

TRANSLATION TRANSMISSION

Tathāgatagarbha Across Asia

JULY 16-19 | 2019 | UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA, AUSTRIA



SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

VIENNA 2019



Buddha-Nature
ATsadra Foundation Initiative



**UNIVERSITY
OF VIENNA**



Tathāgatagarbha Across Asia

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

Organized by

Professor Klaus-Dieter Mathes

*Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
Universität Wien*



Tathāgatagarbha doctrine and the concept of buddha-nature continue to be of interest to academics, 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. To that end, Tsadra Foundation will partner with the University of Vienna to host a symposium on the topic.

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 throughout 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. For example in terms of a buddha-nature (tathāgatagarbha), either one has to explain the causal process of its production or accept its primordial existence. 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 Tathāgatagarbha sūtras,



or the Yogācāra interpretation of the latter, buddha-nature can refer to either an already fully developed buddha, or the naturally present potential (prakṛtisthāgotra) 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 in India and beyond.



University of Vienna Event Locations

Alte Kapelle

*Evening Welcome Event &
Keynote Speech: Donald S. Lopez, Jr.*

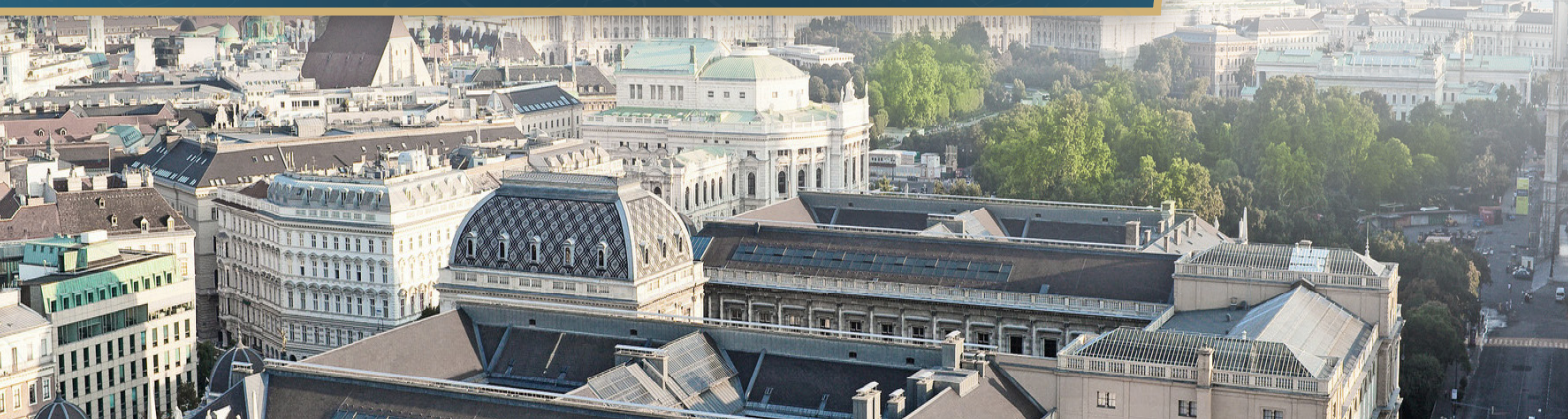


Aula

*All other sessions of the
symposium.*



Scan QR codes for Google map links



Schedule



Tuesday, July 16

WELCOME RECEPTION



17:00 — *Evening Welcome Event*

Keynote Speech: Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

Dinner and Official Welcome from the organizer, Klaus-Dieter Mathes and the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies

Location: Alte Kapelle

Wednesday, July 17

DAY ONE



9:00 — *Session One:* Klaus-Dieter Mathes & Filippo Brambilla

10:30 *Tea Break*

11:00 — *Session Two:* Martina Draszczyk & Khenpo Tamphel

12:30 *Lunch*

14:30 — *Session Three:* Christian Charrier & Patrick Carré & Douglas Duckworth

16:00 *Tea Break*

16:30 — *Session Four:* Alexander Gardner & Marcus Perman & David Higgins

18:00 *End of Day*



Thursday, July 18
DAY TWO

- 9:00 — *Session One:* Shenpen Hookham & Hong Luo
10:30 *Tea Break*
11:00 — *Session Two:* Sina Joos & Khenpo Ngawang Jorden
12:30 *Lunch*
14:30 — *Session Three:* Christopher V. Jones & Kazuo Kano
16:00 *Tea Break*
16:30 — *Session Four:* Casey Kemp & Seiji Kumagai
18:00 *End of Day*

