Kuiji’s analysis of individual capacities for enlightenment: Philosophical foundations of his Chinese Yogācāra Buddhist tradition

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Kuiji’s analysis of individual capacities for enlightenment: 
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Introduction: A brief sketch of Chinese Buddhism’s understanding of various individual capacities for enlightenment

According to Mahāyāna Buddhism as seen in the Lotus Sūtra and many other Buddhist texts revered in Chinese and other East Asian traditions, the Buddha used his insight into each individual’s capacity for understanding, to tailor his teachings about how they should proceed toward overcoming suffering. For this reason, the Buddha is sometimes called the Great Physician, having the ability to diagnose an individual’s case and prescribe a specific remedy for suffering. This is the Buddha’s skillful means or skill-in-means (upāya), his expertise in crafting a personal plan for liberation. Thus, Mahāyāna Buddhist typically see the overall ethical imperative as being the same regardless of an individual’s aptitude, that is, a Buddha and a Bodhisattva is obligated to save all sentient beings from suffering. However, the specific ethical practices vary according to individual aptitude.

Historically, Chinese Buddhists have generally held the belief that all people are endowed with Buddha-Nature, the innate ability to become enlightened. For example, in Chapter 12 of the Lotus Sūtra, the Buddha predicts the eventual enlightenment of even his antagonistic cousin Devadatta along with others once considered icchantika, deluded people thought to be incapable of attaining liberation. He further explains that some of the things the Devadatta did that appear to be hostile were actually indications that he was a good friend, because that enabled the Buddha to perfect the Six Pāramitās.

Chinese Buddhists found theoretical basis for universal Buddha-Nature in Indian Tathāgathagarbha thought, which holds that all beings have within them an innate “womb of the Tathagata”, the Buddha. However, based on his own study of Sanskrit Yogācāra texts, the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India, Xuanzang (c. 602–664 CE), opposed this long-held and cherished view of Chinese Buddhism with the theory that instead we have within us a Storehouse Consciousness (Sanskrit: ālayavijñāna) that accumulates the karmic seeds of negative emotions. Accordingly, for those able to do so, dedication to the Buddha’s Noble Path is the means of clearing the impure seeds stored in the ālayavijñāna and tied to individual and social suffering. Likewise, as the Eightfold Path instructs, individuals must help others to do the same. Yet, Xuanzang found that Yogācāra also taught that not all people are capable of transforming the karmic seeds of suffering and thereby attaining liberation. According to this understanding of Yogācāra’s teachings, a person seeking enlightenment must necessarily use skill-in-means to engage others based on their innate capacities, just as the Buddha had done. But what are the categories of human capacities, perhaps used by the Buddha as the Great Physician to prescribe remedies to suffering? Indeed, what is the nature of Buddha-Nature and of transformation? It is necessary to
answer these questions in order to apply Yogācāra’s practical ethics to actual individual and group situations. Xuanzang left instructions on how to receive the Bodhisattva Vows to save sentient beings. He also left a text that lists and explain specific ethical acts that those aspiring toward enlightenment must necessarily put into practice. However, he did not leave the necessary details about individual capacities. According to the person who identified himself as Xuanzang’s closest student and successor of his Chinese Buddhist tradition, Kuiji (632–682), this task was left to him, taught by Xuanzang privately.

This paper describes Kuiji’s detailed analysis of individual capacities, which is the philosophical basis of his entire system of enlightenment. Our treatment of his scheme includes a description of his breakdown of (1) Two aspects of Buddha-Nature, (2) Three Steps in the Process of Transformation (3) Two Divisions of the Basis (4) Five Gotras, and (5) Three types of icchantika. We begin by describing the background to Kuiji’s understanding.

**Background to Kuiji’s description of lineages of individual capacities (gotra)**

According to the scholar Lu Cheng, the reason Xuanzang strictly followed the Five Gotra doctrine and brought it back to China in face of stanch opposition by the other Buddhist schools, is that just before he returned to China, his teacher Śīlabhadra (c. 6th–7th centuries) demanded that he do so.¹ Centuries later, *The Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* records that among his many students, Xuanzang only authorized Kuiji to propagate the Five Gotra teachings, a claim that has been often disputed from then until now. According to that document, Xuanzang said, “Concerning the dharmic tradition of the five natures, only you can propagate it and no one else!”² The doctrine of Five Gotra came to be a distinctive and essential feature of Kuiji’s tradition, called Consciousness-only (Chinese, Weishi 唯識; Sanskrit, Vijñaptimātra;) by its Chinese proponents and Dharma Characteristics (Chinese, Faxiang 法相) by its opponents. The strength of Kuiji’s adherence to Indian Yogācāra thought and the Five Gotra doctrine is such that modern scholars, including We Xueguo, have said that his tradition is the most distinctive stream of thought to resist Sinification in Chinese Buddhist history.³

