

A Study on a Buddhist Idea of Food Consumption

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【要旨】 仏教における「消費」―「食」の観点から

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本稿においては、インドの初期仏教と日本の禅仏教における食の消費の考え方を検討する。

インドの初期仏教としては、釈迦の事績を紹介する。仏教の開祖である釈迦は、当時インドの宗教界で一般的であった断食などの苦行を捨てて、供養された乳粥を食べて開悟成道したと伝えられている。この挿話は、仏教の食に対する基本姿勢、つまり、「修行をする心身を維持するために、最低限の食物を摂取する」を示す。食への執着は煩悩であり、修行の妨げとして斥けられるが、最低限の食の摂取は認められる。また、出家修行者（僧、比丘）は、すべての世俗的活動を絶ち、修行と布教に専念するべきであるとされ、食物を生産したり、調理したりすることは許されず、生命を維持するためのすべての食物は、在家信者によって供養された。俗世の信者は出家者に供養することで功德を積むことができた。

中国の禅宗寺院では自給自足の生活が行われるようになり、また、瞑想だけではなくて日常のあらゆる行為が修行であるという考えが発達し、食物生産や調理も修行であるとされるようになった。日本曹洞宗の開祖である道元もこのような考えを受け継ぐ。本稿では禅宗寺院の台所仕事について書かれた『典座教訓』と、食事の仕方について書かれた『赴粥飯法』の二つをてがかりとして道元の食の消費に対する考え方を明らかにする。

In the wake of the earthquake in Tohoku on March 11th and the subsequent explosions of nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japanese people have begun to reconsider their way of heavily consuming resources and energy. In particular, by reflecting on our excessive consuming and wasting food in the past, many of us now intend to have simpler but safer and attentively prepared meals. This trend has increasingly lead people to get interested in Buddhist ideas of food and eating style, because Buddhism gives us an ethic of consumption — the idea that we should moderately and properly use of resources without showing any greed. In this presentation, I will examine the ideas of food consumption proposed by early Indian Buddhism and Japanese Zen Buddhism.

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1 . The basic idea of food consumption in Buddhism – The denial of a fast as an ascetic practice and the minimum food consumption.

In order to discuss the problem of the food consumption in Buddhism, I start by examining the historical facts about Śākyamuni Buddha (565~486), the founder of the Buddhism. He was born to be a crown prince in a small city state named Kapilavastu in ancient India. As he grew older, he developed a tendency to fall into deep meditation and was preoccupied with the mutableness of life. Eventually, the man decided to lead the life of a monk. At the age of twenty-nine, renouncing social life he left his castle to seek the truth. In the beginning, he tried asceticism, which was commonly practiced during that time in India. He earnestly observed a severe fast for six years in a deep forest; according to a legend, he ate only one grain a day and this practice made him skinny and bonny, leaving him on the verge of starvation. He still could not achieve enlightenment, nonetheless, and realized that giving the kind of torture on his body was not the way to attain enlightenment. This realization made him refuse asceticism. After he cleansed his body in the Nairanjana River, he could regain his strength by eating a bowl of rice porridge boiled with milk which a girl in a near-by village offered him. At the age of thirty-five, by doing meditation under the Bodhi Tree 菩提樹 he finally achieved enlightenment, becoming a “Buddha” (awakened or enlightened one). He established a Buddhist community (Samgha), and his active preaching life lasted long enough for forty-five years until he died at the age of eighty.

Here, we must pay attention to the fact that the founder of Buddhism refused asceticism such as going on a fast, which was a common practice among religious communities in ancient India, and he achieved enlightenment right after eating a bowl of rice porridge. This episode hints us the basic philosophy of Buddhism about food consumption; that is, Buddhist trainees should have the minimum food in order to keep their body and soul sound while practicing the Buddhist Way 仏道. The attachment to food is considered as *klesa* 煩惱 and should be denied as an obstacle to enlightenment.

