In this book, Tse-fu Kuan, an assistant professor at the General Education Centre, National University of Kaoshiung (Taiwan), presents a revised version of his doctoral thesis focused on mindfulness in early Buddhism. It is not a book for all kind of readers. Its deep analysis of the mindfulness concept using different sources (Chinese, Pali, Sanskrit), would make readers without previous knowledge of Buddhism to have problems to fully understand the ideas developed.

The book starts with the discussion of the concept of “sati” (mindfulness) and its role in practices and philosophy in early Buddhism. This first chapter analyses mindfulness and its links with sannā (apperception, conception), cognition, emotion and the path to liberation. The second chapter addresses the types of mindfulness—simple awareness, protective awareness, and introspective awareness—and its functions. Next chapter studies the role of mindfulness in methodical meditation (insight meditation, serenity meditation). Chapter four explores mindfulness directed to the experience. It clarifies the term Kāyagatā sati (usually translated as mindfulness of the body), proposes a reconstruction of a previous version of the Kāyagatāsati Sutta and elaborated other meanings of the term Kāyagatā sati. Finally chapter 5 analyses various versions of the Satipatthāna Sutta, a discourse much venerated in Theravāda Buddhism.

The book includes 3 interesting appendices with annotated translations of the Sarvāstivāda (it is the name of an ancient Buddhist school) version of the Satipatthāna Sutta and the Kāyagatāsati Sutta (“mindfulness of the body”), respectively, as well as a comparison of the Pali and Chinese versions of the Satipatthāna Sutta. Satipatthāna, according to the author of the book, can mean “bringing about of mindfulness” or “establishment of mindfulness” (p. 104).

The added value of the analysis presented in this book is that it offers new approaches through a comparative study of Buddhist works in different languages (Chinese, Pali and Sanskrit). The book includes a brief glossary with Pali and Sanskrit terms as well.

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Karma Phuntsho, the author of the book, was trained as “Khenpo”, a Bhutanese term to refer to a Tibetan Buddhist monastic abbot. Research Associate at the Mongolia and Inner Asian Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge His background provides this book “insider” views on the topics analyzed.

The book explores a central Buddhist concept, Emptiness. It is structured into five chapters. First chapter examines the significance of the Buddhist concept of Emptiness from different perspectives: soteriological, doctrinal, ontological and historical. Second chapter offers an historical view on the debate of emptiness (controversies, critiques). The third chapter addresses the concept of emptiness in the Mādhyamika system, which involves the process of negation and reasoning known as “the reasoning scrutinizing the ultimate”. The chapter discusses the knowability and affability of emptiness. Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyatso (1846-1942) has diverse writings, especially the debates he had with his Gelupka opponents. The author presents Mipham’s criticisms of the Gelupka understanding of emptiness as well as its contributions to this concept. He also addresses Mipham’s discussions on three key issues: the delimitation of the negandum, the theory of the ultimate and the knowability and affability of emptiness. Chapter four analyzes Mipham’s views about the ultimate reality. Finally last chapter examines important terms such as conceptuality, non-conceptuality and emptiness.