

The Celebration of Congee in East Asian Buddhism

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Abstract

Scholars of Chinese Buddhism have given much attention to vilified foodstuffs such as meat and pungent vegetables (alliums), and less attention to celebrated foods. While proscriptions are important for their role in constructing boundaries used in group identification, we should not overlook the celebration of particular foods such as congee (*zhou* 粥). In Buddhist writings, congee is enshrined in the wording of mealtime rites in Chinese monastic communities and is associated with claims of karmic or health-promoting efficacy. Such claims are also important because they inform normative practices. Sources as temporally and geographically distanced as the Pāli canon's *Congee Sūtra* (*Yāgu Sutta*) and Japanese monk Mujaku Dōchū's (1653–1744) *Zenrin shōkisen* 禪林象器箋 agree that congee is a food with special significance to Buddhists. The most celebrated forms of this food, however, have not remained constant. The ingredients of a congee commemorating the Buddha's awakening transformed in the wake of Mahāyāna revisionism and through cross-cultural reinterpretation (i.e., substitutions), shifting from dairy congee to mold-cultured congee and bean congee. Analyzing tenth-century citations on congee in the *Shishi liutie* 釋氏六帖, an extra-canonical Buddhist encyclopedia, and also referencing the *Foshuo shishi huo wufubao jing* 佛說食施獲五福報經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Five Advantageous Rewards Reaped from the Bestowal of Food), I attempt in this paper to offer the beginnings of a historically informed answer to a basic problem: Why would Buddhist authors celebrate some foods over others?

Keywords:

Religion and food, history of food in Buddhism, empirical knowledge in religion, congee (*zhou* 粥), *Foshuo shishi huo wufubao jing*

東亞佛教中崇尚粥糜的飲食文化

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摘要

研究中國佛教的學者已非常關注葷辛等禁食的食品，但是卻很少留心被推崇的食物。雖然戒禁對於區別群體身份的作用很重要，但是不應忽視對諸如粥等特定食物的推崇。在佛教的著述中，「粥」這一字眼已被納入中國佛教僧團的臨齋儀軌之中，並且與養生或果報有關。此類宣稱也很重要，因為它們為實踐提供規範依據。在時間上與地理上遠離的巴利文經典 *Yāgu Sutta*（粥經）和日本僧人無著道忠（1653–1744）的《禪林象器箋》都認同「粥」對佛教徒而言是有特殊意義的食物。然而，這種食物最著名的形式並沒有保持不變。紀念佛陀覺醒的粥的成分在經大乘教義的修正和跨文化的重新詮釋之後發生變化，從乳粥變為用菌類和豆類做的粥。透過分析十世紀的藏外類書《釋氏六帖》列舉的內容，同時參照《佛說食施獲五福報經》，本文試圖對一個基本問題率先提供歷史性解答：為何佛教著述家對某些食物特別推崇？

關鍵詞：

宗教與飲食、佛教飲食史、宗教經驗知識、粥、佛說食施獲五福報經

1. Introduction

Previous research on food in Chinese Buddhism¹ has tended to dwell on the food proscriptions that characterize Chinese Buddhist food practices, such as prohibition on the use of alcoholic beverages,² the adoption of a vegetarian diet,³ or the origins of a disdain for alliums.⁴ Research on tea in Chinese religious history⁵ has been the most notable exception to the general pattern of emphasis on food proscriptions as a topic for analysis. Nonetheless, premodern Buddhist authors had more to say about food than whether or not a substance should be considered taboo. Below, I investigate the Buddhist celebration of a particular food—congee (*zhou* 粥), which has a deeper history than tea and is cross-culturally important in the social history of Buddhist food and eating practices.

In Chinese Buddhism, no food has the same historical depth and centrality in Buddhist literature as congee. Congee is the poster child of Buddhist discourse on food. By “congee” I mean the Asian food category similar to the European “pottage”: a semi-liquid mush obtained by boiling grain (and sometimes legumes or other additions) in water or another liquid.⁶ In its basic

¹ While this research mostly concerns Chinese Buddhism, the celebration of congee can be traced from Indian Buddhism to Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, and probably to Buddhisms in other regions as well. Due to limits of space, I have not tried to extend this study to Korean Buddhism, though I suspect that Korean Buddhists have also expressed the celebration of congee in ways that are worthy of attention.

² Michihata, *Chūgoku bukkyō shi zenshū*, vol. 7, 379–542.

³ Prominent examples include Michihata, *Chūgoku bukkyō shi zenshū*, vol. 3, 458–516; Suwa, *Chūgoku chūsei bukkyōshi kenkyū*, 39–91; Mather, “The Bonze's Begging Bowl”; Kieschnick, “Buddhist Vegetarianism in China”; and Heirman and De Rauw, “Offenders, Sinners and Criminals.” This tendency to focus on proscriptions is a general characteristic of studies in religion and food. See for example Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, chap. 3; Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh*; Ulrich, “Food Fights”; and Company, “The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China.”

⁴ Suwa, *Chūgoku chūsei bukkyōshi kenkyū*, 183–98.

⁵ See for example Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui*, 368–435; Kieschnick, *Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 262–75; Benn, “Buddhism, Alcohol, and Tea in Medieval China” and *Tea in China*.

⁶ “Porridge,” the modern term for a pottage, might also serve well here if the practice behind this term had not narrowed into a mere oatmeal breakfast for much of the Anglophone world. “Congee” connotes a pottage made primarily with rice boiled in water, entering the English language via Tamil *kañji* (also

form, congee is a common food in many cultures, a starchy staple without much distinction, though it can be made fancy with the addition of savory or sweet ingredients. Easy to make, easy to digest, it is a food of the poor and the sick—and a favored food of Buddhists.

Congee, in its relatively plain forms, has held a special place among Buddhists since early times, but there is also a set of cultural practices that raise up congee to a new level of distinction in association with the festival commemorating the Buddha's awakening. One intriguing case of this commemorative congee involves *hongzao* 紅糟 (literally “red lees”), a potentially alcoholic fermented grain mash prepared from rice. In China from the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) to at least the Qing (1644–1912), there is evidence of monastic production and consumption of *hongzao* as a type of congee used to commemorate the Buddha's awakening. For example, in the Qing dynasty *Tian'an sheng chanshi yulu* 天岸昇禪師語錄 (Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Tianan Sheng) we observe the monk Bensheng 本昇 (1620–1673) composing or reciting the following verse:

Eating *hongzao* on the eighth of the twelfth month 臘八喫紅糟，
How grand is the mood of the monastery 叢林意氣豪！
Merrily stumbling in deep drunkenness 酣酣沉醉倒，
Much less leading to literary excellence 更不惹風騷。⁷

These verses seem to have been of interest to others in the Buddhist community, since they recur in a number of places.⁸ If they can be taken at

kañci). Several terms are used for similar foods in Chinese, but the most common is *zhou* 粥. The Song dynasty *Taiping yulan* clusters similar food terms in fascicle 859 (yinshibu 17): *mizhou* 糜粥, *gaozhou* 膏粥, *shen* 糝, etc. All these terms, Chinese and English, are applied to what amounts to a fuzzy category lacking clear definition. Congee, as I understand it here, is a soupy liquid with a suspension of starches cooked from grain (cereal). It may be thick or thin, may have other ingredients added or be plain, and may or may not contain salt. In contemporary China it is usually prepared plain and unsalted from rice, millet, or other grain and served with various flavorful condiments. For related English terms, see Davidson and Jaine, *Oxford Companion to Food*, 210, 625, 630.

⁷ Accessed via CBETA: J B187, 26, fascicle 10, in the paragraph between 703c14–704a05. A similar statement also appears in the second fascicle: J B187, 26, fascicle 2: 667a19–30.

⁸ They may not be original to Bensheng, and they may have a significance in Chan Buddhist rhetoric that is other than the surface meaning, but I will not pursue these issues. Our concern is with the cultural practice connecting the eating of *hongzao* with the festival commemorating the Buddha's awakening.

face value, they depict Chinese Buddhist monks getting drunk from eating an alcoholic mash on the day marking the Buddha's awakening. This would go against the major Buddhist precept of avoiding intoxicating substances! What is *hongzao*? Was it inebriating? How did tonsured Chinese Buddhists come to connect it with festivities in memory of the Buddha's awakening?

A coherent explanation to this historical puzzle can be obtained by reviewing the social history of Buddhist use of congee. I will argue that the specialness of congee occurs at three levels that are closely related in Buddhist discourse: (1) a general appreciation for congee as a physically beneficial foodstuff, (2) a heightened celebration that associates congee with the meal eaten by the Buddha before his awakening, and (3) a connection between congee and the moral benefits of food-offering practices. We will begin with the origins of a commemorative congee, explore how it was interpreted in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist communities, then turn to questions regarding general Buddhist appreciation of congee and whether any of these forms of celebration should be understood as fundamentally symbolic (and hence religious) in nature.

I will contend that we cannot draw a clean line between doctrinal (religious) knowledge and empirical forms of knowledge. This is exactly what a social constructivist framing of the specialness of food in religion tends to do: it shows how food in religion becomes a tool for constructing social identities by coordinating points in a symbolic system,⁹ but it stops short of accepting religious knowledge as encompassing empirical knowledge of the world. If Buddhists have treated congee as special merely for its historical role in the narrative of the Buddha's awakening, then the choice of congee is indeed arbitrary and is little more than a cultural detail. This is the view that appears to hold sway in academia today, but I think this view does not hold up to the historical evidence.

Consulting the topically-organized Buddhist encyclopedia *Shishi liutie* 釋氏六帖 (Six Books of Mr. Śākya),¹⁰ compiled by the monk Yichu 義楚 in tenth-century China, I found that Buddhist thinkers grounded their celebration of congee not just in the historical narrative, but in a working knowledge of congee as an actual food. The Buddhist celebration of congee is no accident of religious history. I would like to suggest that discussions of congee in Buddhist contexts provide evidence that Buddhist knowledge encompasses

⁹ Cf. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 36, 40, 46; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 2–3.

¹⁰ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 1–438.

forms of knowledge associated with empirical observation of physiological, medical, and nutritional concerns.¹¹ In my reading of the relevant material on congee, I find no justification for clearly demarcating properly religious and non-religious knowledge in these Buddhist writings. The relationship between these forms of knowledge was not dichotomous but interactive.

