

[The MU News](#)

All MU, All the Time

Saturday, June 28, 2014

Eido Shimano and the ZSS Cult

[Most of this was written years ago, but I have added to it now and then. Because it is so long, here is the same post in [pdf](#) and [epub](#) formats.]

[Also, there is now a [web page](#) devoted to Mr. Shimano's sexual and financial misdeeds]

I lived at DBZ for three and a half years. I wrote about Mr. Shimano before, on an old blog I used to have (also called The Mu News). This was years ago -- before the most recent scandal broke. I had found Mr. Shimano to be a man of dangerous and remarkably deceptive character.

This had come as a complete surprise, to me. I had been witness to a number of serious abuses -- including what I considered criminal behavior -- a woman had been instructed to lie to a donor for scholarship money. I had assumed, at the time, such abuses were the machinations of the nuns -- two women of volatile personalities who were in charge of the day-to-day operations at DBZ. In times of crisis or controversy, this was a widely held view. The idea that Mr. Shimano might be the source of such malevolent notions had never crossed my mind.

A short while before I left, I had started to attempt to remedy such abuses by bringing them directly to Mr. Shimano. Further, I had suggested, to him, some simple protocol (e.g. documented monastery guidelines, issue escalation procedures) to ensure that such abuses might not recur -- or that there would, at least, exist a path toward remedy.

I was surprised by Mr. Shimano's reaction. My fees were raised (twice). False, and damaging rumors were spread about me. In dokusan, Mr. Shimano, himself, would occasionally erupt in volcanic rage -- sometimes over trifling incidents. My ideas were resisted, and Mr. Shimano, instead, made every effort to ensure that the controlled, secretive atmosphere would remain intact.

This was a trying time for me. By the time I left, I realized that most people would believe nearly any deception, if floated by Mr. Shimano and his nuns. There was no open forum for discovery at DBZ, and my efforts

to create one had been thwarted by Mr. Shimano himself. Further, a good deal of what went on between Mr. Shimano and myself occurred in secret, as I would usually request a private meeting to discuss matters of even the slightest controversy. Figuring Mr. Shimano to be innocent of knowledge of the abuses, I had considered this the proper path.

As I write this, I am sure that others have been in the same situation I am now -- wishing I had a tape recorder with me, in my pocket, during every interaction I had with the man. If I had such a device, there would now be a single person who would not consider Mr. Shimano to be an extremely sick man.

There biggest problem at DBZ was the silence. Nobody ever talked about what was going on, and so nothing was ever done. There was a strong focus on the simple formalities of the “practice”, as if maintaining clockwork-like form was the answer to anything and everything – as if the beautiful appearance was all that mattered.

I'll get on with it. I'll tell the story of how I left.

I was never a monk, and I always paid for my stay (even after DB changed the rules to up my fees – twice). I just don't see the point in committing to any particular form. I'm still not a monk. And I was never very interested in dokusan, or any formal teaching. In fact, at DBZ, I doubt that I would ever have gone to dokusan if it were not for the demands of the jiki-jitsu, who was prone to wild attacks if she noticed anyone skipping too many meetings.

I eventually settled on a rhythm.

I'd go once a day during sesshin, and once every other day (or so) during a normal kessei day. The Jiki seemed OK with this.

This meant I actually had little contact with Mr. Shimano, outside of morning meeting -- itself a formal affair. Mornings, amid bells and chants, Mr. Shimano would descend, slowly, from his upstairs apartment, go through his rituals, sit, say what he had to say, and float (again, in slow-motion) back up to his apartment.

He would generally remain in his apartment though the day, as the nuns shuffled up and down his stairs, bringing him food, and running his

errands. The nuns and Mr. Shimano were in constant contact, but for most residents, he was rarely even seen. He would appear again only for the evening sit, or the dokusan periods.

That was the tradition, as Mr. Shimano presented it.

So you never saw the guy, and you heard very little of him except what was relayed through the nuns in charge – Fujin and Jokei. If there was anything that had to be done, you would work it out with them.

For me, this was trouble, as I found the policy effected by the nuns (toward visiting groups, some other residents, and myself) needlessly harsh, if not blatantly, and uselessly, harmful. I would often find myself being screamed at, in violent anger, for something I did not do, or had never even, in my life, thought. Worse, I'd often stumble into thwarting some malicious scheme, meaning to help another party, only to find myself utterly confused by the nuns' rage.

It is my feeling that the militaristic, abusive atmosphere was instrumental in constructing a dangerous (and completely false, I'd later find out) understanding of Mr. Shimano, who would often sit, in stoic silence, while the nuns erupted over some imaginary crime that no resident had ever even committed, or plowed into some new scheme, or harshly derided some visiting group, behind their backs, for not being “Zen”.

It is difficult to describe the way things worked without going into detail. Without the detail, I've found that people dismiss the concerns I'd voice as personal differences. With the detail, things get a little boring, and distract from the focus of this happy retrospective.

How do explain DBZ if you omit the role of the abusive environment? Somehow, such an environment always seemed to have existed, at DBZ. Why does Mr. Shimano arrange things this way?

To answer this question, this has to be talked about.

So here are a few stories:

[BY THE WAY, IF YOU WANT TO SKIP THEM, JUST SCROLL DOWN TO THE NEXT PLACE WHERE YOU SEE BIG, CAPITAL LETTERS IN BRACKETS, JUST LIKE THIS]

One day Tomcho, the caretaker, asked me if I wouldn't mind driving him into town. He had to attend a meeting to get his driver's license back. It had been revoked.

I told him "sure". I was headed to town anyway, on a food run.

I went off to make sure it was OK with Fujin. I found her in the kitchen, by the sink.

I asked her if it would be OK if I drove Tomcho to town.

Fujin immediately turned around, furious. She started screaming insults, shouting a string of accusations.

Completely bewildered, I reminded her that she hadn't said "yes" or "no", and that I would do whichever she chose.

Her anger only escalated, until she jerked to a quarter inch of my face, screaming "GO TO YOUR ROOM! GO TO YOUR ROOM!"

I backed up, said "you're crazy" and mentioned that I'd be giving Tomcho a ride.

These incidents were common, and disorienting, because there was no way to avoid them, and because there was no way to understand where the rage came from.

Sometimes, later on, you would find out. In this case, it turned out that there had been some disagreement between members of the ZSS board and DBZ over whether or not Tomcho should be fired. Indeed, I'd later learn that this man would be placed, by the board, on a kind of probation.

The problem was: Both the nuns wanted him out, and they had for some time.

Their solution was: Stop him from getting his driver's license – something he (of course) depended on to do his work.

By sabotaging his ability to do his job, they would, in short measure, get their way.

This was their plan and, by offering to help, I had placed Fujin in an awkward spot. Saying “no, you can’t drive him” in front of others was a ridiculous response, since I was already headed to town.

Such a response would expose her thinking. Saying “yes” would ruin her sabotage.

I had gotten in the way. The only thing left was an eruption of fury.

This wasn’t an isolated incident. This was generally the way things worked, at DBZ. It was a strange place, full of purposeful deceit. DBZ actually had a fair case as to why the caretaker might be let go, in this instance, but nothing up there was ever done up-front. Nothing was discussed in the open. There were always backhanded plots. It was as though the leaders could think in no other manner, even when a perfectly straight path presented itself plainly. So you never knew exactly what was going on, as so many lies were told, and much of the decision-making was motivated, finally, by secret, petty hatreds.

Among the nuns, there was an absurd level of disdain for those who were, somehow, less “Zen”.

This was expressed in every manner possible.

One Spring, I was surprised to find that a wedding group was scheduled to arrive before the normally scheduled start of the summer guest season. This was trouble, because the guest house roof had been leaking all winter, in all rooms, and, furthermore, the attic was full of bats. That meant that the paint on the walls in the upstairs room had peeled and crumbled over the upstairs carpets – in all the rooms. Worse, bat guano had mixed with the water that had soaked through, creating a putrid smell in all the exposed surfaces – the beds included.

I was surprised to have my offers to prepare the house flatly refused by the nuns.

This went on until Mr. Shimano returned from Shobo-Ji, where he had been for some time. He arrived only a couple of days before the guests were to arrive.

Morning meeting was the only thing close to a public forum. I would speak up often in this period, because everybody was present. If you ask a question that has an obvious answer, people would look foolish saying no. So, in morning meeting, I took the opportunity of Mr. Shimano's return to ask him if I might be allowed to work on the house, and he agreed, to the obvious annoyance of the nuns.

It was of course impossible to finish cleaning in time. But, luckily, the day before the wedding was a scheduled off-day. I asked a couple of guys – Zenchu and (Giun? – something like that – I'll call him Giun here) to help out. They were good guys. They agreed enthusiastically.

Fujin overheard this exchange in the kitchen, and immediately started screaming. She angrily announced that it would in fact not be an off day. Instead, it would be a half-day of work, because, as we all knew, guests would be arriving.

However, she told Zenchu and Giun that they wouldn't actually be doing anything to prepare for the guests. Instead, she assigned them both to bake cookies for the residents' 10am snack, to be held in a couple of hours.

Hearing this, I told her that I would clean the house myself, and she again became furious. She screamed the usual insults, adding that I would not be reimbursed for the money I had spent. I had rented a rug shampoo machine and had bought cleaners and materials to repair the walls.

I told her that's OK and went off to clean. The nuns actually forbade anyone to come down to assist me, and I had no help at all until the guests had already started arriving. Chimon eventually broke ranks late in the afternoon. He was a Shobo-ji student who showed up early. He came down, finally, to help in the afternoon.

Again, it was a confusing thing.

In this case, it turned out that the wedding was for the child of Shinge Sherry Chayat, a dharma heir of Mr. Shimano's, and someone for whom the nuns held a particular dislike.

So, again, the only motivation was personal hatred. If the nuns had gotten their way, the wedding party -- mostly young people who had never even

been to DBZ -- would have spent the night sleeping on beds covered in soggy paint and bat guano.

This was actually the intentional plan. This was what the nuns actually wished to have happen – with enough hatred to manipulate protocol so that well-meaning volunteers, on a scheduled off-day, could not prevent it.

I know this is hard to believe, but that is why I have to tell the stories in detail.

Because it was this way, up there.

OK... another....

I remember, once, the nuns had asked me to make an Excel spreadsheet for the caretaker. He was to detail his activity every fifteen minutes of his day, every day, from 6 AM to 7PM. He would give me the spreadsheet, and I would give it to them. I was to behave as if I wanted it.

