

## A MONK'S GUIDE TO A CLEAN HOUSE AND MIND

By Shoukei Matsumoto

Translated from the Japanese by Ian Samhammer

Illustrated by Kikue Tamura

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To Shin Buddhist monk Shoukei Matsumoto, we clean to cultivate mindfulness and counter indifference. Cleaning is a metaphor for the body and mind, hence the title *A Monk's Guide to a Clean House and Mind*. The cotton *tenugui* cloth worn wrapped the head mentally prepares one for temple chores. Sweeping the grounds and polishing the floors remove gloom and "free ourselves from attachments" (1). Ironing keeps our heart "crisp and fresh" (74). Dusting and wiping a lamp invite enlightenment. Matsumoto discusses the value of simple beauty, the role of silence, the courtesy of hygiene, and the primacy of conservation (bath water is re-used to clean indoors). This slim volume of temple cleaning practices—the how and the why—is peppered throughout with Japanese terms (*oryoki* is the set of nested bowls with eating utensils in silk fabric) and delightful spot drawings (a monk changes into toilet slippers before entering the bathroom). It joins a spate of decluttering books, including Marie Kondo's bestseller *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (Ten Speed Press, 2014), but differs in approach. The KonMari threshold to discard an item is: Does it bring joy? The monk's is: Do you need it? (90) Housekeeping is not magic; it's vital. —Lisa Thaler, author of *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*, 2 January 2020