

Xuanzang's Yogācāra Tradition

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Entry tags: Yellow and Yangzi Rivers Region, Buddhist Traditions, Religious Group, Yogācāra Buddhism, Scholastic Buddhism, Chinese Buddhist Traditions

This entry is aimed to document the religious beliefs and activities of Xuanzang and his major dharma heirs. Xuanzang (intentionally or subconsciously) established the "Yogācāra" tradition, which he deemed as the genuine form of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in China. Xuanzang is one of the most famous pilgrims in world history who took an arduous journey to India, studied at the Nalanda Monastery, and introduced thousands of Buddhist scriptures to China. After returning from India, Xuanzang accompanied the Emperor Taizong of Tang for a period of time. Later, with the royal patronage, he initiated mass translation projects and thus also renowned as one of the "Four Greatest Chinese Buddhist translators." Within his translation teams, a few members became his intimate disciples, e.g. Kuiji, Woncheuk and Puguang. They carried and developed Xuanzang's teaching and wrote many commentaries to explain this sophisticated scholastic Buddhist tradition. As a request received from Kuiji, Xuanzang, based on the works of the ten greatest Yogācāra commentators at the Nalanda Monastery, manufactured the classic compendium *Cheng weishi lun*, which later became the most seminal text not only for the whole Yogācāra tradition but also for the whole Chinese Buddhism tradition. Despite its particularity, this tradition is far from institutionalized and only bonded by their doctrinal proclivities. Societally speaking, this tradition did not last more than a century. Its cradle place, the Great Cī'en Temple, soon became Tantric-focused. The tradition neither has a patriarchal system by itself nor provide a clear dharma-transmission narrative. After two generations, the number of commentaries gradually diminished. Since then, this strand of Yogācāra thoughts is fully dismantled into Chinese Buddhist traditions, such as Chan and Huayan. Along with four major and minor transmission, this tradition is transmitted into Japan and became fully sectarianized as the Hossō sect, which remained as one of the strongest Buddhist sects in Japan. This idiosyncratic tradition offers a set of unique doctrines, such as "eight consciousnesses and four aspects" and "three natures," which represents the Abhidharmic psychological wing of Yogācāra Buddhism. It offers a unique soteriological path by analyzing one's cognitive process and subsequently acquire the divine cognition to perceive the "true nature" (buddha-nature, so-to-speak) of existence. The title of Xuanzang's compendium expresses the central idea of this tradition—"merely consciousness." Its philosophy draws a similarity with Kantian Transcendental Idealism, which asserts the world we human perceived is bonded by our epistemological limit and supported by a transcendental cognito, and Husserlian Phenomenology, which suspends the ontological inquiry and shifts to study and propose a universal cognitive structure that we human perceive experience. And therefore, nowadays, this tradition is commonly rendered as the Buddhist phenomenology, which contributed enormously to modern scientific disciplines, e.g. cognitive science, psychology, and science of mind.



