

## TRANSLATION

# Kūkai's Epitaph for Master Huiguo: An Introduction and Translation

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## INTRODUCTION

IN 804 CE, the monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835) traveled from his native Japan to China in the hope of studying esoteric Buddhism under a great Chinese master. In the Chinese capital Chang'an 長安, he was introduced to the head of the renowned Qinglongsi 青龍寺,<sup>1</sup> Master Huiguo 惠果 (746–805) of the esoteric Zhenyan 真言 (Jp. Shingon) tradition, in 805.<sup>2</sup> When Kūkai arrived, Huiguo was serving as spiritual advisor to the emperor, as he had for the two previous Sons of Heaven. These emperors relied upon the master's esoteric abilities to bring rain in times of drought, keep the nation safe from foreign invasions, and so on.

Kūkai later reported that at first sight Huiguo recognized him as the future transmitter of esoteric Buddhism to Japan. Accordingly, the master immediately took him into the initiation hall and within six months had completely poured his knowledge into Kūkai's mind. Afterwards, aware of his advanced years and failing health, Huiguo instructed Kūkai to return to Japan

<sup>1</sup> The Qinglongsi ("Green Dragon Temple") is a famous Buddhist temple from the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907). It was built in 582 and named Linggansi 靈感 ("Inspiration Temple"). The name was changed to Qinglong in 711. Kūkai lived in Chang'an from 804 to 806. The present Qinglongsi in Xian 西安 was reconstructed in 1963. National Master is an honorific title bestowed by the emperor in gratitude for service. Huiguo was the teacher of three Tang dynasty emperors: Daizong 代宗 (r. 763–779), Dezong 德宗 (r. 779–805), and Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805–820).

<sup>2</sup> Murakami 1929; Okamura 1982.

without delay to begin propagating Zhenyan in that country. While Kūkai had originally planned to study in China for twenty years, he saw the wisdom in his master's wishes, and eventually succeeded in building one of the most influential traditions in Japanese history, Shingon Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> Before returning, however, he took on the responsibility of composing an epitaph<sup>4</sup> for his master.

The following is a translation of the epitaph as it appears in the collection of Kūkai's prose, poems, and prayers known as the *Henjō hokki shōryōshū* 遍照發揮性靈集 (Collected Works Divining the Spiritual Nature of Henjō; hereafter, *Shōryōshū*), preserved in the sixth volume of the *Kōbō Daishi Kūkai zenshū* 弘法大師空海全集 (Complete Works of Kōbō Daishi Kūkai, hereafter, KKZ).<sup>5</sup> It begins with Kūkai's explanatory prose, which he added after returning to Japan. When translating Kūkai's Chinese, we consulted the Japanese translation and commentary notes included in the volume.<sup>6</sup> Kūkai described his knowledge of esoteric Buddhism as coming directly from Huiguo, and his portrayal of the master should therefore be particularly useful for understanding the early development of Shingon as well as Kūkai himself.

When interpreting Kūkai's writing, we consulted Katsumata Shunkyō's *Keika oshō den no kenkyū* 恵果和尚伝の研究 (Research on Biographies of Master Huiguo).<sup>7</sup> Katsumata utilized primary sources in researching the biographies of Huiguo in an attempt to locate him in his historical and religious context. His article examines available biographies of Huiguo in six sections, (1) an introduction; (2) the life of Huiguo; (3) Huiguo's master and Dharma brothers; (4) Huiguo's disciples; (5) Huiguo and Kūkai; and (6) conclusions: evaluation of Huiguo.

### *Primary Sources*

The primary sources for biographies of Huiguo are as follows. First, Wu Yin 吳殷 (n.d.), a lay disciple of Huiguo, composed the *Da Tang shendou Qinglongsi Dongtayuan guanding guoshi Huiguo aduli xingzhuang* 大唐神

<sup>3</sup> The term Shingon is the Japanese reading for the Chinese Zhenyan, which means "True Word" or mantra.

<sup>4</sup> Although there is no evidence that the stone monument actually exists in China, we adopted the term "epitaph" because Kūkai uses it.

<sup>5</sup> An alternate reading, *Seireishū*, also appears in the KKZ.

<sup>6</sup> Although this Japanese translation was made from Kūkai's classical Chinese, the translators adopted Sino-Japanese graphs in accordance with modern Japanese scholarship.

<sup>7</sup> Katsumata 1973.

都青龍寺東塔院灌頂國師惠果阿闍梨行狀 (Biography of Ācārya, Abhiṣeka and National Master Huiguo of the Eastern Pagoda Center of the Qinglongsi in the Divine Capital [Chang'an] of the Great Tang Dynasty) just after his master's death. Kūkai included it in his *Himitsu mandara kyō fuhō den* 秘密曼荼羅教付法傳 (Biographies of Transmission Masters of the Secret Mandala Teaching), generally referred to as *Fuhō den* 付法傳 (hereafter, *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*), in the *Kōbō Daishizenshū* 弘法大師全集 (Complete Works of Kōbō Daishi).<sup>8</sup>

Second, Haiyun 海雲 (n.d.) wrote the *Liangbu dafa xiangcheng shizi fufa ji* 兩部大法相承師資付法記 (Transmission Record of the Two Sets of the Great Esoteric Buddhist Teaching from Master to Disciple; hereafter, *Transmission Record*) in two fascicles approximately thirty years after Huiguo's death. It includes some descriptions of Huiguo and his disciples. The text is available in the Taishō Buddhist canon.<sup>9</sup>

Third is the *Da Tang Qinglongsi sanchao gongfeng dade xingzhuang* 大唐青龍寺三朝供奉大德行狀 (Biography of the Great Virtuous Master Huiguo, a Resident Master of Qinglongsi, and the Imperial Chaplain of Three Courts of the Great Tang Dynasty) which the monk Engyō 円行 (1128–n.d.) brought from China to Japan. Although the author of this work is unknown, it is the most comprehensive biography of Huiguo among extant primary sources and describes the master's life extensively and chronologically. It is also available in the Taishō canon.<sup>10</sup> Katsumata primarily used this work to discuss Huiguo's overall life path in his article.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth is Kūkai's *Daitō shinto Shōryūji moto sanchō kokushi kanjō no ajari Keika oshō no hi* 大唐神都青龍寺故三朝國師灌頂の阿闍梨惠果和尚の碑 (Monument for the Late Ācārya Huiguo, High Priest of the Qinglongsi in the Divine Capital [Chang'an] of the Great Tang Dynasty, and National Abhiṣeka Master for Three Courts), which is translated here. If we compare this work with the sources mentioned above, the tone and content of the others are more descriptive and objective, while Kūkai's is subjective and personal. Kūkai's writing includes mythological and religious reference about himself and Huiguo that are absent in the other biographies. There may have been a sectarian reason for this in that Kūkai's epitaph theoretically backs up his claim that he was chosen by Huiguo as his rightful Dharma heir and the

<sup>8</sup> Sofū Sen'yōkai 1923, pp. 43–45.

<sup>9</sup> *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (hereafter, T) no. 2081, 51: 783c11–787b21.

<sup>10</sup> T no. 2057, 50: 294c16–296a15.

<sup>11</sup> Katsumata 1973, pp. 774–79.

transmitter of his esoteric lineage to Japan.<sup>12</sup> Part of the evidence that Kūkai relates is supernatural occurrences that only he observed. Such extraordinary accounts and perhaps even exaggerations found in Kūkai's work were unnecessary in the writings from China, where the tradition was already firmly established.

Because Huiguo's tonsure master Tanzhen 曇貞 (n.d.),<sup>13</sup> an eminent disciple of Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong Jingang 不空金剛, 705–774), was busy with his work as a chanting master for the imperial court, he did not have time to train his disciple.<sup>14</sup> Instead, Huiguo learned esoteric Buddhism from Amoghavajra and eventually transmitted his lineage. Kūkai says that when Huiguo met Amoghavajra for the first time, Amoghavajra immediately recognized Huiguo's great potential. Kūkai writes, "With one glance, the Tripiṭaka Master [Amoghavajra] was endlessly amazed and secretly informed him, 'You will definitely make my Dharma teachings flourish.'"<sup>15</sup> Kūkai clearly considered the religious connections between his grandmaster Amoghavajra and his master Huiguo as very special.

