"Zen Has No Morals!" - The Latent Potential for Corruption and Abuse in Zen Buddhism, as Exemplified by Two Recent Cases

by Christopher Hamacher

Paper presented on 7 July 2012 at the International Cultic Studies Association's annual conference in Montreal, Canada.

Christopher Hamacher graduated in law from the *Université de Montréal* in 1994. He has practiced Zen Buddhism in Japan, America and Europe since 1999 and run his own Zen meditation group since 2006. He currently works as a legal translator in Munich, Germany. Christopher would like to thank Stuart Lachs, Kobutsu Malone and Katherine Masis for their help in writing this paper.

"Accusations, slander, attributions of guilt, alleged misconduct, even threats and persecution will not disturb [the Zen Master] in his practice. Defending himself would mean participating again in a dualistic game that he has moved beyond."

- Dr. Klaus Zernickow[1]

"It is unfair to conclude that my silence implies that I must be what the letters say I am. Indeed, in Japan, to protest too much against an accusation is considered a sign of guilt."

- Eido T. Shimano[2]

1. INTRODUCTION

Zen Buddhism was long considered by many practitioners to be immune from the scandals that occasionally affect other religious sects. Zen's iconoclastic approach, based solely on the individual's own meditation experience, was seen as a healthy counterpoint to the more theistic and moralistic world-views, whose leading proponents often privately flouted the very moral codes that they preached. The unspoken assumption in Zen has always been that the meditation alone naturally freed the accomplished practitioner from life's moral quandaries, without the need for rigid rules of conduct imposed from above. The perfect embodiment of this state was held to be the Zen Master, a type of person to whom almost superhuman qualities of insight, spontaneity, compassion, and freedom from desire have been imputed.[3] However, the veracity of such claims is now slowly being called into question, due to numerous modern Zen Masters having in the meantime exhibited behaviour no less scandalous than that seen in other religious communities.[4]

1 Zernickow, Klaus (Sotetsu Yuzen), *Tritt durch die Wand, Die Koan-Sammlung MUMONKAN*, Mumon-Kai Verlag, 2nd Ed. 2011, p. 538. All translations from the German in the present paper are by Christopher Hamacher.

2 Shimano, Eido, letter to "Sangha Member" dated 19 October 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821019_Shimano_Sangha.pdf.

3 Lachs, Stuart, "The Zen Master in America: Dressing the Donkey with Bells and Scarves", paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Washington D.C., 18 November 2006, pp. 1-2. Available at www.hsuyun.org.

4 A partial list of North American Zen centres that have had trouble, in addition to the one discussed in the present paper, includes the San Francisco Zen Center, Moonspring Hermitage in Surry, Maine, the Los Angeles Zen Center, the Kwan Um School of Zen in Providence RI, the Toronto Zen Centre, Shasta Abbey in northern California, and the Kanzeon Zen Center in Salt Lake City. Also, in a study of eight cases of student betrayal by Zen teachers in the United States, five involved inappropriate sexual behaviour by the teacher: see footnote 62.

In this paper I examine two of the most recent and egregious of such scandals in Western Zen: the well-publicised case of Eido T. Shimano in New York, USA, as well as that of Dr. Klaus Zernickow (also known as Sotetsu Yuzen), who is still relatively unknown outside of his home country of Germany. Both of these Zen teachers have been accused of long-term, systematic abuse of their students, with allegations ranging from sexual predation to financial improprieties.

In the first section, I review the respective case histories, including the disconcerting facts that Shimano has only recently stepped down - after almost fifty years of documented misconduct - and Zernickow still teaches unhindered even today. I continue by categorising, with examples, eight types of behaviour that are characteristic of both, though I specifically do not examine the sexual aspect in any detail.[5] The reason is that many of these teachers' students were apparently surprised and shocked when the full extent of the allegations was revealed; presumably because the most universally-condemned type of misconduct, namely the abuse of trust for sexual purposes, always occurs in private under a veil of secrecy. Therefore, by focussing only on those other types of behaviour that are not usually hidden and can be detected at any time by an informed observer, I hope to better enable future students to recognise a potentially abusive Zen teacher long before they themselves are physically accosted[6] - and not to mistakenly believe that he is harmless simply because no new sexual transgressions have been discovered in the recent past.[7]

In the final section, I then discuss how these teachers could have been allowed to continue teaching for so long, despite the flagrant abuse and even though, at least in Shimano's group, scandal after scandal had erupted over the years.[8] I argue that there are in fact several reasons why, on the one hand, such conduct by a Zen teacher might not have been considered inappropriate in the first place, and, on the other, why Zen students might not have been inclined to take action even if the conduct had been deemed wrongful. I also note that the discussed behaviours are all typical warning signs for high-demand/cultic groups, and suggest that, as a consequence, more serious structural problems with Zen underlie the teacher misconduct. I finally conclude that, far from being immune to scandal, Zen Buddhism as it is currently practiced in the

5 For works discussing Shimano's sexual misconduct, see footnotes 12, 69 and Marinello, Genjo Joe, “ZSS and Chobo-ji, A Report by Genjo”, footnote 10. On sexual misconduct by spiritual teachers generally, see the chapter “Gurus and Sexual Manipulation” in *The Guru Papers*, footnote 79.

6 When the chairman of the German Buddhist Union's Ethics Working Group was asked how a student could recognise a potentially unhealthy Zen group, his main example was “any attempt by the teacher to romantically touch the student during a private interview.” I suggest that a problematic teacher may be detected much sooner.

7 For example, although Shimano already had a history of gross misconduct spanning several decades, by early 2010 even very experienced students nevertheless believed that he had “changed his behavior” because no new sex cases had become public for approximately fourteen years. See Phillips, Banko Randy, post to *genkaku-again* blog dated 7 February 2012, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20120206_Phillips.pdf; and Chowaney, Nonin, posts to Zen Forum International, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100522_Nonin_Declarations_ZFI.pdf. See also footnote 243.

8 According to one 1993 report, there was a “mass exodus of people in 1967, 1975, 1979, 1982, 1986 and 1993” from the Zen Studies Society; see footnote 121.

West in fact needs serious re-examination if it intends to remain a viable alternative to the more traditional Western religions.

NB: Though this paper is quite critical of two specific Zen teachers, it is not my intention to suggest that the reader should avoid Zen Buddhism at all costs. The practice of Zen meditation has in fact been very beneficial to me personally, and I leave it up to readers to judge its overall merits for themselves.

2. CASE HISTORIES

a) Eido Shimano

The story of Eido Shimano is presumably unparalleled in modern Zen Buddhism, both in the extent of his abuse and his ability to nonetheless rise to prominence. Though he had evidently already begun victimising students shortly after arriving in the United States in 1961, and continued to do so throughout his fifty-year career, he was still able to become one of the most highly esteemed Buddhist teachers in North America; for example, he has officially met with both the Dalai Lama and Pope Benedict XVI.[9] He finally stepped down with a generous pension[10] from the Zen Studies Society,[11] the non-profit organisation that runs the two temples at which he taught, at the end of 2010.

The evidence documenting Shimano's many ethical breaches and the ensuing coverups was already examined in detail in an essay published in 2009.[12] In the present section, I therefore review only the events that have occurred since that paper was published. Shimano was namely still in office at that time, and the general opinion in the Zen community was that discussing any past transgressions of his constituted “re-hashing” old news.[13]

The watershed occurred on 21 June 2010 when, merely days after he had assured the ZSS board

9 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, press release dated 4 March 2008, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20080304_USCCB_Papal_Visit.pdf.

10 Both Shimano and his wife now receive 70% of their annual salaries as a pension (i.e. approximately $60,000 p.a. for Eido Shimano), plus a 4% annual cost of living adjustment, the expenses of their condominium on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and insurance. See Zen Studies Society, Minutes of the Annual Meeting dated 14 January 1994, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19940115_ZSS_Board.pdf; Zen Studies Society, Meeting of the Board of Directors dated 11 March 2000, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20000311_ZSS_Board.pdf; Marinello, Genjo Joe, “ZSS and Chobo-ji, A Report by Genjo”, Plum Mountain News Winter 2011-2012, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20120301_Marinello_PMN.pdf.

11 The Zen Studies Society, Inc., 233 Beecher Lake Road, Livingston Manor NY 12758, www.zenstudies.org. Abbreviated in the following as “ZSS”.

12 Lachs, Stuart and K., Vladimir, “The Aitken-Shimano Letters,” September 2009, www.hsuyun.org/chan/docs/ENGLISH/pdf/TheAitken-ShimanoLetters.pdf.

13 See footnote 7.

that there had been no ethical breaches in over a decade, yet another intimate relationship between the married, 77-year-old Shimano and a student was revealed.[14] This discovery, combined with pressure from various outside sources,[15] caused a series of reactions at the ZSS which is still ongoing today. First, Shimano resigned from his position on the board,[16] and he then issued an unspecific "heartfelt apology" via email in which he announced that he would also be stepping down from his position as abbot.[17] However, on 1 December 2010, a letter was released in which Shimano declared that he "did not resign because of these false allegations."[18]

On 2 July 2011, supposedly in response to requests for his return by sixty former students, Shimano then issued a public announcement that there would be "no exceptions" to his retirement from teaching.[19] Yet only three days later, he requested permission from the ZSS board to hold meetings and teach in a classroom format.[20] And as of today, he does in fact continue to teach at independent spiritual retreats organised by devoted students.[21] He is apparently still allowed to visit the ZSS, though only under supervision.[22]

b) Dr. Klaus Zernickow (Sotetsu Yuzen)[23]

Klaus Zernickow is a German gynaecologist who has been teaching Buddhism since 1971.[24] His Zen group "Mumon-Kai", incorporated as a non-profit organisation, maintains two temples and an apartment building in a suburb of Berlin, as well as an affiliate temple in Poland and a small vacation cottage in northern Germany.[25] Besides teaching Buddhism, Zernickow also provides his

14 Oppenheimer, Mark, "Sex Scandal has American Buddhists Looking Within", *The New York Times*, 21 August 2010, p. A13.
15 See e.g. www.shimanoarchive.com, http://genkaku-again.blogspot.com/2010/02/eido-tai-shimano.html, and http://robertaitken.blogspot.com/2010/05/eido-tai-shimano-roshi.html.
16 *Supra,* footnote 14.
17 Shimano, Eido, email to ZSS sangha dated 7 September 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100907_Shimano_Sangha.pdf.
18 Shimano, Eido, unpublished letter to the Editor of the New York Times, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20101201_Shimano_NYT.pdf.
19 Zen Studies Society, transcript of an announcement made on July 2nd at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110705_ZSS_Announcement.pdf.
20 Hara, Zensho Martin, email dated 5 July 2010 to Soun Joe Dowling, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110705_Shimano_Dowling.pdf.
21 www.playfulmoon.com/EidoRoshi/where.html. Last accessed on May 23, 2012.
22 Marinello, Genjo Joe, post to Zen Forum International dated 11 July 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20111107_Marinello_ZFI.pdf.
23 Dr. Zernickow has so far vigorously denied the allegations against him, and has threatened at least one former student with legal action. The author thereby would like to underline that none of the accusations against Zernickow have yet been proven in a court of law. However, Ms. Christiane Dietrich, spokeswoman for the Berlin Senate's Control Centre for Cult Issues (*Leitstelle für Sektenfragen*) has confirmed that her Centre has been contacted by 3 different former Mumon-Kai members, who "credibly" reported many of the problems described in this paper. Furthermore, fourteen ex-members maintain a social networking group for mutual support, and first-person testimonials from six thereof, including one signed affidavit, were obtained by the author for the purposes of this paper. Finally, the German Buddhists' Union has also officially distanced itself from Mumon-Kai due to the allegations: see page 8 below.
24 www.mumon-kai.de/en/master-of-rinzai-zen. Last accessed on 23 May 2012.
25 www.mumon-kai.de. The group's official name is "*Erste Berliner Zen-Gemeinschaft e.V.*", Schlieperstrasse 31, 13507

students with therapeutic counselling at his private medical practice, situated in his home adjacent to one of the temples.[26] He is married, with a grown son.[27]

Zernickow's Zen teaching style is generally described as autocratic[28] and controlling.[29] Student transgressions were allegedly punished by arbitrary monetary fines - payments to the so-called "Unmindfulness Kitty" - of anywhere from five to 500 euros. Students were reportedly required to carry an "Emergency Mobile Phone," via which they were to remain available 24 hours a day,[30] and a team of four bodyguards armed with clubs and pepper spray was maintained by the group, ostensibly to protect female members.[31] Zernickow himself allegedly told his students on more than one occasion that he wore a firearm when on the street.[32]

Students were reportedly required to donate funds for many of the group's luxury building projects, such as a group whirlpool and under-floor heating for Zernickow's pet tortoises, as well as to support the group-run restaurants.[33] One former student, C, states having paid approximately 12,000 euros for building and furnishing the group's centre.[34] Students also allegedly had to make numerous mandatory purchases, such as Zernickow's autobiography for 100 euros,[35] an urn in the group's private columbarium in Poland for 500 euros,[36] and all the accessories necessary for the practice, such as meditation robes, eating bowls, etc. All such items nevertheless were expected to be returned and/or forfeited by the student - without financial compensation - upon leaving the group, and most students reportedly complied with this demand.[37] Students were also allegedly expected to purchase Zernickow's musical CDs and books,[38] of which over forty are listed on the Mumon-Kai website.

The Zen training method at Mumon-Kai itself is described as unusually hierarchical, with many conditions and prerequisites to be met before passing from one level to the next.[39] Former student

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Berlin, Germany.

26 Affidavit by former long-time Mumon-Kai student A dated 13 May 2012.

27 Interview with former long-time Mumon-Kai student B dated 11 May 2011. In an email to the author dated 22 January 2012, former student H stated that "I was a member of Mumon-Kai from 1989 to 2003 [...and] hereby confirm the reliability of [B's] testimony."

28 *Ibid*. See also http://blog.buddhistische-sekten.de/?p=207.

29 In an email to the author dated 15 January 2012, ex-member C described Zernickow's obsession with control as follows: "the craziness of everything being perfect was so played out that I had to create a 3 page Excel spreadsheet running form 3 weeks before an event to days and then minutes before an event which outlined who, what, where, and when necessary tasks were supposed to be done."

