available on the web (eg., Barack Obama's acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony in 2009, the Balfour Declaration of 1917). The book would perhaps have been better off as a series of essays or commentaries on these documents and the events they chronicle.

This is neither a textbook, nor a work of analysis – because it does not, in fact, analyse or explain any of the events it talks about. dhara.anjaria@gmail.com

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How Buddhism Acquired a Soul on the Way to China (Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies Monographs). By Jungnok Park. pp. x, 246. Equinox, Sheffield, 2012.
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This is yet another book among many which deal with what came to be called the doctrine of non-self (*anatta/anātman*) and is regarded as characteristic of Buddhism, in antithesis of the doctrine of *ātman*, which, in the author's words, "posits a permanent agent going through *saṁsāra*". This, the author explains, is the stance in the Hindu tradition, in which the popular criterion for distinguishing between orthodox and heterodox movements has been whether or not they acknowledge the existence of *ātman* and *brahman*". The gist of the author's thesis is to show, as the title of the book indicates, how, through interpolations and shifting of meaning of words in translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese, a notion of a permanent agent passing through successive deaths and births emerged and came to be widely accepted and how, in the process of assimilating Indian Buddhism, the Chinese created their own form of Buddhism.

In the first, rather technical, chapter the author deals with peculiarities arising from the linguistic and cultural differences between ancient India and medieval China and discusses translation procedures adopted by different translators. In the second chapter he is concerned with the problem of identifying individual translators and spotting the interpolations done over time by them and by copyists. Some texts were translated several times and comparing the different versions can be revealing. These two chapters form Part I of the book.

Three chapters, forming Part II, scrutinise the development of the Indian Buddhist concept of the self. The author maintains that various Buddhist conceptions of self, whether analysed ontologically, epistemologically or ethically, have to be set within a soteriological context. In early Buddhism an impermanent self-constructed, under certain conditions, of impermanent components undergoes innumerable rebirths as a person identifiable by his *karma* (his past moral or immoral actions). His *karma* locates him accordingly in certain circumstances, but leaves him capable of moral decisions in the present (which determine the circumstances of his future rebirths). This basically clear position is complicated by the polemics with Brāhmanism which, in the author's words, "asserts a permanent agent of perception as taught in the Upanisads" ; it is called *ātman* (masculine gender), and it is a permanent self, which the Upaniṣads identify with *brahman* (neuter gender), the highest power and the source of the world. Early Buddhism does not refer to this identification and uses the word *brahman* in the masculine gender, as Brahmā, for a god among many who is not the creator of the world.

There is a problem with the author's interpretation of the Upaniṣadic teaching. In pre-Buddhist Upaniṣads *ātman* is always identified with *brahman*, and is therefore not designated as "a permanent agent of perception" in individuals transmigrating from life to life, but is the universal core of the whole reality which is the same in all individuals. Individuals as such, although sharing the ātmic core, are identified by the constituents of their personality which pass to their next life as a kind

of mental conglomerate: when one dies, "he becomes a mental being; what is of mental nature, follows him; [his] knowledge [or wit], [his past] actions and previous experience [or knowledgeability] envelop him" (*savijñāno bhavati, savijñānam evānvavakrāmati; taṁ vidyākarmaṇī samanvārabhete pūrvaprajñā ca*, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV,4,2). This formulation is completely in agreement with the subsequent position of early Buddhism in which the changeable constituents forming the empirical personality (*khandhas*) reconstitute themselves in the next rebirth and are proclaimed *anatta*, while the early texts remain silent about whether there is or is not an *atta* or universal core common to all reality and therefore to all beings.

The notion of *atta/ātman* as a permanent transmigrating agent in individuals purporting to be a Brahminic/Hindu doctrine is a misconception developed within the Theravāda school of thought as is the assertion that the Buddha expressly denied the existence of *atta/ātman*. The Theravāda *anatta* polemics against the presumed Brahminic doctrine of *ātman* as a transmigrating agent is a kind of shadow boxing. (The Brahminic/Hindu notion of a transmigrating entity in individuals was developed in post-UpaniṣadicVedāntic texts and Vedāntic systems differ about whether on salvation it totally merges with the universal *ātman* as in Advaita Vedānta, preserves a limited individuality as in Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta or retains its separate individuality as in Dvaita Vedānta.)

In early Buddhism the individuality of the impermanent self as a compound of five constantly changing aggregates is guaranteed in successive lives by continuity expressed in the chain of dependent origination (*paṭicasumuppāda*). The reborn person is neither the same nor someone else. Abhidhamma went further in its doctrine of momentariness: a person is neither the same nor another one in two consecutive moments even during the present lifespan. When rebirth occurs, only the empirical aggregate of shape (*rūpakkhanda*), i.e. body, is entirely replaced, but it was also, of course, constantly changing during one single lifespan (cf. p. 110).

