

Tenzo kyokun: Instructions for the Tenzo

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From ancient times communities of the practice of the Way of Awake Awareness have had six office holders. The roku chiji or six offices of "those who understand" in Dogen's time were tsusu: administrator; kansu: assistant administrator; fusu: treasurer; ino: disciplinarian or supervisor of the monks; tenzo: chief cook in charge of meals and supplies; shissui: work leader in charge of caretaking. The tsusu, kansu, and fusu together are known as the fusu who, as disciples of the Buddha, guide the activities of Awakening the community. Amongst these, the tenzo bears the responsibility of caring for the community's meals. The **Zen Monastic Standards**: Chanyuan Qinggui (**Ch'an-yuan Ch'ing-kuei; Zennen Shingi**). An important ten volume work by Changlu Zongze (Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse; Choro Sosaku), published in 1102/3, states, "The tenzo functions as the one who makes offerings with reverence to the monks."

Since ancient times this office has been held by realized monks who have the mind of the Way or by senior disciples who have roused the Way-seeking mind. This work requires exerting the Way. Those entrusted with this work but who lack the Way-seeking mind will only cause and endure hardship despite all their efforts. The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, "Putting the mind of the Way to work, serve carefully varied meals appropriate to each occasion and thus allow everyone to practice without hindrance."

In times past such great masters as Guishan Lingyou. Also Wei-shan Ling-yu (Isan Reiyu), 771-853. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records: Biyen-lu (Pi-yen-lu; Hekiganroku)** 4, 24, 70 and **Wumenguan (Wu-men-kuan; Mumonkan)** 40. Dongshan Shouchu, Tung-shan Shou-ch'ou; Tozan Shusho, 910-90. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records: Biyen-lu** 12 and **Wumenguan** 15 and 18. Not to be confused with Dongshan Liangjie (Tung-shan Liang-chieh; Tozan Ryokai), 807-869, founder of the Caodong (T'sao-tung) or Soto Lineage in China and others have served in this post. Although this is a matter of preparing and serving meals, the tenzo is not just "the cook." For this reason I have left the word "tenzo" untranslated as no appropriate English term such as "chef" can imply the depth of practice and mindfulness that is the tenzo's function.

When I was in Song China, during spare moments I enquired of many elder monks who had served in the various offices about their experience. Their words to me were from the bone and marrow of the Awakened Ancestors who, having attained the Way, have passed it through the ages. We should carefully study the **Zen Monastic Standards** to understand the responsibility of the tenzo and also carefully consider the words of these senior monks.

The cycle of one day and night begins following the noon meal. Following the tradition of Indian Dharma, the noon meal was regarded as the last meal of the day. As the Chinese, Japanese (and Canadian) climates are much colder than India, an evening meal was introduced but was rationalized as an

“unofficial”, medicinal meal.[/fn] At this time the tenzo should go to the administrator and assistant administrator[fn]Tsusu and kansu.[/fn] and procure the rice, vegetables, and other ingredients for the next day’s morning[fn]Shuku: literally “gruel”.[/fn] and noon meals. Having received these things, you must care for them as you would the pupils of your own eyes.[fn]Ganzei.[/fn] Thus Zen Master Baoning Renyong[fn]Pao-ning Jen-yung; Honei Nin’yu, Ca. 11th C.[/fn] said, “Care for the monastery’s materials[fn]Jojumotsu.[/fn] as if they were your eyes.” The tenzo handles all food with respect, as if it were for the emperor; both cooked and uncooked food should be cared for in this way.

Following this, all of the officers gather in the kitchen building in order to carefully consider the next day’s meals with regard to flavourings, vegetables to be used, and the kind of rice-gruel. The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, “In deciding the morning and noon meals, the amount of food and number of dishes, the tenzo should consult the other officers. The six officers are the administrator, assistant administrator, treasurer, disciplinarian, tenzo, and head caretaker. After the menu is decided post it on boards by the abbot’s residence[fn]Hojo.[/fn] and the study hall.”[fn]The study hall or “shuryo” is a common room for reading and drinking tea.[/fn] Following this the morning gruel may be prepared.

Do not just leave washing the rice or preparing the vegetables to others but use your own hands, your own eyes, your own sincerity. Do not fragment your attention[fn]Shogon joshin.[/fn] but see what each moment calls for;[fn]Makoto.[/fn] if you take care of just one thing then you will be careless of the other. Do not miss the opportunity of offering even a single drop into the ocean of merit or a grain atop the mountain of the roots of beneficial activity.[fn]Zenkon. The three roots of beneficial activity are freedom from the three klesas (poisons) of passion, aggression, and stupidity.[/fn]

The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, “If the six flavours[fn]Rokumi: bitter, sour, sweet, hot, mild, salty.[/fn] are not in harmony and three virtues[fn]Santoku: light (kyonan), clean (joketsu), dignified (nyoho).[/fn] are lacking, then the tenzo is not truly serving the community.”

