

DODGY BUDDHIST RATBAGS ROOTING THEIR FOLLOWERS

by Cameron Slater on November 18, 2013 at 9:00am



At least it is better than bugging little boys.

The Daily Beast looks at the [dodgy rooting buddhist ratbags](#) in the US.

☞ A new ebook by New York Times religion columnist Mark Oppenheimer alleges what many in the American Buddhist community have known for years: that some of its most revered teachers were also serial sex offenders.

Case in point: Eido Shimano Roshi. The founder and leader of New York's Zen Studies Society—among the largest Western Buddhist communities in America, with prominent CEOs and celebrities among its members—Shimano carried on clandestine affairs with over a dozen women in his community over the course of thirty years, according to Oppenheimer's provocatively titled [Zen Predator of the Upper East Side](#). The book is a devastating indictment of Shimano Roshi, filled with hard evidence of the affairs and the cover-ups, the testimony of several victims, and occasionally lurid details. It even includes Shimano's own confession to having sex with some students, though, he says, "far fewer" than his accusers allege.

As with many religious sex scandals, this is old news to insiders. Other Zen roshis with similar allegations against them include Richard Baker, Joshu Sasaki, Taizan Maezumi—the list goes on, really. The pattern is disturbingly familiar from Catholic, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, and similar systematic abuse scandals: insiders made aware, positive values of spiritual teacher stressed, abuse hushed up, abuse repeated.

Yet in Shimano's case, the facts are murkier. First, all of his "victims," if that's even the right word, were adults; this was not a case of predation of teenagers, as in the Catholic Church. Second, none were raped, in the narrowest (and legal) sense of the term. And while some sexual acts are alleged to have been coerced, most of Shimano's reported liaisons were consensual—that is, if there can ever be consent within a power relationship such as that between guru and disciple, which perhaps there cannot. Finally, while Shimano was married, it's not known what his wife made of the allegations, or when she knew of them.

From Len Brown to Bill Clinton to catholic priests to Buddhist zen masters people in power use that power to be rooting ratbags.