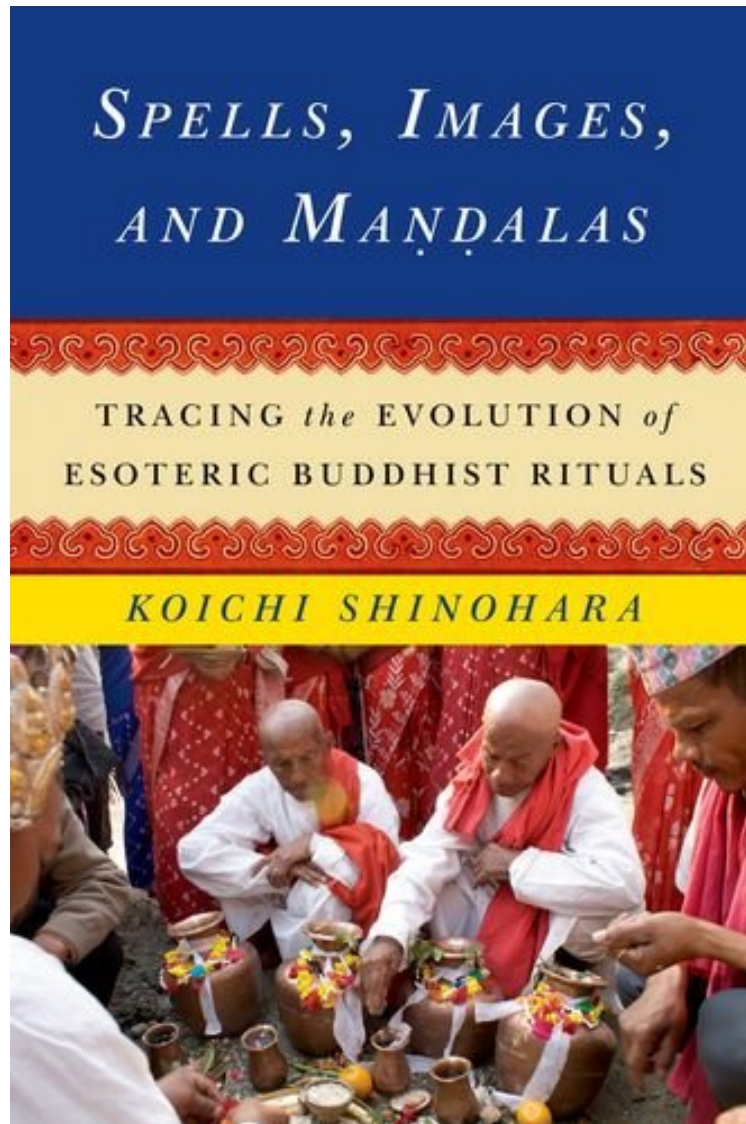


[Free] Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies)

## Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies)

*Koichi Shinohara*

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**Koichi Shinohara : Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals (The

Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies):

Koichi Shinohara traces the evolution of Esoteric Buddhist rituals from the simple recitation of spells in the fifth century to complex systems involving image worship, mandala initiation, and visualization practices in the ninth century. He presents an important new reading of a seventh-century Chinese text called the Collected Dharani Sutras, which shows how earlier rituals for specific deities were synthesized into a general Esoteric initiation ceremony and how, for the first time, the notion of an Esoteric Buddhist pantheon emerged. 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. The visualization practices so important to later Esoteric Buddhist rituals were absent from this ceremony, and their introduction would fundamentally change Esoteric Buddhist practice. This study examines the translations of dharani sutras made by Bodhiruci in the early eighth century and later Esoteric texts, such as Yixing's commentary on the Mahavairocana sutra and Amoghavajra's ritual manuals, to show how incorporation of visualization greatly enriched Esoteric rituals and helped develop elaborate iconographies for the deities. Over time, the ritual function of images became less certain, and the emphasis shifted toward visualization. This study clarifies the complex relationship between images and ritual, changing how we perceive Esoteric Buddhist art as well as ritual.

This book will transform the scholarly discourse concerning the relationship between dharani scriptures and esoteric Buddhism in the late Mahayana. In an area rife with confusing and competing theories, Shinohara has waded in and done the nitty-gritty textual work necessary to advance a coherent thesis on the evolution of the use of images and the emergence of practices of visualization. (Charles D. Orzech, Glasgow University) *Spells, Images, and Mandalas* is the first study of early Buddhist Tantra to make full use of a vast trove of Chinese sources that predate, often by many centuries, extant Sanskrit and Tibetan materials. Through exacting detective work, Koichi Shinohara reconstructs the evolution of Buddhist Tantra from its origins in simple incantation rituals to more elaborate forms of image worship and finally to full-blown maṇḍala and visualization rites. The result is a groundbreaking account of the development of Buddhist ritual traditions. (Robert Sharf, University of California, Berkeley) Shinohara has given us an insightful and detailed examination of the transition between Mahayana and early Esoteric Buddhism based on Chinese sources. He has illuminated the development of practices that include the worship of images, visualizations, and the use of mandalas, and his painstaking discussions of rituals give us a vivid sense of how practices might have been performed. (Paul Groner, University of Virginia) Shinohara has produced a bold, insightful, and original work that marks a milestone in the study of Esoteric Buddhist ritual. Among his many important findings are well-reasoned hypotheses regarding textual accretion, ritual theory, and the evolving role of images and visualization in the development of Esoteric Buddhist rituals between the fifth and ninth centuries. Shinohara's hard-won erudition is palpable on every page and expressed in clear and concise prose. *Spells, Images, and Mandalas* is sure to remain the definitive work on Esoteric Buddhist ritual for years to come. (James Robson, Harvard University) *Spells, Images, and Mandalas* is a tour de force and the culmination of a lifetime's scholarly accomplishments.... It is a great contribution not only to the field of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, but to the study of Buddhist tantra as a whole. (Zhaohua Yang *Studies in Chinese Religions*) An important contribution to the study of Esoteric Buddhism. (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*) Impressive. (*Journal of Religion and Chinese Society*) This is a landmark study that greatly advances our understanding of the history of Buddhist ritual practice in both India and East Asia. (Paul Copp *Journal of the American Oriental Society*) An important book by the right person. (*Religious Studies*) About the Author Koichi Shinohara teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University. He is the coauthor of *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in India and China* and the coeditor of *Images in Asian Religions: Texts and Contexts* and *Sins and Sinners: Perspectives from Asian Religions*.