Date Range: 645 CE - 696 CE

Region: Major Yogācāra-driven monasteries during the early Tang period

Region tags: Asia, East Asia, China, Chang'an

These are some major monasteries where Xuanzang and his dharma heirs held most of their translation projects, doctrinal debates, and religious activities. These monasteries are the Cī'en Temple 慈恩寺, the Ximing Temple 西明寺, the Yuhua Temple 玉華寺, the Hongfu Temple 弘福寺.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Paul, Diana Y., and Paramartha. *Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China : Paramartha's "Evolution of Consciousness."* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984.
- Source 2: Jorgensen, John, Dan Lusthaus, John Makeham, and Mark Strange. *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith.* Oxford Chinese Thought. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190297701.001.0001>.
- Source 3: Weinstein, Stanley. *Buddhism under the T'ang.* Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Source 1: Yang Weizhong 楊維中. *Zhongguo weishi zong tongshi 中國唯識宗通史.* Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2008.
- Source 2: Hsuan Tsang., and Wei. Tat. *Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun, the Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness.* Hong Kong: Ch'eng wei-shih lun publication committee, 1973.
- Source 3: Xuanzang, Bianji, and Jung-hsi. Li. *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions.* Berkeley, Calif.: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation & Research, 1996.
- Source 1: Lusthaus, Dan. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun.* Curzon Critical Studies in Buddhism Series. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Source 2: Fu Xinyi 傅新毅. *Xuanzang Pingzhuan 玄奘評傳.* Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2006.
- Source 3: Wriggins, Sally Hovey. *Xuanzang: a Buddhist pilgrim on the Silk Road.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGsnxiuoAQI&list=PLbnahgNlnPWvIfXMZaXnA7xRCqaqKOeSq>
- Source 1 Description: A series of lecture given by Ven. Kuan-chien, which teaches some basic Yogācāra doctrines.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ddc.shengyen.org/mobile/toc/07/07-09/index.php>
- Source 2 Description: An e-book on public domain by Ven. Shengyen that delineates some basic Yogācāra doctrines.
- Source 1 URL: <http://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A000294>
- Source 1 Description: This is a biographical entry created by Buddhist Studies Authority Database Project. You can check Xuanzang's date of birth and death, major translations and disciples, and basic biographical information here.
- Source 2 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fKEr1Qkwpl>
- Source 2 Description: An introduction to Xuanzang and the Yogācāra tradition he represents.
- Source 3 URL: <http://www.acmuller.net/yogacara/articles/index.html>
- Source 3 Description: Some online essays and articles about Xuanzang's Yogācāra tradition.

Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

- Source 1 URL: http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi_pdf/sutra14/T31n1585.pdf
- Source 1 Description: The corporal text of the most seminal Chinese Yogācāra compendium, Cheng weishi lun 成唯識論 (CWSL).
- Source 2 URL: http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi_pdf/sutra20/T50n2053.pdf
- Source 2 Description: Xuanzang's hagio-biography, Datang Dacien si sanzang fashi zhuan 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳.
- Source 3 URL: http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi_pdf/sutra18/T43n1830.pdf
- Source 3 Description: The authoritative commentary of the CWSL made by Kuiji.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: Chang'an in the Early Tang is a cultured and religious city. Buddhism (especially Yogācāra), in this sense, is somehow an intruder who is forced to communicate with Chinese religions (Confucianism, Daoism) and with other Buddhist traditions.



Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Notes: Yang documented several debates that happened in these Yogācāra temples. Based on the historical records, there are Daoist provocateurs who sparked some argumentations.

Reference: Weizhong Yang. Zhongguo weishizong tangshi 中國唯識宗通識. Nanjing: Fenghuang Chubanshe. isbn: 9787806439593. p.642-670



Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes



Is the cultural contact neutral:

– Field doesn't know



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: It was a peaceful age in the Tang capital city. No violent is involved.



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

— No

Notes: In terms of becoming a Buddhist, certainly, one needs to go through the standard procedure to get ordained. However, Xuanzang's tradition is largely intellectual and far from sectarianized. Therefore, there is not a particular process for assigning this specific religious affiliation. One can whether join Xuanzang's translation teams or study under him.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

— No

Notes: This tradition is highly scholastic and doesn't actively proselytize.

Does the religion have official political support

— Yes

Notes: Both Xuanzang and his major disciple, Kuiji, received royal patronages, and most of their activities are sponsored by royal family.

Reference: Rongxi Li. Great Tang Records on the Western Regions. BDK America, Inc.. isbn: 9781886439023. p.xiii-xv

Reference: Stanley Weinstein. Buddhism Under the T'ang. Cambridge University Press. isbn: 9780521103480. p.44

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

— Yes

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

— Yes

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

— No

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

— No

↳ Is religious observance enforced by the polity:

— No

Notes: It was a kind of pluralist environment that no coercive religious observance. In fact, in China, it is common that people practice two or many religions at the same time. There is no need for such enforcement.

