

空海

Symphony Kūkai

Information Pack

Composer: Ye Zou

Produced by: Beijing Tianguzhiyin Culture Media Co. Ltd.



交响曲：空海

Symphony: Kukai

A vivid portrayal of the magnificent Buddhist master Kūkai, marking the millennia-long cultural exchange between China and Japan.

Friday, 24 January 2025, 7:30pm

301/317 Queen Street, Auckland Town Hall

Part A - Symphony Kūkai Introduction

Symphony “Kūkai” is inspired by the life story of Master Kūkai. Kūkai (774 –835) is a founding figure in Japanese Culture. He took a treacherous journey to China in the time of Tang dynasty and studied under Master Huiguo. He later returned to Japan, bringing with him all he had discovered, and became an iconic symbol of cultural exchange between China and Japan.

The symphony was completed in 2023 to celebrate the 1250th anniversary of the birth of Kūkai. The glorious music, so vividly portraying the journey of Kūkai, is written by the renowned Chinese composer Zou Ye, with a wonderful fusion of Western and Eastern sound worlds. In summer 2023, the company toured this piece with the Chinese Philharmonic Orchestra and Lanzhou Concert Hall Choir in Kyoto and Tokyo in Japan, and Lanzhou in China. The performances received widespread critical acclaim in reviews in both countries.

On 17th August 2024, the symphony was brought to London for its European premiere, working with Orpheus Sinfonia and choir groups from both UK and China. The performance is a great success and received extensive coverage in UK and China media, which created a huge impact in cultural, religious, and political circles.

On 24th January 2025, the oceania premiere was held of Auckland Town Hall in the New Zealand. This event brought together over 160 artists from China, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and China's Hong Kong and Taiwan to present an awe inspiring symphonic masterpiece. Distinguished guests attending the performance included Zhou Li, cultural consul of the Chinese Consulate-General in Auckland, Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown, Makoto Osawa, ambassador of Japan to New Zealand, Matsui Shinji, consul general of Japan in Auckland, Nancy Lu, member of Parliament for the New Zealand National Party. The concert hall was filled with nearly 1,300 attendees that created grandeur and unprecedented excitement. This concert serves not only as a tribute to the history of cultural exchange between China and Japan but also as a call for communication and mutual understanding between Eastern and Western civilizations.

In the future, we look forward to bringing this extraordinary piece of music to more cities all over the world.

Part B - Introduction of Symphony Kūkai by Chapter

- Chapter 1.** Born with the Great Vow and Practising Asceticism with Aspirations
- Chapter 2.** Pursuing Study in Tang China and Sustaining the Dharma Lineage
- Chapter 3.** Spreading Esoteric Teaching in Japan and Turning the Dharma Wheel
- Chapter 4.** Dwelling in Vairocana Pure Land and Having Great Compassion for All Living Beings
- Chapter 5.** Widely Spreading Esoteric Teaching and Benefitting Sentient Beings
- Chapter 6.** Abiding in Esoteric School and Accomplishing the Mission of Buddha

I. Chapter one

It focuses on the early years of master Kūkai and reveals the fact that master Kūkai was determined to find out the ultimate truth about life and the universe even when he was only a young man.

Master Kūkai was born in 774 in the precinct of Zentsū-ji temple under the lay name Saeki. His mother, Ato, had an auspicious dream of an Indian saint entering her body when she fell pregnant. Master Kūkai was exposed to Buddhist teachings from a very young age with many eminent monks in the Ato family. At age 15, he arrived in Nara and studied Buddhism under Iwabuchi Zosojo Gonso-Daishi. At age 20, he became a disciple of Iwabuchinozo Sojyo and was ordained in Satomachi Izumi. At age 22, he received Upasampada in Todai-ji and changed the dharma name to Kūkai. He returned to Shikoku in search of secluded mountainous areas to chant the mantra of the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha. Kūkai sought to discover answers and spiritual awakening through isolation in the wilderness and by performing good deeds for the people. At age 24, he published his first major literary work, Sangō Shiiki, in which he expounded the pros and cons of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and explicitly expressed his will to take refuge in the triratna.