According to the Kuiji, who grounds his discussion on the Dharmapāla and Śīlabhadra interpretive lineage of Yogācāra, there are only two types of people capable of attaining enlightenment. They are those who are of the Bodhisattva lineage (gotra) and those of the indeterminate lineage. These two types of lineages are also known as ertyou (二有), the two kinds of sentient beings possessing Buddha-Nature. The other three types of gotra are the Śrāvaka lineage, the Pratyekabuddha lineage, and the Icchantika lineage. These three are known as the sanwa (三無) the three kinds of sentient beings without Buddha-Nature.⁴ Accordingly and in opposition to general Chinese Buddhist belief, the fifth of these lineages, the icchantika, is comprised of people who do not possess any potential for achieving awakening of any kind. The doctrine of Give Gotra is textually supported by various Yogācāra texts. From references in the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the *Buddhabhūmi*

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² T 50, 2061: 725c.
³ Wu Xueguo, 1998: 32.
⁴ FEB, 1989: 1179.
sūtropadeśa, the Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra,\(^5\) and other texts, we know that the doctrine of Five Gotra emerged in the time of the early Yogācāra theorists, Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu, that is, 3rd-4th centuries CE. Philosophically, the doctrine of Five Gotras is grounded in the Yogācāra ideas of the turning around of the basis (Chinese: zhuanyi 轉依; Sanskrit: āśrayaparivṛtti), which is further established based on the doctrine of consciousnesses (Chinese: shi; Sanskrit: vijñāna) and karmic seeds (Chinese: zhongzhi 種子; Sanskrit: bijī).

In attempt to make palatable the parts of this theory that his detractors found unacceptable, Kuiji supplemented it with alternative interpretations of Buddha-Nature found outside of Yogācāra texts, such as that in the Śrīmālādevī Śīvanāda Sūtra. By so doing, he shaped his own theory of two aspects of Buddha-Nature.

**Kuiji’s theory of two aspects of Buddha-Nature:**

*Theoretical Buddha-Nature and Practical Buddha-Nature*

To explain Buddha-Nature, Kuiji distinguished between two aspects of it: the Theoretical Nature of Buddha-Nature and the Practical Nature of Buddha-Nature. The Theoretical Nature of Buddha-Nature is equivalent to the tathāgatagarbha as found in the Śrīmālādevī Śīvanāda Sūtra. In that sūtra, all beings share in the tathāgatagarbha or womb of Buddhahood. This means that theoretically, everyone has the capacity for becoming a Buddha, such thatness and the ultimate truth are accessible to all. That is to say, there is a certain non-dual, non-conceptual, uncompounded, and positivistic truth that pervades all phenomena. Kuiji agreed that all sentient beings possess this theoretical Buddha-Nature. Practically, however, Kuiji identifies with tathāgatagarbha as depicted in the Laiṅkāvatāra Sūtra. That sūtra refers to a sentient being’s “capability” of becoming a Buddha, which involves the transformation of the Storehouse Consciousness from impure to pure. From the perspective of Practical Buddha-Nature, Kuiji argued that the Yogācāra theory of Five Gotras and the concept that icchantika cannot attain nirvāṇa are both rational and correct. He concluded that not all sentient beings are capable of attaining Buddhahood. In this way, by describing two aspects of Buddha-Nature and three kinds of icchantika, Kuiji brought together the conflicting doctrines of Five Gotras and tathāgatagarbha.

