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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Spiritual Life and Folk Beliefs in Vietnam in the Modern Era: An Anthropological Approach

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | In the context of modernization and globalization, the spiritual life and folk beliefs in Vietnam have undergone profound transformations. This paper analyzes the changes in folk beliefs in response to the challenges and opportunities brought by modernization, while also assessing the role of social, economic, and cultural factors in the preservation and transformation of traditional values. The research results indicate that despite being influenced by modern factors, folk beliefs continue to hold an important role in the lives of the people. However, rituals and belief practices have had to adapt to fit the new social context. Media and education play a crucial role in disseminating and preserving folk beliefs. The development of modern communication tools, particularly social media, has introduced new ways to access and practice religious rituals, while also posing new challenges for maintaining traditional values. Although education has great potential for preserving and promoting belief values, it has not been adequately emphasized in the national education system, leading to the risk of these values being forgotten. Cultural policies and state management also have a significant impact on the transformation of folk beliefs. The government has implemented various policies to preserve and develop traditional cultural values, but the implementation of these policies often faces difficulties, especially in a rapidly changing society. The differences between regions and communities in practicing beliefs have posed challenges for comprehensively preserving these values. This study demonstrates that folk beliefs in Vietnam have retained their core values and resilience despite the changes brought by modernization. To preserve and promote these values, a close combination of tradition and modernity, with active participation from the community, the state, and researchers, is essential. Only with coordinated efforts and a clear strategy can folk beliefs continue to develop and play an important role in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people. |

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Vietnam has undergone significant economic and social changes, marking the transition from a traditional agricultural economy to a modern industrial and service economy. This process has not only brought about strong economic growth but also led to profound changes in social structures and cultural values. Globalization and urbanization are two of the key factors driving this transformation. Globalization has provided Vietnam with opportunities to access other cultures

and knowledge, but it has also posed challenges in preserving traditional cultural values, including spiritual life and folk beliefs. In the context of rapid urbanization, many people have left rural areas in search of opportunities in large cities, altering social structures and affecting belief practices that are closely tied to rural communities. In the modern context, folk beliefs in Vietnam have faced the need to transform and adapt to survive and thrive. Some traditional beliefs have disappeared or been altered to fit the new context, while others have flourished, even attracting the interest of the younger generation and the urban middle class. This raises questions about how traditional cultural values can be preserved and promoted in the modern context.

Research on spiritual life and folk beliefs in the modern context is important because it sheds light on the role of these cultural factors in contemporary society. In a rapidly changing world, understanding how traditional values are maintained or transformed is crucial for developing effective conservation strategies. This research also contributes to expanding knowledge about Vietnamese culture and society in the context of globalization. By exploring how folk beliefs adapt to economic and social changes, this study can provide valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and communities in preserving and promoting traditional cultural values.

This study aims to analyze the social, economic, and cultural factors impacting spiritual life and folk beliefs in contemporary Vietnam. Specifically, the research will examine how factors such as globalization, urbanization, and economic development have influenced folk belief practices. Additionally, the study will explore the adaptation and transformation of folk beliefs under the influence of modernization. Through this, it will investigate the methods communities use to maintain these beliefs in the modern social context. Finally, the research will offer recommendations for preserving and promoting spiritual cultural values, with the goal of ensuring that folk beliefs retain their meaning and value in modern life.

## MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

### Materials

Historical documents play a crucial role in providing the historical and cultural context for the research. These materials include historical texts, ethnographic documents, and previous studies on folk beliefs in Vietnam. Researching historical documents helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of the origins and development of folk beliefs, as well as how they have adapted and transformed over different historical periods. In addition to historical documents, previous studies and research materials are also important data sources. These materials include scientific articles, monographs, and research theses related to folk beliefs and spiritual life in Vietnam. These documents will be used to build the theoretical foundation for the research, providing analytical frameworks and key concepts that help researchers better understand the subject of study. Referring to previous research also helps identify gaps in the existing literature and clarifies the research questions that need to be addressed.