Be careful of sand when you wash the rice, be careful of the rice when you throw out the sand. Take continuous care and the three virtues will be naturally complete and the six flavours harmonious.

Xuefeng[fn]Xuefeng Yicun (Hsueh-feng I-ts’un; Seppo Gison), 822-908. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records: Biyen-lu** 5, 22, 49, 51, and 66 and in Wumenguan 13.[/fn] once practiced as tenzo under Zen Master Dongshan.[fn]Dongshan Liangjie (Tung-shan Liang-chieh; Tozan Ryokai), 807-869. Appears in Blue Cliff Records: Biyen-lu case 43.[/fn] Once when he was washing rice, Dongshan said, “Do you wash the sand away from the rice, or the rice away from the sand?”

Xuefeng said, “I wash them both away together.”

Dongshan said, “Then what will the community eat?”

Xuefeng overturned the washing bowl.

Dongshan said, “You should go and study with someone else. Soon.”[fn]Xuefeng’s understanding was so partial that he lost himself in the drama of expressing it and so squandered the food that he was to prepare for the community as a whole instead of expressing it through actualization and taking everything into account through “seeing what each moment calls for” (makoto). This is traditionally said to be a primary example of the difference between Soto and Rinzai training. The incident itself appears as one of the koan of

the **Open Eyes Book: Kaigen-roku** studied at Dainen-ji. Later, Xuefeng served as tenzo at Deshan's monastery and eventually received transmission from Deshan. See **Records of Silence: Tongrong lu (T'ung-jung lu; Shoyoroku)** case 55, **Wumenguan** case 13.[/fn]

Senior students, from ancient times, always practiced with the mind which finds the Way and so how can we of later generations not do the same? Those of old tell us, "For the tenzo, the mind which finds the Way actualizes itself through working with rolled up sleeves."[/fn]Literally, "sleeves tied back."[/fn]

You yourself should examine the rice and sand so that rice is not thrown out with sand. The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, "In preparing the food, the tenzo is responsible for examining it to ensure that it is clean." Do not waste grains of rice when draining off the rinsing water. In olden times a cloth bag was used as a filter when draining the rinse water. When the rice is placed in the iron cooking pot, take care of it so that rats do not fall into it or idlers just hang around poking at it.

After cooking the vegetables for the morning meal and before preparing rice and soup for the noon meal bring together the rice pots and other utensils and make sure that everything is well-ordered and clean. Put whatever goes to a high place in a high place and whatever goes to a low place in a low place so that, high and low, everything settles in the place appropriate for it.[/fn]**Jingde Chuandeng-lu (Chiang-te Ch'uan-teng-lu; Keitoku Dentoroku)**: Once Guishan and Yangshan went to make a new rice paddy. Yangshan said, "'It's quite low here and high over there, isn't it?" Guishan said, "'We can measure the level with water.'" Yangshan said, "'Master, don't depend on water as a standard. A high place finds its level as a high place, a low place finds its level as a low place.'"[/fn] Chopsticks for vegetables, ladles, and all other tools should be chosen with great care, cleaned thoroughly, and placed well.

After this, begin work on the coming day's meals. Remove any weevils, lentils, husks, sand, and pebbles carefully. While you are selecting the rice and vegetables, the tenzo's assistants should chant the sutras to the shining being of the hearth.[/fn]Soko Shinsai. In some cases Idaten Sonten.[/fn] When preparing the vegetables or ingredients for the soup which have been received from the office[/fn]Kusu: the tsusu, kansu, and fusu. The chief administrative officers.[/fn] do not disparage the quantity or quality but instead handle everything with great care. Do not despair or complain about the quantity of the materials. Throughout the day and night, practice the coming and going of things as arising in the mind, the mind turning and displaying itself as things.

Put together the ingredients for the morning meal before midnight and begin cooking after midnight.[/fn]Sanko: the third watch. There are five watches from sunset to sunrise so the third watch approximates midnight.[/fn] After the morning meal, clean the rice cooking pots and soup pots for the noon meal. The tenzo should always be present at the sink when the rice is being soaked and the water measured. Watching with clear eyes, ensure that not a single grain is wasted. Washing it well, place it in the pots, make a fire, and boil it. An old teacher said, "Regard the cooking pot as your own head, the water your own life-blood." Place the cooked rice in bamboo baskets in summer and wooden serving buckets in winter and set these out on trays. While the rice is boiling, cook the soup and vegetables.

