

Zen sand: The book of capping phrases for koan practice

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ZEN SAND

THE BOOK OF
CAPPING PHRASES
FOR KŌAN PRACTICE

VICTOR SŌGEN HORI

ZEN SAND: THE BOOK OF CAPPING PHRASES FOR KOAN PRACTICE

by Victor Sogen Hori

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Zen Sand is a classic collection of verses aimed at aiding practitioners of kôan meditation to negotiate the difficult relationship between insight and language. As such it represents a major contribution to both Western Zen practice and English-language Zen scholarship.

In Japan the traditional Rinzai Zen kôan curriculum includes the use of *jakugo*, or “capping phrases.” Once a monk has successfully replied to a kôan, the Zen master orders the search for a classical verse to express the monk’s insight into the kôan. Special collections of these *jakugo* were compiled as handbooks to aid in that search. Until now, Zen students in the West, lacking this important resource, have been severely limited in carrying out this practice. *Zen Sand* combines and translates two standard *jakugo* handbooks and opens the way for incorporating this important tradition fully into Western Zen practice.

For the scholar, *Zen Sand* provides a detailed description of the *jakugo* practice and its place in the overall kôan curriculum, as well as a brief history of the Zen phrase book. This volume also contributes to the understanding of East Asian culture in a broader sense.

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fourteenth centuries, Japanese Zen monks have collected many such phrases and compiled them into various notebooks to aid students searching for appropriate capping phrases in response to their master's questions. Victor Sōgen Hori's Zen Sand is a recent attempt to introduce the contemporary Japanese Rinzai kōan tradition to a Western audience. In this monumental work, Hori creates the most comprehensive handbook of capping phrases existent in English.
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