

the hall, the number of singers, and the season of the year. A service on a cold winter night, for example, will be sung in a strict and austere manner, while the same piece performed in springtime will require a more relaxed treatment. In the 13th century shomyo chants began to be notated in a score, but the arguments recorded in contemporary sources concerning the pertinence of adopting such a method of notation lead us to suspect that the scores did not give a faithful representation of the music. Even today the notations are no more than an approximate guide. The important parts defy notation; they must be learnt directly from the teacher. Genealogies still exist today showing the generations through which the secrets have been handed down to the present day by personal instruction.

A service consists of a combination of several shomyo pieces chosen according to a more or less clearly defined conventional order.

The ceremony often comprises four main sections: a hymn in praise of Buddha, the strewing of flowers to purify the hall and the participants and to welcome Buddha, a chant in praise of the beautiful sound of Buddha's voice, and a chant in praise of the sacred mountain in the centre of the universe. The ceremony is led by a senior monk who, in a squatting posture, takes his position in the centre of the hall. There is no regulation concerning the number of the other monks, but an even number is considered preferable.

The Dai Hannya is a collection of scriptures on Buddha's wisdom compiled in ancient India. The sutra was translated into Chinese during the T'ang dynasty. Historical documents show that the Dai Hannya ceremony was celebrated as early as the 8th century, when the sutra was brought to Japan. After the hymn in praise of Buddha and the strewing of flowers, the officiating monk sings a chant in praise of the sutra, which is then read by all the monks. As the sutra comprises six hundred volumes, however, the complete text cannot possibly be read at a single ceremony. Therefore the monks "skip" a large part of the sutra, and the result is a symbolic reading in which the monks open out their prayer books, which are folded