Field data is an indispensable part of anthropological research. In this study, field data will be collected from rituals, ceremonies, and religious activities within local communities. The researcher will participate in and directly observe these events to gather information about how the rituals are organized, the roles of individuals and the community in religious activities, and the significance of these rituals to the spiritual life of the people. Collecting field data requires active participation from the researcher, as well as the ability to observe and document details. The collected data will include notes on the rituals, interviews with participants, and related visual and audio materials. After data collection, the next step is to analyze the data to draw scientific conclusions. In this study, data analysis methods include content analysis, data coding, and case study comparison. After coding the data, the researcher will conduct comparisons and contrasts among the case studies. This method helps identify similarities and differences between cases, thereby drawing conclusions about the

transformation and adaptation of folk beliefs in the modern context. By comparing case studies, the researcher can discover common factors influencing folk beliefs across different localities, as well as unique factors that only appear in specific contexts.

The comparison of case studies also helps identify patterns or trends in the transformation of folk beliefs. For example, some rituals may retain their traditional structure but change in meaning or manner of execution to suit the new social context. Conversely, other rituals may be completely altered or even forgotten due to changes in social structure or the influence of modernization factors. Through this comparison and contrast, the research not only describes religious practices but also delves into explaining the reasons behind the transformation and adaptation of these beliefs. The results of this analysis will help clarify the challenges and opportunities in preserving and promoting traditional cultural values in the modern context.

### Research methods

Participant observation is one of the distinctive methods of anthropological research, allowing the researcher to directly engage in the community's life to gain a deeper understanding of religious practices and their significance within specific cultural and social contexts. In this study, we will participate in ceremonies, rituals, and other religious activities to observe how these rituals are performed, as well as the role they play in the daily lives of the people. Participant observation not only helps us gather data directly and in detail but also helps us build trust with the research community. This is crucial in understanding cultural and spiritual factors that may not be easily perceived through other research methods.

In-depth interviews are another important method in anthropological research, allowing the researcher to collect information from individuals with deep knowledge of folk beliefs. In this study, we will conduct in-depth interviews with cultural researchers, shamans, religious practitioners, and local residents. The goal of these interviews is to gather detailed information on how folk beliefs are maintained, transformed, and adapted in the modern context. The interview questions will be open-ended to encourage respondents to share their perspectives and personal experiences, providing the researcher with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of religious practices.

Case studies are a research method that focuses on in-depth analysis of one or several specific cases to better understand a phenomenon. In this study, localities with representative folk beliefs will be selected as case studies. The selection of these localities is based on criteria for representing the diverse and characteristic forms of Vietnamese folk culture.

## RESULTS

### Changes in folk belief practices

During the process of modernization and urbanization in Vietnam, many traditional rituals and festivals have undergone significant transformations. Traditional festivals, which were once an integral part of the cultural life of rural communities, have gradually been altered to fit the pace of modern life and economic conditions. In the past, festivals were often organized on a large scale, lasting several days and requiring the participation of the entire community. However, changes in population structure, with a large number of people migrating from rural areas to major urban centers, have led to traditional festivals no longer retaining their original form (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016). Traditional village festivals, such as crop-worshipping festivals and festivals commemorating village deities, were typically organized with the participation of the entire village, including ritual offerings and cultural and sports activities. However, in the modern context, these rituals have been simplified, often retaining only the most essential parts, while cultural and sports activities tend to dominate. The emergence of commercial elements, such as tourism services and trade during festivals, has altered the nature of these rituals. Additionally, traditional worship rituals

have also been simplified and modified to better align with the pace of modern life (Truong, T. H., 2023). This not only changes the essence of the festivals but also leads to the erosion of traditional cultural values.

Another significant change is the emergence of commercial elements in traditional festivals. In many localities, festivals are no longer just an occasion for the community to gather and worship the gods but have become cultural-tourism events aimed at attracting visitors. This change is evident in major festivals such as the Huong Pagoda Festival and the Phu Day Festival, where tourism services and trade have become an indispensable part of the festival (Thai, M., 2023, p. 25). Traditional festivals, which were previously organized on a large scale and lasted for several days, now often only take place over one or two days (Nguyen, V. T., 2023). Although this change helps boost the local economy and promote culture, it also leads to the loss of the sacred and original nature of religious rituals.