30 *Ibid*.

31 See footnote 27.

32 See footnote 26.

33 See footnote 27.

34 See footnote 29.

35 See footnote 27.

36 See footnote 26.

37 See footnote 27.

38 See footnote 26.

39 *Ibid.*

B relates only being admitted to koan[40] study after three years in the group, and then, after four years, being asked to join the “inner circle” and being ordained as a monk. He later describes a further step of being asked to become “one of the Master's personal students, which meant that I had to sign a declaration in my own blood, stating among other things that I had to unconditionally follow the Master's instructions without exception, and to care for him as long as I lived, in the same way as he would care for me as long as he lived.” As for the koan curriculum, it is described as being divided into preliminary koans and main koans, with a six-month suspension from koan study being sometimes ordered as punishment for transgressions, such as communicating with an ex-member or having sexual relations with a former partner of Zernickow's.[41] Another ex-Mumon-Kai student, A, states that such koan training

> was often used as an instrument of power and abused in order to promote the teacher's interests. For example, with regard to my partner, who no longer appeared to him [Zernickow] to be trustworthy, I was pressured to “throw her out” of our apartment in order to solve a certain koan. In another case, I was ordered to break off all contact to an ex-member, in order to be continued to be admitted to the training.[42]

Mumon-Kai students were reportedly given the opportunity to live in the group's own apartment building next to the temple and to volunteer at its restaurants.[43] As mentioned above, Zernickow also ran a medical practice in his home, and students were accordingly encouraged to take therapy sessions with him, as a “great opportunity to get to know him better and receive his advice,” for 30 euros per session.[44] During these sessions almost every male student was allegedly pressured to undergo sterilisation, in order to better concentrate on their Zen training and the community, without the distractions of a family or children. Moreover, these sessions were also allegedly used by Zernickow not only to “massively” intrude into students' private and work lives, in order to collect information which he often publicly held against the respective student later, but also as a venue for clandestine sexual relations with as many as 12 different female students.[45] When former student B, for example, was discussing his experience in the group with other ex-members, they together came to the realisation that Zernickow had in fact

> had sexual relationships with numerous women - not all of them, but there were at least attempts at sexual activity with almost every one and also numerous relationships either during the meditation seminars [...] or very massively in the medical practice, the so-called “sessions” - they apparently consisted of nothing but sex for certain women. One woman described to me how she was told that “her issue was to surrender - to open herself - and that she could start by 'spreading 'em'!”[46]

40 Short paradoxical stories used in the Zen school as a meditation aid.
41 See footnote 27.
42 See footnote 26.
43 *Ibid*.
44 See footnote 27.
45 See footnote 26.
46 See footnote 27. Former student E also reports that Zernickow recommended therapy to her at one of their first meetings and that, “during the very first session, [...] I was to tell my husband that sexual freedom was absolutely

As a result of such accusations, Mumon-Kai has since been become the first Zen group in Germany to be removed from the German Buddhists' Union (DBU)'s list of recommended practice centres.[47] In correspondence adressed to a website promoting Mumon-Kai, the DBU namely stated the following:

> The DBU council and/or individual council members have received numerous complaints about this group by various former members of the community, which are cause for grave concern.
>
> Although the council has not yet come to a conclusive decision about the accusations levied against Mumon-Kai, given the number of independent allegations made and the severity of the accusations, the DBU council is of the opinion, based on current information, that it is unacceptable that advertisements for Mumon-Kai continue to be made in the DBU's name.[48]

Nevertheless, as of the present writing, Zernickow continues to teach at Mumon-Kai with a core group of a half-dozen students.

3. ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOUR

The reports of Shimano and Zernickow's teaching methods, as well as of their respective personalities, demonstrate some remarkable similarities. In the following section I have attempted to categorise these similarities into eight different types, though there is some overlap and the list is not necessarily exhaustive. The categories were chosen based solely on the common features I observed when comparing the two respective case histories and, as mentioned in the introduction, I have specifically omitted the obvious common element of sexual predation.

a) Aggression upon being confronted

Anecdotal evidence suggests that neither Shimano nor Zernickow was able to deal with criticism calmly and rationally, but that each immediately resorted to anger and defensiveness instead. For

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necessary. Remaining faithful was allegedly a terrible restriction, etc. He already moved on to intensively attempting physical approaches during the first hour. I was at first quite stunned and refused both his opinion as well as his advances, so that he discharged me after only three or four sessions, and prescribed intensive and concentrated zazen as a 'therapeutic measure.' I left the group sometime later." See http://der-asso-blog.blogspot.com /2011/05/neues-von-dr-sex.html.

47 *Deutsche Buddhistische Union* (DBU); see www.dharma.de.

48 Boeck, Sogen Ralf, Chairman of the DBU's Ethics Working Group, email to BuBB online dated 30 March 2012.

example, when Zernickow once learned that a student had privately referred to him as a “kind of egomaniac,” his reported response was to “mercilessly” tear into the student, and force him to apologise and retract the statement in writing vis-à-vis everyone who had been present. He is also described as being “unable to deal” with students who had chosen to leave his group: instead of simply accepting the departure, he would verbally denigrate them and condemn them as “traitors.” In general, if things did not turn out as planned, Zernickow “was only able to deal with it in a very choleric manner - patience wasn't exactly his strong suit.”[49] Finally, Mumon-Kai's reaction to the first public reports of teacher abuse at a German Zen centre - even though neither the teacher nor the group were identified in the reports - was to immediately deny all accusations and threaten the sources with legal action. Ironically, Mumon-Kai's lawyers on the one hand claim that the allegations are all untrue, yet at the same time declare that the unnamed Zen centre in both cases was obviously Mumon-Kai.[50] In response to my own inquiry about the allegations, the group described them as a “slander campaign” and “egomaniac self-portrayals”, created by a “severely mentally troubled” individual trying to deal with his “capitulation” before the rigours of Zen training. The group also threatened criminal charges in the matter.[51]

Eyewitness accounts of Shimano's inability to respond reasonably to criticism abound as well. Some sample descriptions of confrontations between students and Shimano are as follows:

> On the afternoon of Saturday, July 24, when I went up to Bosatsu to talk with you [Shimano] […] you replied by saying it was all a plot by the martial arts Master, Min Pai, and the members of his zendo, who wanted to destroy you. A few moments later you expanded this group of conspirators to include Maezumi Roshi of the Los Angeles Zen Center, who, you said, hated you because “Maezumi Roshi owes almost a million dollars, and Dai Bosatsu owes no one a penny” […] on October 13, your list of persecutors had been expanded to include Soen Roshi who wanted to remove you from Dai Bosatsu so that he could become Founding Abbot and perform an expensive ceremony!!! A few moments later, the plotters were joined by Yamada Mumon Roshi, the abbot of Myoshinji.[52]
>
> I rose to leave and said, “If you [Shimano] are going to lie, there is no point in continuing this meeting,” and I started down the very steep stairs. He came running after me in a panic and, on those dangerous steps, we had quite a wrestling match [...][53]
>
> Your [Shimano's] understanding seems to be that They are all out to get you [...] It is the questioners who are “insane” or full of “intense personal hatred” or want Your zendo or want Your monastery or hate you because you have money and they have not or don’t

49 See footnote 27.
50 See e.g. letter from Terhaag & Parter, attorneys, to the *Bayerische Rundfunk* dated 26 March 2012.
51 Letter from Mumon-Kai to the author dated 20 April 2011.
52 Zournas, George, letter to Eido Shimano dated 27 October 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821027_Zournas_Shimano.pdf.
53 Zournas, George, letter to Robert Aitken dated April 13, 1983, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19830413_Zournas_Aitken.pdf.

> understand the “Japanese” group [...][54]
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> [...] your [Shimano's] taking no candid responsibility for your own behavior but rather answering direct, honest and caring queries with, in one form or another, the line you used in a jam-packed zendo in 1975: “It’s none of your business.”[55]
>
> At the dinner table, he [Shimano] suddenly shouted, “You do not understand my mind! I am a monk, and you are only laymen!” We were stunned by such a childish outburst, and could not fully understand what he meant for a long time, and only now understand it fully. He meant that we, as laymen, should shut up and not criticise the Buddhist priesthood, no matter how much in error they were. In the present case, he is very angry with me, so angry that he says he does not trust himself to see me for fear he will do violence to me.[56]
>
> Finally one day, in dokusan, 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. I was thinking, “this man is sick.” [...] 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.[57]

This similarity between Shimano and Zernickow can furthermore be seen in their respective reactions to the same negative situation. As it happens, both men were confronted with the hostile departure of one of their designated teaching successors. In Zen, to be nominated by one's teacher as his so-called “dharma heir”, i.e. a practitioner suited to transmit the unbroken lineage of Buddhist enlightenment to the next generation of students, is the highest possible honour.[58] For such a dharma heir to afterwards disavow his teacher must therefore be considered an especially severe criticism. Yet this has occurred to both Zernickow and Shimano - in fact, Shimano is or has been at odds with four of his five dharma heirs - and their reactions were similarly furious. For example, according to student reports, when Zernickow's first dharma heir announced that he was quitting Mumon-Kai - only weeks after his “exemplary” qualities and “absolute integrity” had been lauded by Zernickow in a lavish ceremony - he was immediately condemned in lectures as having a “lousy character.” Zernickow then wrote letters to various outside groups clarifying that the dharma heir's title had been revoked. And finally, all passages in Zernickow's autobiography that referred to said heir were ordered to be physically removed after the fact by the publisher.[59] This last act constitutes a particularly striking parallel to Shimano, who on at least two occasions also attempted to erase estranged dharma heirs from published history.[60] And Shimano's angry reaction

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54 Fisher, Adam, letter to Eido Shimano dated November 1, 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821101R_Fisher_Shimano.pdf.

55 *Ibid.*

56 Aitken, Robert, letter dated 11 September 1964 to Soen Nakagawa, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19640911R_Aitken_Nakagawa.pdf.

57 Seaman, Jushin Ted, post to *genkaku-again* blog dated 19 February 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110211_Genkaku_Again.pdf.

58 See also footnote 185.

59 See footnote 27.

60 See Buddhadharma magazine, Fall 1993, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20030900_Mortensen_Inka.pdf; Zen Studies Society Newsletter, Spring/Summer 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110600_ZSS_Newsletter.pdf, p. 12.

to the departure of one dharma heir is described by a witness as follows:

> Shimano reacted in typical Shimano fashion - shouting insults and commands, screaming angrily, “I am your teacher! I am your teacher!” But Denko answered, “Not anymore”, and was gone. I remember Shimano announcing his leaving was a “sign of mental illness”. Typical Shimano.[61]

I note in conclusion that this characteristic of being unable to deal with criticism appears to be common among other Zen teachers as well. In a 1999 in-depth review of eight cases of student betrayal by Zen teachers in the United States, every single teacher involved responded to the respective accusations with excuses or denial; either blaming, shouting at, or ignoring the student, forbidding them to talk about the problem or telling them that it was “projection.”[62] And Ralf Halfmann, a former student of the influential French *Association Zen Internationale* (AZI), also reports of the same type of reaction to his own paper critical of that group and their teacher Taisen Deshimaru:

> From the AZI's end and from the people who are linked to it, the paper was almost unanimously brusquely rejected as “lies”, “defamatory”, “wild polemics”, an expression of “inner confusion”, etc., all the way to, in a few cases, targeted personal insults directed towards me. No argumentation <u>about the issues</u> themselves has been made to date.[63]

b) <u>Extreme formalism</u>

In Zen Buddhism, as with any large religious sect, the way it is concretely exercised can vary significantly between the opposite poles of conservative and liberal interpretations. Both Shimano and Zernickow's methods, however, are situated on the very conservative end of the spectrum, characterised by extremely formal rituals, extravagant robes and accoutrements, and sometimes brutally long periods of meditation.[64]

Having myself attended three meditation retreats with Shimano, I can attest to the severity and formality of the practice that he promotes. Students are sometimes required to meditate over an

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61 Seaman, Jushin Ted, post to *The Mu News* blog dated 29 November 2008, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20081129_Mu_News.pdf.

62 Gopfert, Caryl Reimer, *Student Experiences of Betrayal in the Zen Buddhist Teacher/Student Relationship*, Ph.D. dissertation from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 21 March 1999, pp. 273-275.

63 Halfmann, Ralf, “*Zen und 'Mind Control' - Ein kritischer Bericht über die Praxis und Methodik der Zen-Übermittlung im Westen*”, 12 October 1999, www.zenforum.de/texte/zen_mc.pdf, pp. 5-6. I have also been publicly accused of “downright reprehensible character assassination” for pointing out some of the issues mentioned in this paper. See Zen Forum International thread on “Eido Shimano's lineage”, captured 18 February 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20101110_ZFI_Shimano_Lineage.pdf.

64 The authors Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad have posited that “the depth of a spiritual practice is, as a rule, inversely proportional to the extent of its accoutrements, special costumes, pomp, titles and holy symbols.” See footnote 79, p. 121.

hour at a time - even on days which are otherwise mostly spent immobile in the meditation position - and are occasionally yelled at, goaded, and beaten extremely hard with the “keisaku”.[65] The schedule also includes long periods of chanting, both in Japanese and Sanskrit, and many ritual prostrations, bows, and other Japanese formalities. The practice is particularly extreme at the ZSS monastery in upstate New York: it is reported that within one eighteen-month period, two students “went off the deep end” psychologically and another even attempted Japanese ritual suicide by stabbing himself in the stomach.[66]

Though they are for the most part Westerners from a Christian background, the overwhelming majority[67] of Shimano's students also take formal Buddhist vows in an hour-long ceremony, at which time they are also given new Japanese names and vestments, and sometimes shave their heads. I myself had not spoken to Shimano for more than ten minutes before he asked me whether I had such a Buddhist name, though he did not press the issue afterwards.