2. Congee in the narrative of the Buddha's awakening

The Buddhist celebration of congee is connected to the narrative of the Buddha's final awakening under a pipal tree at Bodhgaya, where he is said to have accepted an offering of milk congee from a young female villager named Sujātā.¹² Yichu cites the story of Sujātā's gift under the topic of food 食 in his *Shishi liutie*, where the narrative appears embellished with auspicious signs:

[53]¹³ **The Buddha eats milk congee.** The *Benxing jing*¹⁴ says, "The Buddha's six years [of ascetic practices] completed, upon the arrival of spring in the second month and on the sixteenth day he thought to himself, 'I need good food. After eating¹⁵ I will attain the fruit of awakening.' At the time there was a low-level god who informed the favorably-born second daughter of the village head, ordering her to make delicious food. The girl then took milk from a thousand cows, mixing it together. When she took milk and simmered

¹¹ C. Pierce Salguero has published thoughtful discussion on the processes of interpretation that Indian medicine underwent when transmitted to China. Because food and medicine are interrelated topics, Salguero's insights are relevant also to the case of transmitted food practices outlined in this paper. See especially *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*.

¹² In some accounts, Sujātā feeds the cows sweet herbs and then concentrates the milk by giving it to successively smaller groups of cows, milking these until she obtains the very richest milk possible, which she uses to cook the "milk-rice" offering. This embellished account suggests that her "milk-rice" may have been thicker than commonplace congee, and sweeter. Perhaps the author(s) of the account had in mind kheer, a sweet dish made from rice boiled in milk, what in North America might be called rice pudding.

¹³ I have numbered the entries falling under the topic of food (*shi* 食) to facilitate finding them in the appendix of my dissertation. For the original Chinese text, see Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 332b.

¹⁴ For this episode see the *Fo benxingji jing* T 190, 3: 771b02–772b16.

¹⁵ Reading 巳 as 已.

congee, the milk congee manifested a sign, leaping out of the pot by several *chi*, giving the appearance of [auspicious] *svastika* symbols. She offered it to him in a golden alms bowl; the Buddha ate and attained completion of the Way.”

佛食乳糜 《本行經》云：「佛六年既滿，至春二月十六日時，心自思惟：『我須好食，食已而證佛果。』時有天子，告善生村主二女，令作美食。女乃取千牛乳，互飲。取乳煮糜時，乳糜現相，踊出高數尺，現萬字德字相。金鉢獻之，佛食成道矣。」

Often embellished with other miraculous occurrences, this story has multiple versions,¹⁶ some ascribing the gift of congee not to Sujātā but to two sisters, Nandā and Nandabalā. Setting aside questions about the historicity of the story or its miracles, we can understand the tellers of these tales to be using miraculous signs to mark these events as having profound importance. As John Strong observes, the offering of milk congee marks the beginning of the process by which the Buddha achieves his awakening. The richly condensed milk congee is supposed to be an especially nutritious meal that will sustain him for the following forty-nine days, a liminal period in which he takes no more food as he transitions from a truth-seeker to a buddha, one who is fully awakened.¹⁷ Having abandoned aristocratic luxury to practice austerities as a mendicant, the Buddha-to-be takes this meal in transgression of ascetic principles, which he recognizes as a failed approach to achieving release from suffering. The meal of milk congee thus represents the beginnings of the Buddha’s Middle Way (中道), a moderate discipline that rejects the extremities of hedonism and asceticism.¹⁸

This narrative of the Buddha’s awakening frames the specialness of congee in the context of history. Buddhists in different parts of the world continue to make a special meal of congee to commemorate the Buddha’s final awakening.¹⁹ This suggests some parallels between Buddhist congee and the bread of the Christian Eucharist, but congee is not as clearly demarcated by sacred status.²⁰ Buddhist discourse on congee does not declare it to be the

¹⁶ Compare, for example, Mitchell, *Buddha*, 39–40; and Strong, *Experience of Buddhism*, 20–21.

¹⁷ Strong, *Buddha*, 69.

¹⁸ E.g. Mitchell (Donald), *Buddhism*, 17.

¹⁹ For one example, see Strong, *Buddha*, 69. Later in the paper I will discuss Chinese and Japanese examples.

²⁰ In drawing a comparison between the bread of the Christian Eucharist and Buddhist congee, we have to differentiate between a ritual or symbolic context

body of the Buddha and its commonality did not allow Buddhists to readily construct a cultural identity around the eating of congee. Its cross-cultural ubiquity allowed Buddhists no opportunity to claim a monopoly on this ancient food. While history and legend clearly contribute much to the Buddhist celebration of congee, Chinese Buddhists appear to have adopted it also on the basis of its intrinsic virtues, as I discuss later in this paper.

3. Commemorative congee

Though Buddhists have made congee a regular part of monastic life, there is also a special congee served—for the Buddhist holiday now called *fabaojie* 法寶節 or *fochengdao ri* 佛成道日—in the twelfth lunar month to commemorate the meal eaten by the Buddha just before his awakening under the pipal tree at Bodhgaya. In the cultural translations of this commemorative congee, we can glimpse yet another example of how the specialness of Buddhist congee remains grounded in practical knowledge rather than a dogmatism based on doctrinal precedent. In the Indian context this congee begins as a milk congee: rice and milk boiled down together into a richly nutritious food. In the legend of the Buddha's awakening, the milk congee is described as being especially concentrated—sixteen times reduced, according to some accounts.²¹ Having weakened his body through self-inflicted austerities, Gautama recognized the need to rebuild his strength, so he accepted the offering of this rich food. The specialness of this particular congee, then, is not just that it was made with milk rather than water, and not just that it was eaten by Gautama just before his final awakening. This congee is special because it is rich and nutritious, a small indulgence that marks the end of his period of extreme asceticism. I do not intend to argue anachronistically that ancient Indian and Chinese Buddhists had a nutritional science akin to that of our modern day, but I do wish to suggest that Buddhists have placed emphasis on the nourishing aspect of this particular congee.

and an ordinary context. Bread was a common food in Biblical times, just as congee was a common food in India and China. Nonetheless, parallels between the two break down on close scrutiny, because Buddhist statements on congee show more interest in its inherent qualities and only some interest in its symbolic meaning within Buddhist lore. I do not work out details of the comparison here, but merely provide it as a conceptual point of reference for understanding the significance of congee in the Buddhist context.

²¹ Strong, *Experience of Buddhism*, 20.

3.1 Milk, mold, and beans: making congee special in the right way

While Buddhist narratives describe Gautama's pre-awakening food as a rich milk-based congee, in parts of China milk products have not always been available—or even palatable—to some members of the saṅgha. The commemorative congee was given a new form in China and then further reinterpreted in Japan. This process of cultural reinterpretation led to some confusion regarding the ingredients in the commemorative congee.

For example, an English translation of the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*²² 勅修百丈清規 lists under the twelfth lunar month the following event: “Eighth Day: The Commemorative Day of the Buddha's Enlightenment. The administrative office beforehand prepares special rice gruel cooked with red beans.”²³ The Chinese text that the translator used for this translation is in fact much more terse: “Twelfth month. Eighth day. Buddha obtained the Way. The administrative office beforehand prepares *hongzao*.” 十二月 初八日 佛成道。庫司預造紅糟。²⁴

The term in question is *hongzao*, literally “red lees.” In modern usage this is rice fermented by addition of a starter culture known in English by the misinformed translation “red yeast rice,” an attempt to directly translate the name of its dried form, *hongqumi* 紅曲米 (紅麴米/紅麴米). *Qu* 曲/麴/麴 should be understood as a mold-based fermenting agent, not as yeast (*jiao* 酵), though in practice it was often contaminated with yeast.²⁵ *Hongzao* is the wet ferment made by cultivating a red mold called *Monascus purpureus*²⁶ on cooked rice, using a starter culture (the just-mentioned *hongqumi*). The mold breaks down the starches of the rice into simple sugars, which can be retained for sweetness or can be further fermented by yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* or a similar yeast) to create an alcoholic beverage. The process of using a mold to convert grain starches to simple sugars is the basis for much of the production of alcoholic beverages in Chinese history (and today), but

22 These are monastic regulations for the Chan school of Buddhism, compiled shortly after 1333 during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).

23 Ichimura, trans., *Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations*, 407.

24 *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*, T 2025, 48: 1155a24. The latter English translation is mine.

25 Huang and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 6, pt. 5, 154.

26 *Ibid.*, 280.

Monascus purpureus is not the only mold for the task and does not seem to be preferred for alcohol production.²⁷

Hongzao was used historically as a food additive for preserving meats and, at least since the Qing dynasty, has been used as a base to age fermented soy products.²⁸ For example, a deep red, savory condiment called [*nan*]*furu* [南]腐乳 is obtained by combining *hongzao* with fermented bean curd. *Furu* can be translated as “fermented milk,” or “milk obtained from fermentation,” or perhaps the term was formed in association with Chinese cheese, *rufu* 乳腐 or *rubing* 乳餅. Either way, *furu* was viewed as an analog for milk or its derivatives. There are regional variations and different names for similar products, one of which is *zaodoufu* 糟豆腐, or bean curd combined with *zao* 糟, lees from the fermenting process. I suspect that the appearance of *hongzao* in the Yuan monastic codes may have been for making *furu* or a similar condiment for congee, but the case is hard to support with evidence. It is clear that we are dealing here with a class of fermented products, which could be used to impart a rich, savory flavor to bland dishes such as congee.

How then did Ichimura, translator of the monastic codes just cited, interpret this as a special congee (“gruel”) cooked with red beans? An answer to this question can be found through consulting the Japanese Zen monk Mujaku Dōchū (1653–1744²⁹), who was a great scholar of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. In his encyclopedic *Zenrin shōkisen* 禪林象器箋 he takes up *hongzao* as a topic, citing the passage from the Yuan dynasty Baizhang monastic codes that we just encountered, above, and discussing preexisting commentary on its interpretation:

A commentator says that long ago, when the Buddha attained the Way, he followed a female herder, begging cow’s milk from her to drink. The *hongzao* of today is [used] to mimic the cow’s milk. It is not known what red product is added. *Hongzao* is also called *wenzao* (“warm ferment”).

解者曰：昔佛成道，隨牧牛女乞牛乳喫，今紅糟學牛乳者也，未知加何紅物矣。紅糟或作溫糟。

Dōchū says: Given that the Tang pronunciation for 紅 was [defined by the initial phoneme of] 俱 and [the vowel of] 牟, and the

²⁷ *Aspergillus* and *Rhizopus* species are more commonly employed in wine-making. See Huang and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 6, pt. 5, 167.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 202, 326–27.

²⁹ Some sources give 1745 as his year of death.

Japanese character 俱 was similar to 字 [in form], it was mistakenly defined as [a combination of] 字 and 牟, hence the mispronunciation [of 紅糟] as wenzao 溫糟.³⁰ Wenzao 溫糟 is a case of erroneous characters [produced on the basis of] erroneous pronunciation.

忠曰：按紅，唐音俱牟，而和字俱似字，故錯爲字牟，仍(乃)作溫糟。溫糟，訛音而訛字者。

Gidō [Shūshin 周信³¹] (1325–1388) writes in his [*Kūge*] *nikkushū*, “Regarding the eating of *hongzao* on the eighth day of the twelfth month, people ask about the originating circumstances of *hongzao*. I reply that the female herder offered milk congee to the World-Honored One and the *hongzao* of today is its legacy.”

