

Soto School Scriptures
For Daily Services
And Practice

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Foreword

Since 1996, the Soto Zen Text Project has been dedicated to the task of rendering into English the Zen texts and Buddhist sutras that are regarded as most important within the Soto school. The present work, *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice*, is the first publication to result from this project.

The scriptures contained herein have a very deep significance for our lives, and especially for the life of practice that takes place in Soto monasteries. They include not only texts used in sutra-chanting services, but also many verses for chanting in connection with donning robes, taking meals, entering the bath, washing the face, and so on. In our Soto school, which advocates the principle that "the buddha-dharma manifests itself in the deportment of practitioners" we must approach all of our daily behaviors and activities as integral parts of the Buddhist path. These scriptures provide guidelines for accomplishing that, while at the same time constituting words of prayer that we use to express the ideals and aspirations of our practice.

In the monasteries and temples of Japan, the traditional Buddhist scriptures written in classical Chinese are used, and everywhere one goes in the country the texts are basically the same, so there is no inconvenience. In Europe and America, however, the situation is different. As is well known, many Zen centers have been established and grown since the 1960s. Leaders in each of the centers have come to prepare and use their own particular translations of Zen texts and Buddhist sutras for chanting and study. This situation is truly inconvenient

when it comes to holding joint sesshins or cooperative ritual observances. It also makes it difficult for people from different Zen centers to maintain a sense of solidarity and identity as members of the Soto school at large.

For these reasons, publication of these *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice* and the forthcoming *Standard Rites of the Soto Zen School*, which treats monthly and annual as well as daily observances, has been a priority since the start of the Soto Zen Text Project.

This book is the result of a cooperative effort. Technically accurate, scholarly translations of the various liturgical texts were initially prepared by Rev. Taigen Leighton, Rev. Shohaku Okumura, and the project editors, Carl Bielefeldt and T. Griffith Foulk. Under the leadership of Rev. Tenshin Anderson, a series of conferences were then held at Green Gulch Farm, bringing together the translators, the leaders of many Soto Zen centers in North America, and representatives of the Soto Zen Education Center. At the conferences, the draft translations were discussed, recited, and modified to make them as clear, aesthetically pleasing, and easy to chant as possible.

The movement that is taking place today in the Zen centers of America and Europe has a different significance than the philosophical or psychological investigations of Zen that occurred in the past. The Zen centers, some of which have monks and nuns as well as lay people as members, actually carry out the practice of the Buddhist path that is centered on zazen. Thus, the centers fulfill a function similar to that of Zen monasteries in Japan. In this sense, the genuinely transmitted buddha-dharma

has begun to take root in America and Europe, and the first steps toward its permanent establishment have been taken. We are now welcoming a new phase in the process referred to by the old saying: "the buddha-dharma progresses eastward" (from India to China, Korea, and Japan).

Thus, this publication of the *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice* has a great deal of significance. It will be an aid to the actual practice of Zen, facilitate exchange and joint activities between the various Zen centers of America and Europe, and foster a sense of unity among practitioners of Soto Zen.

As chair of the board of directors of the Soto Zen Text Project, I am most pleased by this publication and the promise it holds for the global development of our school. I wish to sincerely thank the people of the Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism (Sotoshu Shumuchō) for their promotion and budgeting of the project. I also wish to express my appreciation to the other members of the editorial board, and especially to the editors, for their effort and enthusiasm. Finally, I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart all those who have shared their wisdom and time in contributing to the work of translation.

Nara Yasuaki
Chairperson
Soto Zen Text Project

About This Book

This book is based on the Japanese edition of the *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice* (*Sōtōshū nikka gongyō selten* 曹洞宗日課勤行聖典), also published by the Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism (Sotoshu Shumuchō) in 1981. As its name implies, it contains only those scriptures that are chanted on a daily basis in Soto Zen monasteries and temples. Numerous other scriptures that are used in monthly, annual, and occasional rites are not included in it but may be found in the much longer *Standard Rites of the Soto Zen School* (*Sōtōshū gyōji kihan* 曹洞宗行持軌範), also published from the Administrative Headquarters in 1981. This book is an English translation.

This book contains exactly the same scriptures as the Japanese edition of the *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice*, but the contents have been reorganized in a way that helps to distinguish the various types of liturgical literature and eliminates the redundancy of the original (the *Heart Sutra*, for example, is printed there four times). Part One of this book contains all of the texts — sutras, treatises, and dharanis — that are recited to generate merit in daily sutra-chanting services. Part Two lists the various sutra-chanting services that are performed daily. For each service, the scriptures to be chanted to generate merit are named (the full texts are all found in Part One), and the eko, or verse for transferring merit, is given in its entirety. Part Three contains: (A) numerous verses that are chanted on various ritual occasions, (B) three eko that are used in rituals other than sutra-chanting services, and (C) two treatises attributed to Dogen.