Shimano also favours elaborate and expensive accoutrements in his practice. For example, one former student describes Shimano's preferred attire as follows:

> At one point he obtained a highly ornate silk brocade ceremonial hat. He adopted the practice of wearing this hood-like, brocade hat with a dropped collar and forward-curved peaked top at important ceremonies. […] It is offensive that vestments can be purchased from Japanese clerical catalogs that list for over $40,000. […] Eido’s wardrobe over the decades has grown in leaps and bounds, becoming more and more ornate as time progressed. These days he can be seen wearing highly ornate brocade robes costing more than an average American working family makes in a year.[68]

Descriptions of the furnishings at Shimano's temples are no less extravagant:

> There are bells and gongs worth more than tens of thousands of dollars each, and one enormous gong, smelted in Japan, valued at over $100,000. There are also hand-pegged oak floors, 15 decorative windows shaped like candle flames, and three hot tubs, three and a half feet deep. Not to forget a library, large kitchen, offices, meeting room, food storage facilities, and a woodworking shop, as well as a wing with private quarters for Eido Roshi.[69]

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65 A long, flattened stick with which the student may asked to be hit across the shoulders by a supervisor, in order to loosen tense neck muscles.

66 Benezra, Philip, “CAVEAT EMPTOR, The Zen Buddhist Community and the Right to Know”, undated essay, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110110_Benezra_Malone.pdf. There have in fact been at least two different attempts at Japanese ritual suicide by students at the ZSS monastery; fortunately both men were discovered in time to be hospitalised and survive.

67 I was once told by a student of a Shimano dharma heir that I was the first long-time Zen student he had ever met who did not have a Buddhist name. Most ZSS members cited in the present study also bear one.

68 Malone, Kobutsu Kevin, “Inka-Stinka-Doo”, essay dated 18 September 2003, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20030918_Inka_Stinka.pdf.

69 Westen, Robin, “Zen and the Art of Seduction”, unpublished essay, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19820400R_Zen_Seduction.pdf, p. 6.

And again:

> We stow our umbrella in a beautiful copper urn, place our shoes in a wooden rack of no less elegant design, mount stairs made of bleached, random-width oak which, I'll later learn, has been imported from Tanzania. Every item in this building has been chosen by Eido, and the $5 million to which he's been staked by several wealthy donors, as well as a host of lesser ones like myself, has given free reign to his elegant taste.[70]

This “elegant” taste was sometimes too extravagant even for the ZSS trustees. For example, one board member wrote the following to Shimano with regard to an anniversary celebration at the temple:

> I find your [Shimano's] recent decision to expend 30-40 thousand dollars to celebrate the 10th Anniversary, nearly 20 thousand of which will go to gifts, an unnecessary extravagance. […] Furthermore, the fact that you declared this to the Board without even speaking with or getting the approval of the Committee Chairman and Treasurer makes the action not only dishonest and improper but also illegal.[71]

Nevertheless, shortly before his resignation in June 2010, Shimano launched yet another grand building project, namely the construction of a $100,000 Japanese-style gate complex at the ZSS monastery, in commemoration of his 50th anniversary in America.[72] The project has evidently been brought to completion despite the subsequent revelations, and Shimano himself has even been invited to the official unveiling at the ZSS monastery.[73]

Shimano's emphasis on extravagance and formality becomes even more striking when one compares it to the way Zen is practiced at the monastery in Japan where he himself was originally trained.[74] Having also practiced there for almost a year, I can attest to the fact that, far from adapting or mitigating traditional Japanese rituals for his Western students, Shimano has rendered many of them even more strict than the originals. For example, though in Japan I took part in dozens of religious ceremonies and memorial services, and was subjected to exactly the same type of training as a typical Japanese Zen monk, I was never forced to meditate more than an hour at a time, was never offered ceremonial robes or a Buddhist name, was never hit unreasonably hard with the keisaku, and the teacher there certainly never wore anything as flamboyant as the hat described above. And though my relationship to that teacher was very close and lasted until his death several years later, our interaction always remained pleasantly informal. In contrast, before being allowed to meet Shimano for the first time - even though I would only be studying with him

70 Shainberg, Larry, *Ambivalent Zen*, Random House, 1995, p. 123.
71 Schnyer, David, letter to Eido Shimano dated January 27, 1986, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19860127_Schnyer_Shimano.pdf.
72 See www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100610_DBZ_Sanmon_Appeal.pdf.
73 According to an email from the ZSS to the author dated 25 June 2012, “Eido Shimano initiated the project before his retirement and therefore is being invited as a guest. [… He will be asked] to say a few words about the meaning of the new gate, and thanking the donors.”
74 Ryutaku-ji monastery in Sawaji, Shizuoka prefecture, Japan.

for a five-day retreat - I was required to undergo a formal “student-teacher recognition” ceremony, which included his brocade-wearing assistant symbolically handing over incense to him worth hundreds of dollars.

Interestingly, Shimano has even attempted to use this personal preference for elaborate furnishings as leverage against his removal from office by the ZSS. In a memorandum issued on 27 October 2010, while Shimano and the ZSS board were still negotiating the fallout from the latest scandal, the board namely states:

> In order to sustain the traditional and authentic Zen atmosphere at DBZ and NYZ, Eido Roshi is generously allowing both temples to use his personal collection of scrolls, sculptures, and ceremonial objects on a provisional basis until a more permanent resolution may be established.[75]

Presumably both parties actually believed that an “authentic Zen atmosphere” included such sculptures and ceremonial objects.

As for Zernickow, he evidently shares Shimano's preference for strict adherence to rituals and formalities. For example, though Zernickow is German, lives in Germany, and maintains a civilian medical practice there, he is described as having “all the possible ceremonial robes and staffs and hats and shoes for every kind of ceremony - strictly in accordance with Japanese models […] a huge act.”[76] This is also confirmed by images on the Mumon-Kai website and their quarterly newsletter, in which he and his (also Western) students are almost always wearing full Japanese Buddhist regalia, and are surrounded by various altars, statutes, Chinese scrolls, etc. His senior students all bear Japanese Buddhist names, as he does himself in addition to the Japanese honorific “roshi.” He is also described as having a preference for expensive furnishings: “everything had to be done to perfection and in the finest of tastes,” and “everything was always of the finest quality, [...] his weakness for exquisite Buddhist art was well-known and was acted out to the fullest.”[77]

Finally, like Shimano's, Zernickow's practice itself was also sometimes more formal than even that seen in Japan. For example, the koan training that I experienced at the aforementioned Japanese monastery was much less formal than the strict hierarchical framework used by Zernickow

75 Board of the ZSS, email to “Dear Sangha” dated 27 October 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20101027_ZSSBOD_Sangha.pdf.

76 See footnote 27.

77 See footnote 27. Interestingly, Richard Baker, another Western Zen teacher involved in a well-publicised scandal regarding abuse of power and sex with students, was also described as having overly expensive tastes: see Downing, Michael, S*hoes Outside the Door - Desire, Devotion and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center*, Counterpoint, 2001, p. 28: “In a time when we had very little money, he [Baker] thought nothing of spending $20,000 on a statute that he happened to like. He loved objects. He was like an art collector, somebody who would die to get that thing […].”

described above, and a requirement that the student sign a lifelong pledge, in his or her own blood, is especially unheard of in Japan. Moreover, according to the Zen teacher and author Ama Samy, the adoption in the West of such hierarchical Japanese methods is not merely a harmless nod to tradition; on the contrary, Samy states that koans, for example, have become

> an ideological tool to create a feudal, patriarchal Zen society. Lectures about “great doubt”, the “great death”, the “great breakthrough”, and so forth only feed ego-tripping, dramatisation and the creation of stories by the student, and it can lead to pressure to succeed and advance, manic-depressive cycles and illusions.[78]

c) Blaming the student's ego

A method often used by spiritual leaders to deflect criticism, especially in the Buddhist and other eastern traditions, is to respond that the student's own egocentric point of view is to blame. Since the student allegedly still sees things through the illusory veil of the ego, she cannot appreciate the fact that what might appear to the untrained eye as womanising, lying, exploitation, etc., is in fact the “enlightened” activity of a Buddhist master. This tactic was accurately described by the authors Kramer and Alstad almost twenty years ago in their book *The Guru Papers*:

> One of the cheapest guru ploys is to make people feel inadequate by showing how their behaviours are tainted with self-centeredness - always an easy task.[79]
> […]
> The guru can reverse any challenge or criticism by saying, “It’s your problem; your ego is getting in the way.” He, of course, has no ego. Common phrases used as barriers against anything that questions spiritual authority are: “That’s merely mental” (or analytical, rational, psychological), “Your ego is experiencing resistance.”[80]

One highly reputed American Zen teacher's use of this argument has been described as follows:

> The identified foe was internal: the human Ego or sense of self, also referred to in Zen Buddhism as ignorance. […] The Teacher encouraged wholehearted, intense meditation practice and participation in Zen liturgy as ways to see through the false layers of Ego and experience Enlightenment […] Doubts about the doctrine or the Teacher, critical thinking, questioning of unfair decisions, the wish to explore Buddhist doctrine through scholarly reading, and disagreeing with the Teacher's views were seen as manifestations of Ego. The primordial manifestation of Ego was anger: it was almost forbidden for students to express anger; to acknowledge its existence was shameful. As happens at many American Zen Centers, the Teacher seemed to have the right to express anger at students or in situations in which students were involved without being labeled as “acting out of Ego.”[81]

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78 Arokiasamy, Arul M., *Warum Bodhidharma in den Westen kam*, Ch. Falk Verlag, 1995, p. 72. With regard to the pressure to succeed at koans, see page 23 below.
79 Kramer, Joel and Alstad, Diana, *The Guru Papers - Masks of Authoritarian Power*, North Atlantic Books, 1993, p. 373.
80 *Ibid.,* p. 98.
81 Masis, Katherine V., “Compassion betrayed: Spiritual Abuse in an American Zen Center”, Cultic Studies Review 2004,

Ralf Halfmann has also described his experience with this catch-all Zen argument:

> The magical “key-word” used in nearly every second sentence is “ego”. It is the personal ego that has to be overcome. The egolessness and the total abandon of oneself is regarded as the highest reachable value on the spiritual path. […] Of course, the masters' and leaders' wills are not egoistic because they claim to express the “Dharma” and be beyond dualistic and self-tainted conceptions. Nearly always, the very complex personal, social or familial situation of a person who does not seem to be “in line” with the ideology is reduced to the simple statement that this person [was] only following his “ego”.[82]

Halfmann continues by observing that “it goes without saying that this ideology constitutes a 'carte blanche' for the behaviour of masters, and those regarded as such, and will almost certainly lead to problematic situations and scandals.”[83] This prediction was unfortunately perfectly accurate, as both Zernickow and Shimano were evidently fervent proponents of the ego argument - as apparently are the majority of Zen teachers who betray their students.[84]

With regard to Mumon-Kai, one former student reports:

> In other words, when we questioned anything, for example the master, we were then instructed: sit with it a while - what are you resisting? What is it that is bothering you? In the end we were always led back to the ego. It was of course our ego that was rubbed the wrong way by the fact that the master had three women; and so it was possible to reassign everything - even very important scruples of conscience - as resistance by the ego that we had to let go of […] This teaching can lead people to characterise their inner voice - the one they should really be listening to - as resistance by the ego and to let it go... Sure, we then got used to it, and then the master just happened to have three women, and I just happened to not have any more contact to former members... We talked ourselves into it and finally just swallowed it.[85]

An even more pointed example is the following quotation from Zernickow himself, in which he almost offhandedly dismisses the current allegations against him as nothing but a deluded product of the students' own selfish minds:

> Such an attempt to target and destroy the master is like the heroic fantasy of a

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p. 28.

82 Halfmann, Ralf, “Zen in the West - A Critical Review of the International Zen Association,” March 1999, www.darkzen.org/Articles/AZI.html. This is a condensed English version of the paper cited in footnote 63.

83 See footnote 63, p. 26. Stuart Lachs concurs: “It is the system that makes this kind of behavior virtually inevitable,” footnote 3, p. 7, as do Kramer and Alstad: “the concept of enlightenment, precisely because it is so exalted, almost inevitably lends itself to abuse and corruption. It can be used to justify any behavior, privileges, or excesses, creating an insidious double standard for the superior ones,” footnote 79, p. 378.

84 In Gopfert's aforementioned study, four out of eight betrayed students reported distress from the “view of ego as enemy,” and five described a “curious mix of denigrating the ego, yet demanding a specific kind of ego that fit the label of a Zen person.” One student described the ego as Zen's “particular weapon in the arsenal of betrayal.” See footnote 62, pp. 272, 440.

85 See footnote 27.

> prepubescent boy, who thinks he can kill a tiger with a dull pocket knife. If the [student's] search within himself is unsuccessful, the ego will not uncommonly try diverting the finger into pointing at the master - instead of back at the student's own nose. Branded as a “scapegoat”, the master is subjected to a reincarnation as the enemy, the devil. Meanwhile, the “misunderstood and abused” sheep self-righteously heads to the pasture of hope, demonstratively nips - along with all the other “offended” ones - at the grass of justice and goes back to uttering his genetically hard-wired “baaaah” instead of the former timid, shaky “mu” - which he never understood.[86]

Interestingly, the position of unassailability that this argument affords the teacher - since he of course has no ego, by definition - can be doubly exploited by Zernickow due to his acting as the students' therapist as well. For example, in Mumon-Kai's aforementioned response to my inquiry about the allegations, the group claimed that the “mentally troubled” accuser “was confronted with his sick illusions during six years of psychotherapy.”[87] However, since Zernickow himself was the so-called psychotherapist, it is of course hardly surprising that he should have come to such a diagnosis.