#### *Kūkai's Writings on Huiguo*

In the epitaph, Kūkai also describes his own unique link with his master Huiguo:

The night of setting sail to return, he explained variously his connection with me in previous lives. The master made a surprise visit that night, appearing in this disciple's dream. He told me in it, "You did not know how much you and I have a close past bond! Within many lifetimes we shared a mutual vow and extensively propagated the mysterious teaching. Each of us has acted as the other's qualified teacher, not only one or two times. This is the reason I urge you to cross the distance and bestow my profound Dharma [on the people there]. You have received the Dharma," he said, "in whole. My wish has been fulfilled. You received the teaching at my feet completely in the western land. I will also be born in the east, enter your room [and become your disciple]. Do not delay long in returning [to your homeland]. I will go there in advance."

<sup>12</sup> Takagi 1967.

<sup>13</sup> Iwasaki 1997.

<sup>14</sup> To understand the disciples of Amoghavajra, see Imai 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Similar sentences are seen in Kūkai's *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*. See Sofū Sen'yōkai 1923, p. 38.

Kūkai wrote two versions of the biographies of transmission masters of Shingon Buddhism, the aforementioned *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*<sup>16</sup> and a shorter version called *Shingon fuhō den* 眞言付法傳 (Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism), which is generally called the *Ryaku fuhō den* 略付法傳 (hereafter, *Shorter Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*).<sup>17</sup> In them, he positions Huiguo in the transmission history of Chinese and Japanese esoteric Buddhism and sets up his own Shingon Buddhism lineage system of eight patriarchs:<sup>18</sup> Mahāvairocana, Vajrasattva, Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250), Nāgabodhi (n.d.), Vajrabodhi (Ch. Jingangzhi 金剛智, 671–741), Amoghavajra, Huiguo and Kūkai.<sup>19</sup> As in the epitaph, in these two texts Kūkai evaluates Huiguo more highly than we find in Chinese biographies and appears to amplify his own religious connection with the master.

In addition to the above-mentioned sources, we can also find descriptions of Huiguo in two other works by Kūkai, in the *Shōrai mokuroku* 請來目錄 (Catalogue of Imported Items), which documents materials he brought back from China to Japan,<sup>20</sup> and in the *Shōryōshū*. In these we see Kūkai's description of how he met Huiguo and subsequently received initiation into esoteric Buddhism, as well as how greatly he valued this transmission. Seven literary pieces related to Huiguo as well as his epitaph are included in his *Shōryōshū*, which consists of 112 writings in total. Kūkai established the Abhiṣeka Hall, the first permanent institution for esoteric ordinations, on Mount Kōya 高野山 and carried out an initiation ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) for the retired Emperor Heizei 平城 (773–825). To document this, he composed the *Heizei tennō kanjō mon* 平城天皇灌頂文 (Writing for Conferring the *Abhiṣeka* to Emperor Heizei) in which he also included descriptions of Huiguo.

The seven pieces in the *Shōryōshū* in which Kūkai mentions Huiguo are number 20, *Hōi kokuka shō shuhō hyō* 奉爲國家請修法表 (Memorial Requesting the Court to Practice Buddhist Teachings for Respectfully Serving the Nation; in fascicle 4); number 40, *Yo Esshū setsudoshi kyū naigai kyōsho kei* 與越州節度使求内外經書啓 (Statement Requesting the Prefect of

<sup>16</sup> Sofū Sen'yōkai 1923, pp. 1–49.

<sup>17</sup> Like *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*, *Shorter Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism* is also included in the *Kōbō daishi zenshū*. See *ibid.*, pp. 50–68.

<sup>18</sup> Mukai 1984, Inaya 1963.

<sup>19</sup> Kōda 1985.

<sup>20</sup> Sofū Sen'yōkai 1923, pp. 69–104. He recorded in the *Shōrai mokuroku* the Buddhist texts and instruments which he collected while in China from 804 to 806 and brought with him to Japan.

Yue Prefecture to Secure Buddhist and Non-Buddhist Scriptures; in fascicle 5); number 41, *Yo hongoku shi shō kyōki kei* 與本國使請共歸啓 (Statement Requesting the Government to Allow Him to Return with the Home Nation's Envoy; in fascicle 5); number 42, *Shōryū oshō kennō kesa jō* 青龍和尚獻納袈裟狀 (Letter Requesting Qinglongsi's High Priest Huiguo to Accept Offered Monastic Robes; in fascicle 5); number 54, *Hōi shion zō nibu daimandara ganmon* 奉爲四恩造二部大曼荼羅願文 (A Prayer for Making Two Sets of the Great Shingon Mandalas for Respectfully Returning the Four Debts of Gratitude;<sup>21</sup> in fascicle 7); number 98, *Kan sho yuenshū ō hōsha himitsuzō hōbun* 勸諸有緣衆應奉寫祕密藏法文 (A Writing Encouraging Many Relevant People to Respectfully Copy Esoteric Buddhist Scriptures; in fascicle 9); and number 99, *Kōya konryū sho kekkai keibyaku mon* 高野建立初結界啓白文 (A Dedication Writing for Making a Construction Site on Mount Kōya; in fascicle 9).<sup>22</sup>

### *Critical Assessment of Kūkai's Epitaph*

The following suggests that Kūkai wrote the epitaph section when he was in China after his master passed away and then added the explanatory verses to it after he returned to Japan. First, no monument for Huiguo on which Kūkai's epitaph was inscribed has been found. Second, it is odd that Huiguo's disciples would have officially requested the foreign and unestablished monk Kūkai to write the epitaph for their master. Third, when Master Huiguo passed away at the age of sixty in 805, Kūkai was just thirty-two years old. He studied esoteric Buddhism under Huiguo for only six months before the master's death. Fourth, even though he learned esoteric Buddhism from Huiguo, Kūkai lived in the temple Ximingsi 西明寺 while he was in China, not at Huiguo's Qinglongsi. Because Kūkai did not live in Qinglongsi, disciples of Huiguo might have considered him as an outsider, not as a member of their inner circle.

Kūkai's accounts of Huiguo established his Dharma lineage, legitimized his founding of the Shingon tradition in Japan, and validated his position in the service of the Japanese emperor. Yet, in the epitaph Kūkai goes beyond what was probably necessary to do so, introducing supernatural or suprarational elements into the process of transmitting the Shingon Dharma. For example, Kūkai mentions that in a spiritual dream, Huiguo reveals that he

<sup>21</sup> The four debts of gratitude constitute the debts owed to parents, to all living beings, to the sovereign, and to the three treasures of Buddhism.

<sup>22</sup> Katsumata 1973, p. 774.

and Kūkai had been connected in many past lives, alternating in roles of pupil and teacher. However, no texts specifically mention a reincarnated Chinese Buddhist monk during the Tang dynasty when Kūkai travelled to China. Even in Tibetan Buddhism there is no specific pinpoint of a reincarnated monk until the case of Karma Pakshi (1204/6–1283), the second (Gyalwa) Karmapa much later than the time of Kūkai. This suggests that from at least the time of Kūkai in Japanese Buddhism there was the idea that specific individuals were reincarnated—before such an idea appeared in China or Tibet.

In addition, according to this account, Huiguo believed he would be reborn in Japan as Kūkai's disciple. This means that one of Kūkai's Japanese disciples would have been Huiguo, and would have perhaps succeeded Kūkai as the leader of Shingon Buddhism. If so, that disciple must have been born sometime after Huiguo's death in 805, making him younger than any of Kūkai's ten known closest followers. Those today who believe that Kūkai did not die but remains in long-term *samādhi* on Mount Kōya may argue that the reincarnation of Huiguo might have not been born yet. Perhaps the reincarnation story in the epitaph was added after Kūkai's time. In this regard, it is interesting that this paranormal situation, that appears to be highly important, is not clarified by Kūkai or even further mentioned in his writings.

Utilizing primary sources directly and indirectly related to his master Amoghavajra and his Dharma brothers,<sup>23</sup> we can objectively locate Huiguo's position among disciples of Amoghavajra and in the history of Chinese esoteric Buddhism without being influenced by Kūkai's potential biases.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, even though his grandmaster Amoghavajra definitely was one of the most important figures or maybe the most important figure in Chinese esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai appears to have magnified Amoghavajra's and Huiguo's importance, as well as his own relationship with these masters.<sup>25</sup>

First, when Amoghavajra passed away at the age of sixty in 774, Huiguo was just twenty-nine years old. Since he had many senior Dharma brothers, he probably did not become the leader among Amoghavajra's disciples when his master was alive or immediately after he passed away. As seen below in his epitaph, Kūkai does not mention Huiguo's Dharma brothers and perhaps intentionally excludes them while focusing on his master. In addition, even though Hanguang 含光 (n.d.) might have been Amoghavajra's most

<sup>23</sup> Imai 1997, pp. 218–22.

