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A Rite of Their Own

Japanese Buddhist Nuns and the *Anan kōshiki*

This article presents a history of the *Anan kōshiki*, a chanted lecture dedicated to the Buddha's disciple Ānanda. After briefly discussing its precursors in ancient India and China, I examine this ritual in three moments of time—its medieval Japanese origins, its early modern revitalization, and its contemporary performances and a contemporary commentary on the ritual. The ritual has been performed exclusively by Buddhist nuns in honor of Ānanda's role in convincing the Buddha to admit women to the monastic order. I argue that the ritual has functioned polysemously for nuns, affirming their marginalization and lesser status vis-à-vis the male clergy, while also serving as a means for nuns to celebrate their gender difference as female monastics. The full translation of the *Anan kōshiki* appears in the online supplement of this *JJRS* issue.

KEYWORDS: Ānanda—Mahāprajāpatī—nuns—Sōtō Zen—*kōshiki*—*keka*—Myōe—Kankō—Aoyama Shundō—Eight Pure Precepts—Eight Heavy Rules

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IN 2003, the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō 愛知専門尼僧堂 celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of its founding as a training convent for Sōtō Zen nuns. To commemorate the occasion, the nuns performed the *Anan kōshiki* 阿難講式, a chanted lecture commemorating the Buddha's disciple, Ānanda, and recorded the event on film. Abbess AOYAMA Shundō (b. 1933) wrote the companion volume (2003), which includes a reproduction of a 1829 printing of the *Anan kōshiki*, as well as the abbess's commentary on the ritual and its historical background. The Aichi Senmon Nisōdō is probably the only Buddhist institution in Japan at which the *Anan kōshiki* is still performed. Even here this elaborate ritual is staged only for special occasions—approximately every six to eight years—and its performance requires at least twelve nuns who have undergone training in Sōtō-style *kōshiki* 講式 and the idiosyncrasies of the *Anan kōshiki* (ARAI 2000, 123; AOYAMA 2003, 118, 124, 130–31; KAWAGUCHI 2004, 79).

In this article, I trace the history of the *Anan kōshiki* from its precursors in ancient India, China, and Japan, to its compilation in the medieval period and revitalization in the late Edo period. Subsequently, I examine the ritual's contents and assess how the rite depicts women in Buddhist monasticism. I argue that the ritual has functioned polysemously, affirming nuns' marginalization and their lesser status vis-à-vis the male clergy, while also serving as a means for nuns to celebrate their gender difference. Most strikingly, Aoyama's commentary feminizes Ānanda, a patriarch of her Zen lineage, as a paragon of female virtues. Thus she symbolically turns Ānanda into a "great heroine" rather than a "great hero," thereby completing an inversion of a common medieval rhetorical tactic employed by Zen masters who masculinized exceptional women as "great heroes."¹ The *Anan kōshiki*, its performance, and Aoyama's commentary contain oblique strategies of inversion and self-affirmation that allow the nuns to employ androcentric concepts to suit their "own interests and agendas," to borrow Saba Mahmood's language (MAHMOOD 2005, 6).

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1. For the application of the "great hero" ideal to women in Chan Buddhism, see LEVERING (1992) and FAURE (2003, 127–34). For a discussion on the influence of this concept in medieval Japan, see MEEKS (2010, 105–107).

Precursors of the Anan kōshiki

Rituals in praise of Ānanda have a long history within the female monastic order of Buddhism. Early Indian Buddhist women—nuns in particular—were said to have an affinity with Ānanda, who not only convinced the Buddha to admit women to the monastic order but was also extraordinarily popular with female Buddhist devotees who flocked to his sermons. He is described as having a fiercely loyal following within the Buddhist nuns' order. For instance, the nun Thullatissā purportedly defended Ānanda when he was criticized and belittled by Mahākāśyapa. Thullatissā upbraided Mahākāśyapa in obvious violation of the Eight Heavy Rules that forbade nuns to chastise male monastics. In a similar story, the nun Sthūlanandā disrobed herself in front of Mahākāśyapa in order to chastise Mahākāśyapa and support Ānanda. In that case, Ānanda is said to have responded apologetically by describing himself as stupid, crazy, and feminine (WILSON 1996, 108–109, 229). In other words, Ānanda characterized himself with qualities that Buddhist texts often stereotypically associate with women. From a male perspective, Ānanda's close relationships with nuns and women were generally depicted as reprehensible and signs of weakness. Yet for women, Ānanda's concern for and compassion toward them were not grounds for criticism but instead elicited veneration.

KATSUURA Noriko (2008, 104–107) has traced the first evidence of nuns' devotional rituals for Ānanda to the travelogues of Chinese monks Faxian 法顯 (337–422) and Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), who depict their journeys to the Indian subcontinent. Both monks document such rituals at Mathurā, a site at which nuns had a strong presence and were highly involved in the emerging cult of images (SCHOPEN 1997, 238–57). In his *Foguoji* 佛國記 (Record of Buddhist countries), Faxian reports that, in about 405, he witnessed Buddhist nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*) in Mathurā making offerings at a stupa dedicated to Ānanda. He explains:

Where members of the monastic community make their home, they erect stupas dedicated to Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Ānanda, as well as to the *abhidharma*, the *vinaya*, and the sutras. During the month after the annual summer retreat (Ch. *anju*; Jp. *ango* 安居), households seeking merit compete with each other in making offerings. The monastic community partakes in gruel, which is allowed outside the regular hours. The monastic community holds a great assembly and preaches the dharma.... *Bhikṣuṇī* mostly make offerings at the stupa of Ānanda. That's because Ānanda asked the World-Honored One to allow women to become renunciants.

(My translation of T 51, no. 2085, 859b18–21, 859b24–25; LEGGE 1965, 44–45)

Faxian mentions similar offerings by monks and novices at stupas dedicated to other important disciples of the Buddha, as well as to various bodhisattvas, the

abhidharma, and the *vinaya*. Such worship rites were held annually on designated days, and groups chose their respective objects of worship based on their primary discipline or status within the Sangha. Festivities included music and dramatic performances that enacted how a particular disciple of the Buddha entered the monastic order, and they led to an outpouring of generosity by lay patrons offering flowers and incense (T 51, no. 2085, 859b18–c01; LEGGE 1965, 45–47).

In a description of Mathurā in 630 CE in his *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Record of travels to western lands), Xuanzang likewise mentions rituals dedicated to paragons of specific disciplines within the Sangha, including offerings by nuns to Ānanda. According to Xuanzang, such offerings occurred more frequently than recorded by Faxian: during the three months of abstinence (*sanchang yue* 三長月 or *sanchangzhai yue* 三長齋月)—the first, fifth, and ninth months—and on the six monthly days of purification (*yue liuzhai* 月六齋)—the fast days (Sk. *poṣadha*) of the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-third, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth day of the month. On the latter purification days, the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra* was recited, monastics confessed their transgressions, and the laity observed the Eight Pure Precepts (Sk. *aṣṭāṅga-samanvāgatam upavāsam*; Ch. *bā zhāijiè*; Jp. *hachi saikai* 八齋戒) (SOOTHILL and HODOUS 2005, 79, 139; MINOWA 1999, 28). In other words, such rites were conducted during periods of repentance, purification, and fasting, described thus by Xuanzang:

There are also stupas containing the relic bones of the holy disciples of the Śākya Tathāgata such as Śāriputra [...], Maudgalyāyana [...], Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra [...], Upāli, Ānanda, and Rāhula [...]; and there are stupas for such Bodhisattvas as Mañjuśrī [...], etc. In the three fast months of the year and on each of the six fast days of the month, the monks would vie with their friends and acquaintances in carrying utensils of worship and many rare and strange articles to offer to the images of their particular patrons. Those who study the Abhidharma make offerings to Śāriputra, those who practice meditation to Maudgalyāyana, the sutra reciters to Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, the Vinaya students to Upāli, the *bhikṣuṇīs* to Ānanda, the *śrāmaṇeras* to Rāhula, and the Mahayana students to the various Bodhisattvas. On such a day offerings are made in competition to the various stupas, and pearled banners are displayed and gemmed canopies arranged in rows; the smoke of incense pervades the air like clouds, and flowers are scattered in showers that obscure the sun and the moon and cause great tumult in the valleys. The king and his ministers perform good deeds as their bounden duty.

(LI 1996, 123; T 51, no. 2087, 890b06–20)

Like Faxian's, Xuanzang's account suggests opulent offerings, with both monastics and lay people competing to outdo one another. According to Xuanzang, such rituals of devotion were closely linked to the observance of *poṣadha* days and the observance of the Eight Pure Precepts, which consist of the following

vows: no killing; no stealing; no sexual misconduct; no lying; no consumption of alcohol; no eating after noon; no wearing of cosmetics and adornments, dancing, or listening to music; and no sleeping on high and ornate beds. Yet despite the prohibition against entertainment and music, such rituals could include dramatic performances, as evidenced by Faxian.

It is likely that Ānanda received cultic attention from women in China since the mid-fifth and early sixth centuries. The *Great Skillful Means Sutra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness* (Ch. *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*; Jp. *Daihōben butsu hōon kyō* 大方便佛報恩經) encourages women to celebrate a ritual of purification and affirmation of the Eight Pure Precepts in order to honor Ānanda (KATSUURA 2008, 107–109).² The scripture gives a detailed account of how Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, was admitted to the monastic order. It includes Mahāprajāpatī's trifold petition and the Buddha's trifold refusal based on a disparaging litany of stereotypical views of women: their innate foolishness and bonds of attachment; their immersion in the river of desire; their limitation to worldly wisdom that prioritizes sensory pleasure and material objects; their indolence, pride, and idleness; their inability to display the thirty-two marks of a Buddha or to be reborn as a wheel-turning king or the King of Brahma Heaven (that is, three of the Five Hindrances).³ The Buddha also points to the damage that women's ordination would bring onto Buddhism by shortening the period of the True Dharma by five hundred years. When he finally grants his permission as a result of Ānanda's zealous appeal, he imposes the Eight Heavy Rules as a precondition for women's ordination.⁴ Then the Buddha encourages all women to honor Ānanda through offerings and by keeping the Eight Pure Precepts on the eighth day of the second and eighth months—both coincide with the first of the six days of abstinence in these months (T 3, no. 156, 152b27–154b12). As recounted in the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*:

When Gautamī [that is, Mahāprajāpatī] heard this explanation she rejoiced in her heart and said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, if we obtain this karmic effect [of ordination], we truly owe a debt of gratitude to the Buddha.”

2. The *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* has often been attributed to the Later Han dynasty but probably dates from sometime between the mid-fifth and early sixth centuries (SUPALASET 2009; NAITŌ 1955).

3. The Five Hindrances consist of the inability to become Brahma, Indra, Māra, a Cakravartin, or a Buddha (SOOTHILL and HODOUS 2005, 129).

4. The Eight Heavy Rules are the eight special conditions the Buddha demanded before he allowed women to be ordained: (1) nuns must always defer to monks regardless of seniority; (2) nuns may not criticize monks directly; (3) nuns may not speak of a monk's misdeeds even though he may speak of hers; (4) nuns must take the tonsure under a monk; (5) nuns must confess their sins before the assembly of nuns and monks; (6) nuns must have a male preceptor; (7) nuns may not share the summer retreat with monks; and (8) nuns must seek out a male preceptor after the summer retreat (SOOTHILL and HODOUS 2005, 37).