Friday, July 19
DAY THREE

- 9:00 — *Session One:* Katrin Querl & Kurtis Schaeffer
10:30 *Tea Break*
11:00 — *Session Two:* Michael Sheehy & Jacqueline Stone
12:30 *Lunch*
14:30 — *Session Three:* Dorji Wangchuk & Michael Zimmermann
16:00 *Tea Break*
16:30 — *Session Four:* Closing Discussion: Reflection on State of the Field
18:00 *End of Day:* Closing Dinner



Presentations



Donald S. Lopez, Jr
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Tathāgatagarbha: A Brief History

A term of indefinite meaning and uncertain origin, *tathāgatagarbha* is one of the most inspiring, provocative, and controversial concepts in the vast literature of Buddhism. Variouslly interpreted as the promise of buddhahood for all, the promise of buddhahood for some, and a provisional teaching for those intimidated by emptiness, it has generated commentary from across the Mahāyāna world among many of the most influential masters of India, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. This lecture will seek to provide an overview of the history and influence of *tathāgatagarbha*.



Klaus-Dieter Mathes
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

Zhang ston Bsod nams grags pa's Defense of Dol po pa's Clear-Cut Distinction between Buddha Nature and the Ground Consciousness

Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan's (1292-1361) doctrinal position is well known for its clear-cut distinction between an ultimate, unconditioned buddha nature, which is identical with the ultimate and buddhahood, and the conditioned ground consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), including all saṃsāric states of mind emerging from it. This strict distinction excludes from the ultimate anything dependently arisen. Dol po pa's disciple Zhang ston Bsod nams grags pa (1292-1370) defends his master's view by addressing opposing statements in

the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* that equate buddha nature with the ground consciousness. Zhang ston's discussion constitutes the major part of the introduction to his commentary on the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, and is in large part also contained in his *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* commentary.

In the present paper it will be shown how Zhang ston elaborates, on the basis of numerous passages from the Maitreya Works, the Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī, the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa, and even other parts of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* itself, that one faces eight undesired consequences if one does not strictly differentiate buddha nature from the ground consciousness. Zhang ston thus argues in nearly every detail against a position that I have earlier identified in 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal's (1392-1481) *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* commentary, which sets forth an exegetically formulated system that regards buddha nature and adventitious stains as not ontologically different, any more than ocean water and its waves are.



Filippo Brambilla
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

Empty of True Existence, Yet Full of Qualities. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho (1880–1940) on Buddha Nature.

Without ever straying more than a few kilometres from the valleys of the 'Dzam thang area of southern Amdo where he was born, a stronghold of the Jo nang tradition, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho (1880–1940) had a very sedentary life. Still, he was exposed to a broad range of philosophical views through teachers, such as 'Ba' mda' dGe legs (1844-1904) and Ngag dbang chos 'byor (1846-1910), who also appreciated dGe lugs scholasticism and who had studied with some of the most prominent bKa' brgyud and rNying ma authorities of the 19th century, such as Kong sprul (1813–1899), dPal sprul (1808–1887), and Mi pham (1846–1912). This paper examines how this broad range of views translated to Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's position on the

polarizing topic of buddha nature. On the basis of key passages from two of his major philosophical works, the Illuminating Light (Rab gsal snang) and Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes (mThar ‘dzin gdung ‘phrog), I will argue that he sought to harmonize the orthodox perspective of his own tradition on this subject with that, essentially opposite, of the dGe lugs pas. In line with the latter, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho presents buddha nature as immanent in all sentient beings inasmuch as it is nothing but the mind’s emptiness of inherent existence that is determined through logical-analytical investigation. On the other hand, he does not depart from the fundamental view of Dol po pa (1292–1361) and elaborates on that same buddha nature qua emptiness in positive terms. Accordingly, he maintains that, once it is directly realized in the meditative equipoise of the noble ones of Mahāyāna in which all adventitious stains are naturally exhausted, buddha nature becomes manifests as primordially existent, replete with qualities, and transcending all conceptual elaborations.



