

แม่โครโบโอดิกส์: วิถีชีวิตของชาวเมืองโฮจิมินห์กับ หมุดหมายทางวัฒนธรรมเชิงพุทธ

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้เป็นผลมาจากการสำรวจเพื่อทำความเข้าใจมั่งสวัธิแบบแม่โครโบโอดิกส์ และเพื่อพิสูจน์ว่าการกินมั่งสวัธิอยู่ในวิถีชีวิตของผู้ที่อยู่ในเขตเมืองอันเป็นภาพสะท้อนของ วัฒนธรรมแนวพุทธ การศึกษานี้ใช้เวลาเก็บข้อมูลจากร้านอาหารมั่งสวัธิเป็นเวลาหนึ่งเดือน เพื่อทำความเข้าใจมุมมองที่มีต่ออาหารมั่งสวัธิในฐานะที่แม่โครโบโอดิกส์ได้รับการพัฒนาให้เป็นอาหารมั่งสวัธิรูปแบบใหม่อันได้แก่ “การกินมั่งสวัธิแบบแม่โครโบโอดิกส์” การวิเคราะห์ ของบทความนีวางอยู่บนฐานของข้อมูลที่รวบรวมโดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก การสังเกตแบบ มีส่วนร่วม ผสมผสานกับการวิเคราะห์ในเชิงมานุษยวิทยา นครเพื่อทำความเข้าใจวิธีสร้าง เอกลักษณะของการกินมั่งสวัธิแบบแม่โครโบโอดิกส์ มุมมองสมมูลของแม่โครโบโอดิกส์ คือ การรับรู้ใหม่ว่าอาหารมั่งสวัธิสามารถสร้างสุขภาพที่ดีให้กับผู้ที่อยู่อาศัยในนครโฮจิมินห์ได้ดังที่ ดาไลลามะกล่าวไว้ว่า “เราพยายามอย่างหนักเพื่อมีชีวิตที่ดีด้วยการมีสุขภาพที่ดีทั้งร่างกายและ จิตใจ อันเนื่องมาจากเรากินเพื่อมีชีวิต ดังนั้น เรามีสุขภาพที่ดีและหายจากอาการเจ็บป่วยได้ ก็ขึ้นอยู่กับการกิน”

คำสำคัญ: ความเชื่อว่าการกินมั่งสวัธิ, แม่โครโบโอดิกส์, พุทธ, วิถีชีวิต

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Macrobiotic: A Way of Life of Ho Chi Minh City's Urban People with the Mark of Buddhist Culture

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a survey aiming to understand macrobiotic vegetarianism and to prove that vegetarianism is an urban residents' way of living representing the Mahayana Buddhism's culture. The research took a month in collecting data from the vegetarian restaurants to understand vegetarian's perceptions toward macrobiotic vegetarian as macrobiotics has been developed to a new model of vegetarian. The analysis of this article base on the data gathered from in-depth interviews, participant observation, combined with the analysis of urban anthropology to make clear about how the 'macrobiotic-vegetarian' create their identity. The perspective of balanced macrobiotic is a new perception that vegetarian can bring healthy life for urban residents in Ho Chi Minh City and as the Dalai Lama said: *"We strive to live best by staying healthy, our physical and mental joy. Because we eat to live, how healthy we live and how well we recover from illness depends on eating."*

Keywords: Vegetarianism, Macrobiotic, Buddhist, Way of Life

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1. Introduction

People tend to improve the quality of personal life, including health problems in the context of the development of science and technology. Under the impact of urbanization, urban residents are faced with many problems including natural and socio-cultural environment such as climate change, pollution, stressed, health, education ... so, to adopt in urban societies, people tend to find solutions to balance their lives and health. According to Yumiko Otani - a famous expert in the proclamations of future Japanese culinary trends: *"We can prevent the destruction of the life system as well as polluting the environment inside the body through the transformation of diets adapted to the life system of the earth and people. And choosing the right amount of food intolerance is the best way to have good health"* (Otani, 2015: 9).

