

# Tenzo Kyōkun

## Instructions for the Cook

By the monk Dōgen  
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Buddhist monasteries have, in principle, six stewards. All are disciples of Buddha and all carry out the work of Buddha. Among them is the officer known as the cook, who is in charge of preparing meals for the assembly of monks. The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries (Chanyuan qinggui) says, "In order to offer nourishment to the monks of the community, there is a cook." From ancient times, the position has been assigned to senior monks who have the way-seeking mind -- eminent persons who have aroused the thought of awakening.

In general, the job of cook is an all-consuming pursuit of the way. If one lacks the way-seeking mind, it will be nothing but a vain struggle and hardship, without benefit in the end. The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries says, "One should maintain a way-seeking mind, make adjustments in accord with the occasion, and see to it that the great assembly receives what is necessary and is at ease." In days of yore, monks such as Guishan and Dongshan performed this job, and various other great ancestral teachers did too at some point in their careers.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is surely not the same as the work of worldly cooks, imperial cooks, and the like.

When this mountain monk [I, Dōgen] was in Song China, on my days off I inquired of retired elderly monks who had held minor and important offices, and they shared something of their views with me. Their explanations are the bones and marrow bequeathed by the buddhas and ancestors who were possessed of the way in ancient times. As a rule, one should carefully read the Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries. After that, one should pay heed to the detailed explanations of those retired senior officers.

The duties of the cook over the course of a single day and night [are as follows].

First, following the midday meal, go to the offices of the prior and comptroller and get the ingredients for the next day's meals: rice, vegetables, and so on. Having received them, protect and be frugal with them, as if they were your own eyes. Chan Master Yong of Baoning [Monastery] said, "Protect and be frugal with monastery property, which is [like] your own eyes." Respect and value them as if they were ingredients for an imperial repast. These cautions apply to fresh and cooked things alike.

Next, the various stewards consult in the store hall about what seasonings should be used on the following day, what vegetables should be eaten, how the rice gruel should be prepared, and so on. The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries says, "When deciding about ingredients as well as the flavors and numbers [of side dishes] for meals, first consult with the stewards in the store offices." The stewards referred to here are the prior, comptroller, assistant comptroller, rector, cook, and labor steward. When the flavors and numbers have been decided, write them on the announcement boards in the abbot's quarters, common quarters, and elsewhere.

After that, ready the next morning's rice gruel. When washing rice, preparing vegetables, and so on, do so with your own hands, with close attention, vigorous exertion, and a sincere mind. Do not indulge in a single moment of carelessness or laziness. Do not allow attentiveness to one thing result in overlooking another. Do not yield a single drop in the ocean of merit; even a mountain of good karma can be augmented by a single particle of dust.

The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries says, "If the six flavors<sup>2</sup> are not provided, then it cannot be

1 The reference here is to Guishan Lingyou (771-853) and Dongshan Shouchu (910-990).

2 The six tastes: bitter, sour, sweet, hot, mild, salty

said that the cook has served the assembly." When examining the rice, first check for sand; when examining the sand [sifted from the rice], first check for rice. If you pay careful attention to detail, watching when coming and watching when going, then your mind cannot be scattered, and [the food] will naturally be replete with the three virtues<sup>3</sup> and endowed with the six flavors.

When Xuefeng resided at Dongshan [monastery], he served as cook. One day when he was sifting rice [master] Dongshan asked him, "Are you sifting the sand and removing the rice, or sifting the rice and removing the sand?" Xuefeng said, "Sand and rice are simultaneously removed." Dongshan asked, "What will the great assembly eat?" Xuefeng overturned the bowl. Dongshan said, "In the future you will go and be scrutinized by someone else."<sup>4</sup>

In the past, eminent men in possession of the way practiced in this way [as cooks], working energetically with their own hands. In this latter day, how can we who are so late getting started [in our practice] be negligent about this? The ancients said that cooks regard tying up their sleeves [for manual work] as the way-seeking mind. Lest there be any mistakes in the sifting out of rice and sand, you should examine it with your own hands. The Rules of Purity say, "When preparing meals, one should reflect intimately on one's own self; [the food] will then of itself be pure and refined."