The Buddha said: “Do not phrase it this way. Ultimately, all living beings do not owe the Tathāgata a debt of gratitude. Ultimately, the Tathāgata does not calculate the debt of gratitude owed by all living beings. [...] However, Ānanda is not the Tathāgata. It is thanks to Ānanda that women are able to enter the Buddha Dharma. Gautamī, in the future, if there are *bhikṣuṇīs* and any good women, they should always mindfully recollect their debt of gratitude toward Ānanda. They should invoke his name, make offerings, and reverently sing his praises without end. If that is not always possible, they should be mindful and not forget [their debt of gratitude] during the six watches of the day and night. Gautamī, tell all *bhikṣuṇīs* and good women the following: ‘We must mindfully take refuge in the Great Teacher Ānanda. If there are women who aspire to obtain auspicious karma in calm tranquility, then they should always purify their robes and mindfully uphold the dharma of the Eight Pure Precepts on the eighth day of the second month and the eighth day of the eighth month. They should practice abstinence during the six watches of that day and night. Ānanda will then use his supernatural power to respond to their voices, protect them, and help them realize their prayers.’” When the assembly heard these teachings, they rejoiced, circumambulated him to the right, and exited.

(My translation of T 3, no. 156, 154a23–b11)

While the specific dates of the celebration mentioned in the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* may be different from the one provided in Faxian’s and Xuanzang’s accounts, the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* also stresses the laity’s adherence to the Eight Pure Precepts and the assumption that women owe Ānanda a special debt of gratitude for his role in the establishment of the nuns’ order. These three texts—Faxian’s *Foguoji*, Xuanzang’s *Da Tang xiyu ji*, and the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*—were known in Japan by at least the eighth century (KATSUURA 2008, 110–11).

By the Heian period, a ritual honoring Ānanda was also celebrated in Japan. The rite, called the *Anan keka* 阿難悔過 (Ānanda penance rite), was likewise linked to abstinence and the observance of the Eight Pure Precepts. The *Sanbōe* 三宝絵 (984), compiled by Minamoto no Tamenori 源為憲 (d. 1011) for the edification of the imperial princess Sonshi 尊子 (966–985), notes that the *Anan keka* was conducted at Junna’in 淳和院 (also known as Saiin 西院), a convent founded by Seishi 正子, the widowed consort of Emperor Junna 淳和 (786–840), on the grounds of Junna’s residence. Unfortunately, the *Sanbōe* provides few concrete details about the content of the *Anan keka*. Based on other penance rites from the Nara and Heian periods, however, it is safe to say that the *Anan keka* probably incorporated the chanting of hymns, the recitation of scriptures, and the laity’s observance of the Eight Pure Precepts. Additionally, such penance rituals served as rites of worship and expiation meant to effect the blessings of the object of veneration and ward off disasters (SATŌ 2002; KATSUURA 2008, 111;

KOBAYASHI 2001).⁵ This is consistent with the *Sanbōe*'s description of the *Anan keka* as a rite of purification and worship intended to generate good karma and fulfill the supplicants' wishes through Ānanda's supernatural powers:

A major rite observed at the temple is the Ānanda Rite of Penance held twice each year. This is its basis: Long ago, the Buddha's aunt Gautamī came to him and asked three times for permission to shave her head and become his disciples, but the Buddha refused. Full of disappointment and grief, she left the Jetavana garden: Ānanda found her in tears outside its gates when he returned from an excursion, and he spoke sympathetically to her and then went inside. Ānanda said to the Buddha, "Seven days after you were born, the lady Māyā died, but Gautamī resolved to raise you in her place. You encourage all sentient beings to enter the Buddha World: why not give her, of all people, your permission?"

The Buddha replied, "It is not because I do not acknowledge my obligation to her. But I cannot allow women to enter the Buddha World. If I were to do so, the Period of the True Teaching would be shortened by five hundred years."

Then Ānanda said, "All the Buddhas of the past had disciples of the Four Classes. Why does our Master, the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, refuse to permit even one woman?" So fervently did he plead that at last the Buddha gave his permission for Gautamī's ordination, and thereafter numbers of women shaved their heads and were allowed to take vows. The Buddha said, "In the future, women who wish to become nuns, as well as those who have that virtuous intention, should concentrate on the recollection of their obligation to Ānanda, and they should chant his name, make offerings to him, and sing his praises."

After the Buddha's death, his aged disciple Mahākāśyapa accused Ānanda of six transgressions and among them included his promotion of the admission of women to the Buddhist community on the grounds that this had caused the shortening of the Period of the True Teaching by five hundred years. But Ānanda was also a very wise sage, and he answered the charges cleverly.

Thus be it known: all women who become nuns owe a debt of gratitude to the revered Ānanda. In the *Hōongyō* it is said: "If a woman seeks an expedient way to earn good karma, on the eighth day of the second month and the eighth day of the eighth month, she should purify her garments and wholeheartedly observe the Eight Precepts through the Six Watches. Ānanda will then use his supernatural power to respond to her voice, and he will protect her and answer every one of her prayers."

The Rite of Penance, which has been observed for such a long time at this temple, is thus intended to repay this obligation to Ānanda; the commitment

5. For an early example of a *keka* (repentance rite) dedicated to the Eleven-Headed Kannon, see tale 11.11 in the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (NAKAMURA 1973, 175–76).

to observe these two days of worship is in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha himself. (KAMENS 1988, 272–73)

The *Sanbōe*'s account is largely based on the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*, particularly in the following regards: the account of Mahāprajāpatī's pleading with the Buddha; his refusal on the grounds that women's ordination would cause the dharma to decline five hundred years earlier; Ānanda's intercession; the Buddha's refusal of Ānanda's argument based on his milk debt; his final acceptance when reminded that previous Buddhas all had as disciples monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen; and the Buddha's words to Mahāprajāpatī that nuns and devoted laywomen should venerate Ānanda in recognition of their debt of gratitude to him, and in order to have their prayers answered through Ānanda's supernatural power (see, for example, T 3, no. 156, 152b27–154b12).

Interestingly, the *Sanbōe* omits the Buddha's stipulation that women follow the Eight Heavy Rules as a precondition for their ordination—a point mentioned explicitly in the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*. The *Sanbōe* only highlights the observance of the Eight Pure Precepts, which allowed the laity to live temporarily like ordained monastics. In ancient and medieval Japan, imperial and aristocratic women often acted as patrons of well-known clerics. As such, these elite women did not customarily take submissive roles toward the masters who administered the precepts to them but often ranked far below them in terms of social status (MEEKS 2006, 66–67). Thus, women of such high status probably would not have accepted the requirement to observe the Eight Heavy Rules in order to join the Buddhist order legitimately, which could explain the rules' omission in the *Sanbōe* account.

It is also important to note that Junna'in developed a Tendai connection through Ennin 円仁 (793–865), the head abbot of Mt. Hiei 比叡山. Seishi may have taken the tonsure in the early 840s in the aftermath of the Jōwa Rebellion, but she did not establish Junna'in as a convent until about twenty years later after she took the bodhisattva precepts under Ennin in 860 (GRONER 2002, 82–85; KATSUURA 2008, 112–13). According to medieval Tendai Buddhist interpretations of the precepts, the bodhisattva vows—rather than the orthodox *vinaya*—were typically the basis for ordination. In Seishi's time, many members of the socioeconomic elite—both male and female—opted for private bodhisattva ordinations that blurred the lines between lay and monastic status. Aristocratic women of the Heian period typically became so-called “lay nuns” who took the bodhisattva precepts of the Tendai school in private ordination rituals rather than on an official ordination platform (MEEKS 2006). According to the *Sanbōe*, so did Seishi:

In the fifth month of the second year of the Jōgan era (860) [Seishi] held a great reading of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Junnain [*sic*]. On the last day, she asked the abbot of Enryakuji, Jikaku Daishi [that is, Ennin] to stay behind, and she

had her head shaved and received the Bodhisattva precepts and the Buddhist name “Ryōso” from him. (KAMENS 1988, 272)

Seishi received the bodhisattva precepts under Ennin for a second time in the eighth month of 861. Nevertheless, around this time, Seishi also convinced Ennin to try to establish an ordination platform for women (GRONER 2002, 85–86; KATSUURA 2008, 112).⁶ He later recorded this encounter in his will:

Empress Junna wished to establish an ordination platform for bodhisattva nuns ordained with the Brahmā’s net precepts so that the Way would flourish. However, [I realized that] I would pass away before the platform could be established. The Treatise Clarifying and Extolling the Mahāyāna Precepts was composed in order to further this goal. I ask that you aid in fulfilling [her] vow. (Cited in GRONER 2002, 85)

The platform was never established after Ennin’s death, but, as KATSUURA (2008, 112–13) has argued, the *Anan keka* may have been closely linked to the Tendai school’s promotion of the bodhisattva ordinations for women, which apparently also included promotion of the Eight Pure Precepts. This brief historical summary provides a helpful context for understanding the emergence of a new devotional ritual dedicated to Ānanda in medieval Japan.

The Composition of the Anan kōshiki in the Medieval Period

A new ritual honoring Ānanda appeared in the medieval period in the emerging genre of *kōshiki*, chanted vernacular lectures that were usually compiled on the basis of scriptural sources. Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232), who authored several well-known *kōshiki*, has been accredited with the compilation of the *Anan kōshiki* (alternatively known as the *Anan sonja kōshiki* 阿難尊者講式 [The chanted lecture on the Venerable Ānanda]). This claim is based on an attribution in an Edo-period copy of the text held at Myōe’s former temple, Kōzanji 高山寺. However, two other extant Edo-period manuscripts—one from 1689 held at the Tendai temple Shōrin’in 勝林院 and an undated copy held at the National Diet Library in Tokyo—do not identify Myōe as the author and merely state that the ritual was compiled for the nuns at Saiin (that is, Junna’in), the convent associated with the *Anan keka*. Indeed, the ritual does not appear in Kōzanji’s official index of Myōe’s works (NOMURA 2002, 374–75).

Nomura Takumi argues that *Anan kōshiki*’s central lecture, the *shikimon* 式文, was likely written by a Tendai cleric who was inspired by the earlier *Anan*

6. According to his travel journal, the *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki* 入唐求法巡礼行記 (838–847), Ennin had witnessed the construction of an ordination platform for nuns in 840 during his travels in Tang China, which may have motivated him to establish a similar platform in Japan (REISCHAUER 1955, 207; GRONER 2002, 85)

keka. As Nomura has demonstrated, the compiler relied heavily on Zhiyi's 智顓 (538–597) *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* (Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju*; Jp. *Myōhō rengo kyō mongu* 妙法蓮華經文句), a major Tendai commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*. Second, the compiler accepted the traditional Tendai rather than the Kegon chronology of the propagation of the Buddhist teachings. Third, the compiler referred to the *Nirvana Sutra* as the “Great Scripture,” a distinctly Tendai convention. Given that Myōe was a strong proponent of the Kegon school, these details raise doubts about Myōe's authorship of the *shikimon* and point instead to a cleric within the Tendai school (NOMURA 2002, 384–89). In addition, Katsuura Noriko points out that the oldest extant manuscript was transmitted at Shōrin'in, a Tendai temple in Kyoto that belonged to an important Tendai *shōmyō* 声明 (vocal music) lineage purportedly founded by Ennin. She argues that this connection supports the hypothesis that the *Anan kōshiki's shikimon* originated within a Tendai environment, particularly because this manuscript claims that the text was compiled for the nuns at Junna'in, which also had a Tendai connection. KATSUURA (2008, 117–18, 120) further speculates that rather than having authored the *Anan kōshiki* himself, Myōe may have copied this ritual for the benefit of Shūmyōmon'in 修明門院, one of his female disciples who took the precepts under him. To bolster Nomura's and Katsuura's argument that the text was likely compiled by a Tendai cleric, I would like to add that in one instance the *shikimon* appears to cite Zhipan's 志磐 (1220–1275) *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* (*Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀), another Tendai text. The chronicle was completed in 1269 (PARK 2010, 216), more than thirty years after Myōe's death, which makes it impossible for Myōe to have been the compiler of the *kōshiki*.

