

Preface

THE SEEDS for this project were sown many years ago when I first visited Japan to spend a summer at Hōkōji, a remote monastery of the Rinzai school in Shizuoka prefecture. Before coming to Japan, I had imagined that life at a Japanese Zen monastery would be relatively quiet, but to my surprise I encountered a rich soundscape. The sounds of various instruments regulated our schedule, and we chanted sacred texts at least twice a day. What especially caught my attention as a jazz musician was a ritual we performed every morning—a rolling reading of the *Great Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom*. It started with a recitation of the *Heart Sutra* at a very fast tempo to dynamic drum playing. The sound of the energetic drum, which at points reminded me of a jazz improvisation, together with our loud voices, broke the silence of the morning.

I left Japan with a deep impression of the vivid soundscape that characterizes a Japanese monastery. As I approached the end of my MA program at the University of Hamburg, I decided to combine my interests in music, Japanese culture, and Buddhism in my master's thesis. With a declared interest in the aural landscape, I started a six-month field study in 2004 to explore the role of music in Japanese Buddhism. At that time, I was introduced to Sawada Atsuko, an ethnomusicologist working on Buddhist music, who in turn kindly introduced me to many temples and monks. Among the latter was Maekawa Bokushō, a well-known specialist in *shōmyō* (Buddhist chant) of the Sōtō school, who has taught at Sōjiji and Nittaiji Senmon Sōdō. Maekawa was very supportive and organized a research trip for me that inspired my study of Sōtō Zen rituals in the years to come.

First I visited Eiheiji, the place where Japanese Sōtō Zen originated and one of the two head temples of the Sōtō school, located deep in the mountains of Fukui prefecture. It was early October, and I fortunately arrived just a few days before the memorial day of Bodhidharma, the semi-legendary Indian monk who is said to have transmitted Chan from India to China. Hearing that I was interested in Buddhist music, a senior monk encouraged me to stay one day longer in order to witness the *Daruma kōshiki*, a ritual for Bodhidharma that was to be performed during the memorial service—it was,

he assured me, one of the most musical observances of the Sōtō school. Thus, I stayed. And indeed the ritual truly impressed me: the novices sang elegant, solemn melodies in several distinctive styles, and all their movements were carefully choreographed.

I then left the green mountains of Fukui for the gray metropolis of Yokohama to visit Sōjiji, the other head temple of the Sōtō school. Again, I arrived just in time to see another *kōshiki*, this one performed in remembrance of Keizan Jōkin, the founder of Sōjiji. The monks warmly welcomed me, and thanks to their interest in my research—and to the introduction of Maekawa, who had taught at Sōjiji—I was able to attend several rehearsals that are usually closed to outsiders, especially a foreign woman. The monk in charge of the musical training of the novices was Akiba Tairyū, and I observed the meticulous care with which he taught them how to read the musical notation and sing the challenging melodies. Akiba's clear voice and elegant singing style invested the whole ritual with a special atmosphere. A month later, when I returned to Sōjiji, the monks were again performing a *kōshiki*—on this occasion, a *Rakan kōshiki*, a ritual for the Sixteen Arhats that had originally been performed by Dōgen, the founder of the Japanese Sōtō school, and subsequently by Keizan.

These encounters with the liturgical genre called *kōshiki*, which had been almost entirely overlooked in Western Zen studies, piqued my curiosity, and I decided to write my master's thesis on the *Rakan kōshiki*. In the course of that work, I came to realize that the genre's rich history in the Sōtō school had not yet been thoroughly studied, even by Japanese scholars: Zen scholarship revolved around Dōgen and his thought, while scholars of *kōshiki* focused on works associated with the earlier Nara schools. I therefore decided to explore the historical development of this genre in the Sōtō school in order to illuminate the vital role of music and ritual in Sōtō Zen. I spent six years in Japan, from 2007 to 2013, fully engaged in research on this topic, and after finishing my PhD in 2014, I have visited Japan once or twice a year to continue it. *Memory, Music, Manuscripts* represents the results of this long and intense period of work on *kōshiki*.

My research was possible because I was able to establish fruitful connections to Sōtō priests and institutions while living in Japan. First of all, Maekawa Bokushō aided my research in countless ways. He has a wide network, mainly of Sōjiji-affiliated priests, and he introduced me to many individuals and institutions. During my years in Japan, I was a visiting researcher at the Research Institute for Japanese Music Historiography at Ueno Gakuen University, where I was able to use the institute's large collection of manuscripts and woodblock prints. I was also a graduate student at Komazawa University in Tokyo, the flagship university of the Sōtō school. Being a student there offered me another network, as well as access to an excellent library with a good rare book collection. Komazawa University is also the home of the Sōtōshū Bunkazai Chōsa Linkai (Committee for the study of cultural assets of the Sōtō school), which conducts archival work at Sōtō temples across Japan and has

many facsimiles of premodern texts in its archive. The scholars of the Sôtôshû Bunkazai Chôsa Iinkai helped me gain access to other temples as well. For example, Itô Ryôkô introduced me to Tamamuro Fumio, who allowed me to join his research group in the archive of Sôjiji Soin for two subsequent summers. During that time, I had the rare privilege of unlimited access to all the texts in this archive, where I discovered many valuable manuscripts, including a *kôshiki* whose existence had been forgotten.

Although I established strong connections to Sôtô priests and institutions early on, I still needed to request formal permission both to do research in temple archives and to observe the rituals conducted at a particular temple. Usually a priest friend of mine would call the head priest of the temple to introduce me informally, and I would write a formal letter requesting permission whenever I set out to visit a temple for the first time. For subsequent visits, I again wrote a letter asking permission to see a certain text or ritual. When I planned to film a ritual or take photos of texts, I likewise requested permission, and in many cases I had to sign forms that detailed how the images were to be used. If I did not know anyone who could introduce me to the temple in question, I wrote a formal letter to the head priest, enclosing an article or two I had written in Japanese to demonstrate that I had worked in archives before, and to show my sincerity. Since articles on rituals rarely appear in Japanese scholarship on Zen, whereas many Sôtô priests are interested in the history of their ritual practice, they kindly permitted me access and supported my research.

A scholar doing fieldwork usually grows closer to her interlocutors over the years. This was also the case for me, and I naturally became friends with some of my informants. At the large Sôtô temple of Tôkôji, I twice had the honor of playing saxophone in a ceremony that we newly created combining elements of *shômyô* and jazz. Shortly after, I helped organize a concert tour to Germany for the Sôtô priest choir Zen-Kûge Ryûgin Kai. Through these collaborations, my bonds with the Sôtô priests who participated in these events grew stronger and I was able to learn more about ritual practices than would have been possible otherwise.

In these ways and myriad others, my research has been indebted to the support and guidance of numerous people, foundations, and institutions, to whom I am deeply grateful. Klaus Vollmer, my dissertation supervisor at LMU Munich, provided unwavering guidance and insightful advice. I am also very grateful to Steven Heine, who has given me invaluable feedback and encouragement over the years since we first met in Japan. Niels Gülberg provided help on many occasions and openly shared his vast knowledge of *kôshiki* and his collection of manuscripts and woodblock prints with me. I would also like to express my gratitude to my early teachers at the University of Hamburg, especially Roland Schneider, Judit Árokay, and Jörg Quenzer.

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