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研究課題名（和文）Buddhist charitable practice, Old-age experience and personhood of Vietnamese elderly

研究課題名（英文）Buddhist charitable practice, Old-age experience and personhood of Vietnamese elderly

研究代表者

LE Hoang Anh Thu (LE, Hoang Anh Thu)

立命館アジア太平洋大学・アジア太平洋学部・准教授

研究者番号：70828384

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研究成果の学術的意義や社会的意義

This research highlights the phenomenon of socially-engaged Buddhism in which Vietnamese senior-aged citizens are involved. It shows how Buddhist charity provides senior citizens with the platform to contribute to the society after retirement.

研究成果の概要（英文）：- Charity is an intensive, socially engaging practice, and hence it offers a platform for people from different classes and backgrounds to meet and interact. It is, therefore, also a space where senior citizens navigate social hierarchy and negotiate their positions in this stratification by interacting with others.

- Charity and voluntary work are a means for senior-aged citizens to retain their legitimacy, and their place in their societies. Through charitable work, senior-aged citizens retain their sense of belonging in society by continuing their social contribution.

研究分野：04030

キーワード：Vietnam Buddhism ageing faith-based charity grassroots charity senior citizens

1. 研究開始当初の背景

Situated in the present context of Vietnam's population rapidly approaching its aged phase, this research responds to the pressing demand for an insightful understanding of Vietnamese old people's ways of life, activities, and concerns. According to United Nations Development Program, due to lower birth-rate and longer life expectancy, Vietnam's ageing process is happening faster than expected. Its aged population (defined as those above 60 years old by the Vietnamese government) is growing much faster than the working-age group. Consequently, it is estimated that by 2030 one in six Vietnamese will be over 60, and by 2060, one in four will be over 60. Despite this prospect, knowledge about ageing and older people's lives and concerns is still very limited in Vietnam. Only recently have Vietnamese old people become the focus of the government's surveys and reports. Literature on the elderly is still largely absent.

In addition, existing studies examine the elderly mainly as home-bound dependents who rely on care and support from society and family, hence overlooking their social engagement and contribution, and how their experience of old age is defined by everyday interactions with multiple social, political and economic contexts in present-day Vietnam (e.g. Ho Chi Minh City's People's Committee 9/2016; Thang et al. 2011; Giang and Pfau 2009; Mai Loan & Eng 2007; Knodel et al. 2003.) How Vietnamese senior citizens perceive of themselves and of their roles as the elderly in Vietnam's society, and how they deal with multiple realities of old age through social activities have not been investigated yet.

Unlike Japan, there are very few social venues for Vietnamese elderly to socialise and to integrate themselves into wider society. In Vietnamese culture, old people's place is at home and with their offspring. Within Vietnam's context, Buddhist practice is dominated by the elderly, and therefore is one of the most popular platforms for older people to socialise and to participate in communal and social activities.

Among the socially-integrated Buddhist practices is the charitable activity. Buddhist charitable projects, such as distributing food to hospital patients, repairing or constructing houses, bridges and roads in rural areas, and assisting victims of natural disasters, have attracted huge attention from the public and have received numerous praises from Vietnam's government for their contribution to the country's welfare. Many participants in the Buddhist benevolent work are senior-aged citizens, who contribute their time, effort and money as charity organisers, fundraisers, donors, and participants.

Therefore, this research explores the Buddhist charitable works conducted by many elderly people in Vietnam to understand their social activities, their perceptions of their social roles, contribution and agency.

2. 研究の目的

This project examines the roles that Buddhist charity plays in defining Vietnamese elderly's perceptions of old age and of their roles and statuses in wider society. In advancing our knowledge of senior citizens' socio-religious practice, this research aims to provide a valuable resource and suggestions for Vietnamese policy makers and welfare providers in supplying the elderly with social facilities, support and platforms to cultivate meaningful old-age experience and to stay socially-active and contribute to their communities.

3. 研究の方法

I traveled to Vietnam for ethnographic fieldwork for 4 months in AY 2019, 2 months in AY 2020, and 3 months in AY 2022. I could not travel to Vietnam in most of 2020 and in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic that resulted in border closure and cancellation of all international flights between Vietnam and Japan.

Drawing on my network of informants from doctoral research, I already had necessary contacts who were Buddhist practitioners and did charity as organisers, fundraisers, donors, and participants. From these existing contacts, I was introduced to new informants who also did charity work. During fieldwork, I visited Buddhist temples and Buddhist lay groups that conducted charitable works and participated in their activities. I interviewed charity organisers, donors, participants, monks and lay practitioners about their activities. I joined them on trips to rural villages and hospitals to distribute charitable gifts and food, or to fund and surveil the constructions of infrastructure in the recipient localities. I also joined many charitable food events that prepare and distribute thousands of servings of meals to patients in hospitals.