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

— No



Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

— Yes

Notes: During the Tang time, most of the monasteries are exempted from tax. However, I do not have the specific answer for the specific monasteries of Xuanzang and his dharma heirs.

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

— No

Notes: Certainly no. Xuanzang is renowned for his comprehensive and inclusive attitude toward all Buddhist traditions. Nobody under this group openly speaks against other religious groups or other Buddhist traditions.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

— Estimated population, numeric: 35

Notes: Xuanzang has more than 30 disciples. If we consider Xuanzang and his disciples, this tradition has around a size of 35; if we consider the spread of this type of teaching into the next two generations, the number would be much bigger.

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

— Field doesn't know

Notes: Duanxuan 道宣, the author of Xu gaoseng zhuan, suggested that there is around a total number of 60,000 monastics during the early Tang period. However, no extant record offers the total monastic population in Chang'an.

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

— Small religious group (seen as being part of a related larger religious group)

Notes: It could be seen as a sub-Buddhist tradition.

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

— Yes

Notes: Major leaders would be Xuanzang 玄奘, Kuiji 窥基, Woncheuk 圆测. The first two were active in the Great Ci'en Temple, the last one was the head of the Ximing Temple. Some minor leaders are Puguang 普光 (Xuanzang's intimate disciple), Jiashang 嘉尚 (Xuanzang's distinguished disciple, a renowned Buddhist in the Ximing Temple), Shentai 神泰 (the former abbot of the Ximing Temple and joined Xuanzang's translation team later).

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Yes

Notes: These leaders have a clear order of hierarchy. Xuanzang's translation team has more than 30 people, and after two generations of dharma promulgation, he has many dharma heirs. Nonetheless, only dozens of them have their names left. Xuanzang, without any doubt, is the top authority. During his lifetime, some of his disciples, e.g. Kuiji, accumulated their fame by demonstrating their vast knowledge and became minor leaders in the local community. When Xuanzang's passed away, these people succeeded the positions of the abbot of major monasteries and thus became the local major leaders. Then, they will have their own disciples and their disciples will gain their fame as minor leaders when the master is alive but succeed their master's position (or being the abbot of other monasteries). Also, there is always a hierarchy between novice and fully-ordained monks. One's dharma age (how many years spent in the sangha) is a factor to determine one's status.

↳ A single leader of a local community:

– Yes

Notes: The abbot would be the leader of the local temple.

↳ Multiple religious communities each with its own leader, no hierarchy among these leaders:

– Field doesn't know

↳ "Regional" leaders who oversee one or more local leader(s) (e.g. bishops):

– No

↳ A single leader for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– No

↳ A council or group of leaders for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– No

↳ Estimate how many levels there are in the hierarchy of religious leadership:

– Number of levels [numeric value]: 3

Notes: For formal Buddhist monastics, there are primarily three levels: 1, śrāmaṇera/śrāmaṇerikā, 2, bhikṣu/bhikṣuṇī, 3, abbot. An abbot is prescriptively equal to other fully ordained monastics but de facto has much greater power. The establishment of this tradition's hierarchy, in a large portion, is as same as other Buddhist tradition. One should first be ordained as a novice monk (śrāmaṇera/śrāmaṇerī). At the age of 20 (or more), a novice monk can receive one's full ordination to become a bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī.

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: Most Buddhists in this tradition are advent devotees of the Matreya. Xuanzang can meditate and invoke Matreya. His hagio-biography shows he had seen and had been miraculously assisted by Maitreya. For example, 《大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳》卷3：「法師乃專心觀史多宮念慈氏菩薩，願得生彼恭敬供養，受《瑜伽師地論》，聽聞妙法，成就通慧，還來下生，教化此人令修勝行，捨諸惡業，及廣宣諸法，利安一切。於是禮十方佛，正念而坐，注心慈氏，無復異緣。於心想中，若似登蘇迷盧山，越一二三天，見觀史多宮慈氏菩薩處妙寶臺，天眾圍繞。此時身心歡喜，亦不知[4]在壇，不憶有賊。同伴諸人發聲號哭。」(CBETA 2020.Q1, T50, no. 2053, p. 234a13-22

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

– No

Notes: Based on the Buddhist cosmology, every sentient being must have enjoyed a past life as a deva with supernatural ability. As a result, the powers, even one may have in their past lives, are largely accumulated and cultivated through one's life.

