

Dear Kobutsu,

I'm writing for the Membership Committee of the American Zen Teachers Association. Thank you for your inquiry about our organization.

Our membership criteria are listed on our website, at [www.americanzenteachers.org](http://www.americanzenteachers.org). You may want to look at the criteria, if you haven't already. While you're on the website, also look at the "History and Function" page. It outlines the background and purpose of the AZTA.

If you feel that you fulfill the membership criteria, please fill out the questionnaire at the bottom of this message. The easiest way to do that is to highlight it, copy it, and then paste it into a new e-mail message. Please send the completed questionnaire to me at [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org). I will distribute it to the entire Membership Committee, which will then act on your request to join the AZTA.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin Chowaney

Rev. Nonin Chowaney  
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3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131-1363  
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## AZTA MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please list your name, street address, phone number, and e-mail address.

Where do you teach? Please include your center or temple website if you have one.

Further questions are listed below the AZTA MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA they refer to.

1. HAS THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER RECEIVED SUBSTANTIAL TRAINING AND BEEN AUTHORIZED TO TEACH BY AN AUTHORIZED TEACHER IN A RECOGNIZED ZEN LINEAGE?

- a. What is your dharma lineage?
- b. Who should we contact to inquire about your lineage credentials?
- c. Have you been ordained, and if so, by whom and when?
- d. If your tradition recognizes different levels of ordination, which levels have you attained?
- e. Who authorized you to teach and when?
- f. Have you been sanctioned as a full teacher capable of teaching the entire curriculum of practices that are contemporary in your lineage?
- g. Have any restrictions been placed on your teaching?

- h. If so, what circumstance(s) would lift these restrictions?
- i. How many years did you practice before you became a teacher?
- j. How many of these years were spent in close proximity to a practice place where you sat regularly but were not a resident?
- k. During this time, how often did you attend sittings, on average?
- l. What practice place was this? (If multiple, please list all.)
- m. Have you trained in residence at a practice place where you were expected to attend all sittings and retreats?
- n. If yes, for how long?
- o. Were you following a full-time work and training schedule during this time or did you hold full-time employment elsewhere?
- p. If you did hold outside employment, how many hours a week did you work outside the practice place?
- q. What practice place was this? (If multiple, please list all.)
- r. What practice positions have you held while in residence, and for how long?
- s. How many days (roughly) did you spend in intensive retreat (sesshin, yongmaeng chongjin, etc) prior to becoming a teacher?
- t. In the tradition in which you have been sanctioned, were you required to resolve koans as part of your formal training and present your understanding of these koans in

the  
dokusan room?

u. Was there a specific koan curriculum you were required to complete before being sanctioned as a teacher?

v. Who could confirm that you completed this curriculum as required?

2. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER TEACH INDEPENDENTLY AND ARE THEY RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING AN INDEPENDENT GROUP ABLE TO MAKE ITS OWN DECISIONS REGARDING FINANCES AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES?

a. At your practice place, are you the only teacher?

b. If not, are you the leading (or senior) teacher or are there others with whom you share teaching responsibilities?

c. Are you an independent teacher, or are you responsible directly to a more senior teacher when making day-to-day decisions?

d. If you are directly responsible to a more senior teacher, can you give an example of a decision that you have had to make that required you to get the approval of the teacher?

e. At your practice place, who makes the final decisions about teaching matters?

f. Who makes the financial decisions?

g. Who makes the scheduling and operational decisions (when sittings and retreats are held, etc.)?

3. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER HAVE THEIR OWN STUDENTS AND ARE THEY AUTHORIZED TO GUIDE THEM INDEPENDENTLY?

a. Do you have formal students and if so, roughly how many?

b. Are you authorized to guide these students independently?

c. Are you authorized to sanction others to teach within your lineage?

d. Can those you authorize to teach operate independently or only under your continuing guidance?

e. Can you sanction others to fully transmit your lineage and to eventually fully transmit it themselves?

4. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER LEAD A PROGRAM WITH FORMAL SITTING MEDITATION ON A REGULAR SCHEDULE?

a. What is the current sitting schedule where you teach?

b. Do you follow this schedule?

5. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER LEAD SESSHINS OR INTENSIVE RETREATS?

a. Do you conduct and lead retreats according to the classical Zen (Son, or Ch'an) tradition?

b. How often are these retreats currently conducted, and what are their lengths?

c. What is your typical retreat (sesshin, yongmaeng chongjin, etc) schedule?

6. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER MAINTAIN FORMS AND RITUALS CONGRUENT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE ZEN TRADITION?

a. Do you maintain the practice forms and rituals transmitted to you when you were in training?

- b. Do you conduct chanting and bowing services?
- c. Do you conduct precept ceremonies and ordinations?
- d. Do you conduct work practice?

7. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER CONSIDER HIMSELF OR HERSELF A BUDDHIST?

- a. Do you consider yourself a Buddhist?
- b. Have you been ordained in or authorized to teach in another tradition?
- c. How would you characterize your connection to any traditions outside Buddhism that you may feel a close affinity with or participate in?

8. DOES THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER DEVOTE A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF HIS OR HER TIME TEACHING ZEN?

- a. What is your primary source of income?
- b. Are you salaried or otherwise compensated by your sangha?
- c. What is the nature of this compensation?
- d. Apart from following the daily schedule (sitting, services, etc.) and leading retreats, what is the average amount of time per week you spend on other practice place work, such as meeting with students, studying for and preparing talks and classes, answering inquiries, doing office work, etc.?
- e. What percentage of this work is operational and what percentage is teaching work?

9. HAS THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER BEEN RECOMMENDED BY AN AZTA

MEMBER?

a. Please list any current AZTA members willing to recommend you for membership

**Rev. Kobutsu Malone**

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(207) 359-2555

March 22, 2009

**To the Membership Committee of the American Zen Teachers Association:**

Thank you kindly for the membership application to the AZTA.

The AZTA currently appears to be geared toward “institutional” Zen teachers, and has grown quite a bit since my last encounter with it in 1995, when I was invited to a meeting, only to be dis-invited shortly thereafter, based on the misconception that I lacked two requirements: “(1) formal authorization to teach from one’s own teacher, and (2) working with students of one’s own.” Needless to say, I found this rather curious, as I seemed to have both.

As most of you are aware, I have been practicing for over forty years, and was ordained in 1993 not as a *monk*, but as a Full Rinzai Zen *priest*. Apparently, my ordination has caused some confusion, perhaps because some ordained monks lack qualification and permission to teach. Obviously, ordination as a priest in Sing Sing Prison, during our Rohatsu sesshin, rather than a monk *more than implies* authorization and qualification to teach.

Furthermore, the private exchanges between my teacher and me were exactly that — private. Therefore, no casual observer, (e.g., shikaryo, clerical staff, monks, nuns and others) would have had any idea of the nature of our communications, of the instructions I received for my practice, or of the degree of my understanding and insight. I was not a monk, and comparisons to those who are monks are irrelevant, no matter how long they may have been monastics.

In reviewing the rather comprehensive membership application, I find several questions to which I have no answers, others to which I have no idea of the precise answers, and still more to which I must withhold answers for reasons that will shortly become apparent. I am extremely reluctant to elaborate on these, at least on the application, because of the potentially damaging nature of the surrounding issues—not only to my former teacher, but also to other very good, well-meaning teachers who have until now been completely unaware of certain issues. I hope it suffices that I put my name and contact information on the application.

I am an itinerant priest, teaching where I am invited. I have no idea how many students currently claim me as their teacher, though from my correspondence, I would estimate the number to be several hundred or more. Many are still incarcerated. Because of this, I rely considerably on correspondence; this plus the fact that I move from sangha to sangha, and (formerly) from prison to prison, can sometimes be quite trying. I recently had to “resign” publicly as “teacher” of a person I had never met, on discovering that he had misrepresented himself as an ordained Zen monk.



I am nobody's Dharma heir, and therefore have not had this type of "transmission," which seems to be an important criterion for AZTA membership. However, I trust that my ordination as a priest rather than a monk should satisfy the requirement that I have been authorized as a Dharma teacher by my own former teacher. I have also enclosed one of my former teacher's recommendations of my qualifications, authorization, and ability to teach. I am attaching a letter of appreciation for my teaching work on death row by my present teacher.

It bears mentioning that there are vastly different requirements for transmission in divergent schools and lines. I know of at least one person who has "transmission," yet who does not identify as a Buddhist. There are some teachers who will "transmit" much more freely than others will (particularly if the student has shown great financial generosity or has been supportive in other ways). There are teachers who have never given transmission and may never give it, dying perhaps without any Dharma heirs. My own teacher, Shodo Harada Roshi, consistently refers to me as "Osho," yet he has not given transmission to anybody.

