

BOOK REVIEW

Thomas Jülch, trans. *The “Zhenzheng lun” by Xuanyi: A Buddhist Apologetic Scripture of Tang China.*

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The “Zhenzheng lun” by Xuanyi is an annotated translation of the apologetic work *Treatise on Revealing the Correct* (Zhenzheng lun 甄正論, T 2112), in three rolls. It was composed in the late seventh century CE by a Daoist priest who converted to Buddhism and sought to expose the shortcomings of Daoism and its many borrowings from Buddhism. The author’s secular name was Du Yi 杜義 and his Buddhist monastic name was Xuanyi 玄嶷. The text comprises thirty dialogue sequences (DS) between the “Venerable Obstructed by Customs” (Zhisu gongzi 滯俗公子), who asks questions, provides description, or makes assertions, and the “Master Revealing the Correct” (Zhenzheng xiansheng 甄正先生), who defends Buddhism, points out fallacies and errors in the Daoist’s account, and is portrayed as a superior scholar who ultimately causes the former to see the error of his ways (10). As translator and annotator, Thomas Jülch is to be commended for presenting the original text of the *Zhenzheng lun* in a way that emphasizes the large portions of the text composed in parallel prose. The body of the text is presented in three columns. The left column lists the page, register, and line numbers of the original text as preserved in the Taishō edition of the Buddhist canon (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經). The center column reproduces the Literary Sinitic text, with lines in parallel prose arranged so that the reader can see the relationships. The right column provides the English translation of the text, with footnotes found at the bottom of the page.

Jülch’s translation comprises a brief introduction (1–16), the translation proper (19–181), a bibliography (183–90), and a short index (191–94). The introduction places the apologetic work in the context of the relationship between Buddhism and political propaganda in the late seventh century, that is, the use of Buddhism by Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (Wu Zhao 武曩, 625–705). It briefly introduces some of the features and characteristics of Daoist thought refuted in the *Zhenzheng lun*, such as the infamous “converting the barbarians” theory (*huahu* 化胡) that absurdly asserted that Laozi traveled west and was reincarnated as the Buddha. The introduction also briefly places the *Zhenzheng lun* in the context of the more important apologetic writings of Falin 法琳 (572–640), whose *Poxie lun* 破邪論 (Treatise on Refuting the False, T 2109) and *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (Treatise Discussing the Correct, T 2110), which Jülch worked on previously in his *Bodhisattva der Apologetik: Die Mission des buddhistischen Tang-Mönchs Falin*, 3 vols. (München: Utz, 2011). He closes the introduction by attempting to place *Zhenzheng lun* in a comparative perspective, likening and pointing out parallels with Justin Martyr’s (ca. 100–165 CE) *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, which was composed ca. 155–60.

Although Jülch's translation is generally correct and well rendered, he has adopted certain conventions that make the work very difficult for readers who are not well versed in Chinese history to appreciate. The most important convention that makes the text inaccessible is that the dates (or approximate dates) of nearly all historical individuals mentioned in the text—including kings, emperors, religious figures, and so on—are not provided in the body of the translation (some appear in the introduction), despite the fact that in several cases the translator provides notes on historical figures. Such dates are given, for the most part, in the index. There are two odd exceptions: the reign dates of King Cheng of Zhou 周成王 (r. 1055–1021 BCE) are provided in the body of the text (130), and the dates of Yan Zun 巖尊 (ca. 83 BCE–6 CE) are provided in a note (172n589). Why the dates of these two figures are provided in the text is unclear, and constantly looking to the index for dates is annoying to the reader. Fortunately, there are few errors regarding titles and historical figures in the text. One minor case is that the “Duke of the Ji [i.e., the Duke of Zhou]” (158) should be simply Duke Ji 姬公 (Ji Dan 姬旦, the Duke of Zhou 周公, eleventh century BCE). In addition, despite the fact that the terms *Gongzi*, which the author rendered as “Venerable,” and *Xiansheng*, which the author translated as “Master,” are relatively common and translatable terms, the translator always refers to the participants in the dialogue using these transliterated Chinese terms in the body of the translation. Because of these odd and awkward conventions, this reviewer constantly wondered who the intended audience of this translation is. It must be some kind of specialist, but which?

Jülch gives Xuanyi's work a generally positive assessment, by referring to the “intertextual agreement with the work of Falin” (12). The flipside or more critical view of this is that to readers familiar with Buddhist and Daoist apologetic material, the *Zhenzheng lun* seems rather derivative of Falin's treatises composed earlier in the seventh century. A significant proportion of the dialogue sequences include material previously covered by Falin. Jülch notes this in the introduction (12): DS 2 to DS 9 (20–68) deal with the issue of the Celestial Worthy, which is treated in the *Bianzheng lun*, roll 5. DS 14 to DS 16 (84–99) deconstruct the “converting the barbarians” (*huahu*) theory, which is dealt with in the *Poxie lun* and *Bianzheng lun*. DS 20 (117–23) covers Buddhist-derived Daoist rituals, which follows Falin's argumentation in the *Bianzheng lun*, roll 2. DS 21 (123–32) covers the Heshang gong 河上公 story, which was previously treated in *Bianzheng lun*, roll 2. Generally speaking, Xuanyi regards the *Laozi* (*Daode jing*) and *Zhuangzi* as authentic Daoist texts, but all of the other literature he castigates as forgeries.

In some ways, the more interesting dialogue sequences are the ones not derivative of Falin's work. DS 17 (99–114), for instance, treats, among several topics, the Buddhist terms “fields of blessedness” (*futian* 福田) (99, 109, 110) and “taking refuge to [sic] the three treasures” (*guiyi sanbao* 歸依三寶) (106), which Xuanyi points out are not discussed in Daoist literature—although he does concede that the *Laozi* refers to three treasures. Unfortunately, the rendering of *futian* as “fields of blessedness” (commonly found in online Chinese-English dictionaries) is misleading, although perhaps fitting in its use as a “Daoist” term. “Field of merit” would be more appropriate in the Buddhist context, which appears to be Xuanyi's

point: Daoist literature borrows and redefines key Buddhist terms, but those terms are not commonly found in Daoist scriptural literature. This reviewer finds Jülch's explanation of "fields of blessedness" as "describing the teachings of the Buddha as a source of blessedness" (110n335) rather limited. The three treasures or three jewels (Skt. *triratna*)—the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha—are all potential fields of merit (Skt. *punyakṣetra*). Meritorious actions or behavior (i.e., wholesome karma) are conceptualized as seeds that bear fruit when they are planted in "fields of merit." The most fertile ground for cultivating such merit has long been the *saṃgha* (monastic community), although making offerings to buddhas and bodhisattvas and the Buddhist teaching also bear much wholesome karmic fruit.

In the end, the audiences most likely to benefit from this translation are scholars interested in the structure of apologetic writings and students of Chinese translation. Despite the shortcoming of employing a few unfortunate conventions, it is a solid piece of scholarship that advances the fields of Sinology and Buddhology.

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