Martina Draszczyk
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

Buddha Nature as Seen by Early Bka’ brgyud Masters

Sgam po pa (1079-1153), whose way of teaching had such an impact on his disciples that the traditions evolving from them were all summed up under the umbrella Dwags po Bka’ brgyud, is well known for his Precious Ornament of Liberation (Thar pa rin po che’i rgyan). He begins this Mahāyāna manual by emphasizing that the very basis for the spiritual process culminating in awakening is *sugatagarbha and proceeds to identify buddha nature with emptiness. On a first glance this seems to resemble presentations of buddha nature from a negating perspective. However, in a number of his other teachings recorded by his disciples and collected in his Gsung ‘bum, he is very specific in his understanding of mind’s emptiness. In his “Excellent Qualities, Teachings to the Assembly”

(Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs), he points out that mind is not mere essencelessness, but rather coemergent wisdom which he in turn equates with natural awareness (tha mal gyi shes pa), both key terms of Bka’ brgyud Mahāmudrā. While Sgam po pa rather uses this terminology and hardly ever the term buddha nature, La yag pa (12 c.), one of his immediate disciples, explicitly equates nonarising, coemergent wisdom, and natural awareness with buddha nature imbued with inconceivable buddha qualities. A century later, during the time of the Third Karma pa (1284–1339), it had become standard that Bka’ brgyud masters equated natural awareness with buddha nature endowed with qualities while simultaneously refraining from attributing any substantial quality to it. This paper’s intention is to take a closer look at the early masters and explore how their meditation-oriented approach is based in both affirming buddha nature as the ground and goal of Buddhist soteriology and avoiding its reification into an entity with real properties.



Khenpo Tamphel
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

The Difference Between a Sentient Being and a Buddha: ‘Jig rten gsum mgon’s Instruction on the Process of Confusion.

This paper will present the text *Phyag chen ‘khrul pa rtsad gcod ‘khrul lugs ngos ‘dzin gyi gdams pa (A Mahāmudra Investigation into Confusion: An Instruction for Identifying the Process of Confusion)* by ‘Jig rten gsum mgon. This text explains what differentiates sentient beings from buddhas and how they are ultimately inseparable. The disciple Mkhan po Bzod pa asks his teacher to clarify where confusion comes from and which came first: a buddha or a sentient being. ‘Jig rten gsum mgon answers that neither came first, that there is no difference in terms of time between the two, and that the first buddha is the primordial buddha (*adibuddha*), which is the *dharmata (chos nyid)*, and the first sentient being is the *dharmin (chos can)*. The *dharmata* and *dharmin* is the basis of all (*kun gzhi*). He explains

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that the *dharmata* exists within all sentient beings, and their confusion is caused by not recognizing that this *dharmata* exists within them. Recognizing this *dharmata* is to become a buddha according to 'Jig rten gsum mgon. This is a profound text that shows how sentient beings and buddhas are related, how confusion arises that leads to *samsara*, and how recognition of the true nature of sentient beings is the way to enlightenment. We will discuss the major points of this text and how *dharmata* is related to the idea of buddha nature of the *Uttaratantra*.



Christian Charrier
TSADRA FOUNDATION

&



Patrick Carré
TSADRA FOUNDATION
PADMAKARA TRANSLATION GROUP

Uttaratantraśāstra: A New French Translation from Tibetan According to Jamgön Kongtrul's Commentary

We would like to share insights from our work on the recently published French translation of the *Uttaratantraśāstra* following Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary. *Traité de la Continuité suprême du Grand Véhicule* (Padmakara 2019) will be available at the symposium. As this is a third attempt at translating Maitreya's root stanzas in French, we will give a brief survey of what has been done before and try to convey how our translation, in keeping with the meditative lineage of the works of Maitreya, aims at providing a direct access to

the « heart matter » or the « reality of the quintessence » (*snying po don*), as Kongtrul often calls the Tathāgata-garbha.

Linguistically, our main challenge has been to keep a « classical » style with an « experiential » flavour and bridge the gap between flowery poetry and philosophical prose. As our choices indeed reflect our understanding of the treatise, this presentation will lead us to express our personal views of the contents.