The transformation in traditional rituals and festivals can also be seen in the changes in their organization and content. Modern elements, such as the use of lighting, sound, and performance technology, have altered the way traditional rituals are presented and experienced. Moreover, in many cases, traditional rituals have been "modernized" to suit the tastes of the modern public and tourists. For example, lion and dragon dances during the Mid-Autumn Festival or worship rituals at the Huong Pagoda Festival have been adjusted to become more visually appealing and attractive to tourists (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016). One of the main reasons for the changes in traditional rituals and festivals is the shift in social structure and economic factors. The disparity between rich and poor, regional differences, along with the transition from an agricultural to an industrial and service-based economy, have altered how festivals are organized and participated in. In major urban areas, festivals are often organized on a larger scale, with the involvement of government agencies and businesses, while in rural areas, festivals are typically organized more simply, with the primary participation of local residents (Nguyen, 2021, pp. 110-112).

In the modern context, technology and media have become important factors, profoundly impacting the practice of folk beliefs in Vietnam. The internet, social media, and other digital platforms have opened up new ways to access and practice religious rituals, while also creating new challenges for preserving traditional cultural values. One of the biggest changes brought about by technology is the emergence of online rituals. In the past, participation in religious rituals often required individuals to be physically present at worship sites, such as temples, pagodas, and shrines. However, with the development of the internet and social media platforms, many religious rituals have been digitized and live-streamed online. This allows people to participate in rituals remotely, without needing to be physically present. Modernization and media have deeply influenced the spiritual lives of the people. On the one hand, modern media helps to popularize and promote religious values to a broader audience, particularly the younger generation. However, this also leads to the distortion or commercialization of some traditional rituals, diminishing their original and sacred nature (Bui, M. D., 2023). The popularity of online rituals has particularly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic when large gatherings were restricted. Many temples and shrines in Vietnam organized online peace-praying and offering ceremonies, attracting thousands of participants through platforms like Facebook and YouTube. While this method allows people to maintain a connection with their spiritual lives, it also raises questions about the authenticity and effectiveness of rituals without direct participation. Additionally, social media has become an important tool in promoting and maintaining folk belief practices. Through social media pages, temples, pagodas, and shrines can share information about rituals and festivals, as well as call for community participation. With the development of social media platforms, religious practices have become more flexible but also more individualized, lacking the community cohesion of the past (Lieng, J. H. R. K., 2023). This makes religious rituals more accessible, especially to the younger generation—the most active users of social media. However, this accessibility can also lead to the spread of inaccurate information or improper religious practices, diminishing the sacredness of rituals (Vu, H. V., 2020, p. 25).

Technology and media have also changed the way religious rituals are presented and experienced. The use of lighting, sound, and modern performance technology has created new experiences for participants, but it has also eroded the traditional essence of rituals. For instance, worship rituals at temples and pagodas are often combined with grand musical and lighting performances to attract tourists, but this also reduces the solemnity and tranquility that traditional rituals inherently possess. Another aspect of the impact of technology is the change in how religious values are conveyed. Previously, religious values and beliefs were typically passed down from generation to generation through direct rituals and practices within families and communities. However, with the development of technology, these values are increasingly conveyed through modern media. This leads to a shift in how religious values are understood and practiced. These values may be altered or interpreted in different ways, depending on the person conveying them and the medium used. While technology has brought many benefits to the preservation and development of folk beliefs, it also poses significant challenges. The commercialization of religious rituals through online platforms, along with the uncontrolled spread of information, can lead to the loss of the sacredness and core values of rituals. Therefore, the application of technology in religious practices must be done carefully, with thorough consideration to ensure that traditional values are not negatively altered.

Another issue related to the impact of technology and media on religious practices is the popularization and standardization of traditional rituals. Previously, rituals were often localized, with distinctive characteristics specific to each region. However, with the development of media, particularly social media, these rituals have increasingly become standardized and tend to become "mainstream." This occurs when certain rituals are widely promoted and become popular nationwide, leading to different localities adopting these rituals in a uniform manner, overlooking their unique local cultural characteristics (Vu, H. V., 2020, p. 26). Furthermore, this standardization reduces the cultural diversity inherent in religious rituals. Folk beliefs, which originally bore the cultural imprint of each local community, may now become similar in form due to the influence of mass media. This can result in the loss of unique cultural values and characteristics that are specific to certain regions.