During this period of private Buddhist practice, Kūkai had a dream, in which he was told that the Mahavairocana Tantra is the scripture which contained the ultimate doctrine Kūkai was seeking. Though Kūkai soon managed to obtain a copy of this sutra which had only recently become available in Japan, Kūkai found the translated portion of the sutra was

very cryptic. As no one in Japan could provide answers, Kūkai was determined to take a long and dangerous journey to Tang China to pursue his Buddhism studies.

II. Chapter two

It focuses on the period when master Kūkai travelled to Tang China to seek esoteric dharma from Maha Acharya Huiguo and revealed his special bond with his master Huiguo and Kūkai's Endless gratitude to him.

In 804, master Kūkai set off to Tang China with the Japanese mission. The government-sponsored expedition included four ships. During a storm, other ships either turned back or were lost at sea, only master Kūkai's ship arrived safely weeks later in the province of Fujian.

In 805, at Chang'an's Qinglong Monastery (青龍寺) master Kūkai finally met the Maha Acharya Huiguo (746–805), the man who initiated him into Chinese Esoteric Buddhism (Tangmi). Huiguo was thrilled to see Kūkai and said, "I foresee your visit and have long been waiting for you". Huiguo immediately bestowed upon Kūkai abhisheka (esoteric initiation) and Kūkai received all the dharma that Huiguo transmitted to him. He also mastered all the secret and profound esoteric knowledge, and he was qualified to become an Maha Acharya of the esoteric lineage in only a couple of months, which is unprecedented. After Kūkai became the new Maha Acharya, Huiguo instructed him to return to Japan as soon as possible and spread the esoteric teachings there. Soon after, Huiguo entered Nirvana in December the same year.

The Monumental inscription for Maha Acharya Huiguo composed by master Kūkai expressed his great veneration to his master. It stated that "I, your disciple Kūkai, think back on the journey coming here from my homeland east of the East China Sea being extremely hard - innumerable rolling billows of the sea and thousands of mountains and clouds. It is neither in my power to arrive nor my will to return, but I am under the calling of your Vajra hook and the guidance of your Vajra rope. You manifested various auguries in the morning when my ship set sail. You revealed our predestined relationship in detail on the night before I sailed back."

III. Chapter Three

It focuses on the period that master Kūkai returned to Japan and devoted to spreading esoteric Buddhism by overcoming all difficulties.

In October 806, under the instruction of Arcaya Huiguo, master Kūkai returned to Japan. He established the Shingon School and was committed to spreading the esoteric teachings. From 807, master Kūkai served as the imperial preceptor for four consecutive emperors of Japan. In 810, master was appointed administrative head of Tōdai-ji, the central temple in Nara, and head of the Sōgō (僧綱). In 816, Emperor Saga accepted Kūkai's request and granted Mount Kōya for building temples for esoteric meditation. Kūkai's vision was to make Mount Kōya the representation of the Mandala of the Two Realms that form the basis of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism: the central plateau as the Womb Realm mandala, with the peaks surrounding the area as petals of a lotus; and located in the centre of the plateau would be the Diamond Realm mandala in the form of a temple which he named Kongōbu-ji ("Diamond Peak Temple"). The construction of Mount Koya bodhimanda endured extreme hardship, including the lack of funding and resources. The magnificent Konpon Daito was only completed in 835, decades after Kūkai entered the long-time meditation.

IV. Chapter Four

It focuses on master Kūkai's final years, praises his magnificent feat that he entered the deep meditation and would return billion years in the future.

In November 834, Master Kūkai started to practise with no food or water and entered the great samādhi of dharmadhatu. Master Kūkai entrusted the To-ji Temple to Shihui, Mt. Takao to Jichie, the Kofukuji Temple to Shinga, and Mt. Koya to Shinnen. In March 835, Master Kūkai sat in the lotus position, forming the Vairocana mudra and chanting the mantra, and entered the long-time samadhi peacefully in the Kongobuji temple. He was 62 years old and had been practising Buddhism for 41 years. His disciples surrounded him and chanted the sacred name of Maitreya, whose pure land will be the new home before master Kūkai return to earth in the long future. In 857, Master Kūkai was honoured the Daisojo, the highest Buddhist rank. In 864, Master Kūkai was bestowed the dharma position of "Hoinn Daikaisho". In 921, he was honoured with the posthumous title "Kobo-Daishi".