Both monks and nuns, who retreated from the secular world, had to refuse all the secular activities that included producing and cooking food, and must devote themselves to practicing the Buddhist Way as well as doing missionary work. They could get food only by asking for alms from laypeople, believers in Buddhism who remained in the secular world. For laypeople, such deeds as giving offerings to monks or nuns meant gaining merits through their pious acts that would help them go up to the heaven 天 after their death.

With respect to the minimum food consumption, it is important for us to distinguish our *attachment* to food from our simple *desires or cravings* for food. A simple *desire* for food arises when a person is hungry and it goes away when he (she) eats something, satisfying his (her) desire. But if a person has *attachment* to food, he (she) can never be satisfied enough just by eating. He (she) will always seek for even more delicious dishes than those he (she) eats now. Attachments tend to grow bigger and bigger without any limit. At the center of attachments is the attachment to oneself. An example will illustrate the point; if a person wants to have a fantastic dinner in a first-class restaurant, he (she) is not just intending to get away from hunger but rather to show that he (she) is a first-class person.

The food consumption among early Indian Buddhists was controlled by precepts. For example, a trainee ate only one meal a day in the morning and was not allowed to eat anything in the afternoon and evening. He obtained food only through begging. He had to eat everything that laypeople put in his bowl that was used for begging, which meant that he had to eat even meat and fish that was put in the bowl. In short, the basic principle of food

consumption in early Indian Buddhism was to stay away from attachment and greed and to purify one's body and soul.

2. The idea of food consumption in Japanese Zen Buddhism

Now let me consider Dogen's idea on the food consumption. Dogen (1200~1253) is the founder of Japanese Soto Zen Sect and is thought to be one of the most excellent philosophers in Japan. In his youth, he went to China, the birthplace of Zen Buddhism, to study the Buddhism. In the land, he experienced the very life in Zen monasteries. While monks are not allowed to do their daily work in India, monks in China must work as his practice 作務. On his returning to Japan, Dogen established his own monasteries in Kyoto and Fukui prefectures: Kosho Temple 興聖寺 and Eihei Temple 永平寺, respectively. He modeled their life style on the Chinese Zen monasteries and established *Eihei-Shingi* 永平清規 as their norm, a collection of regulations on their daily life in Zen monasteries. In the monasteries, all the actions — cooking, face-washing, cross-legs sitting, eating, drinking, cleaning and lying — are done rigorously following extremely detailed regulations. *Eihei Shingi* consists of six volumes. Among them I discuss here two volumes: *Tenzo-Kyokun* 典座教訓 (Precepts for cooking priests) and *Fushoku-Hanpo* 赴粥飯法 (Table manners in Zen monasteries). These two volumes make clear the meaning of food consumption in the Zen monastery life. By looking at these, let us understand Dogen's idea on the food consumption.

Let me first look at *Tenzo-Kyokun*. The Tenzo refers to a priest who is in charge of preparing and serving meals for monks. In Zen Buddhism, to have meals is to grasp the Buddhist Way 仏道; having meals in accordance with the regulations that are considered to have been established by Śākyamuni Buddha is one of the most important practices in Zen monasteries. So, Tenzo priests must always make their best efforts in preparing meals so that monks can do the eating practice comfortably.

Tenzo-Kyokun includes following seven matters: (1) The importance of the role of a Tenzo priest; (2) The day schedule for a Tenzo priest; (3) How to prepare and serve meals for monks; (4) A Tenzo priest's appropriate and thoughtful mind-set in the preparation of meals as a practice; (5) Dogen's experience during his stay in China — his encounter with an old Tenzo priest; (6) Ideal Tenzo priests in old days in some Chinese regions, such as Isan 滙山 and Tozan 洞山; (7) Three mind-sets of a Tenzo priest — Delighted Mind 喜心 (he should be glad to play a role as a Tenzo priest for the sake of Buddhist Way and three Buddhist Treasures, which refer to Buddha, Dharma (Truth), and Samgha (monks)); Parental Love 老心 (Just like parents who always take good care of their children, a Tenzo priest should be willing to devote himself to preparing good meals attentively and respectfully for monks); Impartial Mind 大心 (An unprejudiced mind which sees no difference between good food and coarse food).

