

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910149666603321
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Titolo	The Mahaparinirvana-mahasutra and the emergence of Tathagatagarbha doctrine // Michael Radich
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Hamburg : , : Hamburg University Press, , 2015
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (266 pages)
Collana	Hamburg Buddhist studies
Disciplina	294.385
Soggetti	Tathagatagarbha (Buddhism) Buddhism - Doctrines
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Sommario/riassunto	"Famously, tathagatagarbha doctrine holds that every sentient being has within the body a womb for Buddhas, or an embryonic Buddha-- the potential for full buddhahood. Previous scholars have seen this doctrine as originating in the Tathagatagarbha-sutra. In this book, Michael Radich argues that rather, the Mahaparinirvana-mahasutra is most likely our earliest extant tathagatagarbha text. Radich then argues that tathagatagarbha ideas originated as part of a wider pattern of docetic Buddhology--ideas holding that Buddhists are not really as they appear. Buddhist docetic texts are clearly troubled by the notion that Buddhas could have flesh-and-blood human mothers. The Mahaparinirvana-mahasutra is one such text, and tathagatagarbha functions as a better substitute for imperfect human maternity: rather than a putrid, painful human womb, buddhahood springs from a "womb" inherent in every sentient being, which promises final liberation from flesh altogether. This book should interest readers concerned with the history of Buddhist ideas, gender in Buddhism, the early Mahayana, the cult of the Buddha's relics, and relations between Buddhist ideas and practice"-- Back cover