4. 研究成果

I published this research project's findings in four academic articles, one special issue on international peer-reviewed journals, and one book chapter. I also presented the research findings in four international conferences in Japan, Singapore, and United States of America. In 2022, I organised a panel focused on faith-based charitable distribution of food in Vietnam and Myanmar at the Annual Conference Association for Asian Studies in University of Hawai'i, Manoa. Drawing on this conference panel, I edited a special issue on Buddhist food charity in Vietnam for *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (forthcoming in October/November 2023).

During my field research, a fact that stood out was that a considerable number of charity givers were older people from modest social and economic backgrounds. These people themselves needed to be careful in their daily expenses to make ends meet. Many of them were above sixty years of age. Charity is therefore a social platform that attracts many retirees, and many of whom are not from well-off background. They contribute their savings or pocket money that they get from their children. But more importantly, they contribute their time and labour as organisers, fundraisers and participants who cook

or assemble and transport charity gifts to recipients living in rural areas, hospitals, orphanages and schools.

Charity is an intensive, socially engaging practice, and hence it offers a platform for people from different classes and backgrounds to meet and interact. It is, therefore, also a space where senior citizens navigate social hierarchy and negotiate their positions in this stratification by interacting with others. Charity at the grassroots level thus offers an opportunity to explore how Vietnam's social stratification is perceived and made sense of by people.

Charity givers in Vietnam perceive capability (or lack thereof) in earning a living and support oneself as the specific criteria to select charity recipients. Recent studies on philanthropy also focus on self-sufficiency as an indicator of deservingness for institutional charity aid in several societies, such as Russia or United States (Caldwell 2016; Dickinson 2016). Dickinson (2016), for example, argues that charitable aid in the United States is no longer given with the intent to alleviate suffering of others. Instead, it is now used as an incentive and assistance for people who work on low-income jobs.

As an extension of these studies, this research argues that not only is self-sufficiency a means of identifying deservingness for charity, it is also the attribute that charity givers from lower economic backgrounds use to distinguish themselves from their recipients. Given that many charity givers are not steady or high-income earners and are often retired and rely on their children, their demarcation between the recipients and themselves is not marked by material wealth. Calling themselves "people with a good heart" [nhà hảo tâm], the Vietnamese term for charity givers, they are usually not the donors, or the major donors, in their own charity projects. Charity givers who have retired use their own savings or the allowance given by their children or from various life rituals that are celebrated in their family, such as new year celebrations when they are given money by relatives or funeral offerings at the death of their spouses, and with this they donate a few hundred thousand đồng to charity. Instead of material wealth, they see their own capability to make a living through work (although most of them have retired) and the recipients' incapability to do so (due to various reasons, such as disabilities, disasters, illness) as the distinction between themselves and recipients, as well as the criteria to select deserving recipients.

My research also shows that charity, as a social practice, is a means through which senior citizens negotiate their roles and place in society and define their relationship and position vis-à-vis other social groups and the state. Charity positions givers in gift-exchange relationships not only with their recipients but also with the wider society and the state. Charity places individuals in a moral relationship with non-kin recipients through open-handed gift-giving practices, which are supposed to be nonreciprocal and are aimed at easing the suffering and hardship of others.

My study agrees with existing studies that show that charity and voluntary work are a means for senior-aged citizens to retain their legitimacy, and their place in their societies. Through charitable work, senior-aged citizens retain their sense of belonging in society by continuing their social contribution. This observation is particularly true in

Vietnam, where work is a salient factor underlying an individual's sense of self and belonging in society. The significance of work is central in shaping senior-aged citizens' experience not only of charity per se but also of their moral place in the society. The significance of work can be seen in both political and cultural discourses in Vietnam. Engaging in productive work is an important factor underlying one's personhood and belonging to a community in socialist Vietnam.

5. 主な発表論文等

〔雑誌論文〕 計5件（うち査読付論文 5件/うち国際共著 5件/うちオープンアクセス 3件）

1. 著者名 Le Hoang Anh Thu	4. 巻 15
2. 論文標題 Doing Bodhisattva's Work: Charity, Class, and Selfhood of Petty Traders in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)	5. 発行年 2020年
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掲載論文のDOI (デジタルオブジェクト識別子) 10.1525/vs.2020.15.4.4	査読の有無 有
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3. 雑誌名 The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus	6. 最初と最後の頁 N/A
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4. 発表年 2021年

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4. 発表年 2022年

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2. 発表標題 Organised a panel titled "Religious food charity, care, and social agency in Vietnam and Myanmar"
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2. 出版社 Akashi Shoten Publisher	5. 総ページ数 4
3. 書名 ベトナムにおける高齢者の道(みち)としての仏教 in 現代ベトナムを知るための63章【第3版】edited by Misaki Iwai	

〔産業財産権〕

〔その他〕

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6. 研究組織

氏名 (ローマ字氏名) (研究者番号)	所属研究機関・部局・職 (機関番号)	備考
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7. 科研費を使用して開催した国際研究集会

〔国際研究集会〕 計0件

8. 本研究に関連して実施した国際共同研究の実施状況

共同研究相手国	相手方研究機関
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