According to this doctrine, while icchantika have no aptitude for attaining liberation of any kind, those of the next two gotras, those of arhants (“worthy ones” in Theravada Buddhism) and pratyekabuddhas, can realize some attainment, but will never attain Buddhahood. The principle of Five Gotras is further grounded on the complex Yogācāra doctrine of the turning around of (or transformation of) the psycho-physical bases for cognition. This doctrine holds that turning toward liberation is triggered only by pure seeds that innately reside in a person’s Storehouse Consciousness. The practical goal of Buddhism, according to the doctrine of turning the basis, is to purify all impure seeds in the Storehouse Consciousness, which will additionally turn around the psycho-physical Storehouse itself and thereby completely transform consciousness. In its untransformed or unturned state, the Storehouse Consciousness harbors elements that lead people to

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\(^5\) Samdhinirmocana Sūtra (T 16, 676: 695a), the Buddhabhūmi sūtropadeśa (T 26, 1530: 298a), the Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra (T 31, 1579: 569c).
incorrectly view the nature of the personal self and all phenomena. Turning around of the Storehouse Consciousness changes one's judgmental tendencies and leads to observing phenomena non-judgmentally, non-reactively, and without the imposition of a constructed "self" that is observing. This is called the "great mirror wisdom" since reality is reflected as it is without biases.

For Kuiji, knowing if a person has innately pure seeds in the Storehouse Consciousness and what kind of pure seeds they are is a critical index for achieving enlightenment. Since in Yogācāra thought the innate pure seed is further used as a synonym for gotra, innate capacity or lineage, only a person with such capacity can attain Buddhahood.

Although Kuiji's theory of Buddha-Nature was close to Indian Yogācāra philosophy, it was shocking to his Chinese contemporaries and triggered a series of debates during and after his time. Such debates occurred between Linruen (7th century) and Shentai (7th century) and between Huizhao (651-714) and Fabao (7th-8th centuries). Kuiji's main concern, was to enhance the analysis of those parts of the Gotra doctrine that seemed unacceptable to his contemporaries, which meant the concepts of icchantika and Buddha-Nature in particular.

In his Praise for the Mysterious Lotus Sūtra (Miaofa Lianhua Jing xuan zan, also called Fahua zan), Kuiji explains the two aspects of Buddha-Nature as follows.

The Sūtra of the Bodhisattva Goodness Precepts and the Bodhisattvabhūmi explain that there are two (kinds of people): one, those possessing a seed lineage (you zongxing, 有種姓), and two, those not possessing a seed lineage (wu zongxing, 無種姓). Those sūtras and śāstras say, “By nature, seed lineages are without a beginning and continuously mutually unfold and shift among the six superior positions.” According to this practical nature, there are those possessing a seed lineage. Because people with no seed lineage are also without a germinal predisposition, although they repeatedly generate the mind (to do so) with zeal, in the end they cannot attain bodhi (enlightenment). But, they can make accomplishments by means of their human and heavenly good roots. This is known as being without a natural disposition. That there are those who have this nature and those who do not have it, is explained based on practical nature. Hereafter, much is explained according to practical nature. Because theoretical nature is pervasive (i.e., all have it), all people are not without achievement and are only slightly different.

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7 Pusa shanjie jing, T 30, 1582 and n. 1583.

8 依《善戒經》、《地持論》中唯說有二：一有種姓，二無種姓。彼經論云性種姓者，無始法爾六處殊勝展轉相續，此依行性有種姓也。無種姓人無種性故，雖復發心勵行精進，終不能得無上菩提，但以人天善根而成就之，即無性也。此被有性非被於無，此依行性以說有無，已下多依行性而說，理性遍有故，依有非無勝劣異故。
Kuiji’s expression “a person with a seed lineage” (zongxing ren 种姓人) comes from the Sanskrit term gotra-bhū. It means a person in the family (xing 姓) of the Tathāgata, that is, one who has the capacity for enlightenment. Again, Kuiji uses the expression “seed nature” to mean an inherited or germinal predisposition for attaining Buddhahood. Kuiji’s explanation above makes it clear that whether or not sentient beings possess the potential to achieve enlightenment can be discussed only from the perspective of practical Buddha-Nature. From the perspective of theoretical Buddha-Nature, all sentient beings have Buddha-Nature and there are only superficial differences among them.

The Three Steps in The Process of Transformation

In addition to textual evidence, Kuiji’s theory of two aspects of Buddha-Nature relies on the Yogācāra doctrine of the transformation or turning of the basis. According to Yogācāra, there must be a basis for ideation. Today we might point to the brain, the mind, or some part of these as the basis. In Yogācāra, it is any of the eight consciousnesses. For example the ālayavijñāna is the basis for enlightened or deluded views of life because that is where the pure or impure karmic seeds are stored. That is, it is the basis or ground for attachments, defilements, etc., and is a basic factor in development toward Buddhahood. The enlightened, the unenlightened, the samsaric and the liberated, all have a psycho-physical basis for their current and future outlooks. Likewise, the sense organs are the basis for sense consciousness.

