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We'd all be laughing (if it weren't so serious)

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Print Article

By Adam Tebbe

This morning I was pointed to a website that has apparently been in existence since 2009, though it seems to have been updated quite a bit since that time. The website, <http://playfulmoon.com>, reads as a "loving?" tribute to Eido Shimanu, former abbot of Zen Studies Society who was forced to resign due to sexual misconduct with female students spanning back decades.

As I browsed through the website, I kept asking myself, "Is this a joke?" It certainly reads like a joke.

Here are some delicious (and nauseating) excerpts from the website:

"Please don't be jealous, Jesus Christ and the Buddha stayed at the best hotels (hosted by their students) and ate the best their students had to offer. It includes the use of an apartment on the Upper East sides, regular travel to Japan, Health insurance for two and annual cash. I am no expert but I think average corporate leaders make \$500,000 a year. Why not Roshì? If we could get someone or a group of people to donate \$15.52 million to cover Roshì's retirement up to his 120th year. Here is a letter I drafted. letter to wealthy individuals and corporations"

A link titled "If you really miss Eido Roshì but are afraid to show it...":

Here is one particular excerpt from that page:

"Why it was a non-issue for me: sex as not so different then a cup of tea I love and respect Roshì. I don't think he would ever hurt anyone. The scandal was not an issue for me and the reasons I offer to help others might seem rude or disrespectful but they are not in my heart. I think one lifetime is not enough to fully appreciate the treasures to be had with Roshì's wife, Alho-san, so why would he stray. Also, doing 10 or so zen retreats a year are not one of the easiest ways to get laid. Also, how long does sex last, 10-20 minutes, this whole conspiracy theory of Roshì being an evil lecher, we would have to have a sangha of the most beautiful women on earth trained in all the nuances of sexual congress, and still, that would not be enough motivation to lead the life of a monk or a Roshì.

I had a lot of dress rehearsal. Many men I have loved since infancy have been accused of infidelity and with strict Catholic upbringing, I wanted to toss them to the nogood pile. But then it happened again and again and again and I realised this belief in fidelity was setting us up to be tormented looking for something that does not exist."

Another link, titled "Roshì sighting!"

Here is an excerpt from that page: "UPDATE as of January 2012: Eido Shimanu Roshì is the founding Abbott of the Zen Studies Society who is retired and is not obligated to teach under the Zen Studies Society rules or sponsorship. However, he is still free to teach and lecture as he pleases anywhere else. Thank you to all those who helped.

Previously, Eido Roshì's teaching was held hostage. Hopefully, soon it will be that, Soen Roshì's ashes, Nyogen Senzaki's ashes as well as the ashes of sangha members are no longer hostage, that Roshì is welcome at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, Kongo-ji and New York Zendo, Shobo-ji."

The page goes on to list the various dates that Eido Shimanu will be "teaching." One of these will be held in Istanbul, Turkey. I half expect to see that Shimanu will be heading overseas and setting up shop there soon, as his reputation here is forever damaged and tarnished. One can point the finger of blame everywhere else but the source all they want, but it will not lead to the reinstatement of someone who has committed such egregious actions during his tenure as a Zen teacher on American soil.

I really wanted to just laugh at it all, because it is all so poorly executed. If you want to get someone like Shimanu back in the door, my suggestion would be to not make a website about it. Don't announce it!

One quote from the website goes as follows: "This page is to be in support of the people who love Eido Shimanu Roshì. Because of a cross-cultural barrier, many people may feel bullied in hiding their love for him, in being quiet in their defense of him. What are we, except babies brainwashed at birth."

Actually, it kind of sounds that way. I don't know what I would call it, though it certainly has all the hallmarks of a personality cult. If that's Zen, I want no part of it.

I can't imagine Zen Studies Society would back the sentiments expressed here...

Photo courtesy Kobutsu Malone

For a wealth of documentation on the activities of Eido Shimanu over the years, including this latest development, please visit: <http://shimanoarchive.com/>

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GENSHIN says:

FEBRUARY 3, 2012 AT 6:36 PM

Goodness. My question would be: if you really do care about his well-being, like on the level of karma, what does it truly mean to love Eido? This is hard to read.


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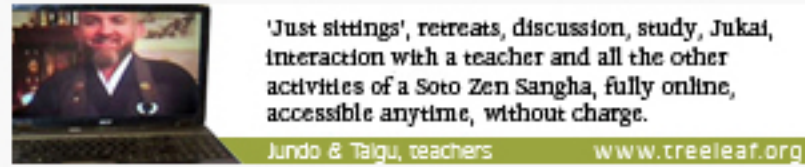
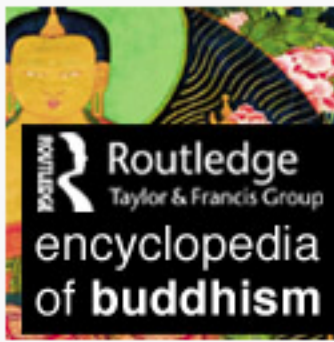
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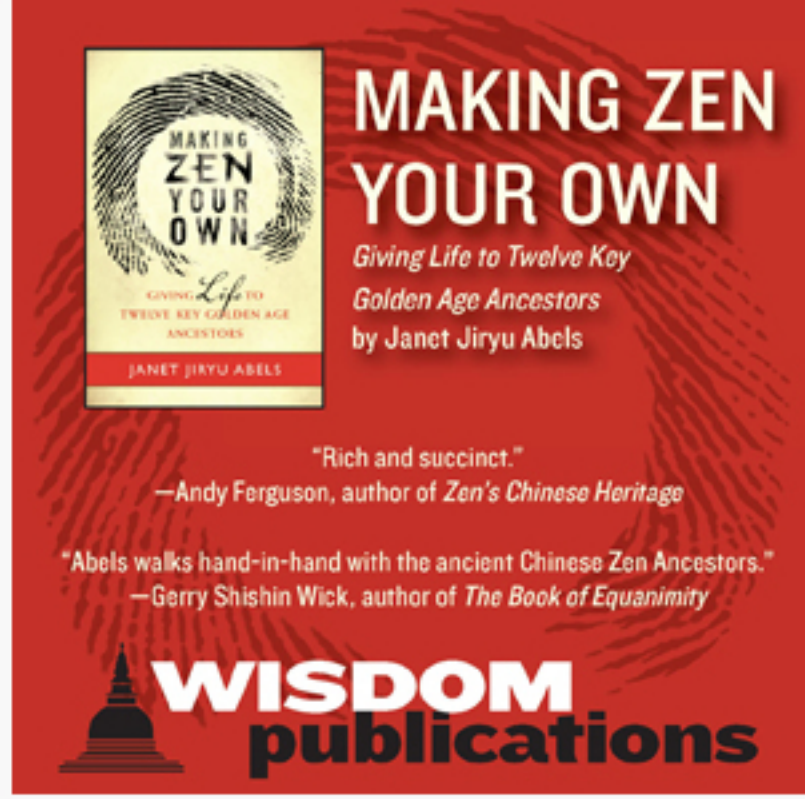
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Established in 2009 as a grassroots initiative, Sweeping Zen is a digital archive of information on Zen Buddhism. Featuring in-depth interviews, an extensive database of biographies, news, articles, podcasts, teacher blogs, events, directories and more, this site is dedicated to offering the public a range of views in the sphere of Zen Buddhist thought. We are also endeavoring to continue creating lineage charts for all Western Zen lines, doing our own small part in advancing historical documentation on this fabulous import of an ancient tradition. Come on in with a tea or coffee. You're always bound to find something new.

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