One noteworthy phenomenon is the rise of new religious practices, emerging from the combination of traditional and modern elements. With the support of technology, many individuals have created new forms of religious practices or blended traditional beliefs with modern elements to create personalized religious practices. For example, the phenomenon of "online worship," where individuals use social media to organize religious rituals or create virtual worship spaces, has become popular in recent years. However, these new religious phenomena also raise questions about authenticity and cultural value. The creation of new forms of beliefs may lead to the decline of traditional beliefs and erode the communal bonds that are inherent in folk religious practices. Although these phenomena reflect the flexibility and adaptability of religious culture, they also present challenges for maintaining and preserving traditional cultural values in the modern context.

Moreover, modern media has contributed to changing how folk beliefs are accessed and practiced. In the past, religious rituals were typically passed down from generation to generation through family and community relationships. However, with the development of the internet and social media platforms, learning and practicing religious rituals have become easier but also more individualized. This can lead to religious practices becoming detached from the community and losing their inherent social cohesion. A specific example of this change is the rise of "spiritual experts" on social media, who use these platforms to offer spiritual consultation services, organize online rituals, and impart religious knowledge. While these activities may help maintain and develop spiritual values, they also raise issues concerning the legitimacy and regulation of religious activities on social media.

In the modern context, the transformation of folk religious practices is not only the result of social and economic changes but also a consequence of technological and media developments. These

factors have contributed to altering how religious practices are conducted, creating new challenges for the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values. The results of this study show that, although folk beliefs have undergone significant changes under the influence of modern factors, there remains a strong connection between traditional rituals and the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people. Understanding these transformations and the accompanying challenges is essential for preserving and developing folk beliefs in the modern context.

**The role of folk beliefs in modern life**

Folk beliefs play an important role not only in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people but also as a bond that unites community members. Through religious activities, such as traditional festivals, people have the opportunity to gather, share their beliefs, and participate in communal rituals. This not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also fosters unity and cohesion within the community. According to Bui and Nguyen (2016), folk beliefs play a role in promoting democracy and solidarity, where everyone in the community, regardless of age or social status, participates in rituals and festivals, thereby enhancing social bonds (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016, p. 74). Traditional festivals, such as village communal house festivals and temple festivals, are not only occasions to worship deities but also opportunities for the community to demonstrate solidarity by jointly organizing cultural and sports activities. These rituals are often held in communal spaces, creating a harmonious atmosphere where individuals feel they are part of a larger community (Thai, M., 2023, p. 16). In this way, folk beliefs not only meet spiritual needs but also contribute to building and strengthening social relationships.

Additionally, ancestral worship rituals within families are also an important factor in strengthening family and clan ties. Regularly conducting these rituals is not only a way to show respect for ancestors but also an opportunity for family members to gather, share, and strengthen their bonds. Activities such as ancestor worship ceremonies and Tet holidays are not only religiously significant but also important cultural events, contributing to the maintenance and promotion of traditional family and clan values (Chu, Q. T., 2016, p. 27). Festivals and religious activities not only bring joy and relaxation to participants but also provide an opportunity for the community to express gratitude and reverence towards deities and ancestors. They are also opportunities for the younger generation to learn more about the nation's history and traditions, helping them feel proud and more connected to their homeland. Through participation in religious activities, generations are taught the moral, cultural, and spiritual values of their ancestors, helping to strengthen family and community relationships (Thai, M., 2023, p. 18).

Folk Beliefs in Vietnam are not only a part of spiritual life but also play a crucial role in addressing social and psychological issues. In a modern society where people frequently face stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, folk beliefs become a means for individuals to seek comfort, peace, and psychological balance. Folk beliefs, with their rituals such as offerings, peace-seeking ceremonies, and misfortune-relieving rituals, not only fulfill spiritual needs but also help people relieve stress and find faith and hope in life (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016, p. 72). A typical example is the early-year rituals for misfortune-relief, peace-seeking ceremonies, and soul-offering rituals, which are performed to help participants feel more at ease in life. These rituals, while spiritual in nature, also serve as a way for people to confront and overcome worries and difficulties in life. In the context of modern society, where work and life pressures are increasing, these rituals help individuals find peace of mind, stabilize their mental state, and thus continue to face daily life challenges.