As for Shimano, various former students have described his use of the ego argument as follows:

> In response to the uproar, Eido has firmly denied all allegations. The women who've charged him, he claims, are acting out their own fantasies, and those circulating the petition are expressing disappointment not with him but with themselves, their lack of sincerity and courage, their lack of commitment.[88]

> the impact and implication of his [Shimano's] various defenses [...] were pregnant with that [ego] message... how could mere mortals understand the wisdom of the gods? How could “barbarian” Americans ever hope to plumb the sagacity, the subtle brightness of all that was Japanese?[89]

> In face of these deplorable actions and the concern of our sangha, Eido Roshi has continually denied his involvement, and maintained an attitude that he is beyond questioning.[90]

> Eido said: “What you remember and what I remember are entirely different. Nobody was witnessing, so you can say it your own way, and I can say it my own way. That’s really the problem. What you will write will be from your point of view. Your subjective reality.”[91]

> But I remember one conversation with Eido, after I had become sick, when he actually opened the door a bit and asked me if I felt that he had done anything to make me feel the way I did. When I began to open my mouth and say “Well, yes…” he jumped on me and exclaimed “It was you who had the egotistical practice! You who would not speak!” …etc., etc… which sent me back into my crazy shell for the time being.[92]

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86 Yuzen, Sotetsu, *Heimkommen - und still ruhen*, Mumon-Kai Verlag, 2010, p. 243. “Mu” is a reference to a koan commonly given to beginning Zen students.
87 See footnote 51.
88 See footnote 70, p. 164.
89 Fisher, Genkaku Adam, email to Christopher Hamacher dated 4 January 2012.
90 Letter from “Your friends in the Dharma” to ZSS Board of Directors dated 30 January 1979, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19790130_Friends_Board.pdf.
91 See footnote 69, p. 11.
92 Benezra, Philip, “Thoughts and Observations on 'Special Karma' at Dai Bosatsu Zendo', undated essay,

Finally, the sheer power of this argument is especially evident in the following quote, in which a student even considers a demand by Shimano for sex to be an implicit test of her ego:

> And almost before I knew it, he [Shimano] had pulled off his robe and was laying down on the bed stark naked. Well, I was in such a state then, I thought this must be some sort of test of detachment. It sounds ridiculous now, but when you're serious about your Zen practice, and when you have a lot of respect for someone, you think the best, no matter what. And I thought the best when he ordered me to go down on him and perform fellatio. He told me it would be a spiritual experience for me…[93]

Clearly, as Kramer and Alstad have stated, in this manner "even the most base behavior by the guru can be set up as a secret teaching or message."[94] And Shimano reportedly maintains even today that "if I didn't accept the sexual advances of female students, I would be creating worse karma than if I agreed to their propositions."[95]

d) Hypocrisy

A personality trait that is easy to recognise and is almost always seen as suspicious in a spiritual teacher is hypocrisy. Yet even ignoring the one particularly glaring example of Shimano's and Zernickow's hypocrisy, namely their violation of the Third Buddhist Precept against misusing sexuality,[96] many other reports of their having quite openly not "practiced what they preached" exist.

For example, the first descriptions of Eido Shimano's hypocrisy came already in 1964, as described by his student Robert Aitken:

> It was soon clear that our preconceptions of a monk as someone who accepted poverty as a way of life were not to be embodied by Shimano. Unlike our first teacher […] and unlike his own colleague from Ryutaku-ji […] our new monk lived anything but a retiring life. Though we were only ten minutes on foot from the University of Hawaii where he took a half-time course, and though two bus lines passed nearby, he insisted on getting a motorcycle for his transportation. He dressed like a young man of commerce, and

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www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20111121_Benezra.pdf. Shimano had also attempted to seduce Merry White, Benezra's ex-wife, during her time at the ZSS monastery. The experience was the basis for White's recent book *Special Karma, A Zen Novel of Love and Folly*, Create Space, 2011, 144 pages.

93 See footnote 69, p. 9.

94 See footnote 78, p. 83.

95 Marinello, Genjo Joe, post to Zen Forum International dated 2 December 2011, www.zenforuminternational.org/viewtopic.php?f=73&t=3584&start=1600.

96 Malone, Kobutsu, *Prison Chaplaincy Guidelines for Zen Buddhism*, Engaged Zen Foundation, 2010, p. 9. Not only have both Shimano and Zernickow vowed to uphold this Precept themselves, but as teachers they also ordain their own students, and so have also 'received' such vows countless times. See also ethical Guidelines of the Zen Studies Society, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19930600_ZSS_Guidelines.pdf.

pressed for a substantial salary.[97]

And also:

> How can Tai San [Shimano] develop as a human being if he says one thing and is another thing? As his long-time associate and as his American sponsor, I am deeply concerned about this. Unless he begins again, surely his teaching will be twisted, as Dr. Smith says.[98]

This latter prediction by Aitken unfortunately turned out to be quite accurate. For example, probably the most basic standard of behaviour expected of a spiritual teacher, or indeed of anyone, is that they tell the truth. The right to expect this of a Buddhist is especially anchored in the Fourth Precept, which may be translated as "I honour honesty and truth. I do not deceive."[99] Yet the reports of lies told by Shimano throughout the rest of his career are so numerous that they render such vow practically meaningless. The following are just some sample reports, not only of Shimano's own lying, but of his expressly demanding that his students do the same:

> You [ZSS board] placed great emphasis on [Shimano] Roshi's reported conversation with me on September 19, that I had agreed to the idea of selling the townhouse […] which ultimately provides for a significant benefit to Roshi and his wife. September 19 […] should not be the anniversary of a Roshi's deception. I did not approve of the plan that he ultimately announced in the December 21 letter.[100]

> Eido Roshi has lied about almost every detail of his coming to America and New York. He has lied by omission and by outright lie. He has had very questionable financial dealings. He has gone against the wishes of his greatest benefactors repeatedly to the point where they "disowned" him. Soen Roshi did the same - and Eido Roshi repeatedly lied about it.[101]

> It never entered my mind that there was even a possibility that I was being deceived. [...] Such a thing was impossible at DBZ where we were all, including you [Shimano], chanting precepts that included honesty and freedom from deception. […] This situation […] turned into outright deception, lying and manipulation. It is incomprehensible and irreconcilable to me how you can expect your students to adhere to Buddhist principles, precepts and vows that you secretly do not keep.[102]

> [Soen] Roshi denounced you [Shimano] in our presence as a liar. He said you had lied to him when he confronted you about the scandals in Hawaii in 1964, and he said you were lying now.[103]

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97 Aitken, Robert, "The Shimano Story," undated draft exposé prepared ca. 1984, www.shimanoarchive.com/Shimano_Story_By_Aitken.html.
98 Aitken, Robert, letter dated 14 August 1964 to Soen Nakagawa, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19640814_Aitken_Nakagawa.pdf.
99 See footnote 96.
100 Carlson, Dorris. F., letter to Korin Sylvan Busch dated 6 March 1984, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19840306_Carlson_Busch.pdf.
101 Phillips, Banko Randy, email to Genjo Joe Marinello, undated, http://www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110603_ZFI_Shodo.pdf.
102 Letter from a survivor to Eido Shimano dated 12 January 1993, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19930112R_Xxxxx_Shimano.pdf.
103 See footnote 52.

> He [Shimano] made it clear to me that no one was to see me entering his quarters as it would cause him “a lot of trouble.” During three different occasions I expressed my concern to him that I was deceiving my dear friends […] and my fiancé […]. I told him that I wanted to tell them because I did not feel right about keeping a deliberate secret of this magnitude. He said, “Lie.” I was literally sick after he said this.[104]

Shimano's record of documented, publicly uttered untruths has continued even after his apology and resignation from his position at the ZSS. As related above, in the July 2011 “important announcement” he falsely declared to his students that he had no intention of returning to teaching. And on 1 December 2010, in a letter to the Editor of the New York Times regarding an exposé on the ZSS, Shimano claimed that, contrary to the story's wording, the Times journalist had never contacted him while researching it.[105] Yet the journalist in question has since reiterated that he did in fact attempt to contact Shimano - at least a dozen times over a period of two weeks -, leaving messages both on answering machines and with people at ZSS offices. Perplexed by Shimano's claim, said journalist concludes: “It is possible that none of my messages got to him, and that none of the [three] board members who did speak with me apprised him that I was looking for him. Anything is possible, I suppose.”[106]

For his part, Zernickow is also described as being very hypocritical: “The better I got to know him [Zernickow], the clearer it became to me that he totally didn't practice what he preached. The dissonance was sometimes so glaring as to be practically unbelievable. [...] He could praise something with the most wonderful of words, without having remotely experienced it himself.”[107] For example, although Zernickow's motto was allegedly “eternal world peace,” he has claimed to carry a firearm, and when one of his group's bodyguards was found beaten one evening by unknown assailant, Zernickow's reported response was for the others to find the attacker and “smash every one of his fingers with a hammer.” On another occasion, during a visit by members of a Japanese peace organisation, Zernickow “had been literally spouting aggression and annoyance all day long, ordering us around and yelling at us, only to then portray himself as a kind of missionary of world peace in a long-winded lecture.”[108]

Further examples of hypocrisy attributed to Zernickow include regularly violating his own conditions for the allocation of duties, lecturing about the joys of travelling alone while never actually doing so,

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104 Letter from a survivor to the ZSS Board of Trustees dated 5 August 1993, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19930805R_Xxxxxxx_Board.pdf. This survivor also describes how Shimano continued to relentlessly pursue her sexually during dokusan - despite her initial refusal of his advances - and that she afterwards entered therapy to deal with the repercussions of the deceit. Her fiancé was namely also a ZSS student at the time, see footnote 102.

105 See footnote 18.

106 Oppenheimer, Mark, blog post dated 28 December 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20101228_Oppenheimer_Blog.pdf.

107 See footnote 27.

108 *Ibid*.

claiming to be child-friendly in talks yet being unable to deal with children, and constantly admonishing his students to frugality while enjoying a very high standard of living himself.[109] Arrangements and agreements made between students and Zernickow were also reportedly broken or withdrawn by him numerous times.[110] Finally, in the quote cited at the beginning of this paper, Zernickow claims to have "moved beyond" the need to defend himself from accusations and slander, yet, as described above, in actual fact he has made repeated, aggressive attempts to silence any questioning of his conduct, including at least three legal cease-and-desist letters as of the present writing.

As a final note, since both Shimano and Zernickow have been accused of lying about sexual abuse, i.e. a double example of hypocrisy, the following quote from the aforementioned *Guru Papers* seems appropriate:

> But it is the lie, not the sex, that's the real issue. The lie indicates the guru's entire persona is a lie, that his image as selfless and being beyond ego is a core deception. Many think that though a guru lies about his personal behavior, his message is still essentially true. Lying here as elsewhere is done to cover up self-interest. If the guru's message is that purity without self-interest is the ultimate achievement, not only did he not achieve it, but he does not even know if it is achievable.[111]

e) Groupthink

In this category I include the teacher's use of group dynamics for his own benefit, either by pitting various members against each other, or by promoting an "us and them" mentality towards other groups and the outside world in general. In the Japanese Rinzai Zen school, to which both Shimano and Zernickow adhere, this technique sometimes takes the form of elitist disdain for other, "softer" types of Buddhism. For example, former Mumon-Kai member B states: "as a member of the only true Zen group, we were shown, and willingly took on, a very elitist self-image. Contacts to the deluded souls in the outside world were allegedly not very productive, unless they were arranged by the 'Master.'"[112]

Shimano's opinion of his Japanese Zen lineage can be characterised as similarly elitist, even arrogant. According to long-term students, he considered Americans to be both "barbarians"[113] and "stupid."[114] Even highly-esteemed American Zen teachers were branded as inferior; with reference

109 See footnote 27.
110 See footnote 26.
111 See footnote 79, p. 129.
112 *Ibid*.
113 Fisher, Genkaku Adam, letter to Eido Shimano dated 1 November 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821101R_Fisher_Shimano.pdf.
114 Wilkie, Margot, June 1999 interview by David Chadwick, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19990600_Margot_Wilkie.pdf.

to Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken, among the most famous Buddhist teachers in the United States, Shimano states the following in a letter:

> I don't want to be associated with these two regarding anything, on any level. In my opinion, they are Judeo-Christian puritans wearing Buddhist Robes and desperately want to appear to be the "first zen Buddhist patriarchs in the land of liberty." They don't know how the Dharma transmission takes place or what it is about. I even doubt they have clear insight. That is none of my business. If they want to be moralistic vigilantes let them do what they want. But my Dharma stream of Hakuin, Torei, Gempo and Soen is slightly different. You know when I say slightly, I mean very.[115]

Though this draft letter is undated, its subject (the forthcoming publication of a book released in June 1996) suggests that it was written in the aftermath of Aitken and Kapleau's own 1995 letter to the ZSS demanding Shimano's resignation for misconduct.[116] Shimano's insinuation that they lack clear insight, etc., can therefore be construed not only as generally arrogant, but also as a calculated attempt - addressed to a top student - to subtly undermine the credibility of their allegations.

