

## Negotiating Religious and Cultural Diversity in Tang China: An Analysis of the *Cha jiu lun* 茶酒論

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### Crynodeb

Roedd Ilinach y Tang yn gyfnod amrywiol yn grefyddol a diwylliannol pan gododd ystod o broblemau ethnig a diwylliannol, a fynegwyd yn aml ar ffurf llenyddiaeth bole mig (neu drafodaethau llys rhwng grefyddol). Canolbwntia'r papur hwn ar ddadansoddi'r *Cha jiu lun*, sef trafodaeth a saerniwyd ar ffurf dialogaidd rhwng tair diod a ddarganfuwyd yn Dunhuang, er mwyn dangos ei bod yn gweithredu'n berfformiad alegoriaidd a dychanol mewn adwaith i'r amrywiaeth grefyddol a diwylliannol yn Dunhuang a Tsieina'r Tang. Mae'r dadansoddiad hwn wedi ei gyd-destunoli trwy ddefnyddio trafodaeth debyg arall ac ystod o lenyddiaeth eilaidd amlwg. O ddadansoddi swyddogaeth drosiadol y tair diod yn *Cha jiu lun*, a ystyri'r yn bennaf yn gyfraniad i'r diwylliant te, tynnir sylw at le'r gwaith mewn maes astudio mwy perthnasol. Archwili'r yn fanwl gonfensiynau ffurf y *Cha jiu lun*, gan arddangos rhai anawsterau o ran dosbarthu'r testun yn draddodiadol yn un trawsffurfio l (bianwen) am ei fod yn adleisio'r trafodaethau polemig adeg y Tang. Yn y papur hwn, eglurir pwysigrwydd ehangach y *Chu jiu lun* yn waith alegoriaidd a ysgrifennwyd mewn lleoliad a chyfnod a oedd yn drwm o dan ddyylanwad materion cyfuno diwylliannol a chrefyddol, ac sy'n darparu astudiaeth gynhwysfawr i'w bwrrpas a'i swyddogaeth yng ngoleuni'r materion hyn.

**Geiriau allweddol:** *Cha jiu lun*, *bianwen*, Dunhuang, alegori, amrywiaeth ddiwylliannol, Ilinach y Tang, trafodaethau'r llys

### Abstract

The Tang dynasty was a religious and culturally diverse period which saw a range of ethnic and cultural issues, often expressed in the form of polemical literature (or interreligious court debates). This paper focuses on the analysis of the *Cha jiu lun*, a dialogically-structured debate between three beverages discovered in Dunhuang, to demonstrate that it functions as an allegorical and satirical performance piece in reaction to religious and cultural diversity in Dunhuang and Tang China. This analysis is contextualised using other similar discourse and a range of prominent secondary literature. Primarily considered a contribution to tea culture, analysing the metaphorical function of the three beverages in the *Cha jiu lun* highlights its place in a more relevant area of study. The genre conventions of the *Cha jiu lun* are explored in-depth, demonstrating some difficulties with its typical classification as a transformation text (*bianwen*) due to its congruency with polemical debates in the Tang. This paper demonstrates the wider importance of the *Cha jiu lun* as an allegorical piece written in a location and period highly influenced by issues of cultural and religious amalgamation, and provides a comprehensive study into its purpose and function in light of these issues.

**Key words:** *Cha jiu lun*, *bianwen*, Dunhuang, allegory, cultural diversity, Tang dynasty, court debates

## 1. Introduction

The study of literary texts and the comprehension of historical issues are commonly congruent, and for this reason literature can be used as a gateway to understanding important historical and cultural issues. The *Chajiu lun* 茶酒論 ('A Debate between Tea and Wine') is a text worthy of study for this reason. The CJL takes the form of a short tripartite debate between the personifications of three beverages (Tea, Wine, and Water), and is attributed to Wang Fu, who is unknown except for indication from copies of the CJL that he was a Confucian scholar. Discovered in the early twentieth century in the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang by Wang Yuanlu, accurate dates for this text are unknown. It is considered, however, to be dated between the mid-eighth to late tenth century. Six copies of it were discovered among the thousands of Dunhuang manuscripts, so while little is known about it, it can be surmised that it was popular within the Dunhuang community. These copies are now located in the Stein Collection of the British Library<sup>2</sup> and the Pelliot collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.<sup>3</sup>