義堂《日工集》云：「十二月八日喫紅糟，有人問紅糟緣起，余曰：牧牛女獻乳糜於世尊，今紅糟其遺意也。」

Dōchū says: *Hongzao* is none other than Five Flavor Congee eaten on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. The *Kagakushū* (a dictionary published in 1444) says, “Congee blended (*tiao* 調) with red (*hong* 紅) is the adzuki bean congee eaten on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month,” in which case the red (the *hong* in *hongzao*) is the color of red [adzuki] beans, but the *Kagakushū*’s giving *tiao* 調 for *zao* 糟 is an error. I furthermore maintain that when fruit products and different grains are mixed together to make congee, the white color of the rice is changed by these and is therefore called “red.”³² It is called *zao* (grain ferment) only because several flavors are combined.

忠曰：紅糟卽五味粥也，臘八噉之。《下學集》云：「紅調粥，正月十五日所食赤豆粥也。」然則紅是赤豆色，《下學》糟作

³⁰ Dōchū’s understanding of historical pronunciation does not appear to be supported by modern-day scholarship such as Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation*, 125, 162, 219, 323, and 382. Nonetheless, Ding Fubao’s dictionary also says that *wenzao* is an erroneous rendering of *hongzao*: 誤紅糟為溫糟.

³¹ See Mochizuki, *Bukkyō daijiten*, vol. 3, 2261.

³² Dōchū’s concern over the proper interpretation of the color red is culturally significant. In East Asia, the color red has long been associated with festivity. In Japan, glutinous rice steamed with adzuki beans (which are red) is a traditional festival food, so a congee made with adzuki beans must have seemed like a close analog. See Ishige, *History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 30.

調，訛矣。余又謂：果品、五穀雜和造粥，米白色爲之變，故言紅。數味相合，故言糟而已。³³

Dōchū comes to the conclusion that *hongzao* is a special congee cooked with adzuki beans, mixed grains, and fruit products (i.e., dried fruit). It seems that in Japan this interpretation held sway, as the technique of fermenting rice with *Monascus purpureus* does not appear to have been transmitted along with the terminology from China. Dōchū's conclusion on the identity of *hongzao* is not simply cultural ignorance. His Chinese sources discuss a congee popularly called *labazhou* 臘八粥, named after the Buddhist holiday on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month (臘月), and cooked from “beans, fruit, and mixed grains” 豆果雜米.³⁴ Dōchū was deeply interested in Buddhist congee, beginning his chapter on eating and drinking with first a general discussion of congee, then six other congee-related topics, before turning to other topics not directly associated with congee. In his survey of statements on Buddhist congee, he cites sources, such as the *Shiwen leiju* 事文類聚,³⁵ that equate *labazhou* with a “seven-treasure, five-flavor congee” (Ch. *qibao wuweizhou* 七寶五味粥):

Those in the south dedicate the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month for Buddha-washing [ceremonies]. In the Eastern Capital of the imperial court, on the eighth day of the twelfth month, all the great temples of the city hold gatherings for washing the Buddha and give out a congee of seven treasures and five flavors, calling it *labazhou*. 南方專用臘月八日灌佛。皇朝東京十二月初八日，都城諸大寺作浴佛會，并送七寶五味粥，謂之「臘八粥」。³⁶

The congee described in the thirteenth-century *Shiwen leiju* is made from a variety of ingredients (“seven treasures” 七寶) and is not specified as *hongzao*. A tradition of eating a “seven-treasure congee” (*qibaozhou* 七寶粥) is attested in various sources in late imperial China, such as Chen Jie's 陳堦

³³ This is from *Zenrin shōkisen*, found in FDJ: *Chan zang* 禪藏: *zaji bu* 雜集部, series 4, vol. 7, 1259–60. If using another edition, go to the first chapter on eating and drinking (Ch. *yindanlei shang* 飲啖類上).

³⁴ Dōchū cites Liu Tong's 劉侗 (*jinshi* 1634) *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略, a description of Ming-period Beijing. This citation comes right after the passages translated above: FDJ: *Chan zang*: *zaji bu*, series 4, vol. 7, 1260.

³⁵ A thirteenth-century Chinese encyclopedia. See Sakai, *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, 61–62.

³⁶ FDJ: *Chan zang*: *zaji bu*, series 4, vol. 7, 1258.

Rishe pian 日涉篇 from 1611, where the congee is described as containing milk, mushrooms, walnuts, and lily—and to alternatively be called salty congee, *xianzhou* 鹹粥.³⁷ While not well attested in formal Buddhist writings, *qibaozhou* does have some scattered mentions in the recorded-sayings (*yulu* 語錄) literature of Chan and Zen Buddhism. The various congees encountered in these sources—*labazhou*, *wuweizhou*, *qibaozhou*, and *xianzhou*—appear to be synonyms for a celebratory congee eaten on the eighth day of the twelfth month. In China, different terms came to be used for a general practice that had no doctrinally specified name or recipe.

The Japanese interpretation of this celebratory congee is consistent with this continental body of practice. Based on a broad survey of literary sources, Dōchū made a logical assessment on *hongzao*, returning attention to a vague but enduring Chinese Buddhist tradition. Nonetheless, Dōchū is still wrong to equate *hongzao* with this “five-flavor congee,” for at least two reasons. First, the statement in the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* says that the administrative office is to make the *hongzao* beforehand (預造紅糟). This indicates a fermented product that needs time to culture, not a motley mix of beans, grains, mushrooms, walnuts, and such—ingredients that could be made in several hours into a large vat of congee and distributed to a public crowd. Second, *hongzao* has a distinct cultural identity in China that is unambiguous. It was associated early on with the south of China, where rice was the staple food and basic material for fermenting alcohol, but it came to be widely known in China (even in the north) between the Song and the Yuan dynasties,³⁸ when the monastic codes encountered above (*Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*) were compiled.

3.2 Interpreting the presence of *hongzao* in the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*

Mention of *hongzao* in the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* is a rarity in Chinese Buddhist literature. A search of the Taishō canon of Buddhist texts, using the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, reveals only the one instance from the Yuan-period monastic codes. A more comprehensive search using the CBETA collection shows only a modest number of hits, all occurring in recorded-

³⁷ Accessed through Scripta Sinica, the citation is on p. 1406 of SXZH (*Suishu xisu ziliao huibian* 歲時習俗資料彙編). Or if using another edition of the *Rishe pian*, see fascicle 12, *shier yue er* 十二月二, *bari* 八日.

³⁸ Huang and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 6, pt. 5, 194.

sayings literature of late imperial China (and in Japanese Zen). This presents us with an interpretive dilemma. Was *hongzao* rarely discussed because no one had any issues with its mention in the codes, or perhaps because it was hardly known in practice outside of the south of China?

That earlier monastic codes and other sources are silent on *hongzao* is actually no surprise, because prior to the Yuan dynasty there was little knowledge and interest in the red ferment using *Monascus purpureus*, which was still a relatively new addition to mainstream Chinese food repertoires. Various Chinese Buddhist sources do, on the other hand, mention lees (*zao* or *jiuzao* 酒糟) more generally. There has long been a practice of using fermented grain, the byproduct of alcohol production, as a food ingredient,³⁹ but this food was generally forbidden to tonsured Buddhists by monastic codes and associated commentaries. Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), the influential Vinaya scholar-monk, wrote that “sweet-vinegar wines [i.e., crudely fermented alcoholic beverages] and the eating of the ferment culture or lees is to be considered *jiluo* 吉羅 [Skt. *krta*],” a misdemeanor.⁴⁰ Even drained of wine, the lees would have contained some alcohol (*jiuqi* 酒氣), and for some food preparations the wine might be left in the lees. Because the products of fermentation (*qu* and *zao*) have the potential to inebriate people, they are generally considered off limits to Buddhists, so we have reason to wonder by what logic the Yuan-period monastic codes justified the making of *hongzao* in a monastic context. As we saw, the Yuan statement on *hongzao* leaves much unsaid, but its being made in preparation for the day commemorating the Buddha’s awakening suggests that it was intended for use in a congee, or even as a congee.

If the Yuan codes did give official sanction to consumption of an alcoholic mash on this Buddhist holiday, we might ask whether the festivities ever became a euphoric ritual, a Dionysian⁴¹ celebration (like, say, Purim in Judaism) that permitted transgression of the precept against consuming alcohol for just one day each year. This seems unlikely. The recorded-sayings literature of Chan Buddhism is filled with metaphor, exaggeration, and didactic phrasing that cannot be taken at face value, so we should hesitate

³⁹ Its use as a preservative and flavoring for meat is attested from as early as the third and fourth centuries in China. Huang and Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 6, pt. 5, 408.

⁴⁰ In Daoxuan’s commentary on the *Sifen lü*: *Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔, T 1804, 40: 85b10–13.

⁴¹ In the sense discussed by Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 78–79.

before accepting Tianan Bensheng's verse (presented in the introduction) as factual representation of monastic practices. We still have little concrete information on how Buddhist monastics were actually using the *hongzao*, whether as an alcoholic mash, as a savory condiment made with fermented bean curd and stirred into congee, or as something else.

A clue to this puzzle can be found in the circumstances surrounding the compiling of the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*, properly titled the "Imperially-Commissioned Baizhang Rules of Purity." The Yuan imperial court commissioned this new edition of Chan Buddhist monastic codes in 1335, appointing Dongyang Dehui 東陽德輝 (fl. 1329–1335), who was then abbot of Baizhang si 百丈寺, a temple established by Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (720–814). Baizhang Huaihai is traditionally credited with having compiled an initial set of monastic codes⁴² for Chinese Chan monasteries, but his set of codes is said to have been lost by as early as the twelfth century.⁴³ A number of other codes were in use, but Dehui had aspirations to settle discrepancies between them by compiling a new set and having them circulated throughout the Yuan empire.⁴⁴ The Yuan court supported Dehui's project and promulgated the new codes in 1336. What is important for the present topic is that his temple, Baizhang si, is situated in the south of China, in what is now Fengxin County in Jiangxi Province. This southern location is close to the Min region, where production of *hongzao* and the alcoholic beverage produced from it, *hongjiu* 紅酒, were well attested from earlier times. Dehui states in his postscript to the codes that he did not make any modifications based on personal interpretation,⁴⁵ so it seems probable that *hongzao* entered the codes as a straightforward reflection of common practice in his area.