Douglas Duckworth
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Sentient Beings Within: Buddha-Nature and the Great Perfection

This paper describes the status of a sentient being in the buddha rather than how the buddha, or buddha-nature, exists in sentient beings. It focuses in particular on how buddha-nature is interpreted by Mipam (1846-1912) in light of his tradition of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*). The qualities of a buddha, as present or not at the time of a sentient being, is an issue closely associated with Madhyamaka debates in Tibet around “other-emptiness” (*gzhan stong*) and “self-emptiness” (*rang stong*). A position that accepts that the qualities of the buddha are primordially present, unconditioned, and thus not newly produced, is closely connected to the affirmation of an “other-emptiness” view. While Mipam accepts this position, he also qualifies his assertion by emphasizing the way that the buddha-nature is also empty, and by making a distinction between the way things are (in which all of the buddha's qualities are primordially present), and the way things appear (in which the qualities of a buddha are newly produced). This paper considers the way his unique treatment of buddha-nature reflects his legacy of the Great Perfection.



Alexander Gardner
TREASURY OF LIVES



&



Marcus Perman
TSADRA FOUNDATION



The Buddha-Nature Project: Expanding Buddhist Literacy in the Digital Age

The purpose of the buddha-nature website is to provide a resource hub for trustworthy information for learning about and teaching the concept of buddha-nature, its associated texts, teachings, lineages, and relevant Buddhist ideas. Unique content will be shared on the site, but it will primarily act as a broker for other projects and authors that have already created quality materials, which we curate for specific audiences.

Online publishing of research and educational material have become a ubiquitous means of sharing information and analysis. Yet despite the Internet's potential for greater accessibility, Digital Humanities projects almost universally replicate the limitations of print media. Despite the great flexibility of the Web, many projects in Tibetan and Buddhist studies remain targeted to a single audience; most often an elite community of scholars. By employing contemporary techniques of user experience design, open source technologies and collaborative tools, coupled with multimedia resources, this project extends itself beyond common examples of digital libraries and takes a step forward for users in the Digital Humanities.



David Higgins
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA



Buddha-Nature and Selfhood

The eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje's (1507–1554) prolific writings on tathāgatagarbha contain several extended disquisitions on the topic of how buddha nature relates to different conceptions of selfhood. On the one hand, he broadly rejects, along the lines of standard Madhyamaka critiques of the belief in self (ātmagrāha), any equation between buddha nature and a self. While his critiques take in the controversial current of early Indian buddha nature theory that had equated buddha nature with a true self, their primary target is 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal's (1392-1481) identification of buddha nature with a subtle self, which was allegedly made under the tutelage of Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa's (1357–1419) conception of a subtle self. On the other hand, the Karma pa does accept a conception of authentic selfhood or transcendent perfection of self (ātmapāramitā) advanced in certain Tathāgatagarbha and Buddhist tantric texts that is said to be realized precisely through understanding selflessness. A touchstone of his attempt to reconcile these two seemingly antithetical views on the relationship between buddha nature and selfhood is to regard them as complementary rather than contradictory. On this view, the negation of self is regarded as an indispensable moment in the discovery of authentic selfhood, which is in this case synonymous with dharmakāya and resultant buddha nature. This presentation will explore the broad range of Indian and Tibetan views on buddha nature and selfhood considered by Mi bskyod rdo rje and show how he presented and defended his own tradition's position in relation or reaction to these.

Presentations



Shenpen Hookham

AWAKENED HEART SANGHA

The impact of a Shentong (gzhan stong) interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha doctrine from the point of view of a western Buddhist practitioner

This paper briefly contrasts a Rangtong (*rang stong*) and Shentong (*gzhan stong*) interpretation of Buddhism and looks at how the Shentong interpretation of *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine impacts on the understanding and practice of westerners, taking into account the way the translation of key terms into English is affecting the way they are understood and used. Some consideration is given to how *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine relates to the earliest accounts of what the Buddha taught and how the seeds of the controversy around *Tathāgatagarbha* and the Shentong interpretation of Buddhism was present even at the time of the Buddha. This relates to how the tradition has interpreted the Buddha's teaching on not-self over the millennia up until today. We have ended up with two very different versions of what Buddhism is about and what *Tathāgatagarbha* means and this relates to the impact Buddhism as a whole is likely to have on modern thought in general.



