

Sokun Tsushimoto Roshi - Declaration Rients Ritskes (17-4-2013)

I do not know whether he really believes so or just has encouraged himself to believe such convenient interpretation for him. Of course it is also possible that he is using intentional interpretation. Anyway I am afraid it may lead everything to very sterile controversy. We must avoid you said/ I said battle.

As I explained you before, he suddenly asked me for the title of Roshi during sesshin in Tiltenberg (I forgot the year). I got surprised at such a silly and bloated question, but I knew his position: he had two or three teachers with the title of Roshi (Soto) under him. Through our careful discussion I explained why it is impossible to give him the title of Roshi. I said to him, "If you want to be Roshi, you must study koan training with me for years and complete it."

Mr RR sent me an email in which he admits that I told him he must not use the title of Roshi. Following this, he also says that he did not use the title of Roshi but that he later started using Dai-Osho by my suggestion. As long as reading only this email, it is as if he had never used the title of Roshi. However, he actually claimed that he got authorized by me in 1999 and has used the title of Roshi publicly. Or at least he allowed people to address him Roshi and never corrected it.

From the viewpoint of the third person, this discussion may appear exclusive to confusion of terminology; Roshi, Zen Master, Dai-Osho.

If RR really knew the Zen tradition, he would never make such claims.

I am convinced that I have to make it clear about the usage of these title.

Terminology:

(1) 'Roshi' is the title compatible with the most formal title 'Shike' who got officially authorized as a Dharma successor by authentic master.

NB: I have never ever authorized RR as a Roshi, my Dharma successor. I have never told RR that he could use the title of Roshi to call or to make people call himself. RR has very little experience of monastic

training and koan study under authentic Roshi. Consequently it is entirely impossible for him to be authorised as a Roshi.

(2) the title of 'Roshi' is equivalent to 'Zen Master/ zen master'.

(3) Dai-Osho is not equivalent to Roshi.

NB: Dai-Osho is not commonly used in Rinzai priesthood. A zen priest is usually called 'Osho' formally or 'Osho-san' with respect and affection. If one is addressed by such an exaggerated title like 'Dai-Osho', it must be somewhat a ridicule or irony. Dai-Osho is respectfully used for deceased priest regardless of Roshi or not.

Points of argument to be clarified:

(1) Authorization as a Roshi should be done in the most formal and explicit way. In Rinzai tradition a master gives a calligraphy of Inka-certificate to disciple as a proof of authorization. Needless to say authorization must be backed up by the fact that the disciple spent many years in zen training under the master earnestly and continuously.

(2) Presenting Rakusu cannot become substitution for authorization as a Roshi. In fact I have never stated that Rakusu is the proof of authorization.

(3) I presented Rakusu to RR as a Dharma friend. I was at the time a chief abbot of Buttsuji school but I never used to be his master/ teacher. He also has never behaved as my disciple/ student.

(4) Consequently I was not in charge of giving him authorization and permission to practice koan study with his students.

(5) I knew he had used some kind of koan-like training with his students. As he has very little monastic training and knew almost nothing about traditional koans, I heard it was something like a short dialogue between counsellor and client (indeed he was a counsellor at university). So he knows very well that his koans are not formal(acknowledged by zen tradition) ones and (if we call) have nothing or quite little to do with traditional koans.

(6) Using self-produced koan(if we call) system is not the job of real Zen Master.

(7) Therefore, the statement of RR falls into logically self-contradiction and it makes no sense.

It must not be attributed to the difference of interpretation about the terminology and the meaning of Rakusu. I urge him to sincerely examine himself, and do all he can to correct them before it is too late.

I am sorry to say that RR does not have a clue as to what Zen Buddhist practice really is. I welcome criticisms of the Zen tradition; indeed, I have criticized it myself at times. His recent criticisms of the Japanese Zen tradition, however, are merely a repetition of what is already well-known. RR himself does not know enough to give a genuine criticism. If he did, he would have the integrity to “look under his own feet” and seriously consider the renowned Zen expression: “Training in Zen for twenty years – now I know my own shame!”