<sup>24</sup> Yoritomi 1980, Iwasaki 2000, Imai 1985, Fujiyoshi 1988.

<sup>25</sup> Imai 1997, pp. 234–35.



important disciple while his master was alive<sup>26</sup> and Huilang 慧朗 (738–820) appears to have been the actual leader among his master's disciples before and after Amoghavajra's death, Kūkai does not as much as mention their names in his epitaph.

Second, Amoghavajra himself considered Huiguo to be one of his six major disciples. In his [*Bukong*] *sanzang heshang yishu* [不空]三藏和上遺書 (A Note that the Tripiṭaka Master [Amoghavajra] Left Behind) wrote on 7 May 774 (a little more than one month before his death), he states that his six major disciples were Hanguang, Hyecho 慧超 (704–787) of Silla 新羅, Huiguo, Huilang, Yuanjiao 元皎 (n.d.), and Juechao 覺超 (n.d.).<sup>27</sup> There are no descriptions of these other five eminent disciples in Kūkai's epitaph, only Huiguo.

Third, according to the *Dade xingzhuang*, Huiguo received the great teaching of the *Garbha* Realm of great compassion (Ch. *Dabei taicang dajiao* 大悲胎藏大教) and the *susiddhi* teaching (Ch. *Suxidefa* 蘇悉地法) from the Sillan master Hyeoncho 玄超 (n.d.), a disciple of Śubhakarasiṃha (Ch. Shanwuwei 善無畏, 637–735), and also the great teaching of the *Vajra* Realm (Ch. *Jingangjie dajiao* 金剛界大教) from Amoghavajra in 767. At that time, Huiguo was twenty-two years old and Amoghavajra was sixty-three.<sup>28</sup> Haiyun also describes Huiguo's two Dharma transmissions in his *Transmission Record*.<sup>29</sup> However, Kūkai does fail to mention the name of Hyeoncho but says in his epitaph of Huiguo and in his *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*<sup>30</sup> that Huiguo received the transmission of the two great teachings from Amoghavajra.<sup>31</sup>

Fourth, in all of the Kūkai's writings about Huiguo (including the epitaph), he never mentions Huiguo's Dharma brothers. By ignoring other important masters of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism of the time, he overemphasized his master's and his grandmaster's roles in its history, thereby elevating the

<sup>26</sup> Imai 1997, p. 224; Ono 1923.

<sup>27</sup> See the *Biaozhi ji* 表制集, T no. 2120, 52: 844a29–b2.

<sup>28</sup> T no. 2057, 50: 295a8–15.

<sup>29</sup> T no. 2081, 51: 784a14–19, 786c25–a1.

<sup>30</sup> Sofu Sen'yōkai 1923, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 43. Wu Yin also mentioned in his “Huiguo aduli xingzhuang” that Huiguo transmitted two great teachings of Esoteric Buddhism from Amoghavajra. However, we need to carefully and textually review the text's content because Kūkai included the text in his *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*. He might have included Wu Yin's work in his writing to support his assertion. We cannot also ignore possibilities that he revised Wu Yin's work to back up his assertion.



importance of what he represents as his own Dharma lineage.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, we cannot use Kūkai's writings to neutrally examine the life of Huiguo, Amoghavajra, and other great masters of Chinese esoteric Buddhism such as Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Yixing 一行 (683–727). To do so, it is necessary to review source materials directly related to Amoghavajra and locate Huiguo among his major disciples.

The most important primary source about Amoghavajra and his disciples is the *Bukong heshang biaozi ji* 不空三藏和上表制集 (Collection of Official Documents Written by the Tripiṭaka Master Amoghavajra and his Disciples; hereafter, abbreviated as *Biaozi ji*) in six fascicles. It was compiled over a twenty-five-year period from 752 to 781 by Yuanzhao 圓照 (719–800), a translator and a resident monk of temple Ximingsi in Chang'an. It includes 133 official documents written by Amoghavajra, his disciples, and eminent scholar-monks who supported his translations. The text is available in the Taishō canon.<sup>33</sup> The documents are related to court rituals, politics, temple repairs, image making, the construction of temple buildings, dharma services, monastic management, and other miscellaneous topics including text catalogues, epitaphs, eulogies, and verses of praise.

Yuanzhao also compiled the *Xu Kaiyuan lu* 續開元錄 (Sequel to the Catalogue of Buddhist Texts Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era, 713–741) in three fascicles in 794.<sup>34</sup> It includes texts composed and translated in China after the compilation of the *Kaiyuan lu* 開元錄 (The Catalogue of Buddhist Texts Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era) in twenty fascicles.<sup>35</sup> These include Amoghavajra's translation activities and biography, descriptions of his disciples, and a catalogue of esoteric Buddhist texts. He also assembled the *Zhenyuan lu* 貞元錄 (Catalogue of Buddhist Texts Compiled during the Zhenyuan Era) in thirty fascicles in the year 800, in compliance with an edict of the Tang dynasty Emperor Dezong. It is a catalogue of Buddhist texts in 2,419 sets and 7,388 fascicles dating from 67 to 794.<sup>36</sup> He included materials related to Amoghavajra and his disciples in the fifteenth and the sixteenth fascicle.

<sup>32</sup> Imai 1997, p. 221.

<sup>33</sup> T no. 2120, 52: 826c14–860c15.

<sup>34</sup> T no. 2156, 55: 748b8–770b16.

<sup>35</sup> T no. 2154, 55: 477a2–723a8.

<sup>36</sup> T no. 2157, 55: 771a2–1048a15. The *Zhenyuan lu* loyally accepted the contents and followed the style of the *Kaiyuan lu* and added the catalogue of Buddhist texts written and translated from 730 to 800 to the text recorded there.

The second most important sourcebook on Amoghavajra and his disciples is the *Bukong sanzang xingzhuang* 不空三藏行狀 (The Biography of the Tripitaka Master Amoghavajra)<sup>37</sup> by Zhao Qian 趙遷 (n.d.), a lay disciple of Amoghavajra.<sup>38</sup>

Zanning 贊寧 (919–1002) referred to the *Biaozhi ji*, the *Xu Kaiyuan lu*, and the *Zhenyuan lu* mentioned above, and wrote a biography of Amoghavajra in 988.<sup>39</sup> He included it in his *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Song Biographies of Eminent Monks) in thirty fascicles. He mainly referred to these three primary sources when he wrote an additional biography of Amoghavajra,<sup>40</sup> and biographies of Amoghavajra's disciples, including Feixi 飛錫 (n.d.),<sup>41</sup> Zilini 子隣 (n.d.),<sup>42</sup> Liangbi 良賁 (n.d.),<sup>43</sup> Qianzhen 潛真 (718–788),<sup>44</sup> Huilin 慧琳 (737–820),<sup>45</sup> and Yuanjiao,<sup>46</sup> as well as the biography of Hanguang.<sup>47</sup> Zanning did not write a biography of Huiguo, which also casts doubt on Kūkai's emphasis on his master's importance and highlights the tendentious nature of his failure to mention Amoghavajra's other disciples in his writings. Zanning also wrote biographies of other eminent monks who cannot be ignored in the history of Chinese esoteric Buddhism. For instance, he wrote a biography of Śubhakarasiṃha,<sup>48</sup> Vajrabodhi,<sup>49</sup> and Yixing.<sup>50</sup>

By all of these and numerous other accounts, Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, Yixing and Amoghavajra were the most important figures in Chinese esoteric Buddhism, much more important than Huiguo in Chinese Buddhism in general and Chinese esoteric Buddhism in particular. However, Kūkai excluded Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing in his Dharma lineage. Kūkai does include Vajrabodhi in his lineage system because he was the master of Kūkai's grandmaster Amoghavajra. However, he mentions him only briefly. We conclude from this that Kūkai was either misinformed about this history,

<sup>37</sup> T no. 2056, 50: 292b2–294c13.

<sup>38</sup> Iwamoto 1996.

<sup>39</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 712a23–714a21.

<sup>40</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 712a23–714a20.

<sup>41</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 721c3–20; Kobayashi 2008; Kobayashi 2004.

<sup>42</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 721c21–722a25.

<sup>43</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 735a26–c22; Yamaguchi 2004.

<sup>44</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 736b14–737a3.

<sup>45</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 738a22–b5.

<sup>46</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 864b16–c3.

<sup>47</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 879b13–880a2.

<sup>48</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 714b7–716a17.

<sup>49</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 711b5–712a22.