Turning of the basis from impure to pure is the process of liberation. It is the process of abandoning the causes of saṃsāra to attain nirvāṇa. It is the process of turning deluded consciousness toward wisdom (zhuanshi chengzhi 轉識成智) in order to attain Buddhahood. This means turning away from delusion and turning toward wisdom. Following Xuanzang’s Treatise on Consciousness-only (Cheng weishi lun), Kuiji analyzes three steps in the process of the turning the basis. He also describes two dimensions of the basis. The three steps of turning generally explain how the process of transformation of the basis happens. The three steps are: (1) embarking on the path capable of turning (nengzhuan dao 能轉道), (2) eradication of defilements through turning (suozhuan she 所轉捨), and (3) attainment through turning (suozhuan de 所轉得).

Regarding the first step, the path capable of turning is the Noble Path of the Buddha’s teachings. It is the main cause for sentient beings’ transformation from ordinary consciousness. The whole path capable of turning is organized into two main phases: embarking on the path capable of subduing (nengfu dao 能伏道) and embarking on the path cable of exterminating (nengduan dao 能斷道). The path capable of subduing is the stage in which a practitioner generates certain wisdom capable of preventing or subduing the actualization of afflicting hindrances (Chinese: fannaozhang 煩惱障; Sanskrit: kleśāvarāṇa) and cognitive hindrances (Chinese: suozhizhang 所知障; Sanskrit: jñeyāvarāṇa). Together these are known as the two hindrances. Afflicting hindrances are obstacles to liberation such as misunderstanding, anger, and jealousy. Cognitive hindrances are obstacles to liberation that come from the familiar way that we know the world. There are two types of cognitive hindrances: those based on wrong thinking, wrong teaching, etc.,

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9 Cheng weishi lun, T 31, 1585.
and those that one is born with. Those based on wrong thinking may be removed by arhats and pratyekabuddhas. Those that one is born with need to be treated through the wisdom and compassion of bodhisattvas. The path capable of exterminating is a more advanced stage in which a practitioner generates certain wisdom capable of completely and permanently uprooting the two hindrances. Again this is turning away from defilement and turning toward wisdom.

Regarding the second step, “eradication of defilements through turning” means getting rid of the obstacles and defilements that should be abandoned in the process of transformation. It includes the elimination of that which is to be exterminated (duoduan shi) and the elimination of that to be discarded (suopqi shi). The elimination of that which is to be exterminated refers to the eradication of the two hindrances. The elimination of that which is to be exterminated refers to all of the abandonment that takes place during each of the stages of a bodhisattva’s progress. Significantly differing from other versions of stages of a bodhisattva’s progress that were influential in China, such as that found in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Yogācāra’s Bodhisattvabhūmi outlines seven stages, beginning with the stage of innate potential (Sanskrit: gotrabhūmi). The other stages in the Bodhisattvabhūmi are resolute faith, superior aspiration, extreme bliss, correct practices (including those of morality), superior concentration, and insightful wisdom.

Regarding the third step in the process of transformation, “attainment through turning” refers to what will be achieved at the end of the process. There are two states to be achieved: the great nirvāṇa and the great wisdom or enlightenment (bodhi). The great nirvāṇa is the perfect peace that is attained after eliminating all afflictive hindrances. Kuiji considered there to be three types of great nirvāṇa. These are (1) nirvāṇa with a remainder, (2) nirvāṇa without a remainder, and (3) non-abiding nirvāṇa. While the first of these exist in other Buddhist traditions, the third is a Mahāyāna innovation that assumes the Buddha does not abide in nirvāṇa. There are also four types of great wisdom or enlightenment to be achieved after abandoning all obstacles to knowledge. In Kuiji’s epistemology, the four types of non-conceptual cognition are (1) great mirror wisdom, which is purified and transformed from the eighth consciousness: the ālayavijñāna, (2) wisdom with equality, which is purified and transformed from the seventh consciousness: deluded awareness, (3) wisdom of discerning, purified and transformed from the sixth consciousness: mental consciousness (thoughts, etc.), and (4) wisdom of accomplishment, purified and transformed from the five sensory consciousnesses.

