

April 26th, 2013

'Dai Osho' Ritskes in monastery only for a short time, *jukai* zen.nl not valid

Zen.nl leader Rients Ritskes, recently accused of title fraud, spent less time in a Japanese monastery than he states himself. On top of this, he was never ordained as a zen priest, so he cannot ordain others. On april 25th, The Japanese Zen monastery Tenryuji informs Sokun Tsushimoto Roshi, a Japanese Zen Master in the Tenryuji line, to this extent.

Ritskes alternately states that he spent five months, six months or a year in Tenryuji. This is not the case. The monastery keeps an official record. From this, it becomes clear that Ritskes was there just a little over three months, from April 4th till July 15, 1987.

Tsushimoto Roshi: 'His name is not in the list of the Winter Semester commencing October 15th, 1987. Even if he continued to stay in the monastery during the summer break from July 16th, there is no zazen training in this period and it is not counted as monastic experience.'

'After that', Tsushimoto Roshi says, 'in some years he did part of a sesshin (intensive week of training), not more than one or two days per visit.' The last short visits were on April 7th and 8th 2010 and June 19th and 20th of 2011, according to the record of the monastery.

From this record it also becomes clear that Ritskes was never ordained as a monk or priest. He was in the monastery as a lay person. He's not registered as a priest in the Tenryuji line.

Ranzen

During his stay in Tenryuji, he received the name 'Ranzen' (Dutch Zen). Tsushimoto Roshi about this: 'This is not a monk's name, since he wasn't ordained. It's a name for a lay practitioner.' In Tenryuji it was common to give a name to full time participants during their stay. A German was called 'Tokuzen' (German Zen), a Swiss man 'Saizen' (Swiss Zen). Tsushimoto Roshi: 'This was normal and pragmatic. Nothing special, no special implications.'

Jukai formally invalid

These facts have consequences for people that did their lay vows ('jukai') with Ritskes. These are formally invalid when Ritskes performed them implicitly or explicitly in the name of the tradition of Tenryuji or Buttsuji. Buttsuji is the monastery where Tsushimoto Roshi was a Zen Master for several years. Also with this monastery, Ritskes has no relationship whatsoever, says Tsushimoto Roshi. 'Unless he was ordained in a different Buddhist line, he has no official Dharma lineage that is the basis for giving or receiving lay ordination (jukai).'

'Dai Osho'

After his title fraud became apparent ('I was officially authorized as a Zen Master in 1999 bij Sokun Tsushimoto Roshi'), Ritskes claims he has received an 'unofficial title' from Tsushimoto Roshi, namely Dai Osho ('great priest'). Also about this, Tsushimoto Roshi is clear: 'In Rinzaï Zen Buddhism, a priest is commonly called 'Osho'. Mr. Ritskes has described the rakusu (a garment worn around the neck by priests and lay people) which I gave him as 'gold brocade'. However, it was only a common one and had no special significance. I gave it to him merely as a sign of friendship.'

'I do not use such terms as 'Dai-Osho' or 'Dai-Roshi' ('great Zen master'), because I hate such exaggerated titles. The term Mr. Ritskes has used for himself, 'Dai-Osho', is usually used as an honorific for priests who have passed away. It is rarely used for living people, and when it is, it is used as a cynical criticism. Further, 'Dai-Osho' is not at all equivalent to 'Roshi' or Zen master.'

'Mr. Ritskes has not been ordained in the Rinzai Zen tradition, let alone practiced as a monk or served as a priest. Thus, his fraudulent, self-ordained titles, have no validity whatsoever. I feel sorry for the many people who have paid exorbitant prices to him to learn something he himself does not know, and to receive rakusu and jukai (lay-precepts) in illegitimate ordination ceremonies. Having kept the precepts with a pure heart, I trust that they will continue their practice in better circumstances.'