Hong Luo

SICHUAN UNIVERSITY

Observing the Link between Self-awareness and Buddha Nature in Ratnā-

karasānti's Prajñāpāramitopadeśa

Self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana/svasaṃvitti*) plays a central role in Ratnākarasānti's doctrinal system, it is the locus of *prakāśa*. Focusing on the six summarizing verses at the end of the *Yathāvadbhāvikatāyāṃ cintāmayī prajñā* section in the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*, this paper aims to 1) present Ratnākarasānti's understanding of self-awareness as sketched in these verses, 2) trace the possible sources of his sketch, and 3) observe the link between *svasaṃvedana* and Buddha nature in his doctrinal system.



Sina Joos

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

The Role of the Ratnagotravibhāga in Tā ra nā tha's dBu ma theg mchog

Tā ra nā tha (1575-1635) is considered second in importance to Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361) regarding the proclamation of *gzhan stong* and the number of his authored works. He clarified and expanded Dol po pa's exegesis of *gzhan stong* unlike anyone before him. Tā ra nā tha's *dBu ma theg mchog* covers a variety of topics relevant to the *gzhan stong* view, including essential Mahāyāna concepts that range from *Yogācāra* to *Madhyamaka* and from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* to the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*.

In the third chapter of the *dBu ma theg mchog*, Tā ra nā tha gives a detailed presentation of buddha nature, which he equates to the *dharmadhātu* and *suchness*. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* is quoted extensively and exclusively in this chapter, while the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* is quoted throughout the *dBu ma theg mchog*. This chapter is divided into nine main points, and the fourth point alone, referred to as "endowed with all aspects," is illustrated by six verses from the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. However, also most of the other points (permanence, pervasion, wakefulness, unmixed/untainted and union) are attested by direct quotes from the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

This study will examine the ways in which Tā ra nā tha utilizes the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in his *dBu ma theg*

mchog to assert his understanding of buddha nature as gzhan stong. It will be based on the root text as well as the commentary written by Tā ra nā tha's disciple Ye shes rgya mtsho according to direct yearly instructions from Tā ra nā tha himself. As Tā ra nā tha is known to have expanded and systemized Dol po pa's view, Tā ra nā tha's position will also be compared to that of Dol po pa.



Khenpo Ngawang Jorden

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST ACADEMY

Revisiting Gorampa on Buddha Nature

I will share some of my thoughts and understanding of Gorampa's interpretation of the concept of Buddha nature presented in his Supplement to the Three Vows. This text was written to critique and clarify what Gorampa saw as misrepresentations and misunderstandings of the theory of Buddha nature that were prevalent throughout Tibet in the fifteenth century. The Jonangpa school of Tibetan Buddhism in particular was one of the major subjects of his criticism, whose assertions on Buddha nature he refuted, presenting and defending his own interpretations.



Christopher V. Jones

ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Selfhood, Secrecy, Singularity: Reassessing the Early Life of the Tathāgatagarbha in India

The early history of Buddha-nature teaching in India is in the process of some reassessment. Michael Ra-

dich's contention that there is good reason to take the *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* as our earliest source for an account of the *tathāgatagarbha* invites a fresh look at the wider corpus of Indian literature concerned with this expression, and with it the affirmation that what is essential to a Buddha (*buddhadhātu*) abides in all sentient beings. My research has focused on a revised trajectory of how Buddha-nature was conceptualized in the first five hundred years of the Common Era, informed by the hypothetical primacy of Indian sources that explain *tathāgatagarbha* to refer to the permanent, indestructible *buddhadhātu*, and which teach that this constitutes nothing less than the Buddha's account of the self (*ātman*).

I contend that the most likely trajectory of Buddha-nature thought in India entailed a creative reimagining of the expression *tathāgatagarbha* away from contentious 'ātma-vādin' origins. With reference to the Indian *tathāgatagarbha* corpus delineated by Takasaki Jikidō, this paper will explore a revised picture of the development of early *tathāgatagarbha* thought by attending to several related themes: the relationship between Buddha-nature and discourse about the self, the claim that it constitutes a 'secret' revealed by the Buddha – a complement to the teaching that there is only a single vehicle (*ekayāna*) to liberation – and the extent to which Buddha-nature should be articulated in terms of the original purity of the mind.