I would characterize my relationship with my former teacher, Eido Shimano, as "informally cordial"; in fact, I still considered him my teacher until he mistreated my son in training causing him bodily harm and another recent incident that I do not believe was completely under his control. I have no desire to publicly humiliate him; however, I must explain how I came to be in possession of a nearly 300-page dossier that rather clearly outlines his status in Japan's Zen hierarchy (from which he publicly and rather suddenly split), as well as certain transgressions beginning with his arrival in Hawai'i that continued long after the time I left the sangha in New York.

I am a dual citizen British / American. In July 2008, I had been named the primary expert witness in a British court case against two self-proclaimed "Buddhist monks" who not only were not Buddhists, but also had committed a great deal of fraud by deception. For their defense, in an attempt to discredit me, the defendants managed to obtain a rather crudely written email purporting to be from "Eido T. Shimano." This email contained factual errors and omissions that my former teacher would have never made. In addition, it volunteered private information about my family, and it was otherwise libelous in nature. I sincerely doubted the authenticity of this email, initially believing it to be yet another forgery by the accused. To my surprise, it turned out that the email actually had indeed originated at the office at Dai Bosatsu. My attorney sent two letters to Dai Bosatsu requesting that the errors be corrected or the email be discredited. I do not think Eido Shimano was aware of the nature of this email, as the writers then resorted to incredible extremes to hide it. For example, in a fax header, they substituted Eido's name for that of the photographer who owned the cell phone that was used to fax documents to another sangha member, who is an attorney for a public relations firm. The bulk of the fax was a printout of my website with a complaint that I shouldn't be wearing a gold rakusu in one of the pictures therein—a rakusu that was a gift from my teacher, Shodo Harada Roshi. In addition, this lawyer said that she had been "advised" that I had not been a student of Eido Shimano for twenty years. Actually, I had been a student of his for considerably longer than that; in 1999, it was twenty-two years. And of course, *my*

attorney's original concerns were never addressed: *Eido Shimano couldn't possibly correct or retract an email he had never been shown*. In retrospect, I doubt that the sangha member posing as Dai Bosatsu's attorney ever saw the email or even my attorney's request.

Shortly after this rather strange incident, I was talking to Robert Aitken Roshi, and this matter came up. The next day, I received a copy of an email he sent to the Archivist at the University of Hawai'i, with instructions to the archivist to locate and release a sealed folder marked "Eido Shimano – Do Not Open" in Aitken Roshi's archives.

I contacted the library and requested a copy of the 270-page file, which is now available to anybody who wants it. I had to read the entire file many times just to absorb the enormity of what its contents described, much of which involves my former teachers sexual transgressions, lies, cover-ups, involvement in precipitation of serious mental problems, activities as a sexual predator, and so on.

However, there are a few pages of particular interest. A letter in Folder Seven, Page 39, indicates *that Eido Shimano was never considered to be a Dharma heir to his teacher, Soen Nakagawa*—at least by anybody in Japan. There was no formal Inka, no ceremony; and Eido Shimano wasn't a Japanese recognized Roshi at the time of Soen's funeral.

Unfortunately, this brings into question Eido Shimano's own credentials—not to mention any students who have received "transmission" from him, and who have been declared his Dharma heirs.

With this knowledge, I wish to make a statement to the AZTA concerning my former teacher: I would never accept "transmission" from him. First, it is simply not his to give.

In addition, even if Eido himself did have transmission, his conduct and morals are atrocious, and it is only by his "unusual relationship with the truth" that he manages to keep up the appearance of a Dharma teacher. Finally, he seems to be less interested in teaching Dharma than in wearing very expensive robes and erecting monuments to himself in his efforts to rewrite history. Very sad.

I have stood in death chambers where no Roshi has set foot, and I have watched my students die at the hands of other men. I have toiled for the Dharma in innumerable prisons throughout the country. I have lived in poverty to enable my prison outreach to flower. I have never taken a dime from anyone for teaching. I have no zendo, no temple, and no center. I have no attendants, injis, acolytes, or servants. I do not have a house to call my own. Nevertheless, I have no accusations of sexual impropriety, or financial impropriety, I have been falsely accused of lying however.

The world seems to have become my zendo, my temple, and my center. All sentient beings are my students and my attendants... My teachers, beginning with my root teacher, Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche; still include Eido T. Shimano; and my current teacher is Shodo Harada, Roshi. From them, I transmit Buddhadharma.

Rather than the collection of questions on the form that I cannot answer, let my application to AZTA be my work bringing the Dharma to the lowest of the low in our society. Let my application be the social justice work with which I have been engaged all these years. Let my application be my everyday actions. My actual teachings, writings, prison, and social justice work stand on their own merit. Let them serve as my application to the AZTA.