Two Divisions of the Basis

Kuiji also grounds his understanding of the basis in Indian Yogācāra thought. In Xuanzang’s Treatise on Consciousness-only and Kuiji’s writings, the basis has two dimensions: (1) the basis for ignorance and enlightenment and (2) the basis for holding seeds (i.e., the

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10 成唯識論, T 31, 1585: 1a12. See Charles Muller’s explanation at http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?62.xml+id%28%27b6240-27b6240-77e5-969e%27%29
11 Cheng weishi lun, T 31, 1585: 54c.
ālayavijñāna). Between them, the transformation of the basis for ignorance and enlightenment provides a doctrinal foundation for Kuiji’s theory of theoretical Buddha-Nature. It does not assume a predisposition and focuses on the realization or failure to realize suchness (tathāta). In contrast, the transformation of the basis for holding seeds appears to closely correspond to Kuiji’s theory of practical Buddha-Nature. It is, therefore, the one most closely related to his analysis of innate individual capacities.

For Kuiji, from the perspective of theoretical Buddha-Nature, suchness is all-pervasive and therefore is a part of all beings. It is precisely because that ordinarily, sentient beings do not correctly realize it, that realization of suchness becomes the mark of enlightened beings. Consequently, from this perspective, the transformation of the basis is the transformation from an ordinary being into an awakened one, the process of going from not realizing suchness to realizing it. The transformation of the basis in Kuiji’s theory of theoretical Buddha-Nature also means that the key to enlightenment is realization of the difference between actually experiencing suchness and the positivistic understanding of suchness. Based on this, Lu Cheng interprets Kuiji as a thinker asserting a theory of distinguishing the ultimate nature of reality from its phenomenal characteristics. This doctrinal position is essential for distinguishing Kuiji’s Consciousness-only tradition from other schools of Chinese Buddhism, such as Tiantai and Huayan.

In contrast to theoretical Buddha-Nature, which uses Dharmapāla’s lineage of Yogācāra thought to reinterpret the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine of Buddha-Nature (that all beings innately have Buddha-Nature), Kuiji’s practical Buddha-Nature is entirely within the domain of Yogācāra doctrine. Relying on the authoritative Yogācāra text the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Kuiji first identifies practical Buddha-Nature with storehouse consciousness, the ālayavijñāna. In this way, practical Buddha-Nature represents Kuiji’s view on sentient being’s capacity for enlightenment and is based on the Yogācāra doctrine of turning around the basis. From the perspective of practical Buddha-Nature, Kuiji follows Xuanzang’s Treatise on Consciousness-only in saying that the ālayavijñāna is the base or basis consciousness (Chinese: benshi 本試) and is the fundamental ground for holding seeds (Chinese: chizhong yì 持種依).

When he speaks of the base consciousness and the basis for holding seeds in terms of practical Buddha-Nature, Kuiji uses two different systems of Yogācāra doctrine to explain it. The first system views practical Buddha-Nature as a basis for purity and impurity and involves the Yogācāra theory of Three-Natures or three ways of perceiving the world to explain the general process of the transformation. Both Xuanzang’s Treatise on Consciousness-only and Kuiji’s Record of the Treatise on Consciousness-only, which Kuiji claimed to be a record of Xuanzang’s line-by-line teachings about the Treatise, state the following. “The basis for holding seeds means the basis consciousness. Because it is able to hold the seeds of all pure and impure phenomena, it is the foundation for both pure and impure phenomena. The Noble Path enables it to discard the impure phenomena and attain the pure.”

The second system of Yogācāra that Kuiji uses here also stresses that practical Buddha-Nature is the consciousness for holding seeds. It takes up the Yogācāra theories of

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consciousness, inner seeds, and perfuming, all of which provide the critical doctrinal foundation for Kuiji’s Five Gotra doctrine explored below, as well as his entire Consciousness-only tradition.

Yogācāra’s theory of the Three-Natures, which Kuiji uses to explain practical Buddha-nature, are basically three layers of the perceptual matrix, Yogācāra’s understanding of the problem of perception. They are as follows.

1. The imagined, constructed, fabricated, or wholly conceptualized (Sanskrit: parikalpita). This is how the world is experienced through conceptual construction based on attachment and erroneous discrimination. It is the failure to recognize that what is viewed as independent objects are actually projections of consciousness.

