

Munich, February 4, 2011

International Cultic Studies Association
P.O. Box 2265
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Subject: Eido T. Shimano and the Zen Studies Society, Inc.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you of a situation of longstanding abuse and manipulation of students at the above-mentioned religious organisation, the Zen Studies Society, Inc. (ZSS). Briefly stated, Mr. Eido T. Shimano, the abbot of the ZSS's monastery in upstate New York, has been accused of (among other things) sexually predating on dozens of female students over a period spanning almost fifty years. The situation is not completely unknown to the public, as both the New York Times¹ and the Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP)² have covered the story. However, as of today, not only does Mr. Shimano continue to remorselessly deny any wrongdoing, but the ZSS still refuses to openly engage with his victims and instead stands steadfastly behind their beloved teacher.

A unique aspect of this case is that said abuse by Shimano, and the accompanying collaboration by successive ZSS boards of directors, has already been painstakingly documented and made publicly available. The website www.shimanoarchive.com provides a fascinating glimpse into the workings of a clearly cultish group and their charismatic leader. Although I of course invite you to examine the entirety of this evidence yourselves, allow me in the present letter to at least direct you to certain sample documents which I believe make a good prima facie case.

To begin, the most damning documents are of course those that provide first-person accounts of Mr. Shimano's numerous sexual aggressions against his students. Indeed, the evidence thereof has since become so mountainous that even his most devoted followers are slowly mitigating their expressions of adoration. Both the aforementioned New York Times article and the 1982 report *Zen and the Art of Seduction*³ provide good, objective summaries in this regard.

Next, please examine some examples of the cult-like denial and intimidation demonstrated by Shimano's followers, which have enabled him to unabashedly continue said abuse for decades. Although I am aware that a 'cult' can be defined in many different ways, for the present purposes I have taken some key signs enumerated in the article *How to spot a Buddhist cult*⁴ by Upasaka HL Wai and referenced to evidence thereof in specific Shimano Archive documents. For ease of understanding I have also added some short explanations of unfamiliar terms in square brackets.

1 www.nytimes.com/2010/08/21/us/21beliefs.html

2 www.sanghaconvergence.org/DATA/SNAP_Responds.pdf

3 www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19820400R_Zen_Seduction.pdf

4 www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=70,4410,0,0,1,0

Sign of Buddhist Cult	Shimano Archive Document	Sample Quote
<p>More often than not, his "holiness" is self anointed and various honorific titles are produced without any clear evidence of certification</p>	<p>Letter dated 11/20/84 from Robert Aitken to Rosemary Kiefer</p>	<p>"So, any transmission given to Eido Shimano by Soen Roshi [his teacher S. Nakagawa] was informal, and any withdrawal of that transmission would also have been informal. Neither action was ever mentioned at Ryutakuji [Japanese Zen monastery] by Soen Roshi."</p>
	<p>Letter from Jiro Andy Afable to the ZSS board of directors dated 06/03/10</p>	<p>"At this point, the documents that are in public view [...] significantly alter perceptions of the 'history of a transmission' depicted in [the book] Namu Dai Bosa. [...] The lineage itself will be seen as problematic."</p>
	<p>Official dharma transmission genealogical table dated 9/20/10</p>	<p>Shimano not listed</p>
<p>Cult followers will display an unquestionable zeal for their leader and will refuse to accept that their leader is ever wrong</p>	<p>Dai Bosatsu Zendo 30th anniversary celebration brochure dated 07/15/06</p>	<p>"Roshi [Shimano's honorific title], you have irrevocably changed our lives and the course of Dharma here in the West. You might respond that this has been nothing more than your karma. But this Sangha [group of Buddhists] owes you everything."</p>
	<p>A statement by Genjo Marinello, Shimano's fifth dharma heir, to the American Zen Teachers' Association private listserv dated 06/09/10</p>	<p>"Eido Roshi's actions were not even illegal, just unconscionable by our standards, still it is not like he forced, bribed, coerced or paid anyone to have sex with him. No one has ever claimed that he has had any relationships with anyone except consenting adults, who should of [sic!] known better themselves. [...] As to why I continue to associate with him, he has demonstrated to my satisfaction, that he can see, hear, speak and act as the ancestors of our lineage [...]"</p>
	<p>ZSS announcement: Shinge-shitsu Roko Sherry Chayat Roshi will be installed as the monastery's second abbot, dated 11/20/10</p>	<p>"Shinge Roshi expresses her gratitude for Eido Roshi's uncompromising and penetrating Dharma Eye, which reveals directly the luminous power of the unconditioned mind."</p>
<p>Followers are constantly reminded that they are being bullied by "unseen" hands, by people in authority and by those who are "jealous" of their unorthodox ways</p>	<p>A statement by Genjo Marinello, Shimano's fifth dharma heir, to the American Zen Teachers' Association private listserv dated 06/09/10</p>	<p>"This current controversy, over old material, has been and continues to be fanned by four men with old grudges, intent to 'bring him down,' as one has said directly. By the way, none of the four men I am referring to are members of AZTA, but please be aware that a man who was declined membership in AZTA, in part because Eido Roshi would not acknowledge [sic!] him as a Dharma Teacher, started the current wave of vilification."</p>
<p>Anyone wishing to attend or visit another Dharma group or center is shunned by the rest of the congregation and considered to be a backslider</p>	<p>An open letter from a former student at the Zen Center of Syracuse dated 01/05/11</p>	<p>"Shinge Roshi told the sangha not to sit outside of our zendo with those that had left the sangha."</p>
	<p>The genkaku-again blog concerning Eido Shimano. 2,027 pages, captured 02/10/10</p>	<p>"I left after asking him [Shimano] about a number of dealings I had somehow heard about -- the last of which involved a student being told to lie on her application for scholarship money. I'd often just speak up in morning meeting, assuming some mistake had been made. But I was learning these things weren't mistakes.</p> <p>Finally one day, in Dokusan [private interview], Shimano screamed at me in rage for perhaps four or five full minutes. It was an unbelievable anger. He was red-faced and spitting. "Who are you to ask me! You are nothing! I built this place!" etc. etc. I was thinking "this man is sick".</p> <p>So, that night, I told people I'd be leaving, and I told a couple others they should too. The next morning, unknown to me, Shimano held a meeting where he told people I had attacked HIM, and that nobody should speak to me."</p>

