

The *Zhoufu Liaozuo* System during the Latter Half of the Northern Wei  
Dynasty: An analysis of the Shangong-si Epitaph

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During the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties periods, inspectors (*cishi* 刺史) of regional administrative districts (*zhou* 州) were given the title, *jiangjun* 將軍 (generalissimo) before being dispatched to the districts they were to inspect. Serving under them were local officials, *zhou zuo* 州佐, whose duty it was to serve not only the *cishi* but also regional administrators (*fu zuo* 府佐) who manned the *jianjun*'s government. Little research has been conducted to date on the *raison d'être* of this bureaucracy, called *zhoufu liaozuo* 州府僚佐, through the Northern Wei and Sui periods, despite the fact that understanding how the *zhoufu liaozuo* system was organized and continued from dynasty to dynasty would 1) shed light on the characteristics of the local administrative systems of each dynasty and 2) allow us to reconsider the impact of the local administrative reform implemented by the Sui Dynasty.

Unfortunately few sources remain explaining how the *zhoufu liaozuo* system operated during the latter half of the Northern Wei period, leaving its specifics unknown, despite its role as the origin of the Northern Dynasties and Sui Dynasty administrative systems. There is one extant source, however, a stone epitaph recently discovered in Ning 寧 Prefecture, Gansu 甘肅 Province that could help shed more light on how the system actually worked during the latter half of the Northern Wei period. The so called "Shangongsi-bei" 山公寺碑 was erected during the first year of the Zhengshi 正始 era by Shan Lei 山累, the *cishi* of Binzhou 邠州. The front and the back of the epitaph contain lists of the names of as many as 210 members of the *zhoufu liaozuo* bureaucracy and other local officials at the *xian* 縣 level, more names than provided by any other source related to the period.

This article attempts to unveil more details about the *zhoufu liaozuo* system through an analysis of Shangong-si epitaph, which indicates both specific titles and the hierarchical characteristics of the system. The source also provides evidence that many bureaucrats without aristocratic titles (*liuwai-guan* 流外官) were members of the *zhoufu liaozuo* governance mechanism. The epitaph also reveals that there were many non-Han Chinese inhabiting Binzhou at

that time, some of whom held positions of power and rank ranging from the *zhou* to the *xian* level. Consequently, the author concludes that in Binzhou, efforts were made to incorporate influential non-Han Chinese local leaders into the dynastic order by installing them as *zhouzuo* or the *liuwai* bureaucrats at the regional government level.

The Le Dynasty Bureaucracy of Northern Vietnam during 18th Century:  
The Trinh "Shogunate" and the Dispatch of Ministers

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The governance of the Le Dynasty under the control of the Trinh Family was characterized by a separation of political power from the Le Imperial Court to what can be called a Trinh "shogunate" (王府) and the formation there of an independent bureaucracy. Consequently, under the figurehead "Le Emperors," a large part of the governance mechanism was taken over by the organization set up by the Trinh "shoguns," giving rise to a large gap between the idea of a "Dynasty" and the actual workings of everyday administration. The characteristics of this Le-Trinh regime would have profound effects on the appointment of the officials who would administer it.

In order to solve the duality inherent in such a regime, the custom of "dispatching" officials from the powerless Le Imperial Court to work within the Trinh "Shogunate" and various garrisons under its control. The decision-making involved in the dispatches was also controlled by the Trinh "Shogunate," leaving the Le Court powerless even in the appointments of its own bureaucracy, providing an officially sanctioned personnel bridge from the Court that conveniently allowed the Trinh Lords to legitimately expand their ruling organization.

Moreover, the author's investigation of records regarding duties assumed by officials during the Le-Trinh regime reveals that dispatched bureaucrats would continue to work permanently at the "shogunate" with no intention of returning to Court, like bureaucrats under the ancient Chinese and Japanese Ritsuryo state having titles but no official duties. It was in this way that dispatched bureaucrats assumed roles as personal advisors to the Trinh "bakufu."