

**EXCERPTS FROM "INDICATIONS OF THE GOALS OF THE THREE
TEACHINGS" (SANGŌ SHĪKI) AND "A SCHOOL OF ARTS AND
SCIENCES"**

By Kūkai

Introduction

Kūkai (774-835), posthumously titled Kōbō Daishi (The Great Master of the Extensive Dharma), was the founder of the Shingon or "True Word" Japanese school of Buddhism and is considered one of the most important intellectual and cultural figures in Japan. Kūkai traveled to China in 804 and went as far west as the Tang dynasty capital of Changan (today, Xian), where he was introduced to the esoteric Buddhist tradition. Upon returning to Japan two years later, he founded a Shingon temple on Mt. Kōya as well as Tōji temple in Kyoto. His main treatise is the Jūjū Shinron (Treatise of the Ten Stages of Mind).

Document Excerpts with Questions

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and "A School of Arts and Sciences"*

By Kūkai

"Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings"

Preface

My relatives and teachers opposed my entering the priesthood, saying that by doing so I would be unable to fulfill the Five Cardinal Virtues¹ or accomplish the duties of loyalty and filial piety. I thought then: living beings are not of the same nature; there are birds which fly high in the sky and fish which sink low in the water. To guide different types of people, there are three teachings: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Although their profoundness varies, they are still the teachings of the sages. If an individual chooses one, he does not necessarily repudiate loyalty and filial piety by doing so.

Now I have a nephew who is depraved and indulges in hunting, wine, and women and whose usual way of life consists of gambling and dissipation. It is obvious that an unfavorable

¹ The Five Confucian Virtues: humaneness, rightness, ritual decorum, wisdom, and trustworthiness.

environment has caused him to lead this kind of life. What has induced me to write [this story] are the opposition of my relatives [to my becoming a Buddhist] and the behavior of this nephew.

"A School of Arts and Sciences"

[When asked his view on establishing a school of arts and sciences in Japan]

My reply is, "In the capital of China, a school is set up in each ward to teach the young boys. In each prefecture a school is maintained in order widely to educate promising young students. Because of this, the capital is filled with talented young men and the nation is crowded with masters of the arts. In the capital of our country, however, there is only one government college and no local schools. As a result, sons of the poor have no opportunity to seek knowledge. Those who like to study but live a great distance from the college encounter great difficulty traveling to and fro. Would it not be good, then, to establish this school to assist the uneducated?" ...

Questions:

1. What is Kūkai's view of human nature?
2. What does he think about the attitude in Japan in relation to China?
3. What does Kūkai say about the "Three Teachings"?