I considered it a strange request, because Jokei knew her way around computers pretty well. Also, I wasn't the man's superior, so it felt wrong. Why didn't Jokei do it? What were the nuns up to now?

But they said that I had to do it, because the man would listen to me.

I offered to put a list of work priorities at the top of the spreadsheet. The nuns and Mr. Shimano would list priorities every day, or every week. I'd bring the guy the spreadsheet, with instructions for the week, like this.

I had thought that this was a good idea. The nuns would often fume to Mr. Shimano, or to board members, about problems with the facilities. However, this would be the first time anyone would hear about the problems – paint peeling on the ceiling of a room or something. I had considered this unfair, and cruel. If you hadn't been assigned to work on a project, and then you found yourself being blamed for failing to complete something that was never communicated in the first place, it just felt like backstabbing.

A list of work priorities would make everything go smoothly, I thought. If the nuns thought something had to be done, they could prioritize the projects at the top of the list. That way, the caretaker would have an idea of what the nuns and Mr. Shimano thought had to be done. Also, if his crew didn't complete the work, and if they didn't have a good reason for it (as

detailed in the time record), then the nuns would have a perfect right to call it a problem.

I was again surprised by the nuns' reaction. The nuns reacted to this idea with rage, forcibly refusing the responsibility of having any real, constructive input toward work. They demanded that I make the spreadsheet without the list of priorities, and they demanded that I deliver it to the caretaker that day.

I think this was the only time I actually refused work, at DBZ. The nuns just seemed cruel-hearted. As always, they wanted absolute authority, and absolutely no responsibility. Whatever they were up to, backstabbing was a part of the plan. Otherwise, there was no reason to resist communicating what work they thought necessary.

There are too many stories...

There was a complete absence of sincerity, among the leadership. I remember once, the nuns called an emergency sangha meeting, just after a visiting group had left. Fujin announced that one of the visitors – a guy from Puerto Rico who had spent some years practicing Jiu Jitsu – had reported witnessing a resident using drugs on monastery premises.

Fujin refused to name the accused, but spoke at length about the irresponsibility of such an act.

Following her speech, Jokei spent a good 5 minutes angrily denouncing the selfishness of doing such a thing. She went on about how the monastery life would be threatened if anyone took legal action, and that a monastery was no place for “getting high”.

Residents were curious about the incident. There was great suspicion tossed about.

Fujin knew who it was, of course, but she wasn't at all interested in the “crime”. She was interested in the suspicion, false blame, and strange DBZ-style leverage that could be conjured, somehow, out of the incident.

But I had seen her too. It was Jokei. Directly after her impassioned speech, I stopped her at the bottom of the stairs, and reminded her that I, too, had seen her. Brightly, she replied “oh yeah!” before bounding up the stairs.

There are too many of these incidents to write about actually...

Well, I'll include one more.

I remember once, Jackie Prete's yoga group was told, days before they arrived, that they would have to bring their own linens, and make their own beds, and clean up after themselves. They had been coming for ~10 years – each of them paying 120 dollars a day (or so, if I remember right), and this was a new thing.

Jackie's group was agreeable, but they were confused. In this case, there were plenty of people willing to assist. Junsho, another resident, was familiar with the group. She was actually associated with them, and she wished to do more for the guests. There was a large resident group at the time. There were plenty of resources. As for myself, I offered to go down evenings, after closing, to clean the group's dishes, at least.

These offers were disallowed, forcibly, and a brand new student (A. from Germany) was assigned as the group's contact, with her instructions including a list of ways in which she may not assist (e.g. no dish washing), and that she was to refuse help from other residents.

These sorts of decisions were part of daily life at DBZ.

Why was that? I don't know. There was never any explanation offered. It just seemed that "Zen" meant, to the nuns, that being mean to everyone, including strangers (albeit behind their backs), was the "Zen" way to be.

The nuns would assume the darkest motivations to the most benign endeavors, and would be very vocal in expressing, again and again, these strange views. This actually bordered on the ridiculous. Donating a flower garden, for example, meant one was actually struggling to "gain favor with Roshi", or that one "is just trying seduce the Yoga ladies", or that one "has no idea what Zen is".

Donating gym equipment meant one was hopelessly vain, stupid, and lacking in commitment to "Zen".

I can't describe the rage that would accompany such admonitions. You hear seething upset, regarding the well-meaning idea of voluntarily

washing dishes for a group, after closing. That just doesn't make sense. This was one reason why the place was so confusing. You had to hear things like this all the time, with the most curious insults. My mother (a gardener) offering to come help me plant a garden, while splitting the cost with me, means I was "trying to gain favor with Roshi?"

I could never think this way, even if I tried. Things like this would just never occur to me.

It seemed impossible for the nuns to consider other motivations than any such as these.

That's enough of the stories.

[YES! THAT IS ENOUGH OF THE STORIES! THIS IS THE END OF THEM!]

It is a little difficult telling these stories. I've found that nobody believes them. It seems too much of a stretch for people to think that anyone could go through such efforts just to hurt another – especially in a monastery. People think "ahh there must be some other explanation".

But, actually, there wasn't. Much of the decision-making up at DBZ was fueled by basic (and baseless) malice. There appeared to be no sense to it, at all.

I tell these stories to describe how Mr. Shimano operates. Two women ended up in hospital only months after Mr. Shimano's arrival in Hawaii, from Japan. In the decades that followed, Mr. Shimano's monasteries were marked by near-continuous upheaval. There were financial irregularities, backroom deals, and hidden agendas. There were near-continuous cover-ups regarding Mr. Shimano's secretive sexual bouts. There was constant backstabbing. There was bloody violence among the leadership. There were several suicides, and many, many hospitalizations.

How come it never stopped, for so many decades? Mr. Shimano, throughout these storms, always appears quiet and innocent.

But, he really isn't. That is what I found out. I am trying to explain what he's doing, using my experience.

I noticed that incidents were difficult to talk about with people who were not living at DBZ. I had some talks with Soun, who was on the ZSS board. Soun would come by now and then. But Soun had no way of knowing what was going on – a nun could just say “we were understaffed” and sigh, and act like she was doing everything she could. It is not easy to explain problems like these, because people can hear it like you are complaining. Without an open forum for getting to the bottom of things, any discussion of these sorts of events could easily be classified as simple interpersonal struggles of the sort that go on in any group setting.

So I started to look to Mr. Shimano.

To me, that made sense. Where else could you go?

At DBZ, people viewed Mr. Shimano as some kind of shining saint. In morning meeting, he would sit, stoically, while the nuns delivered their rants. This spectacle was confusing, and it was actually a common topic of discussion, among the residents. What was going on? It was often surmised that Mr. Shimano was somehow “above” the worldly problems people that the rest of us rabble were dealing with.

Over the years, I heard many, many people advance this thought.

This was a very strong notion – one that almost everyone entertained, including myself, to a degree. The good cop/bad cop contrast between Mr. Shimano and his nuns really had this effect. The assumption was that Mr. Shimano’s great compassion rendered him blissfully unconcerned with the goings-on. There really was no other explanation, and this, though confusing, actually served, in a manner, to heighten his prestige.

In fact, I had never heard this view challenged, or even questioned. I once heard Seigan, a long time monk, refer to Mr. Shimano as “weak”, for never confronting his head nun, but that was as critical a statement as any I have ever heard. I know there were some residents who left after bringing their concerns to Mr. Shimano. Tentetsu, and some of the monks left this way. Even Denko Osho had voiced this view, to me, once, after I helped him move his stuff out, the first time he left.

Denko had later walked out, the second time, during the morning meeting chant. I had noticed that Fujin had changed the chant on the day Denko returned. Denko did not know the new chant and, without a chant book, he

sat there silently for 10 seconds or so before simply rising and heading out the door. So, his return lasted only an hour and a half or so, and that's including the morning sit. I wondered, then, if this little chant switcheroo of Fujin's had something to do with his abrupt departure. I doubt he'd admit this, but it isn't an easy thing to be the constant subject of willful subterfuge.

Regardless, as I had mentioned, Mr. Shimano's lack of action was a point of curiosity among many residents. Yet, among everyone, there was no suspicion whatsoever placed on the character of Mr. Shimano. The idea that Mr. Shimano might harbor similarly dark intents was never approached.

As I mentioned, I too held the notion that Mr. Shimano was an alright guy.

So, (again, as mentioned), I started to bring my concerns to him.

I did this, and, almost immediately, I started noticing curious things.

Mr. Shimano would usually agree with me when I brought things up in public – in morning meeting, for example, as was the case with the wedding guests, and the donation of the garden for the guest house. Usually, there was some extremely obvious answer, and, unlike the nuns, when questioned in public, Mr. Shimano would provide it.

Privately, though, it was another matter, altogether.

For example, I remember being tasked with removing gold leaf from a large 14th century gong. While doing the work, I noticed some Kanji on the top rim. I asked Fujin about the characters, and she told me that they were from a Japanese monastery (Ryu Taku-Ji? something like that...), to which the gong had belonged. The monastery was still operating and was, in fact, very popular.

I was cautioned, very sternly, by the nuns, not to mention this fact to anyone.

Don't mention it? Why? It had been missing for 15 years or so. It had just been returned, to some fanfare – Mr. Shimano called an impromptu ceremony, where he struck the big metal bell again and again. So it was not as though it was a secret. I didn't suspect any wrongdoing. What could

be wrong with asking?

I was curious, so I brought it up in morning meeting. I asked Mr. Shimano about the bell, and if the Japanese monastery knew DBZ had it. He said they did.

It surprised me. So I asked him if they had ever asked for it back.

Mr. Shimano answered “Not... Officially...” before both nuns erupted, once more, in a hail of insults.

I usually went to dokusan in a certain manner, when I had to go: I’d go in and sit quietly, answer whatever question or koan Mr. Shimano asked, and leave. I wouldn’t even say hello. I’d just do my bows and sit there, waiting to be rung out. After a while Mr. Shimano had stopped presenting koans, which was fine with me. If he had nothing to say, there would just be a little staring contest, then he would say “just mu”, and ring me out.

The evening after I asked about the bell, Mr. Shimano did something different. He gave a little speech.

He said “Jushin... You went to a... good... school...you had... good... job... Good.. friends.... But.. you leave... These....things.....”

I nodded.

He said, with great disdain “this is a sign of... mental illness!” and rang me out.