Both Nomura and Katsuura come to the conclusion that, except for the Edo-period attribution in the Kōzanji manuscript, there is no direct documentary link between Myōe and the *Anan kōshiki*. Nevertheless, these scholars provide convincing evidence that Ānanda received cultic attention at Zenmyōji 善妙寺, a convent founded by Myōe in 1223 in the vicinity of Kōzanji.⁷ Zenmyōji provided shelter for aristocratic and warrior women who were widowed or orphaned during the Jōkyū disturbance in 1221. In 1224, images of Ānanda and of the sixteen arhats painted by Myōe's disciple E'nichibō Jōnin 惠日房成忍 (active early thirteenth century) were enshrined at Zenmyōji, and Myōe conducted the eye-opening ceremony. In 1265, three decades after Myōe's death, the nun Ze'e, the widow of Fujiwara no Mitsuchika (1176–1221), erected a stupa dedicated to

7. Zenmyōji is named after Shanmiao 善妙, a young woman who falls in love with the Korean monk Ūisang 義湘 (625–702) during his stay in Tang China. She eventually becomes his devotee, transforms herself into a dragon, and assists his passage back to Silla where Ūisang then spreads the Huayan 華嚴 (Kr. Hwaōm; Jp. Kegon) teachings. The story has been transmitted in the *Kegon engi emaki* 華嚴緣起繪卷, which is held at Myōe's former temple, Kōzanji, and may have been produced under the patronage of the Zenmyōji nuns (BROCK 1990).



FIGURE 1. *Hōkyōin tō* dedicated to Ānanda (1265) at Inji 為因寺, a small temple near Kōzanji, Kyoto (photograph by the author).

Ānanda on the temple grounds. The treasure-chest-seal stupa (Jp. *hōkyōin tō* 宝篋印塔; FIGURE 1) was erected on the eighth day of the eighth month of 1265, which coincides with one of the two annual Ānanda- veneration days that are mentioned in the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*, the *Sanbōe*, and the *Anan kōshiki*.⁸ That Ānanda was singled out through an image and a stupa—rather than being shown alongside Mahākāśyapa as the attendant of Śākyamuni or as one of the Buddha’s chief ten disciples—indicates that he must have received special cultic attention at Zenmyōji, a fact reinforced by the specific date on which the stupa was erected. This makes it feasible that the *Anan kōshiki* was performed at Zenmyōji despite the lack of concrete documentary evidence (NOMURA 2002, 379, 382–83; KATSUURA 2008, 119–20).

There is, however, direct documentation that the *Anan kōshiki*—or potentially a variant form thereof—was performed elsewhere during the medieval

8. As Shi Zhiru has demonstrated, Wu Qian (928–988), the last king of Wuyue, erected large numbers of treasure-chest-seal stupas containing printed copies of the *Heart Mantra of the Treasure Chest Seal Sutra* (Ch. *Baoqieyin xinzhou jing*; Jp. *Hōkyōin shinju kyō* 宝篋印心呪經). According to Shi Zhiru, the scripture functioned “as a substitute for rare, hard-to-come-by bodily relics” (SHI 2014; quote on page 107). A treasure-chest-seal stupa was therefore particularly suitable for commemorating Ānanda.

period. As Lori Meeks has shown, a *kōshiki* dedicated to Ānanda was regularly performed at Hokkeji, a Ritsu convent associated with Eison's 叡尊 (1201–1290) reform movement. According to a fourteenth-century list of yearly ceremonies at the convent, the *Anan sonja kōshiki* was celebrated on the eighth days of second and eighth months—as stipulated by the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* and the text of the extant *kōshiki*. Meeks suggests that for medieval Ritsu nuns, who belonged to a school of Buddhism that sought the revival of orthodox monastic precepts including the reestablishment of full ordination for women, the ritual served to link their order to their Indian predecessors. Through the rite, the nuns were able to depict themselves as part of an ancient, Indian Buddhist tradition and thus affirm and legitimize their identity as female monastics (MEEKS 2010, 235–36). It is plausible that the ritual had a similar meaning for Sōtō Zen nuns, who began performing the *Anan kōshiki* from the late Edo period onward.

The Revitalization of the Ritual within a Sōtō Nuns' Network

Apparently largely forgotten by the first half of the early modern period, the *Anan kōshiki* was revitalized in the early nineteenth century by Jakushū Kankō 寂宗觀光 (1785–1868; FIGURE 2), a Sōtō nun at Mishōdō 微笑堂, a small temple in Chita 知多 district, Owari 尾張 province. Kankō was born in Kuwade 桑田 district in Tanba 丹波 province, the daughter of a low-ranking samurai. She took the tonsure at the age of eight under a teacher by the name of Dokushō 独照 and eventually moved to Owari province to become the fifth abbess of Mishōdō (SŌTŌSHŪ NISŌSHI HENSANKAI 1955, 273–74). In the ninth month of 1827, Kankō received permission by Kōzanji's abbot Eyū 慧友 (1775–1853) to copy Kōzanji's manuscript of the *Anan kōshiki*. Based on the printed edition that she sponsored two years later, it appears that she not only copied the text but also used her knowledge of the Buddhist canon to emend textual corruptions and discrepancies with Buddhist scriptures before she had the text committed to print. In 1829, she requested that Kōsen Mujaku 黄泉無著 (1775–1839; FIGURE 3), a prominent scholar-monk from Owari, compose a consecration (Jp. *saimon* 祭文) for the *kōshiki*.⁹

As abbot of Manshōji 万松寺 in Owari province, Kōsen had been a local force for reform and the revitalization of Dōgen's 道元 monastic regulations within Sōtō Zen, but he subsequently transferred to Kōtaiji 皓台寺 in Nagasaki in 1828. In 1829, he traveled to Edo for a shogunal audience and took the opportunity

9. Much of this information can be culled from the printed edition reproduced in KAWAGUCHI (2004, 81, 85), which contains a full reproduction of the 1829 *Anan kōshiki*. Other versions of the text omit parts of the colophon (79–86). Therefore, I rely on Kawaguchi's reproduction. My full translation of this text is included in the online supplement to this journal issue. My footnotes in the translation indicate Kankō's emendations.



FIGURE 2. Zen Master Arai Sekizen's 新井石禅 portrait of Jakushū Kankō (1926) (AICHI SENMON NISŌDŌ 2003, 3; reproduced with permission of Aichi Senmon Nisōdō).



FIGURE 3. Portrait of Kōsen Mujaku at the age of 64 (1838). Held at Hōjiji 法持寺, Nagoya (reproduced with permission of Hōjiji).



FIGURE 4. Kankō's portrait of Ananda with an inscription by Kōsen Mujaku (1827) (AICHI SENMON NISŌDŌ 2003, 2; reproduced with permission of Aichi Senmon Nisōdō).



FIGURE 5. Kankō's portrait of Mahāprajāpati with an inscription by Ichi Jōin (1839) (AICHI SENMON NISŌDŌ 2003, 2; reproduced with permission of Aichi Senmon Nisōdō).

to visit Owari on his five-month journey. On his return trip in the fifth month of 1829, he stayed in the Nagoya area from the seventeenth of the fourth month to the sixth of the fifth month, giving dharma talks and administering the precepts to over 400 people (KAWAGUCHI 2005, 25–26; KAWAGUCHI Kōyū 2010, 125–27, 147–49). It appears that one of the many visitors who came to see him was Kankō, who probably presented her request to Kōsen at this time for the *saimon*. Kōsen completed the *saimon* that same month, likely during his stay in Owari. On the fifteenth of the seventh month, Kankō completed the colophon of the *Anan kōshiki*, which was subsequently printed (KAWAGUCHI 2004, 81).

Unfortunately, our knowledge about Kankō's tenure at Mishōdō and how she became interested in the *Anan kōshiki* is limited because the temple was destroyed in a fire, and with it all documents pertaining to Kankō's life there. However, the few details that are known indicate that Kankō was a capable organizer and a staunch devotee of Ānanda. In her activities, she seems to have had the support of a tight-knit network of local nuns. In the 1820s, Kankō had Mishōdō rebuilt and enshrined a statue of Ānanda as the main image of worship. It is said that she gathered smooth rocks at a nearby beach, inscribed them with the *Lotus Sutra*, and buried them under the main altar (SŌTŌSHŪ NISŌSHI HENSANKAI 1955, 274–76). In 1827, the year she obtained a copy of the *Anan kōshiki* from Kōzanji, she drew an image of Ānanda (FIGURE 4), which she personally inscribed with short quotes from the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* and the *Anan kōshiki*. She had Kōsen write the primary inscription eulogizing Ānanda, which he did in the twelfth month of 1827, the year before he moved to Nagasaki (KAWAGUCHI 2004, 75, 80). Printed copies of this image were circulated at several nuns' temples in the area (personal communication with Kawaguchi Kōfū, 20 June 2014).

Kankō seems to have relied on this vibrant community of nuns in the Nagoya area to finance her printing of the *Anan kōshiki* in 1829. She mobilized a contingent of sixty-eight nuns and three laywomen and raised about four *ryō* 兩 (gold coins) to fund this project.¹⁰ In the text's colophon, Kankō expressed her wish “that, by virtue of making donations to support this printed edition, the assembly of nuns will be delivered from the river of desire, awaken Buddha insight and

10. While the gender of clerical names is difficult to ascertain, the majority of the monastic donors listed in the colophon were likely nuns. Sixty-eight monastic names are grouped with three laywomen while two monastic names are listed alongside a layman, suggesting that the former were nuns and the latter male clerics. Furthermore, the list of sixty-eight monastics contains the name of Chikyō 智鏡. A nun by the same name had become the resident cleric at Jōshinji 淨心寺, a nearby Sōtō temple, which Kōsen had revitalized in 1822. Chikyō died in 1825, two years before the *Anan kōshiki* was printed, but she, or one of her disciples acting on her behalf, could still have contributed to the project. The list of donors contains two other names—Jōkyō 貞鏡 and Ryōkyō 良鏡—whose dharma name includes the character *-kyō* 鏡. This character was commonly used in the names of nuns at Jōshinji. See KAWAGUCHI (2003).

inexhaustible wisdom, and enter the [dharma] sea of Ānanda.” At the same time, however, her reasons for printing the ritual were also highly personal: according to the colophon, she wished that her late wet nurse, a lay woman by the posthumous name of Bodaiin Myōkan Daishi 菩提院妙歎大姉, “may in every existence become properly ordained, strictly adhere to the Buddhist precepts, be liberated from the river of desire, and quickly realize enlightenment” (my translations; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 85).

Kankō’s interest in the founding of the nuns’ order in India persisted during the following decades. In 1839, Kankō drew another image (FIGURE 5), this time of Mahāprajāpatī, and had it inscribed by Iichi Jōin 惟一成允 (1789–1861) (KAWAGUCHI 2004, 75). Jōin was another regionally prominent Sōtō cleric and scholar of Dōgen’s (1200–1253) *Shōbōgenzō*. He was originally from Mino 美濃 province and had served as the abbot of Annonji 安穩寺 in Owari province. Subsequently, he transferred to Kōkenji 孝顯寺 in Musashi 武蔵 province and eventually returned to Owari to reside at Narumi Nyoiji 鳴海如意寺 in his later years (NAGOYA SHIYAKUSHO 1934, 595–96).

In 1849, Kankō transferred to Kyoto to become the abbess of Yōrin’an 養林庵, then a Rinzaï convent for high-ranking samurai women and noblewomen (*bikuni goshō* 比丘尼御所) that was endowed with thirty-one *koku* 石 (that is, enough rice to feed thirty-one people for one year) by the shogunate. Although Kankō was a Sōtō nun, her organizational skills and erudition (she had apparently read the Buddhist canon twice in its entirety) made her an attractive choice as abbess. Having raised her social status through adoption into the aristocratic Rokujō 六条 family, she succeeded Chigon Soshō 千巖祖松 (1786–1848; abbess 1834–1848), who had been unable to manage the rebuilding of the convent after it was damaged in a fire in 1788—a task soon accomplished by Kankō. Under Kankō and her successor Soden Kanbyō 祖田觀苗 (1818–1894), Yōrin’an developed into a training convent for young nuns. By 1872, eleven years after Kanbyō succeeded Kankō and four years after Kankō’s death, there were eleven nuns in residence at Yōrin’an, eight of whom were peasant daughters from Owari (SŌTŌSHŪ NISŌSHI HENSANKAI 1955, 276–78; NISHIGUCHI and SATŌ 2000, 62–63, 68–69; YŌRIN’AN 1872).¹¹

Kankō also transmitted to the Yōrin’an nuns her devotion to Ānanda as suggested by Yōrin’an’s statues of both the youthful Ānanda and the aged Kankō, who is revered as the temple’s revitalizer (FIGURE 6). In the early Meiji era, Kanbyō raised 29.90 yen from thirty-five nuns—most of whom were from the Kansai region—to have a second edition of the *Anan kōshiki* printed. In 1884, Kankō’s student Mizuno Jōrin 水野常倫 (1848–1927) succeeded Kanbyō as

11. SŌTŌSHŪ NISŌSHI HENSANKAI (1955) gives the dates of Soshō’s death as 1845 (273), whereas NISHIGUCHI and SATŌ (2000) give 1848 (63).