Developments in Mahāyāna brought new formulations, particularly with respect to the concept of emptiness which occurs in early Buddhism in connection with emptying the mind during meditation. In the Prajñāramitā literature it is used in paradoxical statements aiming at "deconceptualised understanding of the state of cessation of suffering" which was caused by ignorance, but can be achieved by means of perfecting wisdom. This presumably supersedes the eightfold path. But the texts are using pointers to the soteriological framework of early Buddhism and this is "the reason why the new doctrinal systems are still called Buddhism despite the fact that the application of those principles yields doctrines that would have been rejected by the Buddha of earlier Buddhism". This is an interesting remark which would delight Theravādins who, in their hearts, regard all subsequent schools of Buddhism as having gone astray, despite playing the ecumenical game. However, if we extend the author's suggestion and put not only the new doctrinal systems' concept of self, but each system as a whole within soteriological context, we may find that they all aim in the last resort at liberation - which was the sole purpose of the Buddha's teaching mission. So at least in that respect they might not have gone astray.

In Chapter 5, '*Nirvāṇa* and a permanent self', the author ponders first the *Mahāyāna Parinirvāṇa-sūtra*'s seeming assertion about the Buddha as being permanent, eternal and immortal. Much depends on the translation and interpretation of the relevant text. E.g. *amata/amṛtya*, frequently translated as 'immortality', is often also rendered as 'non-death' or 'deathlessness' and interpreted as 'absence of the process of rebirth'. This suggests an entirely different dimension (transcending time) than immortality, which somehow implies endless duration. Further developments led to the Trikāya doctrine which overcomes the sense of abandonment after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. The omnipresent Buddhahood works also on saṁsāric levels and is germinally present in all beings as *tathāgatagarbha*, which the author calls "the permanent self of Mahāyāna Buddhism"; he describes it as "a concept theoretically retro-abstracted from its soteriological result", whatever that may mean. The concept is hopelessly complex for a brief characterisation as is the problem of the nature of *nirvāṇa* altogether.

Part III, 'The Development of the Chinese Buddhist Concept of Self' has four chapters. The first one describes the pre-Buddhist situation, mainly Daoist and Confucian, and the popular belief in spirits. In the second one the author explains that the Chinese did not have the notion of *saṁsāra*, i.e. of sequence of deaths and births, so in order to explain it, the existence of "an agent that goes through *saṁsāra* according to karmic law" and is permanent was needed. It was expressed by a variety of Chinese terms which the author discusses at some length and analyses in subsequent chapters. The early translations done in collaboration with Indian experts and Chinese scholars enabled interpolations of notions of an imperishable soul. When bilingual translators became the rule and were better versed in Buddhist doctrines, the discrepancies were noticed and efforts were made to correct them, particularly by Kumārajīva. But there were also minor translators and Chinese apocrypha. Besides, "authors of independent treatises and Chan analects could freely create their own theory, quoting particular passages from various canonical texts, sometimes regardless of their original context", complains the author, who also touches on rivalry and assertive attitudes among Chinese Buddhists.

On the whole there seems a variety of conceptions of self in Chinese Buddhist thinking and the author does not conclude the book with a summary of his findings which would provide the reader with an overall picture. The adaptation of the author's PhD thesis for public readership has not been carried out, understandably, as he himself did not have a chance to do it himself. All of its parts are useful to different specialists and at least half of it is probably highly profitable only for scholars in full command of classical Chinese and indispensable for consultation as a reference book. Its weakest point is the lack of discernment between the early Buddhist *anatta* doctrine and its Theravāda interpretation and its comparison or confrontation with the presumed Brahminic teachings on *ātman*. However, the book shows that here was a brilliant scholar in the making who was prevented from maturing by his untimely death. <kw19@soas.ac.uk>

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Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages. By Sanping Chen. pp. xi, 279. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania University Press, 2012.
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The long history of China is punctuated by episodes of conflict between the Chinese and their neighbours. China has been repeatedly invaded, most frequently by peoples from the north, and more especially from the north-east. One of the most enduring symbols of China, the Great Wall, is a constant reminder of this. Quite a number of the 'barbarian' invasions have been successful, and have resulted in the establishment of states ruled by non-Chinese, controlling part or all of the north of China, and sometimes more.[1] There is a general view, however, that the 'barbarians', faced with the superior culture of China, became 'sinicized' (or 'sinified')[2] and, sooner or later, were completely absorbed into the Chinese population. The underlying assumption is that they had little or no culture of their own, and were quickly overwhelmed by the vastly superior culture of China. This view is less prevalent today than formerly, but it undoubtedly still has some currency (not least among the Chinese themselves). It is very refreshing, therefore, to read this book by Dr Sanping Chen, which

[1] Exactly who was "Chinese" and who not is also a debatable question.
[2] Chinese *Hanhua* 漢化