<sup>50</sup> T no. 2061, 50: 732c7–733c24.

which is unlikely, or that he intentionally overvalued the position of his grandmaster Amoghavajra and his master Huiguo, presumably to authenticate and promote his own transmission of the Dharma.

## TRANSLATION

Monument for the Late Ācārya Huiguo, High Priest of Temple Qinglongsi in the Divine Capital (Chang'an) of the Great Tang Dynasty, and National Abhiṣeka Master for Three Courts

Composed by Japan's National Education Dharma Disciple Bhikṣu Kūkai<sup>51</sup>  
(prose and verses)<sup>52</sup>

What laypersons should emphasize are the five constant virtues.<sup>53</sup> What monks should value are the three insights.<sup>54</sup> Being loyal and being filial, Master Huiguo's reputation is engraved in a golden register.<sup>55</sup> His virtues being like heaven, why should we not store them in a stone room?<sup>56</sup> I will attempt to explain this.<sup>57</sup>

That which is inextinguishable is the Dharma. One who does not fall away [from it] is a person. Who is awake to the Dharma? Where is that person?

<sup>51</sup> Kūkai uses the compound *bichu* 苾芻 to transliterate the Sanskrit word *bhikṣu*, a term for a Buddhist practitioner of austerities.

<sup>52</sup> Kūkai's Chinese-language prose comprises the majority of this work. The text of the memorial monument for Huiguo appears in verse form at the end.

<sup>53</sup> The five constant virtues of Confucianism (Ch. *wuchang* 五常) are (1) humanity, (2) righteousness, (3) propriety, (4) wisdom, and (5) trust.

<sup>54</sup> The Buddhist term *sanming* 三明, literally "three lights," refers to the three insights. They are (1) the insight of destiny, knowing the past; (2) the insight of the Eye of Heaven, knowing the future; and (3) the insight of nirvana, knowing the nature of suffering and its end.

<sup>55</sup> *Weizhong weixiao* 惟忠惟孝 ("Being loyal and being filial") is a phrase from the second entry in the Cai Zhong zhi ming 蔡仲之命 ("Orders of Cai Zhong") section of the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of History).

<sup>56</sup> "Stone room" is a reference to entries 14 and 149 of "Taishi gong zixu" 太史公自序 (Preface by the Grand Historian) in the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian). The Historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?–86? BCE) says the government official documents should be kept in a stone room to preserve them.

<sup>57</sup> This expression appears in the "Open Trunk" (Ch. *Quqie* 祛篋) section of the "inner chapters" of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. There, after "I will try to explain this," an example is given to ridicule the five virtues of Confucianism, suggesting that even a thief may employ such traits.

Here was the High Priest of the East Pagoda Hermitage of the divine capital's temple Qinglongsi, the Great Ācārya whose Dharma name was Huiguo. The Great Master, clapping hands during the collapse of the castle of Dharma,<sup>58</sup> achieved birth into the Ma 馬 clan of Zhaoying 昭應.<sup>59</sup> Heaven released [his] pure essence and the land smelts [his] sacred spirit. [His] seed is like the phoenix's egg and the sprout is like the dragon's colt. Soaring high and selecting a tree, nets of the clamorous dust could not catch him. With a lion's stride, he divined his residence.<sup>60</sup> The flowers of the forest of contemplation<sup>61</sup> were his auspiciously divined food. Directly, he then went to the late meditation master named Dazhao 大照<sup>62</sup> taking him as his master and serving him as a disciple. That Great Virtuous monk [Dazhao] entered the room<sup>63</sup> of Tripiṭaka Master Amoghavajra of Great Extensive Wisdom [and received the Dharma transmission from him]<sup>64</sup> in the temple Daxingshansi 大興善寺.<sup>65</sup> In the days when his

<sup>58</sup> *Facheng* 法城 (castle of the Dharma) refers to the Buddhist teachings. The expression is seen in various sutras, including the *Huayan Sutra* and the *Lotus Sutra*. Kūkai believed he lived in the age of the Counterfeit Dharma when the age of the Proper Dharma had passed. He mentions in the *Hizō hōyaku* 秘藏寶鑰 (The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury) that some special people are born even in the age of the Counterfeit Dharma.

<sup>59</sup> Zhaoying is present day Lintong 臨潼 Prefecture in Shanxi 陝西 Province.

<sup>60</sup> We have followed the modern Japanese in the KKZ, vol. 6, p. 211, in reading the graph *shi* 師 (master) as *shi* 獅 (lion).

<sup>61</sup> "Contemplation forest" (Ch. *chanlin* 禪林) is a term referring to a Buddhist temple.

<sup>62</sup> Tanzhen was called Meditation Master Dazhao, a name posthumously given to him by a later emperor. See *Mikkyō daijiten* 密教大辭典 (Encyclopedia of Esoteric Buddhism), rev. and enl. ed., pp. 1691c–92a.

<sup>63</sup> "Great Virtuous monk" is a translation of *Dade* 大德, an official title. The phrase "Entered the room" means he received the transmission of the esoteric Dharma in the initiation (*abhiṣeka*) hall.

<sup>64</sup> Amoghavajra was the sixth patriarch of Shingon. He was born in Sri Lanka. At the age of fourteen, he traveled to Java where he became the disciple of Vajrabodhi, who Japanese Shingon Buddhists consider their fifth patriarch. He went to China with his master in 720 and assisted him in translating esoteric texts. After the death of Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra went to India to obtain Sanskrit texts and returned to China in 746. He was well received by emperors and given the title "Tripiṭaka Master Extensive Wisdom" (Ch. *Guangzhi Sanzang* 廣智三藏) by Emperor Daizong in 765. He translated 110 texts.

<sup>65</sup> Daxingshansi, located in the vicinity of Xian 西安, is generally considered the temple from which Chinese esoteric Buddhism originated. The temple was founded under the name of Zunshansi 遵善寺 around the latter part of the third century CE during the reign of Emperor Wu 武 (r. 265–290) in the Western Jin 晉 dynasty (265–316) and was renamed to Daxingshansi in the second reign year of Emperor Wen 文 (r. 581–604) of the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618) in 582. From 716 to 720 of the Tang dynasty (618–907), three eminent Indian esoteric Buddhist masters—Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra—came to the

forelocks and milk teeth had passed,<sup>66</sup> he had a chance to follow his master and then to see the Tripiṭaka Master. With one glance, the Tripiṭaka Master [Amoghavajra] was endlessly amazed and secretly informed him, “You will definitely make my Dharma teachings flourish.” The master already considered him as a father and treated him as a mother would. Pointing to those abstruse traces, the master taught the mysterious storehouse [to him].<sup>67</sup> When Huiguo heard [the two *dhāraṇī* texts] the *Great Buddha Crown* and the *Mahāpratisarā* through his ears, the *dhāraṇīs* were engraved in his heart.<sup>68</sup> When he heard the sound of [the two texts] the *Deeds of Samantabhadra* and *Mañjuśrī's Eulogy*, [the echo of the texts] remained in his mouth.<sup>69</sup> During the year of saving ants, he had many miraculous experiences.<sup>70</sup> At that time, Emperor Daizong heard this, issued an imperial decree, and invited him to enter [the palace]. The emperor ordered, “I have some questions which bother me. I wish for you to visit me and answer them.” The Great Teacher received the emperor's invitation

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temple and transmitted esoteric Buddhist tradition to Chinese Buddhists. Amoghavajra translated five hundred sets of Indian esoteric Buddhist texts into Chinese at the temple.

<sup>66</sup> In KKZ, vol. 6, p. 230, note 26, it is written that according to the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (The Outer Commentary on the *Han-School Odes*) by Han Ying 韓嬰 (200–130 BCE), the time when a child loses forelocks and milk teeth is around the age of eight.

<sup>67</sup> The mysterious storehouse is the collection of esoteric scriptures. Like the larger *tripiṭaka*, the esoteric collection consists of three parts: sutras, *vinaya* (rules of discipline), and commentaries.

<sup>68</sup> The *Great Buddha Crown* refers to the *Great Buddha Crown* (*uṣṇīṣa*) *Dhāraṇī* (Jp. *Daibucchō darani* 大佛頂陀羅尼); see *Mikkyō daijiten*, p. 1533a. *Dhāraṇī* are strings of syllables, typically Sanskrit, the sounds of which are thought to be particularly meaningful or efficacious. A mantra is a type of *dhāraṇī*. The *Mahāpratisarā* refers to the *Dhāraṇī of Mahāpratisarā* (Jp. *Daizuigu darani* 大隨求陀羅尼), in one fascicle (T no. 1154, 20: 637b–644b); see *Mikkyō daijiten*, p. 1481.