FIGURE 6. Statue of Kankō (right) enshrined alongside a statue of Ānanda (left) at Yōrin'an, Kyoto. (Photograph by the author.)

abbess of Yōrin'an. In 1903, Mizuno established, together with three other nuns, the Aichi Nisō Gakurin 愛知尼僧学林. This convent was one of the first modern Sōtō training convents that would give nuns greater educational opportunities than previously available. It was eventually moved to its present location in Nagoya and became the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō, where the *Anan kōshiki* is still celebrated to this day. Furthermore, under the current abbess Aoyama, the *Anan kōshiki* was reprinted twice, once in 1985 to celebrate the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō's eightieth anniversary and again in 2003 to honor the one-hundredth anniversary (SŌTŌSHŪ NISŌSHI HENSANKAI 1955, 307–308, 343–46; ARAI 1999, 53–56; AOYAMA 2003, 124, 130–31). The performance and reproduction of the *Anan kōshiki* is thus closely connected with the history of this training convent.

The Contents of the Anan kōshiki

The *Anan kōshiki* as published by Kankō in 1829 consists of a combination of musical elements—including transliterated Sanskrit and Chinese hymns of praise (Jp. *san* 讚 and *bai* 唄) and *gāthās* (Jp. *kada* 伽陀 or *ge* 偈), as well as a percussion arrangement performed by two cymbals and a gong; offerings of food, drink, and incense to Ānanda; a consecration (*saimon*); a lecture (*shikimon*); and a dedication of merit. The entire service has the following structure (sections in bold face are unique to the *Anan kōshiki*):

Opening

The officiant performs several prostrations.
The entry of the officiant.
The entry of the assembly.
The officiant enters the hall.
Offering of incense and three prostrations.

Offerings

Scattering flowers and verse.
The *inō* (ceremonial leader) summons the two hymn leaders.
The hymn leaders play part one and two of the gong and cymbal arrangement.
The hymn leaders chant the “Praise of the Four Wisdoms” in transliterated Sanskrit.
The hymn leaders play part three of the cymbal and gong arrangement.
The *inō* summons the officiant.
The officiant steps forward to offer incense and performs three prostrations.
Incense and rice gruel offering.
Incense, sweets, and tea offering.
Three prostrations after sweets and tea offering.

Saimon and Gāthās

Saimon recited by secondary lector

The *inō* recites the “*Sōrai no ge*” (*Gāthā* of communal obeisance).

The cantors are called forth.
The cantors bow three times.
“*Nyorai bai* (Song of Praise of the Tathāgata).”
“*Gāthā* of Scattering Flowers.”
“*Gāthā* of Indian Melody.”
“*Gāthā* of the Monk’s Staff.”

Lecture and Gāthās

The *inō* summons the officiant.
The officiant steps forward to offer incense and performs three prostrations.
The officiant recites the *shikimon*, while the *inō* leads the interspersed *gāthās*.

(1) Introduction (1a)/Women’s Debt of Gratitude to Ānanda (1b)

***Gāthā* 1**

(2) Ānanda’s First Virtue: Beauty

***Gāthā* 2**

(3) Ānanda’s Second Virtue: The Perfect Attendant

***Gāthā* 3**

4. Ānanda’s Third Virtue: Perfect Recollection of the Buddha’s Sermons

***Gāthā* 4**

5. Ānanda’s Fourth Virtue: Miraculous Death and Division of the Relics

Gāthā 5

6. Women's Debt of Gratitude to Śākyamuni

Gāthā 6

The officiant recites the merit transfer.

The *inō* chants the universal merit transfer.

The assembly performs three prostrations.

Closing

The assembly exits.

The officiant exits.

The officiant retires from the hall.

This 1829 version of the *Anan kōshiki* follows the standard liturgy for Sōtō *kōshiki*—including the hymns, *gāthās*, and the universal merit transfer that frame the *saimon* and the *shikimon*. This script incorporates many pieces that belong to the common *shōmyō* repertoire in Japan.¹² In contrast, the *saimon*, the *sōrai no ge* 総礼の偈 (*Gāthā* of communal obeisance), the *shikimon*, and the main merit transfer are the distinctive core of the *kōshiki* dedicated to Ānanda. In this article, I focus my analysis on the *saimon* and the *shikimon* because these sections are unique and central to the *Anan kōshiki*.

The early modern *saimon* explains the reasons for the offerings to Ānanda and gives an overview of the highlights of his life. These include accomplishments subsequently mentioned in the *shikimon*, such as Ānanda's physical beauty, his role in establishing the nuns' order, and his miraculous death. Furthermore, the *saimon* mentions additional biographical details such as Ānanda's begging for milk on Śākyamuni's behalf at the house of a Brahmin (from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*), Ānanda's nearly being ensnared by the Mātāngi girl (from the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* and the *Śuraṅgama Sūtra*), his role as the Buddha's messenger to hell (from the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*), his entry into the chamber of the first Buddhist council through a keyhole after attaining arhatship (often cited in Zen texts), and his moment of awakening after being told by Mahākāśyapa to cut down the temple pole—an occurrence that establishes him as the second patriarch in the Zen lineage. Ānanda's role as a Zen patriarch is reinforced by the *sōrai no ge*, which is based on a verse that Ānanda supposedly uttered during his face-to-face transmission of the dharma to his successor, the third patriarch of Zen.¹³

The medieval *shikimon* is divided into an introduction and six sections (*dan* 段), each ending with a *gāthā*. After a brief introduction (*hyōbyaku* 表白), the

12. Michaela MROSS (2007) has analyzed the structure of Sōtō *kōshiki* in the example of the *Rakan kōshiki*. ARAI (2000; 2008) describes in detail how this Sōtō framework is staged during the *Anan kōshiki*.

13. See Yongming Yanshou's 永明延壽 (904–976) *Record of the Axiom Mirror* (Ch. *Zongjing lu*) 宗鏡錄, T48, no. 2016, 937c29–938a01.

first describes Ānanda's role in convincing the Buddha to ordain women; the next four sections praise Ānanda's four principal virtues (the beauty of his countenance and physique, his role as the Buddha's perfect attendant, his perfect recollection of the Buddha's sermons, and his miraculous death by self-combustion and the distribution of his relics); and the last section praises Śākyamuni for establishing the nuns' order despite his initial opposition. The *shikimon* borrows extensively from the *Lotus Sutra* and Zhiyi's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, as well as the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* and the *Nirvana Sutra*. Direct quotations from the *Lotus Sutra* consist of two of the six *gāthās* that are interspersed into the *shikimon*—namely the *gāthās* of sections three and six. Three of the remaining *gāthās* and much of sections two through five (praising Ānanda's virtues) are adapted or borrowed verbatim from Zhiyi's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, particularly from Zhiyi's commentary on the introduction to the *Lotus Sutra*. Such appropriated material includes glosses for the opening line “thus have I heard” and for “Ānanda,” who is listed as one of the disciples attending the Buddha's sermon. Sections one and six rely heavily on material from the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*.

The *shikimon* transitions seamlessly into a merit transfer expressing a wish for rebirth in the presence of Maitreya, the future Buddha. The accompanying universal merit transfer asks that all sentient beings attain enlightenment. Additionally, contemporary performances incorporate the recitation of the *Anan tange* 阿難歎偈 after the final three prostrations of the assembly and before the officiant leaves the hall:¹⁴

Homage to the most compassionate Venerable Ānanda!
 Born on the day of the Buddha's enlightenment,
 He brought bliss and joy to the five regions of India,
 Served as an attendant to three generations of Buddhas,
 Had the most perfect recollection of all that he had heard,
 Brought about women's ordination and the Eight Precepts of Reverence,
 Was most excellently assured future enlightenment on Vulture Peak,
 Collected all the [Buddha's] discourses at the first council,
 Cut down the temple flagpole and received the golden robe of face-to-face
 transmission,
 Manifested a mysterious transformation through fire *samādhi*,
 Divided his body and entered nirvana on the Ganges.
 Homage to the most compassionate Venerable Ānanda!

(My translation; see, for example, AOYAMA 2003, 66–69)

14. The authorship of the *Anan tange* is unknown, but Shimoyama Kenkō 下山賢光, the current abbess of Yōrin'an, speculates that Kankō may have composed the verse. I have been unable to verify this attribution, but the verse must have been composed by a Zen cleric who was familiar with the *saimon* and the *shikimon*. EBIE (1986, 293) notes that Sōtō nuns began to chant this verse in the contemporary period.

The verse recapitulates Ānanda's lifetime accomplishments mentioned in the *saimon* and the *shikimon*, including those that mark him as a Zen patriarch. After the two cantors, who performed the *Nyorai bai* during the *kōshiki*, chant each line, the entire assembly responds with the refrain "Homage to the most compassionate Venerable Ānanda!" Like the other *gāthās*, this verse is chanted in Chinese. The *Anan tange* is the most familiar aspect of the ritual for the nuns since they chant this verse monthly on the eve of the eighth day. The following morning, rice gruel is offered to Ānanda (ARAI 2000, 123; AOYAMA 2003, 118, 131). Since an individual nun can perform the *tange*, this short chant is recited on that day not just at the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō but also at many small temples belonging to this Sōtō Zen nuns' network.

Celebrating Difference: An Interpretation of the Anan kōshiki

How are we to assess the *Anan kōshiki*? Previous scholarly appraisals of the *Anan kōshiki* have come to contradictory conclusions about its significance and meaning. Katsuura regards the *Anan kōshiki* and its close forerunner, the *Anan keka*, as rituals that were commonly performed at elite convents in Heian and medieval Japan and that spread in the context of the Tendai school's administering the bodhisattva precepts. Katsuura and Nomura are more concerned with determining the authorship of the *shikimon* than with its larger ritual purpose (KATSUURA 2008; NOMURA 2002). Paula Arai argues that the *Anan kōshiki* "functions to legitimize and empower the nuns" but does so by embracing "noncontentious ... gratitude" (ARAI 2008, 196). As Arai also points out, for contemporary nuns, elevating Ānanda for persuading Śākyamuni to allow women to take the tonsure is highly resonant, as his struggle parallels modern Sōtō nuns' struggle for equal standing—accomplished from a legal perspective only in the 1960s. By praising Ānanda, his erudition, and his wisdom in convincing the Buddha to ordain women, Arai asserts, the nuns are legitimizing and exalting themselves indirectly (ARAI 2008, 197–200). Meeks offers a more guardedly optimistic interpretation. She notes that the *Anan kōshiki* has a double-edged agenda, allowing the nuns to cast their femininity in a positive light, while simultaneously reaffirming their lower status vis-à-vis the male clergy by recounting the circumstances of the establishment of the nuns' order (MEEKS 2010, 236–37). In contrast, Bernard Faure interprets the *Anan kōshiki* and the earlier *Anan keka* as disseminating the belief that the ordination ritual symbolically transformed women into men and thus denied their femininity. He also highlights the misogynistic implications of the ritual because it reiterates both women's indebtedness to Ānanda and Śākyamuni's hesitation to admit women to the order (FAURE 2003, 59, 102). Similarly, Kawaguchi cautions in a note appended to his reproduction of the 1829 edition of the *Anan kōshiki* that even though this ritual "is practiced by

Sōtō nuns, this *kōshiki* is related to gender discrimination.” Therefore, he urges that “this *kōshiki* should be handled with great care and not be used to spread or further discrimination” (KAWAGUCHI 2004, 92).

