

## **Influence of French Food Heritage in Hanoi: Case of Baguette and Coffee**

According to Japan Foundation Grant for Field Research on Heritage Tourism program which was held on the 5th - 8th August 2017 in Hanoi, we had a chance to visit Hanoi and do field research under the theme of Food Heritage. As we are students of Chiangmai University, we choose to study about Baguettes and coffee in Hanoi.

First of all we shall start with some background information of Vietnam and Hanoi. Vietnam's official name is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Vietnam is one of the four countries that has espoused communism in all organization of government, politics and society. Vietnam is the ninth-most-populous Asian country with an estimated 92.7 million inhabitants (Wikipedia, "Vietnam"). Its capital city is Hanoi which is the country's second largest city by population. Its population in 2015 was estimated at 7.7 million people. From 1902 until 1954, Hanoi served as the capital of French Indochina. Since 1954 to 1976, it was the capital of North Vietnam, and it became the capital of a reunified Vietnam in 1976, after the North's victory in the Vietnam War (Wikipedia, "Hanoi"). After the administrative boundaries expansion on August 2008, Hanoi city has the total area of 3323.6 km<sup>2</sup> according to the statistics in 2012 of General Statistics Office of Vietnam. Hanoi climate is distinguished by the tropical monsoon climate with hot and rainy summers and cold and dry winters which are the typical climate in the north of Vietnam. The average temperature of the air is 23.6°C per year (AloTrip).

Vietnam has a long timeline of history and has a lot of changes and important events happened all the time. According to our assumption about French influence of food heritage in Vietnam case of Baguette and coffee in Hanoi, the focus of Vietnam history in this essay is on French colonization. Due to the upsurge of French capitalism in, the French decide to invade Vietnam in order to meet the need for overseas markets and the desire for French territories in Asia. The French colonization in Vietnam started from 1862 when the southern third of the country became the French colony and was called Cochinchina. Then, the entire country had come under French rule by 1884. Shortly afterward, all of three parts of the country were integrated into the union of French Indochina in 1887. Officially, the French colonial period in Vietnam was during 1887 to 1954. French rule was imposed directly at all levels of administration. Vietnamese bureaucracy was left without any real power and Vietnamese emperors were replaced by others willing to serve the French. All important positions within the bureaucracy were officials imported from France. In the 20th century, Vietnam became a source of raw materials and a market for tariff-protected goods produced by French industries (Neil Jamieson).

## **French colonization**

The French colonized Vietnam for more than six decades. They not only took resources out of the country, but they also introduced, built and brought in a lot of new things to Vietnam. First of all, the French were the one who introduced Catholicism to Vietnamese who had believed in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Catholicism came to Vietnam in the 1605 and caused major problems for both the Vietnamese government and the people. The French start converting Vietnamese to Catholicism since 1644 and there were over 400,000 converts by 1660. Nowadays the priests have been allowed to spread Catholic. Almost 3% of the population in Vietnam is Catholic. In addition, a lot of famous architectures in Vietnam, especially Hanoi are in French style. Many architecture buildings which are built from 19th century until the early of 20th century are the trace of French colonialism in Vietnam. To illustrate, the Presidential Palace in Hanoi was constructed in 1900 by French architects. It was built for Ho Chi Minh intended to be his official residence; however he refused to stay there because he preferred to stay in a traditional Vietnamese stilt-house instead.

The most important French colonial heritage to mention here is cuisine. Many of the Vietnamese foods have been influenced by French colonialism in Indochina. Some of them stayed and combined with the Vietnamese way of cooking and this made new taste and variant of Vietnam traditional food. There are two kinds of subjects which are chosen to discuss: Baguette and coffee. The first one is “Bánh mì” or Baguette in French bread. Bahn mi has been widely recognized by neighbors and westerners in the name of Vietnamese food. The word “Bahn mi” can be found in western dictionaries. According to Oxford online dictionary, Bahn mi means “(in Vietnamese cuisine) a sandwich consisting of a baguette (traditionally baked with both rice and wheat flour) filled with a variety of ingredients, typically including meat, pickled vegetables, and chili.” Thus, it cannot help that others and Vietnamese themselves understand that Banh mi is Vietnamese food.

However, originally, the baguette was a native kind of food from France and it was popular in western countries. It is assumed that baguette was first brought and made in Vietnam for feed the hungry soldiers during the Indochina colonization period. Many of the vegetables and ingredients that were introduced to the country were common in Western cooking. By 1910, little baguettes or ‘petit pain’ were sold in the street of Hanoi to people in general and in the years afterward, meat, vegetables, eggs, pate or fish were stuffed in the bread. Vietnamese have adapted and changed the recipe of the baguette-sandwich by using local vegetables and ingredients in their area (Day Tours in Hanoi).