I just thought the guy was in a bad mood. It occurred to me that I had asked him about the gong, earlier, but I couldn’t even consider that my question might have been the cause of Mr. Shimano’s upset. Such thinking is the way of mafioso. I had only asked a question, about a bell. Naively, I had been thinking the return of the bell was a happy time, and contacting the Japanese monastery would be a pleasant thing to do.

Because of this, I was very confused by Mr. Shimano’s anger.

I dismissed it.

But it continued.

At DBZ, there were always operational issues. I mentioned, above, some of the kinds of problems I was talking about, and I have mentioned that it was difficult to get any traction in getting anything changed.

So, I started asking for a document of basic monastery guidelines. I had noticed that Mr. Shimano had thrown out the rules and procedures that were in effect when Denko Osho had been around. I had found a few documents on the upstairs computers, but Mr. Shimano had made it clear that these documents were “someone else’s”. So, figuratively, he had simply tossed out any policies and procedures – the old ones were null and void, and he had replaced them with nothing.

For me, this was frustrating, as the most basic rules were sometimes changed scurrilously, solely to injure another. I had been through this. Further, real issues were swept under the rug, or drowned, as always, in screams, or made invisible by behind-the-back character attacks and misrepresentations.

I saw a set of written rules as a solution to these things.

The guidelines would cover the most basic things – the Kessei fee schedule, for example. Further, with documented issue escalation procedures, leading up to the board, a real problem could be addressed fairly and rationally. As I mentioned, a casual talk with a board member was a waste of time. The guy could assume personal differences, or other motivations. You couldn’t get to the meat of things.

Another idea: Publicly published minutes, perhaps once a month, from the sangha meeting. This meant that you could have your say – anyone could, no matter what rank, and it couldn’t be misconstrued or twisted into something dark behind your back. With this, there would be a record that someone could refer to in the event of controversy, or if an issue had not been addressed.

These were simple ideas that would take no added resources to employ. They weren’t genius ideas. They are ideas that any reasonable 20 year old would think up to combat such troubles, in a group setting.

Over the course of a few months, I would bring these ideas to Mr. Shimano, after morning meeting. I would ask to speak to him, and I would

talk about it after the others had left. At this time, I had already had my fees raised, in a manner that conflicted with long standing policy, and with the change applying only to myself. I had assumed this was Fujin's work. There was some urgency to my request, because I didn't want something like this to happen again.

During these talks, Mr. Shimano would spend a great deal of time politely agreeing with the need for such documentation, without 1) agreeing to allow me to produce it or 2) having it produced by anyone else.

That was frustrating. It made no sense that such a simple, basic thing would be delayed, for so long, and for no reason, at all. I had previously assumed that Mr. Shimano would have welcomed the effort.

Finally after perhaps four or five talks, over the course of months, I mentioned to Mr. Shimano that it would take me all of twenty minutes to draft the items I had discussed, and that I could write an outline in under two minutes, on the napkin I held, at the time, in front of me. We had just finished eating cookies, in morning meeting.

Mr. Shimano bristled, before answering that he will make the work a priority.

He assigned the project to Fujin.

Fujin spent a couple of weeks preparing a pamphlet consisting mostly of monastery etiquette. The pamphlet discussed, at length, how to behave properly during the monastery day -- when one may or may not use sugar in the tea served during morning meeting, for example, when the sugar was passed around.

There was no organizational information -- no fee schedule. There was no issue escalation procedure, except to reaffirm the roles of Jisha and Shika (head nun, Fujin herself). Both these roles were always appointed by Mr. Shimano.

There would be no records of any meetings. Instead, Fujin, at the next Sunday sangha meeting, reiterated the purpose of the meeting, before launching into an attack on a woman who she had noticed was holding her arms by her hips, the previous day, in a manner that Fujin had considered flirtatious, and therefore outrageously offensive.

This was all discouraging, for me.

All of this had sparked my curiosity in Mr. Shimano. It was ridiculous that there was no official documents or guidelines governing the basic operations of the place. There was nothing to refer to. Any honest man would very much welcome an agreed-upon procedure to settle operational issues, especially if people were directly harmed. And what could be wrong with a public record of a monthly meeting? No matter what is said! Even if it is only posted on the hallway bulletin board!

What Mr. Shimano was doing was purposely choosing continued secrecy and control, over openness and agreement. This was obviously his deliberate choice. To me, that was slowly becoming obvious.

Very shortly after this, the "understood" rules were again shifted, twice.

At this time, a woman, E., had decided she had had enough. She was on her way out. I drove her to the bus station, with Giun and S.. I never enjoyed watching people go, so I took them out for ice cream at a nearby diner, to say goodbye.

During our ice creams, E. told us that Fujin had told her to lie to a donor (Mike?) to secure more money for the monastery. The donor had offered scholarships to pay for kessei for first-time students. E. had been there for a few already.

I considered this a kind of theft. I thought something should be done about it.

Thus began the final few weeks of my stay at DBZ.

DBZ was a strange place. I think, because of the militaristic tradition, and the rain of harsh reprimands, it was an easy thing for people to sort of turn themselves off and just settle into doing whatever it was that produced the fewest temper tantrums.

It appeared, to me, that many people saw this as a kind of wisdom, in itself.

The (supposed) ideal that Mr. Shimano presented was a big reason why

people endured the place. As I mentioned, there was that good cop/bad cop effect, and that is a very, very strong psych game. With this, it looked to me as though some people felt a compulsion to show that nothing moved them, no matter the situation, even when a donor was being stolen from -- even when people were being harmed -- even when someone's livelihood was being purposefully undermined.

This was indeed the model that Mr. Shimano presented, just by his own simple lack of action.

There were other things that added to this effect. Mr. Shimano's demeanor changed drastically, often, between his public persona and dokusan. He could be screaming furiously about a student's mispronunciation of a Japanese word one moment, but then, in dokusan, appear kind and mild-mannered, never even mentioning such incidents. This stark contrast in led one to believe that Mr. Shimano, of course, understood that it didn't matter how one spoke Japanese, and that such outbursts were benevolent, as they served to spur us on, or helped to maintain an attitude of sharp focus among everyone.

This was how a lot of people saw it. It was always assumed that there was a deep wisdom to such trials.

I have lived in many monasteries. In my opinion, this is the single most frustrating thing about Zen. I can deal with everything that goes on. I did, for many years. I can deal with anything. People can scream all they want, about anything, if they want. I don't mind getting up early. I love the sitting, actually, and the physical work. I feel my best in monastery life. For me, it is the perfect life -- healthy food and outdoor, communal work. I truly love the life.

But there is one thing that makes the practice unbearable.

I've found, in Zen, especially among students in the most corrupt centers I've lived in, that this hope, and faith, in the master condenses into a kind of diamond-hard nut; hard to reach, and unbreakable.

It is my view that the strict, hierarchical form of Japanese Zen is partly to formation of this unquestioned and (ultimately) blind faith. It is as though the difficulties that most people feel under the harsh forms begs a rationale, and the hope and belief in the practice (and its "master") is the only thing

that provides it. The greater the hardships, the greater the required faith.

And so, under this pressure, things condense.

When this happens, the very last thing anyone would wish to face is that there was no rationale to their hardships, or to the everyday abuses they have witnessed. Once the abusive environment is seen as “good”, or “Zen”, or whatever, it is much easier to dismiss, ridicule, or even attack, those who try to talk about it.

The traditional hierarchy is, in this manner, fortified, as things don’t make sense any other way.

People just assume there is a great good to it, and after a short while, they become participants. Once they accept the hierarchy, and fit themselves a place within it – they just will not allow themselves to see things any other way. Once they wear the (metaphorical) coat – once “Zen” becomes part of their identity, they become completely unreachable.

I don’t know exactly how it happens. I just know it happens.

It is very difficult to talk with people, once this occurs. It is an arduous effort to have a meaningful conversation. Nothing outside of the traditional form is addressed. Outside activities are looked down upon, or openly derided.

Do you enjoy playing tennis? If you do, you’ll hear something about how spiritually immature you are for delighting in the game.

But, by far, the most difficult part is that the slightest suggestion of malfeasance on the part of the “master” is answered only – ONLY – with unsavory characterizations of the man or woman who dared to comment.

It is impossible for me to describe how powerful this effect is, and how pervasive it is in Zen students’ thinking.

One illustration of the effect: I have read many of the women victims’ stories – including those from other “spiritual” centers. One common thing that stands out, to me, is some women’s compliance, during the onset of actual physical affront, under the belief that they are “being

tested”, or that the touching is something to which their reaction would somehow be better understood by the “master” than themselves.

This is an example of what I am talking about. People see “teacher” first, and assume a subservient role, no matter the actual situation -- even during an event like this, where a man is reaching up a robe, uninvited – an absurd situation, actually. No doubt the womens’ reaction would be different if the incident occurred in a shopping mall. But something happens, as a result of the ceremony, the ritual, the pageantry, the formality, and the syrupy reverence that is given the “master”, always, in public settings.

The belief sets, like concrete. “Zen” becomes something sacred, and holy. It can only be good.

What it means is that, in a monastery, it is very difficult to discuss any issue of controversy. It is worse than “very difficult”. The only people who can speak rationally and productively about such issues seem to be people who have never practiced “Zen’.

To me, this was the single most frustrating thing about DBZ. I’d constantly try to bring things up, like the lie to the donor, only to be receive curious instruction on how to behave as a Buddhist. So there was no discussion, at all – even a single sentence – nothing.

To me, it was as if people couldn’t hear the very words that I was speaking.

Regarding the scholarship lie, I remember trying to talk about it with Giun, who would soon become a monk.

He told me to “let it go”.

I asked him “what if it was your money?”

He said: “Don’t be so self-righteous”

I talked to Shinkon, another future monk, mentioning that we should, somehow, get word to the donor.

He offered the same sort of deadening response: “practice acceptance”

I told him I considered it theft, and he said “You are right, but don’t be attached to being right”

These kinds of non-conversations were maddening, to me. At DBZ, they were constant. I had hundreds of them – literally hundreds. I’d bring up issues in the lounge, after closing. I’d try to talk about things. But it seemed, to me, always, that people literally could not hear what I was saying. They would respond with something that had nothing to do with what I had brought up.

In Zen, it always seems like that. Various Zen “philosophies” added to this odd form of voluntary deafness. There seems to be a strong idea in Zen circles that all thought is a bad thing. For most, this idea seems to mesh with the activity of meditation, I suppose. “juust muu”, or “too much thinking” are things you would hear all the time, no matter what it was you were talking about.

