

Traditional Chinese Culture: Xing Wenwei Restricts the Prince's Diet

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In 666 AD, the first year of Emperor Gaozong's reign in the Tang Dynasty's Qianfeng Era, Prince Xiaojing of the East Palace neglected his duties and refused to meet with court officials.

At that time, Xing Wenwei was the royal housekeeper in charge of meals. When he learned of the reclusive lifestyle the prince was living, he ordered the kitchen to restrict the prince's food, and submitted a report to the prince. In the report, he wrote the following: "According to *Dadai Book of Rites* (大戴禮記), after a prince reaches adulthood, he will no longer be subjected to the rigid disciplines of his teacher; however, he must be supervised by a royal historian who must make historic records of each and every one of the prince's mistakes. The prince must also be supervised by another court official who will manage his diet. If the prince makes mistakes, his diet will be restricted by the order of this official. If, when a mistake or misconduct takes place and the royal historian fails to record it, or if a dietary official fails to reduce a prince's diet, they have failed to uphold their responsibilities. The reason His Majesty hired

virtuous court officials for Your Highness is to help Your Highness improve your morality and virtue. Lately, Your Highness refused to meet with court officials, but still meets with ladies in the East Palace. If Your Highness continues to do this, how will you ever enhance your wisdom and morality? Since the royal court historian is currently unavailable, I as manager of your diet, must reduce it as a warning. I am willing to risk my life, but I must follow the *Dadai Book of Rites!*"

Prince Xiaojing read Xing Wenwei's report and agreed with every word he wrote. He was very pleased and wrote him a letter in reply, telling him that he would make amends for his mistake.

Shortly afterwards, there was a vacancy in the royal court. Emperor Gaozong told several royal court officials, "When my son lacked diligence, Xing Wenwei took the meat out of his diet. Xing Wenwei is truly a man of loyalty and integrity!" Thus he made an exception and promoted Xing Wenwei to the vacant spot in the court, which was a much higher position than he held previously.

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