The tenzo supervises this personally. This is true whether the tenzo works alone or has assistants to tend the fire or prepare the utensils. Recently, Zen monasteries have developed positions such as rice-cook and soup-cook[/fn]Hanju and koju.[/fn] who work under the tenzo. The tenzo is always responsible for whatever is done. In olden times the tenzo did everything without any assistance.

In preparing food never view it from the perspective of usual mind or on the basis of feeling-tones. Taking up a blade of grass erect magnificent monasteries,[fn]Hoo-setsu; Buddha-ksetra. Their term could be used for the Field of Awakening of a Buddha or the temple of a Buddha.[/fn] turn the Wheel of Reality within a grain of dust. If you only have wild grasses with which to make a broth, do not disdain them. If you have ingredients for a creamy soup do not be delighted. Where there is no attachment, there can be no aversion. Do not be careless with poor ingredients and do not depend on fine ingredients to do your work for you but work with everything with the same sincerity. If you do not do so then it is like changing your behaviour according to the status of the person you meet; this is not how a student of the Way is.

Strengthen your resolve and work whole-heartedly to surpass the monks of old and be even more thorough than those who have come before you. Do this by trying to make as fine a soup for a few cents[fn]Sens.[/fn] as the ancients could make a coarse broth for the same amount.

The difficulty is that present and the past are separated by a gulf as great as between sky and earth and no one now can be compared to those of ancient times. However, through complete practice of seeing the nature of things[fn]Do-ri. The way of the principles or nature of things.[/fn] you will be able to find a way. If this isn't clear to you it is because your thoughts speed about like a wild horse and feeling-tones careen about like a monkey in the trees. Let the monkey and horse step back and be seen clearly and the gap is closed naturally.[fn]Dajo-ikken.[/fn] In this way, turn things while being turned by them. Clarify and harmonize your life without losing the single Eye which sees the context or the two eyes which recognize the details.[fn]Ichigen-ryogen.[/fn]

Taking up a vegetable leaf manifests the Buddha's sixteen-foot golden body;[fn]Joroku-shin.[/fn] take up the sixteen-foot golden body and display it as a vegetable leaf. This is the power of functioning freely as the awakening activity which benefits all beings.

Having prepared the food, put everything where it belongs. Do not miss any detail. When the drum sounds or the bells are struck, follow the assembly for morning zazen and in the evening[fn]Boshu. Traditionally only senior students gathered together in the Master's quarters to receive teachings.[/fn] go to the Master's quarters to receive teachings. When you return to the kitchen,[fn]Tenzo-ryo. The tenzo's quarters.[/fn] count the number of monks present in the Monks' Hall;[fn]Sodo. Actually, the text says "the number of 3' by 6' spaces (tan) occupied in the Monks' Hall."[/fn] try closing your eyes. Don't forget about the senior monks and retired elders in their own quarters or those who are sick. Take into account any new arrivals in the entry hall[fn]Tangaryo.[/fn] or anyone who is on leave. Don't forget anyone. If you have any questions consult the officers, the heads of the various halls, or the head monk.

When this is done, calculate just how much food to prepare: for each grain of rice needed, supply one grain. One portion can be divided into two halves, or into thirds or fourths. If two people tend to each want a half-serving, then count this as the quantity for a single full serving. You must know the difference that adding or subtracting one serving would make to the whole.

If the assembly eats one grain of rice from Luling,[fn]A monk asked Qingyuan Xingsi, "What is the essence of the Buddha Dharma?" The Master said, "What is the price of rice from Luling?" This koan appears as **Records of Silence: Congrong lu** case 5.[/fn] the tenzo is the monk Guishan.[fn]Guishan Lingyou (already listed twice in these notes). In the **Jingde Chuandeng-lu (Chiang-te Ch'uan-teng-lu; Keitoku Dentoroku)** it states: Once Master Guishan taught the assembly, "After I die I will become an ox at the foot

of this mountain. On the the left side of the ox's chest will be marked, 'I am a monk of Guishan.' When you call me a monk of Guishan, I'll be an ox. If you call me an ox, I will be a monk of Guishan. So what could you really call me?"

In serving a grain of that rice, the tenzo sees the assembly become the ox. The ox swallows Guishan. Guishan herds the ox.

Are your measurements right or are they off? Have those you consulted been correct in their counting? Review this as best as you can and then direct the kitchen accordingly. This practice of effort after effort, day after day, should not be forgotten.

When a patron visits the monastery and makes a donation for the noon meal, discuss this with the other officers. This is the tradition of Zen monasteries. Other offerings to be distributed should also be discussed with the other officers. In this way, the responsibilities of others are not disrupted nor your own neglected.