2. Other-dependent or relative nature, (Sanskrit: paratantra). This is the experience through which a falsely imagined (parikalpita) duality of a subject and objects is generated and projected onto reality by the activation of imprinted predispositions contained in the storehouse Consciousness (ālayavijñāna). It is associated with saṃsāra. That is to say that even if the world is recognized as fabricated, there is still a failure to recognize “that consciousness itself is constituted by a contingent conditionality (paratantra)”.

3. Fully accomplished or absolute nature (Sanskrit: parinīpanna) is the state in which one comprehends things as they are with nothing added or taken away by mental discrimination. In this state, the substance of so-called objects are perceived conditionally as is the cognitive process by which they are reified.

Relying on Xuanzang’s Treatise on Consciousness-only, Kuiji believed that the Three Natures precisely describe the different natures of perception by ordinary unenlightened beings, those in the process of transformation, and enlightened beings. The Treatise on Consciousness-only states, “All three kinds of natures are not separate from the mind or mental constituents.” In addition, Kuiji and the Treatise on Consciousness-only define the three natures from an epistemological perspective as follows.

It is said that mind, mental constituents, and that which is transformed (aspects of the perceiver and the perceived) arise from various conditions. Thus they are like illusions and so forth, which do not truly exist, but, appearing to exist, deceive the foolish. All of these are called other-dependent-arising nature (Chinese: yitaqi xing; Sanskrit: paratantra svabhāva). The foolish perversely hold onto this as either self or phenomena, either existent or non-existent, either the same or different, either simultaneous or not simultaneous, and so on. It is like a sky-flower mirage without real nature and character. All of these are called conceptually

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17 Lusthaus, 2002, 98.
19 T 31, 1585, 46c.
constructed. From the perspective of other-dependent-nature (dependent origination), such wrong grasping of self and phenomena is empty. Emptiness explains the true nature of consciousness and can be said to be that of the fully accomplished.\(^{20}\)

For Kuiji, other-dependent is the true nature of all mental phenomena, including mind or consciousness itself, none of which can arise independently.\(^{21}\) However, the ordinary person mistakenly believes in an inherent and independent essence of a person, a personal self, and a phenomental self that is the basis of all things. These wrong views shape the ordinary mental state and are characterized by Yogācāra as conceptually constructed in nature.\(^{22}\) After completely eliminating these wrong views, awakened individuals clearly see the dependent nature of all phenomena and their enlightened mental state is characterized as fully accomplished.

In his *Fayuan lilin* Kuiji illustrated the relationships among the three natures by quoting the famous story of a person who mistakes a rope for a snake, found in the key Yogācāra text *Mahāyānasamgraha*.\(^{23}\) Accordingly, the mistaken snake refers to the first way of perceiving the world, that is, by conceptual construction. The rope, which represents perceived objects, and consciousness, which represents the perceiver, are interdependent. Since the rope is made of strands of hemp, it is also other-dependent in nature, as is the hemp and all “things”. Hence, the realization of the non-inherent existence of both the snake and the rope is the realization of the thoroughly established in nature. Kuiji’s interpretation has played an important role in serving as the traditional understanding of the Three Natures among East Asian Buddhist thinkers.

*Five Gotras*

From the perspective of practical Buddha-Nature, Kuiji discussed an individual’s potential or lack of potential for achieving enlightenment in terms of Yogācāra’s doctrine of the Five Gotra. As the base consciousness that holds them, the transformation of the ālayavijñāna initiates the actualization of the innately pure seeds and eliminates the impure seeds. More and more pure seeds are also generated until the ālayavijñāna is full of them only. For Kuiji, innately pure seeds play a decisive role as causal condition for bringing about the transformation of the basis. He believed that the type of innate pure seeds determines the types of enlightenment and nirvāṇa to be attained. In Kuiji’s writings, the innate pure seed is synonymous with the innately abiding seed lineage or gotra. The acquired pure seed is synonymous with the seed lineage accomplished through cultivation (Chinese: *xisuocheng zhongxing*; Sanskrit: *samudānītaṃ gotra*). Cultivation means development of wisdom, meditative practice, and engagement in Bodhisattva ethical activities. Kuiji clearly delineates his understanding of the doctrine of Five Gotras in his *Record of the Treatise on Consciousness-only* and *Record of the Twenty Verses on*

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\(^{20}\) *Cheng weishi lun*, T 31, 1585: 46c.

\(^{21}\) For more information on the other-dependent in nature, see Yokoyama Köitsu, 1996, 264-279.

