

An Abstinent Imperial Uncle, Prince Yunxi (1711-1758)

Ch'en Kuo-tung
Institute of History and Philology
Academia Sinica

Abstract

Yunxi (*alias* Yinxi, 1711-1758) is the twenty-first son of Emperor Kangxi. He was born in the same year as Hongli, the future Emperor Qianlong. These two figures had once shared cordial interaction before Hongli ascended to the throne.

Yunxi's mother came from a certain Chen family of the Yangtze Delta. Her status in the inner court was relatively low. Partly on account of this, and partly on account of Yunxi's minority, there was not any likelihood for Yunxi to become the imperial heir. He, however, led a life of abstinence and diligence. He is well versed in both *belles lettres* and martial arts. His life is short. Although he did not make any great achievement in political aspect, he left behind quite a few art and literary works, and, in addition, some legends.

The paper is devoted to reconstruct a concise biography of Yunxi. He was the son, the brother, and the uncle of three successive emperors. How did this changing of status bring about effects to his life style? The paper finds that Yunxi became more and more precarious and adjust himself to lead quiet life. Hence we call him an "abstinent imperial uncle."

Keywords: Yunxi, Kangxi, Qianlong, Zheng Xie