

## **The Legislation of the Mudium for the Communication between the Central and the Local in the Tang Dynasty: The Discussion of the Erection of Commemorative Shrines and Steles**

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### **Abstract**

This article starts with the discussion of the law in the *Administrative Regulations* in Book 11 of *Tang Legal Code* (section on professional regulations), indicating that, “senior officials will have a stele inscription erected.” We can reconstruct the practice of “inspecting achievements” regime in the Tang Dynasty by systemizing the 114 cases regarding the erections of the commemorative shrines and steles in the Tang Dynasty and analyzing the time, space, the official positions, and legitimacy.

This research is based on the historical sources of the commemorative shrines and steles and further to examine the dynamic states of inspecting achievement system with a purpose to understand the possibility of the communication between the central and the local. The research contains two main points: the first one is to analyze and discuss the process of how the central authority legislated the communication medium between the central and the local. In other words, this research examines the relationship between official authorities and local powers by observing the verified cases regarding the commemorative shrines and steles-erecting. The second one is to discuss the practices of Tang laws by observing how the central authority controlled the

individual official and how to establish models as good local officials.

The analysis of the Tang 114 cases regarding the erections of commemorative shrines and steles approved by local officials shows that the amount of shrine-erecting cases makes not much difference in the former and latter periods of the Tang Dynasty. Looking at the amount of shrine-erecting cases during each emperor's reign, we can see that the number of the shrines for the virtuous government increased after Emperor Gaozong and reached its peak during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong and Dezong. By looking into the location of the shrines, most of the shrine-erecting events took place in the north, centering around the Chang'an, Luoyang, and the most prosperous zones of downstream Huanghe River and Huai River; Wei Zhou is a special case. In the south part, most of the shrines were found in Xiang Yang and Yanzhou, both of which were important cities at that time; the special case in the south is Guangzhou. For the official positions, Provincial Governor, Prefect and Prefectural Magistrate were most easily elected to have a commemorative shrine, and then the County Magistrate. In the Late Tang Dynasty, a lot of shrines for virtuous government were erected by Jiedushi (regional military governor). To approaches the erection of the a shrines, more than 60 percent of the cases were legalized, which shows the execution procedure and legal efficacy of shrines-erecting. But on the other hand, in the Late Tang Dynasty, the local officials, citizens and monks of Buddhism and Taoism from the border regions usually went to the central government in groups and requested commemorative shrines for the Jiedushi. This can be taken as the evidence to prove the emerging local power and the more difficulties in practicing "inspecting achievement" system.

In fact, the central authority of the Tang Dynasty reached deep into the localities by making the local officials to "declare

the law” and “appreciate the law”. By using “inspecting achievement” system, such as “reporting is the first policy” and “the achievement is the most important”, the central authority created models for officials. And by examining the cases of erecting commemorative shrines and steles, the central authority was able to know the governance of local officials. The governance of local officials was reported from the local to the central, and finally being inscribed on the stone steles.

Keywords: commemorative shrine, commemorative stele, shrine for virtuous government, inspecting achievements system, communication