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11 November 1982

Dear Robin Westen:

Another packet of materials came recently from George Zournas, and in them I find questions raised about the hierarchy of Rinzai Zen.

Actually, there is almost no hierarchy, no chain of authority. Relationships are those of sharing. Transmission comes from the teacher, and this is simply permission to teach in turn. The real authority to be a Rōshi comes from the students; in Japan, this is the committee of senior monks at the monastery; in the U.S., it would be the board of directors at the center. Other teachers, even the teacher's original teacher, have no comparable authority.

I don't know if this information is helpful to you at this late date, but I thought I'd pass it along.

With gasshō,

cc: George Zournas

Robert Aitken