Keep the white water with which you have washed the rice; do not wastefully discard it. In ancient times they used a cloth bag to strain the white water and used it to boil the rice when making gruel. Having put [the rice] into the cooking pot, pay attention and guard it. Do not allow mice and the like to touch it by mistake, nor any covetous idlers to examine or touch it.

When cooking the vegetable side dishes for the morning gruel, also prepare the platters and tubs used for rice, soup, etc., as well as the various utensils and supplies that will be used for that day's midday meal. Wash them so that they are completely pure and clean, placing up high those that belong in high places and putting down low those that belong in low places. "High places are high and level; low places are low and level."<sup>5</sup> Treat utensils such as tongs and ladles, and all other implements and ingredients, with equal respect; handle all things with sincerity, picking them up and putting them down with courtesy.

When you have finished, think about the ingredients for the next day's meals. First, pick over the rice. If there are any insects, green beans, hulls or pebbles, carefully pick them out. While picking over the rice and vegetables, the postulants should chant sutras and dedicate the merit to the kitchen god. Next, select the ingredients for the vegetables and soup and cook them. Do not argue with the store officers over the amount of ingredients you have received. Without worrying about their quality, simply make the best of what you have. It is prohibited to show your feelings or say anything about the amount of ingredients.

During the day and through the night, whether things come and dwell in your mind or your mind turns and dwells on things, put yourself on a par with them and diligently pursue the way. Prior to the third watch take stock of the next morning's tasks; after the third watch take charge of making the morning gruel. When that day's gruel is finished, wash the pots, steam the rice, and prepare the soup. When soaking the rice for the midday meal, the cook should not leave the vicinity of the sink. Keep a sharp eye on everything, so as not to waste even a single grain, and properly rinse out any foreign objects. Put the rice in the pots, light the fires, and steam it. Of old it was said, "When steaming rice, treat the pot as one's own head; when rinsing the rice, know that the water is one's own lifeblood." When the steaming is done, collect the rice in bamboo baskets or rice tubs and place it on the table.

3 The three virtues: light, clean, dignified

4 The references here are to Xuefeng Yicun (822-908) and Dongshan Liangjie (807-869).

5 A famous saying taken from a dialogue between Guishan Lingyou (771-853) and his disciple Yangshan Huiji (807-883):

One day [Yangshan] went along with Guishan to open a field. The teacher [Yangshan] asked, "Why is it that this part is low and that part is high?" Guishan said, "Water can level things; let us just use water to level it." The teacher said, "Water is not reliable, master. It is just that high places are high and level; low places are low and level." Guishan assented.

Preparation of vegetables, soup, and the like, should be done while the rice is being steamed.

The cook keeps careful watch over the area where the rice and soup are prepared, giving commands to the postulants, the servants, and the fire stokers, and instructing them in the handling of the various utensils. Nowadays, large monasteries have rice cooks and soup cooks, but those are nevertheless under the command of the cook. In the past there were no such rice or soup cooks, only the single officer, the cook himself.

When ordinarily preparing ingredients, do not regard them with ordinary [deluded] eyes, or think of them with ordinary emotions. "Lifting a single blade of grass builds a shrine;<sup>6</sup> entering a single mote of dust turns the great wheel of the dharma."<sup>7</sup> Even when, for example, one makes a soup of the crudest greens, one should not give rise to a mind that loathes it or takes it lightly; and even when one makes a soup of the finest cream, one should not give rise to a mind that feels glad and rejoices in it. If one is at the outset free from preferences, how could one have any aversions? Even when confronted with poor ingredients, there is no negligence whatsoever; even when faced with scanty ingredients, one exerts oneself. Do not change your mind in accordance with things. Whoever changes his mind in accordance with things, or revises his words to suit the person [he is speaking to], is not a man of the way.

With resolve and sincerity, one should aim to exceed the ancients in purity and surpass the former worthies in attentiveness. The way to put that aspiration into practice in one's own person is, for example, to take the same three coins that one's predecessors spent to make a soup of the crudest greens and use them to now to make a soup of the finest cream. This is difficult to do. Why is that? Because present and past are completely different, like the distance between heaven and earth. How could we ever be able to equal their stature? Nevertheless, when we work attentively, therein lies the principle that makes it possible to surpass our predecessors.