According to statistics, the Japanese have the highest life expectancy in the world. Is one of the secrets of Japanese life expectancy being food and diet? Yumiko Otani noticed in Japan there are also some problems related to lifestyle and diet. Most people want to have better health, abstain from diets but not everyone gets the desired results. In the book *"What to Eat without Death,"* Michael Greger, an internationally renowned physician, nutritionist and founder of NutritionFacts.org explains why nutrition and lifestyle interventions can sometimes succeed more than prescription drugs and other surgical and medical solutions, to give us healthier lives. He advocated for a plant-based diet that was previously quite unfamiliar to American lifestyles and society based on nutritional science (Greger, 2018).

In big cities, such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in Vietnam, under the influence of negative food impacts, changing the notion of health and the effects of real words, the product has gradually appeared. Urban people tend to find the purity and safety of food. Not to mention the religious element, macrobiotic is considered as an effective method to help people improve their health and reduce cancer, cardiovascular, high blood pressure, diabetes, Parkinson's, and many diseases and others.

In the context of an increasing of vegetarian restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. The question is vegetarian is macrobiotic? And proving vegetarian/macrobiotic is a new way of life for urban residents with the mark of Buddhist culture.

2. Macrobiotic and the Mark of Buddhist Culture

When we typed the keyword "*vegetarian*" on google, we had received 43,100,000 results within 0.43 seconds, the phrase "*Vegetarian and Buddhist*" gives 8,890,000 results in 0.37 seconds, and there are 126,000,000 results in 0.42 seconds in the term "*real nutrition*." The combination of "*vegetarian*" and "*macrobiotic*" has up to 70.7 million results in 0.46 seconds. The above figures show that vegetarianism and macrobiotic are more related to Buddhism. Besides, recently published many best seller books related to the content we are referring to as "*How Not to Die Cookbook: 100+ Recipes to Help Prevent and Reverse Disease*" by Michael Greger and Gene Stone (2018); "*Nursing for Dummies*" by Verne Varona (2018), ... further affirms that vegetarianism and nutrition are gradually becoming popular in the lives of Vietnamese people particular in Ho Chi Minh City.

The research question that is vegetarian a macrobiotic? The hypothesis for this question is that vegetarianism and macrobiotic are fundamentally no different - using food to feed the body and because the term vegetarian is defined in connection with religion, especially Buddhism so we want to affirm this hypothesis is true in the title of the report.

In term '*vegetarian*' in Vietnam is agreed by most people which is to eat food prepared with vegetables, fruits, tubers. Do not eat salty foods of animal-like meat, fish, shrimps, crabs, ... are species that are greedy and afraid of death like poultry, cattle...

On the Lotus Library website, there is an explanation of vegetarianism: "*Buddhists should not kill living beings to eat meat. Murder is the first prohibition in the five precepts. Murder to take sentient beings for food is the worst crime in Buddhism. The Buddha did not think it was appropriate to propose vegetarianism to his monastic disciples, what He did was to advise them to avoid eating animal meat, because no matter what kind of meat they eat, meat is still abetting the killing, and animals are only killed to make food. That's why before nirvana, the Buddha advised people to become vegetarian. Buddhists should be vegetarian with a method and slowly. Do not skip meat immediately to switch to a vegetarian diet, as doing so can cause disruption and illness for the body because vegetables do not enough nutritious. People could slowly reduce the amount of fish meat, then they can start in a short period of time. Buddhists should be vegetarian to nurture compassion and equality, but also avoid many diseases*" (Sen, 2019).