### **Present appearance of French food heritage and revolution of baguettes in Hanoi**

From the observation and interview local people in Hanoi found that baguettes become daily life food of people here because they consume baguettes as a meal include noodle, rice. Moreover, Baguettes are sold in Hanoi as follows

#### **Vietnamese baguettes in street food**

There are a lot of baguettes vendors in sub-street around the city in Hanoi. The ingredients and fillers are different because they invent the fillers themselves such as omelet. The price of baguettes in street food is cheaper than baguettes in local shops or franchise which is start from 20,000 VND. Moreover, we can also see the peddlers who sell baguettes by walking around the street with their yokes. The baguettes that they sell are without filler or pure baguettes. Most of the clients are local people in Hanoi. They do not bake baguettes themselves and buy baguettes from vendors because it is cheap and convenient to buy baguettes, the yeasted dough is hard to master and ovens are scarce in Vietnam. These are the reasons why we can see the baguettes vendors are everywhere around the city.



**Baguettes vendors in sub-street around the city in Hanoi**



**Peddlers who sell baguettes by walking around the street with their yokes**

### **Local brand of Vietnamese baguettes**

We can see many baguette shops in Hanoi which are local brands. The baguette here look like a sandwich, two slices of bread are often spread with butter, with a layer of meat, cheese, etc. But for local people, they called it as a bread or Vietnamese bread because they invent the fillers and recipe by themselves. Each shop has their own recipe to create the uniqueness of their own shop. Local brands are very popular. Both local people and tourists consume baguettes in local shops as we can see from the interview of the employee of Banhmi “P” Vietnamese bread shop. This stall has launched more than 3 years. The owner is Vietnamese



and tries to invent recipe by themselves. People here call baguettes as Vietnamese bread or Bánh mì because local people (Vietnamese people) created this menu by putting meat and local vegetable which is easy to find in local area. In this shop, the owner of this shop continues using the traditional recipe. However, the customers can choose themselves. They put the stuff into baguettes according to Vietnamese recipe including meat (beef chicken pork), vegetable (cucumber carrot onion) and sauces. Moreover, the unique of this stall is adding grilled chicken into baguettes and it becomes the most popular menu in this stall. This shop buys baguettes 500 pieces per day from the local family which bakes baguettes, a shop located near the literature of study. From 6am to 5pm they can sell baguettes more than 350 pieces. The busy time for selling baguettes is from lunch to midnight. Baguettes can be found in every province of Vietnam, however they might be some of the differences of baguettes in some part of Vietnam because people might use different ingredient especially vegetable that they can find in the local area. Therefore, the recipe can be different. The percentage of customers both foreigner and local people are equal. According to the manager's opinion, baguettes are popular food because they are cheap, convenient and taste for Vietnamese. He also said that baguettes in Hanoi are similar to baguettes in other provinces because ingredient of baguettes in Hanoi comes from other provinces.



**Banhmi “P” Vietnamese bread shop, the banquettes shop sold by local.**

### **Modern Vietnamese baguettes or franchises**

When baguettes become a meal and popular dishes in Hanoi, many baguettes franchises spring around in Hanoi. It is regarded as modern baguettes because they invented new ingredient that is not similar to other shops, use modern packaging that easy to handle, use delivery service to attract the customer and most of the employees are young people. Baguettes franchises usually serve with cool tea and various beverages. These show the modern life style of local people in Hanoi. However, they still remain the dominant culture of sitting on the small chair.

### **Vietnamese baguettes in family own industry**

There are small factories in Hanoi that bake baguettes and sell them to baguettes shops in Hanoi. The factories are small because they do family own business. Local people can bake baguettes themselves by using wheat imported from Australia. Baking baguettes by local people show that baguettes are a part of their food culture and became the daily food of local people. Even though in the past Vietnamese resist France in term of politic but the food culture of France affects to the life of Vietnamese people such as consuming baguettes.



**Small factory that bake baguettes and sell them to baguettes shops in Hanoi**

The second subject chosen to discuss in this essay is coffee. According to Oxford online dictionary coffee means “A hot drink made from the roasted and ground beanlike seeds of a tropical shrub”. In the 11th century, the coffee plant was first discovered in Ethiopia. Back then, Ethiopians boiled the leaves of coffee or what they called "magical fruit" and they believed that this drink had medicinal properties. In the mid of 14th century, coffee had traveled to Yemen and for 300 years, it was drunk following the Ethiopian medical recipe. The French had their taste of coffee in 1669 since the Ottoman ambassador brought plenty of coffee to the court of King Louis XIV of Paris. Coffee rapidly became the favorite drink of Parisian high society (Turkishcoffeeworld). In French colonial period around the mid of the 19th, the French brought coffee along with them and introduced it to Vietnam.