Thank you for your consideration,

In dynamic peace,

*Kobutsu*



Kobutsu Malone

**From:** Nonin Chowaney <heartland@prairiewindzen.org>  
**Subject:** **AZTA**  
**Date:** March 27, 2009 3:32:04 PM EDT  
**To:** Kobutsu Malone <kobutsu@engaged-zen.org>

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Dear Kobutsu,

I'm sorry, but I can't forward the material you sent to the rest of the AZTA Membership Committee. Our process is to have the prospective member fill out the questionnaire that I sent you. The information that we need to process your membership will appear in your answers to the questions. If you still want to be considered for AZTA membership, please highlight the questionnaire, paste it into a new e-mail message, and answer the questions. Then, send the completed questionnaire back to me, and I will forward it to the rest of the Committee, which will then decide whether to accept you as an AZTA member or not.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin Chowaney, Chair  
AZTA Membership Committee

**From:** Nonin Chowaney <[heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)>  
**Date:** April 2, 2009 10:03:24 AM EDT  
**To:** Kobutsu Malone <[kobutsu@engaged-zen.org](mailto:kobutsu@engaged-zen.org)>  
**Cc:** Alan Senauke <[alans@kushiki.org](mailto:alans@kushiki.org)>  
**Subject: Re: Notification of a Cleared eCheck Donation**

Kobutsu,

Your application for membership in the AZTA was not "rejected without review," for you have not yet applied for membership in our organization. The Membership Committee has a specific procedure by which we process new members. We ask that all prospective members fill out our Membership Questionnaire and return it to us. Then, the Membership Committee will decide whether you fulfill our criteria for membership or not.

As yet, you have not filled out and returned the Membership Questionnaire that I sent you. After you do, I will pass it on to the other Committee members and we will process your request for membership in the AZTA.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin Chowaney

Kobutsu Malone wrote:

Dear Hozan,

The "clear criteria" for AZTA members has turned into The Spanish Inquisition, at least in the application form. The "criteria" involve some people having to do things that I find morally and ethically repugnant in order to become "credentialed."

It doesn't make sense to me, my concern is awakening and social justice. I know AZTA members who are clueless on both counts but who have nonetheless received "transmission" and are "valid" AZTA members. I've noticed in one individual an air of exclusivity as regarding their AZTA membership that seems to denigrate people who are not members. I don't feel that is "right" any more than I can recognize that "transmission" from one teacher can be equated with that of another.

People are unwilling to recognize the truth in favor of obtaining approval; just one example that I know intimately is with Eido Shimano. The man actually teaches that, "There are no morals in Zen" and with his actions proves the point. Yet, the AZTA "recognizes" "transmission" from this person as a criteria for admission. I have difficulty with that....

I will stick to being just a Rinzai Zen Buddhist priest who happens to teach Zen and leave it at that. I do not behave as my former teacher did, nor am I a fraud as some of Eido Shimano's followers and Mr. Barry Graham proclaim. People can take me as they find me without whatever "validation" the AZTA implies by virtue of membership. Shimano's personality cult followers attacked me and I respond with prima facie evidence to refute their baseless allegations. Mr. Graham has done the same, and some people probably believe him. His latest jab at me took the form of a diatribe on "right speech" in which he stated:

***"Name one time I have ever publicly insulted (by name) my former teacher, even after finding out that he was a crook who had faked his ordination.***

***If you never were taught about "right speech," you must have been sleeping during my talks - and you particularly must have been sleeping the night you took refuge, when I talked about every vow, including that of right speech."***

Amazing....

In any event, I'm not going to re-apply to The AZTA.

In dynamic peace,

Kobutsu



On Apr 1, 2009, at 8:43 PM, Alan Senauke wrote:

I don't think it is institutionalization, but it is an attempt to have clear criteria for membership, as any organization might be inclined to do. But I hesitate to encourage you to re-apply. It might be in vain, despite my own attempted intervention.

Warmly,  
Alan

Kobutsu Malone wrote:

Dear Hozan,

Sorry it cannot be more... my social security check goes only so far.

I trust you will receive the support necessary for "Adopt a Monk" to flourish. My heart goes out to our fellow monks in Burma, what a nightmare of pain the Burmese people have had to endure for so long.

I'm in a quandary about the AZTA after my application was rejected without review. I'm undecided as to re-applying. I have a bad taste of "institutionalization" in my mouth about it.

Kobutsu