<sup>69</sup> The *Deeds of Samantabhadra* refers to *Eulogy for the Deeds of Samantabhadra* (Jp. *Fugen gyōgan san* 普賢行願讚), in one fascicle (T no. 297, 10: 880a–881c). *Mañjuśrī's Eulogy* refers to *Mañjuśrī's Eulogy in Gratitude of the Dharmakāya* (Jp. *Monjushiri san butsu hosshin rai* 文殊師利讚佛法身禮), in one fascicle (T no. 1195, 20: 936c–938a). Hearing the sound and stopping his mouth is likely a reference to Vajrasattva Bodhisattva receiving the transmission from Mahāvairocana in the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* (T no. 848, 18: 1a–30c). It means he received the esoteric transmission from his master. This expression is also used in Shinzei's biography of Kūkai, which appears as the “Introduction” to *Shōryōshū*, KKZ, vol. 6, pp. 729–30.

<sup>70</sup> The year of saving ants is around the age of fourteen or fifteen. The name comes from the idea that if a young person saves ants, he or she will have a long life. This is seen, for example, in the *Za baozang jing* 雜寶藏經 (Storehouse of Miscellaneous Jewels Sutra; T no. 203, 4: 466c18), which translates as: “A novice who saves ant children from water disaster attains long life and makes up for karma.”

in accordance with the Dharma and led him to solve his problems like water which flows naturally.<sup>71</sup> The emperor exclaimed, “Although the dragon child is small, he is able to make rain fall.<sup>72</sup> Your words were not vain. Left and right I will record them in detail.<sup>73</sup> I see now the young master who freely enters and leaves a vase.”<sup>74</sup> From this time onward, the thoroughbred horse<sup>75</sup> [Huiguo] was welcome and there were no scarcities of the four kinds of items offered to him.<sup>76</sup> When he became twenty years old, he received [full ordination]. He worked diligently by the shine of snow.<sup>77</sup> He made great waves in the ocean of the three groups of Buddhist teachings<sup>78</sup> with his lips and mouth. He caused the mirror which reflects the five divisions [of the *Vajra* Realm mandala]<sup>79</sup> to illuminate

<sup>71</sup> The KKZ, vol. 6, p. 211, explains this by saying Huiguo called out to Maheśvara, a guardian of the Dharma that has its origins in the Hindu deity Śiva. KKZ, vol. 6, p. 230, note 34 explains that Kūkai refers to this in his *Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism* (KKZ, vol. 2).

<sup>72</sup> See the reference to making rain in the note 75 on the *Biography of Aśoka* below.

<sup>73</sup> According to KKZ, vol. 6, p. 230, note 35, this may refer to civil officials’ formal dress including a writing tablet held in a knotted sash.

<sup>74</sup> According to the *Biography of Aśoka*, once when Aśoka met a seven-year old novice, he waited until no one could see him, and prostrated himself. Aśoka asked him, “Please do not tell anyone that I bowed down before you.” Nearby was a jar. Suddenly, the novice entered it and emerged through the spigot by means of his powers. He told the king, “O king, do not tell anyone that I entered this jar and came out again through the spigot.” Aśoka protested that such a marvel could not be hidden and that he would have to tell everyone about it. That is why, it is said, three things should never be maligned: a young king, a young *nāga* (dragon), and a young monk. The first, though young, can slay men; the second, though tiny, can make it rain; and the third, though small, can save humankind. Thereafter, Aśoka used to throw himself at the feet of Buddhist monks regardless of the place and the people watching. See Strong 1983, p. 197.

<sup>75</sup> A *jilu* 驥騮 is a horse that can run a thousand *li* 里, over three hundred miles, in one day.

<sup>76</sup> The four items are the four major offerings laypersons donate to Buddhist community: (1) clothes, (2) food and drink, (3) bedding materials, and (4) medicine.

<sup>77</sup> Working by snow light is an allusion to the Chinese story of Sun Kang 孫康, who was too poor to buy a lamp and worked by the light of the moon shining on snow. In China, working by snow light came to mean working diligently. This story was in the *Mengqiu* 蒙求 (Helpful Collection for First Education) and other Heian period primers in Chinese writing. See Denecke 2004, p. 113, note 44. Kūkai also uses this allusion when referring to his own dedication as a student in the *Sangō shiiki* 三教指歸 (Indications of the Three Teachings; KKZ, vol. 6, pp. 5–10).

<sup>78</sup> The Buddhist canon is composed of three groups: sutras, *vinayas* (rules of discipline), and commentaries.

<sup>79</sup> The “five divisions” refers to the five divisions of the *Vajra* Realm mandala (the Buddha division, the *vajra* division, the lotus division, the treasure division, and the karma division), where Mahāvairocana’s wisdom is revealed, in contrast to the *Garbha* Realm mandala, where Mahāvairocana’s ultimate principle is shown.

his spiritual tower.<sup>80</sup> Like a great bell's sound, he would freely roll out or fall back according to the situation. Like echoes in an empty valley, he would freely hide and appear according to the capacity of others. At first he began to practice Buddhism by preserving the rules of the *Four-part Vinaya*.<sup>81</sup> Later he practiced the three mysteries and *abhiṣeka* [initiations].<sup>82</sup> The debating spears which filled the skies were not able to cross blades [with him].<sup>83</sup> When roasting the grease-pot with *prajñā*, who would dare to go to the very bottom of the pot?<sup>84</sup>

Therefore the three courts honored him and considered him as national teacher. The four groups [of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen], respected him and received initiations from him.<sup>85</sup> If the drought demon scorched the leaves, he summoned the *nāga* and caused him to make the great rains fall.<sup>86</sup> If *shangyang* 商羊 destroyed the dikes, he caused *garuḍa* to make the sun shine brightly.<sup>87</sup> His feelings were an invariable sundial. His efficacy was the

<sup>80</sup> Originally, *lingtai* 靈臺 referred to a tower from which the emperor could look out over the four directions.

<sup>81</sup> The *vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka school of India was called the *Four-part Vinaya* (Ch. *Sifen lü* 四分律) in China. It became the standard *vinaya* in China in particular and in East Asia in general.

<sup>82</sup> The three mysteries are the mysteries of the body, mind, and speech, which each have corresponding practices involving mudras, mandalas, and mantras, respectively.

<sup>83</sup> According to KKZ, vol. 6, p. 231, note 45, this is a reference to the "Xi Zaochi zhuan" 習鑿齒傳 (Biography of Xi Zaochi) which appears in the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of the Jin dynasty). The biography says, "There was once a priest Daoan 道安 [312–385] with excellent speech and high intellect. He arrived in Jingzhou 荊州 Prefecture, where he first met [Xi] Zaochi 鑿齒 [n.d.]. Daoan said, 'Shi 釋 Daoan of Filled Skies.' Zaochi said, 'Xi Zaochi of Four Oceans.' Because they were contemporaries, they became an excellent pair." The note says the spears that filled the skies are Daoan's pointed words.

<sup>84</sup> That is to say, who would use up all their mental resources to debate with the best, Huiguo? Roasting the grease-pot, which is hung under the axle of a cart, means using up all of one's mental resources in a debate. A similar expression, roasting the hub (*zhigu* 炙轂), is used in the same way in the biographies of Mencius 孟子 (371–289 BCE) and Xunzi 荀子 (313?–238 BCE) in the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian).

<sup>85</sup> The four orders are ordained monks, ordained nuns, lay male devotees, and lay female devotees.

<sup>86</sup> In the same way, Kūkai is said to have used his esoteric practices to bring rain at the request of the emperor of Japan. His poem to commemorate this appears as the fourth entry in the first book of the *Shōryōshū*. The drought demon appears as "Yunhan" 雲漢 in the "Daya" 大雅 (Greater Court Hymns) section of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs). Kūkai transliterates the Sanskrit word *nāga*, which can mean snake or dragon. In this case it has the former meaning.