\(^{22}\) For more information on the conceptually constructed in nature, see Yokoyama Köitsu, 1996, 255-264.

\(^{23}\) *Fayuan lilin*, T 45, 1861, 259a.
Consciousness-only. Allegedly, he was taught the doctrine by Xuanzang and he supports it by reference to a number of Yogācāra texts.

The five types of lineages can first be divided into two groups, those that are determinate and those that are indeterminate. Determinate generally means that one’s lineage is fixed in and it will never change or be lost. For indeterminate types, there is a possibility that one’s lineage can be modified or lost, that is, there may be a chance for upward or downward mobility. For Kuiji, there are as many of four, among the five lineages, that are determinate.

The first of the five lineages is that of the Śrāvaka or Hearers of the Buddha’s words. The placement of this gotra is related to Yogācāra’s doctrinal classification scheme (Chinese: panjiao) in that it judges the early followers of the Buddha, who heard his first teachings directly, to be of a lower lineage than those who heard his later, Bodhisattva teachings. However, Śrāvaka can definitely advance along the path to enlightenment by listening to and practicing the early teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The second lineage is that of the Pratyekabuddha, a lone Buddha. Those of this gotra can definitely advance in their practice by coming to an understanding of the Buddha’s principle of dependent origination by contemplating the twelve links of causation or Twelve Nidānas. The third lineage is that of the Bodhisattva or Buddha. It refers to those who can definitely achieve Buddhahood by practicing the Six Perfections of Wisdom (prajñāpāramitā) essential to most traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism. These are generosity, morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and insightful wisdom. The fourth lineage in Kuiji’s theory is the indeterminate lineage. It is constituted by those practitioners who possess multiple lineages for achieving Arhantship, Pratyekabuddhahood, or Buddhahood. Those of the fourth lineage may switch back and forth among these.

The fifth lineage is that of the icchantika, who is not endowed with a lineage of any kind. Thus, they have no potential for achieving Arhantship, Pratyekabuddhahood, or Buddhahood. The idea of icchantika was by far the most challenged of the Yogācāra doctrines taught by Xuanzang and was, therefore, central to Kuiji’s apologies. In attempt to quell some of the opposition to it by proponents of the theory of universal Buddha-Nature, which was believed by the overwhelming majority of Chinese Buddhists, in his Commentary on (Xuanzang’s) Vidyāmātrasiddhi-sāstra (Cheng weishi lun shuyao), Kuiji proposed that there are three types of icchantika.

Three types of Icchantika

In analyzing the concept of icchantika, Kuiji brought together two opposite opinions found in Yogācāra writings about whether icchantika are capable of any kind of liberation. Accordingly, he argued that there are three types of icchantika. These are the ātyantika (Chinese: adiandijia), the anicchantika (Chinese: achandijia), and the icchantika (Chinese: yichanti). He based his idea of the first type, the ātyantika, on the Discourse on the Stages of Yogic Practice (Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra) and the Discourse on the Stages of Buddhahood (Buddhabhūmi-sāstra). Accordingly, ātyantika are individuals who are completely without

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24 Record of the Treatise on Consciousness-only, Cheng lun shuji, T 43, 1830, 230a; Record of the Twenty Verses on Consciousness-only, Weishi ershi lun shuyao, T 43, 1834, 979a.
25 D’Amato, 2000, 66.
an innate capacity for attaining nirvāṇa or liberation of any kind. Such individuals are addicted to their own desires and confined in saṃsāra with no roots of goodness. He took his idea of the other two types of icchantika from the Lankāvatāra Sūtra. Accordingly, the anicchantika will attain nirvāṇa because of the Buddha’s teachings. The icchantika will remain in saṃsāra because of their great compassion for helping others attain liberation from suffering.

Kuiji combined these two opposite opinions in Yogācāra texts, accepting both ideas to make his own theory more inclusive, insisting that only those without lineage would not attain nirvāṇa. Historically, neither Xuanzang, Kuiji, nor their followers appeared to have given up their belief in the doctrines of Five Gotra and that the icchantika cannot attain nirvāṇa. These became the two major characteristics of Kuiji’s version of Yogācāra thought and the Consciousness-only or Dharma Characteristics tradition, although they were severely criticized and rejected by other Chinese Buddhist thinkers, such as the influential theorist Fazang (643–712), who much preferred to think that all sentient beings would achieve Buddhahood.