In-depth analysis of this text is rare; only two English translations exist,<sup>4</sup> and it has also been translated into French.<sup>5</sup> The nature of the text as a Tang dynasty piece focusing on a debate between Tea and Wine means that the CJL has hitherto been analysed and used as a contribution to tea history. Importantly, however, the content of the CJL itself suggests a deeper allegorical purpose. Rather than a contribution to tea history, this study proposes that the CJL can instead be read as an allegorical discussion of religious and cultural diversity during the Tang (618–907). The aim of this study, therefore, is to ascertain the purpose of the CJL through detailed analysis of the text and to examine how the CJL reflects the issues of religious and cultural diversity by contextualising the CJL in light of these issues.

The translations mentioned above are helpful but constrained by their bias in reading the text as a contribution to tea culture, and therefore do not allow for a true sense of the text in terms of its literary function and form. A comprehensive analysis of the text can be completed only by considering the source text; for that reason a translation and literary analysis-based methodology is used here, utilising my own translation and a range of similar texts and secondary literature to appropriately contextualise the text.

This study discusses in detail the contents and rhetoric of the CJL to better understand its genre, purpose and the metaphorical function of the three beverages, questioning whether the CJL is a Buddhist text by examining its genre classifications and placing it in the context of dichotomous debates in Tang China. It also focuses on the allegorical aspect of the CJL through the text's links between religious and cultural diversity in Tang China.

## 2. Analysis of the *Chajiu lun* 茶酒論

The CJL is a dialogically structured debate between the personified beverages Tea and Wine, while Water arrives at the end to conclude the debate. As it was discovered in Dunhuang, and is filled with reference to Buddhist language and stories, the CJL has been classified as a *bianwen* in the *Dunhuang Bianwen Jiaozhu* (DBJ). The *bianwen* are regarded as religious or secular Buddhist texts of a prosimetric and heptasyllabic structure.<sup>6</sup> While the CJL is classified as a *bianwen*, it has been the tendency of scholars to include many other genres of popular literature in the *bianwen* category because they were discovered in Dunhuang.<sup>7</sup> This analysis demonstrates a number of issues in simply classifying it this way.

The version of the CJL in the DBJ is taken from P.2718, which is the transcription studied here. Nothing is known about the author Wang Fu other than he was a *xianggong jinshi* 鄉貢進士 (candidate for the advanced scholar degree), while another copy of the text dated to the year 978 indicates that he was a lay scholar.<sup>7</sup> P.2718 comes with a note from the copyist indicating that it was copied by Yan Haichen on February 1, 972.<sup>8</sup> From this it's clear that the CJL was created prior to 972. Dating of the CJL is commonly regarded as sometime between the mid-eighth and late tenth centuries. Ji expands on this, explaining that the use of certain teas in the text (such as Fuliang tea), means that the CJL should be considered to have been written between 780 and 840.<sup>9</sup> Regarding this timeframe as factual is not possible, however, the suggested dating indicates the CJL was likely written after tea became a valuable commodity, after the An Lushan rebellion (756–763), and during a period of political and religious instability at the end of the Tang.

### **2.1. Discussion of textual rhetoric**

The CJL uses a range of skilful discursive and literary techniques in its rhetoric, which are significant for interpreting both its genre and literary function. The sentence structure in the CJL is, for the most part, consistent, using four or six characters lines with a number of five or eight character lines supplemented throughout. This structure gives the text a fast-slow paced rhythm, indicating the hurried nature of the debate. Tea's final argument is marked with a number of eight character lines, presenting a sense of desperation to his tone. Rhyme also plays a large role in the text but it is marked by a lack of consistency. In each exchange between Tea and Wine the rhyming character changes; for example, in Tea's first paragraph the rhyme is 花 huā, 芽 yá, etc., while in Wine's following paragraph the rhyme is 貴 guì, 醉 zuì, etc, indicating the distinct gap in tone between beverages.

