



LUDWIG-
MAXIMILIANS-
UNIVERSITÄT
MÜNCHEN

FAKULTÄT FÜR KULTURWISSENSCHAFTEN
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GUEST LECTURE IN INDOLOGY & BUDDHIST STUDIES

Mittwoch, 25. Januar, 16–18 Uhr c.t., Ludwigstr. 31, 427

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The Four Inconceivable Points (*acintyasthāna*) in the *Tathāgataḡuhyaka-sūtra* and Its Influence on Early Mahāyāna Notions of Buddhahood

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Abstract

The *Tathāgataḡuhyakasūtra* (Ch. 如来秘密經) is an early and influential Mahāyāna scripture, first translated in the 3rd century by *Dharmarakṣa (竺法護), under the name **ḡuhyakādhipatinirdeśa* (密迹金剛力士經). In the 6th century, this text was further incorporated into Chapter 3 of the **Mahāratnakūṭa* (大宝積經) collection by *Bodhiruci (菩提流志). I am currently preparing a new edition of the Sanskrit *codex unicus*.

It has long been debated whether the *Tathāgataḡuhyaka-dharmamukha* (如来秘密法門) referred to in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-Mahāsūtra* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* is the *Tathāgataḡuhyakasūtra*. This topic will be further explored in this presentation. I will also show that the group of “four inconceivable points” (**caturacintyasthāna*, 四不可思議事) known to early canonical works such as the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* plays a significant role in the *Tathāgataḡuhyakasūtra*. Among these, the **buddhaviśayācintyasthāna* (佛土境界不可思議) will be discussed at length, which will lead us to consider some of the reasons that may have led to the composition of the *Tathāgataḡuhyakasūtra*.

About the speaker

Dr. Hiromitsu Ikuma is research fellow in the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taishō University. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Indology and History of Indian Buddhism at the Graduate school of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University in 2019. He is currently working on an edition of the Sanskrit *Tathāgataḡuhyakasūtra*. He is involved in the Taisho University study group dedicated to the publication of a transliteration of the Gilgit manuscripts of the Larger *Prajñāpāramitā*. The same study group has recently undertaken to publish new transliterations of Central Asian manuscripts of the *Lotus Sūtra*.