

Write up for Kobo Daichi presentation.

Kūkai (774–835), born Saeki no Mao, posthumously called Kōbō Daishi, was a Japanese Buddhist monk, calligrapher, and poet. It is true that he founded the esoteric Shingon school of Buddhism. From a very early age, he was recognized as a gifted child. It was through a family member that he was accepted into higher education and awarded the opportunity to study in China.

His travels to China allowed him the opportunity to study Tangmi under the monk Huiguo (746–805) of the Zhengyuan School. Chinese_Vajrayana_Buddhism is called tang mi, or Sino Esoteric Buddhism. In this teaching it is believed that all humans possess the buddha essence. However, it is believed that not all humans advance at the same pace. This is why it is so important to expose individuals to the levels of knowledge that are in their immediate future understanding. Kukai was very clear in his position that esoteric knowledge should be given to those individuals able to understand the depth of what was being taught. He did not want his offerings to create confusion for students, thus slowing their progress toward self-realization and enlightenment. Kukai is most often associated with the mandala of the two worlds. In Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, the Womb Realm mandala is one of a pair of mandalas that forms a Mandala of Both Worlds, a representation of the Buddhist cosmos as explained in two sacred esoteric texts originating in southwest India. Kūkai, encountered the Mandala of Both Worlds while studying in China. He brought them to Japan.

The Heart Sutra (The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom) is the samadhi and dharma-mandala of the bodhisattva Prajna. The primary teaching of this great work is to drop all judgment and expectations. Judgments give our immediate reality the boundaries needed to feel contained within a form. Expectations control our senses to give credibility to our immediate judgment-based reality. The Heart Sutra speaks to the release of all limitations brought on by physicality. Releasing time and space parameters then allows for the enlightenment of the collaborative human mind as it awakens to surrounding adjacent dimensions. A condensed version of the sutra:

*Body is nothing more than emptiness,
emptiness is nothing more than body.
The body is exactly empty,
and emptiness is exactly body.*

*The other four aspects of human existence --
feeling, thought, will, and consciousness --
are likewise nothing more than emptiness,
and emptiness nothing more than they.*

*All things are empty:
Nothing is born, nothing dies,
nothing is pure, nothing is stained,
nothing increases, and nothing decreases.*

*So, in emptiness, there is no body,
no feeling, no thought,
no will, no consciousness.
There are no eyes, no ears,*

*no nose, no tongue,
no body, no mind.
There is no seeing, no hearing,
no smelling, no tasting,
no touching, no imagining.
There is nothing seen, nor heard,
nor smelled, nor tasted,
nor touched, nor imagined.*

*There is no ignorance,
and no end to ignorance.
There is no old age and death,
and no end to old age and death.
There is no suffering, no cause of suffering,
no end to suffering, no path to follow.
There is no attainment of wisdom,
and no wisdom to attain.*

*The Bodhisattvas rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,
and so with no delusions,
they feel no fear,
and have Nirvana here and now.*

*All the Buddhas,
past, present, and future,
rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,
and live in full enlightenment.*

*The Perfection of Wisdom is the greatest mantra.
It is the clearest mantra,
the highest mantra,
the mantra that removes all suffering.*

*This is truth that cannot be doubted.
Say it so:*

*Gaté,
gaté,
paragaté,
parasamgaté.
Bodhi!
Svaha!*

*Gone,
gone,
gone over,
gone fully over.
Awakened!
So be it!*

This presentation will explore the different aspects of the role Kukai played in bringing esoteric Buddhism to Japan. His contribution to Buddhism is an important aspect of