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In *Memory, Music, Manuscripts: The Ritual Dynamics of Kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen*, Michaela Mross shows how the practice of Japanese ritual chanting emerged over time to reflect divergent sectarian identities within the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism. Focusing on the genre of kōshiki, a form of chanted lecture that belongs to the larger tradition of Japanese chanting (shōmyō), Mross counterbalances what have been predominantly text-based approaches to the study of ritual by arguing not only that kōshiki have shaped other sub-traditions of shōmyō but also that the sonic, kinetic, and aesthetic aspects of kōshiki helped to enact a shared cultural memory from within the Sōtō school. Readers will come away with a clear view of how the production of kōshiki manuscripts has been inseparable from this ritual enactment and how this relationship has continued steadily into the contemporary era. At a general level, this study sharpens our understanding of the role of Buddhist sectarianism as it relates to ritual, the body, and modes of knowledge production.

Mross divides the study into two complementary parts. Part 1, “Development and Performance of Kōshiki,” provides the historical and theoretical scaffolding for later arguments surrounding collective memory and traces the relationships between textual, vocal, and material aspects of Sōtō kōshiki, on the one hand, and the religious and institutional histories of the Sōtō school, on the other. In part 2, “Kōshiki and Collective Memory: The Case of Keizan,” Mross covers early modern textual transmission lineages that preceded modern revisions of Sōtō kōshiki and focuses on the social and imaginative elements at play in the delivery of kōshiki tied to key Sōtō founder figures. The author also appends an annotated list of extant manuscripts of the Butsui kōshiki engaged in part 2, as well as several translations of portions of kōshiki and facsimiles of kōshiki manuscripts referenced throughout the book.

Readers are introduced to the ritual genre of kōshiki from roughly the tenth century in chapter 1, “History of Kōshiki.” During this period, initial
versions of what we now call kōshiki were composed by the Tendai monk Genshin (942-1017) to encourage rebirth in the Pure Land among small, localized devotional groups. Kōshiki proliferated across all Buddhist schools in Japan thereafter and emerged surrounding different objects of devotion and encouraging different soteriological goals. Mross explores these subsequent histories of textual lineage as kōshiki proliferated in the Sōtō school, processes of textual borrowing that occurred across sectarian lines, the advent of printing technologies that accelerated the production and circulation of printed versions of kōshiki, and new editorial cultures that grew around these printed versions. And yet, while the composition of kōshiki grew widely over time across all Buddhist schools in Japan, they still functioned locally through ties to specific temples, founder figures, and objects of devotion. Some Sōtō clerics, as Mross describes, consider kōshiki a “cultural asset” in this way, and the genre therefore initially appears a rich site for exploring how it authenticates sectarian histories at the local level (p. 59).

In chapter 2, “Ritual Structure of Sōtō Kōshiki,” Mross pulls back and explores the process of editorial changes and borrowing referenced in chapter 1 by proposing a model of modules and frames. These concepts help to describe how clerics have brought together textual, acoustic, and material elements that inform the structure and content of kōshiki. Focusing on the Rakan kōshiki, an offertory kōshiki for the Buddha’s sixteen immediate disciples, Mross shows how “textual modules” (the central text of the ceremony, or shikimon), “acoustic modules” (vocal and accompanying instrumental music), “kinetic modules” (hand gestures, physical entrances and exits from the ritual space), and “material modules” (images, ritual handbooks, robes, and other ritual objects) have made it possible for Sōtō clerics to easily add new or alter existing portions of rituals in their sectarian repertoire because these modules have been so deeply embodied throughout clerical training. Likewise, Mross shows that “ritual frames,” in this case subsections that surround and contextualize shikimon at the center of the kōshiki, tend to adopt a sectarian flavor with regard to content despite the central text remaining generally the same in deliveries of this kōshiki across different Buddhist schools. All of this amounts to what the author calls an inherent “intrrituality,” whereby the textual, acoustic, and material elements at play in the Rakan kōshiki are shared across versions of the kōshiki in other schools, and yet the sectarian framing identifies this particular version of the kōshiki as distinctly Sōtō. This also tends to be the case for other kōshiki across the genre. Above all, this model of modules and frames is incredibly effective in communicating the simultaneity of rigid and fluid ritual traditions in the Sōtō school, but also of kōshiki performance generally. Constitutive of a ritual genre, kōshiki are bound by their structure and devotional aim, and yet portions of that structure and the objects of that devotional aim can be exchanged and modified to serve a variety of sectarian purposes.