The culinary problem of primitive Buddhism: according to our understanding, vegetarianism is the daily meal of monks and nuns. Meals depend on the generosity of the cross-country places in the bowl when the monks beg for alms. The monks receive food with a calm and indifferent mind because the food is generally meant only to keep their life. This concept of vegetarianism means: *“Living by an alms life, not deliberately killing”* (do not know, do not listen, do not doubt). From the point of view of Mahayana Buddhism, vegetarianism is aimed at nurturing compassion, preserving the precepts of not killing animals, then make life peaceful and calm in physically and mentally. The vegetarian style has gradually become a noble, sacred lifestyle on the path of Buddhist practice in general and of monks in particular. Perhaps in Vietnam, Mahayana Buddhism has the largest number of followers in the country so the concept of *“vegetarian”* is recorded in the Vietnamese dictionary: eating non-animal foods to practice Buddhism and some other religions (Lien, 2015: 18).

The Zen macrobiotic diet was developed in the 1930s by George Ohsawa - a Japanese philosopher who integrated traditional Asian medicine and belief with Western medicine and the Christian teachings. The Zen macrobiotic diet became popular in the 1960s. Macrobiotic, which is based on the concept of yin and yang, (the two opposite forces of life) (Palaniswamy, 2003: 244), is defined as the right vegetarian diet following a pattern that gives the vegetarian complete health in both physical and mental aspects. So, what is macro-vegetarianism? A form of vegetarian food that ensures the most essential nutrition for the body, a healthy diet with plants. This form of vegetarianism is quite popular so individuals use it as a cure and have a certain effect. The macrobiotic diet method initiated and spread by Ohsawa (Sakurazawa Nyoichi) since the early 20th century, his books translated into Vietnamese: *“Food is medicine, medicine is food,”* which means macrobiotic takes “food” as a medicine. Macrobiotic focuses on adjusting human eating habits because the disease is not self-sustaining, it originates from the unreasonable lifestyle and diet. In addition, there are other vegetative regimes that are also applied by many people: such as fasting, eating, eating 100% organic food without using any chemicals. disease results from an imbalance of yin and yang based on the philosophy behind Zen macrobiotics.

The increasing of vegetarian habits is Abstention from eating meat because it is wrong to kill animals has been held by a number of ancient philosophers including Buddha (566-486 BCE) the founder of Buddhism (Palaniswamy, 2003:

244). To compare with meat eaters (Alcott, 1884 cited in Palaniswamy, 2003: 244), vegetarians were described as superior mental and physical strength. On the other hand, the vegetarian choices have become mainstream and continue to grow in popularity, concerned about animal welfare, poverty, health, and the environment (Leahy, Lyons & Tola, 2010: 2). Human beings have developed feeding habits that is individualized, and acquired through a number of factors including religious and philosophical beliefs, habitat, availability, taste preferences, socioeconomic status, and specific health requirements (Palaniswamy, 2003: 243). In Vietnam, majority popular is effected by Buddhism and humanities to concern about animals and animal welfare (Beardsworth & Keil, 1991 cited in Ion, 2007: 354) and religious issue that determines people to adopt a more or less vegetarian diet. Being vegetarian helped to express their philosophy of non-violence or no-injury to animals (Ion, 2007: 354) So, by manipulating the concepts of vegetarianism, macrobiotic, as well as understanding why vegetarianism is often associated with Buddhist, there are cultural imprints of Mahayana Buddhism, a vegetarian diet is now being adopted by many people, not necessarily practitioners or followers of Buddhism.

3. Macrobiotic by Ethnographic Perspective in Ho Chi Minh City

The analysis of this article will be based on the data gathered during the research process by in-depth interviews, participant observation a vast of owners and guests to have an objective view of the vegetarian macrobiotic trend in Ho Chi Minh City from January 2019 to March 2019. We chose District 1, Binh Thanh District, Phu Nhuan District to avoid the subjectivity of the researcher, with many services, meeting almost all the needs of the local people and guests. This article is analyzed based on collected data behind urban anthropology theory framework and Zen macrobiotics philosophy.