Additionally, folk beliefs contribute to solving social issues, especially those related to the relationship between humans, nature, and the community. For example, rain-seeking and harvest-praying rituals in folk beliefs not only express prayers for a bountiful harvest but also demonstrate respect and harmony with nature. These rituals raise awareness of the relationship between humans and the surrounding environment, thereby promoting environmental protection and the sustainable

use of natural resources (Tran, H. L., 2006, p. 58). Folk beliefs also reinforce traditional moral values, such as filial piety, compassion, and solidarity. These values are not only conveyed through religious rituals but also through folk stories, myths, and legends, thereby contributing to educating younger generations about ethics, lifestyle, and a sense of responsibility towards family and community (Thai, M., 2023, p. 20).

Another important aspect of folk beliefs is their ability to meet spiritual needs in a flexible manner, unbound by strict doctrines and religious laws. This flexibility allows folk beliefs to easily adapt to changes in modern society while preserving core values and traditional cultural identities. Thanks to their flexibility and capacity for integration, folk beliefs have become an indispensable part of the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people, especially in the context of modernization and globalization (Nguyen, T. N., 2004, p. 144). In summary, folk beliefs in Vietnam are not only a part of traditional cultural heritage but also play an important role in maintaining community cohesion and addressing psychological and social issues. Religious rituals and activities not only help people find peace and comfort in life but also contribute to preserving and promoting traditional cultural values, thereby creating a harmonious, cohesive, and sustainable society.

**The adaptation of folk beliefs to social changes**

In the context of urbanization and migration, folk beliefs in Vietnam have faced significant challenges. The rapid development of urban areas has not only altered living environments but also profoundly affected the practice and maintenance of traditional beliefs. People migrating from rural areas to large cities bring with them the beliefs and customs of their homeland, contributing to cultural diversity in urban areas. However, the urban environment, with its fast-paced life and limited living space, has changed the way rituals and beliefs are practiced (Chu, Q. T., 2016, p. 83). One significant change is the decline of traditional festivals in urban areas. In rural areas, festivals are often organized with the active participation of the entire community and take place in open spaces. In contrast, in large cities, the space and time allocated for these festivals are often limited, leading to festivals being simplified or conducted in new forms. This not only alters the nature of the festivals but also affects community cohesion, a crucial element in religious life.

Moreover, migration from rural to urban areas has led to a divergence in the practice of folk beliefs. In areas with a high concentration of migrants, migrant communities tend to preserve and practice their traditional beliefs. However, in areas where migrants are less concentrated, the practice of these beliefs tends to diminish or be assimilated into other religious practices. This poses a challenge to the preservation and development of traditional cultural values in the context of urbanization (Hoang, T. L., 2018).

The adaptation of folk beliefs in the context of urbanization is also evident in the emergence of new worship spaces, such as small shrines and temples built in urban areas. These spaces are often organized simply, not as elaborately as in rural areas, but still meet the spiritual needs of the people. This helps maintain the connection between individuals and traditional spiritual values, even in a changed living environment.

Amidst modern societal changes, not only are traditional forms of belief affected, but many new forms of belief have also emerged to meet the spiritual needs of people in the new context. These new forms of belief, although influenced by foreign cultural elements, still inherit and promote the core values of traditional folk beliefs. A notable phenomenon is the revival of traditional rituals and customs in new forms. For example, the hầu đồng rituals in the Mother Goddess worship, although long-standing, have recently been "revived" and become more widely popular, especially among the younger generation. This demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of folk beliefs to social changes while also reflecting the people's desire to reconnect with their roots and traditional values (Hoang, T. L., 2019, p. 75).

Furthermore, the combination of traditional and modern elements in beliefs has created new forms of religious practices. For instance, in many traditional rituals, modern technologies such as sound and lighting are used to enhance spiritual effects and attract participants' attention. These changes not only make the rituals more appealing but also reflect the interaction between traditional values and modern elements in religious life. The new forms of belief also reflect the integration and interaction between cultural elements in the process of globalization. The emergence of personalized religious phenomena, such as online worship or virtual rituals, shows the adaptation of folk beliefs to social changes while also representing the continuation of traditional values in a new context.