Kazuo Kano

KOMAZAWA UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

Examples of the Term tathāgatagarbha Appearing in Indic Tantric Literature

This presentation focuses on the term *tathāgatagarbha* appearing in tantric scriptures and commentaries composed by Indic authors. In general, it has been pointed out that the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching has a strong doctrinal impact on tantric teachings, but actual examples of *tathāgatagarbha* appearing in tantric literature are rather rare in comparison with other terms of non-tantric Mahāyāna origin, such as the five *jñānas* of

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the Buddha, buddha's bodies, etc. Through this investigation I shall clarify purposes of integration of this term into tantric contexts in each example. I have in my previous article in 2012 dealt with the literature of the Yoginī-tantra and the Highest yoga-tantra classes, and will here include those of Yogatantra-class.



Casey Kemp

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

The Luminous Basis for Buddhahood: 'Jig rten mgon po's Pith Instructions for Merging the Nature of Mind with the Dharmakāya

This paper will present an overview and analysis of 'Jig rten mgon po's (1143–1217) explanation of luminosity (*prabhāsvaratā*; 'od gsal ba) from his Mahāmudrā perspective in terms of basis, path, and fruit. This is most clearly outlined in his 'Od gsal nam lnga gcig tu bsre ba'i man ngag, a pith instruction on merging (*bsre ba*), a genre of Bka' brgyud teachings generally associated with the *nā ro chos drug* tradition. While *chos drug* instructions on luminosity tend to focus on deep sleep tantric practices, this text outlines luminosity in terms of mind's true nature, which is to be pointed out, recognized, and ultimately merged with the *dharmakāya*. 'Jig rten mgon po offers a five-fold typology of luminosity: the luminosity of the basis, the path, dream, the *bar do*, and the ultimate. In this text, he explicitly explains that the luminosity of the basis is the nature of mind, described in terms of buddha nature, and is none other than the *dharmakāya* itself. 'Jig rten mgon po goes on to explain the process of "merging" this basis with the path luminosity by way of pointing out instructions, which subsequently merges with the dream and *bar do* states naturally through direct recognition. Finally, this (collective) recognition of the basis is to be merged with the ultimate luminosity, the *dharmakāya*. 'Jig rten mgon po thus offers a framework for how the different types of tantric and non-tantric luminosity as understood in the early Bka' brgyud Mahāmūdra tradition

can be merged by taking the nature of mind as both the basis for Buddhahood and ultimately inseparable from the fruit of the *dharmakāya*.



Seiji Kumagai

KYOTO UNIVERSITY

How the Concepts of "Buddha-Nature" (Tathāgatagarbha) and "Innate Enlightenment" (Hongaku) were interpreted by Shinran (1173-1263), Founder of the Jōdo-Shin-Shū School of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.

Japan is one of the most prominent Buddhist countries. Located in the Far East, this country's Buddhism has developed many peculiar characteristics and concepts. One of these specific ideas is the theory of "Innate Enlightenment" (*hongaku*), which is closely related in meaning to the term "Buddha-Nature" (*tathāgatagarbha*).

The theory of "Buddha-Nature" insists that since all sentient beings possess the essence of Buddha, they are all capable of becoming enlightened in the future. On the other hand, the theory of "Innate Enlightenment" admits as a fact that all sentient beings are innately enlightened, or that all phenomena are a manifestation of Buddha. The extended interpretation of the theory of "Buddha-Nature" was highly developed in Japanese Tendai school.

The unique theory of "Innate Enlightenment" was actually criticized by Japanese Buddhist monks both inside and outside the Tendai school. For example, the theory does not appear in any of the attested treatises of Genshin (942-1017), a highly influential representative of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism (although it does appear in forged works attributed to him). Honen (1133-1212), the founder of the Jōdo-Shū school, took a contrary position against the idea of "Innate Enlightenment" as admitted by modern Buddhologists.

However, Yoshiro Tamura insists that Honen's disci-

ples, including Shinran (1173-1263), the founder of Jōdo-Shin-Shū school, embraced the theory of “Innate Enlightenment” against their master’s position. Japanese Buddhologists after Tamura have also defended that Shinran was influenced by such a theory to a greater or lesser extent.