Conversely, *bianwen* are characterised by a prosimetric style with heptasyllabic verse portions. All are written in semi-colloquial language and usually have an intimate relationship with pictures.<sup>10</sup> From this it's clear that the CJL does not share many of the features of the *bianwen*, although it is classified as such in the DBJ. The CJL also does not contain the characterised 'transformations' or 'strange things' like other *bianwen*,<sup>11</sup> therefore according to its contents it should be taken to be a typical example of popular writing.<sup>12</sup> Schmid comments that even determinative textual features such as genre markers can be highly elusive among Dunhuang texts.<sup>13</sup> However, the structure and rhetoric of the CJL is much more representative of the *fu*. The *fu* are similar to the CJL in a number of ways. Firstly, they are primarily written in four or six characters lines, contain rhyme which is often inconsistent,<sup>14</sup> are most notably in the form of oppositional structure between characters,<sup>15</sup> and also serve as persuasive pieces of rhetoric in dialogue form aimed at the moral edification of their audience.<sup>16</sup> It's clear, therefore, that the *fu* are much more representative of the literary form of the CJL. Its designation as a *lun* also places it in the realm of interreligious court debates, as expounded further on.

Although the CJL is understood to be one of the more sophisticated texts discovered in Dunhuang in both style and language,<sup>17</sup> it contains a number of scribal errors. Similarly, a vast number of Dunhuang manuscripts contain such errors, often with indications of them having been corrected.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, there are numerous scribal errors in the text, and almost all cases of incorrect character usage are errors of a homophonic nature. For example, the character 為 (*wèi*) is frequently used in place

of the character 謂 (*wèi*), and the character 胡 (*hú*) is used in place of 湖 (*hú*).<sup>19</sup> Errors of this kind are attributed more commonly to texts of an oratory nature, as the easiest error to make when writing down an orally delivered text is to mistake one homonym for another.<sup>20</sup> This phenomenon is illustrated clearly in the C JL.

The text's oral nature is further emphasised in that some of the preserved fragments of the text contain stage directions, which are distinguished from the main text by being written in smaller characters.<sup>21</sup> These stage directions indicate that the C JL was used in a performance context, but while it was a piece of literature used for performance, it was not necessarily a *bianwen* performance piece, as its content and genre conventions place it more solidly as a piece of *fu*. Interestingly, unlike other copies of performance pieces discovered at Dunhuang, the C JL is one of only few pieces that has a named author.<sup>22</sup> The oral and collective nature of composition mitigates a single person being designated the creator of a given transformation text,<sup>23</sup> while it has also been commented that many plays that were written were not actually intended for performance.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, it's possible that, while the C JL was clearly eventually used in Buddhist secular setting as indicated by the copyist, it may not have originally been for this purpose. The content of the text seems suggestive of this idea.

## 2.2. Content analysis

Several scholars have completed descriptive commentaries on the content of the C JL,<sup>25</sup> so a similar approach will not be taken here. Instead, this section focuses on the terminology of the text to illustrate the function of Tea and Wine as metaphors indicative of Buddhism and traditional Chinese religions respectively, while Water stands as a metaphor for the integration of the Three Teachings.

The author's position as a Confucian scholar is emphasised in the preface; the stories mentioned here are all representative of traditional Chinese civilisation, particularly in its emphasis of Confucian teachings (as opposed to either Buddhist or Daoist ones). It elucidates the importance of the following debate by using these stories to illustrate how the winner will become the most celebrated tradition. Such prefaces are extant in China's interreligious court debates, indicating direct speech to the debaters and the court. In a performance context, this can be understood as addressing the audience to introduce both the characters and the debate.

There are distinct differences in the terminology used by Tea, Wine and Water. Tea's arguments are filled with Buddhist influence. While his first two arguments regard the economic importance of tea, his succeeding arguments distinctly place tea in a Buddhist context, using terms such as 'Maitreya', 'kalpa', and 'bhadanta'. He emphasises the importance of tea for meditation ('I can dispel dullness and weariness'), a practice which likely began during the Tang,<sup>26</sup> as indicated by Feng Yan who states 'when practicing meditation he emphasised the importance of staving off sleep... [so] allowed his followers to drink tea'.<sup>27</sup> However, Tea also alludes to the Buddhist precept against alcohol, indicating sin, depravity and perversion as results of wine-drinking. His arguments are filled with Buddhist examples in particular, including that of King Ajatasatru. He also uses an example of the Daoist poet Liu Ling to accentuate his point, and concludes that wine's effects will cause one to turn to Buddhism. Daoist ritual use of wine often meant that their gatherings could become quite boisterous,<sup>28</sup> and this seems to be emphasised here. Similarly, Buddhist polemics also emphasised the purity of Buddhism compared with Daoist focus on rituals and talismans.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, he also refers to Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin) who, during this