Overall, folk beliefs in Vietnam have demonstrated flexibility and adaptability in the face of social changes. Although influenced by modern factors, the core values of folk beliefs have been preserved and promoted, and even revived and developed in new forms. This not only helps preserve the cultural heritage of the nation but also creates new motivations for the development of beliefs in the modern social context.

## DISCUSSION

### Significance of research findings

The research findings on spiritual life and folk beliefs in Vietnam during the modern era have illuminated many important aspects, particularly the adaptation and transformation of folk beliefs in response to social changes. When compared to previous studies, it is evident that factors such as urbanization, migration, and technological development have had profound impacts on religious practices, leading to changes in both form and content.

In earlier studies, folk beliefs were regarded as a core component of national culture, playing a crucial role in preserving and maintaining traditional values. However, more recent studies have shown that although these beliefs continue to hold an important place in the spiritual lives of the people, they have had to adapt to the rapid changes of modern society (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016, p. 74). Notably, recent research has begun to delve deeper into the development and transformation of folk beliefs within the context of globalization and modernization. These studies indicate that while folk beliefs are still preserved, they have been significantly influenced by modern factors, such as the rise of new forms of belief and changes in the way traditional festivals are organized. This is evident in the increasing commercialization of traditional festivals and the simplification of worship rituals to suit the pace of modern life.

Historical and cultural factors play an extremely important role in the preservation and transformation of folk beliefs in Vietnam. Since their inception, folk beliefs have always been closely linked to the nation's historical development. Ancestral worship rituals, worship of deities, and national heroes all reflect respect and gratitude toward past generations, as well as aspirations for a better life. Traditional cultural elements, such as ancestor worship and the organization of festivals, have provided a solid foundation for the existence and development of folk beliefs. These elements not only help preserve traditional cultural values but also act as a cohesive force within the community. However, in the modern context, these factors also face significant challenges. On the one hand, they must adapt to social changes such as urbanization and globalization; on the other hand, they must contend with the intrusion of foreign cultural elements and new forms of belief (Tran, H. L., 2006, p. 58). In most communities, despite many changes due to urbanization, people still strive to maintain traditional religious values. Village festivals, although simplified, are still held annually with the active participation of the people. There is also a focus on passing these values on to younger generations through cultural activities and community education programs. This helps maintain a connection to roots and preserve cultural identity, even in a rapidly changing social environment (Bui, X. D., 2023).

One of the notable points is the transformation in the organization and practice of religious rituals. For example, the rituals of the Mother Goddess worship, which are inherently sacred and complex, have now been simplified or altered to fit new living conditions. However, despite these transformations, these rituals have retained their core values and continue to play a vital role in maintaining the relationship between humans and the spiritual world (Vu, N. K., 2007, p. 75). Historical factors also play an important role in the preservation of folk beliefs. These traditions are not only maintained across generations but are also vividly transmitted through folk tales, myths, and traditional rituals. This helps maintain connections between generations while allowing traditional cultural values to continue to develop in the modern social context.

Overall, the results of this research show that although folk beliefs in Vietnam have faced many challenges in the modern context, they have retained their core values. The transformation and adaptation of these beliefs not only ensure their survival but also allow them to continue to play an important role in the spiritual lives of the Vietnamese people today.

**Impact of modernization on spiritual life**

Modernization has brought profound changes to Vietnamese society, including significant impacts on spiritual life and folk beliefs. One of the biggest challenges that communities face is how to maintain and preserve traditional values while integrating modern elements. Maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity is not only a cultural requirement but also a crucial factor in ensuring the sustainability and development of folk beliefs in the context of globalization (Thai, M., 2023, p. 16). Studies show that in many localities, people have sought to combine traditional and modern elements in religious practices. For example, in worship rituals, traditional forms such as offerings and incense burning are maintained, but they are also combined with modern elements like the use of lighting, sound, and performance technologies to enhance spiritual effects. This combination not only makes the rituals more appealing but also attracts the interest of younger generations, who may be less connected to traditional values (Bui, V. D., & Nguyen, T. C. T., 2016, p. 71). However, balancing tradition and modernity is not always easy. In some cases, modernization can lead to the alteration or loss of the core values of folk beliefs. For example, when traditional festivals become commercialized, the original purpose of these rituals—such as worshiping deities or honoring ancestors—can be forgotten, replaced by activities that are more entertainment-oriented or commercial in nature.

