



Philosophy of Life in The Folk Religious Practices of The Khmer People in Vinh Long Province in The Contemporary Context

Hung Nguyen Quang¹, Thanhthao Le Thi²

¹Tra Vinh University, Vinh Long province, Vietnam. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2644-8814>

²Tien Giang University, Dong Thap province, Vietnam. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9064-8301>

ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the philosophy of life in the folk religious practices of the Khmer people in Vinh Long province in the contemporary context, aiming to clarify how traditional belief systems are maintained, transformed, and restructured under the impact of urbanization, market economy, and social transformation. Based on an interdisciplinary approach between philosophy, cultural anthropology, and religious studies, the research uses qualitative methods combined with practical surveys and secondary document analysis. The results show that the philosophy of life of the Khmer people is shaped on the foundation of a harmonious cosmology between humans, nature, and deities, while clearly demonstrating practical ethics through norms such as filial piety towards ancestors, accumulating merit, and community responsibility. The study also indicates that the fusion of folk beliefs and Theravada Buddhism creates a “multi-layered religious” structure, helping traditional values to be both preserved and adapted to modern conditions. Notably, in the context of social change, religious practices tend to simplify in form while still maintaining sacred meaning, reflecting the process of “restructuring the sacred” in contemporary life. From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to clarifying the role of folk beliefs as a system guiding behavior and maintaining social order. In practice, the research results suggest policy implications for preserving and promoting Khmer cultural values in a sustainable manner and in line with the current development context.

Corresponding Author:

Hung Nguyen Quang

Published Online:

May 12, 2026

License:

This is an open access article under the CC

BY 4.0 license:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

KEYWORDS:

Philosophy of life, folk religious practices, Khmer people, contemporary Vinh Long province

Cite the Article: Quang, H.N., Thi T.L.(2026). *Philosophy of Life in The Folk Religious Practices of The Khmer People in Vinh Long Province in The Contemporary Context*. *International Journal of Human Research and Social Science Studies*, 3(5), 346-352. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijhrsss/04-2026-Vol03105>

INTRODUCTION

In the context of strong globalization and modernization, the traditional cultural value systems of ethnic minority communities are facing many profound changes, especially in the field of folk beliefs, where the worldview and philosophy of life of the community are most clearly preserved and reflected. For the Khmer people of Southern Vietnam in general and the Khmer people of Vinh Long province in particular, folk beliefs are not merely a system of spiritual beliefs but also the foundation of cultural identity, guiding social behavior and forming a system of community moral norms over many generations (Lu, 2005; Van, 2001).

The philosophy of life – as conceptions of humanity, life, moral principles, and the relationship between humans and nature, society, and the supernatural world – is crystallized and vividly expressed in folk belief practices. In the life of the Khmer people of Southern Vietnam, this philosophy is expressed through the system of rituals, customs, traditions, as well as forms of worshiping ancestors, deities, and supernatural forces such as Neak-Ta, Arak, or spirits (Luom, 2018; Vinh, 2012). These factors contribute to shaping how the Khmer people interpret the origin of the universe, the meaning of life and death, and the norms of behavior within the community.

Recent studies show that the folk beliefs of the Southern Khmer people exhibit a high degree of fusion between Theravada Buddhism and indigenous belief elements, creating a unique system of thought that is both religious and folk-based (Chim Don Ta & Chanh Da, 2026; Quang Nguyen & Hong Vu, 2025). In this system, the philosophy of life is expressed through concepts such as the law of karma, reincarnation, filial piety towards ancestors, and community spirit. These values are not only significant in spiritual life

but also contribute to regulating social behavior, strengthening community cohesion, and maintaining traditional social order (Nguyen Quang Hung & Vu Hong Van, 2024).

However, in the current context, under the impact of urbanization, market economy, and cultural exchange, the religious life of the Khmer people is undergoing significant changes. Some traditional religious practices are fading or becoming distorted, while new elements are being introduced and restructuring the belief system (Hung & Van, 2021). This raises an important question about the transformation of the philosophy of life in contemporary religious life: are the core values still being preserved, or are they being replaced by new value systems?