period, was in the beginnings of integration into the Daoist pantheon,<sup>30</sup> indicative of religious adaptation and a sense of compatibility between Buddhism and Daoism. Tea also directly relates himself to Confucianism, stating 'I became famous by the age of thirty'. Importantly, the use of Confucian texts and ideals is a common persuasive rhetoric in both Buddhist apologetics and religious court debates. As Confucianism was the state doctrine, Buddhism had to adapt to account for implications of state interests, which were rooted in Confucianism,<sup>31</sup> further emphasising Tea's position as a metaphor for Buddhism in the context of court debates. This is also indicative of cultural adaptation between the foreignness of Buddhism with traditional Chinese culture.

Conversely, terminology used in Wine's arguments are indicative of an amalgamation of Confucianism and Daoism. His arguments clearly represent traditional Chinese morality and religious practice. He states that 'after a goblet of wine was poured into a river, the three armies all become drunk', referring to a story about the King of Yue during the Spring and Autumn period (770–476). This traditional story emphasises the antiquity of Wine in Chinese tradition, but the reference itself is interesting. The original characters (單醪投河, 三軍告醉) can be found in another Dunhuang manuscript classified as a *bianwen* called The Story of Wu Tzu-hsu.<sup>32</sup> The story is a hybrid of traditional Chinese narrative form with Buddhist storytelling models.<sup>33</sup> Regarding a narrow definition of *bianwen* means that this text should also not be classified as such.<sup>34</sup> These genre issues are similar to the CJL, and this hybridity of Buddhist and Chinese literary techniques certainly indicates a level of cultural adaptation in Dunhuang texts.

Wine also emphasises Confucian morality and the relationship between subject and ruler in this section, indicating that alcohol allows for correct relationships, and is responsible for four of the five cardinal virtues of Confucianism. Wine's argument is filled with this traditional Chinese narrative, but is also indicative of Daoist practice. For example, use of the terms 'wine can nourish one's life' and 'Gods enjoy my Qi', referring to Daoist ceremony and ritual, and emphasis on longevity for the Emperor. This section illustrates the importance of alcohol to the State, in both a ritual and religious context. Wine further expresses his importance for the State in the fifth paragraph ('shows courtesy and thoughtfulness to one's neighbours'), but again emphasises Daoist practice in the form of health and longevity by listing medicinal wines and those used by Daoist immortals. Wine comments that drinking tea prevents artistry and music (particularly in reference to the court), similarly to how Tea condemns the garrulous behaviour resulting from wine-drinking in Daoism.

While using religious terminology, Tea and Wine also succeed in arguing their own merits in terms of popularity of tea and wine culture. They both argue for their economic importance, with Wine stating that 'tea has been cheap, and wine has been valuable', and Tea arguing that he has an 'excess of money' from his popularity. However, their allusions are steeped in religious influence. While they do illustrate, to an extent, the importance of tea and wine to Chinese culture, more importantly the characters Tea and Wine hold an allegorical function related to religious diversity.

Previous scholarship regarding the CJL has had the tendency to avoid the role played by Water in the text,<sup>35</sup> as they are often too focused on the text as an indication of tea culture in the Tang. As has been illustrated in this section, Tea and Wine exist as two beverages representative of Buddhism and traditional Chinese religions respectively, but Water's role is also highly significant. Interestingly, Chang also takes the approach of the beverages as metaphors for the three religions, but relates Tea

to Buddhism, Wine to Daoism, and Water to Confucianism.<sup>36</sup> This makes little sense when considering that Wine is rich with both Daoist and Confucian language, while Water's speech is laced with terminology extant of all three religions. Chang also indicates that other scholars argue that Water cannot be Confucian because of its Buddhist influence, but makes no comprehensive attempt to explain this phenomenon.<sup>37</sup>