V. Chapter Five

It focuses on Master Kūkai's achievements in esoteric teachings as well as in the mundane world. This chapter also honoured his great contribution to Japanese culture.

Master Kūkai was devoted to spreading esoteric Buddhism after returning to Japan. He demonstrated the sublime truth of the Esoteric School, integrated the essence of the Tang esoteric school's dharma principles and expounded the essential doctrine of the True-word School: the self-nature of all living beings contains the dharma of both mundane and supra-mundane worlds. His Dharma lineage flourished for over a thousand years. In modern times, the esoteric teachings recirculated back to China.

Master Kūkai made widespread contributions to Japanese culture. He founded Shugei Shuchiin following the example of the educational institution in Tang China, which was the first school for commoners in Japan. He brought the advanced technologies (such as mining, road building and bridge construction) from Tang China to Japan, and taught people how to use petroleum and coal.

Master Kūkai is hailed as "the great master between the two Buddhas", meaning that Master Kūkai is continuously delivering and benefitting living beings of the mundane world in the period between the nirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha and the manifestation of Maitreya Buddha.

VI. Chapter Six

It is called Sattva Passion, with the compassionate vows made by all bodhisattvas leading to the final and most magnificent chapter. It emphasizes on Master Kūkai's great vows to enlighten and save all living beings, which resonate with the vow of Vajrasattva Bodhisattva, the great Bodhisattva who protect and transmit esoteric dharma.

Part C - Lyrics Translation

| 交响曲《空海》歌词 | Symphony "Kūkai" Lyrics |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">序章</p> <p>诸佛四时中，恒依密严住，而于一切处，现生及涅槃。</p> <p>如来净智境，观行者皆见。</p> <p>白话译文：诸佛于一切时间中，永恒安住于密严净土，同时于十方一切世界，示现（化身）出世及涅槃。如来清净圆满的智慧境界，（如法）观行者皆能证见。</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Prologue</p> <p>All Buddhas permanently reside in the pure land of Vairocana,</p> <p>And simultaneously demonstrate births and nirvana in all places.</p> <p>All practitioners have the potential to realise the pure and perfect wisdom of Tathagata.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">第一乐章</p> <p>啊嘎撒峨利巴 波滴撒搭哇</p> <p>含义：虚空藏菩萨</p> <p>梵文：Ākāśa-garbha Bodhisattva</p> <p>春花枝下落，秋露叶前沉。逝水不能住，回风几吐音。</p> <p>六尘能溺海，四德所归岑。已知三界缚，何不去纓簪。</p> <p>白话译文：春天的花朵落到花枝下，秋天的露珠滴落于树叶前。流逝的河水不能停留，回旋的冷风几度吐露声音。（以上比喻世事无常，一切事物不断变化，转瞬即逝。）世间六尘（色、声、香、味、触、法）是能令众生沉溺的苦海，涅槃四德（常、乐、我、净）是众生所应归向的高山。既已了知三界（欲界、色界、无色界，三界指世间、世俗世界）的烦恼缠缚，何不去除世俗的冠饰，出家修行追求解脱？</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">First Movement</p> <p>Meaning: Bodhisattva Akasagarbha Sanskrit: Ākāśa-garbha Bodhisattva</p> <p>Spring flowers fall beneath the branches, autumn dew drops before the leaves.</p> <p>Flowing water cannot stop, swirling wind whispers several times.</p> <p>(These metaphors illustrate the impermanence of the world, where everything constantly changes and vanishes in an instant.)</p> <p>The six dusts of the world (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought) are the bitter sea that living beings can drown in,</p> <p>while the four virtues of Nirvana (eternity, bliss, true-self, and purity) are the high mountains that living beings should aspire to. Having suffered from the entanglements and afflictions of the three realms (the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm, three-realms represent the secular world),</p> <p>why not remove worldly adornments (and pursue liberation through Buddhism practice)?</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">第二乐章</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Second Movement</p> |