That you still do not grasp the certainty of this principle is because your thinking scatters, like wild horses, and your emotions run wild, like monkeys in a forest. If you can make those monkeys and horses, just once, take the backward step that turns the light and shines it inward, then naturally you will be completely integrated. This is the means by which we, who are [ordinarily] set into motion by things, become able to set things into motion.

Harmonizing and purifying yourself in this manner, do not lose either the one eye [of transcendent wisdom] or the two eyes [of discriminating consciousness]. Lifting a single piece of vegetable, make [yourself into] a six-foot body [i.e. a buddha] and ask that six-foot body to prepare a single piece of vegetable. Those are [the cook's] spiritual penetrations and magical transformations, his buddha-work and benefiting of living beings.

Having prepared [everything] so that the preparations are finished, and cooked [everything] so that the cooking is done, look to "that side" and put things away on "this side".<sup>8</sup> When the drum sounds or the bell rings, join the assembly [of monks in training] and attend the convocation [to hear the abbot's teachings]. "Morning and evening, seek and attend", without being remiss even once.<sup>9</sup>

When you return to your quarters, right away you should close your eyes and clearly envision the

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6 This passage alludes to case 4 of the koan collection *Congrong Record*, entitled "The World-honored One Points to the ground":

When the World-honored One was walking with the assembly [of his followers], he pointed to the ground with his hand and said, "This place is suitable to build a shrine." [The deva] Indra took a single blade of grass, stuck it in the ground, and said, "I have built the shrine." The World-honored One smiled.

7 This passage alludes to a passage in the *Shurangama-samādhi-sūtra* which states that

The tathāgatas of the ten directions, embracing the spirit of this dharani, turn the great wheel of the dharma in lands [innumerable as] motes of dust.

8 A double-entendre. On the literal level, the meaning is simply that the cook should look all around and put things away where they belong. Figuratively, he is advised to look "there" (nahen -- the realm of the highest truth), while putting things to rest "here" (shahen -- the worldly realm).

9 A play on the common expression, "In the morning attend [the abbot's sermons] and in the evening seek [his instruction] (chōsan boshō)," which means to seek the dharma at all times.

number of individual places in the [sangha] hall; the number of monks in the individual quarters of retired minor officers, retired senior officers, and the like; how many individual monks there are in the infirmary, geriatric quarters, temporary quarters, and so on; the number of wandering monks registered in the guest quarters; and the number of people in subtemples. After carefully calculating in this way, if you have the slightest uncertainty, ask the hall manager in question, or the quarters prefect, quarters chief, or quarters head seat of the various quarters and eliminate your doubts.

Now carefully calculate: for every grain of rice to be eaten, one grain must be supplied. If a single grain of rice is divided, then you will have two half-grains of rice. Three tenths, four tenths; one half, two halves. If you supply two half-grains of rice, you will make a single whole grain. Or, supply nine tenths and see how many tenths you still have; now take back nine tenths and see how many tenths are still there.

Getting to eat a single grain of Luling rice enables one to see the monk Guishan; getting to supply a single grain of Luling rice enables one to see the water buffalo [that Guishan will become]. The water buffalo eats the monk Guishan, and the monk Guishan feeds the buffalo.<sup>10</sup> Is my measurement complete or not? Is your calculation complete or not? If you carefully inspect and exhaustively check [these matters], your understanding will dawn and become clear. Then, when an opportunity presents itself, say something; when you confront someone, speak. And, if you exert yourself in this way without deviation, day after day, then you will not be able to forget it, even temporarily.

When a patron comes into the monastery and donates money to hold a feast, the various the stewards should all be consulted; this is the precedent established in monasteries of old. With regard to the distribution of the merit-making donations, they also consult together. Do not create a disturbance in the hierarchy by infringing on anyone's authority.

When the midday meal or morning gruel has been properly prepared and placed on the table, the cook dons his kesa, spreads his sitting cloth, faces the sangha hall [where the monks eat], burns incense and makes nine prostrations. Upon finishing his prostrations, he sends the food [to the sangha hall].

Throughout the day, as you prepare the meals, do not pass the time in vain. If your preparations are true, then your movements and activities will naturally become the deeds of nurturing the womb of the sage. The way to put the great assembly at ease is to step back and transform yourself.