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

– Yes

↳ Powers are inherited:

– No

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from a supernatural being:

– No

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from another human (e.g. teacher):

– No

↳ Powers are associated with leadership office they assume:

– No

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– No

Notes: During that time, there is no procedure to elect a religious leader. A fully ordained monastic may cultivate his knowledge, wisdom, reputation and social status through various activities. Xuanzang is renowned for his vast knowledge and a highly respected pilgrim. In contrast, his major disciples, like Kuiji and Woncheuk, are renowned Yogācāra commentators and accumulated their status through writing commentaries and winning debates.

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– No

Notes: Throughout his life, Xuanzang is highly respected and royally patronized.

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– No

Notes: Some of Xuanzang's personal assistants and disciples, such as Puguang 普光, seemingly didn't enjoy high religious status and didn't gather lots of fame.

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Yes

↳ Are they written:

– Yes

Notes: The most seminal one is Cheng weishi lun by Xuanzang. Some others are the Yogācārabhūmiśāstra, the Mahāyānasamgraha, the Mahāyāna śatadharmā prakāśamukha śāstra, many Abhidharma texts and many commentaries and sub-commentaries of the CWSL. All of these are written records that still extant.

↳ Are they oral:

– No

Notes: Some other Buddhist traditions, such as Tiantai, offer many oral sermons and teachings. Usually, these oral teaching will be jotted down by attendants and became a religious scripture. However, we do not know the case for Xuanzang's tradition. I speculate that, for such scholastic debates, oral transmission is nearly impossible. Also, one does not need to recite a Buddhist commentary.

↳ Is there a story (or a set of stories) associated with the origin of scripture:

– Yes

↳ Revealed by a high god:

– Yes

Notes: Asanga received the Yogācārabhūmiśāstra from Maitreya.

↳ Revealed by other supernatural being:

– No

↳ Inspired by high god:

– No

↳ Inspired by other supernatural being:

– No

↳ Originated from divine or semi-divine human beings:

– No

↳ Originated from non-divine human being:

– Yes

Notes: Yogācāra is primarily as commentary tradition and Xuanzang's tradition is not an exception. All commentaries are made and written by human beings. Even though some authors are advanced religious practitioners (yogis) who can spiritually visit a "higher realm," the majority of Yogācāra scriptures are (and are believed as) man-made efforts.

↳ Are the scriptures alterable:

– Yes

Notes: Partially yes and partially no (but I think it is alterable at most of the time). Being a commentary tradition means one shall follow several central commentaries, e.g. Triṃśikā and the CWSL. However, one may write their own sub-commentaries and develop their own theory. Also, one is free to choose which commentary to study. There is no fixed curriculum.

↳ Are there formal institutions (i.e. institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders) for interpreting the scriptures:

– No

↳ Is there a select group of people trained in transmitting the scriptures:

– No

Notes: Basically, everybody is trained to think in Yogācāra scholastic direction, but one will have one's own expertise and scriptural focuses.

↳ Is there a codified canon of scriptures:

– No

Notes: Japanese Hosso sect (which transmits Xuanzang's teaching) prescribes four commentaries as its canon. However, no original Chinese source indicates there is a Chinese Yogācāra canon.

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: There are a few distinctive religious monuments dedicated to Xuanzang and this tradition, such as the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda 大雁塔 along with the Great Ci'en Temple 大慈恩寺.

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Percentage: 25

Notes: Let's take the Great Ci'en Temple as an example. Nowadays, its settlement is 50,738 square-meters. There are several key halls (the Guanyin Hall, the Main Hall; the Relics Hall) and the Great Goose Pagoda shall be considered as religious monuments. Guess based on modern maps, it would be 20-30% percent of the total area.

