



Tsadra Foundation

Venerable Geshe Lharampa Dorji Damdul
Director of Tibet House,
Cultural Center of H.H. the Dalai Lama,
New Delhi, India



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Wien, 19.03.19

Dear Venerable Lharampa Dorji Damdul,

We would like to invite you to speak at an upcoming symposium on buddha-nature texts and *Tathāgatagarbha Thought Across Asia*, co-hosted by the University of Vienna and Tsadra Foundation, taking place at the University of Vienna, shortly after next year's International Association of Tibetan Studies conference. As a teacher, scholar, and lineage holder in the Tibetan tradition with many years of experience teaching modern people and relating with western scholars, you are uniquely placed to give insight and discuss details of Buddhist teachings with us at this meeting. We would very much to hear your thoughts on Gyaltsap Je's commentary on the Gyulama and of particular interest is the verse on "the three reasons all sentient beings have Buddha-nature," but please feel free to pick any specific verse or topic of the Uttaratantrashastra to discuss from your Geshe training. Tathāgatagarbha doctrine continues to be of interest to academics and traditional scholars and practitioners of Buddhism around the world and a recent series of books, articles, and meetings have brought new energy and interesting information to light that requires continued discussion and analysis. We would like to invite you to join us in Vienna next year, July 16-19th, 2019. Please see the further details below and respond as soon as possible so that we can continue to plan this exciting event.

Dates: July, 16-19, 2019

Location: The University of Vienna, Austria

Symposium Title:

Tathāgatagarbha Across Asia:

The Reception of an Influential Mahāyāna Doctrine in Central and East Asia



DESCRIPTION

The tathāgatagarbha doctrine which proposes that all sentient beings are already a “buddha within” or at least have the potential to attain Buddhahood was first largely ignored in Indian scholastic Buddhism, but increasingly attracted the attention of Mahāyāna scholars and became

an important, if sometimes controversial, current of Buddhist thought all over Central and East Asia. With the Mahāyāna goal of establishing all sentient beings in Buddhahood, the possibility of enlightenment became a Buddhist axiom of central importance. Either one has to explain the causal process of its production, or accept its primordial existence, for example in terms of a buddha nature (tathāgatagarbha). The latter also applies, of course, when buddhahood is not taken to be produced from scratch. The way the process of becoming a Buddha is addressed is an ideal touchstone for systematically comparing the philosophical hermeneutical positions of various masters in Central and East Asia. The diversity of views on buddha nature has its roots already in early Indian Buddhism. Depending on whether one follows the original intent of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtras, or the Yogācāra interpretation of the latter, buddha nature can refer to either an already fully developed buddha, or the naturally present potential (prakṛtishāgotra) or natural luminosity of mind, i.e., sentient beings’ ability to become buddhas. In Madhyamaka, buddha nature was taken either as a teaching of provisional meaning (neyārtha) or simply a synonym of emptiness (i.e., a non-affirming negation). This symposium will look at the differing forms tathāgatagarbha doctrine assumed as its primary Indian scriptural sources were translated and transmitted throughout Central and East Asia and variously interpreted by religious schools in line with their key philosophical positions. Contributions will range from the historical-philological analysis of the primary sources to issues of reconstruction and comparison in the target languages and cultures with particular attention to the role the tathāgatagarbha doctrine played in the development of Buddhist philosophical and religious views both within India and beyond.

Other Invited Scholars:

1. Filippo Brambilla (University of Vienna)
2. Karl Brunnholzl (Nitartha Institute)
3. José Cabezón (University of California, Santa Barbara)
4. Martina Draszczyk (University of Vienna)
5. Douglas Duckworth (Temple University)
6. David Higgins (University of Vienna)
7. Shenpen Hookham (Awakened Heart Sangha)
8. Luo Hong (Sichuan University)
9. Christopher V. Jones (Oxford)
10. Kazuo Kano (Koyasan University, Japan)
11. Seiji Kumagai (Kyoto University)
12. Donald S. Lopez (University of Michigan)
13. Klaus-Dieter Mathes (University of Vienna)
14. Giacomella Orofino (University of Naples)



15. Katrin Querl (University of Vienna)
16. Michael Sheehy (University of Virginia)
17. Jacqueline Stone (Princeton University)
18. Khenpo Tamphel (University of Vienna)
19. Dorji Wangchuk (Hamburg)
20. Michael Zimmerman (Hamburg)
21. Khenpo Ngawang Jorden (International Buddhist Academy)

FORMAT

Sessions will be 90 minutes long with only two presenters each allowing for quality discussion time with each speaker.

SCHEDULE

July 16 - 19, 2019 – These dates will allow for those attending the IATS meeting in Paris to have Bastille Day in Paris, and another day to travel to Vienna before the meeting starts.

July 16th, 2019 - Arrival Day

5:30pm - Evening Welcome Event and Dinner

Keynote Speech by Donald S. Lopez, with Official Welcome from Klaus-Dieter Mathes

July 17th, 2019 - Presentations

9:00am - Session 1

10:30am - Tea Break

11:00am - Session 2

12:30pm - Lunch

2:30pm - Session 3

4:00pm - Tea Break

4:30pm - Session 4

6:00pm - End of Day

July 18th, 2019 - Presentations

9:00am - Session 5

10:30am - Tea Break

11:00am - Session 6

12:30pm - Lunch

2:30pm - Session 7

4:00pm - Tea Break

4:30pm - Session 8

6:00pm - End of Day



July 19th, 2019 - Presentations

9:00am - Session 9

10:30am - Tea Break

11:00am - Session 10

12:30pm - Lunch

2:30pm - Session 11

4:00pm - Tea Break

4:30pm - Session 2: Closing Discussion: Reflection on State of the Field

6:00pm - End of Day

July 20th, 2019 - Departure Day

TRAVEL & LODGING

Stipends for travel and lodging for speakers will be offered by the hosts and arranged via the University of Vienna. Please do reply soon if you are interested in attending this event and we can begin to arrange details. Abstract proposals and further information about presentations will be sent later in the year.

With best regards,

Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes
Head of Department
South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies
University of Vienna



Marcus Perman
Director of Research, Tsadra Foundation
Organizer of the Translation & Transmission Conference Series
TranslationandTransmission.org - DharmaCloud - [Rinchen Terdzo](http://RinchenTerdzho) - [Damngak Dzo](http://DamngakDzo)