3.1 *Guests who macrobiotic*

According to the survey, people at middle-aged and women often use nutritious food, when health begins to show signs of decline, cancer diseases as a leading threat affect the quality of life ... So, people who live in urban areas Ho Chi Minh city realized that being vegetarian can help them cure some cancers, especially herbal vegetables and fruits. Due to the negative impact of the market economy, the taste favored the appearance, so *'the grain of rice is often milled white, sometimes using white crystalline sugar, synthetic spices like MSG ...*

Therefore, vegetarians in this way are often weak, lack of resistance to weather changes, are susceptible to digestive disorders' (Ly, n.d.). So, macrobiotic as a vegetarian diet ensures adequate nutrition that urban people choose to improve their health. People who come to the vegetarian shop not only the monks and nuns who are Buddhist, but also many people who are not religious or other religions.

"I am old, so my body feels with all sorts of diseases. I take any kind of medicine the way I eat. But from the day I only eat brown rice, it has been better this month" (In-depth interviews note 1). *

"I am a vegetarian. Suffering Dyslipidemia, so I could not eat much meat. From the day people ask me only eat brown rice, it feels better" (In-depth interviews note 2).

The food in macrobiotic consists of two main ingredients: brown rice and sesame salt. In order to maintain this nutritional course without being bored, people already know how to prepare food in combination with many different ingredients such as seaweed, lotus, beans, ... without losing with the nature and balance of yin and yang according to the meaning of nutrition. *"Macrobiotic individuals strive to focus on living each day happily with gratitude for everyone and everything. They surround themselves with positive and energetic people who further their desire for self-fulfillment. Seeking out and furthering a relationship with a higher being is another necessary aspect of a complete existence"* (Wherley, 2002: 2). Macrobiotic always aim to innovate in the processing of dishes from brown rice and sesame salt such as seaweed rice rolls, brown rice porridge, brown rice nuggets, traditional millet rice cakes.

*"I usually only ate brown rice. Sometimes I cook at home even at a restaurant like this. I cook rice, porridge with lotus seeds, sticky rice. I often have breakfast in the restaurant** in the morning"* (In-depth interviews note 2).

In conclusion, depending on the living situation of each individual, people (not dominated by religion, gender, age) have a decision their different vegetative diets. That choice suits the body and the food ingredients that can be loaded into the body and the appetite of each person. People who were used to vegetarianism

* Implementer: Nguyen Thi Thanh Ngan. Implementation date: 16.01.2019 at Khai Minh Food Restaurant, Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City

** Please see more detail in Shop Thuan Thien, 2017.

(vegetarian school; a few days of the month such as 30, 1st, 14th, 15th day of the lunar calendar; vegetarian diets, etc.) tend to quickly approach vegetarians.

3.2 Macrobiotic Products

Many vegetarian restaurants have captured the needs of gourmets based on with the spirit of *"healing power of food"* known as Dr. Gene Stone's famous *"Eat Not Die."* In order to be able to develop a nutritious restaurant that attracts consumers, they must ensure that the elements of food are consistent with the nutritional formula and Buddhist philosophy in terms of vegetarianism. For example, without meat in daily meals and some combination dishes such as seaweed soup, brown rice porridge ... Many ingredients combine together so that the dish has a balance of yin and yang enough without harming the body or creating negative effects. In order to be able to get a list of dishes in a nutrition restaurant, the seller must have a good understanding of nature, meaning, and structure of food ingredients to process nutritious dishes. Moreover, it is a combination of food medicine and Buddhist philosophy of food, which aimed a good body and a healthy life.

One should discontinue using processed and refined sugars, including white table sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, corn syrup, juice concentrate, and malt. Sugar is actually a strong acid that robs the body of minerals and causes inflammation in the organ systems (Wherley, 2002: 4). The next step in adopting macrobiotics is the discontinuation of all red meat, pork, and chicken products. The animal meats available today are very different from those consumed in past generations, which are generally given hormones to make them grower taster, and bigger. Animals are also treated with antibiotics to reduce the impact of illness and disease (Wherley, 2002: 6). Meanwhile, vegetarian should limit the use of sugar and animal meats to prevent the weakening of the body's organs. Instead, take vitamins from vegetables. The restaurant found it almost in line with the vegetarian philosophy of Buddhism, and the macrobiotic vegetarian diet would be more effective than the vegetarian diet instead of the lack of rice protein.