The ritual is indeed double-edged because it simultaneously celebrates the founding of the nuns’ order through Ānanda’s intercession and reifies the nuns’ lower status vis-à-vis male monastics by repeatedly reiterating Śākyamuni Buddha’s hesitation to admit women to the monastic orders. Moreover, the ritual eulogizes Ānanda, one of the Buddha’s chief male disciples, rather than a female paragon such as Mahāprajāpatī, the first Buddhist nun. Last but not least, both the early modern *saimon* and the medieval *shikimon* were composed by male clerics for nuns, which means that the ritual text constructs nunhood from a male perspective rather than directly representing the nuns’ self-image. This has the potential to relegate nuns to—as Faure argues— “spokespersons’ of a dominantly male tradition” (FAURE 2003, 53) who are forced to engage in a form of male ventriloquism by performing the ritual.

The most apparently androcentric section of the ritual is Kōsen’s *saimon* from 1829, which describes Ānanda as a Zen patriarch:

Today on (*day and month*), we *bhikṣuṇīs* including so-and-so and others, [who are followers of] the teachings transmitted [by the Buddha], respectfully offer incense, flowers, tea, and sustenance in honor of the truth of [Ānanda’s] minutely dividing his body [while floating in a boat] on the Ganges. Per chance we have heard [the following]: the Venerable had a perfectly beautiful face like the moon, eyes like lotus blossoms, and the thirty marks. He memorized all the sermons that he heard over the course of fifty years. He was assured that he would become [a Buddha by] the name of [Tathāgata-King Whose] Wisdom [Freely Penetrates the] Mountains and Seas. When he attained enlightenment, he was like a supernormal teacher. He was the wonder child of Śuklodana and a truly trained attendant. He begged for milk at the Brahmin’s house. He became the anvil for [Vimalakīrti’s] hammer. He transmitted the [Buddha’s] order to hell. He shunned the ordinary and strove for the sacred. He summed up the most refined teachings into one word. He dispelled the three doubts of the monastic assembly. He fell into the river of desire with the Mātāṅgi girl. He opened the secret texts of the Seven Marks and the Eight Returns. He surprised King Ajātaśatru of Maghada in a dream, divided his body into four parts, and left [his remains as] relics. Had he not assisted Mahāprajāpatī with her wish, how could we have followed this lesser *śrāvaka*’s example? We wish that he who transformed himself to enter the cave through the keyhole and received the robe by knocking down the flagpole take pity on us who carefully adhere to the Eight [Rules of] Reverence and Eight Renunciations and who bear the Five Defilements and Five Hindrances. We often bow to the solitary stupa on Mount Sumeru and yearn from afar for the remains of his body, which he divided [as he was crossing] the Ganges [by boat]. We now

offer a trifle of sustenance. It is a plain and inconspicuous meal. We wish that the great teacher may take pity on us and accept our humble offerings. May he please delight in them.

(My translation; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 80–82)

While Kōsen's humble tone should probably not be attributed to the female voice of the speaker but, rather, to the conventions of the genre, it is undeniable that the *saimon* emphasizes several negative stereotypes associated with women. Not only does the *saimon* stress the nuns' indebtedness to Ānanda and calls Mahāprajāpatī a "lesser *śrāvaka*" (*shōshōmon* 小聲聞)—in contrast to the great male disciples of the Buddha (*daishōmon* 大聲聞), but it also mentions the Mātāṅgi girl, a *femme fatale* who tries to lure Ānanda away from the Buddha and the monastic path into the "river of desire" (*aiga* 愛河). Furthermore, the *saimon* refers to the Five Hindrances (*goshō* 五障), which are mentioned in one sentence with the Five Defilements (*gojoku* 五濁).¹⁵ While the Five Defilements technically apply to all living beings, they are here attributed to female monastics as indicated by the pairing of the Five Defilements with the Five Hindrances, perhaps hinting at stereotypical notions of female defilement. In other words, Kōsen describes the nuns as both defiled and facing innate karmic obstacles, echoing a common understanding of the Five Hindrances that arose in the medieval period.¹⁶ However, since the *saimon*'s narrators are nuns rather than laywomen, Kōsen leaves unmentioned the Three Obediences (to father, husband, and son), which were often paired with the Five Hindrances—as in the expression *goshō sanjū* 五障三従 (Five Hindrances and Three Obediences). Unlike their lay counterparts, nuns were no longer held accountable to their fathers, husbands, and sons but to the male clergy. Therefore, Kōsen pairs the Five Defilements and the Five Hindrances with the Eight [Rules of] Reverence (*hakkyō* 八敬), also known as the Eight Heavy Rules, and Eight Renunciations (*hakki* 八棄).¹⁷

Kōsen's references to the Five Hindrances, "river of desire," and the Eight Heavy Rules betray a rather negative view of the female body, and these references are not isolated occurrences in the 1829 edition of *Anan kōshiki*. A colophon of the

15. The Five Defilements are associated with the cyclical decline during the kalpa of continuance and include decay, shortened lifespans, mistaken views, increasing passions and delusions, and thus increasing suffering (SOOTHILL and HODOUS 2005, 122).

16. As Yoshida demonstrates, in medieval Japan, the Five Hindrances came to be understood as internal defilements (that is, flaws inherent to women) rather than external hindrances, which the original Chinese term seemed to imply (YOSHIDA 2002).

17. Like the Eight Heavy Rules, four of the Eight Renunciations apply only to nuns. The first four—abstaining from sexual misconduct, stealing, killing, and lying about one's spiritual accomplishments—are shared with monks, but the latter four—sexual relations with a man, improper relationships with a man, hiding sexual misconduct, and inappropriate relationships with monks—apply to nuns alone (SOOTHILL and HODOUS 2005, 38, 183).

Anan kōshiki dating back at least to the late seventeenth century and containing an alternate merit transfer also mentions the Five Hindrances and pairs them with the concept of female-to-male transformation in order to attain salvation: “We now dedicate this merit to the salvation of everyone. We reverently wish that the Great Teacher Ānanda will give us clear evidence [of the Buddha’s truth] and grant us wisdom and insight. Hereby may all women be reborn out of their bodies subject to the Five Hindrances and be born into the Land of Bliss like Queen Vaidehi” (my translation; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 85; NOMURA 2002, 396). Furthermore, the 1829 colophon mentions (not once, but twice) the “river of desire,” which nuns might escape by virtue of the *Anan kōshiki* (my translation; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 85). In contrast to Kōsen, however, Kankō and Kōzanji’s abbot Eyū reporting Kankō’s motivations mention the “river of desire” without suggesting that women are temptresses who lure monks into this river with them. They may be implying that nunhood represents a means for women to escape the yoke of sexual intercourse and thus the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth.

Moreover, Ichi Jōin’s inscription of Kankō’s portrait of Mahāprajāpatī from 1839 enumerates the Eight Heavy Rules. The inscription liberally paraphrases the *Middle-Length Sutra about Former Events* (Sk. *Madhyama Ityukta Sūtra*; Ch. *Zhong benqi jing*; Jp. *Chūhongikyō* 中本起經; T 4, no. 196, 158a23–159a02), a biography of Śākyamuni, to describe how Mahāprajāpatī was able to become a nun through Ānanda’s intercession:

The *Middle-Length Sutra about Former Events* says: After the Buddha attained enlightenment, his foster mother Mahāprajāpatī asked to become a renunciant and study the way. The Buddha did not allow it. Ānanda said: “Please allow them to become renunciants.” The Buddha said: “Absolutely not. I cannot allow women to enter my dharma and become *śramaṇa*! This would be like a house of a great clan that had many women and few men. It would always be decrepit and weak and could not become powerful.” Ānanda asked again. The Buddha expounded the Eight Heavy Rules. If he allowed her to become ordained, Mahāprajāpatī must accept them faithfully, and she would be able to become a nun:

- (1) A one-hundred-year-old nun must bow to the feet of a novice monk.
- (2) She must not criticize a monk.
- (3) She must not point out a monk’s misdeeds.
- (4) She must receive the precepts from a monk.
- (5) If she commits a misdeed, she must confess to a monk.
- (6) She must receive instruction from a monk twice a month.
- (7) She must observe their three-month summer retreat under a monk.
- (8) [After] the summer [retreat] she must request a monk [for instruction?].

Respectfully recorded by the *bhikṣu* Ichi in deep winter 1839.
(My translation; see, for example, AOYAMA 2003, 2)

Significantly, the inscription itemizes the Eight Heavy Rules that Māhaprajāpati must vow to observe if she is to become ordained—thereby placing far greater emphasis on them than by naming them collectively. It is also striking that both Kōsen and Ichi—in their *saimon* and inscription, respectively—deliberately use the terms *bhikṣuṇī* (Jp. *nibisshu* 尼苾芻) and *bhikṣu* (Jp. *biku* 比丘) rather than using the more common Japanese terms such as *ni* 尼, *sō* 僧, or some other clerical rank. Using the transliterated Sanskrit term establishes a direct connection to the ancient Indian Buddhist tradition, as would references to the Eight Heavy Rules. Paradoxically, the emphasis on the Eight Heavy Rules highlights the nuns’ inferior status compared to monks while simultaneously legitimizing their order’s existence. These three examples (the Five Hindrances, women’s association with the river of desire, and the Eight Heavy Rules) indicate that by the Edo period, these concepts had become standard tropes in Sōtō Zen, if not Japanese Buddhism as a whole, but that at least in the case of the Eight Heavy Rules, they could be leveraged to argue for greater legitimacy.

In contrast to the *saimon*, the *shikimon* avoids many of the negative clichés often associated with women in the medieval and early modern periods. As Meeks has convincingly argued, “the Chanted Lecture on Ānanda text downplays the soteriological obstacles faced by women. Compared with conventional scriptural teachings on women, the chanted lecture offers a markedly positive view of women’s practice, as it skips over or ‘talks past,’ canonical views of nuns that explicitly disparage women” (MEEKS 2010, 236–37). Indeed, the *shikimon* skirts issues such as whether women can attain Buddhahood in a female body. The focus is entirely on Ānanda’s accomplishments, the Buddha’s generosity in ordaining women, and the gratitude (Sk. *kṛta*; Ch. *en*; Jp. *on* 恩) that women feel toward Ānanda and Śākyamuni.

Sections one and six deal most directly with the debt of gratitude owed by nuns to Ānanda and Śākyamuni. These two sections have the most potential for ambivalence; therefore, I cite them here in full, beginning with section one:

I reverently address the great teacher Śākyamuni, whose blessings are vast; the 80,012 holy expedient and true teachings; Ānanda, who served the Tathāgata; and everything in the realm of the three treasures, saying: by dyeing one thread the color changes. All beings will attain benefits according to their karma. When inquiring about the causal stage of the Buddhas, even in the case of an ordinary man or a sinner, [we know that] the true body of all sentient beings has the seed of Buddhahood and natural virtues. When an ordinary man advances, he will attain sagehood. When a sinner practices, natural virtues manifest themselves. When he begins to advance, he will encounter the Buddhist teachings and achieve ordination. If he completes this practice, he will fulfill the ten stages, and become a Buddha. Now, we have already encountered the Buddhist teachings and taken the tonsure. Won’t we ultimately attain

the ten stages and become Buddhas? When we think of the karmic conditions that allowed us to take the tonsure and hear the dharma, it is no other than the blessed result of Ānanda's three requests. Therefore, we repay our infinitely great debt of gratitude by performing a lecture. *Add to this supplication on your own.*¹⁸

This assembly has a special purpose and is not like an ordinary one. It focuses on praising Ānanda's virtues and repaying our infinite debt of gratitude. First, we would like to explain that women should certainly repay their debt of gratitude to Ānanda, then we will praise Ānanda's great virtues, and finally we will praise the depth of our gratitude toward Śākyamuni.