早知你来，相待久已，今日相见，大好大好，报命欲竭，无人付法。吾道东矣。”

白话译文：我早已预知你的到来，等待已久。今日终于相见，极好极好！我此生寿命将尽，却无人继承法脉。（你既已到来），我所传承的密教之道将要东传了。

崑卢匝那

含义：毗卢遮那佛

梵文：Vairocana

人之贵者，不过国王；法之最者，不如密藏。建胎藏之大坛，开灌顶之甘露。一尊一契，证道之径路；一字一句，入佛之父母。

白话译文：人中最尊贵的，莫过于国王；佛法中最高级的，超不过密藏（即密法、密宗）。（为传授密法），建立胎藏界大曼荼罗坛场，普降灌顶甘露。（阿闍黎在灌顶中传授的）每一位本尊、每一个手印，都是实证佛道的路径；每一个梵字、每一句真言，都是证入佛果境界的父母。

三藏圣教，悉皆洞晓。国师三代，万类依之。幸厕洒扫，得沐甘露。悲喜非分，粉身何答。流传法界，度脱有情。

白话译文：恩师惠果对经律论三藏的圣教，全部通达明了。三朝皇帝尊他为国师，各类众生皈依他学密法。我（空海）有幸侍奉左右，沐浴恩师的佛法甘露，或悲或喜都无以表达感恩之心，粉身碎骨也难以报答大恩大德。唯愿将恩师所传授的妙法流

Having foreseen your visit, I have long awaited.

Finally meeting you today is most wonderful!

My current worldly life is nearing its end,

but no one is suitable to inherit the Dharma lineage.

(Since you have arrived,) The Esoteric School will flourish with you in the east.

Meaning: Vairocana Buddha

Sanskrit: Vairocana

The most noble among humans is none other than the king;

the most profound Buddhist teachings is none other than the secret treasury of esoteric teachings.

(To transmit esoteric teachings,) the great mandala of the Womb Realm is established, and the nectar of empowerment is universally bestowed.

Each honoured one and each mudra (hand gesture) taught in the empowerment are paths to realise Buddhahood;

each Sanskrit syllable and each mantra are the parents that lead to the attainment of Buddhahood.

Master Huiguo realised the teachings of the Tripitaka.

Three emperors regarded him as the imperial preceptor, and all beings took refuge in him.

I, Kūkai, how fortunate I was to serve him, bathed in the nectar of his teachings.

Whether in joy or sorrow, I cannot express my gratitude.

Even if I crushed my body into pieces, I cannot repay the great kindness.