When the meal is ready and set out on trays, at noon and morning put on the wrap robe, Kesa (in Sanskrit "kasaya") spread your bowing mat, Zagu offer incense and do nine great bows in the direction of the Monks' Hall. When this is done, send out the food.

Day and night, the work for preparing the meals must be done without wasting a moment. If you do this and everything that you do whole-heartedly, this nourishes the seeds of Awakening and brings ease and joy to the practice of the community.

Although the Buddha's Teachings have been heard for a long time in Japan, I have never heard of any one speaking or writing about how food should be prepared within the monastic community as an expression of the Teachings, let alone such details as offering nine bows before sending forth the food. As a consequence, we Japanese have taken no more consideration of how food should be prepared in a monastic context than have birds or animals. This is cause for regret, especially since there is no reason for this to be so.

When I was staying at Tiantong-jingde-si, T'ien-t'ung-ching-te-ssu; Tendo-keitoku-ji a monk named Lu from Qingyuan fu Now called Ningbo held the post of tenzo. Once, following the noon meal I was walking along the eastern covered walkway towards a sub-temple called Chaoran Hut Dogen was going to visit his teacher and friend Myozen who was ill in the infirmary. Myozen will be mentioned again at a further point in the text. when I came upon him in front of the Buddha Hall Dai-yuden; also Butsuden drying mushrooms in the sun. He had a bamboo stick in his hand and no hat covering his head. The heat of the sun was blazing on the paving stones. It looked very painful; his back was bent like a bow and his eyebrows were as white as the feathers of a crane. I went up to the tenzo and asked, "How long have you been a monk?"

"Sixty-eight years," he said.

"Why don't you have an assistant do this for you?"

"Other people are not me."

"Venerable sir, I can see how you follow the Way Nyuho. Follow the standards; to do the right thing through your work. But still, why do this now when the sun is so hot?"

"If not now, when?"

There was nothing else to say. As I continued on my way along the eastern corridor I was moved by how important the work of the tenzo is.

In May of 1223^[fn]The sixteenth year of the reign Jiading.^[/fn] I was staying aboard the ship at Qingyuan. Once I was speaking with the captain when a monk about sixty years of age came aboard to buy mushrooms from the ships Japanese merchants. I asked him to have tea with me and asked where he was from. He was the tenzo from Ayuwang shan.^[fn]A-yu-wang-shan; Aikuozan.^[/fn]

He said, “I come from Xishu^[fn]In south-western China.^[/fn] but it is now forty years since I’ve left there and I am now sixty-one. I have practiced in several monasteries. When the Venerable Daoquan became abbot at Guyun temple^[fn]Koun-in.^[/fn] of Ayuwang I went there but just idled the time away, not knowing what I was doing.^[fn]Hu-luan; uronkwa. “In a questionable manner.”^[/fn] Fortunately, I was appointed tenzo last year when the summer Training Period ended.^[fn]Kaige-ryo. The end of Ge-ango.^[/fn] Tomorrow is May 5th^[fn]The Chinese Dragon Boat Festival.^[/fn] but I don’t have anything special offerings for the monks so I thought I’d make a nice noodle soup for them. We didn’t have any mushrooms so I came here to give the monks something from the ten directions.”

“When did you leave Ayuwangshan?” I asked.

“After the noon meal.”

“How far is it from here?”

“Around twelve miles.”^[fn]The text says “thirty-five li.” The measurement of thirty-five li roughly equals twelve miles. In any case, it meant a four hour or so walk.^[/fn]

“When are you going back to the monastery?”

“As soon as I’ve bought the mushrooms.”

I said, “As we have had the unexpected opportunity to meet and talk like this today, I would like you to stay a while longer and allow me to offer Zen Master tenzo a meal.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, but I just can’t. If I am not there to prepare tomorrow’s meal it won’t go well.”

“But surely someone else in the monastery knows how to cook? If you’re not there it can’t make that much difference to everyone.”

“I have been given this responsibility in my old age and it is this old man’s practice. How can I leave to others what I should do myself? As well, when I left I didn’t ask for permission to be gone overnight.”

“Venerable sir, why put yourself to the difficulty of working as a cook in your old age? Why not just do zazen and study the koan of the ancient masters?”

The tenzo laughed for a long time and then he said, “My foreign friend, it seems you don’t really understand practice or the words^[fn]Monji. Literally the characters that make up words.^[/fn] of the ancients.”

Hearing this elder monk’s words I felt ashamed and surprised. I asked, “What is practice? What are words?”

The tenzo said, "Keep asking and penetrate this question and then you will be someone who understands."