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Square meters: 625

Notes: This would be the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda 大雁塔.

Reference: unknown The Great Ci'en Temple 大慈恩寺

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 64.5

Notes: This is the current height. Different historical sources suggest different heights back to Tang times (some say 10 stores, some say 7 stores).

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– Yes

Notes: The relics of Xuanzang and his major disciples are stored in the Xinjiao Temple 興教寺, Xi'an, which is equivalent to the tomb in the Buddhist tradition.

↳ Cemeteries:

– No

↳ Temples:

– Yes

↳ Altars:

– Yes

Notes: The function of relics, stupa and temple are basically equal to altars. In addition, Xuanzang is a well-revered figure whose portrait has been worshipped for a long time.

↳ Devotional markers:

– I don't know

↳ Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Yes

Notes: The Great Ci'en Temple, which now became a public plaza, is the best example. Also, the Great Goose Pagoda is a popular site. Some information could be found, <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/da-ci-en-temple.htm>; https://www.xianprivatetour.com/attractions/show/da_cien_temple.htm; <https://www.chinadiscovery.com/shaanxi/xian/giant-wild-goose-pagoda.html>

↳ Other type of religious monumental architecture:

– No

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– At home

– Some public spaces

Notes: Xuanzang fuji tu 玄奘负笈图 (The painting of Xuanzang shouldering a bamboo box) is Xuanzang's most famous iconography. The original painting now is at the Tokyo National

Museum; however, copies are widely available and people may worship it by themselves.

- ↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:
 - I don't know

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: The Great Ci'en Temple a sacred site where the "genuine sutras" had been translated.

- ↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:
 - "Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...
 - No

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes

- ↳ How strict is pilgrimage:
 - Optional (rare)
 - Notes: As far as I know, some contemporary Chinese Yogācāra-like monastics make pilgrimages to the Ci'en Temple (since Xuanzang is a great pilgrim himself).

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

- ↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:
 - Yes
 - Notes: The Buddhist meditative cosmology divides the world as the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formless. One's body and sensation will be distinguished once one's spirit (consciousness) enters the realm of form and the realm of formless. Meditating in this direction, one might ultimately accumulate supernatural abilities. Thus, supernatural abilities are, more or less, enfranchised by one's consciousness. Yogācāra Buddhism is even more so.

See

http://chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/The_Six_Supernatural_Powers_of_Buddha

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– No

Notes: Consciousnesses in the Yogācāra tradition are considered as discrete entities. However, based on the doctrines of dependent origination, consciousness and body are mutually formed. Thus, one cannot make a clear ontological distinctive.

↳ Other spirit-body relationship:

– Yes [specify]: The doctrine of dependent origination propose that consciousness and body are mutually formed.

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: It largely concurs with the Buddhist notion of samsara, the cyclical existence that is difficult to break.

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: It is about the Buddhist notion of six/five realms. See the "six realms" entry:
<http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%85%AD%E9%81%93>

↳ Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

Notes: If one achieves nirvana (a type of afterlife, more or less), one will exist beyond the bondage of this world and completely free. Specifically, the Yogacara tradition involves a strong sense of Maitreya worship. A dying person might concentrate on the deathbed and potentially reborn in the Tuṣita Heaven.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “above” space:

– Yes

Notes: Tusita Heaven (a kind of Buddha-land) vaguely fits this category as well. See [http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?51.xml+id\(%27b515c-7387-5929%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?51.xml+id(%27b515c-7387-5929%27))

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “below” space:

– No

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: Six realms are all vaguely the horizontal spaces in terms of this life.

↳ Afterlife located in "other" space:

– No

Reincarnation in this world:

– Yes

↳ In a human form:

– Yes

↳ In animal/plant form:

– Yes

↳ In form of an inanimate object(s):

– No

Notes: In the Buddhist cosmology, only sentient beings can cognize and are animate. They will always gain reborn as animate/sentient beings unless the attainment of nirvana.

