

The Household Master and Master-Servant Relations in Tang Code

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Abstract

The hierarchical system of Tang Dynasty was expressed explicitly and thoroughly in Tang Code; to put it differently, the master-servant relations disclosed in Tang Code served to maintain hierarchical order. Three legalizing conditions qualify a household master: identical household registration, non-servant status and legal right to property, lacking any of which shall make a household master ineligible. The system is centered with a household master, as remotely referring to a relative who shall take to mourning for a year at minimum. Legally defined master-servant relations can be expanded till the passing away of a master or till the servant who is liberated of servitude. Twelve types of master-servant relations were announced in Tang Code, compassing criminal prosecution, civil prosecution and proceedings. Extent of punishments vary tremendously, reflecting an unequal status of master and servant, and demonstrate the mind and intention of the ruling class of Tang Dynasty—constructing and maintaining the stratification order. The concept of household master varies from the change of age, while the household master and master-servant relations play a spectacular part in the history of China, immensely influenced by the expanded household and the construction of master-servant system in the middle ages. Viewing from master-servant relations, one may perceive the diversification of social class of Tang Dynasty and the rigorous strictness of stratification order.

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