Mross expertly leverages her training in musical performance and music historiography in chapter 3, “Kōshiki as Musical Practice.” Here, readers are treated to an extensive overview of the vocal and instrumental aspects of kōshiki and come to understand that, as vocal and musical notation systems changed overtime, they became codified with the advent of mass printing during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) and, together, culminated in what we now know as the standard musical characteristics of Sōtō chanting. Mross's treatments of both vocal and instrumental notation represented in Sōtō handbooks are accompanied by clear images of notated manuscripts. Mross also covers the form and common usage of a range of ritual objects present in Sōtō kōshiki performance, such as handbooks, bells, drums, cymbals, gongs, bowls, and other objects, each of which are also accompanied by images. This coverage is enhanced by close attention, in the latter portion of the chapter, to aspects of shōmyō train-
ing and education within the Sōtō school. Drawing from interviews and writings of contemporary shōmyō specialists, Mross shows how, for these specialists, shōmyō is only authentic when the practitioner follows the aesthetic and artistic ideals of the shōmyō tradition; a truly skilled performer will embody the deep subtleties uncaptured by notation, such as timbre, tone, and breathing. In a step further, one specialist describes shōmyō as the “unity of practice and realization” akin to the soteriological mechanisms at play in Zen contemplative practice (pp. 155-56). Through these perspectives on the practice of chanting, Mross is successful in highlighting a range of additional modules (material, textual, vocal) and frames (artistry, devotion, soteriology) that continue to give dynamic and fluid shape to Sōtō kōshiki in the contemporary era.

In “Early Modern Lineage Divergences,” chapter 4, Mross more forcefully advances her argument for kōshiki as an enactment of collective memory. Two early modern performances of the Butsuji kōshiki (Kōshiki on Zen Master Butsuji), one at Sōjiji and the other at Yōkōji, and both delivered during memorial services for prominent Sōtō lineage-founder Keizan (1268-1325), form the basis of analysis. Like other kōshiki with historical figures at their center, the Butsuji kōshiki includes hagiographic narratives of portions of Keizan’s life that link him to critical Sōtō lineages. The shikimokon in the Sōjiji and Yōkōji versions of the Butsuji kōshiki each present a different narrative of Keizan’s early lineage history, and yet each are framed by standard Sōtō liturgical and musical structures. In this way, both versions authentically and authoritatively enact entirely different collective memories of a lineage history; they equally instantiate Keizan as a key figure in that memory, though do so within lineages that have converged at two separate temples over the centuries. As in the case of the Rakan kōshiki presented in chapter 2, the example of the Butsuji kōshiki speaks to the fluid and malleable nature of the kōshiki genre. Here, though, through Mross’s attention to the use of Keizan’s hagiographies in the editorialization of the Butsuji kōshiki favoring either Sōjiji or Yōkōji (and in some cases disfavoring the opposite temple), we can see how deliberately these kōshiki were leveraged to meet concerns over lineage authenticity within the Sōtō school.