Reference: John Kieschnick, Meir Shahar. India in the Chinese Imagination. University of Pennsylvania Press. isbn: 9780812245608. p.160-167

↳ In non-individual form (i.e. some form of corporate rebirth, tribe, lineage. etc.):

– No

↳ Reincarnation linked to notion of life-transcending causality (e.g. karma):

– Yes

Notes: Karma is the fuel of samsara and thus the fuel of life-transmitting causality.

↳ Other form of reincarnation in this world:

– Yes [specify]: Yaksa, Deva and Hungry ghost.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: The Buddhist practice of dying and death is sophisticated. Usually, Buddhist saints are being cremated for the purpose of relic production. No exception here. Xuanzang, at least allegedly, produced many relics.

Reference: Bryan J. Cuevas, Jacqueline Ilyse Stone. The Buddhist Dead. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824830311.

↳ Cremation:
– Yes

↳ Mummification:
– No

↳ Interment:
– No

↳ Cannibalism:
– No

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):
– No

↳ Feeding to animals:
– No

↳ Secondary burial:
– No

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:
– No

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :
– Yes [specify]: The making of relics

Notes: Here is some information about Xuanzang's stupa, which supposedly stores his relics.
<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%8E%84%E5%A5%98%E5%A1%94>

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:
– No

Are grave goods present:
– No

Notes: All extant goods are reconstructed. Most of grave goods are destroyed over the history

Are formal burials present:

– No

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: Xuanzang's Yogacara tradition is highly engaged with the Maitreya worship. For more information, see Foguang dictionary 佛光大詞典, p6422.

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Yes

Notes: Based on the Mahayana theory of three kayas, a Buddha or bodhisattva can appear in any physical form, whether anthropomorphic or not. In terms of one's rewarded body, all these enlightened beings appear in the anthropomorphic form.

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– Yes

Notes: Many Chinese rulers attempt to legitimize their ruling by claiming themselves as the reincarnations of a world-saving Buddha. Empress Wu usually claims she is the reincarnated Maitreya. Xuanzang's disciple, Kuiji, is involved in this reincarnation polemic.

Reference: N. Harry Rothschild. Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers. Columbia University Press. isbn: 9780231539180.

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– Yes

- ↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:
 - Yes
- ↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:
 - Yes [specify]: Maitreya is the future Buddha who can mitigate one's past unwholesome karmic deeds.
- ↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:
 - Yes

Notes: Maitreya usually manifests in the living world and preach. For example, see Yogācārabhūmi Śāstra 瑜伽師地論 CBETA 2020.Q1, T30, no. 1579, p. 284a2-8.
- ↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region:
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
 - Yes

Notes: An enlightened being has (at least could attain) the power to see everywhere. It is not restricted to Maitreya. See T 1579.30.470a3.

↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):
— Yes

↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):
— Yes

Notes: It is called para-citta-jñāna or, in Chinese, taxin tong 他心通. See T 1579.30.494c19.

↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):
— Yes

↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):
— Yes

Notes: Even though with exceptions, enlightened beings are accustomed to the karmic law and thus know what will happen next. They transcend time.

↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:
— Yes [specify]: Secret teaching, meditation, etc.

Notes: For more knowledge-induced powers, see [http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id\(%27b5341-529b%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id(%27b5341-529b%27)).

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
— No

Notes: It is prescribed by the basic Buddhist theology, that no being can change the causality itself (even though one may escape from it).

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:
— No

Notes: It depends on how we define "indirect." The enlightened beings are free from the karmic law and therefore there is largely no distinction between direct and indirect. Nonetheless, one may just escape but cannot affect the causal efficacy.

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:
— No

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:
— No

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

— No

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

— Yes

Notes: A Buddhist shall always take refuge from the Sakyamuni Buddha, even though one may particularly worship one Buddha. Of course, there are many available bodhisattvas for worshipping.

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

— Yes [specify]: The most notable features a Buddha may possess is the 32 marks.