Financial exploitation; cult is usually preoccupied with raising money, either for charitable purposes or to build their center	Letter from Mrs. Chester F. Carlson (widow of the founder of Xerox) to Jean Bankier dated 02/08/84	"It was never my intention to make a gift of \$160,000 to the Roshi. [...] It is only because of the spiritual stature of Eido Roshi that I give any funds for the New York Zen Studies Society. If it were not for him, I should not have been interested. Indeed, I do not share that same confidence that I once did and this is so because many reliable sources have reported to me that the spiritual stature of the Zen Studies Society has been compromised over the years because of Eido Roshi's behaviour."
	An appeal by ZSS to build a \$100,000 entry gate dated 06/10/10	"To commemorate Eido Roshi's 50th Anniversary in the United States, and to express his gratitude to the Three Treasures, a Sanmon (gate complex) will be built at the entrance of Dai Bosatsu Zendo [ZSS monastery]. The total cost will be approximately \$100,000. Please join Eido Roshi in making this historical project a reality."
Cult religions rely on private and public intimidation to keep their members in line. [...] weak individuals or those facing personal problems are especially susceptible to such treatment.	Statements by Nonin Chowaney of Zen Forum International dated 05/22/10	"Things are the way they are. If someone is carrying ill-will, hard feelings, or whatever from events [sexual abuse by Shimano] fifteen years past, he or she has to deal with them, and if an apology never came or is not forthcoming, he or she has to deal with that. If Zen practice has not helped the person move on, seeing a counselor or therapist is in order. Some psychological issues need the kind of help provided by a professional."
	An account and commentary from Phil Benezra dated 01/10/11	"While practicing there, during the period of about a year and a half, I witnessed a student attempt to take his own life by stabbing himself in the belly with a knife. A young military vet who 'lost it' in the Zendo [meditation hall], 'went off the deep end psychologically' and had to be picked up by parents. Another student, myself, who temporarily 'went off the deep end' into what psychiatrists might call paranoid schizophrenia. Meanwhile Eido Roshi was still having or attempting to have sexual relationships with students [...] Is there a connection between the 'crazy' behavior of a few students and Eido Roshi's 'lack of morality' (as he once put it)?"
Such leaders are also adept at pricking on guilt conscience, often playing with the mind of the confused	Dai Bosatsu Zendo 30 th anniversary celebration brochure dated 07/15/06	"Roshi described his early beginnings in the Zen Studies Society, saying that, well before Shobo-ji's [ZSS urban centre] construction, he'd sometimes find himself so hungry (having arrived in New York without much money and no official zendo yet) that he would drink and drink water, then walk around the city for hours."
	A letter from Christopher Hamacher to the ZSS board of directors dated 09/04/10	"However, when I got back up afterwards and glanced at him [Shimano], I was taken aback by the expression on his face. He was practically glowing, with great, round eyes and an enigmatic smile, as if he had just given me some extraordinary gift, and was waiting for the corresponding acknowledgement. It was just a brief moment, but nevertheless extremely unsettling. Not only had he misunderstood what had just (not) happened, but he was also clearly hoping for a definite emotional response from me."

Allow me just to add that several of the more disconcertingly pro-Shimano comments above were made by people who currently sit on the ZSS board of directors. They thus are currently in a position of power to oppose any internal action initiated against him. Indeed, as a detailed examination of the Archives shows, not only was Shimano himself a member of the board for decades, but he was also apparently allowed to hand-pick all of his fellow board

members - including his own wife as treasurer and director of a ZSS temple - during that time. The ensuing grievous, systemic conflict of interest was clearly a major factor in the numerous cover-ups of his abuse over the years, and continues to thwart any kind of remediation today.

In conclusion, I repeat that the above selection constitutes merely a small fraction of the hundreds of documents contained in the Shimano Archive. I trust, however, that you now have at least enough evidence to merit your further investigation of this case. I would thus appreciate it if, once you have undertaken a more thorough analysis, you could provide me with some suggestions on how a concerned outside party should proceed in addressing these problems. I also of course hope that you will help publicise the case more widely, via any channels to which you have access. I underline that, as of today, Mr. Shimano currently remains in an official capacity within the ZSS, perhaps even under salary, and no effective action to address any of the harm caused has been undertaken. There is therefore a very real danger that the cycle of abuse will continue.

Finally, please note that at least two lawsuits against Shimano and the ZSS are apparently being prepared. Several former ZSS residents/Shimano victims have also indicated a willingness to share their experiences with you directly. I will gladly provide you with appropriate contact information or any other details, should you so require.

Thank you for taking the time to review this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Christopher Hamacher

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