

“zuò wù” (作務) in Qin wood slips

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Abstract

This paper argues that “zuò wù” (作務) in Qin wood slips and handed literature should not be interpreted as “handicraft”. The word in the handed down literature was close to the concept of “labor” or “work”. This was the most common meaning of “zuò wù”. Different from the common meaning, “zuò wù” in Qin law and administrative documents as a legal term, was limited its meaning for the convenience of the operation of the law, which means “official laborer earn money for the government”. This meaning was only valid for specific legal and administrative situations. “zuò wù” in Qin law was a case of daily vocabulary becoming a legal term. The similar case can be found in other terms of Qin law.

Keywords: zuò wù, handicraft, labor, Liye Qin wood slip, Zoutu bu

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