What do you say to something like this? You can’t say anything.

I never knew what to say, but to me, these things sound like the command: “be stupid!”

This is something that I cannot do (on command, at least..).

Like a twilight-zone episode, people seemed to be making great efforts toward slotting themselves, like automatons, into perfect Zen-functionals. I never understood why anyone would undertake this effort. What is the rationale? Like in the darker TZ episodes, or any of the Invasion of the Body Snatchers movies (I think there were 5) people would attack anyone who strayed – even only in personal mannerisms -- from the accepted norm.

For this scholarship lie, going to the nuns to resolve the problem was obvious, instant suicide, but they held the contact list, in the office. Getting word to the donor meant getting ahold of the contact list.

So, as per my new habit, I brought the issue to Mr. Shimano. Like I had said, I trusted him, at the time. As always, I asked to have a word with him, after morning meeting, and he agreed.

I told him about what had happened, and was surprised to hear his answer: “I... believe... it... was... her... FIRST... Kessei”

This, of course, was an obvious lie. I reminded Mr. Shimano that I had been living in the monastery the past few years (in case he hadn't noticed?), and that it certainly was not E.'s first kessei. She had been there for a while.

Mr. Shimano repeated: “I... believe... it... was... her.... first”

This completely useless back-and forth went on a couple more times, actually. But I had remembered the months of nonsense talk from Mr. Shimano regarding the monastery policy documents. I'm sure he had worn out people this way, over the years, sitting there, very politely lying, for months and months.

Finally, I pointed to the phone, mentioning that I had E.'s number, and that we could call her, at that very moment.

Mr. Shimano paused, before saying, cryptically, “Jushin.... you... are... changing...”

Naively, I sat there for a moment wondering why he had changed the subject to me. I'm changing? What was the guy talking about?

I told him I would get word to the donor myself.

I remember mentioning this exchange to Shinkon, who, like everyone else, was aware of the lie.

Shinkon was concerned only in the manner in which I had spoken with Mr. Shimano. Pointing to the phone was the wrong thing to do. I had violated another mysterious rule of the universe known only to the Japanese. Shinkon finally explained, at length, that I had not allowed Mr. Shimano a way to “save face”.

I wasn't interested in a(nother) Japanese etiquette lesson. A crime had been committed. No? Could nobody see that?

At DBZ, people would talk about everything that is not the issue. They would talk about everything except what you were talking about. I don't

know how many times I heard “let it go” in times like these.

I got word to the donor myself. Shortly after the curious exchange with Mr. Shimano, a guy, Ben, showed up to help out and enjoy the times with the Ohashi group. Ben was a good guy. He told me he knew the donor personally, and said that he would talk to the guy about it.

For me, that was fine. As was usually the case, I didn’t think it would be a big deal. I doubt it would have even caused a problem with the donor. It was a matter of a few thousand dollars, and I would have guessed the donor would have just figured a mistake was made. He probably wouldn’t have even asked for the money back.

I told Mr. Shimano about it, a week or so later (he takes off on Ohashi week) in dokusan. Mr. Shimano just grunted and rang me out.

The next day, as I was walking through the kitchen, Fujin pulled me aside, and told me that my fees would be doubled.

I explained to her that this was unfair, as she had already raised the fees on me once, and that I was already the only student, ever, to have paid full price, for so long.

She said I either pay, or leave.

Alan, a bookseller from Brooklyn, had overheard the exchange. He later said “it sounded like she was punishing you”

“She was”, I had told him.

Zenchu would offer, later “they’re hitting you where it hurts”

I had to stay, because people who I knew were coming from far away. They had already brought their tickets. I had to at least be there to greet them.

I later told Fujin I would pay a third, every month, for three months.

So that was another sudden rule change. This was the sort of thing I was trying to avoid when I was pushing for written policy.

The next rule change involved relationships at the monastery.

DBZ was a strange, strange place, especially regarding this -- the subject of sex.

In case anyone is wondering, there was never a rule about relationships at the monastery, and they were a common thing. In fact, every monk I knew, and every future monk, except for one (Shinkon, who had just shown up), had a lover living at the monastery while I was there. The same goes for most residents – male or female. This goes all the way back to the day I arrived. It is tempting to list them here, but, in this case, I don't see the point.

Anyway, I never considered this an unpleasant thing. In fact, I liked most of the people I met at DBZ, and I would be happy whenever two of them seemed to like each other. It wasn't a big deal. It was one of the few "human" things you saw up there. You rarely saw any laughing, or joking around. I had first shown up to DBZ with a Frisbee, soccer ball, and football. I brought them for the little half-hour breaks. You get up at 4, work hard all day (if you are not in the office), until 9:30 pm. You get maybe 2 half-hour breaks. Why not play Frisbee?

I still had them up there the day I left. People enjoying each other's company, in any friendly way, doesn't bother me in the least. For me, regarding relationships, it was nice to see people together, taking walks, or making secret plans. It wasn't as though couples would stay in the same room during sesshin. They wouldn't. People were OK. It was never an awkward thing, and it never got in the way of anything.

As for me, well past my third year at DBZ, I had never had a girlfriend at the monastery. I had been involved for a bit with a woman from the city, and she came to visit the monastery now and then, but at DBZ, we were friendly, but on our own.

This wasn't because I was particularly dedicated to any precept or vow. I just didn't like the idea of having a girlfriend at the monastery. I had never had a problem meeting women. I was in fact a little tired of the pressures relationships bring. It had often felt, to me, like women want so much, and in so many different ways. I found it tiring to have to be aware of all those different ways, all the time. I actually came to DBZ, in large part, to take a break from women.

And a monastery is a closed environment, putting you in close quarters with others. I didn't want a relationship. What if you argue? What if you break up? There would be no place to even get away for a bit, and the nuns, as a way of life, made sure they kept their nose in everyone else's business. I reasoned early on that being in a relationship up at DBZ would be horrible.

Besides, I allowed myself short breaks in the summer. I'd go out to California, or I'd go camping in Maine for a week. I'd travel, or I'd visit friends. Women would always show up, somehow. I never had to make much effort.

Being alone up at DBZ was not so bad at all. I liked it that way.

Despite this, and despite the fact that nearly every other resident was in a relationship with another, I had a strong reputation at DBZ. I don't really know why this was, but I suppose it was because, unlike most DBZ people, I'd often joke about women – expressing effusive joy about the prospects of massages by busloads of pretty ladies during Ohashi week, for example -- and I would speak openly of women who I was in contact with, or whom I may have met while away from DBZ.

For me, this was just natural talk. I would answer when people asked. And I never saw the point in behaving as though 40 women showing up offering free massages was not wonderful thing.

But, for some reason, my way of being caused a lot of trouble.

The nuns would fume about sex often – especially in regard to myself, even going so far, once, as to scream wildly at a woman and me, in morning meeting, about how disgusting it was, what we were doing, and how ashamed we should be, etc etc., while the woman and I looked at each other, embarrassed and bewildered. You don't get to answer, in times like this. If you open your mouth, the nuns would just scream louder and louder. You don't even get a chance to speak a sentence.

We were bewildered because we were not lovers. We just really liked each other's company. She came up every summer to help out for the groups. She particularly enjoyed swimming in the lake. We would stay up late talking and laughing and then pass out asleep on the guest house couches.

Once, the nuns lectured the Ohashi group, specifically, about myself – with Fujin first insisting that I don't appear at the meeting. I don't know what it was she said, but the lecture conveyed the notion that I was a serial seducer, keen to ply my skills on the innocents among their group.

I had great skills in begging massages from the Ohashi group – one year obtaining somewhere north of a dozen or so -- and I met many people whose company I enjoyed, but there was never a woman, from any group, who could ever say I was ever even trying to “seduce” them. Nobody will ask around, but if anyone bothered to ask the group members themselves, there will be no unsavory stories. I still talk to some of those Ohashi ladies. The ones I know are very good people.

For me, it was a real pleasure when “normal” people showed up. You could have normal conversation. With the visiting groups, there was none of the aggressive, demeaning arrogance that seems so highly correlated with commitment to the Zen form. You could have normal laughs. You could meet people on a human level.

I'm not blind. I happily noticed how pretty some of the visiting women were, but that just meant it was more fun to say hello. I wasn't thinking, concretely, of seducing anybody. I was thinking of enjoying my time.

I don't know what the nuns were thinking. Sex was just this strange, sickly secretive subject, up at DBZ.

I have many more stories about this subject. There was tremendous hypocrisy. But this post is too long as it is.

In any case, things changed for me in my last summer. There was a woman I was involved with. She was a new student, and we were both living at the monastery.

As I said, this was a first for me. It actually lasted for only a couple of weeks.

I'll explain why.

It was a big deal, for some reason. Both of the nuns were furious, delivering lectures about such horrible, disrespectful behavior, and offering hours of

the same terrible disdain – literally hours, if you count them up. Days went by, and it was suggested that the woman and I would be asked to leave.

There were grave talks like this. Fujin would say that there were serious discussions going on.

Another couple of days passed, with “relationships at the monastery” suddenly being a topic of deep concern. Rumors spread among the residents. Another possibility was that one of us leave, so that the other may remain.

I talked about it once, with Fujin, mentioning the very obvious fact that such relationships had never been a problem for any monk, nun, or resident, before. Come to think of it now, it had never been a problem for any Zen master, either – any of them.

I asked Fujin what was different in my case.

She answered, angrily, that I had met the woman at DBZ, and she continued her tirade for some time. When I asked her if she knew of any couple at DBZ who did NOT meet at DBZ, she refused to answer, choosing instead, another stream of insults.

I asked her about a couple from Colorado who would be showing up together in a couple of weeks. The couple would actually be living in the same room.

Fujin stormed off.

Finally, after much deliberation, it was decided that a new rule would be put in place – no sex in the monastery. The news was delivered to me by Mr. Shimano himself, who, in very strange fashion, called a private meeting, where he passed me a note on which was written “Sexual relations at the monastery are no longer allowed”.

Except for the glaring hypocrisy and ridiculous degree of upset, this was no big deal, to me. I talked it over with the woman I was with and we laughed and figured we could always take little drives together in my

pickup truck, on off days, if we wanted to get away. We were both paying, so we could actually even leave on little vacations, if we wished.

But we didn't leave, because we both liked sitting, and we both enjoyed communal life. We just shrugged it off.

So: no sex at DBZ.

By DBZ law! If anyone can believe it.

As far as I know, this is the only time such a rule was in place, at the monastery. There had never been such a rule before.