But I didn't know what he was talking about and so the tenzo said, "If you don't understand then come and see me at Ayuwang shan some time. We'll talk about the meaning of words." Having said this, he stood up and said, "It'll be getting dark soon. I'd best hurry." And he left.

In July of the same year I was staying[fn]Kashaku. Put away one's gear for travelling.[/fn] at Tiantongshan when the tenzo of Ayuwang shan came to see me and said, "After the summer Training Period is over I'm going to retire as tenzo and go back to my native region. I heard from a fellow monk that you were here and so I came to see how you were making out."

I was overjoyed. I served him tea as we sat down to talk. When I brought up our discussion on the ship about words and practice, the tenzo said, "If you want to understand words you must look into what words are. If you want to practice, you must understand what practice is."

I asked, "What are words?"

The tenzo said, "One, two, three, four, five."

I asked again, "What is practice?"

"Everywhere, nothing is hidden."[fn]Henkai-fuzozo.[/fn]

We talked about many other things but I won't go into that now. Suffice it to say that without this tenzo's kind help I would not have had any understanding of words or of practice. When I told my late teacher Myozen[fn]Myozen Butsubu (1183-1225). Dharma-heir of Eisai. Gave Dogen transmission as a Rinza Master and then travelled with Dogen to China where he died at Tiantong si. Dogen returned with his ashes for internment at Kennin-ji.[/fn] about this he was very pleased.

Later I found a verse that Xuedou[fn]Xuedou Zhongxian (Hsueh-t'ou Ch'ung-hsien; Setcho Juken), 980-1052. Gathered the one hundred koan that became the **Blue Cliff Records** or **Biyen lu** and composed capping verses (juko) for them.[/fn] wrote for a disciple:

*One, seven, three, five.
What you search for cannot be grasped.
As the night deepens,
the moon brightens over the ocean.
The black dragon's jewel
is found in every wave.
Looking for the moon,
it is here in this wave
and the next.*

What the tenzo said is expressed here in Xuedou's verse as well. Then it was even clearer to me that the tenzo was truly a person of the Way.

Before I knew one, two three, four, five; now I know six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Monks, you and those to follow must understand practice and words through this and from that. Exert yourself in this way and you will practice the single true taste of Zen beyond words,[fn]Ichimi Zen.[/fn] undivided into the poisonous five flavours.[fn]Gomi Zen. See “Five Styles of Zen” in **Before Thinking: Saturday Morning Dharma Talks**, Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi, Great Matter Publications, 1992.[/fn] Then you will be able to prepare food for the monastic community properly.

There are many old stories we can hear and present examples of monks training as tenzo. A great many teachings concern this because it is the heart of the Way.

Even if you become the Abbot of a monastery, you should have this same understanding. The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, “Prepare each meal with each detail kept clear so that there will be enough. Make sure that the four offerings of food, clothing, bedding, and medicine[fn]Shiji-ku. I have inserted a list of the four offerings into the text.[/fn] are adequate just as the Generous One offered to his disciples the merit of twenty years of his lifetime. We ourselves live today within the light of that gift because the energy of even a white hair between his brows[fn]Byakugoko. In many sutras it is said that when the Buddha taught, light blazed forth and penetrated the ten directions from the tuft of white hair between his brows.[/fn] is inexhaustible.” It also says, “Just think about how to best serve the assembly without being hindered by thoughts of poverty. If your mind is limitless, you enjoy limitlessness.” This is how the abbot serves the assembly.

In preparing food, it is essential to be sincere and to respect each ingredient regardless of how coarse or fine it is. There is the example of the old woman who gained great merit through offering water in which she had rinsed rice to the Thus Come.[fn]The text actually says, “Jugo” or “the One of the Ten Names.” These are ten traditional epithets for the Buddha which are as follows: 1) Thus Come (tathagata) 2) worthy one (arhant) 3) completely awake (samyak-sambuddha) 4) harmonization of insight and practice (vidya-carana-sampanna) 5) gone into joy (sugata) 6) knower of the world (loka-vidu) 7) unexcelled (anuttarapurusa) 8) charioteer of the path 9) teacher of shining beings and humans (deva-manusanam sasta) 10) awake and generous one (buddha-bhagavat).[/fn] And of King Asoka creating roots of wholesomeness through offering half a mango to a monastery as he lay dying.[fn]In Nagarjuna’s **Mahaprajnaparamitopadesa (Dachidoron)** Chapter 8 and **Asokavadana (Aikuo Kyo Shoinnen Bonryaku)** Chapter 5 respectively.[/fn] As a result of this he realized the deathless in his next life. Even the grandest offering to the Buddha, if insincere, is worth less than the smallest sincere offering in bringing about a connection with awakening.[fn]Hotoke-no-en. Relation or relational condition of Buddhahood.[/fn] This is how human beings should conduct themselves.