As for women being obligated to repay their debt of gratitude, the fact that women can take the tonsure is due to the zealousness of Ānanda's request. If Ānanda had not asked three times, even if we had met the Buddhist teachings, we would never have been able to take the tonsure. Necessarily, in order to acknowledge and repay him for our debt of gratitude, we should praise his virtues and prostrate ourselves before his image. In the various regions of India, female renunciants paid homage to the stupa of Ānanda on the six monthly days of abstinence. There were so many people coming and going that it was like a busy marketplace. According to the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*, the Buddha said to Gautamī, "In the future, *bhikṣus*,¹⁹ *bhikṣuṇīs*, and all women should always certainly and sincerely contemplate their debt of gratitude toward Ānanda. They should invoke his name, sing his praises, and make reverent offerings to him. If that is not always possible, they should [at least] be mindful and not forget it during the six watches of the day and night. Moreover, if a woman wishes to obtain good fortune, on the eighth day of the second and eighth months, she should mindfully adhere to the Eight Precepts during the six watches of the day and night. Ānanda will then use his supernatural power to respond to and protect her. She will soon see her prayers fulfilled." Therefore, great teacher Ānanda, remember your original vow and grant us clear evidence [of the Buddha's truth]. Thus, we should first praise him with a *gāthā* and then perform prostrations to him. We recite this verse:

Take refuge in Ānanda, Guardian of the Dharma,
The great teacher of women's ordination.
Through your great supernormal and expedient power,

18. The sentence in italics is the compiler's interpolation.

19. The inclusion of *bhikṣu* in the *shikimon*, rather than just *bhikṣuṇī* and women, appears to be a corruption of the passage from the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing*, which only lists the latter two terms. Kankō did not correct the passage in the printed edition of the *Anan kōshiki*—as she did with other obvious textual corruption—and it is difficult to assess whether she thought the inclusion of monks was deliberate or a scribal error. However, when she cites this passage in her inscription of the Mahāprajāpatī portrait, she quotes the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* rather than the *shikimon*, from which she cites another line from section five.

We wish that you may swiftly grant us fulfillment.

Pay homage to, seek refuge in, and bow to the great teacher Ānanda.

(My translation; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 82–83)

Section six concludes the *shikimon* and reads:

Finally we sing the praises of the depth of our gratitude to Śākyamuni. Our great debt of gratitude consists of him not objecting to Ānanda's request. The words of the request were: "The Buddhas of the past all had disciples of the Four Classes [that is, monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen]. Why does only our great teacher Śākyamuni not have all of them? Gautamī is your foster mother. She can attain unsurpassed enlightenment! Don't you owe her gratitude for suckling you? Out of the great compassion of the Tathāgata, please allow them all to take the tonsure. How can you not grant your mother this?" The Buddha could not counter Ānanda's reasoning and finally gave the women permission. When the women heard this, joy penetrated them to the bone and tears of gratitude filled their eyes. Thus, we should wholeheartedly sing his praises and bow to him. We recite this verse:

Well done, Śākyamuni,

Foremost teacher!

Following the example of all Buddhas,

You use expedient means to save living beings.

Pay homage to the great teacher Śākyamuni, the sovereign of the great
compassionate teachings.

(My translation; see, for example, KAWAGUCHI 2004, 84–85)

In these two sections there is evidence supporting androcentric readings of the ritual, but strategic omissions complicate this reading, and—paired with evidence supporting women's active roles—change the way that the ritual functions. The *shikimon*'s introductory paragraph echoes a familiar trope that draws parallels between the salvation of women and of evildoers—a common strategy in Buddhist texts that reflects androcentrism. Moreover, both sections stress that women are indebted to Ānanda for persisting in his request to allow women to join the monastic order and to Śākyamuni for granting Ānanda his request. Mahāprajāpatī and the other women seeking ordination are not depicted as active participants in the conversation between Ānanda and Śākyamuni. There is, for instance, no mention of how the women traveled a great distance to make their request of Śākyamuni before Ānanda interceded on their behalf.

Paradoxically, however, this strategy of omission allows the compiler to circumvent stereotypical characterizations of women. Instead of echoing the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* by detailing Mahāprajāpatī's trifold request and Śākyamuni's trifold refusal, including the latter's long litany of disparaging comments about women, the *shikimon* treats Śākyamuni's resistance in a

noticeably abbreviated manner and shifts the focus—in sections two through five—to Ānanda’s lifelong accomplishments beyond the ordination of women. Moreover, women in general are described in sections one and six not as passive bystanders but, rather, as actively venerating Ānanda and Śākyamuni—in the past flocking to Ānanda’s stupa on the six monthly days of abstinence to pay homage and now conducting this *kōshiki* and presenting offerings to both Ānanda and Śākyamuni.

As ritual performers, the status of women is elevated vis-à-vis the Buddha, which becomes especially apparent in the accompanying *gāthā* that ends section six of the *shikimon*. The *gāthā* quotes the *Lotus Sutra* and lets the nuns speak with voices of the Buddhas of the ten directions who praise Śākyamuni for preaching the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra* through expedient means. The full passage in the *Lotus Sutra* reads:

When I [Śākyamuni] thought in this manner,
 the Buddhas of the ten directions all appeared
 and with Brahma sound comforted and instructed me.
 “Well done, Śākyamuni!” they said.
 “Foremost leader and teacher,
 you have attained the unsurpassed Law.
 But following the example of all other Buddhas,
 you will employ the power of expedient means.”

(Translation adapted from WATSON 1993, 43; T 9, no. 262, 9c19–c22;
 italics added to indicate the lines used in the *gāthā*)

Not only does this verse allow the nuns to speak as Buddhas, but it also effectively rationalizes—as an expedient means—Śākyamuni’s hesitation to ordain women. In other words, according to this view, the Buddha does not hesitate due to substantive concerns, such as women’s inherent inferiority.

Significantly, for the nuns with whom I have spoken, the *Anan kōshiki* is not a ritual in which they passively reiterate ideals set by the male establishment but, rather, a chance to celebrate their difference as female monastics (from the male establishment). Throughout the *Anan kōshiki*’s history, nuns have played an active role in its transmission and performance. Such agency is clearly visible in Kankō’s efforts to revitalize the ritual and reprint the text, as well as in subsequent printings by Kankō’s successor Kanbyō and Aoyama Shundō. Furthermore, the contemporary Sōtō nuns whom I have had a chance to interview have universally expressed that they consider the ritual as something precious that needs to be treasured and preserved. During an interview in 2014, Shimoyama Kenkō, for example, the current abbess of Yōrin’an, proudly produced two scrolls containing the *saimon* that she had copied in her own hand when she participated in a performance as the secondary lector. While the *saimon* may be the

most problematic section of the *kōshiki*, for nuns like Shimoyama, the fact that it was commissioned by Kankō and therefore constitutes part of the heritage of modern Sōtō Zen nuns outweighs the disparaging aspects of the text. Furthermore, according to another nun, misogynistic concepts are to be expected given the ritual's long history. In other words, the presence of such concepts proves the antiquity of the rite, heightening its legitimacy.

It is important to remember that the *Anan kōshiki* is not simply a text that is read and studied but one that is actively performed. The active power of performance is demonstrated by contemporary stagings of the *Anan kōshiki*, in which Aoyama Shundō has served as officiant. Such performances tend to omit substantial passages of the *shikimon* as, for example, Aoyama did in her recitation of the *shikimon* for the above-mentioned video recording in 2003. In all but one of the six sections, Aoyama recited the first few lines of the section and then skipped to the last couple of lines introducing the respective *gāthā*. According to one nun, abbreviation of the *Anan kōshiki*—in fact, of any *kōshiki*—is typical of contemporary performances in the Sōtō school.²⁰ Ostensibly the omissions make the ceremony more manageable for the audience of older laywomen who would otherwise be forced to kneel for three and a half hours without the chance of stretching their legs since they do not perform the full prostrations alongside the nuns. Abbreviation cuts the ritual to about two hours, giving it a more reasonable length. Moreover, Aoyama noted, when I interviewed her, that the omissions cut the ritual to a length that was more easily captured on film.

The elisions, however, also seem to be deliberate and have a profound effect on the content of the ritual. Michaela Mross, who has conducted extensive work on *kōshiki*, confirmed the contemporary tendency to abbreviate *kōshiki* in the Sōtō school. However, she also noted that the extent of the abbreviation of the *Anan kōshiki* was exceptional and that eliding passages within each section rather than omitting whole sections, as is more common in the case of other *kōshiki*, was unusual (personal communication). Aoyama thus deliberately retained all six sections, but in the case of the 2003 performance of the *Anan kōshiki*, her omissions effectively lessened the emphasis on Śākyamuni's hesitation about admitting the nuns to the monastic order in the first and last sections dealing with the ordination of women. In the first section, Aoyama collapses the introduction and the section detailing Ānanda's role in establishing the nuns' order by eliminating a lengthy description of why women ought to feel grateful

20. Arai reports that a recording of the *Anan kōshiki* from 1987 was likewise only about one hour and forty-five minutes long—about the length of the recording from 2003. This leads me to believe that this performance was similarly abbreviated and that such substantially abbreviated performances are the norm rather than an exception (ARAI 2000, 123, 129).

to Ānanda (because he interceded with the Buddha on behalf of women's ordination). The only remaining reference to his role in women's ordination occurs in the accompanying *gāthā*:

I reverently address the great teacher Śākyamuni, whose blessings are vast; the 80,012 holy expedient and true teachings; Ānanda, who served the Tathāgata; and everything in the realm of the three treasures, saying: therefore, great teacher Ānanda, remember your original vow and grant us clear evidence [of the Buddha's truth]. Thus, we should first praise him with a *gāthā* and then perform prostrations to him. We recite this verse:

Take refuge in Ānanda, Guardian of the Dharma,
The great teacher of women's ordination.
Through your great supernormal and expedient power
We wish that you may swiftly grant us fulfillment.
Pay homage to, seek refuge in, and bow to the great teacher Ānanda.

(My translation; see, for example, AICHI SENMON NISŌDŌ 2003)

Similarly, in the sixth section she elides the description of Śākyamuni's refusal to allow women's ordination, Ānanda's plea for Śākyamuni to recognize the milk debt he owes his foster mother, the Buddha's inability to counter this argument, and the Buddha's reluctant acceptance:

Finally we sing the praises of the depth of our gratitude to Śākyamuni. Our great debt of gratitude consists of him not objecting to Ānanda's request. When the women heard this, joy penetrated them to the bone and tears of gratitude filled their eyes. Thus, we should wholeheartedly sing his praises and bow to him. We recite this verse:

Well done, Śākyamuni,
Foremost teacher!
Following the example of all Buddhas,
You use expedient means to save living beings.
Pay homage to the great teacher Śākyamuni, the sovereign of the great
compassionate teachings.

(My translation; see, for example, AICHI SENMON NISŌDŌ 2003)

Because of the omissions, the women suddenly remain as the only active ritual actors who have the power to petition Śākyamuni and Ānanda ceremonially through their worship.

Arai's recognition that "the ritual's performance signals to monks and laity alike that nuns and monks are not fundamentally different" (ARAI 2000, 126) is astute but does not capture fully the *Anan kōshiki's* message. Staging the *Anan kōshiki* does convey that nuns are just as capable as male clerics to perform a complex ritual, but performances of the ritual also signal that the nuns have a

distinct ritual tradition and history. On the one hand, Sōtō nuns voice their frustration that male Sōtō clerics have long regarded the ritual as relevant only to the nuns' order rather than to the monastic order as a whole and that, for this reason, the ritual has received little sectarian recognition, and most male clerics tend to be ignorant of its existence. On the other hand, many nuns also display apprehension that the ritual might be misrepresented or, even worse, misappropriated and thus wrested away from them, should it become more widely known. In other words, the value of the ritual is heightened for the nuns because it is a ritual of their own—not one that is shared by the male clergy.