One explanation for how Buddhists of southern China could justify the use of lees, when the Chinese Buddhist literature generally proscribes its use by tonsured Buddhists, is that in the south of China *hongzao* was widely recognized as a foodstuff outside of the context of alcohol production. For example, the scholar of medicine Zhuang Chuo 莊綽, active around the end of

⁴² Retrospectively referred to as the *Baizhang gu qinggui* 百丈古清規. Modern scholars question whether Baizhang ever wrote such a set of rules. Existing historical evidence suggests that the narrative of his authorship of monastic codes was a product of later hagiography. See Foulk, "Chanyuan qinggui and Other 'Rules of Purity' in Chinese Buddhism," 280–83.

⁴³ Ichimura, *Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations*, xv.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

the Northern Song (roughly twelfth century), noted the culinary use of *hongzao* in the south when commenting on regional customs:

In Jiangnan and throughout the Min [region], publicly and privately people practice fermentation, always [for] a wine made with red ferment. In the autumn they eat their fill of *hongzao*. Vegetables, fish, and meat are harmoniously mixed in proportion and they then do not eat vinegar. In Xinzhou during the winter months, again, [the locals] sell the flesh of carp stewed in *hongzao*.

江南、閩中，公私醞釀，皆紅麴酒。至秋，盡食紅糟。蔬菜、魚肉，率以拌和，更不食醋。信州冬月，又以紅糟煮鮫鯉肉賣。⁴⁶

The popular use in the south of *hongzao* as a base for preserving foods during the colder months could have helped to override any Buddhist conservativeness on the question of whether or not the ferment was inebriating. In this form it was likely not inebriating, especially if the food thus preserved had to be cooked before serving. Used as a base for pickling vegetables, as we see in a collection of recipes from a Yuan-period householders' manual, the *Jujia biyong shilei quanji* 居家必用事類全集,⁴⁷ souring lees could hardly have called up images of drunkenness.

3.3 Lees as medicinal food

In addition to Buddhists justifying use of *hongzao* based on local practice and experience, they may have viewed it as medically efficacious, having a status somewhere between food and medicine. It is often commented that in China the boundaries between food and medicine were (and are) blurry. We see this in Li Shizhen's 李時珍 (1518–1593) influential medical compendium from the Ming dynasty, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, which regards lees favorably:

Wine-making lees are sweet, spicy, and without toxin. They heat the [body's] core and digest food, remove cold *qi*, rid [food of] animal stench, detoxify herbs and vegetables, moisturize the skin, and regulate the organs.

⁴⁶ From the *Jilei bian* 雞肋編, second fascicle, “Nüjiulangyi deng shusu” 女酒郎衣等殊俗, p. 118, accessed via Scripta Sinica. Zhuang Chuo's exact dates are not certain.

⁴⁷ Nakamura Takashi, trans., *Chūgoku no shokufu*, 9, 176–79.

酒糟 甘、辛，無毒。溫中消食，除冷氣，殺腥，去草
菜毒，潤皮膚，調臟腑。⁴⁸

This entry on lees suggests that at least by the Ming dynasty, people had enough experience eating lees to be aware of their medical benefits—or what we might consider their nutritional benefits.⁴⁹

Buddhist attitudes toward food have long favored a medical mode of eating, spurning eating that is indulgent. Even in the earlier Indian monastic codes, proscribed substances such as lees were allowed in true cases of medical need. In China, with its ingrained culture of fermentation (please excuse the pun), we can see a fairly relaxed attitude among some Buddhists regarding the major precept of avoiding inebriating substances. Even Daoxuan, writing in the seventh century, commented⁵⁰ that alcohol was sometimes permitted, given certain conditions:

If an illness is not cured by other medicine, one may use alcohol as medicine. If one uses it externally to rub onto a wound, in all such cases there is no infraction.

若病餘藥治不差，以酒爲藥；若用身外塗創，一切無犯。⁵¹

In the centuries intervening between Daoxuan's studious comments and the Yuan codes under discussion, Chan Buddhist revisionists reworked monastic codes to better adapt both teachings and practices to the times and local cultural conditions. If conservatives launched a protest on seeing *hongzao* used in the commemorative congee, this is not easy to see in extant records.

Furthermore, we still have questions regarding how the Chinese Buddhist community—within or without Chan sectarian institutions—responded to the appearance of wine-making lees in a set of monastic codes. Did northern Buddhists ignore *hongzao* and continue eating “seven treasure, five flavor congee” based on such foods as beans, grains, nuts, and dried fruits, or did *hongzao* spread northward after promulgation of the Yuan codes? We also

48 Accessed via Scripta Sinica: P 1569; *gu bu* 穀部 (grains), fascicle 25, *gu zhi si* 穀之四, “zaonianglei ershijiuzhong” 造釀類二十九種, *zao* 糟.

49 *Hongzao* is an ingredient in one of the prescriptions that follows Li Shizhen's entry on wine-making lees, but I do not see it assessed independently of other lees.

50 This is in the same discussion where he proscribed the eating of lees.

51 T 1804, 40: 85b16–18.

might ask whether these ingredients represent discrete regional versions of the celebratory congee, or were mutually compatible.

Despite these and other questions, we are dealing here with distinct examples for how to recreate the specialness of the original pre-enlightenment milk congee: on the one hand, a nutritious ferment (*hongzao*), and on the other a congee enriched with ingredients that could raise the nourishing quality of the congee well above that of plain rice (or millet) congee. For locations lacking access to fresh cow's milk, the nourishing quality of the congee had to be constructed by other means. East Asian Buddhists found creative ways of doing so. Fermented rice, nuts, fruits, and adzuki beans were the main ingredients that East Asian Buddhists used to enrich their congee and align it with the meanings of the Buddhist holiday.

The Buddhist celebration of congee is not limited to the commemorative version, and many aspects of this celebration are grounded in a general appreciation of congee as a foodstuff appropriate for the nutritional and moral needs of Buddhists. We turn now to the context beyond the commemorative congee: the place of congee in the everyday life of Buddhists.

4. Congee in Buddhist mealtime liturgy

Congee was for China a preexisting cultural form with proponents in the field of medicine. If so, was the influence on the East Asian cultural milieu of the *Buddhist* celebration of congee limited to the commemorative congee discussed above? There is evidence that Buddhist congee practices (coming from India) interacted with autochthonous Chinese medical discourses to impact East Asian Buddhism in other important ways. For example, Chinese Buddhist models led to the introduction to Japan of practices and beliefs regarding congee.⁵² Myōan Eisai 明菴榮西 (1141–1215), a Japanese Tendai (Ch. Tiantai 天台) monk who is credited with introducing Rinzaï (Ch. Linji 臨濟) Zen Buddhism to Japan, wrote in praise of mulberry congee in his treatise on the medical benefits of tea and mulberry, the *Kissa yōjōki* 喫茶養生記. And his contemporary, Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), who established Sōtō (Ch. Caodong 曹洞) Zen practices in Japan after visiting China, included in

⁵² This is not to say that Japan lacked its own congee practices before receiving Chinese cultural models through Buddhist knowledge dissemination. The ability to make congee probably traveled along with the immigrants who introduced rice to Japan beginning around the 3rd century BCE. See Ishige, *History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 17, 21–23, 28–29.

his monastic codes, the *Eihei shingi* 永平清規, a chapter titled “The method for attending breakfast and lunch” (*fu shuku han pō* 赴粥飯法), which uses “congee” as a metonym for breakfast and “rice” as a metonym for lunch. Such was the basic pattern of meals in East Asian monasteries following the continental (Chinese) model, a pattern that remains relevant today. Congee is not required for breakfast, but it is common enough to warrant a special verse in the mealtime liturgy.

In August of 2013 I had opportunity to share meals with the monastic community at Lingyin Temple 靈隱寺 in Hangzhou, a well-known Chan Buddhist monastery. The mealtime liturgy that the community chanted on mornings when congee was served (which was frequent) included a special line for the occasion: “Congee has ten benefits. It profits those on the path [i.e., Buddhist practitioners]. Its fruits of karmic results⁵³ are without limit, leading ultimately to permanent bliss.” 粥有十利，饒益行人。果報無邊，究竟常樂。⁵⁴

This strong praise for congee does not raise up congee as sacred, saying that it is a holy food only permitted in such and such an occasion. Rather, the praise posits benefits from congee and suggests that it is especially good for practitioners of the Buddhist path, helping to lead them to better karmic returns and finally to the bliss of nirvana. The ten benefits are not here spelled out, but I will show later that at least a portion of them reference physiological processes. The praise for congee contains both doctrinal and practical elements.

What, then, are the benefits of congee? The “ten benefits of congee” 粥有十利 is a common formula in Chinese Buddhism and in the Buddhism from other East Asian regions that borrowed from Chinese models. This customary formula appears in Yichu’s Buddhist encyclopedia, so let us next look at it there.

4.1 The ten benefits of congee in the *Shishi liutie*

Congee is the third topic of Yichu’s section on food in the *Shishi liutie*, coming after alcohol 酒 and food 食, but before rice 飯, soup 羹, and

⁵³ “Retribution” has a negative connotation—the nuance here should be neutral.

⁵⁴ Lingyin si, *Fojiao niansong ji*, 114. See also Yifa, *Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 125. Yifa’s translation of the *Chanyuan qinggui*, compiled in 1103, shows how the use of congee (“porridge”) and belief in its merits is a longstanding feature of Chan Buddhist monastic codes. She briefly discusses congee, pp. 58–59.

wheat-flour products 餅, among others. This prominent position is likely significant, showing a heightened status for congee. Yichu's citations on congee exhibit at least three major themes: an emphasis on the practical benefits of congee, a tradition of giving congee to the saṅgha, and the notion that congee is an ancient and respectable food.

I will take up first the practical benefits of congee, which Yichu presents through the formula just mentioned:

Congee has ten benefits. The *Sifen lü* says, “Giving congee to the saṅgha secures ten beneficial merits: (1) [healthful] appearance, (2) strength, (3) longevity, (4) joy, (5) eloquence, (6) removal of undigested foods and (7) of wind [pathologies⁵⁵], (8) [elimination of] hunger and (9) of thirst, and (10) [benefits to] digestion.”⁵⁶

粥有十利 《四分律》云：「施粥與僧，俱得十利功德：色、力、壽、樂、辭⁵⁷ 清辯、宿食風除、[除]飢渴、消。」⁵⁸

According to Yichu's citation, the benefits are obtained through karmic recompense from the act of giving congee to the Buddhist community, rather than directly from its ingestion. Still, the benefits appear to have been conceived as a listing of positive health outcomes noted by those with experience in eating congee, due to the inclusion in the list of physiological implications. Yichu's next entry on congee suggests that vinaya literature recognized physiological benefits as directly associated with the eating of congee:

There are eight types of congee. The *Shisong [lü]* lists [these]: (1) butter, (2) oil, (3) sesame, (4) milk, (5) small bean, (6) ground [bean] powder, (7) hemp seed, and (8) plain congee. [These] can have

⁵⁵ In this context, removal of wind (Skt. *vāta*) refers to a pathogenic factor thought to generate particular types of illnesses. See, e.g., Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine*, 80.