However, the current speaker has been able to prove that Shinran, as well as his master Honen, clearly showed a negative attitude against the theory of “Innate Enlightenment”, although he used terms which are often regarded to be associated with the theory. This presentation will overview Shinran’s position concerning the theories of “Buddha-Nature” and “Innate Enlightenment”.



Katrin Querl
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

Preliminary Notes on the Notion of Buddha Nature in the Single Intention

‘Jig-rten mgon-po Rin-chen dpal or ‘Jig-rten gsum-mgon (1143-1217) was one of the most influential figures in the intellectual milieu of 12th and 13th century Tibet. Although his teachings that were compiled by his students into the text corpus known as the Single Intention (dGongs gcig) were highly contested by some of his contemporaries, most famously by Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga’ rgyal-mtshan (1182-1251), on the contrary, other scholars like ‘Gos Lo-tṣā-ba gZhon-nu dpal (1392-1481) reportedly based their Mahāmudrā hermeneutics and exegesis of the Uttaratantra on his works.

Even though there is no independent work on buddha nature by ‘Jig-rten gsum-mgon, the topic is widely discussed in the Single Intention. Relevant themes include the relation between buddha nature and emptiness, the qualities that buddha nature possesses, that it is of virtuous nature and worthy of dedication, and the defense of a single potential (rigs gcig) and a single vehicle (theg pa gcig).

Drawing on texts such as the two earliest commentaries

on the Single Intention by direct disciples of ‘Jig-rten gsum-mgon and other records of his teachings, this paper provides an overview of this pivotal thinker’s view on buddha nature. It thus aims to shed further light on the early Mahāmudrā tradition of Tibet, with a particular focus on its meditative approach (sgom lugs) to buddha nature literature.



Kurtis Schaeffer
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Notes from the Cave: Jikmé Lingpa on Buddha-Nature

Jikmé Lingpa (‘Jigs med gling pa, 1730-1798) was a key figure in the development of late-period Great Perfection thought in Tibet. His major philosophical work, the Treasury of Precious Qualities (Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod), was much-studied in the years after its composition in 1789. The Treasury’s presentation of Great Perfection ontology is grounded (if you will) in Buddha Nature. Perhaps more interestingly, much of Jikmé Lingpa’s debate with interlocutors about Great Perfection revolves around Buddha Nature rather than Great Perfection per se. Jikmé Lingpa was also deeply skeptical about the possibility of expressing anything of value about Buddha Nature, as opposed to the value of experiencing Buddha Nature for oneself in meditation. “The best commentary on Buddha Nature I’ve ever seen is the one I made in my cave!” he quips. This paper portrays Jikmé Lingpa’s antinomian approach to Buddha Nature in the context of Great Perfection thought, as well as his more ephemeral bits of commentary, conversation, and opinion about Buddha Nature that can be found scattered throughout his life writings and occasional pieces.

Presentations



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Tantric Zhentong Visions of Tathāgatagarbha in Tibetan Kālacakra Yoga Manuals

This paper investigates the concept of *śūnyatā-bimba* (*stong gzugs*), “empty images” or *expressions of emptiness* in the *Kālacakra Tantra*, and gives attention to how this phenomenon was interpreted by the Tibetan Kālacakra master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (1292-1361) and his immediate disciples to be direct expressions of *tathāgatagarbha*. We are interested in the tantric epistemology of these “empty images,” textual connections to *tathāgatagarbha*, and correlative contemplative experiences that are described within Tibetan meditation manuals on the Kālacakra sixfold vajrayoga. As we find in Dolpopa’s writings, as well as by later Jonang authors, these expressions of *tathāgatagarbha* are observable and experiential, and come about through the careful execution of the yogic procedures explicated in the vajrayoga practice of the Kālacakra. We explore the process of how these expressions are said to be experienced through the precise process of withdrawing one’s sense faculties from mundane stimuli, hence rescinding one’s involvement with objectification through a threefold practice of isolating the body, voice, and mind (*dben pa gsum*), and how this results in the philosophical and contemplative visions of tantric zhentong (*sn-gags gi gzhan stong*). To contextualize Dolpopa’s claims, we analyze passages from early meditation procedural manuals on the sixfold vajrayoga practices composed by two of his closest disciples, Chokle Namgyal (1306-1386) and Lotsāwa Lodro Pel (1313-1391), interlinear commentarial writings on the *Kālacakra Tantra*, prescriptive guidebooks about remedying blockages to meditative realization, and autobiographical accounts of yogins to better understand the phenomenon of these expressions of *tathāgatagarbha* and their categorical construction as contemplative experience within Tibetan literature. In so doing, we analyze Buddhist

doctrinal relationships of emptiness and *tathāgatagarbha*, and probe the epistemological nature of these expressions to be nature-born experiences, external referents, visionary “images of buddhas,” and/or intentional objects of meditation.