Aoyama Shundō's Commentary on the Anan kōshiki

Last but not least, Aoyama Shundō's commentary suggests that she does not expect contemporary nuns to think of themselves as adopting a masculine ideal but, rather, that she encourages them to praise Ānanda as a paragon of feminine virtues. Aoyama's companion volume to the video of the *Anan kōshiki* includes a chapter titled *Anansama monogatari* 阿難さまものがたり (The tale of Venerable Ānanda). In the essay, Aoyama comments on various elements of the *Anan kōshiki*: Ānanda's great physical beauty, his accomplished service as the Buddha's dedicated attendant, his role in the establishment of the nuns' order, his encounter with the Mātāṅgi girl, his skill in memorizing all the Buddha's sermons, his training and enlightenment under Mahākāśyapa, and his miraculous death. Aoyama's commentary illustrates how nuns affirm their status as full members of the community through a ritual that elevates a male monastic. The nuns do so by feminizing Ānanda to facilitate their identification with him, and by illustrating his relevance—and, by extension, their own—to the Sangha as a whole (AOYAMA 2003, 77–118).

Aoyama was born in Ichinomiya 一宮 in Aichi prefecture in 1933. From the age of five, she was raised at her aunt's temple, Muryōji 無量寺, in Shiojiri 塩尻, Nagano Prefecture. She became ordained at the age of fifteen and trained at the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō before earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from Komazawa University in Buddhist Studies. She returned to the Nisōdō in 1964, eventually becoming its abbess in 1976 (AOYAMA 1995, 198–201, 246). In 2006, she became the second female recipient of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai's 仏教伝道協会 Distinguished Service Award for “having guided many female monastics and having formed karmic connections with many women through her publications and lectures” (BUKKYŌ DENDŌ KYŌKAI n.d.).

Aoyama's commentary on the *Anan kōshiki* opens with a striking quote by educator and Jōdo Shinshū cleric Tōi Giyū 東井義雄 (also known as Tōi Yoshio, 1912–1991):

The character for “daughter-in-law” [*yome* 嫁] consists of the radical “woman” [*onna* 女] and the character for “house” [*ie* 家]. This implies that women are

safe when in the house.... Exactly in this way, the character expresses that when a woman pays close attention to doing housework and child rearing her mission, joy, and life and treats each family member warmly, then the husband excels at his workplace and the children are properly reared.

In today's society, mothers compete in entering the workforce, and children return to empty homes where nobody is present to greet them. I cannot forget the housewife who told me: "I don't mind being poor! I think I will be the only mother in Japan who can greet her children when they enter the house saying, *I'm home*, with *Welcome home!*"

This is a reminiscence by Tōi Giyū, who devoted his life to love-centered education. I cannot forget the expression "I would like to become the only mother in Japan who can say 'Welcome home.'"

(My translation; see, for example, AOYAMA 2003, 78)

Aoyama has frequently voiced similar views to Tōi's in her other publications. In her essay, *Hahagokoro o issai no ue ni* 母心を一切の上に (A mother's heart above all else), she argues that a woman needs to balance her obligations to her husband, children, and mother-in-law:

At the same time as being a mother, you should not forget that you are also a wife. If you have a mother-in-law, you should not forget that you are also a daughter-in-law. By serving in these three roles, a woman matures as a woman.
(My translation; see, for example, AOYAMA 1987, 179)

In many of her nearly thirty books geared toward a female audience, Aoyama has emphasized a traditionalist construction of femininity, which is also reflected in the themes of her publications: cooking, tea ceremony, and flower arrangement, considered important finishing skills for housewives in the mid-twentieth century.²¹

At first glance, Aoyama's choice to begin her narrative of Ānanda's life with a conservative, nostalgic endorsement of women as good wives and wise mothers may seem counterintuitive, particularly since Ānanda was elevated for persuading the Buddha to allow women to renounce their lives as householders (that is, as mothers and wives) and become nuns. The opening anecdote appears strangely disconnected, even jarring, in the context of this section titled *Mina sorezore no chōsho o ikashi* 皆それぞれの長所を生かし (Employing everyone's strengths), but it serves to highlight that for Aoyama, ideal women are committed caregivers. While this notion reflects Aoyama's traditionalist expectations, it also establishes an important parallel with Ānanda, revered for his role as the perfect attendant for Buddha, an elderly family member.

Aoyama then proceeds to compare the Buddha's ten major disciples (including Ānanda), each of whom had distinct strengths, with Aichi Senmon Nisōdō

21. For a detailed discussion of such traditionalist constructions of femininity in postwar Jpn, see chapter 8 in AMBROS (2015).

nuns and their respective strengths. It is important to note that elsewhere Aoyama has used the concept of individual strengths to make a claim for essential equality while simultaneously acknowledging difference. In her essay *Byōdō to sabetsu: Ippai no hana ni manabu* 平等と差別—一杯の花に学ぶ (Equality and discrimination: Learning from a bowl of flowers), she uses the example of flower arrangement to elucidate that equal value does not rule out difference. She explains that a well-balanced flower arrangement only comes to life when it incorporates both beautiful flowers and simple weeds, while a bouquet consisting only of beautiful flowers appears to lack in character. In other words, each constituent should be valued for its distinct contribution (AOYAMA 1987, 52–55). Thus, despite the traditionalist construction of femininity in her opening paragraph, Aoyama’s commentary on the *Anan kōshiki* obliquely gestures toward the themes of equality and valuing difference.

Aoyama’s celebration of traditional female virtues continues as she applies them to Ānanda. For instance, Aoyama subtly feminizes Ānanda as she describes his physical beauty. She begins by contrasting his youthful (feminine) beauty with Mahākāśyapa’s aging (masculine) austerity. She explains that Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda—as the Buddha’s most important disciples—are sometimes depicted as flanking images of the Buddha, just as Amida is surrounded by Kannon and Seishi, and Yakushi by Nikkō and Gakkō. Unlike the elderly disciple, Mahākāśyapa, who excelled at having shed his desires and is often depicted as a haggard, old monk in a tattered robe, Ānanda is young and beautiful, and it is the young and beautiful Ānanda whom the aging Śākyamuni designates as his personal attendant. Reflecting his physical beauty, Ānanda’s name means “bliss.” Thus the scriptures praise his beauty with the *gāthā*, “His face is like the pure full moon, his eyes are like blue lotus flowers” (AOYAMA 2003, 81–83). In her allusions to this *gāthā* and the meaning of Ānanda’s name, Aoyama is directly referring to passages from the *shikimon*.

Aoyama contends that Ānanda was chosen because of his personality, replete with ideal qualities that are usually associated with women—for example, his excellence in caring for an aging relative. She recounts that Ānanda, Śākyamuni’s cousin, had taken the tonsure under the Buddha five years earlier at the age of twenty when the Buddha was fifty years old. At fifty-five, the Buddha, suffering from aches and pains associated with old age, decided to take an attendant. He rejected the offer of a senior disciple, Śāriputra, and chose the young Ānanda instead. Aoyama surmises that the Buddha chose Ānanda not only out of respect for his elderly disciple (and wish to spare Śāriputra) but also because Ānanda was a close relative and had a warm, meek, and likable personality (AOYAMA 2003, 84). As his attendant, Ānanda was faithful and “meticulous without being pushy” (AOYAMA 2003, 85). While Aoyama does not directly state that these are ideal feminine qualities, she nevertheless implies the parallel—especially since

she begins the essay by endorsing the image of a warm, caring mother and wife, supporting her husband and children so that they can thrive. She seems to imply that women, striving to fulfill the ideal of the good wife and wise mother, should look to Ānanda as a paragon of the virtues they seek to embody.

Indeed, Ānanda is described as a self-effacing attendant, just as ideal women are supposed to be self-effacing. He imposes eight conditions upon himself before accepting the Buddha's request for him to become the Buddha's personal attendant—similar to how, one might argue, nuns had to submit to the Buddha's eight rules in order to join the monastic order. Ānanda's conditions demonstrate that he is not taking his position as the Buddha's attendant for personal gain and that he is zealously committed to mastering the Buddha's teachings. Ānanda's conditions are as follows: he will not receive any clothes or food offered to the Buddha; he will not share the Buddha's special quarters; he will not accompany the Buddha when the latter has been invited by a devotee but will insist on having the Buddha accompany him when he has been invited; he will immediately take visitors to the Buddha; he will ask the Buddha directly for clarification on doctrinal matters; and the Buddha will repeat his sermons to Ānanda should the latter be absent. The Buddha is said to have assented to these conditions. Based on her experience having had attendants for thirty years, Aoyama states that these conditions would have been difficult to implement but very wise. Ideal attendants are constantly present without being obtrusive, anticipating the needs of the person served without being asked and without being visible. Yet despite the high status of the person they are serving, the attendant must resist the temptation to become arrogant and assume the privileges accompanying a higher status (AOYAMA 2003, 85–88). Of course, unlike nuns and their Eight Rules, Ānanda chose these conditions voluntarily, but he subjected himself to eight rules nonetheless out of humility and dedication to the Buddhist teachings.

In the next section, Aoyama discusses Ānanda's role in the establishment of the nuns' order. She evocatively states that Ānanda “served as the midwife (*sanbayaku* 産婆役) of the nuns' order” (AOYAMA 2003, 88). She appears to be fond of this expression and uses it in two other essays in the book, the preface and the history of the *Anan kōshiki* (AOYAMA 2003, 11, 124). By comparing Ānanda's role to that of a midwife, Aoyama is simultaneously assigning a feminine role to him while recognizing the agency of women in the process of obtaining permission to become ordained. Ānanda was the midwife who helped procure this permission, but he did not give birth to the nuns' order himself.

Aoyama's account of Ānanda's petition on behalf of the Buddha's foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī, to establish the nuns' order similarly stresses women's active roles. And it is in recognition of Mahāprajāpatī's active role that when nuns (especially those who have trained at the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō) venerate Ānanda on the eighth day of the month, they are also venerating the first nun Mahāprajāpatī,

who was so persistent in her request to the Buddha (AOYAMA 2003, 91, 131). Aoyama begins her account by describing how Śākyamuni lost his birth mother as an infant and was raised by Mahāprajāpatī, who approached the Buddha with her ordination request, fifteen years after he had attained enlightenment, alongside other male relatives who were also taking the tonsure. The Buddha declined her request. But five years later, when she was about seventy-five years old, Mahāprajāpatī again approached him, together with other Śākya women such as the Buddha's former wife Yaśodha. When the women approached the Buddha's *vihāra* in Vaiśālī, they were dusty and tired, their feet swollen from their five-hundred-kilometer journey. They were a pitiful sight. Ānanda, who had already become the Buddha's attendant, was moved by the women's plight and tried to reason with the Buddha. Although the Buddha acknowledged that in principle, women have the potential to attain the highest enlightenment, he refused to grant their request for ordination. Only when Ānanda appealed to the Buddha's emotions, reminding him of the debt of gratitude owed his foster mother for his loving upbringing, did the Buddha grant the request (AOYAMA 2003, 88–90). Aoyama's account is noticeably void of any of the disparaging remarks about women that are found in abundance in the *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* (for example, their foolishness, their entrapment in the river of desire, the threat of shortening the period of the True Dharma by five hundred years, the Five Hindrances, and so forth). She even depicts, relatively positively, the Buddha's initial rejection because he acknowledges that women are as capable as men in attaining enlightenment.

Despite the positive thrust of her narrative, Aoyama cannot avoid addressing the Eight Heavy Rules. Aoyama's treatment is concise, even abbreviated. She mentions only three of the eight rules explicitly: the first, that nuns must always defer to monks, regardless of seniority; the fifth, that nuns must confess their sins before the assembly of monks on *poṣadha* days, twice per month; and the third, that nuns may not speak ill of a monk. Aoyama explains that women and men are essentially equal despite the existence of these rules:

We may perceive this as the discriminatory treatment of women vis-à-vis men, but even though the Buddha recognized the fundamental equality of their abilities as humans, he also realized human weakness, and in light of women's status in Indian society at that time, he wanted to prevent mental confusion so that they would be able to continue their practice, so he established the Eight Rules, which are also called the Eight Heavy Rules.