A rich buttery soup[fn]Daigomi. The five tastes of milk, curd, raw cheese, ripened cheese, ghee. As a metaphor, the fifth taste is used to denote an exquisite flavour although it would probably have tasted quite ghastly to Far East Asians who inherited the metaphor from Indian texts but who on the whole had no contact with dairy products.[/fn] is not better as such than a broth of wild herbs.[fn]Fusaiko.[/fn] In handling and preparing wild herbs, do so as you would the ingredients for a rich feast, wholeheartedly, sincerely, clearly. When you serve the monastic assembly, they and you should taste only the flavour of the Ocean of Reality, the Ocean of unobscured Awake Awareness, not whether or not the soup is creamy or made only of wild herbs. In nourishing the seeds of living in the Way rich food and wild grass are not separate. There is the old saying, “The mouth of a monk is like a furnace.”[fn]In the **Soei-shu** Katyayana says, “The mouth of a monk is like a furnace, Just as a furnace burns both sandalwood and cow shit without distinction, our mouths should be the same, eating rich and plain food as food. We should use whatever we receive.”[/fn] Bear this in

mind. Wild grasses can nourish the seeds of Buddha[fn]Shotai.[/fn] and bring forth the buds of the Way.[fn]Doge.[/fn] Do not regard them lightly. A teacher must be able to use a blade of wild grass to benefit humans and shining beings.

Do not discriminate between the faults or virtues of the monks or whether they are senior or junior. You do not even know where you stand, so how can you put others into categories. Judging others from within the boundaries of your own opinions, how could you be anything other than wrong? Although there are differences between seniors and juniors, all are equally members of the assembly.[fn]So-shu.[/fn] Those who had many faults yesterday may be correct and clear today. Who can judge “sacred” from “common.” The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, “Whether foolish or wise, the fact that one trains as a monk provides for others a gift that penetrates everywhere.”

If you stand beyond opinions of right and wrong, you bring forth the practice of actualizing unsurpassable Awakening. If you do not, you take a wrong step and miss what’s there.[fn]See the **Fukanzazengi**.[/fn] The bones and marrow of the ancients was just the exertion of such practice and those monks who train as tenzo in the future realize the bones and marrow of the Way only through just such exertion. The monastic rules set forth by great Master Baizhang[fn]Baizhang Huahai (Pai-chang Huai-hai; Hyakujo Ekai), 720-814. The text of Baizhang’s monastic rules no longer survives but all of the shingi of Zen monasteries derive from it. He appears in **Blue Cliff Records: Biyen lu** cases 26, 53, 70, 71, 72 and **Wumenguan** cases 2 and 40.[/fn] must always be maintained.

After I returned to Japan I stayed at Kennin-ji[fn]This was the Tendai monastery in Kyoto where Dogen had practiced Rinzaï Zen with Eisai zenji and Myozen zenji.[/fn] for around two years. They had the office of tenzo there but it was only nominal because no one actually carried out the real activity of this training post. They did not understand it as the activity of Awake Awareness so how could they have been able to use it to express the Way? Truly, it was very sad. The tenzo there had never encountered a living one who could use the office of tenzo as the functioning of Awake Awareness and so he carelessly idled away, breaking the standards of practice.

I watched the tenzo there quite closely. He never actually worked at preparing the morning and evening meals but just ordered about some rough servants, lacking in intelligence and heart, leaving to them all the tasks whether important or not. He never checked on whether they were working well or not, as if it would be shameful to do so like peeping into the private quarters of a neighbouring woman. He just hung about in his own rooms, reading sutras or chanting when he wasn’t lying down or chatting. Months would go by before he would even come close to a pot, let alone buy utensils or make out a menu. He did not understand that these activities are the exertion of Awareness. The practice of donning the wrap robe and offering nine bows before sending out the food was something he would never have even dreamed of; it just wouldn’t have occurred to him. As he himself did not understand the office of tenzo, when it came time for him to teach a novice[fn]Zun-nan or shami.[/fn] how to carry out the office what understanding could be passed on? It was very regrettable. Although one might have the fortune to hold this post, if one is without the mind which uncovers the Way and fails to meet with one who has the virtue of the Way, it is like returning empty-handed after climbing a mountain of treasure or entering an ocean of jewels.

Although you might not have the mind which uncovers the Way, if you meet one manifesting the True Person[fn]Hombunnin. Or “Original Person.”[/fn] you can then practice and unfold the Way. Or, even if you cannot meet with one who is the display of the True Person, by yourself deeply arousing the seeking for the

Way, you can begin the Way. If you lack both of these, what is the point?