As already mentioned above, both Shimano and Zernickow regularly performed Buddhist ordination ceremonies with their students. A major element of this ceremony is the taking on of a new Buddhist name, which the teacher chooses and then inks in Japanese characters on a special part of the student's robe. Like Christian baptism, this ceremony can also be seen as a method of strengthening allegiance to the group and the teacher; given that it is a purely symbolic and by no means obligatory practice for Zen students, Shimano's and Zernickow's widespread use of it may indeed have been self-serving.[117] For example, former Mumon-Kai student B reports that, in the aftermath of his departure from the group together with four other members, the remaining students clung to Zernickow even more tightly: they all received Japanese names and "were sworn in more intimately and placed in formation against the insidious, conspiratorial traitors like me."[118]

Moreover, with regard to his own Buddhist ordination, B relates that his appointment as a Zen monk was "quite a stroke of genius" by Zernickow, since he "now had special tasks and recitations to perform, and took part in the special monks' meetings" which were to be kept strictly confidential from the non-monks. This left B "bursting with pride" and the others "bursting with jealousy and envy." He also relates that his admission to working with koans "had had a similar effect some time before. Koans being strictly confidential, they were a perfect opportunity for manipulation and, like

115 Shimano, Eido, undated draft letter to Roko Sherry Chayat, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19950900_Shimano_Chayat.pdf.
116 Aitken, Robert et al., letter to the Zen Studies Society dated 9 August 1995, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19950809R_ZenTeachers_ZSS.pdf.
117 See also footnote 79, p. 140.
118 See footnote 27.

all secrets, caused a further division between the insiders and outsiders."[119]

According to another former member, D, Zernickow had on the whole strictly stratified Mumon-Kai into various subgroups. D states:

> Zernickow had a strict hierarchy in this respect. There was the "association" (also called the trust) which was registered with the court. All practitioners had to become members of the association. […] When one had logged enough service and, in addition, fulfilled a series of conditions (participating in a certain number of sesshins, reading all of Zernickow's books, learning recitations by heart, etc.), one could, at the master's discretion, be accepted into the "community." Past that, it was also possible to become a monk/nun and a "personal student". I don't know the conditions for that. […] In any case there were additional, mostly secret obligations for each respective level.[120]

Another example of the manipulation of group dynamics employed by both Shimano and Zernickow is the swift removal of any potential critics from among the membership. For instance, Shimano is described as believing that "members can easily be replaced" and telling students "to 'get out' when they don't agree with him."[121] This attitude presumably contributed to the mass departures of disgruntled students throughout the history of his group, some of whom "would like to come back but can't because they do not feel safe and/or can't practice at a ZSS facility."[122] Shimano reportedly once even dissolved the membership altogether and closed both temples for thirty days, declaring that afterwards "those he wants back will be invited to return, and the rest can go somewhere else."[123] As for Zernickow, former student A clearly describes how

> students who no longer unconditionally conformed to the teacher's will were systematically "mobbed", denigrated in therapy sessions and lectures, and pressured, so that in most cases they left the group of their own volition.[124]

The simple removal of critics from the group is only a temporary remedy, however, if such ex-members can still exert influence from the outside. It is presumably for this reason that both Shimano and Zernickow have also tried to prevent unwanted communication between current and ex-members. For example, when a ZSS board member once began practicing Zen at a different temple, Shimano unilaterally attempted to have her removed from the board, explicitly because she "was now sitting elsewhere."[125] Shimano's successor as teacher at the ZSS has also reportedly told

119 *Ibid.*
120 Email from D to the author dated 3 June 2012. The aforementioned declaration signed in the member's own blood was a prerequisite to become Zernickow's "personal student," the highest level at Mumon-Kai.
121 Zen Studies Society, Women's Workshop Minutes, 22-24 October 1993, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19931022R_Womans_Workshop.pdf. Former SFZC teacher Richard Baker has also been described as giving "his followers two choices: obey his words without question or be marginalized. Being marginalized was tantamount to being forced to leave […]." See footnote 3, p. 9.
122 *Ibid*.
123 See footnote 70, p. 164.
124 See footnote 26.
125 Shimano, Eido, letter to Peggy Crawford dated 2 September 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/

her students “not to sit outside of our zendo with those that had left.”[126] And Zernickow has been described as enforcing a “communications ban” with ex-members. Various former students report, for example, having been “ordered several times not to create ties to former members, and to break off any existing ones,”[127] or having “to sign a statement that weren't allowed to contact any ex-members.”[128] And one of Zernickow's current students also reportedly prohibited her children from speaking with a neighbour's daughter, since she was “the child of a former student and thus belonged to the enemy camp.”[129]

A final example of “groupthink” is described by critic Ralf Halfmann as follows:

> the social connections between the community of practitioners, the so-called “sangha”, are based mainly on the shared ideology and not on a truly personal level. A sure sign of this is that any open criticism of the “master” or the ideology leads to more or less immediate distancing from the other group members, or even to aggression. The “friendship” ends as soon as one diverges from the shared ideology.[130]

Again, this phenomenon was evident at both the ZSS and Mumon-Kai. For example, several former members of the ZSS who have voiced criticism of Shimano have since been personally insulted, sometimes viciously, by current members.[131] Ironically, a Shimano dharma heir who once publicly expressed disdain for ZSS critics has himself now become the target of similar insults. He recently reported:

> I must say I am feeling a bit burned by my continued efforts to bring change to the ZSS. I’ve now been successively accused of being power hungry, motivated by my early abuse history, “Holier than thou,” allowing dual relationships including the sin that my wife of twenty plus years is a member of the Chobo-Ji sangha and comes to dokusan with me, and finally sexual harassment followed by an apology. These attacks on me I think are diversions from what remains to be done at ZSS.[132]

On another occasion, when a different board member hardened his stance against Shimano at a meeting at the ZSS monastery, his car was reportedly vandalised.[133]

Finally, with regard to Mumon-Kai, ex-student G explicitly states how “as is the case in other cults

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19820902_Shimano_LoCicero_Crawford.pdf.

126 Spencer, Kensei Jim, undated open letter, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110105_Kensei_account.pdf.

127 See footnote 26.

128 Email from ex-member G to the author dated 3 June 2012.

129 See footnote 27.

130 See footnote 63, p. 28.

131 Email from “Fudo” to Kobutsu Kevin Malone dated 15 August 2008, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20080815_Fudo_Malone.pdf; Marinello, Genjo Joe, “Genjo's Memories”, essay dated June 2009, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100609_Marinello_AZTA.pdf.

132 Marinello, Genjo Joe, “Saving a Dharma Treasure”, essay dated 11 May 2012, http://sweepingzen.com/saving-a-dharma-treasure/.

133 Marinello, Genjo Joe, post to Zen Forum International dated 30 August 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110830_Marinello_ZFI.pdf.

as well, here the phenomenon also occurred that one was forced into the mould of either a victim or a perpetrator. Many 'Zen friends' became spies and exerted enormous pressure on the others. This might be one of the many reasons which caused the group [of ex-members] to split up and which has prevented a joint meeting and discussion from taking place."[134]

This victim/perpetrator culture at Mumon-Kai is also confirmed by B, who frankly admits that when two members were once "basically frozen out of the community [by Zernickow] through sheer jealousy," despite his conscience B "even helped kick them out" and "was happy when things finally calmed down."[135]

f) Information control

The aforementioned attempt to prevent communication with ex-members is also symptomatic of a general tendency, demonstrated by both Shimano and Zernickow, to control the inflow of all possible information to their students. This tactic has been described by Steven Hassan as one of the four basic components (the "BITE" model) of destructive mind control.[136,137]

For Hassan, information control includes both minimising or discouraging non-cult sources of information, as well as extensively using cult-generated information.[138] In Zernickow's case, both of these elements were evident. With regard to cult-generated information, his prolific output of self-published works on Zen Buddhism - some of which number over 500 pages - was reportedly mandatory reading for students, and the contents thereof were also allegedly skewed to cast him in an unrealistically favourable light.[139]

Zernickow's other works were reportedly subject to the same phenomenon:

> He often described events that I was witness to, and yet I still couldn't recognise them. Contrary to what really happened, in his writings every good idea sprang from his intuition and every work from his own creative impulse. If we students hadn't sufficiently

134 See footnote 128. Former students of the Zen Order of Buddhist Contemplatives have created an internet forum to discuss abuse by various OBC teachers, due to the fact that such discussion within the OBC itself was not tolerated: see http://obcconnect.forumotion.net/.

135 See footnote 27.

136 Hassan, Steven, *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves*, Freedom of Mind Press, 2000. The 'BITE' model stands for Behaviour Control, Information Control, Thought Control and Emotional Control.

137 Elements of information control are evidently present in many Zen groups. In Gopfert's study, four out of eight students explicitly reported secrecy issues, five described a sense of "profound isolation," and six felt that they could not "talk" with their teachers: see footnote 62, pp. 270-271. Censorship was also an issue in Katherine Masis' Zen group: "Every piece submitted for publication was read and edited by the Teacher. Articles of a questioning, critical nature were never published, and were dismissed as detrimental to meditation practice"; see footnote 81.

138 http://freedomofmind.com/bite/.

139 See footnote 27. The tactic of self-aggrandizement in autobiography is not uncommon in Zen generally: see Lachs, Stuart, "When the Saints Go Marching In: Modern Day Zen Hagiography," available at www.hsuyun.org.

> realised this, he would occasionally “help them along.” For example, in one book he added the following sentence to a testimonial by one of his students: “Roshi is not only a really good Zen master, but also a really good captain.”[140]

And according to ex-student A, a translation of the Japanese “Shodoka”, which Zernickow has claimed as his own, is largely identical to a previous translation by Nyogen Senzaki of the same work.[141]

Mumon-Kai also issues a 50-page newsletter called “Tenshin” four times a year, which contains additional material such as Zernickow's personal correspondence, transcribed lectures, etc. Students were allegedly required to make contributions to Tenshin as well, “which were subject to censorship and often printed in more or less redacted form, without consultation, under the byline of the respective member.”[142] Former student A also reports that on at least one occasion, he was ordered to send a letter under his own name, though its contents were dictated.[143]

Information from outside the group was allegedly discouraged by Zernickow as well. Besides the aforementioned outright ban on communicating with ex-members, Zernickow is described as having become upset when students went to see a certain movie together, or having declared a certain restaurant to be off-limits to students, due to their becoming friendly with the staff.[144]

Finally, Zernickow also reportedly applied two other information control techniques described by Hassan, namely the “unethical use of confession” and “compartmentalisation of information.”[145] In fact, the descriptions of Zernickow's abuse of his position of trust - not only as a spiritual teacher but as a therapist - constitute a textbook case of unethical use of confession to collect information. According to A,

> the medical profession's non-disclosure requirement was regularly violated during these therapy sessions, in that contents of other students' therapy sessions were revealed to me. Concrete issues and contents of therapy sessions were also regularly disclosed in lectures.[146]

And with regard to the compartmentalisation of information, former student B states:

> In retrospect, I can generally say that the numerous real or supposed secrets within the group were one of the most distinctive features of the cult, and were exploited by [Zernickow] as a means to divide and conquer.[147]

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140 *Ibid.*
141 See footnote 26. Senzaki died in 1958, so that any plagiarism presumably would not be litigated.
142 See footnote 27.
143 See footnote 26.
144 See footnote 27.
145 See footnote 138.
146 See footnote 26.
147 See footnote 27.

As for Shimano, he also evidently applied many of these same information control techniques. In addition to his aforementioned overt lying and encouragement of others to do so, he and his wife are described as “not wanting students to talk to each other”, wanting “a 'veil of secrecy' to surround everything” and considering “public discussions of the student-teacher issue as a loss of face.”[148] An explicit example of Shimano's use of secrecy to deflect criticism is the following quotation, taken from one of his few actual written responses to the many accusations against him:

> For weeks now I have not answered your many letters, because I had to wrestle with the subtle question of how to talk about “what happened during this Dokusan”[149] [...] For centuries, this meeting between teacher and student has remained confidential to both: the teacher does not talk about it, and neither should the student. The secret character of Dokusan is essential. Only thus can true Dharma continue, especially in the Rinzai tradition.
>
> My training strictly forbids me to speak publicly about what happens during Dokusan, yet I do not want to use the confidential nature of Dokusan as an excuse to conceal alledged [*sic!*] sexual pursuits. This has been truly my dilemma. Because of the situation at Shobo-Ji you have created, I have now decided to break the tradition and speak publicly about this allegation [...][150]

Given that many of the sexual encounters described by Shimano's victims did in fact occur during dokusan, this position can, in retrospect, only be considered as extremely self-serving.[151]

And an explicit example of compartmentalisation of information at the ZSS comes from the following resignation letter by a board member:

> it is my opinion that this Board has some operational issues.The way a typical Board of Directors operates is that documents and important news is shared immediately with every Board member. I know of several instances during my tenure where this has not occurred. Every Zen Studies Society director needs to be “kept in the loop” at all times even when uncomfortable and/or embarrassing information is involved.[152]

Finally, Shimano's autobiographical accounts, like Zernickow's, also omit any reference to the numerous allegations with which he has been confronted.[153] Even the very fact of his resignation has since been written out of history: in October 2010 - under the auspices of the ZSS “Ethics

148 See footnote 122. Students under Richard Baker at the SFZC also recall “a pervasive and sometimes punitive atmosphere of silence and secrecy,” see footnote 209, p. 243.

149 A private interview between the student and teacher.

150 Shimano, Eido, letter to George Zournas dated 21 October 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821021_Shimano_Zournas.pdf.

151 One survivor reports that Shimano incited sexual activity during 80% of her dokusan interviews: see footnote 104.

152 Perriello, Fran, letter to ZSS Board dated 10 September 1995, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19950910_Perriello_Board.pdf.

153 See e.g.: Nordstrom, Louis, ed., *Namu Dai Bosa*, Theatre Arts Books, 1976; Zen Studies Society, publicity brochure, 1978, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19780000_circa_Brochure.pdf. References to the accusations against Shimano on Wikipedia have also been completely removed several times, see http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Eido_Tai_Shimano&action=history.

Committee” no less - the current president of the board reassured a survivor in writing that Shimano had “submitted his resignation effective 8 December 2010” and that the “Board is now in control of operations.”[154] Yet all subsequent ZSS publications celebrate Shimano instead as “retired” - not resigned - and he is even described as having festively presided, as “Retired Founding Abbot” before over 120 guests, at his successor's installation ceremony on 1 January 2011 - almost a month after his supposed resignation took effect.[155] This is of course an especially pernicious example of information control, since the very same fact is spun by the ZSS in two completely opposite directions, depending on the respective advantage to be gained: in the context of privately appeasing a potential whistle-blower, Shimano is described as resigned, but for all other purposes, especially in promotional material, he retains his status and authority as “Retired Founding Abbot.” Ironically, this latter title is itself an example of misinformation, since Shimano's teacher Soen Nakagawa was already appointed “Honorary Founder” of the ZSS monastery in 1972.[156]

g) Self-aggrandisement or “cult of personality”

Perhaps the most well-known warning sign of a potentially dangerous teacher, besides sexual misconduct per se, is the teacher's own extremely high opinion of himself, along with the corresponding adulation by his students. To quote but one recent iteration of this point: “Excessive emphasis on the teacher as a special being, when no other person can ever attain to such a level - this attitude is a giveaway that something is wrong in the sangha.”[157] Although this characteristic surely underlies much of both Shimano's and Zernickow's behaviour examined elsewhere in this paper, in the present section I discuss a few especially narcissistic examples thereof, and also show that such exaggeration apparently extends even to their “authentic” teaching credentials.