<sup>87</sup> The *shangyang* is a mythical bird whose appearance signals the coming of rain, according to the *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語 (Family Sayings of Confucius). The *garuḍa* is a bird-like creature in Hindu and Buddhist mythology, large enough to block the sun.



same as having it in the palm of his hand. The emperor and empress honored his merit. The descendants of the jasper branches and jade leaves [i.e., the royal family] admired his ability to conquer devils.<sup>88</sup> The Great Master enabled this with his compassionate power. When numberless carriages were loaded with wealth and silk and products of many *qing* 頃 of fields and gardens were offered to the master,<sup>89</sup> although he received them, he did not hoard or attempt to increase them for his own daily life.<sup>90</sup> He used them to construct a *mahā* mandala or to establish a temple.<sup>91</sup> He saved the poor with wealth and guided the ignorant with the Dharma. He made his mind to not store wealth and he made his nature to not be stingy with the Dharma. For this reason, he benefited both those who appeared to be noble and those who appeared to be lowly. Empty they came and filled they returned. From near, from afar, they gathered, searching for the light. Bian Hong 辨弘 [n.d.] of the Nation of Heling 訶陵<sup>92</sup> passed through the five regions of India and touched the master's feet with his head [as a disciple]. Hyeil 惠日 [n.d.] of Silla passed through three kingdoms [of Korea]<sup>93</sup> and received [his teachings] with a bowed head. Weishang 惟上 [n.d.] of Jiannan 劍南<sup>94</sup> and Yiyuan 義圓 [n.d.] of Hebei 河北 Province<sup>95</sup> admired their master's teaching, visited him, and shook the tin.<sup>96</sup> Thirsty for the Dharma, they carried away boxes of books on their backs. Among those who received the seal of approval from the master,<sup>97</sup> there was Yiming 義明 [n.d.] who served as an imperial chaplain.<sup>98</sup> Sadly,

<sup>88</sup> The descendants of the royal family are called jasper branches and jade leaves.

<sup>89</sup> One *qing* equals 6.7 hectares, or 67,000 square miles.

<sup>90</sup> The Chinese term *zisheng* 資生, literally meaning the necessities of daily life, originally appears in the "Kun" 坤 (Earth) section of the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Change).

<sup>91</sup> A *mahā* mandala is one of the five kinds of Shingon mandala. Kūkai uses the term *sōgaran* 僧伽藍 (Ch. *senggalan*) as a transliteration for the Sanskrit *saṃgha-ārāma*, literally a "garden for the *saṃgha*," i.e., temple grounds.

<sup>92</sup> According to the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old History of the Tang Dynasty), the Nation of Heling was located in the middle part of the island of Java. See KKZ, vol. 6, p. 232, note 58.

<sup>93</sup> The three kingdoms Mahan 馬韓, Byeonhan 弁韓, and Jinhan 辰韓 were the ancient three kingdoms of Korea in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula.

<sup>94</sup> Jiannan is now in present-day Sichuan 四川 Province.

<sup>95</sup> Yinyuan was a top disciple of Huiguo, according to KKZ, vol. 6, p. 232, note 69.

<sup>96</sup> "Shook the tin" means rattled the metal rings on the tip of the monastic's ring-staff, called a *khakkhara* (Ch. *xizhang* 錫杖, literally "tin staff.") They would be shaken to frighten off animals or draw the attention of alms givers. Shaking the tin in this sentence may mean that Weishang and Yiyuan were trying to draw Huiguo's attention.

<sup>97</sup> *Yinke* 印可 is the student's seal of approval by their master to receive higher teachings or, in this case, to be the successor of Huiguo in leading the lineage.

<sup>98</sup> Yiming is not found in the Taishō canon.

when [Yi]man [義滿 [n.d.] died before him, the master used his cart for his disciple's outer coffin.<sup>99</sup> Just like looking after a child in the bath,<sup>100</sup> he made his disciples receive the teachings of the three mysteries. His disciples, Zhi, Can, Mei, and Yi,<sup>101</sup> and another group of his disciples, Cao, Min, Jian, and Tong,<sup>102</sup> together all adopted the *samaya* precepts, studied yoga, grasped the three mysteries, and succeeded in *vipāśyanā* [meditation]. Because some of Huiguo's disciples served as the emperor's master and others became the masters on whom the four groups of Buddhist followers<sup>103</sup> relied, his Dharma lamp filled the realm and his streams of thought prevailed in the nation. All of them received the generous Dharma offering from the Great Master.<sup>104</sup>

After they took leave of their parents, they went to their master [Huiguo], abandoned their ornaments, and entered the monastic path. He did not need to borrow a floating bag from others;<sup>105</sup> he always had the oil bowl in his possession.<sup>106</sup> He made his mind solid like pine and bamboo and he made his will determined like ice and frost. He was well accomplished in the four postures without effort.<sup>107</sup> He was good in the three karmic activities without

<sup>99</sup> Yiman was a disciple of Huiguo. KKZ, vol. 6, p. 233, note 74 says this is a reference to the *Lunyu* 論語 (hereafter, *Analects of Confucius*), book 11, line 7, speculating that this means that Huiguo felt like a father who lost his child.

<sup>100</sup> KKZ, vol. 6, p. 233, note 77, says this is likely a literary allusion. If the analogy in the previous sentence likens Huiguo to a dead child and his student to a father, this may be saying that the student watches Huiguo closely like a child in the bath.

<sup>101</sup> These are Huiguo's disciples Yizhi 義智 (n.d.), Wencan 文璨 (n.d.), Yigong 義攻 (n.d.), and Yiyi 義壹 (n.d.).

<sup>102</sup> These are Huiguo's disciples Yicao 義操 (n.d.), Yimin 義敏 (n.d.), Xingjian 行堅 (n.d.), and Yuantong 圓通 (n.d.).

<sup>103</sup> See note 85, above.

<sup>104</sup> One of the three *dānas*, or three kinds of offerings: offerings of goods, offerings of the Dharma, and bestowing confidence. See *Bukkyōgo daijiten* 仏教語大辞典 (Encyclopedia of Buddhist Terms), 2nd ed., p. 478.

<sup>105</sup> "Floating bag" means a life raft. It is a metaphor for precepts through which monks are able to arrive in liberation. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra* speaks of grasping the floating bag to cross the great ocean (T no. 375, 12: 673c19). We take this sentence to mean that he possessed the precepts and therefore did not need others to give him a life raft.

<sup>106</sup> In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra*, an oil bowl is mentioned in a metaphor for how bodhisattvas keep close watch on all living beings even though they are surrounded by life's distractions. It describes a king who threatens someone with execution if he spills a single drop from a bowl of oil while carrying it on a busy road. In the midst of distractions, the man succeeds in watching the oil so closely that he does not spill it (T no. 375, 12: 740a8–9).

<sup>107</sup> The four postures (Ch. *siyi* 四儀) are walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. Buddhist practice can be done in any of the four postures.

artifices.<sup>108</sup> The great teacher was extremely admirable in his preservation of the precepts. Enduring cold and enduring heat, he did not speak of his hardships. Meeting with hunger, meeting with sickness, he did not retreat from doing proper deeds. During the four daily ascents, he persevered in contemplation.<sup>109</sup> He told the four *māras* to surrender.<sup>110</sup> He held the ten directions under his protection<sup>111</sup> and tied the hands of the ten armies [of Māra] behind their backs.<sup>112</sup> Accomplished in endurance, accomplished in diligence, my master [Huiguo's] traits were uncompromising. Drifting to the Dharmakāya palace,<sup>113</sup> observing the ocean of the *garbha* assembly and entering the *Vajra* Realm, he respected the assemblage of universal wisdom.<sup>114</sup> He made hundreds of thousands of *dhāraṇī* pass through his single mindedness. He spread hundreds of millions of mandalas over his single body. Wherever he went and wherever he sat, he transformed the place to a field for the way. Whether asleep or awake, he was never separated from insightful wisdom. This being the case, as the morning sun startles one from a long sleep and the spring thunder draws out those long hibernating, is this not how my master Huiguo's meditative wisdom wonderfully functioned here? He showed the splendid and precious, and guided the splendid and precious. He pretended to have sickness to deal with those having sickness.<sup>115</sup> Responding to

<sup>108</sup> The three karmic activities (Ch. *sanye* 三業) are verbal, physical, and mental activities.

<sup>109</sup> The phrase "the four ascents" literally means that monastics should go upstairs to the temple practice hall four times a day. The four times are at dawn, noon, evening, and midnight.

<sup>110</sup> The four *māras* or demons are mental obstructions to practice. They are the demon of confusion, the demon of the five *skandhas* (the senses and thoughts), heavenly demons that appear attractive and arouse desires, and the demon of death.

<sup>111</sup> The ten directions are the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions, above, and below.

<sup>112</sup> The ten armies of Māra constitute (1) sensual desires, (2) discontent, (3) hunger and thirst, (4) craving, (5) laziness, (6) fear, (7) indecision, (8) conceit, (9) fame, and (10) self-praise and disparaging others.