The woman and I didn't break the rule.

This rule mysteriously evaporated shortly after I left.

Of course, it never applied to Mr. Shimano himself.

The following kessei started with a sesshin. This would turn out to be my last sesshin.

As I had mentioned, I would never say anything in dokusan. It just wasn't why I was there. I never asked anything of Mr. Shimano. I wasn't shy, or afraid. I just wasn't very enamored with dokusan. I'd just go in and sit down. If Mr. Shimano rang me out, that was fine. I'd done all the koans Mr. Shimano had asked me. There is one thing, and, after that, they are mostly boring. So why do them? There are better things to do.

Eventually, Mr. Shimano stopped asking anyway. He'd usually just say "juuuuuuuust mu", or something, and ring me out. It had been that way for the last three years.

But now I was curious about something. I had of course noticed the great respect Mr. Shimano was given, by everyone. I examined, in myself, the reasoning behind this respect, and how it "felt". I imagined asking Mr. Shimano questions – just simple, almost comical questions, and I noticed that this would be a difficult thing to do. It would be a most uncomfortable thing to do.

Why was that?

Sometime in the first couple of day or so of sesshin, I thought a lot about this, reasoning that, if indeed Mr. Shimano had any “attainment” of the type he and his followers constantly mention, then, if anything, Mr. Shimano would be among the people who would cause the *least* discomfort, or fear (reverence?) among the people around him, no matter what question they asked.

What was the role of Mr. Shimano’s status as a figure of near-worship? I had already recognized that such thoughts, once adopted, played a role in making discussions of controversial matters completely impossible among the sangha members. I’ve made some efforts to describe that effect here.

Of course, I also recognized how the rich formality of the practice, and the militaristic insistence on the minutia of the forms helped create this lofty image. I had always assumed everybody knew this – certainly everybody saw through it. But was that really the case?; And what about me? In my heart, did I see through it?

If there was any fear at all, then I didn’t, right?

I certainly had spent some time navigating the maddening maze of Mr. Shimano’s delays and evasions during the discussions I had held with the man. I had understood that my previous conception of him had been simply wrong. How can you choose to wrong a donor when it is easily prevented? It wasn’t like it would have taken any effort to make things right. Why not pick up the phone yourself and call the guy?

In any case, I noticed, for some reason, my discomfort evaporate, replaced by curiosity. There are all those Zen terms – “non-discriminating mind”, “equanimity”, “acceptance”, “unconditioned mind” and so on. The meanings are pretty clear, as intellectual ideas. Of course, any “master” who speaks of such things really ought to embody them – at least to some degree.

So I walked in one, day, bowed a few times as always, and asked Mr. Shimano “Why don’t you wash dishes?”

This sounds like a horribly disrespectful thing to ask, but I was just curious to see how he would react. I had actually never asked anything before, in dokusan. This is the truth. I had been there for over three years. I wasn’t

upset, and I didn't even consider the question as any kind of challenge, at the time. I was almost bored, at the moment I asked, in fact. It was as though I was running through a line of a script.

I had simply wanted to see what he would say. Everybody washes dishes in a monastery, except for a couple of people, and it is a nice time, actually. I always enjoyed it. Most of the normal people seemed to enjoy it. It is a group effort. Group efforts are almost always happy.

I thought he'd say "I'm busy" or "they are clean", or something reasonable. Everyone else -- myself -- even the nuns -- would respond this way.

Instead, he blew up, in red-faced rage. He was screaming, half in Japanese, horrible curses and insults. I am not exaggerating when I say this went for at least, three full minutes, as I watched him boil over, with spittle flying from his mouth.

Finally, he paused, to catch his breath. I said "that's not a good answer, Roshi"

He started screaming again, launching, once more, into a stream of fury. Again, he wore himself out, and paused, to rest.

I was used to sitting through temper tantrums, just from living there. This is what you would go through every day. I was surprised to hear it, this way, from Mr. Shimano himself, but I was used to it.

I said, again "that's not a good answer"

He waited a bit, then said "because I am busy doing other things"

At this, I got up, and left the room.

This was a surprise, to me. Mr. Shimano had always controlled himself before, and I had, many times, given him the benefit of the doubt, as he sidestepped basic responsibilities, or played innocent through trying times. I went to sleep wondering what was going on.

As I said, I usually went to dokusan only once a day during sesshin -- the minimum required to appease the Jiki, so it was a full day before I saw Mr.

Shimano again.

The next evening, I walked in, bowed, and sat down.

Mr. Shimano started in immediately, calling me stupid and arrogant, and some other Japanese words. He was working his way up into another tantrum. In some time, he was screaming, in rage "you are nothing! you are nothing!" With his fury approaching another crescendo, he started repeating "I am teacher! you are student! I am teacher! You are student!"

He kept screaming this single phrase, over and over.

I had not said anything. I watched on, surprised, and saddened.

I noticed that Mr. Shimano was holding his kesaku, which was something he usually didn't do. He usually kept it on the floor in front of him. When he paused for breath, I asked him "with that stick, how do you teach?"

Mr. Shimano only grunted, and I grabbed the stick from his hands and tossed it behind me.

I had actually never broken any rules at DBZ. I was happy dwelling at the bottom of the chain of command, enjoying the physical work that nobody else wanted. I was happy with the earliest shift (ringing the big bell) and the latest one (closing alters) – I'd often had both together, because nobody else wanted them. I had paid more than anyone. I'd donated the garden, the gym, and new A/V equipment. I'd just driven across the country to bring in a tractor that a friend had donated.

Despite this, I had had my fees raised, twice, and I had heard some of the most horrible rumors, all false, spread about me. The sudden "no-sex" rule was a joke, considering the context, the history of the place, and the fact that I was one of the only people I knew who had never had a lover living at the monastery, over the years.

I had not expected, before, that these behind the back attacks were coming from Mr. Shimano himself, as he had always presented himself well to me – always agreeing with me, as I had mentioned, in the cases that I would bring up an issue in public.

I found this manner of being unimaginably cowardly. I realized very

suddenly how Mr. Shimano operates. How he hides behind those he gets to enact his plots, taking pains to appear calm and polite throughout. This way, he can avoid suspicion while his fiercely loyal lieutenants carry out his schemes.

All of this really turned my stomach. Like many others, I often had to watch as others were needlessly harmed, as work was sabotaged, or plans were scrambled for no reason other than personal attack, born of petty hatreds. Like many others, I had sometimes met with Mr. Shimano in trust to discuss some of these incidents.

I saw now this was a mistake. I was disgusted with the conniving falsehood of the man, and his level of deception, his tremendous arrogance, and the disdain for others that he held hidden in his heart. There was nothing to this guy, outside from a need for power and position over others. I had trusted him. I had no idea the guy hated me. I realized that I had presented a threat to him. This was all the man was interested in. A guy who might ask questions up the ladder was not someone Mr. Shimano wanted around. A guy who might wish for openness and agreement was just not welcome.

Of this, I had previously had no idea.

I called him a coward, and a liar. We sat there for a few seconds.

Mr. Shimano asked me to get the stick. I stood up and got the stick. I handed it to him. He asked me to bow. I did. He hit me gently, with the stick, on both shoulders.

This annoyed me. It is about the worst thing to do, actually, in response to the question I had asked. It is an example of “knowing” something through reading, or study, or being told, and passing this off as something else. Any other answer is better, actually -- even asking "what the hell are you doing?" is better, since such a response, is, at least, sincere.

I had done this little stick thing once before, with a different Japanese Zen master, whose name I forget now – a man who comes to DBZ once a year, to visit. That guy had always held the stick in front of him, for some reason, all the time. I had been surprised, then, to notice that the man had not understood what I had meant by my question, despite the fact that it really isn't much of a question – the whole point is only to see if the guy

knew what to do. This Zen master had looked on, confused, pulled back on the stick, and asked me if I wanted it. I had laughed and told him that of course I didn't want his stick. But there is a simple thing to do. Like I said, it isn't even much of a koan, it is just something to ask, to see if the answer comes.

I was dismayed by this exchange with Mr. Shimano. To me, all of it meant something horrible, given all of the goings-on at the place, not to mention the every-day abuses and lies. There was absolutely no purpose to any of the harm. There was no wisdom to anything up there, at all.

That evening, I began to remember some other incidents that had not troubled me before.

One summer – I think in my second year -- I had left DBZ for a few weeks. One of the things I had done was a sesshin in Soho, with Kyudo roshi.

People knew about this. Through my time at DBZ, a number of monks and nuns would often tell me never to mention other monasteries, but I enjoyed travel during the off periods, and I would occasionally visit other centers. I didn't mean any insult by it, but it was not like I was going to announce "Alas, I must not speak of such things" if someone asked me about these travels. I'd chat happily about my trips.

But it did cause upset, and it did result in the same sort of confusing attacks that I had mentioned earlier. When Fujin had heard that I would be visiting Kyudo's Soho center, she immediately broke into a speech about this master, pontificating loudly to the assembled residents. I remember Zenchu was there. Jokei was there. There was the whole gang. Fujin had said she was once at a meeting where both Mr. Shimano and Kyudo were present, and that Kyudo was terrified of Mr Shimano, visibly wilting in his presence.

Fujin had also said that, when Kyudo had been named abbot of Ryu Taku-Ji, the teacher of both Kyudo and Mr. Shimano, Soen roshi, had forced Mr. Shimano to give Kyudo his "notebook". I had asked Fujin what she was talking about, what's a "notebook?" Fujin had explained, to me, that every Japanese Zen master keeps a notebook of interesting interactions with students. Her claim was that Kyudo had required this notebook to understand what "real" Zen interactions sounds like.

Of course, I recognized this as DBZ-speak, and, even then, had assumed that this probably meant the opposite – that it was likely that Soen had, in fact, told Kyudo, at some point, to show Mr. Shimano his notebook. I didn't suspect Mr. Shimano, at the time, but I knew how the nuns worked.

There were other things that I remembered.

There were only a few koans that I can recall from my whole time with Mr. Shimano. I remember them only because they were not from any book, and were therefore about the only koans that really meant anything, to me. Because of this, they were a little more interesting. I had figured Mr. Shimano had come up with them – that is why they meant something. At the time, it seemed a kind of proof of something, to me.

After I had sat in Soho, I had realized that what I had been thinking was not true. Kyudo had employed, materially, the same series of koans, with only minor changes: “bring me a moon rock without going to the moon”, “how old is the rock?”, “there is an inscription...” instead of Shimano's “bring me a rock from the bottom of the sea without getting your arms wet” etc. etc. I didn't go through them all with Kyudo, but it was obvious they were the same.