At Zernickow's temple, there were reportedly “portraits of him everywhere” as well as a bronze bust. His many books are described as having “increasingly consisted of mere grandstanding,” in addition to being subject to the express censorship and positive spin mentioned above. Zernickow himself is described as often subjecting group members to solo singing performances - which ranged from “embarrassing to horrible” - as well as holding monologues that could go on for over two hours. In general, he is described as being obsessed with leadership. B states, for example,

154 Dowling, Soun Joe, email to Shimano survivor dated 16 October 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100912R_Xxxxx_ZSS.pdf.
155 See Zen Studies Society, Spring/Summer 2011 Newsletter, footnote 60, p. 12.
156 See Zen Studies Society, undated invitation signed by Shimano, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19720915_SoenShimanoDt.pdf.
157 Schireson, Myoan Grace, “Education for Zen Students on Misconduct in Sanghas”, http://sweepingzen.com/education-for-zen-students-on-misconduct-in-sanghas-studying-personal-interpersonal-and-transpersonal-levels

that:

> His goal was certainly always to lead the group. I don't know when he drifted into such delusions of grandeur, but he needed that. He also can't be without the group - in that respect he's dependent, too. Sure, he was always threatening to: “I'll leave!”, and we just thought, “Go right ahead!”, but he couldn't do it. […] He needs to be on a pedestal […] there can be nobody who is at eye level with him - he kept his dharma heirs small, too - and for that he needs his organisation.[158]

As for Shimano, one former student recalls that he “was the absolute authority ruling over obedient American students, many of whom revered him as almost a god,”[159] and a website devoted to Shimano currently refers to him as a “living Buddha” who has enabled “literally millions of people to taste the peace of meditation.”[160] Having myself had the opportunity to observe Shimano in person, I can confirm that he certainly does communicate an aura of self-importance. His gait, tone of voice, and word selection all give the impression of someone who cherishes authority, and very well knows the subtle methods of securing it - especially in a Zen context.[161] He also was evidently unwilling to share the pedestal with others: I recall one occasion, at the beginning of a retreat in Switzerland, when a member of the retreat centre's staff had called a short meeting with participants to explain the procedures for the daily work period. By chance Shimano happened to have called a private meeting of his own, with a few students, at the other end of the same room. And at one point during our meeting, the staff member was angrily interrupted by Shimano's assistant, who requested that he lower his voice, since they were “having an important meeting here!” Though said staff member had been speaking at an appropriate volume - during a scheduled meeting at his own centre - and was explaining necessary basic procedures for the smooth functioning of his guest Shimano's retreat, he was nevertheless evidently considered an affront to the latter's more important spiritual business. I was not the only participant to have been visibly dumbfounded by this interruption.

Another example of self-aggrandisement, specific to Zen, has been described in detail by Stuart Lachs. Lachs explains how the Zen teacher need not actually make any particular claims about his own greatness, since, as long as he can point out the fact that he is a “roshi” and “dharma heir” in the Zen school - which both Shimano and Zernickow do repeatedly[162] - the Zen institution will automatically complete the picture of nigh-divinity for him, “regardless of whether or not the

158 See footnote 27.
159 See footnote 92.
160 www.playfulmoon.com/EidoRoshi/page1.html, last accessed 6 June 2012. With regard to the accuracy of the figure provided: according to the 2008 Pew Forum Religious Landscape Survey, there are considerably fewer than one million adult Zen Buddhists in the entire United States.
161 See also Hamacher, Christopher, letter to ZSS dated 4 September 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100904_Hamacher_Board.pdf.
162 See e.g. Shimano, Eido, *Points of departure: Zen Buddhism with a Rinzai view*, Zen Studies Society Press, 1991; see also footnote 153; www.mumon-kai.de.

individual can manifest any evidence of such an exalted level of spiritual attainment."[163] In the same vein, the teacher need merely "selflessly" praise the supreme attainment of his own teacher, and the prestige will be automatically transferred back to him via the mythology of dharma transmission.[164]

Shimano in particular used the latter technique to great advantage. Besides making countless glowing references, dedications, etc., to his "legendary" teacher Soen Nakagawa throughout his career, Shimano has written and/or edited two entire books about him. Though expressing reverence for one's teacher in this form is certainly understandable, the manner in which Shimano makes explicitly clear that he himself is Nakagawa's dharma heir, in the opening passages of both books, smacks of self-congratulation. Ironically, in the 1986 book *The Soen Roku,* in order to stifle a rumour that Nakagawa might have granted dharma transmission to a particular Western student, Shimano expressly lists the four other Japanese monks besides himself who were officially named as Nakagawa's heirs.[165] Yet ten years later, after such Western student had died, the preface to the next book names only Shimano - supposedly as Nakagawa's "closest disciple and principal dharma heir"[166] - without acknowledging any of the other four, even though one of them was running his own Zen centre across town from the ZSS at the time. The book itself is even described in advertisements as "an intimate, in-depth portrait of the master of Eido Tai Shimano, his Dharma heir [...]"[167]

Another historical Zen figure to whom Shimano and the ZSS claim to be at least indirectly related is the well-respected Buddhist scholar D.T. Suzuki. For example, Suzuki is described as the founder of the ZSS in the very first sentence of the ZSS home page[168] and, in his lectures, Shimano often fondly recalls his own personal meeting with Suzuki in Hawaii.[169] Yet according to his collected letters, D.T. Suzuki himself did not want to be associated with either the ZSS or Shimano in any manner, even expressly requesting that his name be struck from their letterhead.[170] From this perspective, Shimano's numerous mentions of Suzuki cannot be considered merely harmless name-dropping: on the contrary, he was clearly exploiting the rhetorical tactic of fondly recollecting past acquaintances, without mentioning that such acquaintances had long since decided to end their relationship to him. Other people in this category namely include former generous patron

163 See footnote 3, p. 10.
164 *Ibid*.
165 Nakagawa, Soen, *The Soen Roku,* Zen Studies Society Press, 1986, pp. xv-xvi.
166 Chayat, Roko Sherry and Tanahashi, Kazuaki, eds., *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa,* Shambhala, 1996, p. ix. The author of the preface, Kazuaki Tanahashi, admits in the same paragraph that he had never actually met Soen Nakagawa. His information therefore presumably came from said "principal" dharma heir himself.
167 See e.g. www.amazon.com.
168 www.zenstudies.org. Last accessed 21 May 2012.
169 See e.g. the ZSS video "With One Stroke A Mandala", Ellen Darby Video Works, 2002.
170 Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshu*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999, pp. 385-392.

Dorris F. Carlson,[171] assistant to the revered Zen pioneer Nyogen Senzaki, Ms. Shubin Tanahashi,[172] and even Shimano's own Zen teacher Soen Nakagawa.[173]

The fact that Shimano's relentless self-marketing was also successful is evidenced by the fawning adoration he received from his students. The following are just some of the many student quotes featured in various ZSS publications:

> For your [Shimano's] teachings of no-discriminating mind, for your amazing Nen, for the beginningless and endless MU of it all, I put my palms together in gratitude beyond gratitude, dear Roshi [...] May we be blessed by many many more years of your brilliant insight, your extraordinary concern for the Dharma, and your unstinting guidance![174]

> At the close of one sesshin, one of the officers expressed particular admiration for Eido Roshi's acceptance of his karma, and this idea has stayed with me. Truly, it must really be something to realize, again and again, that one's life is wrapped up with those of all the patriarchs, bound tightly to unyielding traditions. Accepting this karma, Eido Roshi has unfailingly responded to those ancient inner commands that have committed all his wisdom and energy to providing, for thousands of Zen students over so many years, the profound touch of spiritual awakening.[175]

> I had heard the stories of course: how he [Shimano] was a direct heir of the legendary Soen Nakagawa Roshi, how ferocious he was in upholding the Rinzai Zen tradition, how he struggled victoriously with philanthropists, architects, bureaucrats, builders and any number of other uncomprehending individuals to build a monastery and plant the seeds of the Dharma; how he had exquisite taste in the arts; how he was a scholar and linguist; how he had struggled with the sometimes insurmountable-seeming cultural barriers between East and West. But to me he was more [...][176]

> Congratulations Eido Roshi! You have had such a dynamic influence on countless people. I count myself as one of the luckiest people having met you! Everyday your Dharma resounds in my life like a Bonsho rung at dawn. Who would I now be if karma had not shown me the way to you [...] It is impossible for me to select one memory or event that can fully represent the richness that knowing you has instilled in me.[177]

> But in that few seconds - I can't explain it - [Shimano] Roshi transmitted something to all of us, something powerful, forceful, and real, just like Joshu's Mu - bringing us into the lineage, offering his humble gratitude like a raft large enough to carry us all […] Roshi, you have irrevocably changed our lives and the course of the Dharma here in the West. You might respond that this has been nothing more than your karma. But this Sangha owes you everything.[178]

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171 Carlson, Dorris F., letter to Korin Sylvan Busch dated 6 March 1984, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19840306_Carlson_Busch.pdf. The ZSS nevertheless continued to advertise their relationship to her, for example in their Spring/Summer 1998 Newsletter, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19980600_ZSS_NewsLetter_Dorris.pdf.

172 See footnote 97. ZSS publications nevertheless often provide fond recollections of Senzaki and Ms. Tanahashi, e.g. in the Winter/Spring 2009 Newsletter, www.zenstudies.org/images/ZSSNewsltr09.pdf.

173 See page 33 below.

174 Chayat, Roko Sherry, quoted in Zen Studies Society, "Never Met With - A Tribute to Eido Shimano Roshi on His 70th Birthday", 2002, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20021001_Never_Met_With.pdf.

175 Nash, Banjo Thomas, *ibid.*

176 Keenan, Saigyo Terry, *ibid.*

177 Schubert, Doshin David, quoted in Zen Studies Society, "30th Anniversary Celebration" brochure, 15 July 2006, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20060715_30_Anniversary.pdf, pp. 9-10.

178 Kerr, Eiko Ellen, *ibid.*

Most of these euphoric statements were of course made at the height of Shimano's popularity, when memories of his past abuse - presumably due to his successful application of the information control techniques described above - had evidently faded. Nevertheless, some of the adulation persists even today. For example, there was allegedly still a large portrait of Shimano hanging at a ZSS temple in November 2011,[179] almost one year after his resignation, and Roko Sherry Chayat, his appointed replacement as abbot, has since stated that “I don't pretend for a moment that I can offer the fathomless insight that Eido Roshi has as a teacher.”[180] As of the date of the present writing, Chayat also continues to express her gratitude, on the ZSS website, for “Eido Roshi’s uncompromising and penetrating Dharma Eye, which reveals directly the luminous power of the unconditioned mind,” and the website also still refers to Shimano “roshi” and his “dharma transmission,” thus even now continuing to exploit the aforementioned assumption of his supreme attainment.[181] Finally, the following, particularly disconcerting statements by ZSS students were all made after the full extent of Shimano's abuse had been revealed:

> There is no doubt in my mind about his [Shimano's] authenticity or commitment to establishing the Rinzai Zen tradition in the United States. I am sincerely grateful for his efforts and his commitment to the practice. Preventing him from seeing students (who want to see him) or attending the religious sites he founded because he has engaged in consensual heterosexual relationships and signed a letter where he defended his reputation is ridiculous.[182]
>
> Everyone has their own level of how much wrongness about someone's behavior = sins against humanity, they can live with and accept, and which doesn't necessarily negate what that person stood for. Shimano = Zen practice = zazen. And that is what needs to be passed on [...][183]
>
> Last year, for the second time, Eido Roshi was the object of a sexual scandal with students complaining about alleged sexual affairs they willingly engaged in. Let me say, that I do not consider myself worthy of examining the behavior of a living Buddha. […] These alleged affairs, should they be true, most probably are Zen teaching.[184]

As suggested above, this exaggerated opinion of Shimano's greatness was based heavily on his being a dharma heir of Soen Nakagawa. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, the circumstances of such dharma transmission - even assuming that the concept itself is more than simply another convenient myth[185] - are in fact suspect. For example, far from considering Shimano as his “closest

179 See footnote 95.
180 See footnote 155, p. 2.
181 www.zenstudies.org/abbot.html, last accessed on 5 January 2012.
182 Hale, Yushin Tim B., email to ZSS dated 17 June 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110617R_YuShin_Board.pdf.
183 “Cocteau, Glenn” post to g*enkaku-again* blog, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110211_Genkaku_Again.pdf.
184 Jean-Pierre, Hoen Sandra, open letter dated 30 August 2011 to the Rubin Museum of Art, http://www.playfulmoon.com/zen/RMA.html; last accessed on 25 June 2012. Her reference to a merely “second” scandal in 2011 also reveals a remarkable naiveté about the extent of Shimano's predatory history.
185 For a critique of the institution of dharma transmission itself, see Storlie, Erik, “Lineage Delusions: Eido Shimano

disciple and principal dharma heir," Nakagawa was rumoured to have finally lost patience and in fact repudiated Shimano altogether following one of the larger scandals.[186] In addition, around the same period, Shimano declared himself "independent" of any other Zen Buddhist organisations in the United States or Japan,[187] arguably severing the very ties upon which his transmission would have been based. Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, Shimano does not even appear on the lineage chart of the Rinzai Zen school from which his alleged transmission stemmed.[188]

In another striking parallel, Zernickow also claims to have dharma transmission, in his case from the Japanese teacher Seki Yuho, but there is allegedly no record in Japan either of such transmission[189] or even of Zernickow's simple claim of being an ordained monk.[190] Zernickow is even reported to have bestowed the title of "Zen Master" on himself in an elaborate ceremony, albeit after "twenty years of self-examination."[191] Although acquisition of the title in this manner is surely a misuse of the concept of dharma transmission, Zernickow is not in fact the first Western Zen teacher to have done so: the aforementioned institutional guarantee of perfection is evidently just too tempting to pass up.[192]

h) Autocratic institutional control

The final common characteristic of both Zernickow's and Shimano's described teaching styles is the undemocratic, total control of the respective organisation. This is also a well-known warning sign for trouble: it had already been pointed out fifteen years ago that "the problems of many Buddhist organisations have rested on the unlimited authority of the guru," and that

> [all] that is needed is proper attention to the creation of an institutional structure in which the power relations between guru and followers is balanced, in which problems and disputes can be raised and discussed and in which the formation of appropriate

Roshi, Dharma Transmission, and American Zen", http://sweepingzen.com/lineage-delusions-eido-shimano-roshi-dharma-transmission-and-american-zen; footnote 3, pp. 4-5; and footnote 63, p. 23: "Historically, this theory [of unbroken dharma transmission] is untenable and constitutes a pure *invention* by the Zen school."

186 Aitken, Robert, letter to Rosemary Kiefer dated 20 November 1984, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19841120_Aitken_Kiefer.pdf; Afable, Jiro Andy, letter to ZSS board dated 6 March 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100603R_Afable_Board.pdf.