Vegetarians were also guaranteed all vitamins including calcium, vitamins A and C, and magnesium. Women vegetarians of reproductive age were found to have comparable amounts of iron than non-vegetarians, plus higher levels of calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, vitamins A, C, B6, and B12, riboflavin, and thiamin (The Kushi Institute of Europe, n.d.: 25; Wherley, 2002: 6). Moreover,

scientists also found kale can help control cholesterol; turmeric - Indian spice, which helps dark curry powder - can also help prevent DNA damage caused by smoking (Greger, 2002: 59-60). In addition, high fiber intake good effects on intestinal health and to reduce the risk of intestinal and breast cancer, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and premature death in general (Greger, 2002: 72).

Macrobiotics, often mistaken simply as an alternative diet, is based on consuming whole grains; leafy green, round, and root vegetables; and beans and bean products, such as tofu or tempeh. Meals may be supplemented with fruits, fish and seafood, nuts, and fruit or grain-based sweet and dairy, poultry, meat products are used very infrequently, if at all (Wherley, 2002: 2). According to the interview, most people believe that macrobiotic are eating brown rice, sesame salt. But in fact, macrobiotic is the popularity of organically grown organic foods and natural processed foods, including whole grains such as brown rice, pure wheat, oats, and buckwheat; soy foods as miso, tofu, shoyu (natural soy sauce) and tempeh (The Kushi Institute of Europe, n.d.). Macrobiotic is the catalyst for many changes in diet and lifestyle that are currently taking place.

“In order for the dishes to be richer, I have to combine cooking with many different ingredients which ensure vegetarians can eat. I am also based on Buddhist philosophy, and you have seen many of Oshawa's books on nursing and books about macrobiotic, so the food here must be balanced and nutritious. It is easy to cook vegetarian dishes, but macrobiotic must have a separate cooking method, especially with that brown rice” (In-depth interview note 3).

“In addition, I also make powders from beans, for customers who do not have time to cook or people do not know how to eat then they can try like red bean flour, tea cooked powder from brown rice, green bean flour. I also have soy sauce for vegetarians. Generally, the products here are vegetarian or macrobiotic, let people have more choices, not be bored because if you start to eat macrobiotically it will be difficult to eat” (In-depth interview note 3).

In fact, there are many studies around nursing, most of which focus on the benefits of macrobiotic. The macrobiotic approach offers an even more detailed and refined understanding which allows us to regulate these factors according to individual needs and for specific results. Food, as a way of life, is one of the most

important means of leading our own health condition toward more yin or yang state, a more physical or spiritual orientation, a more active or receptive condition, according to the type of activity we wish to pursue and the type of qualities we wish to achieve (Kushi & Oredson, 1989: 27). With the macrobiotic approach based on certain knowledge, it is possible to adjust the food elements according to the needs of the individual. That is the understanding of the yin and yang philosophy, the balance between the body and environment, which people can choose to add the yin and yang quality of food through the choice of cooking methods.

3.3 Business culture of macrobiotic restaurants

There are more macrobiotic vegetarian restaurants currently in Ho Chi Minh City. Most of the macrobiotic restaurants are also a place to present and sell macrobiotic products such as brown rice, sesame salt, medicinal plants ... General characteristics of these restaurants and shops are all available selling organic foods that cure diseases, they also printed on the packaging instructions for the use and functions of each type of food. For example, all types of beans have different therapeutic functions specified on the product packaging. Pure green beans or whole green beans have different ways of eating. The pureed brown rice is used to cook rice, sticky rice; lotus seed powder has a function of balancing sleep, detoxification. These foods are derived from plants that are prepared dry and have a shelf life of 1 to 3 months. We are not only participation - observation but also enjoy the food at a macrobiotic restaurant in District 1, buy some food namely millet. There are instructions on the label on treatment effects:

- Millet is effective for cooling and soothing pain.
- Cooked millet seeds are applied in the high paste for: boils, pustules, wounds, etc.
- Millet juice is applied to children's wounds.
- Millet is burned and blended with oil, then used as a high paste, thought to heal wounds without leaving a scar.
- Used to treat bleeding in women and used to bathe to treat diseases such as skin irritation.