In the many monasteries of the mountains of Song China that I have seen, the monks holding the various offices train in these posts for a year at a time, each of them in each moment practicing by three standards. Firstly, to benefit others benefits yourself. Second, make every effort to maintain and renew the monastic environment. Third, follow the standards set forth by the examples of excellent practitioners of past and present and come to stand with them.

You should understand that foolish people hold their practice as if it belonged to someone else, wise people practice with everyone as themselves.

An ancient teacher[fn]Xuedou Zhongxian.[/fn] said,

*Two-thirds of your life has passed
without clarifying who you are.
Eating your life,
muddling about in this and that,
you don't even turn when called on.
Pathetic.*

From this verse we can see that if you have not met a true teacher, you will just follow the lead of your tendencies. And this is pathetic. It's like the story of the foolish son who leaves his parent's home with the family treasure and then throws it away on a dung heap.[fn]In Chapter 4 of the **Lotus Discourse**, the **Saddharma Pundarika sutra**.[/fn] Do not waste your opportunity as that man did.

Considering those who in the past made good use of their training as tenzo, we can see that their virtues were equal to those of their office. The great Daigu[fn]Another name for Guishan Lingyou (who has appeared three previous times in these notes). He trained as tenzo under Baizhang. In the **Jingde Chuandeng-lu** it states: Once when Daigu was training as tenzo on Baizhang shan, he went to serve the Master. Baizhang called out, "Who is it?" Daigui answered, "Me, Lingyou." Baizhang said, "Go and stir up those coals and see if anything's burning." Daigui did as instructed and when he returned told Baizhang that the fire was out. Baizhang got up, went to the brazier himself and stirred the ashes. Uncovering a small ember he brought it over to Daigui and said, "Well, what do you call this?" Daigui suddenly realized Baizhang's pointing out instructions and bowed.[fn] woke up while training as tenzo and Dongshan Shouchou's "Three pounds of flax," occurred while he was tenzo.[fn]Dongshan Shouchou (Tung-shan Shou-ch'ou; Tozan Shusho), 910-90. Dongshan's "Three Pounds of Flax" koan appears as **Blue Cliff Records** (Biyen lu) case 12.[fn] The only thing of value is the realization of the Way, the only time that is precious is each moment of realizing the Way.

Examples of those who long for the Way are many. There is the story of a child offering the Buddha a handful of sand as a great treasure.[fn]According to the **Aikuo Kyo Shoinnen Bonryaku** this child was reborn as King Asoka.[fn] Another is of someone who made images of the Buddha and had reverence for them and thus had great benefit follow them.[fn]King Uten was reborn in a heavenly realm through these activities according to the **Sakuzo Innen Kyo**. As well, the **Lotus Discourse (Saddharma Pundarika sutra)**

satates: “If one looks at the image of the One Gone into Joy on a wall and makes offerings to it, even in an angry state of mind, one will eventually come to see ten million Buddhas.”^[fn] How much more benefit must there be in fulfilling the office of tenzo through actualizing its possibilities as have those excellent ones who have practiced before us?

When we train in any of the offices of the monastery we should do so with a joyful heart, a motherly heart, a vast heart.^[fn]Kishin, roshin, daishin.^[fn] A “joyful heart” rejoices and recognizes meaning. You should consider that were you to be born in the realm of the shining beings you would be absorbed in indulgence with the qualities of that realm so that you would not rouse the recognition of uncovering the Way and so have no opportunity to practice. And so how could you use cooking as an offering to the Three Jewels? Nothing is more excellent than the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Teachings, and the Community of those who practice and realize the Way. Neither being the king of gods^[fn]Sakrodevanamindra^[fn] nor a world ruler^[fn]Cakravartin.^[fn] can even compare with the Three Jewels.

The **Zen Monastic Standards** states, “The monastic community is the most excellent of all things because those who live thus live beyond the narrowness of social fabrications.” Not only do we have the fortune of being born as human beings but also of being able to cook meals to be offered to the Three Jewels. We should rejoice and be grateful for this.

We can also reflect on how our lives would be were we to have been born in the realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or jealous gods.^[fn]Naraka, preta, tiryanc, asura. See “The Wheel of Becoming” in **Zanmai** No. 9-10, Great Matter Publications, 1992.^[fn] How difficult our lives would be in those four situations or if we had been born in any of the eight adverse conditions.^[fn]Hachi noansho or hachinan (astaksanani). As well as the four already listed: Being born in a place where the Dharma is not practiced or taught (zai uttan’otsu). Being born without the faculties that would allow us to practice (romon’o). Being born locked into the views of social conventions (sechi benso). Being born at a time when the Dharma is no longer available at all (butsuzen butsubu).^[fn] We would not then be able to practice together with the strength of a monastic community even should it occur to us to aspire to it, let alone be able to offer food to the Three Jewels with our own hands. Instead our bodies and minds would be bound within the limits of those circumstances, merely vessels of contraction.