Water exists as a mediator of the debate, and his speech illustrates an amalgamation of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Interestingly, he refers to the 'four greats', as opposed to the traditional Chinese five elements, highlighting a clear Buddhist influence. However, his speech is also steeped with traditional Confucian stories, such as that of a great flood in the time of Yao, and reference to the Book of Changes with the use of the character *qian*乾. He refers to the necessity of harmony between Tea and Wine so that 'wine shops become wealthy, and teahouses do not become poor', which is likely a Confucian-influenced allusion to ensuring the correct running of the State. These economic arguments were also used to refute Buddhism within polemical court debates.<sup>38</sup> This could be regarded the same way as Tea's use of Confucianism, however, Water's speech is also suggestive of Daoism. Water is one of the most significant metaphors for the Dao, as indicated in the *Daodejing*, stating that 'The highest excellence is like (that of) water'.<sup>39</sup> Water's speech is also heavily influenced by the concept of harmony ('you two are forever brothers'), and thus its purpose can be seen in a similar way to that of a quote by Yan Zhitui (531–591), 'Buddhism and Confucianism share the same substance. However, having evolved in different lands, they manifest differences in doctrine and depth of understanding'.<sup>40</sup> Like Wang Fu, Yan was a Confucian scholar influenced by Buddhism,<sup>41</sup> and through a Confucian-Buddhist dialogue he achieved a balanced combination of 'harmony' and 'non-conformity',<sup>42</sup> similar to Water's own ideals. His speech indicates a Buddhist influence, with Confucian morality and virtue, and sense of harmony through the Middle Way or Dao. If Tea is therefore a metaphor for Buddhism, and Wine Confucianism and Daoism, Water's metaphorical purpose can be seen as that of a higher being or principle in the form of the integration of the Three Teachings.

While Tea and Wine indicate their importance in terms of food culture, their arguments are undoubtedly rooted in religious doctrine and teachings. It is clear, therefore, that the purpose of the CJL lies not in the debate between the beverages tea and wine, but is a debate between two different sets of doctrines using the popularisation of tea and wine as commodities, as metaphors to accentuate the issues of doctrinal and religious debates during the Tang. It focuses on reconciling Tea and Wine through religious imagery related to the Three Teachings used by Water.

Interestingly, Water's final sentence is directed at the audience ('If people read this text, they will never suffer being mad from tea or wine'), indicating no clear winner, but also illustrating that the purpose of the CJL was for entertainment in a performance context. This also highlights an issue in taking the CJL as a Buddhist text in contribution to the popularity of tea culture. In Buddhist texts and apologetics, the Buddhist notion would certainly emerge as winner of the debate. Instead, the Three Teachings co-exist in this text, highlighting a level of mutual absorption and integration of the cultural landscape.<sup>43</sup> While the copyist indicates that it was used in a secular setting, the content of the text, as well as issues with classifying the CJL as a *bianwen*, brings into question whether the CJL is actually a Buddhist text. Examining these issues further illustrates that the CJL, while certainly Buddhist influenced, took a satirical and allegorical approach in light of religious diversity.

### 3. Is the *Cha jiu lun* 茶酒論 a Buddhist text?

While the language of the CJL is rife with Buddhist influence, this is constrained almost exclusively to the Buddhist metaphor (Tea). That being said, the popularity of the text in Dunhuang and the position of Dunhuang as a centre for Buddhism indicate that the text is likely a Buddhist one. Certainly, advocating the use of wine in a Buddhist text is unusual, as Buddhists were prohibited from the consumption of alcohol as indicated in the five precepts.<sup>44</sup> This does not, however, rule out the CJL as a Buddhist text. Interestingly, there is significant evidence to suggest that the consumption of alcohol was a common occurrence by Buddhist monks in Dunhuang, both in a religious and social context.<sup>45</sup> Not only does this highlight the nature of the text, it also illustrates a high level of cultural and religious amalgamation. The CJL may not have originally been intended for performance in a Buddhist context, but its popularity in the Buddhist-centred Dunhuang indicates that it was likely used as a comical performance piece in light of religious and cultural diversity; and indications by subsequent copyists suggest that this was in a Buddhist context. That being said, the CJL is very much representative in content and style of interreligious court debates.

The emergence of Buddhism in China spurred a theme of State-sponsored interreligious court debates. Though these debates were often labelled debates between the Three Teachings, the orthodoxy of Confucianism as a State-sponsored tradition meant that, in reality, these debates were primarily between Buddhists and Daoists.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, like the CJL, the winner of these debates was decided by a judge (the Emperor), thus asserting the Emperor's primacy and the primacy of the State over all three doctrines.<sup>47</sup>

During the Tang, these debates began to more readily advocate the harmonious relationship between the Three Teachings, becoming more entertainment based.<sup>48</sup> The reconciliation between the Three Teachings was often promulgated by Buddhist debaters themselves in an attempt to fully assimilate into Chinese society. In 735, Emperor Xuanzong himself convened a debate for the purpose of indicating harmony between the teachings.<sup>49</sup> In the CJL, this influence is seen clearly in the closing speech of Water who acts like the Emperor as a judge, and advocates the harmony of the three religions. For Wang Fu, as a Chinese scholar who clearly fell under Buddhist influence, the CJL was likely intended as a satire on such debates,<sup>50</sup> especially considering Dunhuang's undergoing of religious-cultural assimilation both in regards to Buddhism and Chinese indigenous religions during its Tibetan occupation.