As many decades passed by, Coffee has become the most popular beverage for Vietnamese. People drink coffee both in day and night. Coffee is made with a simple metal contraption which is placed over a cup instead of using a coffee machine. It takes times for coffee to drip through the tool. That is why it is called drip coffee. Consumers might need to wait but it allows them to appreciate the time with others sharing some conversation (Insidevietnamtours). Here, coffee can be served either hot or cold and it is commonly mixed with condensed milk for the creamy and sweet taste. Not only consuming, but Vietnam also produces an incredible amount of coffee beans until it is regarded as the world's second largest coffee exporter. Coffee, currently, is the largest agricultural export after rice in Vietnam.



**Traditional Vietnamese drip coffee (Anil Gurung)**



## **Coffee shop in Hanoi**

### **The interview of Coffee shop**

This coffee shop is a famous one in Hanoi, Kim Lai. Here, it is a popular coffee shop for young people. Besides serving coffee, they also sell coffee bean that they roast themselves so they mainly sell the coffee brand that is named after the owner of this shop. 10 percent of coffee bean in Vietnam comes from northern part and 90 percent of coffee beans in Vietnam come from southern part of Vietnam depend on the amount of area they grow coffee tree. France brought coffee to Vietnam. The interviewee claimed that local customers use one kilo of coffee bean in a couple of a month. The customers in coffee shops are different from the customers who consume the coffee on the pavement due to their favor. The interviewee said that the numbers of the customer are almost equal for instance Asians, European and Canada. The best seller coffee bean in this shop is Blue Mountain.



**Kim Lai, the popular coffee bean shop in Hanoi**

### **Coffee shop on pavement**

In every morning local people in Hanoi usually drink tea and coffee on the pavement sitting on a small chair which is comfortable for Vietnamese. Coffee bean that the vendors use to make coffee is different from coffee bean in the modern or big coffee shop. They use a lower quality of coffee bean therefore; the price is low as well. Most of the client is working class, they enjoy meeting friends in the coffee shop on the pavement because the coffee here has a



low price. People usually come to drink coffee with friends in morning lunch and evening, in other words, they consume coffee and tea throughout the day. In the evening, people come to coffee shops after working hard all day long and meeting friends. It is the way they take a rest and relax. Besides coffee, they usually have sun flower seeds as a snack during conversation. This becomes an activity in daily life of local people here.



**People come to coffee shops after working hard all day long and meeting friends.**

According to studying the influence of French food heritage in Vietnam: case of baguette and coffee in Hanoi, it can be seen that both baguettes and coffee are not the original food of Vietnam. They were brought by western people or French people by colonialism in the past. After getting freedom from France for 63 years ago, Vietnamese still have baguettes and coffee in their daily life until today. Finally, local people adapt baguettes and coffee to be their local food and beverage as we can see in Hanoi that there are a lot of baguettes (Banh Mi) shops and coffee shop and we have never seen this from others countries in Southeast Asia. Moreover, baguettes and coffee are adopted together into their not luxurious life of Vietnamese people according to the low price of coffee and Banh Mi.

## References

- Banh mi. Oxford Dictionaries. Accessed 25 Aug. 2017. Oxford University Press. <[https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/banh\\_mi](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/banh_mi)>.
- Coffee. Oxford Dictionaries. Accessed 25 Aug. 2017. Oxford University Press. <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/coffee>>.
- Existence of French culture in Hanoi. Day Tours in Hanoi. Accessed 24 Aug. 2017. <<http://daytourshanoi.com/guide/existence-french-culture-hanoi/>>.
- Gurung, Anil. A Backstreet Guide to the Best Cafes in Hanoi. 11 Aug. 2015. <<https://www.backstreetacademy.com/blog/a-backstreet-guide-to-the-best-cafes-in-hanoi/>>.
- Hanoi. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 9 Oct. 2017. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanoi>>.
- Hanoi geography. AloTrip Ltd. 15 Nov. 2014. <<https://www.alotrip.com/about-vietnam-geography/hanoi-geography/>>.
- The Conquest of Vietnam by France. Jamieson, Neil, et al. 14 Sep. 2017. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam/The-conquest-of-Vietnam-by-France>>.
- The History or Turkish Coffee. Turkishcoffeeworld.com 19 Oct. 2017. <<https://www.turkishcoffeeworld.com/History-of-Coffee-s/60.htm>>.
- Vietnam. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 19 Oct. 2017. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam>>.
- Vietnam's unique coffee culture. Insidevietnamtours.com. 9 Mar. 2015. InsideAsia Tours Ltd. <<https://www.insideasiatours.com/insidevietnam/vietnam-news/3541/vietnams-unique-coffee-culture/>>.