All the scriptures included in Parts One, Two, and Three, with the exception of the dharanis, have been translated into English from the Chinese and Japanese texts that appear in the Japanese edition of the *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice*. The dharanis have simply been transliterated, using roman letters to represent the pronunciations given (in the *kana* syllabary) in the Japanese edition. The pronunciations differ in some places from ones used at Eihei-ji and Sojiji (the two head temples of the Soto school), but they are the ones recommended by the Administrative Headquarters for use in joint services.

Attempts have been made in the past to "translate" dharanis into English. Because dharanis have no meaning in the classical Chinese in which they are written, however, any such attempt must begin by reconstructing a text in the original Indic language (usually presumed to be Sanskrit) and then proceed to translate that text into English. It is true that certain combinations of Chinese characters in dharanis, even when chanted by Japanese today, are recognizable as Sanskrit words such as "tathagata" or "bodhisattva." From the standpoint of critical scholarship, however, the reconstruction of a complete, ostensibly original text is a highly dubious process, for there is no way of knowing for sure which Indic or Central Asian language served as the starting point for any given Chinese transliteration, and there is no reason to assume that even the original Indic version had a clear enough syntax or meaning to support translation. That, and the fact that Buddhists in East Asia have never attempted to translate dharanis, has persuaded the board of editors of the Soto Zen Text Project to stick with the tradition of transliterating them. Some Zen practitioners in the West

believe that dharanis should at least be restored to their "original" Sanskrit pronimciations, but in most cases that is not a critically viable option. The only dharani presented here in romanized Sanskrit is the one that appears at the end of the Heart Sutra translation: "Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha."

Part Four of this book contains roman letter transliterations of all the sutras, treatises, dharanis, and verses that appear in Parts One and Three. These are given for the benefit of people who do not read Japanese but may have occasion to participate in Soto Zen services conducted in that language. The eko translated in Part Two have not been transliterated in Part Four because they are generally recited by the cantor (*ino*) alone, not by a group. When services are conducted in Japanese, non-speakers of the language would rarely be called upon to act as cantor.

This book employs two different systems of romanization.

First, the romanization of all titles, and all texts that are chanted in Japanese, follows the Hepburn system that is standard in modern scholarship. In that system, roman letter words of varying numbers of syllables are formed in accordance with the pronunciation and grammar of the original Japanese. The five basic vowel sounds in Japanese are represented by the letters "a" (as in "pasta"), "I" (as in "liter"), "u" (as in "lute"), "ē" (as in "egg"), and "o" (as in "tote"). Macrons over the "o" and "u" (e.g. o, kō, ū, kū) indicate a lengthening of those vowel sounds, with no change of basic pronunciation. Consonants in romanized Japanese have the same pronunciation as in English.

Second, the romanization of all texts that are chanted in the Chinese (*kanbun*) word order employs a modified version of the Hepburn system that retains the same basic pronunciation of all vowels and consonants but uses a different means of indicating long and short syllables. The following four rules apply: (1) syllables in one-syllable words are to be regarded as "long" and chanted using one full beat; (2) syllables in multi-syllable words, unless otherwise marked, are to be regarded as "short" and chanted using half-beats (thus, for example, the words “shi” and "shiki" take exactly the same amount of time to chant — one full beat); (3) syllables in hyphenated two-syllable words (e.g. sep-po, bus-shi) are both "long," but the consonant sounds that end the first syllable and begin the second are run together; (4) in multi-syllable words, syllables marked by a macron over the vowel are "long." Some examples follow:

bu (long = 1 beat)

shi (long = 1 beat)

bus-shi (long long = 2 beats)

bushi (short short = 1 beat)

gyataya (short short short = 1.5 beats)

tori (long short = 1.5 beats)

tatā (short long = 1.5 beats)

mujōi (short long short = 2 beats)

All of the dharanis in Part One have been transliterated in accordance with the rules for the romanization of texts chanted in the Chinese (*kanbun*) word order. Each of the texts transliterated in Part Four is marked as either “Japanese” or “Chinese” to indicate which of the two systems of romanization applies to it.

Symbols :

- ◎ strike large bowl-bell
- strike small bowl-bell
- ▲ muffle hand-bell with striker
- ◎3 strike large bowl-bell, 3rd chanting only
- 3 strike small bowl-bell, 3rd chanting only
- ▲3 muffle hand-bell with striker, 3rd chanting only