According to a survey of some macrobiotic restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, we found that macrobiotic is a method of using food combined with vegetarianism as a way of treating cancer, balance the yin and yang in the body, reducing the number of chemicals from meat and fish, keep a healthy diet. Shop owners, with his knowledge and understanding of nutrition, also want to provide quality products

full of nutrition in accordance with the principles of macrobiotic and vegetarianism.

For a long time before modern nutrition developed, the ancients learned by trial and realization of what is healthy and unhealthy food. Since then, the development of traditional human diet has come from hundreds of generations and cultures (Briscoe, 2016: 19). This gives us a conclusion: vegetarianism and macrobiotic are like a combination of indigenous knowledge that belongs to tradition and modern science. Many macrobiotic restaurants have adopted this method in their dishes, making the menu more diverse and richer while ensuring adequate nutrition and vegetarianism can be used.

In 2016, as the Chairman of Vietnam - Southeast Asia Friendship Association in Ho Chi Minh City, in a cultural and artistic exchange program celebrating 40 years of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the Philippines held at Ho Chi Minh City Union of Friendship Organizations, we have received sponsorship of some macrobiotic vegetarian dishes from Home Food Restaurant. After the program, the organizers came to Home food to thank, Ms. Pham Minh Huong - Home food Manager shared: *"Clean food is only a part. You have to eat right, if eat clean and eat wrong, clean food will also become garbage in your body"* (In-depth interview note 4).*

In conclusion, restaurants have created their business philosophy with the desire to bring a healthy life by providing food from a rich and diverse plant source available or cultivated in the wild. On one hand, they based on the principle of balancing the method of macrobiotic, on the other hand, they refer to the Buddhist philosophy of simple, which to prepare the dishes to fit the needs and requirements of urban people. So, nominate some slogans of the macrobiotic restaurants: *"Nutritious and pure"* (Hoa Dang vegetarian restaurant), *"Meals for health"* (Mani vegetarian restaurant), *"Macrobiotic essence."* (Home food)

4. Conclusion

"Macrobiotic" is a relatively new phrase, but in fact, it is a method of applying eating principles that emphasize a balanced in body, based on traditional ingredients and processing methods, traditional. Macrobiotic opens to a sublimated world, brooding and enjoying with vegetables. That thought not a religious practice

* Implementer: Phan Thi Hong Xuan. Implementation date: 05.11.2016 at HomeFood Restaurant, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City.

of any religion, but gives people a close sense of the "*enlightenment*" in Buddhism, which is deepening, listening and appreciating oneself.

In the context of science and technology development, people have more opportunities to take care of their health, but paradoxically, it is the sedentary lifestyle, eating and drinking junk food, grease, alcohol, a pressure of work... lead urban people to cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, ... than in rural areas. Derived from urban people needs: enjoying delicious but nutritious dishes, to prevent and treat diseases, macrobiotic is spread through books of many domestic and foreign authors, according to many vegetarian restaurants following the principle in Ho Chi Minh City. This shows that vegetarianism and macrobiotic have become a new trend and lifestyle for urban residents, popular among middle-aged, officer, women - with economic conditions and ability to follow it, absorbing progressive social knowledge; and also at risk of many diseases due to living and working harsh environment.

We believe that this is a positive trend that needs to be propagated and replicated to help all classes of people to live happily, healthy, useful, contribute to building and improving the quality of human resources at Ho Chi Minh City in particular, Vietnam generally integrate with the region and the world.

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