Notes: For doctrinal support, see T 1579.30.334a20; for general information, see <http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E4%B8%89%E5%8D%81%E4%BA%8C%E7%9B%B8>

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

— Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:

— Yes

Notes: This is the story of Asanga and Maitreya. See <http://aumamen.com/story/maitreya-appears-to-asanga>

↳ In dreams:

— Yes

↳ In trance possession:

— Yes

Notes: Usually, Yogacara (or say Buddhist) practitioners practice various kinds of meditation, including concentrating on the Buddha's body. In that case, you will somehow see the Buddha in a trance state and the Buddha will assist you in this trance state. During Xuanzang's pilgrimage, he visited the site that Asanga picked up by Maitreya and practiced mindfulness concentration (正念而坐) on the site. Then he saw the Maitreya and moved to cry. During Xuanzang's deathbed, the report says, in a semi-conscious state (which I consider as a trance possession), he saw Maitreya and received his salvation by listening to the dharma preached by Maitreya. See CBETA 2020.Q1, T50, no. 2053, p. 234a13-22; 277b27-c18.

↳ Through divination practices:

— No

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

Notes: Any person can hear or see Maitreya in a trance state, or Maitreya can manifest in any form to communicate with any person.

↳ Only through monarch

– No

↳ Other form of communication with living:

– Yes [specify]: A Buddha may just manifest itself.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– No

Notes: They can only be seen by supernatural powers, whether meditation or traveling between different realms.

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have other knowledge of this world:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– No

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: Devas have.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: Asuras have.

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– Yes

Notes: Hungry ghosts have.

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: All unenlightened beings possess afflictions.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– No

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: For the Buddhist tradition, the realms of hell, hungry ghost, deva and asura may all be considered as supernatural beings

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– No

↳ Organized hierarchically:

– Yes

Notes: For example, based on the cosmology of the Heaven of the Thirty-three Celestials, Śakra 帝釋天 dwells in the center and is the leader of all deities.

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– No

↳ Other organization for pantheon:

– No

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– No

Notes: In contrast, sentient beings' activities are self-registered in one's own alayavijñāna.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– No

Notes: All the reward and punishment are the manifestation of one's latent unwholesome disposition and bad karmic deeds.

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– No

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Yes



Is the messiah's whereabouts or time of coming known?

– Yes

Notes: Some sutras prescribe that Maitreya will descend and save all sentient beings. For example, the Maitreya-vyākaraṇa. See CBETA 2020.Q1, T14, no. 453, p. 421a2



Alive, identified:

– Yes

Notes: The enlightened beings, such as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, are always present in the form of dharma-body, in the dharma realm.



Coming in this lifetime:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The idea of "this lifetime" is vague in the Buddhist tradition. In this specific case, it depends on the practitioners to make it happen. So, whether this or another lifetime, the field doesn't prescribe.



Coming on specified date:

– No



Coming in unspecified time in near future:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Again, it depends on the practitioner.

↳ Coming in unspecified time in distant future:
– Field doesn't know

↳ Coming has already passed:
– No

↳ One in a line of many past and future messiahs:
– Yes

Notes: It is somehow true, since all Buddhas and bodhisattvas can be considered as messiahs.

↳ Is the messiah's purpose known:
– Yes

↳ Messiah is a political figure who restores political rule:
– No

↳ Messiah is a priestly figure who restores religious traditions:
– No

↳ Other purpose:
– Yes [specify]: Because the cyclical samsaric existence is suffering, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are the saviors that bring enlightenment and set sentient beings free from samsaric existence.

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Since they are Mahayana Buddhist, they largely take Mahayana precepts (the Bodhisattva vows).

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– No

Notes: Everybody, based on the Mahayana ethics, shall become a Bodhisattva.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

— No

Notes: It requires total abstinence.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

— No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

— Yes

Notes: No eating after afternoon.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

— Yes

Notes: A monastic shall eat everything given by the donor.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

— No

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

— No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

— No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

— No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Yes

Notes: Joining the sangha always means to forfeit all personal belongings.