Vinh Long province, as one of the oldest settlements of the Khmer community in the Mekong Delta, is a typical cultural space for examining these issues. Although there have been many studies on the culture and beliefs of the Southern Khmer people, in-depth studies on the philosophy of life in the folk religious practices of the Khmer people in Vinh Long in the contemporary context are still limited. Most current studies focus on describing customs, festivals, or analyzing beliefs from a cultural perspective, without delving into the interpretation of the philosophical values hidden within them (Loan, 2018; Thuong, 2020).

Furthermore, in the context of the Vietnamese State's promulgation of the Law on Belief and Religion in 2016, the preservation and promotion of folk belief values are placed within a new legal framework, creating favorable conditions for the practice of belief while also requiring the identification, evaluation, and orientation of traditional cultural values (Law on Belief and Religion, 2016). This further highlights the role of studying the philosophy of life in folk beliefs as a scientific basis for cultural policy planning and sustainable development.

In addition, studying the philosophy of life in Khmer folk beliefs is significant in contributing to clarifying the characteristics of Vietnamese philosophical thought in general. As Tran Van Giau (1973) pointed out, Vietnamese thought is a combination of indigenous and foreign elements, in which folk beliefs play an important role in shaping the worldview and philosophy of life of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, a case study of the Khmer people of Vinh Long will contribute to the overall picture of the diversity and richness of Vietnamese folk philosophy.

From the above issues, it can be seen that the study of "Philosophy of Life in the Folk Beliefs of the Contemporary Khmer People of Vinh Long Province" is necessary both theoretically and practically. This research aims not only to identify and analyze the philosophical content of life expressed in folk beliefs, but also to clarify their changes in the current context, thereby proposing solutions to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of the Khmer community in the process of development and integration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evaluation of research works related to the topic

Research on folk beliefs and the philosophy of life of the Khmer people in Southern Vietnam has attracted the attention of many scholars both domestically and internationally, with diverse approaches from ethnology, cultural studies to philosophy and religious studies. Overall, these works can be divided into three main directions: (i) theoretical research on beliefs and religions in Vietnam, (ii) research on the culture and beliefs of the Southern Khmer people, and (iii) direct research on the philosophy of life in folk beliefs.

On the theoretical level, the works of Van (2001, 2005) have built a conceptual foundation and methodological approach to religion and beliefs in the Vietnamese context, emphasizing the socio-historical nature and transformation of spiritual life. Lu (2005) approaches folk beliefs as a system of communal cultural practices, reflecting the spiritual needs and perceptions of the supernatural world of human beings. These studies provide an important analytical framework for explaining folk beliefs not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as a system of knowledge and values. In addition, Hinh (2007) and Ngoc (2002) contributed to clarifying the characteristics of Vietnamese spiritual life and cultural identity, in which folk beliefs are considered a core element in forming the traditional worldview.

In the second research direction, many works focus on describing and analyzing the cultural and religious elements of the Southern Khmer people. Set (2012) and Vinh and Trieu (2015) provided rich materials on traditional customs, rituals, and festivals, thereby showing the role of beliefs in maintaining social structure and ethnic identity. Loan (2018) analyzed cultural elements in Khmer beliefs in the Mekong Delta, emphasizing the fusion between Theravada Buddhism and indigenous beliefs. Similarly, Thuong (2020) approached Khmer folk culture from a local perspective, showing the diversity and flexibility of religious practices in daily life.

Some studies delve into specific forms of belief. Vinh (2012) surveyed the worship of Neak-Ta, pointing out the transformation of the object of worship and its symbolic meaning in the modern context. Luom (2018) analyzed ancestor worship as an expression of worldview, emphasizing values such as filial piety, family and community cohesion. Studies by Van and Long (2019) also affirm the role of ancestor worship in shaping the moral values and community consciousness of Vietnamese people in general, which can be related to the case of the Khmer people.

In the third direction, direct studies on the philosophy of life in Khmer folk beliefs are relatively limited but have made notable contributions. Chim Don Ta and Chanh Da (2026) analyzed the "Bai Say" system as an expression of cosmology and philosophy

of life in Southern Khmer beliefs, clarifying concepts of reincarnation, karma, and the relationship between humans and the universe. Nguyen Quang Hung and Vu Hong Van (2024) approached the philosophy of life from the perspective of religious practices in Tra Vinh, pointing out that values such as goodness, accumulating merit, and community harmony are core principles governing social behavior. Quang Nguyen and Hong Vu (2025) expanded this analysis within the context of contemporary spiritual life, emphasizing the adaptation and restructuring of folk beliefs in response to social changes.