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From Buddha Nature to Original Enlightenment “Contemplating Suchness” in Medieval Japan

Most theories of buddha nature circulating in medieval Japan entailed the proposition that all phenomena, being empty, are nondual and mutually inclusive, each encompassing and pervading all others without losing its individual character; thus the “buddha” is somehow present in ordinary beings. To many Buddhist thinkers, this suggested the possibility that buddhahood could be attained quickly. “Realizing buddhahood with this very body” (*sokushin jōbutsu*)—what it might mean, its preconditions, and the practices for achieving it—was vociferously debated. Concern for rapid attainment culminated in the Tendai Buddhist doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku hōmon*), which asserts that buddhahood is not a goal at all but the true status of all things: Suffering arises from the failure to realize this, while liberation lies in the insight, or even the faith, that one is buddha already. Hongaku thought has often been disparaged in modern scholarship as an uncritical world affirmation that, in valorizing all phenomena as expressions of original enlightenment, in effect negated the need for practice and legitimated sinful acts. It is more accurately understood, however, as a radical inversion of practice and attainment: buddhahood is not a future achievement but inherent from the outset, and practice is not a means to realize buddhahood but its paradigmatic expression. This paper will examine how original enlightenment thought grew out of major strands of East Asian Mahāyāna thinking about buddha nature. It will also illustrate some of its defining features as seen through a twelfth-century text

known as Shinnyo kan (“Contemplation of Suchness”), which asserts that buddhahood lies precisely in contemplating self and others—humans and animals, pebbles and trees—as buddhas, just as they are.



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Rong-zom-pa on the Tathāgatagarbha and Pratītyasamutpāda Theories

The critique of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine by the two Japanese scholars Shirō Matsumoto and Noriaki Hakamaya has compelled scholars engaged in the study of Buddhism to reflect on the Buddhist status of the doctrine. While the agenda and the underlying motives of these two scholars may be different, their dismissal of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as non-Buddhist may have been inspired by some position found in Tibetan Buddhism. To my knowledge, however, Tibetan Buddhist scholars have never gone to the extent of apodictically rejecting the theory as non-Buddhist while some Tibetan Buddhist (e.g. Dol-po-pa’s or Jo-nang-pa’s) interpretation thereof has certainly been. One of the most significant criticisms of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is that it contradicts or disregards the doctrine of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which has often been eulogized as the quintessence of the teachings of the Buddha. In this paper, I wish to (re)examine how the eleventh-century rNying-ma scholar Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po interprets the *tathāgatagarbha* theory particularly in relation to the *pratītyasamutpāda* theory and whether or not he viewed the *tathāgatagarbha* and *pratītyasamutpāda* theories to be mutually contradictory.



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New research on the concept of buddha-nature in India: the beginnings

The idea that all living beings carry a buddha embryo within themselves or already have full-fledged buddha-nature is one of the most pervasive ideas in the history of Buddhist thought. Buddhist thinkers have been struggling with the different concepts based on such a thought and its meanings for soteriology and spiritual training. In the 1990s the traditions that promote the idea of buddha-nature were heavily criticized and denounced as being non-Buddhist by a Japanese group of scholars who thought of themselves as “true” followers of Buddhism which, so they claimed, always must be “critical” with regard to its underlying philosophical structure. Such normative claims have lost their pervasive power nowadays. During the last decade, research on the earliest history of buddha-nature thought in India has gained a new momentum. Early texts promoting buddha-nature thought in India have been reconsidered and new theories with regard to the origins of the theory of buddha-nature were formulated.

The talk will summarize some of these new findings and discuss possible reasons for why the idea that all sentient beings have buddha-nature possibly made its appearance. It will be argued that the idea is an integral part of Buddhist intellectual history and that it can be linked to other concepts found in older Buddhist writings.