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| <p>传于整个法界，以此教化度脱一切众生。</p> | <p>My only wish is to spread the wonderful esoteric teachings throughout the Dharma realm, to enlighten and liberate all beings.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">萨埵悲愿</p> <p>我昔遇萨埵，亲悉传印明。发无比誓愿，陪边地异域。</p> <p>昼夜愍万民，住普贤悲愿。肉身证三昧，待慈氏下生。</p> <p>白话翻译：我往昔幸遇明师大菩萨，亲自为我传授全部密法印契与真言。我（为报师恩）发起无比的誓愿，愿于难闻佛法的偏僻地域陪伴众生，昼夜不息地悲悯化度（加持）众生，恒常安住于普贤菩萨的大悲誓愿。以此肉身证入法界大定，（久住人间）等待弥勒菩萨下生。</p> <p>波涛万万，云山几千。招我以钩，引我以索。</p> <p>泛舶之朝，数示异相；归帆之夕，缕说宿缘。</p> <p>白话翻译：波涛万里，云山千重。来大唐并非自己之力，回日本也非我的志愿，这是师尊惠果大阿闍黎以金刚钩召唤我，以金刚索引领我。来航途中，多次示现神异之相；归航前夜，详尽述说前世因缘。</p> <p>多生之中，相共誓愿，弘演密藏，互为师资。</p> <p>师资之爱，法义相亲，世出世间，拔苦与乐。</p> | <p>Bodhisattva's Vow</p> <p>I was fortunate to encounter a great bodhisattva as my master, who personally transmitted all the esoteric mudras and mantras to me.</p> <p>(To reciprocate the master's merit) I made a great vow, to accompany the living beings in remote lands where the Dharma is difficult to be heard.</p> <p>To empower all living beings day and night with compassion, and to always keep the great compassionate vow of Samantabhadra.</p> <p>With the physical body, I will enter the great samādhi of dharmadhatu, awaiting for Maitreya's descent.</p> <p>Innumerable rolling billows of the sea, thousands of mountains and clouds.</p> <p>It is neither in my power to arrive nor my will to return, I am summoned by your Vajra hook, and the guidance of your Vajra rope.</p> <p>On the morning when my ship set sail, you manifested various auguries.</p> <p>On the night before I sailed back, you revealed our predestined relationship in detail.</p> <p>Throughout many lifetimes, we have shared the same vow to spread Esoteric dharma teachings, mutually serving as master and disciple in turns.</p> |

白话翻译：多生多世之中，你我共同发愿，弘扬宣演密法，彼此互为师徒。师徒的法爱，乃是因佛学的教法义理而彼此相亲，于世间出世间均能拔除痛苦给予安乐。

早归乡国，以奉国家，流布天下，增苍生福。

四海清泰，众生安乐，报佛之恩，报师之德。

白话翻译：早日回归故国，以密法奉侍国家，流传天下，增益众生福祉。如此则天下太平、众生安乐，以此回报诸佛与师尊的大恩大德。

密严微妙土，清净福为严，解脱知见人，最胜之依处。

密严诸智者，与佛常共俱，恒游定境中，一味无差别。

白话翻译：密严微妙净土，以清净福德来庄严佛土，是证得解脱知见法身的圣者最为殊胜的住处。安住密严佛净土，显现如圆明月轮，诸位密严净土智者，常与诸佛共聚一处，恒常游行殊胜禅定境界，（体性）平等一味无有差别

一乘法流，运转不息；法界体性，运用不息。

诸佛菩萨，长夜大慈大悲、大喜大舍摄取众生。

白话翻译：一乘的法流，永远运转不息；法界的本体与妙性，恒常运用不停；这正是诸佛菩萨于无明长夜以大慈大悲大喜大舍四无量心摄受化度一切众生。

The deep bond between masters and disciples is the affection built on devotion to the Dharma and the doctrine,

which saves one from suffering and blesses with joy in both mundane and supra-mundane worlds.

Hasten back to your homeland,
offer the esoteric Dharma to the nation,
spread the teachings widely,
and cultivate the merits of living beings.

Thus the world will be at peace,
and people will live in happiness.

That is how you repay the kindness of Buddhas and the virtue of patriarchs.

The subtle pure land of Vairocana,
glorified by the pure blessings,
the ones who have realised the dharmakaya of perfect wisdom of nirvana abide in this supreme place.

The ones who live in the pure land of Vairocana,
permanently stays with the buddhas,
constantly dwell in the supreme samadhi,
are the one and the same as buddhas.

Unceasingly being transmitted is the dharma-flow of the One Vehicle.

Eternally being applied is the nature of Dharmadhatu.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas enlighten and deliver all living beings in the long night of ignorance with the four immeasurables of Great benevolence, Great compassion, Great empathetic joy and Great detachment.

虚空尽，众生尽，涅槃尽，我愿尽。

虚空尽，众生尽，涅槃尽，我愿尽！

白话翻译：虚空穷尽，众生度尽，涅槃终尽，我愿乃尽。

When all ākāśa is reached, all living beings are enlightened, and nirvana is achieved, then my wishes will be fulfilled.

When all ākāśa is reached, all living beings are enlightened, and nirvana is achieved, then my wishes will be fulfilled.