated as to pass all bounds; but none of the rude and coarse language I used was uttered in a conscious state. The next morning, after hearing others speak on the subject, I realised what had happened, whereupon I was overwhelmed with confusion and ready to sink into the earth with shame.

Context

In 9th Century China, the 'Dunhuang Bureau of Etiquette' insisted that local officials use the above letter template (dated 856) when sending apologies to offended dinner hosts. The guilty party would copy the template text, enter the dinner host's name, sign the letter and then deliver with head bowed.

The letter was discovered, alongside thousands of other documents, in a sealed cave library in western China. To read more, visit the incredible [International Dunhuang Project](#).