⁵⁶ See Furuyama, “‘Shukuyū jūri’ kō,” for a strong case in favor of the reading given here. A more logical placement of breaks, suggested in the *Shishi yaolan*, would divide *ciqing* and *bian* into two terms and place *xiao* as the verb for *jike*, but Furuyama shows that such a reading is not in accord with Pāli sources. Nonetheless, we might ask whether the “correct” reading is the one that accords best with early sources, or the one that most Chinese adopted as standard. Since Yichu did not supply punctuation or otherwise comment, we cannot know his preference for where to place the breaks.

⁵⁷ Variant 辭.

⁵⁸ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 332b.

five benefits: Elimination of hunger and thirst, calming [of temper or excitement], removal of chill, and [good] digestion of food.

粥有八種 《十誦》云：一蘇、二油、三胡麻、四乳、五小豆、六磨沙、七麻子、八清粥。能有五益：除飢渴、下氣、却冷、消食。⁵⁹

In this case, the *Shisong lü* frames these five benefits as directly following from the ingestion of congee.

4.2 Benefits of congee and the question of causation

The ten benefits of congee may have begun as a list of five. The Pāli canon contains a short statement on the benefits of congee: the *Yāgu Sutta*, in the Anguttara-Nikāya. As translated for the Pāli Text Society by E. M. Hare, the statement reads:

Monks, there are these five advantages from gruel. What five?
It checks hunger, keeps off thirst, regulates wind, cleanses the bladder,
and digests raw remnants of food.
Verily, monks, these are the five advantages of gruel.⁶⁰

This list of “advantages” has close parallels with Yichu’s list from the *Shisong lü* of five benefits, above, suggesting that Chinese Buddhist literature absorbed from Indic sources the notion of five physiological benefits, even if no “congee sūtra” (粥經) can be found translating the Pāli statement word for word. The third and fourth terms from Hare’s translation do not closely match the Chinese in Yichu’s list, producing a discrepancy of interpretation regarding the benefits of congee. I will not take time here to investigate this discrepancy, but we should note that the idea of five benefits following the eating of congee likely influenced the historical development of the formula of ten benefits.

My immediate concern here is to understand why the benefits are sometimes associated with the giving of congee and sometimes with its consumption. If only karmic benefits were recognized, then the specialness of

⁵⁹ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 332b. This cited content can be found in the *Shisong lü*: T 1435, 23: 188c14–21.

⁶⁰ Hare, *Book of the Gradual Sayings*, 183. Translation of the *Yāgu Sutta* is in vol.3 of Hare’s complete translation of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. It is contained in the Book of Fives, chapter 21 (“Kimbila”), topic #7 (#207 in the cumulative count for the Book of Fives).

congee would have to rest on a purely symbolic (doctrinal) foundation. Both the *Shisong lü* and the *Yāgu Sutta* list physiological benefits, which is significant. Since some statements allude to direct practical benefit, the Buddhist celebration of congee is not merely symbolic. Nonetheless, this discrepancy between moral causation through karma and direct physiological benefit needs historical clarification.

Furuyama Ken'itsu has published a detailed study on the ten benefits of congee, taking as his point of departure Sōtō-school founder Dōgen's interpretation of the list. Due to a lack of punctuation in most literary Chinese texts, these have retained an element of ambiguity regarding how to divide the ten terms. Furuyama's purpose is to clarify the parsing issue, but in the course of his study he cites passages in which congee is understood as benefiting the eater, rather than the donor. While my purpose diverges from his, his literature review can help us gauge the prevalence of karmic and physiological interpretations. For example, he cites Changlu Zongze's 長蘆宗蹟 (d. ca. 1107) influential set of monastic codes, the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery), which adds to the mealtime liturgy for congee (cited above) another phrase: "Congee is great medicine, capable of removing hunger and thirst, causing [people] to reap moral benefits [Skt. *śīla*] and together obtain the highest path..." 粥是大良藥，能除消飢渴，施受獲清涼，共成無上道.⁶¹ Zongze thus gives congee status as medicine, with benefits going to its eaters (understood here as members of the saṅgha).

Zongze's monastic codes represent one of the earlier adaptations of the vinaya teachings to local Chinese conditions, yet these Northern Song codes arrive on the scene only after many centuries of Chinese Buddhism.⁶² We have to look earlier if we hope to understand what sources may have influenced Chinese Buddhist statements on congee. A useful early source is the *Mohe sengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (Skt. *Mahāsāṃghika vinaya*, monastic codes of the Mahāsāṃghika school of Buddhism), translated to Chinese during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420):

...At that time the World-Honored One spoke a verse of invocation:
 "Received in two hands by pure people upholding the precepts,
 respectfully according with the time for congee to be given; ten
 benefits profit those on the path: [healthful] appearance, strength,

⁶¹ Furuyama, "Shukuyū jūri' kō," 167.

⁶² For an overview of the history of monastic codes in China, consult Yifa, *Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 3–98 (her introduction to the *Chanyuan qinggui*), and Heirman, "Vinaya: From India to China."

longevity, joy, eloquence, removal of undigested foods and of wind [pathologies], [elimination of] hunger and of thirst, and [benefits to] digestion.⁶³ These names are what was spoken by the Medicine Buddha (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru*). Those wanting to be born in the human and heavenly realms and obtain everlasting joy should give congee to the saṅgha.”

爾時世尊說偈呪願：「持戒清淨人所奉，恭敬隨時以粥施，十利饒益於行者，色力壽樂辭清辯，宿食風除飢渴消，是名為藥佛所說，欲生人天常受樂，應當以粥施衆僧。」⁶⁴

This passage clearly states that the ten benefits of congee profit practitioners themselves. Nonetheless, to say that Yichu’s citation on the ten benefits of congee mistakes karmic and physiological causality would be overly hasty, since the passage from the *Mahāsāṃghika vinaya* also indicates a reciprocal benefit associated with the gift of congee: The donor gains merit from the gift and may be born in heavens of everlasting joy. Two forms of causality are at play here: material and karmic. Yichu’s conflation of the two seems like a corruption, but there is still another explanation.

Let’s return to Furuyama, who in order to investigate the problem of how to parse congee’s ten benefits consults a Pāli edition of monastic codes, *Mahāvagga-pāḷi*, and provides a translation into Japanese, which I render here in English⁶⁵:

“...Oh, brahmins, these ten are the benefits of congee. What are the ten? One who gives congee gives long life; gives [good] appearance; gives ease; gives strength; and gives eloquence. One who drinks congee avoids starvation, removes thirst, adjusts the bodily winds, purifies the lower gut, and ripens (i.e., digests) any raw remaining [foods that sit undigested in the gut]. One who respectfully gives congee according to the [proper] time to those who out of self-control eat what is given by others (i.e., one who feeds congee to worldly renunciants) gives the basis for [all] ten: long life, [good] appearance, ease, and strength; furthermore, in this person eloquence arises, hunger and thirst are

⁶³ Following Furuyama, “‘Shukuyū jūri’ kō.” I have chosen not to add full punctuation to the verse, because the breaks remain an issue worthy of debate. I do not want to distract from my purpose here, which is to investigate whether sources connect physiological benefit with the eating of congee.

⁶⁴ T 1425, 22: 462c19–24.

⁶⁵ I am not qualified to translate from Pāli, but those who are may see the next note.

removed, bodily winds [are adjusted], the lower gut is purified, and food is ripened (digested). This is the medicine praised by Sugata (the Buddha). Accordingly, if people seek ease, they should regularly give gifts of congee...”⁶⁶

If Furuyama’s Japanese translation from Pāli is accurate, the source presents the causality of the ten benefits as simultaneously material and karmic. An initial set of five benefits is associated with giving—this is karmic causality. Then a second set of five benefits is associated with the drinking of congee—this is physiological causality. But then the two lists of five are brought together into a list of ten based on the logic of moral causation. Doctrinally, to give a material benefit is to set up oneself for a karmic return in kind, thus the person who gives congee “gives the basis for all ten.” To give congee to others is to obtain physiological benefits through the action of karma, the law of moral causation.

That congee is here invested with physiological benefits is further emphasized by its status as medicine. To call congee a medicine raises it above the status of basic food (tainted by the desires of appetite) to a special level of efficacy. Medicinal food not only satisfies appetites, but it heals problems in the body. Medicine is a necessity, in contrast with food’s potential for indulgent use—the two are distinguished by *need* versus *want*. The trope of medicine is widespread in Buddhist writings⁶⁷ and serves here to confer a positive valence to congee.

A last observation on this Pāli passage is that the intended audience appears to be the elite members of society who were in a position to patronize Buddhist renunciants. The passage addresses the brahmin (“brāhmaṇa”) *varna*, the priestly class of Indian society. This is significant for understanding the use of the doctrine of karma as a way to extend the benefits of congee from

⁶⁶ I provide here the relevant Pāli text, as cited by Furuyama (172), in case a reader wishes to check my English translation against the original: “...*dasayime, brāhmaṇa, ānisamsā yaguyā. katame dasa, yāguṃ dento āyuṃ deti, vaṇṇaṃ deti, sukhaṃ deti, balaṃ deti, paṭibhānaṃ deti, yāgu pītā khuddaṃ paṭihanati, pipāsaṃ vineti, vātaṃ anulometi, vatthiṃ sodheti, āmāvesesaṃ pāceti. ime kho, brāhmaṇa, dasānisamsā yāguyāti. / yo saññātānaṃ paradattabhojināṃ, kālena sakkacca dadāti yāguṃ. / dasassa ṭhānāni anuppavecchati, āyuñca vaṇṇaṃca sukhaṃ balañca. / paṭibhānamassa upajāyate tato, khuddaṃ pipāsañca byapaneti vātaṃ. / sodheti vatthiṃ pariṇāmeti bhattaṃ, bhesajjametaṃ sugatena vaṇṇitaṃ. / tasmā yāguṃ alameva dātuṃ, niccaṃ manussena sukhatthikena...*” Furuyama cites as source the *Mahāvagga-pāli*, 6th collected edition from Myanmar, 315–16.

⁶⁷ Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*, 1–2, 12, 67–95.

the eaters to the donors. Rather than simply asking donors to give congee to the saṅgha, Buddhist authors framed the transaction in terms of merit: By benefiting us with congee, you are benefitting yourselves. This is a much more sophisticated way to encourage the giving of congee. Because early Indian Buddhism was a religion of renunciation that relied on elite patrons for the feeding of the saṅgha, the Buddhist community could not directly act on food preferences. I believe that this social dynamic between the renunciant and lay Buddhist groups explains why some Buddhist authors do not directly list the benefits of congee in strictly material terms.