It has been a long time now since the name "buddha-dharma" came to be heard in our country, Japan. However, our predecessors did not record, and the former worthies did not teach, anything about the proper procedure for monks' meals, and they never even dreamed of the rite of making nine prostrations before the monks' meals. People in this country say that the way in which the monks eat and the way in which monasteries prepare food are just like the feeding methods of [domestic] birds and beasts. This is truly pathetic, truly deplorable. How could it be?

When this mountain monk [I, Dōgen] was at Tiantong Monastery, the position [of cook] was held by cook Yong, of the same province [as the monastery]. Once, after the midday meal I was passing through the east corridor on my way to the Chaoran room [where my teacher Myōzen was being nursed] when I saw the cook in front of the buddha hall airing mushrooms. He carried a bamboo staff in his hand, but had no hat on his head. The sun was hot, the ground tiles were hot, and sweat streamed over him as he worked diligently to dry the mushrooms. He was suffering a bit. With his backbone bent like a bow and his shaggy eyebrows, he resembled a crane.

I approached and asked the cook his dharma age. He said, "Sixty-eight years." I said, "Why do you

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<sup>10</sup> Luling was a district in Jiangxi Province that produced a distinctive type of rice. The reference to Luling rice comes from a famous dialogue found in the biography of Chan master Qingyuan Xingsi (d. 740) :

A monk asked, what is the ultimate meaning of the buddha-dharma?  
The master said, "What is the price of Luling rice?"

not employ postulants or laborers?" He said, "They are not me." I said, "Venerable sir, your attitude is indeed proper, but the sun is so hot; why are you doing this [now]?" The cook said, "What time should I wait for?" I took my leave, but as I walked along the corridor, I began to realize how important an opportunity this position affords.

Again, in the fifth month of the sixteenth year of the Jiading era [1223], I was on the ship at Qingyuan. While I was talking with the Japanese captain, there was an old monk who arrived. He was about sixty years old. He came directly onto the ship and inquired of the Japanese passengers if he could buy Japanese mushrooms. I invited him to drink tea and asked where he was from. He was the cook of the monastery on Mount Ayuwang. He said, "I come from Sichuan, but I left my home village forty years ago. This year I am sixty-one years old. In the past I have trained in quite a few different monasteries. In recent years, I stayed for a while with Guyun. I was able to register at Yuwang [monastery], but for some time I felt out of place. At the end of the summer retreat last year, however, I was appointed cook of that monastery. Tomorrow is the fifth day [feast], but the entire menu does not yet include a single delicacy. I need to cook noodle soup, but still have no mushrooms, and thus have made a special trip here to try to buy mushrooms to offer to the monks of the ten directions.

I asked him, "What time did you leave there?" The cook replied, "After the midday meal." I inquired, "How long is the road from Yuwang to here?" He said, "Thirty-four or thirty-five li." I asked, "When will you return to the monastery?" He said, "If I can buy the mushrooms now, I will set off right after that." I said, "Today I did not expect to meet you and have a conversation on this ship. It is most fortunate, is it not, to form this karmic bond? Dōgen [I] will treat the cook Zen master [you] to a meal." The cook said, "It is impossible. If I do not oversee the preparations for tomorrow's meal offering, it will not turn out well." I said, "Are there not co-workers in the monastery who understand the meals? What will be deficient if only one officer, the cook, is not present?" The cook said, "I took up this position in my later years; it is this old man's pursuit of the way. How could I hand it over to others? Besides, when I came I did not ask to stay away overnight."

I again asked the cook: "You are venerable in years; why don't you sit in meditation to pursue the way or contemplate the words of the ancients? It is troublesome being cook; all you do is labor. What good is that?" The cook laughed and said, "My good man from a foreign country, you do not yet understand pursuit of the way and do not yet know about written words." When I heard him speak in this manner, I suddenly felt ashamed and taken aback. I asked him, "What are written words? What is the practice of the way?" The cook said, "If you do not slip up and pass by the place you ask about, how could you not be a man?" At the time, I did not understand. The cook said, "If you still don't understand, come to Yuwang Mountain at some other time, in the future. On that occasion we can discuss the principle of written words." Having spoken thus, the cook got up and said, "It is late in the day and I am in a hurry, so I am going back now."

