



Courtesans and Tantric Consorts: Sexualities in Buddhist Narrative, Iconography, and Ritual

Serinity Young

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The wisest teachings of Buddhism say that, like all oppositions, one must move beyond gender. But as Serinity Young shows in this enlightening work, the rhetoric of Buddhist texts, the symbolism of its iconography, and the performative import of its rituals, tell different, and often contradictory, stories. In Courtesans and Tantric Consorts, Serinity Young takes the reader on a journey through more than 2000 years of biographical writings, iconographic depictions, and ritual practices revealing Buddhism's deep struggles with gender.

Juxtaposing empowering images of women with their textual repudiation, beginning with the Buddha himself who abandoned his wife; tantric courtesans who are considered necessary to male enlightenment with fertility rituals designed to ensure male offspring; tales of gender-bending gods and goddesses with all male heavens; Serinity Young draws on a vast range of sources to reveal the colourful, and often troubling, mosaic of beliefs that inform Buddhist views about gender and sexuality.



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