4.3 The *Wufubao jing* and moral causation

This strategy of encouraging the giving of food to the saṅgha by emphasizing karmic reward for donors is not limited to congee. In the Chinese Buddhist canon, the logic of this position is detailed in a short sūtra called the *Foshuo shishi huo wufubao jing* 佛說食施獲五福報經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Five Blessings Reaped from the Bestowal of Food, hereafter “*Wufubao jing*”).⁶⁸ Under the topic of food 食, Yichu cites this sūtra (and the *Abhidharma Storehouse Treatise*) as sources for the notion that five blessings are associated with food:

[31] **Food furnishes the five blessings.** The *Wufu[bao] jing* records [the following]: Obtain a marvelous and strong appearance, prosperity, joy, long life, [and] eloquence. The *Jushe [lun]*⁶⁹ also says, “Obtain a marvelous appearance, reputation, people’s admiration, a soft and flexible body, and be at all times in comfort [sukha-saṃsparśa].”

食施五福 《五福經》云：得妙強色、富、樂、壽命、詞辯。又

⁶⁸ This is T 132, 2: 854c05–855a11. Two editions have been entered into the Chinese canon, both coming from the Records of the Eastern Jin (東晉錄). I am using the first: 132A. The name of the translator has been lost. See my appendix for a full translation of 132A.

⁶⁹ From verse in the *Apidamo jushe lun*, T 1558, 29: 96b01–2:

財異由色等 得妙色好名
衆愛柔軟身 有隨時樂觸

This is in a discussion that appears to use theory of karma to address how differences in wealth or fortune arise. Was Yichu justified in interpreting these as benefits accruing to people who give food offerings to the saṅgha?

《俱舍》云：「得妙色、好名、衆愛、柔軟身、有隨⁷⁰時樂觸也。」⁷¹

The five blessings from the *Wufubao jing* match five of the ten benefits of congee, suggesting doctrinal overlap.

Yichu does not clarify whether these blessings are obtained physiologically or through karmic causation, but the *Wufubao jing* speaks of these two modes of causation as intimately connected and places greater emphasis on moral causation. This relationship becomes clear only when the opening to the sūtra and the discussion of individual blessings are considered together. I include here a translation of the first blessing to illustrate integration of the two modes of moral causality in the giving of food⁷²:

Thus have I heard: At one time, the Buddha was at [the park] Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍada-ārāma in Śrāvastī. The Buddha addressed the monks, “When you know to eat in moderation, you can receive [food] without harm.” The Buddha said, “When people take rice food and offer it to [other] people, there are five advantageous virtues that [help] people attain the Way. If the wise settle into a broadminded view, then they will reap the five blessings. What are the five? The first is the bestowal of life, the second is the bestowal of [good] appearance, the third is the bestowal of strength, the fourth is the bestowal of ease, and the fifth is the bestowal of wit.”

聞如是：一時，佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。佛告諸比丘：「當知食以節度，受而不損。」佛言：「人持飯食施人，有五福德，令人得道，智者消息，意度弘廓，則獲五福。何等為五？一曰施命，二曰施色，三曰施力，四曰施安，五曰施辯。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of life? When people do not obtain food, their facial complexion is wan and sallow and [their vitality] cannot be vividly manifested. Before the passage of seven days their lives abruptly end. Because of this, the wise bestow food, and this bestowal of food in turn bestows life. This bestowal of life [allows them], in life after life, good longevity and birth into heavens or

⁷⁰ The character is cramped down against the bottom border line and unclear. The edition in *Foxue cishu jicheng*, edited by Fanchi jushi, gives 隨, which can be inferred as correct based on the text of the *Apidamo jushe lun*, cited in the previous note.

⁷¹ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 331b.

⁷² See Appendix B for my full translation of the *Wufubao jing*.

human society (i.e., favorable rebirth); their lifespan extends, they do not suffer early death, they naturally receive advantageous rewards, and their riches are without measure. This is the ‘bestowal of life.’”

「何謂施命？人不得食時，顏色憔悴，不可顯示，不過七日，奄忽壽終。是故，智者則為施食，其施食者則為施命；其施命者，世世長壽，生天世間；壽命延長，而不夭傷，自然福報，財富無量，是為施命。」

Discussion of the latter four blessings follows a similar pattern, recognizing the physiological benefits of food, but proposing moral causation as the more desirable point of intervention. The wise bestow food to others in order to bestow the five blessings, so that they may experience a benefit in kind—if not in this life, at least in lives to come. This long view of the transmigration of beings from life to life is a great concern in Buddhism, so there should be no surprise that moral causation receives here greater emphasis than physiological benefit. Nonetheless, we must note that without the observation of physiological benefit, all discussion of the blessings obtained from giving food would be illogical. Belief in the physiological benefits of food is a necessary condition for the doctrine of the five blessings obtained from food donations.

To summarize, it seems that the list of ten benefits from congee resulted from the amalgamation of two traditions. The list of five blessings such as we see in the *Wufubao jing* was understood as karmic recompense for food donations to the saṅgha, in contrast with the list of direct physiological benefits contained in the *Yāgu Sutta*. Because congee was closely associated with food donation, the two lists were brought together to form a list of ten benefits, creating ambiguity on the question of causality.

4.4 Chinese Buddhist institutions and food donations

In Yichu’s Chinese context, the begging practices of early Indian Buddhism (a religion of renunciation and mendicants) never took firm hold, and Buddhists came to rely on communal meals in monastic mess halls.⁷³ Because donated foods could be stored in monastic kitchens until needed, Chinese Buddhists had more control over their diet and had less need to appeal to their patrons for gifts of preferred foods, such as congee. They could make their own congee from the grain they received. They had less reason to persuade donors

⁷³ Mather, “Bonze’s Begging Bowl,” 418.

that gifts of congee—rather than uncooked rice—would benefit them through moral causation.

Nonetheless, the same doctrinal logic of the moral causality of food gifts remained relevant in Chinese Buddhism. Yichu’s overview of congee includes the following:

First with Viśākhā. The *Sengqi lü* (*Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya*) says, “When Mother Viśākhā had attained sagehood, she was replete with meritorious virtues and was first to provide breakfast congee for the saṅgha.”

初毗舍伽 《僧祇律》云：「毗舍伽母已得聖果，具大福德，始為僧置開齋粥。」⁷⁴

This citation suggests that the giving of congee to the saṅgha is a tradition founded on virtue and superior merit—a position that surely helped donors to feel even better about the generous act of giving food to the saṅgha. The message that faithful lay Buddhists could attain great merit helps frame congee as a food of mutual benefit for the clergy and laity alike.

Yichu thus perpetuated through his Buddhist encyclopedia the call for donations of congee (or rice for congee) to the saṅgha. Institutional changes in eating practice did not change the role of congee as an ideal form of gifted food. Another of Yichu’s citations on congee also frames it as a food to offer the saṅgha:

Six kinds [of ingredient] made into congee. The *Wufen* [*lü*] says, “There was a brahmin whose cart was loaded with offerings. Following the Buddha, he wanted to make offerings to the Buddha and saṅgha, but because of the prior invitations of various kings, great ministers, and elders, he was unable to obtain precedence. ...The Buddha ... had them cook congee and give it to the saṅgha as a donated breakfast and lunch. The elder took butter, milk, oil, curds, fish, and meat and cooked them at one time into congee, presented it to the Buddha and returned home.”

六種為粥 《五分》云：「有婆羅門車載供物，隨佛，欲供養佛及僧眾，被諸王、大臣、長者先請，不得次第。……佛……令將

⁷⁴ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 332b.

煮粥與僧，開齋福與齋等。長者將蘇、乳、油、酪、魚、肉一時煮粥，施佛而歸。」⁷⁵

This narrative shows people on different tiers of elite society taking turns to present their food offerings to the saṅgha. Viewed this way, the giving of congee is hardly about filling basic needs but is more centrally focused on merit building. If the congee provided by even this socially outcompeted brahmin was so richly composed of dairy, fish, and meat, then what of the meals offered by kings? By Yichu's time, the tenth century, Chinese Buddhists had largely adopted vegetarianism as a monastic norm, so this narrative must have struck Yichu's contemporary readers as luxurious feasting.

Even if ideas such as attitudes toward eating meat were revised by Chinese Buddhist authors, the accretionary nature of Buddhist teachings has meant that old ideas remained part of the intellectual milieu, even as new ideas emerged on the scene. In Chinese Buddhism, congee has remained a trope for prosocial caring grounded in the longstanding relationship between lay supporters and a dependent saṅgha. The ambiguity over whether congee (or other foods) held benefits for donors or for eaters among the saṅgha may have been, for scholars such as Yichu, a moot point. Due to karma, both parties benefit from gifted food. The claim that congee is good food with physiological benefits appears to be accepted in either case, and we can see that this claim is intimately connected with the longstanding practice of giving congee to the saṅgha.

4.5 Congee as an ancient Chinese food

Finally, it is time to turn to the last major theme of Yichu's citations on congee: the idea that congee is a time-honored food. There is no shortage of evidence that even basic congee was important in both the history of Buddhism and in the food practices of rice-growing cultures in Asia.⁷⁶ Congee was ubiquitous.

Yichu's *Shishi liutie* is Buddhist in the sense that it is a presentation of teachings of the "Śākya clan," or of "Mr. Śākya." The title of his encyclopedia

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ishige, *History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 17–32, discusses congee as one of the methods for cooking rice that was likely available wherever rice was introduced, even if it was not always preferred over other methods such as steaming. Ishige observes that congee has often served as a customary breakfast in parts of China, Korea, and Japan, especially for non-laboring urbanites who do not need the extra calories of steamed rice. This observation might also apply to the majority of Buddhist monastics, who as non-laboring ritual specialists could afford to forgo a more calorie-dense breakfast.

refers to the Buddhist community of monks and nuns, the saṅgha. Those who in China leave home for the Buddhist path adopt the surname Shi 釋, abbreviated from Shijia 釋迦 (Śākya), and are thus considered members of the clan of the Buddha 釋氏.⁷⁷ Yichu's choice, then, to cite a statement on congee from the Book of Zhou stands out as a departure from the Buddhist literature that makes up the majority of his citations:

Zhanzhou mizhou (congee). The *Zhoushu* says, “The Yellow Emperor first cooked grain to make congee. Zhou 鬻 [means] congee, and also to trade goods. Zhan 饘 is thick congee. Adding ‘mi’ [to form the term *mizhou*] is redundant.”

