

Binding, watermarks and paper are also ruled beyond the book's remit. The first chapter, under the generous heading "Manuscripts", covers subjects ranging from illustration and illumination, size, "authentic" vs "fake" manuscripts, assessments of value, and how the numbers of surviving exemplars may relate to a text's popularity with readers. This chapter provides an overview of issues in Javanese and "Javanese-inspired" manuscript studies, giving a sense of the richness of the tradition that will be particularly eye-opening to those working on other manuscript cultures. Chapters 2–8 treat more unified topics: access to manuscripts, manuscripts written on *lontar* and *gebang* leaves, verse and verse metre, mistakes and corrections, dating and calendars, colophons, and miscellaneous information on dating and ownership. Eight substantial appendices cover such topics as names of metres, verse schemes, and a table calibrating Javanese and Arabic years to the Gregorian calendar, which will no doubt prove useful to researchers. The inclusion of a large number of images is especially welcome, but it is unfortunate that the photographs in the MyBook paperback version (the print accompaniment for users of the e-book) are in black-and-white only and are often obscure.

The book incorporates and applies some of the key recent interventions in the field, including the critique of Eurocentric assessments of value and the recognition that basing our understanding of these manuscript cultures entirely on collections assembled under colonial auspices may distort our view. The book draws on many manuscripts in less well-known institutional collections, including the palaces of Cirebon, Yogyakarta and Surakarta, and in private hands. Van der Meij warns that digitization efforts currently underway in Indonesia are likely to transform our view of the field, noting that the Arabic-derived *pegon* script may in fact turn out to be the dominant script in Java (p. 136). His insistence that, especially in the case of Balinese, we are dealing with a living tradition (p. 30), where texts could move from manuscript to print to *lontar* and back again (pp. 47, 103), and that oldest does not necessarily mean best or most interesting (p. 46), is salutary.

Rather than providing a theoretical or methodological framework, or advancing a particular thesis, this book is a field guide to Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and Sasak manuscripts. It will enable the researcher encountering a given manuscript for the first time to begin to decipher what he or she is looking at. As such, it is a valuable reference work for scholars and students.

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EAST ASIA

FANG LITIAN:

*Chinese Buddhism and Traditional Culture.*

(Chinese Perspectives). [vi], 234 pp. Abingdon: Routledge, 2019. £130. ISBN 978 1 138 85519 9.

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This book represents, according to a note on p. [iv], an attempted English version of a work entitled in Chinese *Zhongguo Fojiao yu chuantong wenhua* 中国佛教与传统文化, by Fang Litian 方立天, published by Shanghai People's Publishing House in 1988. Fang's work has become a steady seller over the past three decades. A 2008 version from Joint Publishing in Hong Kong is still on sale there today, with a blurp

attached to the cover asserting that Fang is the most influential living Buddhist, as well he may be, at least in the one fifth of the world that uses Chinese. Though as a survey of Buddhism in China it is not beyond criticism, there are no doubt arguments for informing the Anglophone world of its contents. But unfortunately this English translation is so catastrophically bad that the only conclusion any reviewer can come to is that it should be withdrawn from sale immediately by its United Kingdom publisher, and that any copies already in libraries should be withdrawn from the shelves.

Fang's survey is commendably broad, but it is only very lightly annotated, with but a smattering of references to modern Chinese scholarship, almost none of which relates to materials that have been transferred into English in this translation. His attempt at incorporating Tibetan Buddhism into an account of the Buddhism of China is also not entirely successful: he remembers (p. 71) the need to assert tendentiously enough that since 1652 "all generations of Dalai Lamas must be conferred by the central government", but in the chapter on Buddhist ritual seems to forget the existence of Tibet altogether. A readable English version of his work would provide some insight into current (or at least recent) Chinese academic perspectives, but despite the need for an up-to-date survey of pre-modern Chinese Buddhism it would decidedly not form an ideal replacement for the now somewhat dated work of Kenneth Chen (1907–1993). The standard of this publication cannot of course be laid at the door of Fang himself, but unfortunately since no translator's or editor's name appears anywhere on its pages – all that we are told on p. [iv] is that "This book is published with financial support from the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences" – it is alas only the author whose reputation is likely to be tarnished.