In addition, Hung and Van (2021) pointed out the changing trends in the religious life of the Khmer people, including increased cultural exchange and changes in ritual practices. These changes directly impact the way the philosophy of life is expressed and received within the community. Hong's (2022) studies also showed the role of traditional cultural values in education and personality formation, thereby indirectly affirming the significance of studying the philosophy of life in folk beliefs.

Research gaps and directions

Firstly, most current research focuses on describing cultural phenomena or analyzing beliefs at the general level of the Southern region, while lacking in-depth studies specific to areas such as Vinh Long province. This leads to a failure to fully identify local characteristics and intra-regional differences in the expression of humanistic philosophy.

Secondly, studies on humanistic philosophy in Khmer beliefs often stop at generalizing common values such as karma, reincarnation, or filial piety, without delving into analyzing how these values are practiced, recreated, and transformed in contemporary life. In particular, under the impact of the market economy, urbanization, and religious management policies (Law on Belief and Religion, 2016), religious practices are undergoing significant changes, requiring a more dynamic and interdisciplinary approach.

Thirdly, there is a lack of research combining philosophical theory and field data to explain the philosophy of life as a living system, constructed and reconstructed in social practice. Previous works have mainly relied on secondary data or descriptive observations, failing to deeply explore the experiences and perceptions of the cultural subjects – namely, the Khmer people themselves in contemporary life.

From these gaps, this study aims to approach the philosophy of life in the folk religious practices of the Khmer people in Vinh Long province as a dynamic value system, linked to the contemporary social context. By combining theoretical analysis with field surveys, the study not only clarifies the content and characteristics of this philosophy of life but also explains its mechanisms of transformation and restructuring in the current context. Through this, the study contributes to the body of knowledge about Vietnamese folk culture and philosophy, while providing a scientific basis for the preservation and promotion of the cultural values of the Khmer community in the process of sustainable development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study “Philosophy of Life in the Folk Religious Practices of the Contemporary Khmer People in Vinh Long Province” is conducted on an interdisciplinary approach, combining ethnology, cultural studies, religious studies, and philosophy, to ensure a full understanding of both the depth of thought and the practical context of the research subject. This approach is consistent with the characteristics of folk beliefs – a phenomenon that is both symbolic and closely linked to concrete social life (Lu, 2005; Van, 2001).

First, the documentary research method is used to systematize and analyze domestic and foreign scientific works related to folk beliefs, Khmer culture, and the philosophy of life. Documents such as Chim Don Ta and Chanh Da (2026), Nguyen Quang Hung and Vu Hong Van (2024), Quang Nguyen and Hong Vu (2025) provide the theoretical basis and analytical framework for the relationship between beliefs and worldview. At the same time, studies on Khmer customs, rituals, and cultural life (Set, 2012; Thuong, 2020) help to locate specific manifestations of the philosophy of life in belief practices.

In addition, ethnographic fieldwork plays a central role in the research. The author conducted field surveys in several areas with large Khmer populations in Vinh Long province, observing and participating in rituals, festivals, and religious activities such as ancestor worship, Neak-Ta, and community ceremonies. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect qualitative data from monks, Achar (religious leaders), elders, and residents, the direct practitioners and transmitters of the beliefs. This approach allows for viewing the philosophy of life not only as an abstract ideology but also as a shared and recreated lived experience within the community (Hung & Van, 2021).

Furthermore, analytical-synthetic and comparative methods were used to compare different data sources, thereby identifying stable characteristics and changing elements of the philosophy of life in the contemporary context. Comparison with studies in neighboring localities such as Tra Vinh (Vinh, 2012; Nguyen Quang Hung & Vu Hong Van, 2024) helps clarify the specificity of the Vinh Long case.

Finally, the study applies a systems approach to examine folk beliefs as a structured whole, in which ritual elements, beliefs, and moral values are closely linked. Through this, the philosophy of life is identified as a dynamic value system, reflecting the interaction between tradition and modernity in the life of contemporary Khmer people.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on field surveys, document analysis, and the application of an interdisciplinary approach, the study identifies four main contents reflecting the philosophy of life in the folk belief activities of contemporary Khmer people in Vinh Long province: (1) Philosophy of the universe and man; (2) Moral philosophy – social behavior; (3) Philosophy of the life cycle and existence; (4) The transformation of philosophy of life in the contemporary context.