饘粥麩鬻 《周書》曰：「黃帝始烹⁷⁸ 穀爲粥。鬻，即粥也，又貨易。饘，即厚粥也。麩加之餘也。」⁷⁹

The passage presents a Chinese mythological belief that the Yellow Emperor originated the practice of making congee. Yichu's inclusion of this passage in his brief overview of Buddhist ideas about congee seems calculated, but toward what end? Perhaps the assumption that congee is a native Chinese food was so strong in his day that he felt compelled to forestall potential objections from his Chinese readers encountering the notion that congee was also attested in Indian Buddhist narratives. I think it is more likely, however, that this recognition was meant to help the status of Buddhism in Chinese society by showing that a preferred food of Buddhists is none other than the familiar congee known in China since prehistory. Yichu makes no effort to say that Buddhist congee is special, that it is made differently from the Chinese version, that it distinguishes Buddhists from non-Buddhists in China. Quite to the contrary, he seems to be saying that Buddhist congee is just congee, a food celebrated in both India and China.

As this passage demonstrates, congee is by no means only a monastic food in China. Taiwanese scholar Chen Yuanpeng published a history of congee in China that says nothing of Buddhist congee.⁸⁰ Congee figures prominently in the history of medicine in China and in Chinese cultural history, becoming

⁷⁷ A practice that originated with Daoan 道安 (312–385), a Chinese scholar and innovator of Buddhism in the early, formative period of its introduction to China. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, 100.

⁷⁸ Variant or damaged character. I do not find an exact match in DCCV, but the extant form of the character and the context point toward *peng* 烹.

⁷⁹ Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan* 6:2, 332b.

⁸⁰ Chen, *Zhou de lishi*.

especially popular as a healthful food from the Song dynasty (960–1279) onward.⁸¹ Chen observes that congee was celebrated in medical literature before the Song, but because of the relatively late rise in its widespread popularity, it seems probable that Buddhists could have had a role in boosting awareness of congee, much as they did with tea.⁸² In any case, both Buddhist and Chinese medical sources are in agreement that congee has inherent merits. At the time that Yichu wrote his Buddhist encyclopedia, congee would have been just on the cusp of a broad popularization, if Chen's assessment is correct.⁸³

Congee is not culturally specific to Chinese Buddhists and is not an exotic product imported with Indian Buddhism. It is commonplace, especially in rice-producing cultures. It garners celebration through historical, doctrinal, and ritual contexts—that is, through its modes of use by Buddhists—but it is also recognized as having intrinsic, tangible benefits. Buddhist notions of the specialness of congee are grounded in a belief in its inherent worth.

5. Conclusions

The Chinese Buddhist celebration of congee is grounded not just in symbolism, but also in knowledge of physiological responses to food. Buddhist authors have long been interested in the intrinsic properties of congee, in addition to any symbolic meanings derived from narratives of the historical Buddha's awakening. This interest in physiological outcomes on the part of Chinese Buddhists calls into question a common distinction in Western academic research of religion: that between knowledge based on socially-constructed symbolic patterns and knowledge that pertains to natural phenomena of our

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸² Kieschnick, *Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 262–75.

⁸³ Chen's slim history of congee provides a useful outline, but lacunae such as Buddhist congee suggest that it is not an authoritative history. Furthermore, if Chen is judging popularity on the basis of congee appearing in literati writings, we might question whether earlier use may have been widespread but not discussed. The transition from Tang to Song ushered in new standards for what literati could write. Improvements in woodblock print technology at the time of this transition also helped broaden the scope of what could be published, leading to a proliferation of recorded knowledge on many aspects of life, including food. The proliferation of texts in the Song gives the impression that many things did not become popular until this time, but it may just be that literati were not writing about them until the Song.

world. In a nutshell, this distinction reflects the enduring belief in an epistemological divide between “science” and “religion.” When analyzing the cultural and intellectual history of food in Chinese Buddhism, we must be careful to avoid projecting this cherished distinction into a historical context where symbolic and empirical forms of knowledge intertwined.

Indic Buddhist sources very early secured a celebrated place for congee in the Buddhist community. Apart from the narrative of the Buddha’s having eaten a milk congee just before attaining awakening while seated under the Bodhi tree, we have sources that proclaim congee to be beneficial on its own terms. The *Yāgu Sutta* in the Pāli canon posits a set of five physiological benefits from eating congee. A list of ten benefits from congee becomes a common formula in Chinese Buddhism, combining five benefits from the *Yāgu Sutta* with another set of five benefits discussed in the Buddha’s exhortation to charitable giving, the *Wufubao jing* in the Chinese canon. The amalgamation of these two lists of five into a larger list of ten benefits creates ambiguity on the question of the causality behind each benefit, but this process is readily explained as an outcome of the strong association of congee with food offerings given to the saṅgha. The law of moral causality, karma, blurs the distinction between direct physiological benefit and benefits gained as a return on charitable action, but in either case congee is associated with benefits that highlight desirable physiological states.

Seeking a place for congee in practice, Buddhists interpreted and adapted knowledge of congee to local conditions, shaping the celebration of congee in interaction with Indian, Chinese, and Japanese knowledge of food. The conspicuous absence of doctrinal specificity on how to make an orthodox Buddhist congee suggests that there was no such orthodoxy. The tenth-century Chinese monk Yichu cites records of congee eaten by the Buddha’s direct community of followers that contained such ingredients as milk, butter, meat, and fish. Here and in the narratives of Sujātā’s offering of a milk congee to the Buddha-to-be, congee serves as a modest vehicle for the rich offerings of lay supporters.

In China, Mahāyāna teachings and local pressures shifted monastic diets toward vegetarianism. Although Chinese Buddhists revere congee as the food eaten by the Buddha just before his full awakening, plain congee was in itself not special enough to serve as the commemorative congee. The Chinese congee for commemorating the Buddha’s awakening came to be enriched sometimes with milk products (milk and butter), but especially with plant products such as sesame, beans, mushrooms, walnuts, dried fruits, lily—and, it would seem, the crimson mold-cultured ferment *hongzao*, a sweet grain mash

with potential to turn alcoholic if contaminated with yeast. After monastic preparation of *hongzao* was officially sanctioned in the fourteenth-century *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*, Chinese monks and nuns consuming it on the eighth day of the twelfth month may in some years, and in some temples, have found themselves “merrily stumbling in deep drunkenness” 酣酣沉醉倒. More commonly, however, *hongzao* was likely prepared as a non-alcoholic flavoring agent for plain congee. The cultural context of this southern regional food suggests that *hongzao*, nutritious and rich in flavor, served as an analog for milk products. Dairying was not common in the food practices of southern China, but monastic Buddhists needed something to distinguish the commemorative congee from that served for breakfast throughout the year.

Several centuries after *hongzao* entered Yuan-period monastic codes in China, the Japanese-Buddhist encyclopedist Mujaku Dōchū interpreted this commemorative congee as taking on a red color from the addition of adzuki beans combined with other grains, revealing a point of confusion over the plurality of solutions for making this congee special. The Buddhist commemorative congee, while interpreted differently across time and cultural geography and lacking a singular appellation, has maintained a thread of coherence around the notion that it represents a modestly rich food with good ability to nourish. Buddhist commemorative congee is not made special by its ritual context alone, but through recipes that reproduce analogs of Sujātā’s nourishing milk congee.

Buddhist commemorative congee is, in the traditions outlined here, not made special in an arbitrary, symbolic way, but rather in a provisional way grounded in knowledge of the physiological outcomes of different foods.

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- Mahāvagga-pāli*, (The Great Section [of the Pāli Vinaya]). <http://tipitaka.sutta.org/canon/vinaya/mahāvagga>.

⁸⁴ For English translations of titles, I follow those given in Muller, *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, unless there is a no title given or I have a difference of opinion. For the sake of improving consistency across Buddhist Studies, I have chosen not to treat titles as subject to intellectual property rights.

Mishasaibu hexi wufen lü 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (Vinaya of the Mahīśāsaka School). Brought in 413 to China by Faxian 法顯 (ca. 320–420); transl. ca. 423–434 by Buddhajīva 佛陀什 (fl. 423–424) and Daosheng 道生 (355–434). T 1421, 22.

Mohe sengqi lü 摩訶僧祇律 (Skt. Mahāsāṃghika vinaya; Monastic Codes of the Mahāsāṃghika School of Buddhism). Trans. in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) by Buddhahadra 佛陀跋陀羅 (359–429) and Faxian 法顯 (ca. 337–422). T 1425, 22.

Rishe pian 日涉篇 / *Rishe bian* 日涉編 (Book of the Wading Sun). 1611, Chen Jie 陳階 (fl. 1611). Scripta Sinica.

Sengqi lü 僧祇律. See *Mohe sengqi lü*.

Shishi liutie 釋氏六帖 (Six Books of Mr. Śākya). 954 CE., Yichu 義楚 (fl. 945–954). Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku tenseki sōkan*, Dai 6, vol. 2, 1–438.

Shisong lü 十誦律 (Ten Recitations Vinaya). Trans. by Puṇyatāra 弗若多羅 (ca. 4–5th c.) and Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413). T 1435, 23.

Shiwen leiju 事文類聚 (Citations on Matters in Topical Arrangement). Preface to Zhu Mu's initial compilation dated 1246, Zhu Mu 祝穆 (?–1255); Yuan dynasty supplementation by Fu Dayong 富大用 (d.u.) and Zhu Yuan 祝淵 (d.u.). Included in *Siku quanshu*, e.g. *Wenjin'ge siku quanshu, zibu* 子部, *leishu lei* 類書類, Vols. 307–8 of the 2005 edition by Shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館.

Sifen lü shanfan buque xingshi chao 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔 (Summary of the Four-Part Vinaya Eliminating Repetition and Augmenting Overlooked Services). Composed ca. 626–630, Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667). T 1804, 40.

Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (Imperial Readings from the Great Peace). Completed in 984 by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al.

Tian'an sheng chanshi yulu 天岸昇禪師語錄 (Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Tianan [Ben]Sheng). Recorded by Shengyue 昇說 (ca.17th c.) and Yuanyu 元玉 (ca.17th c.). J B187, 26.

Wufen lü 五分律. See *Mishasaibu hexi wufen lü*.

Wufubao jing 五福報經. See *Foshuo shishi huo wufubao jing*.

Yāgu Sutta (Congee Sūtra). See Hare, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, vol. 3, p. 183.

Zenrin shōkisen 禪林象器箋 (Encyclopedia on Zen Monasticism). Published 1741. Mujaku Dōchū 無着道忠 (1653–1744). *Foguang dazang jing* edition (See *Foguang dazang jing bianxiu weiyuanhui*): Chan zang 禪藏: zaji bu 雜集部; series 4, vols. 5–7.

Zhoushu 周書 (Book of Zhou). 636 CE, Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (582–666).