(My translation; see AOYAMA 2003, 91)

In addressing this sensitive issue, Aoyama resorts to a common strategy, explaining the rationale behind the Eight Heavy Rules without criticizing the Buddha,

and blaming the rules' existence on ancient Indian society.²² While critiquing the rules themselves in a muted manner, she also seems to imply that even though such rules were deemed appropriate during the Buddha's lifetime, they are no longer so in today's society, which accepts gender equality. In a different essay, entitled *Danjo byōdō* 男女平等 (Equality between men and women), she forcefully asserts men's and women's equal potential for enlightenment and that it is acceptable for a monk to bow to a nun based on her spiritual achievement; she bases her reasoning on Dōgen's *Raihai tokuzui* 禮拜得髓 and the nun Moshan's 末山 encounter with Zhixian 志閑. In that essay, she also rejects the teaching that female-to-male transformation is necessary for women to attain buddhahood. She contends that the teaching of the Five Hindrances is a later accretion that was not taught by the Buddha himself (AOYAMA 2009, 109–14).

In her commentary on the *Anan kōshiki*, Aoyama then turns to the story of Ānanda's encounter with the Mātāṅgi girl, who is initially infatuated with Ānanda but eventually enters the monastic order and becomes an accomplished disciple of the Buddha. Even though the Mātāṅgi girl is only mentioned briefly in the *saimon* and does not appear in the *shikimon*, Aoyama devotes three full sections to this episode in Ānanda's life—more than to any other aspect of his biography. Aoyama's retelling of the Mātāṅgi girl's story closely follows the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* (The story of Śārdūlakarṇa), translated into Chinese several times, including the *Foshuo modengnü jing* 仏説摩鄧女經 (T 14, no. 551; Jp. *Bussetsu Madōjo kyō*), attributed to the early Parthian translator An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168 CE), and the *Foshuo modengnü jiexing zhongliushi jing* 仏説摩登女解形中六事經 (T 14, no. 552; Jp. *Bussetsu madōjo gekyō chūrokuji kyō*), whose translator is unknown. The Mātāṅgi girl's story also appears in altered form in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (T 19, no. 945; Ch. *Lengyan jing*, Jp. *Ryōgonkyō* 楞嚴經), which Aoyama cites as her source. However, Aoyama mostly relies on the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* although she never mentions that text explicitly. Significantly, the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* depicts the Mātāṅgi girl as a young, low-caste woman intent on marrying Ānanda, while the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* depicts her as a low-caste prostitute, a detail never mentioned by Aoyama.

Aoyama uses this story to demonstrate that women have exemplary potential for enlightenment. The Mātāṅgi girl has more than one impediment: not only is she female, but she also belongs to a low caste associated with impurity. While the story of the Mātāṅgi girl employs the common Buddhist trope of the temptress, the young woman eventually becomes an accomplished, enlightened disciple of the Buddha. Aoyama inverts received gender expectations by having Ānanda serve, for the Mātāṅgi girl, a role similar to that of the beautiful

22. For a critique of this strategy, see FAURE (2003, 59–60).

woman in premodern Buddhist tales who leads to enlightenment the male who is infatuated with her.

Aoyama recounts the Mātaṅgi girl's story as follows. One day while begging for alms, Ānanda is thirsty and asks a girl at a well to give him water. She refuses because she is of a low caste. He responds that her caste does not matter but that all humans are equal, and that she should not denigrate herself like this. Struck by his kindness, the Mātaṅgi girl falls deeply in love with the beautiful Ānanda. When her natural charms fail to seduce him, she asks her mother, who is skilled in magic, to cast a spell on him to lure him to her house. Her mother reluctantly agrees, luring Ānanda to the girl's house with a spell. Just before the girl and Ānanda consume their union, Ānanda comes to his senses and calls on the Buddha, whose power saves him. Ānanda returns to the *vihāra* dejected. However, the Mātaṅgi girl continues to pursue him, hindering Ānanda's begging rounds. Eventually, the Buddha asks Ānanda to bring the Mātaṅgi girl to him. He asks her whether she wants to marry Ānanda. When she assents, he stresses that she needs her parents' permission, which she secures (AOYAMA 2003, 92–97). Up to this point, Aoyama's account of the Mātaṅgi girl and her encounter with Ānanda appears to employ a common trope of Buddhist literature, depicting the Mātaṅgi girl as the young temptress (albeit a humanized one without explicitly evil intentions) who tries to lure the young, handsome Ānanda away from the monastic path.

What happens next in Aoyama's narrative is highly unusual. The Buddha asks the Mātaṅgi girl why she is so attracted to Ānanda. She responds that she loves every aspect of his body: his eyes, nose, mouth, voice, and regal stature. According to Aoyama, the Buddha then replies:

Try to settle your mind and think carefully. Aren't there only tears in Ānanda's eyes that you find so lovable? There is mucus in his nose and saliva in his mouth. In this way, isn't his whole body impure? His youth will fade into old age. Aren't you only fixated on temporary appearances in your yearning for him? Why don't you choose the eternal path of truth instead? Ānanda has chosen this path in earnest. If you love Ānanda, you must also choose this path and practice. (My translation; see, for example, AOYAMA 2003, 98)

This passage closely reflects the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna*. However, Aoyama directly identifies Ānanda's body as impure, whereas the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* describes the human body in general as impure, gesturing only indirectly toward the conclusion that Ānanda's body is impure. For instance, the *Foshuo modengnü jing* says:

The Buddha said [to the Mātaṅgi girl]: “Why do you love Ānanda?” The girl said: “I love Ānanda's eyes. I love Ānanda's nose. I love Ānanda's mouth. I love Ānanda's ears. I love Ānanda's voice. I love Ānanda's gait.” The Buddha said: “In the eyes, there are only tears. In the nose, there is only nasal mucus. In the

mouth, there is only saliva. In the ears, there are only defilements. In the body, there are foul-smelling feces and urine.”

(My translation; see, for example, T 14, no. 551, 895b23–b27)²³

Here the Buddha employs a means typically used by monks to realize the impurity of the female body: contemplating the (female) body as the porous, leaking locus of impure bodily fluids. As Faure notes, contemplating the impure conditions of the female body, particularly the decaying female body, was used by male monastics to conquer their carnal urges: “Significantly, this type of contemplation was reserved for men trying to overcome their carnal desire, and there was no equivalent for women. Thus, asceticism remains a typically male prerogative” (FAURE 2003, 276). Similarly, Liz Wilson states that while the Buddha is frequently said to have used an abominably disfigured, decaying female body to help both men and women to overcome their desires and attachment to feminine beauty, “in no case does the Buddha direct a woman to look at a male body and observe its abject condition” (WILSON 1996, 106–107; quote 106). The closest example, she contends, is the above-mentioned passage from the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna* about the encounter between Ānanda and Prakṛti, the Mātāṅgi girl. The reason why Ānanda’s body is used for contemplating the body’s impurity, Wilson argues, is that Ānanda was a “woman-identified male” who once described himself as “foolish, womanish (*mātrgrāma*), witless.” Therefore, “Ānanda is more likely to be represented as a locus of impermanence and impurity than men of few womanly qualities” (WILSON 1996, 108–109; quote 109).

In Aoyama’s version, Ānanda is similarly cast in a role that is usually associated with women. She describes Ānanda’s body as porous and impure more explicitly than does the *Śārdūlakarṇa Avadāna*. His body—not the human body in general—serves as a means for a woman to contemplate impurity. However, rather than using Ānanda’s feminization in order to denigrate him (and, by extension, women), Aoyama uses this episode to demonstrate women’s potential for ascetic practice and enlightenment.

In Aoyama’s retelling of the Mātāṅgi girl story, the young woman responds by shaving her hair and donning a nun’s robes, indicating her change of heart. She eventually repents her earlier behavior and becomes a proper nun, at peace with her condition. In contrast, Ānanda is tormented by the fact that he succumbed to the spell cast by the Mātāṅgi girl’s mother. Apparently, this indicates that he still harbors attachments (AOYAMA 2003, 99). This aspect of Aoyama’s retelling is similar to the Mātāṅgi girl’s story in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (Ch. *Lengyan jing*; Jp. *Ryōgonkyō* 楞嚴經), where Ānanda is shown as being plagued by doubts, whereas the Mātāṅgi girl becomes spiritually accomplished (T 19, no. 945, 106c09–c16, 122a01–a10, 133a13–a20). In the end, the Mātāṅgi girl overcomes the encounter

23. See also T 14, no. 552, 896b08–b11.

with Ānanda more easily than does Ānanda himself. Like the monk ultimately saved by his infatuation with a beautiful woman, the Mātaṅgi girl is saved by her infatuation with the beautiful Ānanda. Thus, the Mātaṅgi girl and Ānanda invert conventional gender roles.

In the remainder of her essay, Aoyama shows why Ānanda is important not only to women but also to the Sangha as a whole. The foremost factors, she explains, are the following: his having listened to and memorized all of the Buddha's sermons; his attainment of enlightenment under Mahākāśyapa, making him the second Zen patriarch; and his miraculous death, making his relics the focus of veneration. She ends by again contrasting Mahākāśyapa's austerity, rigid adherence to the *vinaya*, and conservatism with Ānanda's flexibility and free progressivism. She emphasizes that Ānanda's strengths allowed Buddhism to develop and earned him widespread reverence throughout the generations as attested by the ritual veneration of his stupa. As heirs of this tradition, the nuns of the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō venerate Ānanda monthly on the eighth day and occasionally perform the *Anan kōshiki* (AOYAMA 2003, 105–18). Through this strategy, the nuns elevate the status of their order along with Ānanda.

Conclusion

The *Anan kōshiki* and the *Anan keka*, its immediate predecessor, are double-edged rituals that propagate stereotypical, and even disparaging, views of women while inspiring great dedication within the nuns' order. On the one hand, the rituals reinscribe women's problematic status within the Buddhist monastic order by reiterating the Buddha's hesitation to admit women to the monastic order. The nuns' choice of Ānanda as their object of veneration could be seen as a reflection of their dependency on the male order as stipulated in the Eight Heavy Rules. On the other hand, by praising Ānanda for helping to found the nuns order and for being a champion of women, which were points of critique from his male contemporaries, nuns have implicitly resisted androcentric constructions of the monastic order. For over one and a half thousand years, rites dedicated to Ānanda have served as a positive marker of difference for nuns by allowing them to claim their own ritual that only they would perform and that would remind the male monastic community of the legitimacy of the female order. While we have few concrete details about earlier rituals venerating Ānanda, we can see that the *Anan keka* and *Anan kōshiki* were closely related to efforts to revitalize, for example, nuns' ordinations or training opportunities for nuns.

Contemporary performances of the *Anan kōshiki* and Aoyama's commentary suggest that the nuns perceive the ritual as affirming their identity as female monastics. In their performances of the *Anan kōshiki*, Sōtō nuns are employing the traditional ritual vocabulary of Japanese Buddhism and the Sōtō school.

Aoyama and the Aichi Senmon Nisōdō nuns do not reject the monastic framework, which often favors masculinity, but they manipulate it for their own purposes. Aoyama's recitation of the *shikimon* elides sections that conventionally have expressed women's inferior status vis-à-vis the monks. Furthermore, her commentary turns gendered Buddhist paradigms on their head by feminizing Ānanda and creating female equivalents for male prerogatives. Through the *Anan kōshiki*, Aoyama engages with androcentric discourse, subtly editing and inverting it to suit the nuns' own needs. Certainly, there is tension between the demand for equality and the assertion of difference, but perhaps this is unavoidable if nuns are to maintain their distinctive place in a tradition that has often marginalized them. By reaffirming this margin and recasting it according to their own agendas, nuns are staking a claim for legitimacy.

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