Philosophy of the universe and man in contemporary Khmer folk beliefs in Vinh Long province.

Research results show that the Khmer people's philosophy of life is primarily shaped by a comprehensive cosmological system combining indigenous beliefs and Theravada Buddhism. In this system, humans do not exist as independent entities but are always in an organic relationship with the universe, nature, and the supernatural world. This concept is clearly expressed in the “Bai Say” system – a thought structure reflecting how the Khmer people interpret the origin of the universe, the workings of the world, and the place of humanity within it (Chim Don Ta & Chanh Da, 2026).

Accordingly, the universe is viewed as a multi-layered entity, where the visible and invisible worlds coexist. Supernatural forces such as deities, Neak-Ta, or ancestral spirits are not only objects of worship but also entities capable of influencing human life. This creates a philosophy of life characterized by “harmony”, in which humans need to maintain balance with surrounding forces through rituals and ethical behavior (Lu, 2005).

Notably, this philosophy is not abstract metaphysical but is concretized in daily religious practices. For example, in the Neak-Ta ritual, the Khmer people not only pray for protection but also acknowledge the role of nature and community history in their current lives (Vinh, 2012). From this, a concept of man as a “dependent subject” is formed, who must live in harmony with the environment and the community.

Compared to Western philosophical ideologies that emphasize individualism, Khmer philosophy of life is strongly communal and relational. This is consistent with Giau's (1973) observation of the characteristics of Eastern thought, in which man is placed within a network of social and cosmic relationships. Thus, the philosophy of the universe and humanity forms the foundation for the development of moral values and behavioral norms within the Khmer community.

Moral philosophy and social behavior in contemporary Khmer folk beliefs in Vinh Long province

One of the important findings of the study is that the philosophy of life in Khmer folk beliefs is clearly expressed through the system of moral values and social behavioral norms. These values are not presented in theoretical form but are “encoded” in rituals, customs, and beliefs.

First, the principle of cause and effect and reincarnation plays a central role in guiding individual behavior. The Khmer people believe that every action in their present life will affect the future, not only in this life but also in future lives. This concept creates a mechanism for self-regulating behavior, encouraging people to do good, avoid evil, and accumulate merit (Nguyen Quang Hung & Vu Hong Van, 2024).

Furthermore, ancestor worship deeply reflects the philosophy of filial piety and family responsibility. Survey results show that ancestor worship ceremonies, Sen Dolta ceremonies, and other forms of ancestor commemoration not only have spiritual significance but also serve to strengthen family relationships and transmit moral values between generations (Luom, 2018). This is consistent with the assessment of Van and Long (2019) regarding the role of ancestor worship in maintaining traditional values.

In addition, community festivals such as Chol Chnam Thmay and Ok Om Bok also demonstrate the philosophy of solidarity and sharing. On these occasions, individuals are placed within the context of the community, where values such as mutual assistance, equality, and harmony are emphasized (Vo Van Thang et al., 2015). These are factors that contribute to maintaining social stability and strengthening Khmer cultural identity.

Notably, this ethical philosophy is not coercive but is internalized through cultural education and religious practice. As Hong (2022) pointed out, traditional values play an important role in shaping personality and civic consciousness. In the case of the Khmer people, folk beliefs are the environment in which these values are transmitted and recreated.

Philosophy of life cycle and existence in contemporary Khmer folk beliefs in Vinh Long province

The Khmer people's philosophy of life is also deeply expressed in their conceptions of the human life cycle, from birth, growth, to death and rebirth. Life cycle rituals such as naming ceremonies, coming-of-age ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, and especially funeral ceremonies all contain philosophical conceptions about existence and the meaning of life.

In this context, death is not seen as an end but as a transition to another state of existence. This concept is linked to the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation, and is further enhanced by indigenous beliefs about the soul and the afterlife (Chim Don Ta & Chanh Da, 2026). This creates an attitude of “acceptance” and “serenity” in the face of life's vicissitudes.

According to field observations, Khmer funeral rituals are not only for bidding farewell to the deceased but also for the community to express solidarity and sharing. Through these rituals, the philosophy of impermanence, the connection between generations, and the responsibility of the living towards the deceased are clearly expressed (Set, 2012).

In addition, rituals related to agriculture and natural cycles also reflect the philosophy of the cyclical nature of human life. The Khmer people believe that humans are part of nature, and therefore must follow the laws of nature to survive and thrive. This concept contributes to the formation of a sustainable lifestyle and respect for the environment.