This life we live is a life of rejoicing, this body a body of joy which can be used to present offerings to the Three Jewels. It arises through the merits of eons and using it thus its merit extends endlessly. I hope that you will work and cook in this way, using this body which is the fruition of thousands of lifetimes and births to create limitless benefit for numberless beings. To understand this opportunity is a joyous heart because even if you had been born a ruler of the world the merit of your actions would merely disperse like foam, like sparks.

A “motherly heart” is a heart which maintains the Three Jewels as a parent cares for a child. A parent raises a child with deep love, regardless of poverty or difficulties. Their hearts cannot be understood by another; only a parent can understand it. A parent protects their child from heat or cold before worrying about whether they themselves are hot or cold. This kind of care can only be understood by those who have given rise to it and realized only by those who practice it. This, brought to its fullest, is how you must care for water and rice, as though they were your own children.

The Great Master Sakyamuni offered to us the final twenty years of his own lifetime to protect us through

these days of decline.[fn]Matsu-se.[/fn] What is this other than the exertion of this “parental heart”? The Thus Come One did not do this hoping to get something out of it but sheerly out of munificence.

“Vast heart” is like a great expanse of ocean or a towering mountain. It views everything from the most inclusive and broadest perspective. This vast heart does not regard a gram as too light or five kilos as too heavy. It does not follow the sounds of spring or try to nest in a spring garden; it does not darken with the colours of autumn. See the changes of the seasons as all one movement, understand light and heavy[fn]Actually, the units of measurement here are first ryo and kin with 1 kin equal to 480 ryo. One ryo is equal to 24 shu.[/fn] in relation to each other within a view which includes both. When you write or study the character “vast,”[fn]Dai.[/fn] this is how you should understand its meaning.

If the tenzo at Jiashan had not thus studied the word “vast,” he could not have woken up Elder Fu by laughing at him.[fn]According to the **Wudeng Huiyuan (Goto Egen)** Chapter 17: Once the great Buddhist scholar Daiyuan Fu (Daigen Fu Joza) was lecturing on the **Great Cessation Discourse (Mahaparinirvana sutra)** at Guangkao-Xiao in Yangzhou . The tenzo from Jiashan who was travelling from temple to temple happened to get snowed in there and so he listened in on the lecture. Daiyuan Fu was explaining the section on the three factors of Buddha Nature and the three virtues of the Dharmakaya when, in the midst of the explanation of the subtleties of the Dharmakaya, the tenzo burst out laughing. After the lecture Daiyuan Fu asked the tenzo to his room where he said, “Look, I’m really a very simple person and so the comments I make when I lecture on the sutras are just literal explanations. I noticed that you couldn’t help laughing about what I said about the Dharmakaya. Could you be so kind as to point out where I went off?” The tenzo said, “Well, you were saying just what was written down there and so it’s not that its wrong. It’s just that you didn’t know what you were saying.” So after this Daiyuan Fu ceased any further lectures and began to visit many masters, inquiring of the Buddha Dharma, exerting himself in practice.[/fn] If Zen Master Guishan had not understand the word “vast,” he would not have blown on dead firewood three times.[fn]**Chanlin Leiju** Chapter 14: When Guishan Lingyou lived on Baizhang shan he went off into the wilderness with his Master, Baizhang Huihai, to work. Baizhang said, “Bring me some fire.” Guishan replied, “Okay, right away.” When Guishan returned he brought a stick to Baizhang who said, “Well, where is it?” Guishan turned the stick around in his hand, blew on it three times, and handed it back to Baizhang. Baizhang accepted the stick.[/fn] If the monk Dongshan had not understood the word “vast,” he could not have taught the monk through his expression, “Three pounds of flax.”[fn]Dongshan Shouchou’s “Three Pounds of Flax” koan appears as **Blue Cliff Records: Biyen lu** case 12.[/fn]

All of these and other great masters through the ages have studied the meaning of “vast” or “great” not only through the word for it but through all of the events and activities of their lives.[fn]Literally “above the tips of a hundred grasses.”[/fn] Thus they lived as a great shout of freedom through presenting the Great Matter, penetrating the Great Question, training great disciples and in this way bringing it all forth to us.

The abbot, senior officers and staff, and all monks should always maintain these three hearts or understandings.

Written in the spring of 1237[fn]Katei 4.[/fn] for those of coming generations who will practice the Way by Dogen, abbot of Kosho-(Horin)-ji.