Regardless, remembering this, I was beginning to view the Rinzai Zen tradition differently. I was beginning to view the purposely manufactured reverence as something blinding, and dangerous. I began to consider the koans themselves as something horribly deceptive -- tools of artificial authority that employ the very sincerity of decent, sincere people as a means of control.

There, sitting with Mr. Shimano, that thought, in particular, filled me with despair.

I'll explain.

It is a simple thing to “learn” answers to koans. Someone could be taught that the answer to “what is the sound of one hand clapping?” is to move one hand, as if the one hand is clapping. But this doesn't mean the person has any “insight”, at all. It just means he or she has been taught the answer to the koan.

No normal person would ever wish to "learn" such answers this way. Any sincere meditator would, in fact, refuse any such offer, as this would mean a lost opportunity. People show up to these places – sincere people – understanding such opportunity, with faith in the teachers. There is a strong Zen ideology, expressed in the strict hierarchical forms, and the idea of “master”. This ideology is based on a single, overarching belief; that the "master" truly has the "insight" that the old Chinese stories point to.

If this single fact is not true, then the koans, and the ritual, and the ceremony, all serve only one single purpose: to manufacture, in others, the belief that the "master's" understanding exceeds that of his students. Every time a student says "I don't know", or scratches his head, this belief is reinforced. Thus, an artificial "spiritual hierarchy" is created, in the minds of the community.

There is nothing at all kind, or good, about such a falsely manufactured scaffolding of deceit. There is actually no benevolent reason for it, ever, at all. It is a deliberate mis-use of trust. Such deception will always result in harm, in the course of time.

But this is a subject for another post.

These thoughts were very troubling to me, at the time. I was thinking that everybody should leave the place immediately. That evening, I knocked on S.'s door. She was staying across the hall from me. The two of us took a walk together. I had a strong feeling of fear and disgust. I had even knocked on Jokei's door, in an effort to encourage her to get out of DBZ, before realizing that it was almost impossible to explain, to anybody, what had gone on.

On my walk with S., I asked her to challenge Mr. Shimano the best she could. I considered this an important thing for her to do. I had seen so many abuses, and Mr. Shimano was a calculating man. It was impossible to explain the level of deception, and there was that faith and reverence, that all students have in these characters. The only solution was for her to see for herself.

S. was relatively new there. She said she would think about it. We went back to our rooms.

That night, I had a lot of trouble sleeping. I was anxious. I was awake

practically the whole night.

The next morning I went to dokusan during the first period. I was dead tired. Mr. Shimano told me to apologize to him. Stupefied, I asked him "for what?" and he explained that I was to apologize for grabbing the stick and throwing it behind me I pointed to toward the Zendo and told him that the people in there believe in him, and he is lying to them, every second of every day. I asked him how he could do this. He grunted. I told him I was leaving. I stood up and walked out the door.

I walked straight to my room, stopping only to mention to the head nun (Fujin) that I would be leaving. In a monastery, if you do anything out of the ordinary, you have to ask permission from the Shikaryo. This was the middle of sesshin. I had been there for over three and a half years, and it was commonly known how much I enjoy sesshin. People thought I was a little crazy, at DBZ, for enjoying sesshin. My leaving was out of the ordinary.

To my surprise, Fujin immediately started screaming, making a big scene about me being angry. I said nothing. I wasn't in the least bit angry. I was extremely tired, and sad.

As always, this rage was confusing. Fujin went on and on, even screaming about how I was holding my arms in an (apparently) angry posture.

I have to say: It seems, to me, that people just hear "conflict" and their brains freeze. I've always considered this an unfortunate fact of the world – that people can't even tell who is actually going crazy, and over what. Their minds seem to say only "oh no! I wish it to stop!"

I didn't respond. Foolishly, I looked down at my arm, before realizing what Fujin was doing. This was a show, as such displays often were, for the other people in the kitchen. Fujin would later claim that I was furious, and violent. For some reason, this often works, at DBZ. One person screams as viciously and loudly as possible at another, about something imaginary, then claims the other was fighting.

I never even raised my voice at the monastery. People will immediately think "Oh Jushin you have no self-knowledge, because I have heard stories..." But I know when I get angry, and the stories are lies.

I was often in a bad mood, and confused, because of all that was going on, but that isn't anger. I was shaking my head a lot, rolling my eyes, waving my arms, and asking what the heck was going on. I was doing this all the time.

It has been broadcast many, many times, by the nuns, that I was an angry person, it just was not true. I didn't hate the nuns, and always dealt well with them well in the occasional moments where they weren't yelling. I never even said anything mean to them except that I thought they were nuts.

That's how I saw it. You scream violently, for 45 minutes (timed, actually, once, by me in the office), about being offered a free flower garden for your monastery, it means you are crazy.

I went upstairs, lay down in bed, and went to sleep.

I was still asleep when a woman, Jimen, knocked on my door. This woman and I had always been friends. I would often greet her at the door and carry her bags to her room. I had just helped her get her car fixed the day before sesshin. The porcupines had chewed up a tire. She and I would often chat casually. We would always be happy to see one another.

Jimen walked in and asked me why I had attacked Roshi. I asked her what she was talking about, and thus began a horrible few days.

With Jimin, I had faced the full weight of the unbelievable (to me) one-way vision that I had mentioned earlier. In my talk with her, it was impossible to get anything across.

This was a terrible time. It was relatively new to me, and it was confusing. The conversation went very much like this:

Jimin: Why did you attack Roshi?

Me: What are you talking about?

Jimin: Are you saying you didn't attack Roshi?

Me: What are you saying? Who said I attacked Roshi?

Jimin: OK. Let me rephrase, then. Why are you so angry? Why do you hold so much rage?

Me: I'm not angry. Hey. Look. Roshi was angry. He was

furious. You should have seen him. You should have heard him.

Jimin: In Zen, we are taught to look at ourselves. We are taught to look inward.

Me: Yeah OK. [pause] There. I'm not angry. Do I look angry? And I wasn't angry. I was just sleeping here. I was asleep! What did you hear? From whom?

Jimin: Roshi cares about you, very much. He sent me in here. He loves you very much.

Me: Umm. Jimin. I doubt that. You don't know what happened. What did he say?

Jimin. I see. I think you need help. Will you do that? Will you come with me and get some help?

Me: Help for what?

Jimin: Your anger. perhaps there is something you are not seeing.

Me: Jimin, have you ever seen me angry? Who carried your bags for you every time you showed up? Was I ever even argumentative? Ever?

Jimin: I hear you have had some trouble with Fujin and Jokei. Is this true?

Me: Who hasn't had trouble with the nuns? Why not talk to any off the dozens of people who have left this place? It was never me throwing tantrums. You don't know.

Jimin: Well, I think you should get some help.

Me: Thanks for your concern, Jimin. But look. I'm not the liar here, and I'm not the angry one. Did you know that Roshi lied to a donor for money? Everybody knows this. Ask anyone.

Jimin: Ahhh I see.

Me: You see what?

Jimin: It is a mistake to idolize your master. He is only human, like you and me.

Me: Idolize? What? Jimin, I get the feeling you are not listening to anything I say.

Jimin: He cares about you deeply. He is very concerned. Will you agree to come with me to see a doctor?

Me: Seriously, Jimin, what makes you think I'm angry?

Jimin: Well, you do seem annoyed, at this moment. Do you realize that I am here to help you?

Me: Jimin, I'm annoyed because you have called me angry like a dozen times, and you have no basis for this belief. I just went through something extremely unpleasant. This conversation is ten times more unpleasant, given what I just went through. What basis do you have for believing whatever it is you believe? What are you thinking?

Jimin: Well, let me ask you about women. I hear you have had some trouble with women.

Me: What sort of trouble? What are you talking about? What are you trying to do?

Jimin: Can we talk about the women you have been with?

Me: What? Look, I don't want to. I don't even know what you are talking about. Jimin, let me get some sleep, ok?

With that, Jimin left, but this talk troubled me greatly. I wanted to talk to someone about it. I had no idea what was going on. As I had done the previous day, I knocked on S's door, just across the hall. S. was in the morning meeting. I asked her what people were talking about during the meeting. Since it was sesshin, it was the only time people were together. I told her Jimin was, somehow, under the impression that I had physically attacked Mr. Shimano.

S. told me the manner in which Mr. Shimano had spoken. S., herself, half-believed Mr. Shimano's vague portrayal of the events.

Mr. Shimano had announced that I would be leaving DBZ. He then instructed sesshin officers to forbid that anyone speak to me, except for Jimin, who would be entrusted with my care.

Following this, apparently, Mr. Shimano had expressed deep concern for my well-being. He had expressed hope that I would get over my "deep troubles". He had said that, thankfully, he had not been seriously hurt, and he wished that, with professional care, I would be happy and functional in this life, even if it might not be at DBZ.

His portrayal was nothing at all like what had actually gone on. I had heard Mr. Shimano speak like this before, but I had no idea how powerful this kind of lie was. I could never dream up someone doing this -- speaking this way, in this manner -- leading people to false conclusions by portraying himself as some sort of valiant, sorrowful victim. This was unheard of, for me. It was truly unimaginable, manipulative, and diabolical.

In case you are curious about what this type of lie-cubed sounds like, it sounds like this (read it very slowly):

"I... have... unfortunat-u... announcement... .. Jushin... rrong-time... student-u

has decided... to... rreave... Dai bosatsu... Zendo I ... hope...he can... find... peace where he... can... Even... if... it...isn't here... In dokusan... yesterday... evening... there was... unfortunate-u... incident...[deep sigh]... Thankfully... I was not... seriously... hurt... I will do... what I... can.... To help... him...but-u... I am... Only... Zen master... and... sometimes... it is... not... enough..."

It goes on like this, and people eat it up. I had just been through two dokusans where Mr. Shimano had been shaking with rage, spitting threats, and cursing like a lunatic, in Japanese. Here he was leading people to a very opposite conception of events, using his powerfully deceptive way of lying.

I had witnessed all the backstabbing and subterfuge, and had seen that Mr. Shimano was at the center of it.

Nothing made sense – for example -- were the nuns plotting against visiting groups out of their own dislikes or was Mr. Shimano involved?

Or was it just “hatred” and arrogance that fueled the place, plain and simple?

In any case, this was the worst part of my time there – seeing just how effective Mr. Shimano’s brand of deception is

This was incredible, to me.