187 Zen Studies Society, press release dated 19 October 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821019_ZSS_Press_Release.pdf.

188 Japanese language lineage chart, undated, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20101001_Ryutakuji_Lineage.pdf, p. 10. The fact that Shimano's relationship to his home temple Ryutaku-ji had lapsed can also be taken from the fact that no delegates from that temple have been sent to the ZSS since death of Soen Nakagawa in 1982. Conversely, when Shimano's American students are sent to Japan for further training, they no longer go to Ryutaku-ji.

189 See http://blog.buddhistische-sekten.de/?p=207.

190 See footnote 26.

191 According to www.mumon-kai.de, "in 1998, after 34 years of Zen practice, confirmation by Zen Masters and the completion of his vow of a 20-year self-examination, Sotetsu Yuzen became an official Zen Master of the Japanese Rinzai school."

192 It is said that "roshi" Philip Kapleau also was never authorised to use the title: see footnote 3, p. 24.

committees allows decision making processes reflecting the wishes of the membership.[193]

Yet this was reportedly far from the case at either the ZSS or Mumon-Kai. For example, though the ZSS was incorporated as a tax-exempt charity, both Shimano and his wife Aiho were de facto permanent members of the board of trustees - with Shimano even as ex-officio Chairman and Aiho as Treasurer.[194] Moreover, though Shimano has since resigned from the board, a long-time student and board member has described all the remaining members as being “handpicked” by Shimano and “not picked because [they] were the best and most mature people to help the Zen Studies Society.”[195] And another student observed already in 1993 that “the Bylaws should be changed to make the Zen Studies Society more democratic. It is currently an autocratic organization where no one has any say in what happens.”[196]

This structure of course eventually caused problems at the ZSS, both from a financial perspective [197] as well as with regard to the organisational response to Shimano's sexual abuse. For example, the board's terse reply to one accusation against Shimano was simply, “We would like you to know that we affirm our confidence in Eido Roshi and his leadership of our sangha. If you have concern for the Dharma and Sangha harmony, we advise you to desist.”[198] To another student's questioning of Shimano's behaviour, the board allegedly responded “with the basest slander and lies about me. It was said that I had 'gone mad', 'flipped out', that I was an 'egomaniac' involved in a 'private vendetta' with Eido Roshi, that I 'wasn't invited back', and many others.”[199] And when an outside observer suggested - already in 1982 - forming an independent committee to investigate the charges against Shimano, the president of the board reportedly offered the amazing response “that it would be impossible to find three 'neutral' people in the Sangha and that therefore there would be no point in following through” on the idea.[200] Finally, the ZSS board continues to pay both Shimano and his wife their generous pensions, despite the many accusations of misconduct against him.[201]

With regard to Zernickow, his group is also organised as a tax-exempt non-profit association, yet, like the situation at the ZSS, in practice Zernickow nevertheless still exerted total control over the

193 Crook, John, “Dangers in Devotion: Buddhist Cults and the Tasks of a Guru”, New Chan Forum, Issue 18, Autumn 1998.
194 See e.g. Zen Studies Society, minutes of board meeting dated 29 December 1982 and 12 December 1983, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821229_ZSS_Annual_Meeting.pdf.
195 Afable, Jiro Andy, email to Kobutsu Kevin Malone dated 6 January 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110106_Afable_Malone.pdf.
196 See footnote 122.
197 See footnotes 52, p.1; and 152; Zournas, George, letter to Trustees of ZSS dated 14 September 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19820914_Zournas_Board.pdf.
198 Busch, Korin Sylvan, letter to “Friends in the Dharma” dated 6 February 1979, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/119790206_Busch_Friends.pdf.
199 Kaufman, Peter, letter to George Zournas dated 1 December 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821201R_Kaufman_Zournas.pdf.
200 Zournas, George, letter to Robert Aitken dated 11 October 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19821011_Zournas_Aitken.pdf.
201 Marinello, Genjo Joe, “ZSS and Chobo-ji, A Report by Genjo”, footnote 10.

voting members. Indeed, former student D provides a detailed description of how the autocratic functioning of the association violated both its own charter as well as its members' constitutional right to political freedom. She describes how in 2002 Zernickow had organised a vigil near the Berlin state legislature, and demanded full support of the initiative by all group members. However, when D refused to attend the vigil out of political conviction, she was first prohibited from participating in all group activities for six months as punishment, and then her membership was summarily revoked altogether, without possibility of appeal - in violation of the association's own conflict-resolution procedure. D describes, among other ignominies, how the group promptly destroyed a video she took of the demonstration - by cutting it into tiny pieces and mailing it back to her - and how the association chairman refused three times to accept receipt of her registered letter appealing the ouster.[202]

Other circumstances at Mumon-Kai offer further evidence that Zernickow's control over the membership was absolute. For example, as mentioned in the case history above, many students lived in an apartment building owned by Zernickow situated in a remote Berlin suburb,[203] and worked in one of its restaurants. Almost all participated in the so-called “therapy sessions”. Some students' partners and children were also group members, or at least participated in group activities.[204] Therefore, on top of being their spiritual leader, Zernickow was also many students' landlord, employer and doctor/therapist as well. Under such circumstances - even ignoring the additional sexual relationships - it is therefore difficult to conceive that “the power relation between guru and followers is balanced,” no matter how the organisation may be legally structured. Indeed, with regard to his aforementioned BITE model, Steven Hassan points out that

> [i]t is important to understand that destructive mind control can be determined when the overall effect of these four components promotes dependency and obedience to some leader or cause. It is not necessary for every single item on the list to be present. Mind controlled cult members can live in their own apartments, have nine-to-five jobs, be married with children, and still be unable to think for themselves and act independently.[205] [emphasis added]

It is thus ironic that, in Zernickow's case, he has apparently usurped even these potentially extenuating circumstances. One can therefore presume that the overall effect of his omnipresence at Mumon-Kai does indeed promote dependency and obedience to him.

In conclusion, I note another parallel on this point to the French *Association Zen Internationale*, the

202 Email correspondence between the author and D dated 25 May 2012.
203 According to ex-member A, “former students who were Dr. Zernickow's tenants during their membership in the group were, with only few exceptions, ordered to move out of their apartments without delay after they left the group.” See footnote 26.
204 Mumon-Kai newsletter “Tenshin”, 2011, vol. 1.
205 See footnote 136.

organisational structure of which has also been described as opaque, not suited to take the interests of all members into account, and featuring voting mechanisms that would violate associations law if applied in Germany.[206]

4. DISCUSSION

I have thus shown that the characteristics attributed to Shimano and Zernickow include, in addition to sexual exploitation: inability to deal with criticism reasonably, favouring formality and extravagant accoutrements in their practice, blaming the student's own ego to deflect accusations, hypocrisy, using group dynamics in their favour, controlling the flow of information to students, self-aggrandisement, and autocratic leadership of their organisations. These behaviours were apparently all freely observable at all times and without any obvious interruptions.

The question thus arises as to how otherwise intelligent or reasonable Zen students could have accepted such flagrant misconduct by their teachers for so long - presumably even to the present day at Mumon-Kai. The issue is particularly pressing since continued abuse seems to be more common than one-time lapses by Zen teachers in general: with regard to the six teachers in her aforementioned study, Caryl Gopfert namely states: “There is no evidence, however, that the teachers in these stories learned anything […] For the most part, these particular teachers continued harming other students.”[207] In the following section, I therefore suggest some potential causes for this phenomenon.

a) Lack of morality

In my opinion, one explanation is that Zen itself does not explicitly condemn any of the behaviour in question. For example, Zen typically places very little emphasis on justice or morally correct conduct. As one author has put it, “if we search for evidence of substantive interest in morality in the two dimensions of the Zen tradition where we would most expect to find it - in the vast canon of Zen sacred literature and in the full repertoire of Zen practices - we discover that it is largely absent.”[208] And though ethical principles such as wisdom and compassion do exist in the broader Buddhist literature, Zen typically rejects pursuing the scholarly study thereof.[209] Even the interpretation of the aforementioned Third Precept against misusing sexuality has been left

206 See footnote 63, p. 11.
207 See footnote 62, p. 342.
208 Wright, Dale S., “Satori and the Moral Dimension of Enlightenment”, Journal of Buddhist Ethics 13 (2006), p. 3. For further examples of Zen's lack of morality, see Victoria, Brian, *Zen War Stories*, Routledge, 2003, 288 pages.
209 See footnote 81.

deliberately vague in Japanese Zen.[210] Thus much of the behaviour attributed to Shimano and Zernickow, which could quite reasonably be qualified as immoral, can nevertheless be painted as acceptable in the "amoral" Zen realm[211] - and it is thus presumably no accident that the quotation in the title of this paper has been used in one form or another by both teachers.[212]

b) Japanese authoritarianism

Secondly, one will also not find any condemnation in Zen of such characteristics as brutally rigid practice, arcane rituals and ordinations, veils of secrecy, or undemocratic rule either, given that these elements are part and parcel of the traditional monastic environment in Japan. Indeed, one respected Zen teacher has even stated that "the Japanese system is weighted on the side of rigidity, ritualism, hierarchy and sadomasochism."[213] And as Katherine Masis has observed, this poses a particular problem for Western students, due to their being unable to differentiate between what constitutes behaviour that is supposedly the outcome of years of meditation, and that which is simply the reflection of their teachers' ingrained authoritarian background.[214] This problem is presumably even greater for those Western students - likely the majority - whose first or only in-depth contact with Japanese culture is through Zen Buddhism.

c) Impossible ideals

The aforementioned Ralf Halfmann argues that typical Zen practice not only fails to condemn, but actually promotes some of the behaviour in question. He states that since Zen's utopian ideal of "egolessness" is in reality impossible to achieve, the student will tend to blame herself and her own practice for her less-than-perfect behaviour. She thereby creates and strengthens an inner psychological schism between her own experience and the unreachable ideal, and the duality thereof contravenes the very goal of "oneness" which caused the problem in the first place. At the same time,

> the Master nourishes and increases precisely this impression of the student being to blame, by regularly declaring that the felt discrepancy disappears when one practices

210 Warner, Brad, *Sit Down and Shut Up*, New World Library, 2007, p. 146.
211 See also Masis: "American Zen students […] seem to deal with their cognitive dissonance by readily explaining away unethical or simply cruel behaviors on the part of Zen masters as serving some 'greater good,' as yet unperceived by the students," see, footnote 81; and Lachs: "[though] Zen places more importance than other religions on their clerics', in this case the Zen masters', lack of self-interest […] this doesn't mean there is, in fact, a lack of self-interest, only that the self-interests can more easily be disguised beneath the Zen ideals of enlightened mind, selflessness and purity," see footnote 3, p. 5.
212 See e.g. with regard to Shimano: footnote 66, and Zernickow has written that "Zen Masters are not holy men or moral apostles […] since they know: there is only ever a relative view of morality and righteousness," footnote 86.
213 Arokiasamy, Arul M., *Zen: Awakening to Your Original Face*, Cre-A, 2005, p. 123. See also footnote 208, p. 14.
214 See footnote 81.

> "correctly." The result is always a recommendation to practice Zen even *more* intensively and with *more* dedication. But since only the "Master" is capable of confirming any potential progress on the spiritual path, in the end the students become more and more dependent, instead of realising autonomy and freedom.[215]

With regard to more senior students, since they are eventually required to uphold this propagated illusion of selflessness, the aforementioned schism between reality and utopia becomes even stronger. Such students are thus led to try to neutralise the conflict, for example via the abuse of alcohol[216] or other coping strategies such as extreme, masochistic subjugation or identification with the aggressor.[217] In the worst-case scenario, secretly troubled long-term students rise to the level of teacher, and then find themselves at the centre of a realm of unbridled power[218] - and no corresponding moral rules of conduct with which to hem in their needs.[219]

d) The Absolute vs. the Relative

Another Zen teaching which can easily be used to justify and thus prolong misconduct is the view of the "Absolute" as different from the "Relative." Indeed, when responding to an accusation, the teacher need only shift the point of view to a higher level of abstraction, and the discussion is immediately brought to a halt. As Kramer and Alstad explain:

> In esoteric "spirituality," this shift is from the realm of individuated existence to the abstract level of an overall unity. For example, when viewing existence as comprised of separate entities, individual people are the locus of suffering. The concept of unity does away with individuals. By combining the different levels and ignoring that they are different, paradoxical statements can be made, such as "There is suffering, yet no one suffers" and "All imperfection is perfect." By changing the context in this way, almost anything can be made into a paradox, thereby indicating special wisdom. Paradox can also be used to justify any behavior by saying there is a hidden meaning that is part of the paradoxical nature of things, which of course, only the guru adequately understands.[220]

Certain Zen teachers have evidently mastered this trick very well, since one observer reports of their "responding to questions posed from the relative point of view of everyday life with answers coming from the Absolute perspective of Buddhism - and vice-versa. In this way they can easily demonstrate the supposedly limited understanding of the questioner, who often is left deeply

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215 See footnote 63, p. 20.

216 *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22. Halfmann's example was the leader of the AZI, Soto Zen Master Taisen Deshimaru, who was known to have abused alcohol and died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 68. Another very popular Zen Master in the West, Taizan Maezumi, was also known to have been an alcoholic.

217 See footnote 81.

218 *Ibid.*: "The Teacher's dogmatism and rigidity seemed to grow in time, perhaps partly in response to the sheer authority she wielded over her students […]"

219 This is of course not to say that rigid moral codes would be the solution. The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, for example, imposes celibacy on its monastics - and has even encouraged married students to cease conjugal relations - yet teacher abuse has also occurred there. See below, footnote 241.