↳ To other in-group members:

– Yes

Notes: At most of the time, you need to donate your possessions to the sangha.

↳ To out-groups:

– No

↳ Destroyed:

– No

↳ Other:

– Yes [specify]: One can leave the personal wealth to one's family.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Notes: It is common to all Buddhist traditions.

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Yes

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Yes

Notes: Even though there is not a specific answer, most Buddhist communities, whether medieval or modern, lay or monastic, require sutra recitation and sometimes repentance. Some records show

Xuanzang and his translation team actively participated in worshipping the Buddha privately.



What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):

Performances here refers to small-scale rituals.

— Hours: 23

Notes: Xuanzang's hagio-biography shows it is an everyday activity. 《大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳》卷7：「[5]過乙之後方乃停筆，攝經已復禮佛行道，至三更暫眠，五更復起，讀誦梵本，朱點次第，擬明[6]旦所翻。每日齋訖，黃昏二時講新經論，及諸州聽學僧等恒來決疑請義。既知上座之任，僧事復來諮[7]稟。」 (CBETA 2020.Q1, T50, no. 2053, p. 260a19-24)

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale “ceremonies” and “festivals.”

— Field doesn't know

Notes: There shall not be any specific requirement for large gathering and large-scale rituals.

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

— Yes



Tattoos/scarification:

— No



Circumcision:

— No



Food taboos:

— Yes

Notes: Chinese Buddhists are strict vegetarians.



Hair:

— Yes

Notes: One needs to shave the head to become ordained.



Dress:

— Yes

Notes: One needs to dress in special monastic ropes.



Ornaments:

– No



Archaic ritual language:

– Yes

Notes: If one performs tantric techniques or dharanis, one shall use Sanskrit (at least the Chinese transliteration).



Other:

– No

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– No

Notes: That would be later Chan development.

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A chiefdom

Notes: It is a tricky question. Nonetheless, it is somehow appropriate to describe Xuanzang's tradition as a "chiefdom." One shall revere and follow the central leader of the temple. There is a hierarchy, somehow lineage based (lineage of Dharmapala).

Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is really a highly scholastic religious group, which means most extant records are their commentaries on several philosophically sophisticated Buddhist scriptures. We know little about their social welfare works.

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

— Field doesn't know

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

— Yes

Notes: Probably not elementary educations, but definitely provide some high-ending education about the Yogacara doctrines.



Is formal education restricted to religious professionals:

— Yes

Notes: All extant Yogacara commentaries of this tradition are written by monastic members. Huayan and other traditions may offer education to non-monastic members; however, current sources do not suggest this case for Xuanzang and his heirs.



Is such education open to both males and females:

— Field doesn't know

Notes: We do not specifically know. However, there is no extant record attribute to any female monastic.

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

— Field doesn't know

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

— No

Notes: It is a scholastic group, where people are adhered through a set of particular doctrines instead of a formal type of bureaucracy (or any kind of social organization/arrangement).

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

— Yes

Notes: Both Xuanzang and Kuiji were actively engaged with royal family, notably Emperor Tiaozong and Empress Wu.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

— Field doesn't know

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

— Field doesn't know

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

— Field doesn't know

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

— No

Notes: Buddhist groups would love to accept donations, but, as a small and institutionalized group, Xuanzang and his tradition are likely not taking any tax.

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— Field doesn't know

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: There is certainly no institutionalized judges in a secular sense.

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: If we consider the formal legal code as secular/civil law, the answer is definitely no.

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by

institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: They use common medieval Classical Chinese.

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– No

Notes: Basically all Tang Buddhist groups follow the Chinese calendar, based on the reign name and the reign year. One may commemorate the Buddha's birth the 4th day of the 4th month of the Chinese lunar calendar. See <http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E4%BD%9B%E7%94%9F%E6%97%A5>

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– No

Notes: The pre-Chan Buddhism in China largely rely on receiving food donations.

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— No

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