<sup>113</sup> The Dharmakāya is the universe, incomprehensible by conventional thought but known through Buddhist practice. It is comprised of the five elements. The Dharmakāya palace is the symbolic abode of Mahāvairocana. To understand the reality of the universe beyond ordinary thought, Shingon uses two conceptual realms for contemplation. The *Garbha* Realm represents the known and wisdom while the *Vajra* Realm is the knower and compassion. Each of these realms is represented by a mandala containing symbolic drawings of Buddhas and other entities. Together they are the two major mandalas of Shingon. Using mudra, mantra, and mandala visualization, Shingon practitioners seek to unite the two realms and thereby realize identity with the universal, Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana.

<sup>114</sup> *Parijñāna* (Ch. *bianzhi* 遍智) means non-dualistic discernment and universal enlightenment.

<sup>115</sup> This is the same technique used by the saint Vimalakīrti as portrayed in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sutra*. In order to teach the Dharma he made himself be honored as a businessman

the sick, he properly prescribed medicine to them. He also compassionately guided the deluded with a compass. He frequently told disciples,

The noblest person does not surpass the king. The best law is not equal to the mysterious storehouse. A person whipping cows and sheep along the road arrives at the destination after a long time [unlike a person who takes on a horse].<sup>116</sup> If one uses his miraculous power to climb mountains and cross rivers, one is able to arrive at the destination without toil. How can one discuss the various vehicles and the mysterious storehouse in the same day? Isn't the outline and essence of the Buddha Dharma right here? Tripiṭaka Master [Shan]wuwei [Śubhakarasiṃha] abandoned the king's position like his slippers.<sup>117</sup> Vajrabodhi came to China in a floating cup to transmit Buddhism.<sup>118</sup> How could this be in vain! Passing from Vajrasattva, each successive student stuck silent and bowing his head to the ground, coming down to the present from master to master, there has been seven generations.<sup>119</sup> Although it is not difficult to attain enlightenment, it is not easy to have the opportunity to encounter this Dharma. Therefore they built a great *garbha* stage and offered the sweet nectar of the *abhiṣeka*.<sup>120</sup>

by businessmen and manifested illness so others would visit him, but with the intention of curing illnesses caused by their delusion.

<sup>116</sup> We included the phrase in brackets following KKZ, vol. 6, p. 234, note 103.

<sup>117</sup> Śubhakarasiṃha was an Indian master who came to China in 716. He brought many scriptures and translated the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* into Chinese.

<sup>118</sup> Here Kūkai calls Vajrabodhi by one of his Chinese names, Jingang Qinjiao 金剛親教 (*Vajra* Original Teaching). Concerning floating in a cup, in the Song 宋 period of the Southern dynasty (420–470) a certain Indian monk came to China and was given the name Beidu 杯度, "Cup Crossover," because he is said to have floated across a river in a cup. This expression was used later to indicate monks who traveled widely. See *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), T no. 2059, 50: 390b20–392b2. The reference to Vajrabodhi arriving in a floating cup is not seen in Kūkai's *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism* or *Shorter Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism*.

<sup>119</sup> Japanese Shingon Buddhism made two sets of eight patriarchs: Nāgārjuna, Nāgabodhi, Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, Yixing, Huiguo, and Kūkai (KKZ, vol. 6, p. 153, note 260), and Mahāvairocana, Vajrasattva, Nāgārjuna, Nāgabodhi, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, Huiguo, and Kūkai. Kūkai included the latter set in the *Shorter Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism* in 817 and in the *Larger Biographies of Transmission Masters of Shingon Buddhism* in 821. They are respectively found in Sofū Sen'yōkai 1923, pp. 50–68, and pp. 1–49, respectively. Regarding the authenticity of the *Shorter Biographies*, see Horiuchi 1994. Here, Kūkai seems to refer to the latter set.

<sup>120</sup> The "*garbha* stage" refers to the ordination platform used in esoteric Buddhism. In this case, the *abhiṣeka* is the anointment ritual performed at the initiation.

Then, whether they were heavenly beings or spirits, they observed the honored ceremony and washed away the dirt. Whether they were men or women, they tasted the Dharma flavor and gathered the pearls. A single offering of respect with a single mudra is the direct path to obtaining realization. Even the first syllable “a” in the Sanskrit alphabet and a single mantra phrase are the father and mother of Buddhahood. So, you all should likewise strive in this way, strive in this way.

The wonderful intentions which my master encouraged can be seen here. One moment of light and one moment of darkness are the constants of heaven. Suddenly appearing and suddenly dying are the expediency of the sages. With common reasoning few are discontent. The expedient path has many advantages.<sup>121</sup> Thereupon, in the first year of the Yongzhen 永貞 reign [of Emperor Shunzong 順宗 (r. 805) of the Tang dynasty], the year of Yiyong 乙酉, when the moon of extreme cold was full [on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month], residing in the world for sixty years and being a monk for forty years, tying the Dharma mudra and becoming absorbed in contemplation, he revealed among people the means by which the fuel is consumed.<sup>122</sup> Oh, ah, how sad!<sup>123</sup> When the heavens were toward Jupiter [the star of the year 805], people lost [the light of] the wisdom-sun.<sup>124</sup> The raft returned to the other shore,<sup>125</sup> leaving the drowning children alone.<sup>126</sup> What sorrow! The medicine king has gone into hiding.<sup>127</sup> His mad sons had relied on him. Who

<sup>121</sup> People feel the ordinary life is easier and the sage's path is more difficult. Even so, the sage's path has advantages of becoming free of the bondage of birth and death.

<sup>122</sup> Yiyong is a year in the Chinese sixty-year cycle, corresponding to the year of the rooster. The phrase “fuel consumed, fire extinguished” (Ch. *xin jin huo mie* 薪盡火滅) is a Buddhist expression for attaining nirvana, and is often used to refer to the Buddha's final nirvana or death. In this sentence it means that Huiguo demonstrated how to exhaust karma so that nothing will remain, thereby attaining nirvana. The expression is found, for example, in the *Lotus Sutra*. See *Bukkyōgo daijiten*, 2nd ed., p. 792.

<sup>123</sup> Kūkai here uses the expression *wuhu aizai* 嗚呼哀哉, an onomatopoeia for an exclamatory cry and sigh.

<sup>124</sup> The position of Jupiter relative to constellations was used to determine the zodiac animal year. Wisdom-sun is a Buddhist term also referred to as Buddha-sun.

<sup>125</sup> The Chinese graphs for the other shore, *bian* 彼岸, have also been used for the Sanskrit *pāramitā*, the transcendental.

<sup>126</sup> The drowning child is a metaphor for the disciples left without Huiguo.

<sup>127</sup> The medicine king can refer to a skilled physician, the Buddha, or the Medicine Buddha, Bhaiṣajya-guru (Ch. Yaoshi Rulai 藥師如來). Here the expression also refers to Huiguo.

will remedy their poisoning?<sup>128</sup> Ahh, sigh, the bitterness!<sup>129</sup> After the seventeenth day of the first month [of the year 806] was selected,<sup>130</sup> a grave was divined for the mound at the nine springs of the mountain Mangshan 邙山.<sup>131</sup> Burying the jade was [like] severing the intestines, roasting the sesame was [like] burning the liver.<sup>132</sup> The door to the springs was forever shut. The appeal to heaven did not reach there. It is as bitter as tea and smartweed, ahh!<sup>133</sup> Like swallowing fire that does not extinguish! The gray, gray clouds of heaven appear sad in color. The pine wind, “*se, se*” 颼颼 suggests a grieving voice. Green bamboo leaves at the edge of the courtyard seem to be old, while the roots of newly planted pine and catalpa turn away from the front of the grave.<sup>134</sup> As the bird’s light [the sun] is aroused and revolves, feelings of regret are cutting. As the image of the moon-toad turns and spins, one beats the breast anew.<sup>135</sup> Ahh, sigh, the bitterness! How could one not help but be in pain?

[I], disciple Kūkai, thinking about the land of mulberry and catalpa (Japan) east of the Eastern Sea,<sup>136</sup> imagined my traveling trunk surrounded with

<sup>128</sup> The parable of the excellent physician, in the *Lotus Sutra*, tells of a physician’s children who were poisoned. Because the poison had made them mad, they refused to take the antidote their father offered. To save them, the father had to deceive his children for their own good, an analogy for the Buddha’s use of skill-in-means used to bring the ignorant to awakening.

<sup>129</sup> Kūkai here uses *jiehu* 嗟呼 which as pronounced in Chinese is an onomatopoeia for a sigh.