In general, the Khmer philosophy of life and existence is profoundly humanistic, combining religious elements and folk experience. It not only helps people understand life but also serves as an ethical framework for interacting with themselves and others.

The transformation of life philosophy in the contemporary context of Khmer folk beliefs in Vinh Long province

The research results show that the life philosophy in the folk beliefs of the Khmer people in Vinh Long province is undergoing significant changes under the influence of economic, social, and policy factors.

First, urbanization and economic development have changed the community structure and the way beliefs are practiced. Many traditional rituals have been simplified or altered in form, leading to changes in the expression of philosophical beliefs. However, core values such as karma, filial piety, and community spirit are still maintained, albeit in new forms (Hung & Van, 2021).

Secondly, cultural exchange and the influence of other religions also contribute to the restructuring of the belief system. As Van (2022) pointed out, Vietnamese folk beliefs in general tend to accept and integrate foreign elements. In the case of the Khmer people, this is reflected in the combination of traditional beliefs with modern elements, creating a flexible and adaptable philosophical system.

Thirdly, the legal framework on belief and religion (Law on Belief and Religion, 2016) has facilitated the preservation and promotion of cultural values, while guiding religious activities towards a healthy direction. This contributes to strengthening the role of humanistic philosophy as a cultural resource in social development.

Fourth, the role of education and communication in transmitting humanistic philosophy is increasingly enhanced. Khmer cultural education programs (Khanh, 2021) and community communication activities have contributed to raising the awareness of the younger generation about traditional values, thereby ensuring the continuity of humanistic philosophy in the modern context.

In short, humanistic philosophy in the folk beliefs of the Khmer people in Vinh Long province is not an immutable system but a dynamic structure, always adapting to the social context. This transformation both poses challenges and opens opportunities for the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values in the process of sustainable development.

DISCUSSION

Research results on the philosophy of life in the folk religious practices of contemporary Khmer people in Vinh Long province show a comprehensive thinking structure in which indigenous elements, Theravada Buddhism, and contemporary social conditions interact, creating a flexible paradigm of life while maintaining cultural continuity. From the perspective of religious and belief theory, it can be affirmed that this philosophy of life does not exist as a closed system, but as an open “field of meaning”, always in motion in the relationship between tradition and change (Van, 2001; Van, 2005).

Firstly, the study reinforces the assertion that the worldview of the Southern Khmer people is shaped on a foundation of a “harmonious-balanced” cosmology, in which humans are not the absolute center but rather an entity within a network of relationships between nature, deities, and the community. This is consistent with the results of Chim Don Ta and Chanh Da (2026), who argue that the Bai Say system reflects a multi-layered worldview where humans must live in accordance with the law of karma and the cosmic order. In the context of Vinh Long, rituals such as the Neak - Ta ceremony, the Sen Dolta ceremony, or Ok Om Bok not only serve a ritual function but also reaffirm a philosophy of life oriented towards goodness, emphasizing harmony between the individual and the community. This is also consistent with Luong's (Luom, 2018) analysis of the role of ancestor worship in shaping the worldview of the Southern Khmer people.

Secondly, a noteworthy finding is that the Khmer philosophy of life clearly demonstrates “practical ethics”, meaning it goes beyond mere awareness and is concretized in daily behavior. Norms such as filial piety towards ancestors, respect for the community, and accumulating merit are expressed through specific actions such as participating in festivals, doing charity work, and preserving temples. This is an expression of a form of “religious ethics” closely linked to social life, similar to the observation of Vu Hong Van and colleagues when analyzing the role of beliefs in educating cultural and ethical values within the community (Van & Long, 2019; Hong, 2022). Compared to previous studies that emphasized the ritual aspect, this research shows the need to approach Khmer beliefs as a vibrant ethical system capable of effectively regulating social behavior.

Third, in the contemporary context, this philosophy of life is undergoing significant transformations under the impact of urbanization, market economy, and digital transformation. Research by Nguyen Quang Hung and Vu Hong Van (2021) on the Khmer people of Tra Vinh has shown a trend of “minimizing rituals – enhancing symbolism”, meaning that traditional rituals tend to be simplified in form but retain their core meaning. Results in Vinh Long show a similar trend, with many families choosing to practice their beliefs more flexibly in terms of time, space, and cost, while still maintaining belief in values such as karma, merit, and divine assistance. This reflects a form of “sacred restructuring”, in which the sacred is not lost but repositioned in modern life (QuangNguyen & HongVu, 2025).