220 See footnote 79, p. 107.

impressed and speechless."[221] Moreover, since from this "absolute" perspective there is no individuated self to feel suffering, one can easily deduce the conclusion that, ultimately, no abuse can ever occur. As Caryl Gopfert formulated it in her study of Zen teacher betrayal: "in the relative realm, there is betrayal and exploitation, in the realm of the Absolute this is simply the nature of human existence. No one betrays anyone. There is no betrayer and no betrayed, no betrayal."[222] The use by Shimano of this rationalisation has even been explicitly pointed out by one of his students: "the argument that there is nothing to judge/no one to judge has been used to justify abusive behavior."[223]

Finally, not only can the Absolute/Relative dichotomy be used to stifle discussion and downplay individual suffering, but the subtle undercurrent of the argument is also that the Absolute level, from which all of the teacher's activity supposedly springs, is in fact "higher" or "more enlightened" than the student's merely Relative level.[224] As a result, the student is therefore not only abused, but also made to feel inadequate because of her lack of access to this supposedly higher realm.

e) The institution of dharma transmission

Critic Stuart Lachs suggests some additional reasons why Zen students might be particularly susceptible to accepting teacher behaviour that, in any other context, would be denounced:

> Further, they learn quickly that their advancement up the institutional ladder is completely dependent upon the master's good graces. Because the Dharma-transmitted Zen master acts not in his own name and authority, but rather as the delegate of the institution, with all the authority and power that entails, he also monopolizes the means to salvation. So, we can understand that there might be multiple motives for "not seeing" the master as he really is, whether there be an absence of compassion or wisdom or the presence of sexual improprieties or alcoholism.[225]

And later:

> This imputed legitimacy [by dharma transmission] obscures the power relation which, though having an aspect of technical competence, is actually a matter of institutional authority. There is a process of *misrecognition*: "the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are, but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder."[226]

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221 See footnote 63, p. 12.
222 See footnote 62, pp. 337-338.
223 See footnote 121.
224 For more on the hidden dualism in the concept of "the Absolute", see the chapter entitled "Oneness, Enlightenment and the Mystical Experience" in *The Guru Papers*, footnote 79.
225 See footnote 3, p. 3.
226 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

In the same vein, Lachs suggests that the power yielded by the “dharma-transmitted” teacher also evidently extends over his teaching colleagues as well. Indeed, at least in Shimano's case, the Zen establishment was on the whole very reticent in speaking out against him, even in full knowledge of the extent of his misbehaviour. Robert Aitken was particularly hesitant to denounce Shimano, having waited until 1995 before demanding his resignation, even though he had been personally aware of Shimano's preying on women - even psychiatric patients in hospital - since the early 1960's.[227] And other teachers continued to openly associate with Shimano over the years as well, either by collaborating with him at conferences or on panels, or attending celebratory events hosted by him.[228] Furthermore, as already mentioned, Nonin Chowaney, a high-ranking member of the American Zen Teachers' Association, was still vociferously defending Shimano in May 2010,[229] and even in November 2010 an otherwise very respectable European teacher wrote the following about the scandal:

> The matter with Eido Shimano is unhappy and complex. […] Shimano was always friendly to me, and I also never heard anything negative from anyone directly; he also was/is the long-time friend of my old teacher […]. For all these reasons it is not easy for me to say anything about it, or to take a position.[230]

My own Zen teacher has also cautioned me against providing information to students about the Shimano scandal, since it is allegedly better to only communicate “good news.”

All this evidence therefore supports Lachs' suggestion that a certain “old-boys' club” mentality persists among Zen teachers who wield the institutional power of dharma transmission, which serves to protect the reputation of “long-time friends” at the expense of preventing further harm to students. Indeed, if even one dharma-transmitted teacher does not live up to the promise of nigh-divinity, then the entire institution presumably becomes open to questioning.

f) Emphasis on enlightenment

Another contributing factor in my opinion, at least in the Rinzai Zen style practiced by both Shimano and Zernickow, is the excessive emphasis on spontaneous enlightenment. Since a spiritual experience of enlightenment can be a joyous, life-changing event,[231] the student may accordingly be very grateful to the teacher and thus more forgiving of his shortcomings - especially

227 See footnote 97.

228 For example, the schedule for the 1976 opening ceremony of a ZSS temple reads “attended by teachers and students of Zendos from around the world,” www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19760109_DBZ_Opening_Ceremony.pdf.

229 See footnote 7. Interestingly, Chowaney has also publicly defended Shimano's dharma heirs based on their “full membership” in the AZTA, though in the same conversation another AZTA member admitted that the AZTA is not even a “judging entity;” see ZFI thread on “Eido Shimano's lineage,” footnote 63.

230 Letter to Christopher Hamacher dated 9 November 2010.

231 For some euphoric student descriptions of enlightenment experiences in Zen, see e.g. Kapleau, Roshi Philip, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, Anchor, 1989.

if the teacher himself stresses the importance of the experience.[232] Such feelings of gratitude are an understandable reaction and not problematic as such - I have similarly warm memories of my own Rinzai Zen teacher - yet in combination with Zen's aforementioned lack of a moral stance, overwhelming thankfulness can seriously compromise a student's ethical judgement. The case of the ZSS particularly demonstrates that the teacher's “forgivable shortcomings” can evidently be stretched to include all the categories of behaviour discussed in this paper.

In the worst case, the cognitive dissonance between, on the one hand, the student's gratitude for her own positive experience with her teacher, and on the other, his obvious defects, may even lead her to consider him as being both “enlightened” and a sexual abuser at the same time. For example, the following is a description of the aforementioned Roko Sherry Chayat, Shimano's appointed successor at the ZSS:

> One evening this past May, Shinge [Chayat] Roshi called the sangha together so that she could explain what was going on with Eido and stop the rumor train before it had a chance to get a full head of steam. She told us about the most recent incident with Eido Roshi and his student and told us that there had been other incidents in the past, but did not elaborate beyond that. [...] All of the people that spoke professed support for Eido, saying that their individual experiences with him during sesshin were enough for them to be sure that he was “the real deal.” Many people also spoke of their unending support of Shinge Roshi. Shinge Roshi was in tears by this point, and told the attendees that she knew that Eido Roshi was her true teacher because, “He has the True Dharma Eye” and is a “fully awakened individual.” I said nothing. [...] I was disturbed that someone could have the True Dharma Eye and do the things that he had done. [...] There was even talk among senior students that his behavior with these women was a type of deep, mystical teaching that he was giving them that we were not yet able to fully understand.[233]

I agree that the reported attitude is particularly disturbing, since it suggests that Shimano's abusive behaviour is not even a shortcoming to be forgiven, but instead is perfectly compatible per se with the goal of “fully awakened” Zen practice.

g) Cultic tendencies

This last troubling quote also hints at a final and, in my opinion, perhaps most significant reason why Shimano and Zernickow were able to continue teaching unhindered for so long. Such statements of continued student support, even today, suggest that over the long span of their teachers' respective tenures, the ZSS and Mumon-Kai have regressed from what might have initially been legitimate Buddhist practice into dysfunctional, cult-like dependency. Indeed, the

232 For an example of Shimano's handling of a student's kensho experience - i.e. as an opportunity for sexual solicitation - see footnote 69, p. 3.
233 See footnote 126.

types of conduct discussed in this paper (e.g. elitism, peer pressure, unaccountable and narcissistic leadership, excessive mind-altering practices, discouragement of dissent, etc.) are in fact all serious warning signs for high-demand/cultic groups.[234] I posit that even if only some of the many allegations against Shimano and Zernickow are true, there still can be no significant differentiation between such "dharma-transmitted" Zen Buddhist masters and other, more run-of-the-mill gurus and cult leaders.

Though a detailed examination of cult dynamics exceeds the scope of this paper, I note at least that the Western Zen community is starting to realise that a problem in this regard exists. Whereas in 1999, for example, Ralf Halfmann could still describe Zen in Europe as practically "immune from cult accusations" and "armed with an almost unshakeable confidence,"[235] in 2011 an American Zen teacher affirmed, based in part on the Shimano case, "that it might be useful to consider every spiritual community, every Zen sangha, as a cult risk,"[236] and former Mumon-Kai students have also begun using that label ("*Sekte*") to describe their group.[237]

I suggest that this is an important acknowledgement, for at least two reasons. First, the Zen community as a whole has traditionally looked down on the Western scientific method, dogmatically battling both "dualistic" logical analysis in general, as well as particular fields of Western study such as sociology, psychology or philosophy. The acknowledgement that Zen groups are a cult risk could therefore signal a new openness to social science, and perhaps allow practitioners to finally profit from all the corresponding research that has since been undertaken on this issue.

Secondly, this frank admission of a potentially serious problem stands in positive contrast to a much weaker proposal in the Zen community, namely that further scandals can be prevented by simply implementing more ethical guidelines for teachers. In my opinion, though such guidelines can certainly be helpful, they would surely still be useless in situations of total cultish dependency such as those described above. Indeed, as Caryl Gopfert already observed in her study: "the best-laid guidelines and codes are only as good as the freedom to use them is alive and well in the community."[238] It follows that if the community's teacher does not show even a minimal level of cooperation or personal integrity, or if board members downplay grievances with comments such

234 See e.g. Lalich, Dr. Janja and Langone, Dr. Michael, "Characteristics Associated with Cultic Groups - Revised," www.icsahome.com/infoserv_articles/langone_michael_checklis.htm. See also Hamacher, Christopher, letter to ICSA dated 4 February 2011, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110204_Hamacher_ICSA.pdf.

235 See footnote 63, p. 1. In 2004, Masis already uses the more moderate phrasing "Zen Buddhism has acquired some immunity to accusations of cult-like endeavors," see footnote 81.

236 Schireson, Kuzan Peter, "Sexual Ethics, Zen Scandals, and Cults", essay dated 14 February 2011, http://sweepingzen.com/sexual-ethics-zen-scandals-and-cults.

237 See footnotes 26 and 27.

238 See footnote 62, p. 115.

as “well, he hasn't raped anyone yet, has he?”,[239] even very stringent guidelines will obviously remain unenforced. One need look no further than the ZSS itself to underline this point, since that group did in fact have ethical guidelines in place since 1993 - and one woefully inadequate example of their application has already been discussed.[240] Another example in the Zen community comes from the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC), whose own internal rules evidently also did not prevent ten years of abuse by their teacher, Eko Michael Little.[241] A subsequent report on that case by the FaithTrust Institute namely states that:

> current OBC rules would have been adequate to deal with the situation had they been invoked. The assessment found, however, that many monks and lay people were ignorant as to their existence. […] Disciples felt powerless to report any wrongdoing on Eko's part out of fear of reprisal. This problem was compounded when other seniors, not wanting to interfere in the master/disciple relationship, referred those disciples back to Eko to deal with their concerns.[242]

Finally, it also goes without saying that no possible guidelines can contain anything substantially new to otherwise honest Buddhist teachers in any case, since the aforementioned Precepts against abusing sexuality, lying, etc., have been at least nominally applicable to all Zen students for centuries.

In conclusion, I therefore concur with the aforementioned critics that the structure and teachings of Zen Buddhism itself lie at the root of the problem, and that the many cases of sexual or other teacher misconduct are merely symptoms thereof.[243] The literature on cult dynamics is immense - one simply has to accept that Zen is not in fact immune from its prescriptions. As one student has put it: “we Zennies have to stop thinking of ourselves as special.”[244] For this reason, I hope that further research into the area of cult tendencies in Zen will occur, and applaud initiatives such as the recently inaugurated Shogaku Zen Institute in the USA, among the goals of which is “understanding the interpersonal, psychological and spiritual aspects of the [Zen] priest’s role. We especially concentrate on issues of power, transference, projection, idealization, and conflict.”[245] I believe that it is only in this manner that Zen will be able to be survive in the West over the long term. If, on the contrary, teachers such as Shimano and Zernickow are written off as

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239 ZSS board member Schnyer, Bugyo David, quoted in Zournas, George, letter to Jack Clareman dated 20 September 1982, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/19820920R_Zournas_Clareman.pdf.

240 Email exchange between a complainant and the ZSS Ethics Committee, see footnote 154.

241 Public Statement from the General Meeting of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives 2011, http://shastaabbey.org/pdf/PublicStatement102011.pdf.

242 *Ibid.*

243 I note that some observers still refer to the problems at the ZSS as being mainly about sex, either due to Shimano's “untreated addiction” or - worse - his “loneliness” and “thinking I can get away with it.” See Schireson, Myoan Grace, “Please read Special Karma by Merry White Benezra”, http://sweepingzen.com/special-karma; and Chowaney, Nonin, “Breaking the Precepts”, http://sweepingzen.com/breaking-the-precepts.

244 See footnote 62, p. 438.

245 www.shogakuzen.org/pages/mission.php. See in particular the section “Addressing Misunderstandings and Challenges.”

unrepresentative or extreme, and Zen's fundamental problems continue to be overlooked and/or papered over with more ethical guidelines, in my opinion Zen Buddhism will eventually fail as a real alternative to the traditional Judeo-Christian religions in the West.

5. SUMMARY

In this paper I reviewed the reports suggesting that at two large and prominent Zen centres, the ZSS in the United States and Mumon-Kai in Germany, rampant victimisation and manipulation of students occurred repeatedly over many years. I then attempted to sort the types of behaviour attributed to the respective teachers into eight different categories, and continued by discussing how the nature of Zen practice can both promote such abusive behaviour in the teacher as well as hinder students from taking appropriate action. Finally, I made the observation that cult dynamics might have played a significant role in both groups, and hope that this latter issue will be examined in greater depth by the Western Zen community in the future.

As a final practical note, though this paper only examined two teachers, I nevertheless encourage any students to exercise caution if they observe too many of the same behaviours in their own spiritual leaders. Indeed, as mentioned above, these types of conduct are all typical warning signs for dangerous cultic/high-demand groups. I of course particularly cannot recommend practicing Zen at either Mumon-Kai or the ZSS, though both groups continue to exist today. With regard to the latter, although Shimano no longer teaches there, their new spiritual leader Ms. Chayat was chosen by Shimano himself and has been one of his closest disciples for several decades, i.e. throughout many of the events described herein. In addition, as late as July 2010 she still did not agree with even asking Shimano to take a leave of absence,[246] she continues to downplay her and the ZSS board's role in enabling his abuse,[247] and, as mentioned above, still publicly expresses her gratitude for Shimano's “uncompromising and penetrating Dharma Eye” today.[248]

246 Chayat, Roko Sherry, email to the ZSS board dated 20 July 2010, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20100720R_Chayat_Board.pdf.
247 Chayat, Roko Sherry, interview with Sweeping Zen, www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20120229_Chayat_SZ.pdf.
248 See footnote 181.