

# Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals; Columbia University Press, 2014; 368 pages; 9780231537391; 2014; Koichi Shinohara

THE EVOLUTION OF ESOTERIC BUDDHIST RITUALS Esoteric Buddhist rituals are enacted in the presence of deities, often in the form of images, and a rich image culture came to characterize the tradition. But sometimes the deities are present more immediately as visions, or in visualizations by the practitioners, who create mental pictures of the deities and then imagine themselves becoming one with them. At such times physical images may not be present, or their role may be ambiguous and unstable. One central thesis of this study is that the relationship between image and ritual changed fundamentally. Esoteric Buddhism is a book originally published in 1883 in London; it was compiled by a member of the Theosophical Society, A. P. Sinnett. It was one of the first books written for the purpose of explaining theosophy to the general public, and was "made up of the author's correspondence with an Indian mystic." This is the most significant theosophical work of the author. According to Goodrick-Clarke, it "disseminated the basic teachings of Theosophy in its new Asian cast." Koichi Shinohara traces the evolution of Esoteric Buddhist rituals from the simple recitation of spells in the fifth century to complex systems involving image ... In the Collected Dharani Sutras, rituals for specific deities were typically performed around images of the deities, yet Esoteric Buddhist rituals in earlier sources involved the recitation of spells rather than the use of images. The first part of this study explores how such simpler rituals came to be associated with the images of specific deities and ultimately gave rise to the general Esoteric initiation ceremony described in the crucial example of the All-Gathering mandala ritual in the Collected Dharani Sutras. Book Details. ISBN. 0231166141. Title. Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies). Author. Shinohara, Koichi. Publisher. Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals. By Koichi Shinohara. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, xxii + 324 pages, ISBN 978-0-231-16614-0 (hardback), \$55.00. Reviewed by Joseph P. Elacqua. Read article. December 3rd, 2016 in Volume 23 2016 Tagged Tantra, Tibetan Buddhism | . Trackback URI | Comments RSS.