Fourth, a matter requiring in-depth discussion is the relationship between Khmer folk beliefs and Theravada Buddhism. In fact, these two systems do not exist separately but are intertwined and complement each other in shaping the philosophy of life. Folk

rituals such as the worship of Neak - Ta or ancestor worship are often practiced in parallel with Buddhist rituals, creating a “religious layering” structure. According to Set (2012) and Khanh (2021), this is a prominent feature of Southern Khmer culture, where indigenous beliefs are “Buddhized” but not dissolved. From a philosophical perspective, this can be seen as a form of fusion between the Buddhist concept of cause and effect and karma with the folk belief concept of souls and deities, creating a paradigm of life that is both metaphysical and closely connected to practical life.

Fifth, the research results also raise the issue of the role of law and policy in preserving and promoting this philosophy of life. The 2016 Law on Beliefs and Religions has created a relatively comprehensive legal framework for guaranteeing freedom of belief while encouraging the preservation of traditional cultural values. However, in practice, certain gaps still exist in supporting the Khmer community to maintain their religious practices in the modern context. This requires a policy approach that is “culturally sensitive”, in which the community's philosophy of life is viewed not only as a heritage but also as a resource for sustainable development (Loan, 2018).

Sixth, when compared more broadly with other communities in Vietnam, the Khmer philosophy of life can be seen to possess both universal and specific characteristics. Universality is reflected in the emphasis on morality, community, and harmony with nature – values also present in many other belief systems (Ngoc, 2002; Lu, 2005). However, specificity lies in the way the Khmer integrate these elements into a distinct cultural-religious structure, linked to their history, ecological environment, and social organization. Compared to the Vietnamese, where ancestor worship is distinctly clan-based, Khmer beliefs exhibit a higher degree of community spirit, particularly through the central role of temples and community festivals (Vo Van Thang et al., 2015).

Finally, from a methodological perspective, this study contributes to broadening the approach to folk beliefs, from describing phenomena to analyzing them in depth philosophically. As Dang Nghiem Van (Van, 2001) emphasized, the study of religion and beliefs in Vietnam needs to move beyond a purely descriptive approach to identify the thought structures and values hidden behind practices. In the case of the Khmer people of Vinh Long, the philosophy of life is not only a cultural content but also a “spiritual operating system”, helping individuals orient their behavior, communities maintain order, and society achieve stability.

In short, the discussion shows that the philosophy of life in the folk beliefs of contemporary Khmer people in Vinh Long is a dynamic system, both inheriting tradition and adapting to modernity. The combination of indigenous and Buddhist elements, between belief and practice, between the individual and the community, has created an ethical and cultural foundation capable of being maintained and developed in the context of profound social changes today.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the philosophy of life in the folk religious practices of contemporary Khmer people in Vinh Long province is not only a reflection of a traditional belief system, but also a dynamic thinking structure that adapts flexibly to the changing social context. Based on a harmonious cosmology between humans, nature, and deities, this philosophy shapes a system of practical ethical values, in which principles such as filial piety, accumulating merit, and community responsibility are realized in daily life. The research results also affirm the characteristic fusion between indigenous folk beliefs and Theravada Buddhism, creating a “multi-layered religious” model capable of maintaining cultural continuity while opening up space for innovation. In the context of urbanization, market economy, and digital transformation, this philosophy of life is not declining but is being restructured towards greater flexibility in form, while still preserving its core values. From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to clarifying the role of folk beliefs as a system regulating social behavior and an endogenous cultural resource for sustainable development. In practical terms, the results suggest the need to develop policies for preserving and promoting Khmer beliefs in a culturally sensitive manner, linked to the local context. Through this, the Khmer philosophy of life will not only be preserved as a heritage but will also continue to be promoted as a socio-ethical foundation in contemporary society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the support of time and facilities from Tra Vinh University (TVU).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently and no financial or commercial relationship influenced the results of this study.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with established research ethics standards. All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study before data collection. Informed consent was obtained and participation was entirely voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were strictly maintained and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Hung Nguyen Quang is the principal author of this study, including conceptualization, research design, and protocol development; ThanhThao Thi Le is the associate author of this study in conceptualization and protocol editing; Author Van Vu Hong contributed to completing the outline, collecting data, analyzing data, interpreting results, and preparing the manuscript. The authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