Were the only problem the impressively sloppy proofreading that would be bad enough: "Louts School" [*sic*] for "Lotus School" (p. 56) at least provides a little light relief among the many mangled names, such as "Amogharajra", who is awarded three index mentions alongside five for Amoghavajra, to whom he can only be described as an evil twin. By contrast plain dittography, it would appear, gives us another otherwise unknown Zen Master, Dehuito (p. 120), who also makes it into the index. But the translations of Buddhist terms even where written correctly seem almost intentionally perverse: 道場 for example is rendered as "Taoist Bodhimanda" [*sic*] in a Tibetan context (p. 72, n. 9) for no discernible reason except perhaps to cause confusion, while "Nyingma (Mongolian Lamaism)" and "Gelug (Shamanism)" on pp. 68 and 70 turn out to represent no more than arbitrary modifications of Fang's explanatory notations 红教 and 黄教. Japanese names fare equally badly: in a list of Japanese Buddhist universities on p. 219 we find such institutions as "Komatsau University", "Garden University" and "Takano University" for Komazawa University, Hanazono University and Koyasan University. These renditions at least pay some attention to the Japanese language, whereas on the next page we find reference to Kukai writing a "*WenJingMiFuLun*" and to a "Tang Zhaoti Temple" in Nara. But elsewhere, even more bizarrely, lapses into Japanese pronunciation in contexts where this is not required can also be found, as on p. 20, where "Buddha, dharma, monk" are designated "Sambo" [*sic*]. Other slightly odd statements by Marxist standards, such as the allegation on p. 222 that in 1642 "the Buddha" instituted kingship in Sikkim, turn out to be not entirely accurately translated either: what Fang writes is 佛爺, a vague term for a Buddhist personage that is, one would guess, a euphemism here signifying the Dalai Lama, who certainly endorsed the move. For in Fang's eyes any Tibetan influence, whether among Kalmucks, Tuvans, or Bhutanese, is seen as Chinese influence, but to name the Dalai Lama overtly as influencing Sikkim in 1642 would raise the question as to whether he was really hand-in-glove with the "central government" of the Ming dynasty at that point, when his secular patronage to all appearances came exclusively from Mongols rather than Chinese.

But such aspects of Fang's narrative are not easy to discern, due to the uncertainties caused by the translation. At times the linguistic confusion verges on the surreal: the Tibetan Kagyu pa use of scriptural teaching 經教 is rendered as "tsunenori" as though it were a Japanese name (p. 69), and a similar lapse on p. 194 gives us the mystic statement "thorough exploration of the logos and the intrinsic character meant immeasurable yoshisada", which turns out to represent 窮理盡性, 謂無量義定, a pair of phrases that is furthermore falsely attributed to the *Lotus Sutra* when Fang's text makes clear that it is from a commentary. Reference likewise to "Taisho Tibetan" on p. 211, n. 1, for 大正藏 points to something very badly amiss, especially after 理不可分 is translated "Li is irresistible" in the same footnote. Only machine translation, I suspect, could produce results as mindless as these, which leads me to conclude that the underlying text of Fang's work was fed into a machine, and that some hapless editorial helpers were then hired to try to sort out the results. They failed. Not everything here is nonsense, but no reader can approach this work with any confidence that it represents what Fang intended to say, and it is consequently worthless.

No doubt among the population of China there are a number of individuals who are capable of translating the linguistically demanding and often quite technical language of Chinese Buddhism into acceptable English, and the disaster that is this book should not be taken as advertising the complete lack of such qualified people there. Certainly no British publisher can be sure of securing help from the handful of individuals in the country capable of retrieving the situation after the delivery of such a defective translation to the United Kingdom. Trained academics must keep their noses to the grindstone and allow no thoughts other than total dedication to research and teaching to enter their minds; helping publishers after all counts for nothing in the purposes of any academic institution here today. No doubt much money has been spent on this project, but the invisible hand of the market exerts but a palsied grip on the field of knowledge concerned. I can, in short, see why this project has been left to machines to ruin. But can China's famed facial recognition technology be put to the Zen purpose of uncovering our original features from before our existence 本来面目? Not on this showing, I'm afraid; not yet.

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REIKO SHINNO:

*The Politics of Chinese Medicine under Mongol Rule.*

(Needham Research Institute Series.) xxi, 194 pp. London and

New York: Routledge, 2016. ISBN 978 1 138 09932 6.

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The Japanese medical historian Reiko Shinno's first book is the most recent addition to the Needham Research Institute Series. Expanding upon the foundation of Joseph Needham's "Science and Civilisation in China" series from the 1950s (now 20+ volumes), since 2002 this series has published twelve books, nearly one every year, covering mostly Chinese medical history (seven) but also *Tibetan Medicine in the Contemporary World*, the history of Chinese mathematics with *Chinese Mathematical Astrology* and *Reviving Ancient Chinese Mathematics* (two), and, more recently, *Agriculture and the Food Supply in Premodern Japan: The Place of Rice*.