



Entangling Vines: A Classic Collection of Zen Koans

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Entangling Vines, a translation of the *Shumon kattoshu*, is one of the few major koan texts to have been compiled in Japan rather than China. Indeed, Kajitani Sonin (1914 - 95), former chief abbot of Shokoku-ji and author of an annotated, modern-Japanese translation of the *Kattoshu*, commented that "herein are compiled the basic Dharma materials of the koan system." Most of the central koans of the contemporary Rinzai koan curriculum are contained in this work.

A distinctive feature of *Entangling Vines* is that, unlike *The Gateless Gate* and *Blue Cliff Record*, it presents the koans "bare," with no introductions, commentaries, or verses. Its straightforward structure lends the koans added force and immediacy, emphasizing the Great Matter, the essential point to be interrogated, and providing ample material for the rigors of examining and refining Zen experience.

Containing 272 cases and extensive note material, the collection is indispensable for serious koan training and will also be of interest for anyone drawn to Zen literature. The present translation had its origins in the discussions between three forward-looking modern Japanese Zen masters and Thomas Kirchner, an experienced Zen monk from America. And Kirchner's careful annotation of each koan makes this a brilliant introduction to Buddhist philosophy.

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