In the seventh month of the same year, I registered at Tiantong [Monastery]. While I was there, that cook came to meet me and said, "At the end of the summer retreat I retired as cook and am now returning to my home village. I happened to hear a disciple say that you were here; how could I not come to meet you?"

I jumped for joy and was very grateful. In the ensuing conversation that I had with him I brought up the karmic conditions of written words and pursuit of the way that we had discussed previously on the ship. The cook said, "The study of written words is to understand the purpose of written words. Exertion in pursuit of the way requires an affirmation of the purpose of pursuing the way." I asked him, "What are written words?" The cook answered, "One, two, three, four, five." I also asked, "What is pursuit of the way?" He said, "In the whole world, it can never be hidden."

Although there was a great variety of other things that we discussed, I will not record them at this point. The little I know about written words and understand about pursuing the way is due to the great

kindness of that cook. I told my late teacher Myōzen about the things that I have just related here, and he was very happy to hear of them.

Later I saw a verse that Xuedou wrote to instruct the monks:

One letter, seven letters, three letters, or five;  
Investigating myriads of images, one reaches no basis.  
In the depth of night, the moon sets into the dark sea;  
Seeking the black dragon's pearl, one finds there are many.<sup>11</sup>

What that cook said some years before and what Xuedou expresses in this verse clearly coincide. More and more I understand that the cook was a true man of the way. But in the past what I saw of written words was one, two, three, four, five. Today what I see of written words is also six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

You disciples who come after me, thoroughly contemplate there in accordance with here and thoroughly contemplate here in accordance with there. If you make this kind of effort, you will be able to obtain in written words the Zen of a single flavor. If you are not like this, you will be subjected willy-nilly to the poison of the Zen of five flavors, and when it comes to arranging the monks' meals, you will not be able to do it skillfully.

I have heard of former cooks and witnessed present ones, with my eyes and with my ears. Concerning this position, there are written words and there are principles of behavior; truly, it can be called a central one! Even if one has the title of head of meals, one's mental attitude should still be the same as this. The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries says,

The preparation of gruel and rice for the two daily meals should be refined and plentiful. The provision of the four types of offerings must not admit to any lack or scarcity. The World-honored One bequeathed the blessings of twenty years to enfold his descendants.<sup>12</sup> The merit of a single beam of white light [emitted from his forehead], when received and used [by his descendants] is never exhausted. Therefore, just know that in serving the assembly, there can be no fear of scarcity.

If you do not have a mind that is limited, as a matter of course there will be no lack of blessings. After all, this is the mental attitude that the abbot has in providing for the assembly.

As for the [proper] attitude in preparing food offerings and handling ingredients, do not debate the fineness of things and do not debate their coarseness, but take as essential the profound arousal of a true mind and a respectful mind.

Have you not seen that a single bowl of starchy water, offered to Him of the Ten Names, naturally resulted in wondrous merit that carried an old woman through future births;<sup>13</sup> and that half a crabapple fruit, given to a single monastery, enabled King Ashoka finally to establish his vast good karmic roots, gain a prediction, and bring about a great result?<sup>14</sup> Although they create a karmic connection with the Buddha, [donations that are] large and vacuous are not the same as [ones that are] small and sincere.

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11 By Xuedou Zhongxian (980-1052).

12 According to a sub-commentary on the "Pure Practice" section of the Avatamsaka-sūtra, the Buddha should have lived 100 years, but he gave up his life at 80 in order to bequeath the remaining 20 years of merit to his followers in future generations.

13 The reference here is to the famous story of a poor old woman who made an offering to Buddha of the water that she had used to rinse rice and, as a result, was reborn as a deva or human for fifteen kalpas, and eventually became a buddha herself.

14 King Ashoka, legend has it, tried to contribute a huge amount of gold to a monastery, but was prevented by his son and ministers. Next he tried to donate his own gold eating utensils to the monastery, but was again thwarted. Finally he took half a crabapple that he had in his own hands and tried to offer that, but was unable to do so by himself. He enlisted the aid of another minister, who gave the fruit to the monks. They received it courteously, ground it into flour, and baked it into a cake, which was shared by all. This was Ashoka's final establishment of his good karmic roots.

