

Nov. 20, 1984

**University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**  
**Library — Archives**

Dear Rosemary,

I begin this letter in Japan and will have it typed up after our return to Honolulu today so that, if you wish, you can duplicate it for interested friends.

My expedition to get information about the status of Eido Shimano was postponed twice to make it convenient for all concerned and finally took place on Saturday, November 17. Since then we had a long kōan review seminar at the Sanun Zendo, so this is my first chance to write. Here is what I learned:

(1) The formal process of Dharma transmission in the Rinzai sect consists of four parts: (a) a document handed over to the one receiving transmission, (b) a ceremony, (c) a registration of the transmission at the home temple, and (d) an announcement of the transmission at the home temple and through established channels in the Rinzai Sect. In this case, the home temple would be Ryūtakuji.

(2) Two people have had ceremonies of transmission from Sōen Rōshi in Japan, and have had their transmissions registered at Ryūtakuji and announced there and through Rinzai channels. These two people are Suzuki Sochū Rōshi, the present abbot of Ryūtakuji, and Fujimori Kōzen Rōshi.

(3) At the funeral for Soen Rōshi, Eido Shimano was shown to a seat in a section for other former monks of Ryūtakuji, not to a seat in a section for Dharma heirs of Sōen Rōshi and other rōshis. I was told that this was a clear signal that he is not considered a rōshi by his Japanese colleagues.

(4) Eido Shimano was given a portion of Sōen Rōshi's ashes to take with him back to the United States. I was told that this was not intended in any way as an endorsement of Eido Shimano and his work, but rather a recognition of the deep investment in transmitting Zen to the West which Sōen Rōshi made over many decades. The feeling was expressed that Daibosatsu Center was very meaningful to Sōen Rōshi, and that he is probably glad that some of his ashes rest there.

(5) Eido Shimano requested a kesa of Sōen Rōshi and this request was denied. However, it seems that he returned to the United States with one of Sōen Rōshi's white robes.

So, any transmission given to Eido Shimano by Sōen Rōshi was informal, and any withdrawal of that transmission would also have been informal. Neither action was ever mentioned at Ryūtakuji by Sōen Rōshi. Confirmation of the rumor that the informal transmission was withdrawn should thus be made in New York.

I prefer not to make any direct quotations in this letter. However, I can assure you that I consulted the authorities who have status and recourse to the correct information. I hope all this is helpful to you and our friends.

Love, gasshō,

Robert Aitken