

# Zhū Bólú's Maxims for Managing the Home

## Introduction

Zhū Bólú lived in Jiangsu Province from 1617 to 1688 and was officially commended for his grasp of moral behavior.

“Zhū Bólú's Maxims for Managing the Home” was prepared to spread morality like jam over the land, and Zhū came to be called “Master Zhū” (Zhū zǐ); thus the text is also popularly called “Master Zhu's ‘Maxims for the Home.’”

Today it is one of the most commonly reprinted of the classical popular texts.

My translation of it will also be found on my web site, where it is accompanied by the full Chinese text in traditional and simplified characters and full Pinyin Romanization.

## Translation

1. At dawn get up immediately, sprinkle and sweep the hall & porch, so that inside and outside are tidy and clean.
2. Then go to bed at dusk, and personally close and lock the doors.
3. With each bowl of gruel or rice you should recall that its production is not easy.
4. With each half length of silk or hemp, always remember “to make a thing is very hard.”
5. It is good to make preparations before it rains; don't wait for thirst before you dig a well.
6. Be frugal in your comforts for yourself, and do not prolong the entertaining of guests.
7. If utensils are of good quality and clean, then pottery is better than gold or jade.
8. Drink and food should be simple, and well-prepared garden vegetables are better than precious delicacies.
9. Do not build a gorgeous house. Do not scheme for choice lands
10. The “three types of nuns and six kinds of procurers” are introducers of promiscuity and theft.<sup>1</sup>
11. When the maids are beautiful and the concubines charming, this is not a blessing in the women's quarters.
12. For servants, don't employ handsome boys.
13. Wives and concubines must avoid beautiful clothing.
14. Although ancestors are remote, they may not be worshipped insincerely.
15. Although children and grandchildren be simple, they must read the Classics.
16. Personal habits must be simple; children must be taught by righteous methods.
17. Do not covet wealth beyond what you earn or drink beyond your capacity.
18. Do not take advantage of a vendor as he carries his wares on a shoulder pole.

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<sup>1</sup> -“Three Types of Nuns and Six Kinds of Procurers”: The traditional Chinese expression in quotation marks, sān gū liù pó refers collectively to extra-familial female trouble makers. They are Buddhist nuns ní, Taoist nuns, and female fortune tellers; the “six kinds of old women” are brokeresses, match-makers, spirit mediums, women who pray in exchange for money, herbalists, and midwives.

19. On meeting relatives and neighbors who are poor or in distress, show kindness and compassion.
20. A family founded in meanness will not long prevail.
21. When human relationships<sup>2</sup> are perverted destruction instantly follows
22. Among brothers, uncles, and nephews, those with much should help those with little.
23. Between old and young, women and men, decorum should be strict and speech dignified.
24. Listening to a wife's talk and harming one's own kin: how can this make one a good husband?!
25. Valuing wealth but slighting parents is unbecoming a son.
26. In marrying off a daughter choose a good son-in-law, ; do not demand a heavy brideprice.
27. In wedding a wife [to your son], seek a virtuous girl; do not count a heavy dowry.
28. A person who fawns before the rich and noble is most contemptible.
29. One who is haughty before the poor is mean beyond measure.
30. A respectable family avoids lawsuits, for lawsuits in the end are evil.
31. In social intercourse, avoid excessive talking; excessive talking causes losses.
32. Do not rely on your position to oppress orphans and widows.
33. Do not so lust after fine food that you needlessly kill cattle and fowl.
34. Obstacity and self-approval result in many regrets.
35. Among the lazy and self-indulgent, it is difficult for a family to succeed.
36. Associating with evil youths, one must eventually be implicated [in their evil].
37. To be humble before the people who are older and more experienced will serve in time of trouble.
38. How is one to know words lightly heard are not other people's slander? One must be patient and think two or three times.
39. If you quarrel over something, how do you know it is the other who is wrong? One must rethink things with a calm heart.
40. Don't think about your own acts of benevolence; but never forget kindnesses received.
41. In all things allow spare ground. Having obtained the objective, don't go further.
42. When others celebrate happy occasions, do not be envious.
43. When others suffer misfortunes, do not rejoice.
44. Good done so people can see it is not a good deed.
45. Evil done that fears exposure is truly great evil.
46. To have a lustful heart on seeing a beautiful woman will bring retribution on one's wife and daughters.
47. To take secret revenge when one has a grudge will bring disaster upon sons and grandsons.
48. If a household is harmonious, then although breakfast and supper may be scanty, there will still be great happiness.
49. If taxes are paid early, then, although one's purse be light, one will feel great satisfaction.

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<sup>2</sup> -Human Relationships: The relationships in question are the usual "five relationships," viz. prince-minister, father-son, husband-wife, older & younger brother, and friend-friend.

50. In study one should aim at [the level of] the saints and worthies, not merely at a degree. [Students, take heed! --DKJ]
51. As an official one's heart should be with one's lord and country; how can one plan to advance oneself and one's family?!
52. Keep in your social position and accept your fate. Follow the times. Obey Heaven.
53. Lead your life in this way and you will approach [the sages].