1. Chim Don Ta & Chanh Da. (2026). Bai Say: Worldview and philosophy of life in the Khmer belief system of Southern Vietnam. *Journal of Buddhist Studies*. Retrieved from <https://tapchingshiencuuphathoc.vn/bai-say-vu-tru-quan-triet-ly-nhan-sinh-trong-tin-nguong-khmer-nam-bo.html>
2. Giau, T. V. (1973). The development of thought in Vietnam from the nineteenth century to the August Revolution. *Social Science*.
3. Hinh, N. D. (2007). Vietnamese spirituality. *Encyclopedia Dictionary*.
4. Hong, V. V. (2022). Education patriotism from education of traditional cultural values. *Synesis*, 14(2), 20019-134. <https://seer.ucp.br/seer/index.php/synesis/article/view/2196>
5. Hung, N. Q., & Van, V. H. (2021). Trends change in religion and belief living of the Khmer people in Tra Vinh Province. *PalArch's Journal of Archeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(4), 7033-7042.
6. Institute of Linguistics. (1997). Vietnamese dictionary. Dictionary Center.
7. Khanh, P. T. (Ed.). (2021). Khmer cultural curriculum. Textbook published by Social Sciences.
8. Loan, B. T. (2018). Cultural elements of belief in the Khmer community in the Mekong Delta. International Conference "Philosophy of life of the Southern people". Can Tho University.
9. Lu, N. D. (Ed.). (2005). Contributing to understanding folk beliefs in Vietnam. *National Politics*.
10. Luom, N. V. (2018). The outlook on life of the Southern Khmer people is seen from the belief in ancestor worship. *Journal of Folklore*, 26(12), 34-40.
11. National Assembly. (2016). Law on Belief and Religion (Law No. 02/2016/QH14). Retrieved from <https://lawnet.vn/en/vb/Law-on-religion-and-folk-belief-5372D.html?tab=3>
12. Ngoc, P. (2002). Vietnamese cultural identity. *Literature*.
13. NguyenQuang, H., & VuHong, V. (2024). Philosophy of life in folk beliefs of Southern Khmer People in Tra Vinh, *Synesis*, v. 16, n. 2, 2024. <https://seer.ucp.br/seer/index.php/synesis/article/view/3112>
14. QuangNguyen, H., & HongVu, V. (2025). Folk beliefs in the spiritual life of Southern Khmer people of Vietnam. *JATI- Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 224 – 249. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol30no1.8>
15. Set, S. (2012). Customs, rituals and character paintings of the Khmer ethnic group in the South. *Ethnic culture*.
16. Vo Van Thang, Nguyen Hung Cuong, & Nguyen Thi Ngoc Tho (2015). Religious festivals of the Khmer people in Southwest Vietnam - Viewed from the perspective of values. *Journal of Culture and Arts*, 5, 16-20
17. Thinh, N. D., & Frank Prosc. (2015). Folklore - some contemporary terms. *Social Sciences*.
18. Thuong, T. M. (2020). Khmer folk culture of Miet Ba Thac - Hau Giang province. *Ethnic Culture*.
19. Van, D. N. (2001). Theory of religion and religious situation in Vietnam. *Social Sciences*.
20. Van, D. N. (2005). Theory of religion and religious situation in Vietnam. *National politics*.
21. Van, V. H. (2022). The influence of Taoism on the folk beliefs of the Vietnamese. *The Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6(4), 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.54631/V.S.2022.64-111099>
22. Van, V. H. (2023). Vietnamese people's customs of worshiping the soul: Concept, content and current changes. *The Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 7(3-2). 67-77. <https://doi.org/10.54631/V.S.2023.732-123534>
23. Van, V. H., & Long, N. T. (2019). Identify the values of ancestor worship belief in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. *International Journal of Philosophy*, 7(4), 60-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2001648j.ijp.20190704.14>
24. Vinh, L. Q. (2012). The worship of Neak-Ta in the Khmer community in Tra Vinh province - Past and present [School-level scientific research project]. Tra Vinh University.
25. Vinh, L. Q., & Trieu, T. V. (2015). Traditional festivals of the Southern Khmer people. *Social science*.