The enactment of collective memory is taken up in a later historical context in chapter 5, “Innovations in the Meiji Era.” Clerics at Sōjiji and Yōkōji continued to editorialize the memory of Keizan through kōshiki in new ways as Japan entered the contemporary period: the abbot of Yōkōji revised the above-mentioned Butsuji kōshiki, while the abbot of Sōjiji composed an entirely new kōshiki, titled the Dentō kōshiki (Kōshiki on the transmission of the light in the Sōtō school), and both of these rituals reflected broader institutional concerns over historical and sectarian legitimacy. Mross provides careful treatment of this editorial work, with a focus on the exchange of modules and frames or, in the case of Sōjiji’s new kōshiki, the introduction of altogether new ones. This chapter provides perhaps the best example of the localized nature of editorialized kōshiki within the Sōtō school; Mross introduces these abbots by name, identifies the texts from which the revised and invented material for these new kōshiki either derived or were cited, and considers the impact of printing technologies on the wider circulation of these kōshiki. In many ways, these two Meiji-era kōshiki are the culmination of centuries of reframing and remodulation and, once again, signal a deep curatorial attention within the Sōtō school. For centuries, this attention has been directed toward rituals that could reflect, and be influenced by, governing concerns over institutional authenticity, and this continued as the Sōtō school entered the contemporary era. Whether at Sōjiji or Yōkōji, as Mross explains, both memorial ceremonies were a “vocalized and enacted remembrance of Keizan, a liturgy of memory” (p. 227). Following the epilogue, which concisely reiterates these and other key arguments presented in the book, readers are invited
to explore several of the texts referenced throughout the book in several appendices.

While a recent special issue of the *Journal of Japanese Religious Studies*, titled “Kōshiki in Japanese Buddhism,” showcased the promise of kōshiki studies within the larger field of Japanese religions, *Memory, Music, Manuscripts* is a testament to the fidelity of that promise.[1] Mross has assembled an exciting and richly contributive work that will alter future approaches to the study of Japanese Buddhist ritual in several ways. While some recent Japanese scholarship has focused on the integration of visual and aural experiences in devotional ritual or on the social, material, and institutional aspects of ritualized practice in Japanese Buddhism, Mross provides a glimpse of these issues and more as they relate to kōshiki, a ritual genre that has begun to draw substantive scholarly attention only in the last decade or more.[2] And while Japanese- and English-language studies of the genre have tended to focus individually on textual provenance, musicality, or the doctrinal content presented in kōshiki, Mross seizes on their interplay.

Through this approach, she delivers an effective study that privileges the complementarity between ritual and performance, the text and the body, and real and imagined histories. Future scholars would greatly benefit by considering the study of Japanese Buddhist ritual, and kōshiki more narrowly, according to the mutually supportive relationship of these and other binaries. While the distinctions between them are important and observable, the case of Sōtō kōshiki presented here reveals that clerics themselves may not have valued these distinctions to the degree to which they tend to receive scholarly focus. That is, Mross shows how invoking and narrativizing the memory of a founder figure can demand ritual formality as much as it does improvisation and aesthetic flourish; it demands a continual and equal curation of both the written text and the movements and vocalizations of the body enacting the text; and it demands that the image of the founder figure be both woven into and out of institutional histories as necessary. Much of this comes through in historical accounts, memoirs, and interviews from the practitioners themselves, and, in this way, readers encounter a picture of ritual practice that is genuinely personal; as a “cultural asset,” Sōtō kōshiki have provided the means for deep and varied connections to historical founder figures among its clergy, but also to the vocal and bodily techniques that establish their religious practice as distinctly Sōtō. This personal aspect of Mross’s scholarship sets it apart from other work of similar scope and content.

Lastly, part of this study’s argumentative effectiveness derives from its methodological variety. In combining techniques drawn from manuscript studies, ethnomusicological studies, and performance studies and exploring materials ranging from premodern writings to contemporary interviews, this book presents a compelling chronological ritual analysis alongside an institutional and textual history. Mross’s diverse provision of perspectives not only captures the multifaceted role of kōshiki within the Sōtō school but also brings to clarity the larger picture of Buddhist ritual chanting practices that have evolved over centuries in Japan. This book will benefit researchers working within and across several disciplines that engage performance and ritual studies, historical ethnography, music studies, and religious history.

Notes


[2]. On the integration of visual and aural experiences in devotional ritual, see Chikamoto Kensuke 近本謙介, ed., *Kotoba, Hotoke, zuzō no kōkyō: hōe, girei to ākaibu ことば・ほとけ・図像の交響: 法会・儀礼とアーカイブ* (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan,

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