This is the practice of a [true] person.

What is regarded as the preparation of superb delicacies is not necessarily superior, nor is the preparation of a soup of the crudest greens necessarily inferior. When you select and serve up crude greens, if you do so with a true mind, a sincere mind, and a pure mind, then they will be comparable to superb delicacies. Why is that so? Because when one enters into the pure and vast oceanic assembly of the buddha dharma, superb delicacies are never seen and the flavor of crude greens does not exist: there is only the one taste of the great sea, and that is all. Moreover, when it comes to the matters of nurturing the sprouts of the way and nourishing the sacred embryo, superb delicacies and crude greens are as one; there is no duality. There is an old saying that a monk's mouth is like a stove.<sup>15</sup> You must not fail to understand this. You should think that even crude greens can nourish the sacred embryo and nurture the sprouts of the way. Do not regard them as base; do not take them lightly. A teacher of humans and devas is able to regard crude greens as things that convert and benefit [beings].

Moreover, you should not concern yourself with the strengths and weaknesses of the monks of the assembly, or look upon them as being old or young. Even the self does not know the self's own weak points; how could others be aware of the weak points of others? How could it not be a mistake to take one's own deficiencies as the deficiencies of others?

Although there are differences in the appearance of seniors and juniors, and some have wisdom while others are foolish or dim, as members of the sangha they are the same. Moreover, something that was not true in the past may be true at present, so who can know which are sages and which are commoners? The Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries says, "The sangha gathers together from throughout the ten directions, without distinguishing sages and commoners." If you have an aspiration that does not try to control all matters of right and wrong, is that not the way of practice that directly approaches supreme awakening? If you are confused about the step you have just taken, then you will slip up and pass by that which stares you in the face. The bones and marrow of the ancients consists entirely in the place where this kind of effort is made.<sup>16</sup> Disciples in these later generations who hold the position of cook will also first attain [the bones and marrow] through this kind of effort. How could the rules of the high patriarch Baizhang be in vain?<sup>17</sup>

After I returned to Japan I took up residence in Kennin Monastery for several years. That monastery established the position of cook, but it was in name only; there was no one at all who actually carried it out. As yet unaware that this is the work of the Buddha, how pathetic was their pursuit and practice of the way! Truly it is pitiable that they, without meeting such a person, vainly passed their days and recklessly destroyed the way of practice. Once I observed that the monk who held the position of cook at that monastery did nothing at all to manage the two daily meals. He entrusted all matters large and small to a servant without a brain or human feelings, giving him only general instructions. He never ever went to see whether the work was done properly or not. He acted as if he was the wife of a neighboring house: if he went and saw the other, it would be an embarrassment or an injury. He ensconced himself in his office, sometimes reclining, sometimes chatting and laughing, sometimes reading sūtras, and sometimes reciting prayers. For days on end and many months he did not approach

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15 A stove consumes all kinds of wood equally, regardless of its quality. A monk, similarly, should eat whatever is served without discriminating plain and delicious.

16 The expression "bones and marrow" is an allusion to a famous story in which Bodhidharma tests his four disciples:

After nine years had passed [since Bodhidharma's arrival in China], he wished to return to the west, to India, so he commanded his disciples saying, "The time is near; each of you should say what you have attained." At the time, the disciple Daofu replied, "As I see it, the function of the Dao consists in not attaching to scriptures and not being apart from scriptures." The master said, "You have gotten my skin." The nun Zongchi said, "My understanding now is that it is like the joy of seeing the Buddha-land of Akshobhya: it is felt at the first glance, but not the second glance." The master said, "You have gotten my flesh." Daoyu said, "The four elements are at root empty, and the five skandhas have no existence; from my point of view, there is not a single dharma that could be attained." The master said, "You have gotten my bones." Finally Huike, after making a prostration, just stood at his place. The master said, "You have gotten my marrow".