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Appendices

Appendix A

The following is a translation of Congee 粥, third topic in the 37th section on food themes in Yichu's *Shishi liutie*.⁸⁵

[37.]3 Congee 粥三

Congee has ten benefits. 粥有十利

The *Sifen lü* says, “Giving congee to the saṅgha secures ten beneficial merits: [healthful] appearance, strength, longevity, joy, eloquence, removal of undigested foods and of wind [pathologies], [elimination of] hunger and of thirst, and [benefits to] digestion.”⁸⁶

《四分律》云：「施粥與僧，俱得十利功德：色、力、壽、樂、辭⁸⁷ 清辯、宿食風除、[除]飢渴、消。」

There are eight types of congee. 粥有八種

The *Shisong*⁸⁸ lists [these types]: (1) butter, (2) oil, (3) sesame, (4) milk, (5) small bean, (6) ground [bean] powder, (7) hemp seed, and (8) plain congee. [These] can have five benefits: Elimination of hunger and thirst, calming [of temper or excitement], removal of chill, and [good] digestion of food.

《十誦》云：一蘇、二油、三胡麻、四乳、五小豆、六磨沙、七麻子、八清粥。能有五益：除飢渴、下氣、却冷、消食。

Six kinds [of ingredient] made into congee. 六種爲粥

The *Wufen [lü]*⁸⁹ says, “There was a brahmin whose cart was loaded with offerings. Following the Buddha, he wanted to make offerings to the Buddha

⁸⁵ The following text on congee is from Yanagida and Shiina, *Zengaku Tenseki Sōkan* 6:2, 332.

⁸⁶ See Furuyama, “‘Shukuyū jūri’ kō,” for a case in favor of the reading given here. See my discussion of Furuyama in the body of my paper for further notes.

⁸⁷ Variant 辭.

⁸⁸ *Shisong lü*: T 23, 1435: 188c14–21.

⁸⁹ A similar narrative can be found in the *Wufen lü* at T 22, 1421: 54c06–19.

於是世尊，進至安那頻頭邑。時有大婆羅門，名曰「沙門」，以五百乘車重

and saṅgha, but because of the prior invitations of various kings, great ministers, and elders, he was unable to obtain precedence. An elder said [on his behalf], ‘My lay disciple also has domestic obligations.’ He [the disciple] said to the Buddha, ‘I would like to scatter the offerings. Wherever the Buddha will go, I hope the Buddha will tread on [the offerings], in order to express my intention.’ The Buddha said no and had them cook congee and give it to the saṅgha as a donated breakfast and lunch. The elder took the butter, milk, oil, curd, fish, and meat and cooked them at one time into congee, presented it to the Buddha, and returned home.”

《五分》云：「有婆羅門車載供物，隨佛，欲供養佛及僧衆，被諸王、大臣、長者先請，不得次第。長者曰：『我俗弟子亦有家務。』白佛：『欲散供物。佛行處，願佛履踐，表我心故。』佛言不得，令將煮粥與僧，開齋福與齋等。長者將蘇、乳、油、酪、魚、肉一時煮粥，施佛而歸。」

First with Viśākhā. 初毗舍伽

The *Sengqi lü* [*Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya*] says, “Not until Mother Viśākhā had attained sagehood and was replete with meritorious virtues did she start to provide breakfast congee for the saṅgha.”

《僧祇律》云：「毗舍伽母⁹⁰ 已⁹¹ 得聖果，具大福德，始爲僧置開齋粥。」

Zhanzhou mizhou (congee). 饘粥糜鬻

The *Zhoushu* says, “The Yellow Emperor first cooked grain to make congee. *Zhou* 鬻 [means] congee, and also to trade goods. *Zhan* 饘 is thick congee. Adding ‘*mi*’ [to form the term *mizhou*] is redundant.”

載飲食逐佛。五月餘日，求次設供，竟未能得。其家迫言：「農時欲過，可還附業。」時婆羅門到阿難所，語阿難言：「我五百乘車載諸飲食，欲供佛及僧。逐佛已來，五月餘日，猶未得設。家信見迫，不得復住。欲以食具，散布道中，令佛及僧，踏上而過。於我宿心，便爲得遂。」阿難答言：「當白世尊！」即以白佛。佛語阿難：「汝可將婆羅門看供食家。若有所無，教令作之。」阿難受教。將婆羅門看供食家，見無有粥，及油蜜煎餅。彼便作七種粥、二種餅。晨朝白佛：「餅粥已辦。」佛語阿難：「汝助下之。」阿難受教，助下粥餅。

⁹⁰ This seems to be an alternative rendering of Pisheqiamu 毘舍伽母 (Viśākhā 毘舍伽, also 鹿子母 or 鹿母), later called Mṛgāra-mātṛ after her husband’s name. She was a wealthy patron of the Buddha who with her husband provided a retreat center (*vihāra*).

⁹¹ Reading 已.

《周書》曰：「黃帝始烹⁹² 穀爲粥。鬻，即粥也，又貨易。饘，即厚粥也。麩加之餘也。」

Appendix B

Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Five Blessings Reaped from the Bestowal of Food

佛說食施獲五福報經⁹³

Name of translator lost.

It is now attached to (included in) the Records of the Eastern Jin
失譯人名，今附《東晉錄》

Thus have I heard:
聞如是：

At one time, the Buddha was at [the park] Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍada-ārāma in Śrāvastī. The Buddha addressed the monks, “When you know to eat in moderation, you can receive [food] without harm.” The Buddha said, “When people take rice food and offer it to [other] people, there are five advantageous virtues that make (i.e., help) people attain the Way. If the wise settle into a broadminded view, then they will reap the five blessings. What are the five? The first is the bestowal of life, the second is the bestowal of [good] appearance, the third is the bestowal of strength, the fourth is the bestowal of ease, and the fifth is the bestowal of wit.”

一時，佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。佛告諸比丘：「當知食以節度，受而不損。」佛言：「人持飯食施人，有五福德，令人得道，智者消息，意度弘廓，則獲五福。何等為五？一曰施命，二曰施色，三曰施力，四曰施安，五曰施辯。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of life? When people do not obtain food, their facial complexion is wan and sallow and [their vitality] cannot be vividly manifested. Before the passage of seven days their lives abruptly end. Because of this, the wise bestow food, and this bestowal of food in turn bestows life. This bestowal of life [allows them], in life after life, good longevity and birth into heavens or human society (i.e., favorable birth); their lifespan extends, they do not suffer early death, they naturally receive advantageous rewards,

⁹² Variant or damaged character. I do not find an exact match in DCCV, but the extant form of the character and the context point toward *peng* 烹.

⁹³ T 2, 132a.

and their riches are without measure. This is the ‘bestowal of life.’”

「何謂施命？人不得食時，顏色憔悴，不可顯示，不過七日，奄忽壽終。是故，智者則為施食，其施食者則為施命；其施命者，世世長壽，生天世間；壽命延長，而不夭傷，自然福報，財富無量，是為施命。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of appearance? When people do not obtain food, their facial complexion is wan and sallow and [their vitality] cannot be vividly manifested. For this reason the wise do a bestowal of food, this bestowal of food in turn bestowing [good] appearance. This bestowal of appearance [allows them], in life after life to be handsome, to be born into the heavens or human society, their faces shining and beautiful, such that people who see them feel fondness, kowtowing and being courteous. This is the ‘bestowal of appearance.’”

「何謂施色？人不得食時，顏色憔悴，不可顯示。是故，智者則為施食。其施食者則為施色；其施色者，世世端正，生天世間，顏華煒燁，人見歡喜，稽首作禮，是為施色。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of strength? When people do not obtain food, their bodies thin and wills weak, they cannot accomplish that which they set out to do. For this reason the wise do a bestowal of food, this bestowal of food in turn bestowing strength. This bestowal of strength [allows them] in life after life to have much strength, incarnating in heavens or among humans with strength that has no equal. Whether entering or leaving, advancing or stopping, their strength is not diminished. This is the ‘bestowal of strength.’”

「何謂施力？人不得食時，身羸意弱，所作不能。是故，智者則為施食；其施食者則為施力；其施力者，世世多力，生天人間，力無等雙；出入進止，力不耗減，是為施力。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of ease? When people do not obtain food, their minds worry and their bodies are in danger. They do not sit still and they cannot be at ease with themselves. For this reason the wise do a bestowal of food, this bestowal of food in turn bestowing ease. This bestowal of ease [allows them] to be secure in life after life, to incarnate in heavens or among humans, to not encounter a host of calamities, but to always encounter virtuous goodness in the places to which they arrive. [They] have immeasurable wealth while avoiding harm and early death. This is the ‘bestowal of ease.’”

「何謂施安？人不得食時，心愁身危，坐起不定，不能自安。是故，智者則為施食；其施食者則為施安；其施安者，世世安隱，生天人間，不遇眾殃，其所到處，常遇賢良，財富無量，不中夭傷，是為施安。」

“What is meant by the bestowal of wit? When people do not obtain food, their bodies are emaciated, their will is weak, and their mouths cannot speak. For this reason, the wise do a bestowal of food, this bestowal of food in turn bestowing wit. This bestowal of wit [allows them] to be intelligent in life after life, to be eloquent in speaking, to be without hindrance, [and] to understand wisdom with penetrating [intellect]. They are born into the heavens or human society, those who hear them taking joy, none [refusing to] kowtow and listen to and accept the words of truth. These are the rewards of the five blessings of food bestowal.”

「何謂施辯？人不得食時，身羸意弱，口不能言。是故，智者則為施食。其施食者則為施辯；其施辯者，世世聰明，口說流利，無所躓礙，慧辯通達，生天世間，聞者歡喜，靡不稽首，聽採法言。是為五福施食之報。」

The Buddha said, “If the sons and daughters of great clans give rise to aspiration for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*), bestowing on all [beings] beverages, food, clothing, and bedding, upon their rebirth they are manifested before the Buddha to learn [from him] the three types of dharma, the four intentions⁹⁴ and the three liberations; to attain the ten powers, the thirty-two marks [of a buddha], and the eighty minor marks. [They] advance and retreat in the ten directions, and, like the rising of the sun, brilliantly radiate light throughout all the ten directions, educating all, continuing to manifest the doctrine of the scriptures after the extinction of afflictions (*parinirvāṇa*), upholding it and obtaining the other shore (i.e., awakening) no differently from a Buddha.”

佛言：「若族姓子、族姓女，若發道意，施一切飲食衣被，在所生處，見現在佛，諮受三法，四意三脫，致十種力，三十二相，八十種好，進止十方，猶如日出，暉暉有光，遍照十方，教化一切，般泥洹後，經法續現，奉之得度，與佛無二。」

When the Buddha spoke this, of the celestials, snake spirits, ghosts, and deities, the people of human society, the lords and great ministers, and the four groups of Buddhist disciples, none did not rejoice and they paid obeisance to the Buddha.

佛說是時，天龍鬼神、世間人民，帝主大臣、四輩弟子，靡不歡喜，為佛作禮。

⁹⁴ I read this as a reference to the four [deeper] meanings, *siyiqu* 四意趣, points of doctrine that help resolve seeming dilemmas in Buddhist thought.