It is just sitting still, cooking, and cleaning. That is life in a monastery. Why all the plotting and scheming? Mr. Shimano attacks before you even know you are his enemy. He doesn’t even let you know. He sets things up so that his attacks come from different people and different angles, all the time.

That is why it is so cowardly. You don’t even get a chance. I didn’t “attack” Mr. Shimano. Rumors are spread and you hear things and you don’t even know where they are coming from. You try to defuse them, or you challenge people to check for themselves, but there is so much deceit.

This is what you face, when you leave in the manner I did. It is upsetting to finally see it, but you have been set up, in a way. If you express any upset, you just fit the image that Mr. Shimano and his nuns have

painstakingly manufactured, over the years.

People hear the way Jimin heard. Nobody ever checks. They just see poor little Mr. Shimano, speaking sorrowfully in slow motion. All those people who "went crazy" when they left, over the decades, must all have some deep-rooted issues. Why did it keep happening at DBZ? Well, lots of people must have deep-rooted issues.

That is the way the thinking goes.

Mr. Shimano knows he can get away with just about anything, this way. And there is no way to get to the bottom of things. Mr. Shimano has always made sure of that. The Japanese Zen tradition is set up so that nearly all communication with the master is done in secret, and Mr. Shimano has always made sure there was no open discussion, at all, in his monastery.

There is no open discussion, ever. There are secret meetings, backroom talks, and so on. Mr. Shimano has many of these little meetings in times of controversy. But he doesn't use them to arrive at clarity. He uses them to politick, to backstab, to float suspicion, and to attack the character of perceived threats. All the while, he uses his little "poor me" trick. He always appears as the victim.

Always, Mr. Shimano was at the center of things.

I was a fighter all my life – I mean a sport fighter. Up until a few years ago, I'd still drop by gyms, on my travels. I was the captain of my wrestling team in high school, beating the NJ state champ my Junior year, and I was captain of my university Judo team. Though I had never placed nationally, I had done alright, against national-level competition. While at DBZ, I still grappled a bit with the guys, in fact. Zenchu had done a couple of years or so of Brazilian Ju Jitsu. Seizan had done some Judo in high school, back in Japan, like most all Japanese guys. I donated some GIs to the guys so we could grapple during the off periods. We would do that, now and then. I had also donated that gym – a treadmill and weightlifting equipment. I was still in good shape (don't believe me? ask Zenchu!).

It was amazing to me that anyone could even begin to think that I might have attempted to harm Mr. Shimano. If I had ever wished to harm this man, a 74 year old, overweight, little man who had been sitting still for the

last 50 years, I could have very easily done so, and he would still be hurt today.

The man was in no physical condition whatsoever. He had no exercise at all aside from picking his nose – and even this ugly act was something he labored through in painfully slow motion (almost every morning meeting, by the way). The thought of hurting this puffy little lump of a man had never even crossed my mind. I couldn't believe that anyone could possibly believe this. It was unreal that anyone could consider this seriously.

People still believe this. Over time, as these things go in these places, the rumors got stronger and stronger. DBZ uses the FOX news technique – repeat something over and over, loudly enough, and everyone will believe it. Throw in some trickery (as illustrated above), and people will not even question. Years after my time at DBZ, I'd sometimes come into contact with people who would recognize my name. They'd say "oh you are the guy who beat up Eido Shimano? What happened?" And I'd roll my eyes. What can you do?

Want to know how it feels to go through this? Not so good! The natural reaction is to think "I'm going to walk up into Shimano's room and beat the piss out of him! It is what people think anyway!"

But you can't do that.

It is not a fun position.

At the time, I was very annoyed by this. I was troubled. So I reminded S. that I had spoken with her the previous evening, and she had seen me in the Zendo in the morning, and she was talking to me now. I asked her if I ever appeared angry. She admitted that I had not. I again asked her to try for herself -- to try to come up with challenges for Mr Shimano. I figured this was the only way anyone could believe me. It had felt horrible, being in the position I was in.

S. finally agreed she would do something. She had been with me. I wasn't angry. If anything, I had been frightened of Mr. Shimano, for a bit, the previous night. I had taken that walk to shake things off.

She didn't ask anything of her own. Instead, during the next period, she asked Mr. Shimano if he had understood what I had done. She was

talking about what I had done with the stick.

Mr. Shimano responded "Yes, but it was not traditional"

S. immediately understood the lie in this statement, either way you look at it.

She stood up, screamed "This room is supposed to be about TRUTH!" and stormed out.

So S. decided to leave DBZ too, after sesshin. Like me, she wanted to stick around, to say goodbye to friends. For a while, Jimin continued to stop by my room. Each time, the conversation was as frustrating as the first. Knowing what was going on, I had found it harder and harder to sleep. I eventually agreed to go with her to the doctor. I figured it would be a couple of hundred bucks or so (by the way: It was a couple thousand!). I hadn't spoken to any "normal" people – it was disallowed, and it was disheartening to me that nobody came in to chat. Jimin was really driving me up the wall.

I had to get out of there. I needed some air.

We drove to the hospital, and I filled out a form and spent time with women's magazines. Finally, I was brought into a room. I was told to lie down on a bed. A guy came in and took some blood. A heavysset lady poked and prodded for a little while. Jimin was standing around anxiously. I politely indicated to her that I'd be Ok by myself. She left and I had a half hour to myself to relax.

Finally, the mental health guy came in, and we talked for a half hour or so. I immediately felt better, talking to this guy. He was a very serious-looking black man, whose name I now forget. I am sure there are records. In our conversation, he had seemed familiar with DBZ. He had closed his eyes and taken a deep breath when I had mentioned the place. It may be a dead end, but, perhaps he might have an opinion on Mr. Shimano, if anyone wants to research this, for the lawsuit, or something.

He had the blood test results with him. He said I was perfectly healthy. I told him some of what had happened. He immediately suggested that I leave the place as soon as I possibly could. He stressed this. I told him

that was my plan, and that I would be leaving in a few days. He said that was good. I told him that I had barely slept for a few days, and hinted that something to help me sleep might help some, but he resisted the idea, gently explaining that sleep would come naturally.

I asked him about the strange fear that I had felt. It was a strong feeling I had had, during that first walk with S. It was unusual for me, as though I was suddenly filled with an uncomfortable liquid, called "fear", that poured in suddenly – actually, while I was lying down in bed that night. What had happened was: I was lying there, when suddenly, in my mind, I had this intrusive little image in my head of Mr. Shimano rocking back and forth while sitting cross-legged, with his forearms crossed menacingly in front of his face. Then the liquid "fear" poured in. It was unusual. It never happened any other time in my life.

So I asked this man about what I had felt. I didn't bring up the little image. The doctor again closed his eyes, then said one word: "deception", before explaining that it would be a normal reaction, given what I had been through.

I left. On the way to the car, I showed Jimin the report. I very stupidly considered this a kind of vindication. To Jimin, it was nothing of the sort. She became very worried, and after a few minutes, started asking me about women again. I told her I had indeed had girlfriends, in my life, and all but one were now ex-girlfriends. I asked her so what? What had she heard?

I reminded Jimin that she had just introduced me to her daughter -- a lovely young woman -- only a few days before, when I had driven Jimin to the repair shop. How had I behaved then? Was I drooling? Did she think I was plotting an attack? What had changed?

Suddenly frightened, Jimin said "let us please leave my daughter out of this."

I didn't know what to say. How could she think this way? It was that thing again – the diamond-hard nut. Jimin and I were friends one moment, and then, the next, I was some sort of monster, in her eyes. This had nothing to do with any interaction between the two of us. There was no communication. There was a kind of certainty, in her mind, that I couldn't even approach.

I realized I would never be able to speak with this woman. Trying to talk to her was like sticking your face into jet exhaust. What could I do but give up?

I asked her if she wouldn't mind continuing on in silence. We drove up the hill without speaking.

When we reached the top, I immediately packed a little bag, and moved down to Tomcho's gate house. Tomcho was away for the week. He had mentioned I could use his place in a pinch, if I needed to. I wanted to stick around to say a short goodbye to people. I had lived with these people for three and a half years straight.

Tomcho's place was good for me. I fished out a frozen pizza from the freezer, lit up the oven, and cooked it up. I found a Budweiser and cracked it open. Good old Tomcho. I had myself this satisfactory little dinner and, following this, I leaned back on the couch, and dropped off into a deep, deep sleep. It felt very good to be away, if only at the bottom of the hill.

S. called the next day. Jimin had expressed concern, in morning meeting, about whether or not the man I spoke with was "a real doctor". I had given up by then. But it still had hurt to hear. Later on, Jimin called a couple of times to ask if I wanted food. I had learned by then that it was a mistake to say anything but "no thank you". So, I kept saying "no thank you" though a couple of phone calls over the next couple of days, and Jimin and I never spoke again.

At the end of the week, I said goodbye to my friends. I tried to warn people about the place—tried to get them to leave. It was very painful to watch people sit there and smile and nod. I knew there was really no way to get anyone to see what I had seen. There really wasn't anyone who would even consider doing something like S. had. It was a sad time for me.

For a couple of years, I kept in light contact with some friends from DBZ, but I've found even this to be a challenge. As it was when I was there, there is no real communication. It just doesn't happen. People bring up Zen and if I say anything, the assumption is almost always that I'm coming from a place of jealousy, or hatred, or "Zen ignorance", or something of the sort. That is where the conversation goes, immediately. So I don't

say anything. I just sit there. And I find it unpleasant listening to people speak of Mr. Shimano in sweetly loving terms.

I don't hate Mr. Shimano. I'm amazed at the man. I would never wish to be anything like the man. I can't say I feel sorry for him, but I often consider what I've seen as perhaps the most horrible life anyone might concoct, in any nightmare – a life of no warm feeling, a life of deceit, scheming, hidden hatreds, and concealed fear. No gentle giggles with someone close – no normal good times, no honest laughs. It is a completely pretend life – one that requires rigorous attention to the details of the pretense. Why choose such a life? For the money? For the now-and-then bouts of cold sexual conquest?

I would lose touch with the other woman who left, S., too. Ironically, our very last phone conversation involved Joshu Sasaki, from Mt. Baldy. S. had liked the place. I had often mentioned, to her, that Mr. Sasaki was doing the exact same thing Mr. Shimano is doing, and that this is a terrible thing – the worst type of fraud, in this world – and that it will always lead to great corruption, even if one has a nice time, while visiting.