Its categorisation as a *lun* brings it directly into the sphere of religious polemics. *Lun* texts are commonly religious apologetics aimed at the debates between the three religions. Examples of these texts are numerous, including well-known apologetics such as the *Xiao Dao Lun*, whose polemical arguments strike similar tones to that of the CJL. Furthermore, examples such as the comical theatrical piece *Li Keji xi Sanjiao* suggest the CJL was not alone in its attempt to reconcile the Three Teachings through satirizing court debates. Stark similarities between these texts and the CJL illustrate that its purpose lay in these religious debates, and emphasise the metaphorical purpose of the three beverages. However, traditional Chinese influence in the CJL does not mean that it is not a Buddhist text but that Wang Fu was a Confucian with a deep appreciation for Buddhism much like Mouzi. In other words, the CJL is likely a Buddhist text with a Confucian author, suggesting a level of reconciliation between the Three Teachings in light of religious diversity.

#### **4. The *Cha jiu lun* as a cultural allegory**

In China, religion and culture are coterminous to an outstanding degree.<sup>51</sup> As a result of this intrinsic link between religion and culture, it can be seen that the CJL's religious allegorical function is also rooted in issues of cultural adaptation. While Tea and Wine have been demonstrated to be metaphors for religious issues, this purpose extends further to embody these beverages as metaphors for the larger issue of cultural diversity.

##### **4.1. Wine as Chinese, Tea as foreign**

Sinocentrism illustrates the difficulty in considering issues of religious and cultural diversity as inherently separate; Buddhism's struggle in competing with China's indigeneity in a religious context was also a matter of culture. Spreading from India, Buddhism began to rise during the Han dynasty, and was ubiquitous by the Northern and Southern dynasties.<sup>52</sup> However, in light of ethno and Sinocentric views, its development was laced with concerns of its form as an irredeemably evil doctrine by virtue of its origins in a 'barbarian' culture.<sup>53</sup> Even in the culturally diverse Tang, Buddhism continued to be regarded as a foreign religion, in which its barbarian roots were often emphasised in polemical debates.<sup>54</sup>

This is further underlined with the An Lushan rebellion (755–763) and subsequent rebellions at the end of the Tang. Issues of cultural and religious diversity became less salient during this period, which also saw a major decline in religious polemics. The rebellion threw the country into disorder, thus the various religious and political factions had to fight for survival rather than supremacy.<sup>55</sup> However, after the An Lushan rebellion, politics re-emerged as a category for conceptualising ethnicity, and issues of culture became more prominent.<sup>56</sup> The foreign origins of An Lushan himself provoked increased suspicion of foreigners.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, anti-foreign sentiment re-emerged as China had come to be surrounded by foreign states.<sup>58</sup> Conversely, foreign trade increased after this uprising, with non-Chinese forces aiding Tang loyalists to suppress the forces of An Lushan.<sup>59</sup> These rebellions meant that cultural assimilation became a paradoxical issue in which it was both a necessity and a threat. Two ninth century essays explicitly considered the issue of Chinese identity, and surmised that political loyalty and adherence to Confucian ideals were the main criteria for being Chinese.<sup>60</sup> In this context, Buddhism remained both antithetical and foreign to the Chinese. Both cultural and religious disputes were therefore a major facet of the late Tang, particularly in locations such as Dunhuang which, while incredibly culturally diverse, came to be occupied by Tibet after the An Lushan rebellion.