17 Baizhang (720-814) was the patriarch renowned in Song China as the founder of the first independent Chan monastery and author of the monastic rules.

the vicinity of the pots. How much less did he take stock of the utensils or pay attention to the flavors and numbers [of side dishes]. How could he possibly have done his job? Needless to say, he had never even dreamed of the two [daily] occasions for making nine prostrations. When the time came for instructing young postulants, he never knew what to do. How pitiable and how sad was that person who lacked the way-seeking mind. Not once did he come into contact with a companion who was possessed of the virtue of the way. Although he entered into the treasure mountain, he came away with empty hands. Although he reached the treasure ocean, he turned back with empty body. You should know that even if he never aroused the thought of enlightenment, if he had seen a single person who set a worthy example he would have attained that way in his practice. And even if he never saw a single person who set a worthy example, if his thought of enlightenment had been profound, he would have hit upon that way in his practice. But in actuality both were lacking, so there was no way for him to benefit.

As I observed in the various monasteries and temples of the Great Sung Nation, the monks who held the positions of stewards and prefects, although they only served for one year, each embodied the three ways of upholding [the buddha dharma]. During their time [in office] they made use of those [three ways], and in their vying for karmic connections they inspired those [three ways]. [1] Even as you benefit others, concurrently there are ample benefits for oneself. [2] Elevate the monastery pulpit and renew its high standing. [3] Standing shoulder to shoulder and competing head to head, follow in the footsteps of esteemed forerunners. You should have a detailed knowledge of these matters. There are fools who look upon themselves as if they were someone else, and there are wise people who regard others as themselves.

An ancient said,

Two-thirds of one's days having swiftly passed,  
Not a single aspect of the spirit dais has been polished;  
Craving life, day after day goes by in distress;  
If one does not turn one's head when called, what can be done?

You should know that if you have not met a wise teacher, you are liable to be carried away by your emotions. How pitiable the foolish son who left behind the family fortune handed down to him by his prominent father and vainly labored in front of others handling garbage and excrement.<sup>18</sup> At present, are we not liable to be like this?

When I observed accomplished people in the past who held the position of cook, their personal qualities were naturally in accord with their official roles. The Great Gui awakened to the way when he was a cook.<sup>19</sup> Dongshan's [saying] "Three pounds of hemp" was also when he was a cook.<sup>20</sup> If there is a matter that can be valued, you should value the matter of awakening to the way. If there is a time that can be valued, surely you should value the time of awakening to the way! The result of cherishing that matter and being addicted to the way is attested especially by the [story of] "grasping sand and making a jewel."<sup>21</sup> We can often see the effect of making an image [of the Buddha] and worshipping [before it]. The position of cook is similar [in its karmic results], but even more so. Its name is the same [as in the past]. If the cook is someone who can transmit its character and its practice, how could its beauty and its fulfillment fail to appear?

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18 This passage alludes to the famous parable of the "prodigal son" in the Lotus Sutra.

19 A reference to Guishan Lingyou (771-853).

20 The dialogue in which this reply occurs is a famous koan, occurring as case 18 in the Gateless Barrier (Wumenguan) and case 12 in the Blue Cliff Record (Biyuanlu).

21 A legend about King Ashoka relates how, as a boy in a former life, he was playing in the road with sand when the Buddha happened to pass by. The boy offered the sand to the Buddha as if it were dried grain. The Buddha accepted it and explained to his disciple Ananda that, 100 years after his entry into nirvana, the boy would be a great wheel-turning king named Ashoka.

In general, the various stewards and prefects, including the cook, should maintain a joyful mind, an elder's mind, and a great mind whenever they perform rituals or engage in work.

So-called joyful mind is the spirit of happiness. You should consider that if you were born in a heaven, you would be attached to pleasures without cease and would not be able to arouse the thought of enlightenment. Practice would not be feasible. Even less would you be able to prepare meals as offerings to the three jewels! Among the myriad dharmas, the most revered and precious are the three jewels. The most superior things are the three jewels. Indra cannot compare. A wheel-turning king does not equal them. The Rules of Purity says, "Revered by the world, it is an excellent space outside [worldly] things; pure and detached, the assembly of monks is best." Now we have the good fortune to be born as human beings and to prepare the food that these three jewels receive and use. Is this not of great karmic significance? We should thus be very happy.