I didn't know about the Sasaki stories, at the time. I only knew about the particular type of fraud, and the type of manipulative, deceitful character it takes to devote your life to such falsehood.

When I'd speak this way of Mr. Sasaki, S. just considered me a trouble addict, of sorts.

And so, S. and I never spoke again.

I'll write about my time at Mt. Baldy, too, soon.

I kept living in and visiting monasteries since I left DBZ. I've stayed in maybe 18 or so. I wrote a little blog for some time about these visits. It made me feel a little better. I wrote about Mr. Sasaki and Mr. Shimano, in particular. That was The Mu News II. (The Mu News one was a joke news site that I ran from my room at DBZ, with headlines like “Meditators Report Tenfold Increase in Powers of Fantasy”).

But the Mu News II was mostly an unrewarding exercise. It was certainly no fun to see the nuns posting (anonymously, of course) in online forums more false stories beginning “Being a Buddhist, maybe I shouldn't say this

about Jushin, but some women have secretly come up to me and told me...”

I had already been through enough of that up at DBZ – certainly enough to see how effective it is. These lies are floated and you have to spend time in a kind of amazed despair. You are forced to explain yourself, wasting time answering to things that never happened. You have stupid, pointless conversations about imaginary incidents, asking people to talk to others who were there and would have seen, or to investigate themselves and find the (imaginary) victim.

It is an unbelievably cruel thing to have happen to you. It feels horrible, and you wonder how anyone could choose to be so vicious. I didn't do anything to deserve such attacks. I never even broke any rules – even as DBZ changed them, again and again. On my blog, and on the online forums, I had never even mentioned the nuns. This post, right here, is the first time I ever wrote about them.

Such attacks just make you want to turn away from it all. People don't even ask. People could check, but they don't. People could watch and see for themselves, or just trust their own eyes. They never do. They take whatever their “Zen” authority figures say.

I can't imagine ever conspiring to destroy somebody, this way – the way the nuns did, and the way Mr. Shimano did.

It works. That is why they do it. A perfect 100 percent of the people turn their attention away from the crimes and abuses that are being committed. Nobody thinks “hey wait a second... who was actually molesting women?” It just works.

Realizing this, I eventually took my blog down. I figured things would eventually come out about these guys. People have to find out for themselves. I figured why bother going through the torture of telling people? Nobody wants to hear anyway, and people can be so mean, so condescending, so dismissive – even afterward, as decades worth of stories pile up.

Talking about the problems in Zen is like a black hole – put energy in, nothing comes out. If you tell the truth, you are attacked, called a liar, dismissed as “not Zen” (whatever that means), and lied about. If you lie,

attack women, steal money, denigrate “stupid Americans”, and bear false witness, then, you are bowed to, chauffeured around, given luxury apartments, and handed sums of money.

Everybody in Zen seems OK about that arrangement.

It is crazy. How do you talk to crazy people?

I gave up. But I knew stories would eventually come out. These sorts of men cannot do anything up-front. They can't even think that way. It isn't in their nature to deal straightforward. They will always choose secrecy, manipulation, and deceit. They build their house of cards, and if you live that way, the wind takes one every now and then. Word gets out. It is impossible to keep such a mountainous volume of lies under cover.

Now, I'm going to mention some facts that nobody will believe. I'll warn you first, by number.

There are big, big problems in the “spiritual” traditions – especially Zen. Japanese Zen is unique in that the tradition gives the “master” totalitarian authority, and that authority is expressed in strict hierarchical form.

(One) But, the truth is, there is no “real insight” without a willing, natural and heartfelt abandonment of any and all position and status that place one “over” and/or “apart from” others. These sentiments are replaced by a simple, friendly wish that others around you are comfortable and in good cheer.

This friendly, open, helpful behavior, really has no place atop the Japanese Zen tradition.

So the Zen world is upside-down.

(Two) Even if you are just talking kensho, a real kensho means you know what you are before you were born (no typo), and today's leaders in Zen don't have this, either, despite their constant talk about it.

A master who says “there is no self”, or one who talks about “an experience of no-self” or one who offers thoughts on believing in “god”, or not believing in “god”, has never had one either. Someone who talks

about kensho having anything to do with “intuition” has never had a real one. A master or monk who defines “impermanence” as something to do with how all things go away, given enough time, has never had one. A master who dismisses questions like “what happens when you die?” as “philosophical games” (e.g. Goenka) has never had one. Someone who cannot ask you a real question, of his own, as a test, has never had one.

Even saying “the past is gone” throws your entire life into a mistaken idea.

Actually, that covers pretty much everyone among the leadership of Zen.

I know people will dismiss this as idiotic, but what I say is true. Before calling me an idiot, find out for yourself. At least, you can ask yourself how you might do that.

(Three) Characters like Mr. Shimano and Mr. Sasaki know very well that they are lying about their “insight”, and this is why they always kept such tight control over the members of their sanghas. They allow no questions in public, and manipulate others so that anyone who might question them is incessantly bullied and/or harassed and/or rendered effectively mute through constant character attacks.

The watch everything with great care. As long as you worship them, they will happily continue their “great teacher” act. If anything you do threatens to prick the thick reverence their groups hold for them, they will go through anything to get you out – literally anything.

I know people will read this and think that I am horribly troubled, or that I am projecting some sick, paranoid delusion onto these fat little men.

But that isn’t the case. I doubt there is anyone on the history of DBZ who was more surprised by Mr. Shimano’s actions. I was shocked by the hatred that he expressed toward me, and I had only found out that he was at the center of things because I had trusted him – I had approached him in my efforts to make some things right. My ideas were obvious, simple, innocent little ideas. I had assumed, naively, that Mr. Shimano would embrace them.

I don’t think many people have taken the route that I took. No master or monk that I knew, actually, took the same route. But I only took it because it made sense. It was not as though the nuns would willingly

accept such policy. Mr. Shimano was the only place to go.

His response to this, as I have described, was actually to dial up the manipulation of protocol – doubling fees, changing monastery rules, and thickening the smoky shrouds of suspicion and defamation.

All the while, he hides behind the women he kept around to enact these plans.

Throughout his history, he has always kept such people close to him. They are chosen for their fierce, desperate loyalty.

It is a deliberate ruse. He purposely sets things up this way.

Why does he do it?

Well, he manages to manipulate things in his favor. That's one thing. He has always managed to control the composition of his board to his benefit. He whispers and whispers sets people against one another. This goes on until someone can't take it anymore, and they give up. People have their normal lives. Why deal with it? They give up and leave.

Miraculously, that's always about the time for a big decision to be made – what to do about this scandal? Or... Wouldn't a retirement package be nice? Or... Oh no another scandal! What to do? Or... Huh!? FaithTrust recommended a forensic audit? What now?

This way, things work out for him, always. Of course, he also gets away with his own continual sexual experiments. He gets himself a whole lot of money, and assets.

Other than that, I don't know why he does it!

But I'll say that this very question is a big part of the reason that he gets away with all that he does. It is nearly impossible to conceive of someone who might spend so much time plotting and deceiving with such manipulative cruelty – especially if their job is just to sit, walk around in circles, and have a chat now and then.

Even after all the stories – even after all the abuses have come to light – it is still almost impossible for most people to imagine such a conniving

character.

Me too – it was difficult for me to imagine such a character. That is why I had trusted him, throughout all the things that were going on up there. Who would live like this? Nobody. So you don't even consider it.

Being interested, one thing I did after leaving DBZ was to read biographies of notorious historical figures. I read histories of Mao and Pol Pot, and I watched a documentaries of Hitler and Stalin.

This was actually fascinating.

You see some patterns.

Mao was always ambitious. People had no idea what the guy was thinking. He was singling out political enemies well before anybody knew.

He had been a (tenuous) military ally of Chang Kai Shek's when China was fighting the Japanese. As a lower political figure and member of the Army, he had struggled to maneuver himself into a middling communications position. From there, he would secretly relay bogus orders to Chang Kai Shek and his troops.

Mao had the nationalist troops marching back and forth through disease-filled swamps. They were dying off, and Chang Kai Shek was expressing confusion and dismay. He had no clue what was going on.

Mao was doing this for the singular purpose of disallowing the nationalist leader to gain a political advantage. The actual war meant nothing to him. He just didn't want to have to read about any nationalist military victories in the papers.

Mao was acting purely in self-interest, intentionally leading troops to their death, solely to weaken the future prospects of a man who, as of yet, had no idea he was an enemy of the anonymous man in the communications towers transmitting him orders.

Why didn't anyone suspect?

Because it is unbelievable! What kind of character would endeavor to secure a lowly communications position just to deceive his own support

troops into marching through deadly swamps, all for the possibility of future political gain?

Who thinks this way? Not so many people! Who harbors such dark motivations? Not so many people!

So the goings-on just appeared strange, and confusing, to most witnesses. In discussions, it was always assumed that innocent mistakes were made. Even the victims, marching through the swamp, dying of hunger and disease, had no suspicions of deliberate malice. They didn't even know someone was attacking them. There were hidden motivations at work.

That is the way things were up at DBZ – strange and confusing – people being attacked for no obvious reason, with rumor and attacks frothing up out of nowhere, always.

All of it seemed pointless.

But there was always a point. Through the constant churn, you always see the same guy benefitting -- and in the ugliest of ways -- money, coercive sex, and power.

I finally realized there is no reason to ask myself why Mr. Shimano behaves in the manner that he does. It is simply his character. He behaves the way he does because that is what he is, and he cannot behave another way.

It really isn't as though he has a choice.

Other people have a choice – compassionate people have a choice – they have their temptations and they wrestle with their conscience. The world throws down its shifting maze, and they make their way through. This struggle is the source of all art, and beauty.

With Mr. Shimano, it is different. His path is determined. He can't think in any other way. He will always try to get, from everyone, the very most that he can, any way he can.

This is how he thinks, first.

And for him, there is no “second”. The man just doesn’t have the feeling that most people have. He doesn’t wrestle with anything at all. He backstabs those who have served him for decades, and he does it as easily and casually as others might tie their shoes.

The single-minded insistence on Zen “form” within his monastery provides enough opacity to hide his motivations. The form is actually all that most people have a chance to see, and it is impressive enough. But it’s just a show. The decades of harm at DBZ are direct reflections of one man’s greed, avarice, lust, and dishonesty. All of the numbing sayings and all the talk of “great tradition” are like a silk scarf draped over an open sewer – useless, completely pointless, and presenting much more peril than cure.