These issues shine through in the precepts of the CJL. The debate between Tea and Wine is focused on economy, state function and venerability. For Tea, however, this venerability did not stem from Chinese roots, and instead came from India in the same way in which it did for Buddhism. Wine's arguments, on the other hand, highlight its purpose as a beverage integral to Chinese culture at every level, emphasising Confucian values and its traditional function as a necessity for the correct running of the State. In other words, if we are to take the CJL as a reaction to religious debates, the comparable positions of Buddhism and Chinese indigenous religions also evidently place Tea as a foreign substance, and Wine as a representative of traditional China. In this period of political, cultural and religious instability this categorisation is telling, particularly in relation to Dunhuang. Water indicates this in an important way; he considers the differences between Tea and Wine to an extent, but convinces of the foolishness of

the debate with reference to his own, higher, position, and indicates the necessity for harmony, advocating a level of reconciliation.

In this sense, the CJL can be seen to mock the traditional attitude of ‘us and them’ (Chinese and foreign) which was still prevalent after the An Lushan rebellion and towards the end of the Tang, as evidenced particularly with the conclusion that Tea and Wine are ‘forever brothers’. Court debates and the difficulties Buddhism faced in Chinese culture were always steeped with an ethnocentric Chinese attitude against the foreign religion, which is illustrated in the arguments of Tea and Wine, but subverted by Water.

### Conclusions

To conclude, analysis of the text’s content has illustrated that the function of the three beverages is a metaphorical one. Tea’s arguments have been examined to illustrate its almost pure use of Buddhist language, while the arguments and use of Confucian doctrine to support these are representative of interreligious court debates in the Tang. Wine is representative of traditional Chinese religion and culture in its arguments, while Water aims to reconcile the two through his concluding speech. In other words, Tea can be seen to represent Buddhism and the foreign, while Wine is designed to represent the Chinese and China’s indigenous religions, and Water acts as the higher being who reconciles the two. The performance context and content of the CJL suggest it was designed as a satirical and comical piece, intended to mock the theme of ethnocentrism in light of religious and cultural issues. This is illustrated in the fact that similar interreligious court debates developed into entertainment pieces at the end of the Tang,<sup>61</sup> and theatrical performances in similar contexts to the CJL were not entirely unusual.

Previous studies have focused on the elements of this text that relate it to the popularisation of tea in China, due to its questionable classification as a *bianwen*. However, the issues discussed within this article have demonstrated that the CJL was a Buddhist, orally transmitted performance piece, more representative of traditional Chinese theatre and *fu* literature, reacting to the dichotomous debates between religious and cultural diversity in Dunhuang and the late Tang. Though its designation as a Buddhist *bianwen* is questionable, it was certainly used in a lay societal context. Furthermore, its designation as a *lun* and similar debates clearly illustrate that its purpose can be seen in reaction to interreligious court debates. For these reasons, it seems likely that the CJL is not a *bianwen* in the true definition of the term.

However, the content of the CJL has demonstrated a clear Buddhist influence on the text, particularly in the terminology used. Considering Wang Fu’s position, the context the text was used in, and the amount of Buddhist influence, the CJL can be considered a Buddhist text, but one also heavily influenced by the hybridity of religion and culture in both Dunhuang and Tang China. These aspects indicate that the CJL can be considered an allegorical discussion of both religious and cultural diversity in Tang China, demonstrating its importance in a wider historical context.

In spite of these contributions to a better understanding of the purpose of the CJL in light of religious and cultural diversity, this article does suffer some limitations. The constraints of this study, and contradictions in literature regarding the CJL, have meant some difficulty in appropriately establishing a genre convention for the CJL. While this issue of genre has been discussed in this article, there is opportunity for further study of genre conventions and classifications in traditional Chinese literature,

particularly in regard to *bianwen*. That being said, this study has provided a much more comprehensive insight into the purpose of the CJL in light of the prevalent religious and cultural issues which occurred during the Tang, and has demonstrated the purpose of the text from a different and more pertinent angle.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor Dr Thomas Jansen for his support in preparing this article.

### Notes

- 1 See S.406.
- 2 See P.2718, P.2972.
- 3 Victor H. Mair and Erling Hoh. *The True History of Tea*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2009, pp. 259–261, and Tsu-lung Chen, “Note on Wang Fu’s Ch’ a Chiu Lun (茶酒論)” *Sinologica* 6 (1961), 271–287.
- 4 Wang Fu, 茶酒論: *Dialogue du the et du vin*. tr. by Tseng Yu Hui and Gil Delannoi. Paris: Berg International, 2013.
- 5 Mair (1983), op. cit., p. 1.
- 6 Victor H. Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 9.
- 7 Mair and Hoh, op. cit., p. 259.
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