Again, you should consider that if you were born into the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, anti-gods, and the like, or born in circumstances where you suffered from one of the eight difficulties, even if you sought to cover yourself in the power of the sangha, your hands would naturally be unable to prepare pure meals as offerings to the three jewels. Relying on that painful physical form you would receive pain and be bound in body and mind. Now, in this life, you have already prepared those meals. How happy a birth! How happy a body! It is the good karmic result of kalpas vast and great. It is merit that cannot decay. When you prepare food and cook it you should do so with the aspiration of taking tens of thousands of births and concentrating them into this one day, this one time, that you may be able to bind together in good karmic result the bodies of millions of [past] births. A mind that contemplates and understands things in this way is a joyful mind. Truly, even if one takes on the body of a wheel-turning holy king, if one does not prepare meals as offerings to the three jewels, in the end it has no benefit. It is only of the nature of water, froth, bubbles, or flames.

So-called elder's mind is the spirit of fathers and mothers. It is, for example, like a father and mother who dote on an only child: one's thoughts of the three jewels are like their concentration on that one child. Even if they are poor or desparate, they strongly love and nurture that single child. People who are outsiders cannot understand what their state of mind is like; they can only understand it when they themselves become fathers or mothers. Without regard for their own poverty or wealth, [parents] earnestly turn their thoughts toward raising their child. Without regard for whether they themselves are cold or hot, they shade the child or cover the child. We may regard this as affectionate thinking at its most intense. A person who arouses this spirit is fully conscious of it. A person who cultivates this spirit is one who truly awakens to it. Therefore, when [the cook] watches over water and watches over grain, in every case he should sustain the caring and warmth of child-rearing!

The great teacher Shakyamuni, moreover, apportioned twenty years of his lifespan as a buddha to assist us in this age of the end of the dharma. What was his intention? It was simply that he valued the spirit of fathers and mothers. A tathâgata is utterly incapable of seeking any reward or seeking any riches.

So-called great mind is, in its spirit, like a great mountain or a great sea: it has no partiality and no factionalism. Lifting an ounce, it does not consider it light; hefting a stone, it does not consider it heavy. Being drawn by the voices of spring, it does not wander into the swamp of spring. Although it sees the colors of autumn, it has nothing whatsoever of the spirit of autumn. It contrasts the four seasons against the backdrop of a single vista. It views pennyweights and ounces [of silver] within the context of a single system of measurement. As an emblem of this sameness, we can write the character "great". You should know the character "great". You should study the character "great". If the cook Jiashan had not studied the character "great", he would not have spontaneously laughed his single laugh and would not have saved Taiyuan.<sup>22</sup> If Ch'an Master Guishan had not written the character "great", he

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22 According to a story, the monk Taiyuan Fu (n.d.), also known as Elder Fu (Fu Shangzuo), was giving a lecture on the Nirvana-sutra at

could not have taken a stick of firewood and blown on it three times.<sup>23</sup> If the Reverend Preceptor Dongshan had not known the character "great", he would not have been able to instruct the monk by raising "three pounds of hemp". You should know that the great teachers of old were alike in their study of the character "great" in connection with the diverse phenomena of this world. Now, too, there are those who freely make a great sound, expound the great meaning, complete the great matter, connect with great people, and accomplish karmic conditions of this one great matter. How could abbots, stewards, prefects, and monks in training entirely forget these three kinds of mind?!

Recorded in the spring of the third year of the Katei era [1237]  
as instruction for accomplished practitioners of the way in the future.

Recorded by the dharma-transmitting monk Dōgen,  
abbot of the Kannon Dōri Kōshō Hōrin Zen Monastery.

Translated by T. Griffith Foulk for the Soto Translation Project

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the Guangxiao Monastery in Yangzhou. When he was explaining a reference to the dharma body of the buddha, a Chan monk in the audience named Zuxue laughed. When the lecture was over Taiyuan invited him to drink tea and asked him why he had laughed. The Chan monk replied that he laughed because "the lecturer does not know the dharma body." Spurred by this criticism, Taiyuan sat in meditation in his room for ten days and eventually awakened when he heard a drum signalling the fifth watch of the night.

23 The story referred to appears in fascicle 6 of the Jingde Record (Jingde chuandeng lu):

Once when the teacher [Baizhang] was working with Guishan he asked, "Have you any fire, or not?" Guishan said, "I have." The teacher said, "Where is it?" Guishan took a stick of wood, blew on it two or three times, and passed it to the teacher. The teacher said, "It is like wood hollowed out by insects."