<sup>130</sup> First month means the first month of the old calendar, corresponding to February 4 to March 5. It is the month of the tiger, as Kūkai says.

<sup>131</sup> Mount Mang is a famous cemetery for aristocrats of the Han 漢, Wei 魏 and Jin 晉 dynasties. It is in Louyang 洛陽 of the Henan 河南 Province. In later times, Mount Mang came to be used as a general term for a cemetery. Nine springs (*jiuquan* 九泉) is the underworld in Chinese mythology.

<sup>132</sup> The disciples’ extreme sadness is expressed as them having severed their intestines or burnt their livers. Huiguo is represented as the precious substances of jade and sesame. “Roasting the sesame” means cremating his body. The graph for sesame (Ch. *zhi* 芝) can also refer to a divine mushroom with miraculous powers.

<sup>133</sup> Both tea and smartweed leaves have a bitter taste. According to KKZ, vol. 6, p. 235, note 118, the expression is used in the *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (House Admonitions of the Yan Clan) written by Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591) of the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty. Kūkai uses the onomatopoeia *wuye* 嗚咽 (in Chinese pronunciation) for crying.

<sup>134</sup> According to KKZ, vol. 6, p. 235, note 120, the first two graphs 隴頭 (Ch. *longtou*) refer to the top of the mountain Longshan 隴山 near Gansu 甘肅 Province.

<sup>135</sup> The bird’s light is sunlight. In Chinese mythology, a three-legged bird lives in the sun and the image of a toad is on the moon.

<sup>136</sup> This means return to his native land. The same reference is made in a poem in the *Shijing*; section 2, “Xiaoya” 小雅 (Lesser Court Hymns); chapter 5, “Xiao Min zhi shen” 小旻之什 (Decade of Xiao Min).

difficulties. There would be tens of thousands of billowing waves and many thousands of cloudy mountains [from here to my homeland]. I did not come [to China] by my own power. I do not leave by my own will. I was summoned with a hook. I was pulled by a rope.<sup>137</sup> On the morning the ship set afloat, he [my master] showed many mysterious signs. The night of setting sail to return, he explained variously his connection with me in previous lives. The master made a surprise visit that night, appearing in this disciple's dream saying:

You did not know how much you and I have a close past bond! Within many lifetimes we shared a mutual vow and extensively propagated the mysterious teaching. Each of us has acted as the other's qualified teacher, not only one or two times. This is the reason I urge you to cross the distance and bestow my profound Dharma [on the people there].<sup>138</sup> You have received the fullness of the Dharma, he said. My wish has been fulfilled. You received the teaching at my feet completely in the western land. I will also be born in the east and enter your room [to become your disciple]. Do not delay long in returning. I will go there in advance.

I took these words' advice. I am not capable of knowing about my comings and goings. I followed my master's suggestions on where I should stay and to where I should go. Even though the illustrious Kong 孔 refrained from speaking of strange phenomena, Ruciraketu Bodhisattva told of a dream about a golden drum.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, [Master Huiguo] raised one corner to show those of the same gateway.<sup>140</sup> His words penetrated the marrow of our

<sup>137</sup> The *Vajra* Realm mandala depicts numerous *vajra* bodhisattvas carrying snares of compassion to bind passions and individuals. The four guardian bodhisattvas of the *Vajra* Realm hold a hook, a rope, a chain, and a bell. Kūkai being summoned to China with a hook is a reference to the mysterious attraction of Huiguo. Being pulled back to Japan by a rope is a reference to the Dharma, also due to his master's influence.

<sup>138</sup> In the *Shōrai mokuroku*, Kūkai reports these events took place earlier when Huiguo came to him in the temple, telling of their connections in past lives and predicting he may be reborn in Japan as Kūkai's disciple. See Hakeda 1972, p. 149.

<sup>139</sup> The Declarable Kong is Confucius. In 9 BCE during the Former Han dynasty (206–8 BCE), Confucius was posthumously conferred the court ranking Laudably Illustrious Lord Ni (Bao Cheng Xuan Ni Gong 褒成宣尼公). It remained a hereditary title for his descendants until the 1940s. Ruciraketu Bodhisattva appears in chapter 3 of the *Sutra of Golden Light*. He tells of a dream in which Brahmin plays a great drum that shines golden light throughout the universe, symbolizing the Dharma. The sutra takes its name from this story.

<sup>140</sup> This is a reference to the *Analects of Confucius*, book 7, line 8. In it Confucius says he only raises one corner of a problem and does not give the whole thing away. If the student



bones; his teachings were engraved on our hearts. At once happy and sad, our chests were split open, our intestines were severed. I wanted to stop my sadness but could not. How can we dare contain our silence? Although I trust the extent of my master's virtue, I am still afraid that his words might fall to the earth [unheard]. Ah, the volatility of those mountains and seas, the non-decay of the hanging sun and moon. Therefore, I made an inscription:

Life is without boundaries.  
 Practice of the vows is without end.<sup>141</sup>  
 When the beautiful heaven, [sun and moon,] reflect on the waters,  
 They divide their images into hundreds of millions.<sup>142</sup>  
 Consequently, there is the pushing up of life<sup>143</sup>  
 And Buddha consciousness in human form.<sup>144</sup>  
 The *vinaya* and the mysterious house  
 He swallowed together but still retained his strength.  
 He kept sutras and commentaries<sup>145</sup>  
 Firmly caged in the heart of his breast.  
 Grasping the Dharma of the *Four-part Vinaya*,  
 Practicing the three mysteries,<sup>146</sup>  
 Serving as the nation's teacher for three generations,  
 Tens of thousands of people depended on him.  
 Making the rain fall and making the rain stop  
 Even within the same day.

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does not come back with the other three corners, Confucius will also not return. The phrase "those of the same gateway" means fellow students of the same tradition. Here, as in other writings, Kūkai shows his fondness of Confucius and his preference for Buddhist ways.

<sup>141</sup> Bodhisattvas make a vow to save all sentient beings. Because there are endless numbers of living beings, there can be no end to the work of fulfilling the vow.

<sup>142</sup> The reflection of the sun and moon form countless images in water. They appear to be many, and at the same time are the reflections are empty of substance. This is an analogy for the Dharma and the Buddha.

<sup>143</sup> Because the sun shines everywhere, life springs up.

<sup>144</sup> Read as a Buddhist technical term, the graph *shi* 識 means consciousness (Skt. *viññāna*). Otherwise the graph means knowledge. The sentence means Huiguo had Buddha consciousness in human form.

<sup>145</sup> The first two graphs in *xiuduo* 修多 abbreviate the three graphs of *xiuduoluo* 修多羅, a Chinese rendering of the Sanskrit word *sūtra*.

<sup>146</sup> The three mysteries are mudras (associated with body), mantras (associated with speech), and mandalas (associated with mind). See note 82.

When my master passed away,  
 I was afraid as to how I could return to truth.  
 The torch of wisdom was already extinguished;  
 In which springtime will Dharma thunder come?  
 The wooden beam broke.<sup>147</sup>  
 Sorrow! Bitterness!  
 The pine and catalpa have sealed the grave gate shut.  
 In what *kalpa* will he again open the gate?<sup>148</sup>

## ABBREVIATIONS

- KKZ     *Kōbō Daishi Kūkai zenshū* 弘法大師空海全集 (Complete Works of Kōbō Daishi Kūkai). 8 vols. Ed. Kōbō Daishi Kūkai Zenshu Henshū Iinkai 弘法大師空海全集編輯委員会. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō. 1983–85.
- T        *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

<sup>147</sup> The wood beam is a reference to a passage about Confucius in the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), part 1 of the “Tangong” 檀弓 section, number 49. It says Confucius was thinking about death, saying great mountains must crumble and wooden beams must break. A disciple heard this and asked what he would do if the wooden beam must decay (*liangmu qi huai* 梁木其壞). This became a Chinese idiom for the passing of a great person. According to this passage, Confucius died seven days later.

<sup>148</sup> The planted trees previously mentioned sealed Huiguo’s tomb. A *kalpa* is an extremely long era. “Change” may refer to the change of clothing in a Maitreya legend. According to it, the Buddha Śākyamuni exchanged his robes with his disciple Kāśyapa, signifying the passing of the lineage from one Buddha to another. Later, Kāśyapa opened the rock entrance to the mountain where Maitreya was awaiting future rebirth as the next Buddha, and left the robes there for him. See Brock 1988. Today, robes are left once a year at Kūkai’s mausoleum on Mount Kōya.

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