At the beginning of *Tenzo-Kyokun*, Dogen shows the significance and the importance of the role as a Tenzo priest and points out that only leading, high Zen priests, enlightened about the Buddhist Way, had been entrusted with this duty. Dogen hence claimed that a Tenzo priest should not be regarded as an odd-job worker who undertook trivial everyday duties but as one of the most important priests in Zen monasteries. The priest is responsible for deciding menus, securing food materials, preparing meals, setting table and so on. All such actions are considered to be Buddhist practices.

The first occasion on which Dogen realized the importance of these duties was when he encountered an old

Chinese priest when he was in China. In *Tenzo-Kyokun*, Dogen describes it as follows: “During my stay at the Tendo 天童 monastery in China, a Tenzo priest named Yu 用, native of Ninpo 寧波, was in charge of preparing meals. One very hot day, after lunch, I was going to a temple called Chonensai 超然齋 along the eastern corridor, when I found the priest earnestly drying up some seaweed in front of the Buddha hall 仏殿 with a bamboo stick in his hand and without a woven hat on the head. The sun was shining down upon and the paving tiles were parched in the sun. In profuse perspiration, he was strenuously drying seaweed here and there. The work seemed to me rather painful. His spine was bent with age like a bow, his long eye-brow were white like the feathers of a crane. I went up to him and said, ‘What is your Buddhist age?’ ‘Sixty-eight’ was his answer. ‘Why don’t you make serving monks or odd-job men do it?’ ‘They are not me.’ ‘You are really one with Buddhism. But I wonder why you work so hard in such a scorching sun.’ ‘When else can I do it except now?’ I uttered no word. But walking along the corridor, I realized how important this effort of a Tenzo priest was¹”

In this episode, I want to pay attention to the two answers given by the old Tenzo priest; ‘They are not me’ and ‘When else can I do it except now?’ These answers illustrate that for him it is most important to devote himself to the work that is to be done ‘here and now.’ In the view of Zen Buddhism, Dharma, the Truth, is considered to be revealed ‘here and now’ and trainees in Zen monasteries must do their works ‘here and now’. The works such as preparing meals or cleaning rooms are no less significant than Zazen meditation (sitting meditation) as a Zen practice in Zen monasteries.

Next let me turn to the volume of *Fushuku-Hanpo*. As I mentioned above, *Tenzo-Kyokun* is written specifically for Tenzo priests whose duty is preparing meals. On the other hand, *Fushuku-Hanpo* is for all the monks who normally have a meal every day in Zen monasteries. In Zen Buddhism, one is expected to have a meal as a Buddha. So, one must have meals piously and calmly following the Buddha’s precepts. In *Fushuku-Hanpo*, Dogen describes in detail how to enter a meditation room 僧堂 (which at the same time serves as a dining room), sit down on the floor, arrange bowls 鉢 and chopsticks, receive food, chant the verse of the ‘Five Insights’ 五観の偈, eat a meal, wash the bowls and put back the bowls in order. Let me explain the verse of the ‘Five Insights’, which is contemplated and chanted before each meal.

1. We must reflect on how much work was needed to prepare this food and how it came here.
2. We must reflect on whether our deeds are completely good and worth receiving this offering.
3. We should not have this meal in a voracious and greedy manner.
4. We must realize that this meal is like good medicine that helps us prevent a decline in health.
5. We are going to have this meal to get enlightened about the Buddhist Way 仏道².

These five insights shows that the food consumption in Buddhism is for keeping monks’ mind and body sound and that it is not allowed to be greedy in Buddhist practices. All the monks, in having meals, should humbly contemplate an amount of efforts made by many who produce the food materials and secure their meals. They should also reflect on whether they are worthy of receiving the meals. Then, they will realize the *depending origination* 縁起, which means that everything depends on each other as they come into existence; every time a monk has a meal, he is expected to realize the very truth of the relationships with other people and everything.

Notes

- 1 Yuho Yokoi, *Regulation for Monastic Life by Eihei Dogen—Eihei-genzenji-shingi—*, Sankibo-busshorin, 1973, Tokyo, p.14.
I modified a little.
- 2 *op. cit.*, p.48. I modified a little.