Globalization has brought many opportunities but also numerous challenges for the preservation of folk beliefs. Cultural exchange driven by globalization has led to the importation and spread of foreign cultural values into Vietnam. In many cases, these values have infiltrated and replaced traditional elements, causing changes or even a decline in certain folk belief practices (Tran, H. L., 2006, p. 58). A major challenge is the change in how religious rituals are perceived and practiced. In an increasingly modern society influenced by Western cultures, many young people no longer value or understand the significance of folk beliefs. Instead, they tend to adopt and practice new forms of belief or view traditional rituals as merely cultural practices rather than an integral part of spiritual life. Furthermore, the process of urbanization and industrialization has changed community structures, leading to a decline in communal religious activities. In urban areas, where community bonds are weaker, traditional rituals and festivals are often simplified or even eliminated. This not only diminishes a crucial aspect of spiritual life but also affects community cohesion (Thai, M., 2023, p. 18).

To preserve and develop folk beliefs in the context of globalization, specific measures and reasonable strategies are needed. One important measure is to educate and raise community awareness, especially among younger generations, about the value of folk beliefs. Additionally, it is necessary to create spaces and conditions where people can naturally practice and transmit traditional rituals without the pressures of modern elements (Nguyen, P. L., 2019, p. 75). Education plays a crucial role

in the preservation and dissemination of folk beliefs. However, the current educational curriculum does not adequately focus on teaching traditional cultural values, particularly folk beliefs. As a result, many young people do not fully understand or even respect these values. To address this issue, content related to folk beliefs and culture should be incorporated into the curriculum, helping students recognize the value of cultural heritage and take pride in their national identity (Phan, A., 2023).

Moreover, the preservation of folk beliefs must be approached comprehensively, including the preservation of both tangible cultural elements (such as relics, temples, and shrines) and intangible elements (such as rituals and cultural traditions). Only when these values are preserved and promoted can folk beliefs continue to survive and thrive in the modern social context. The results of this study indicate that although modernization has posed many challenges for the preservation of folk beliefs, it has also provided opportunities for these beliefs to be renewed and adapted. Maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity is key to ensuring that traditional cultural values are not forgotten in the process of globalization.

## Factors influencing the transformation of folk beliefs

Media and education play a crucial role in the formation, maintenance, and transformation of folk beliefs. The rapid development of modern media has opened up many new opportunities for the dissemination and development of folk beliefs, but it has also posed significant challenges. Media, particularly the internet and social media, have become the primary channels for conveying religious and belief values. Thanks to technological advancements, rituals and religious activities can be widely transmitted and promoted, attracting the participation of many people, especially the youth. However, this also means that traditional rituals can be distorted or misunderstood due to the spread of inaccurate or uncontrolled information (Do, Q. H., 2009, p. 34).

Education is also a critical factor influencing the transformation of folk beliefs. Through the national education system, history, and cultural programs can help younger generations better understand the origins and meanings of folk beliefs. However, in the context of modernization, many schools have not adequately integrated content related to folk beliefs into their curricula, leading to these values gradually being forgotten or undervalued. Furthermore, the development of media has significantly impacted how folk beliefs are practiced. Previously, rituals were typically taught and practiced in specific spaces like communal houses, temples, and shrines, but today, they can be conducted online under the guidance of "spiritual experts" on social media. This not only changes the nature of the rituals but can also lead to the dispersion and loss of the communal aspect inherent in folk beliefs.

Cultural policies and state management are other important factors affecting the transformation of folk beliefs. In the context of globalization and modernization, the state has implemented various policies to preserve and promote traditional cultural values, including folk beliefs. However, the implementation of these policies sometimes faces challenges, particularly in balancing preservation and development (Hoang, T. L., 2018, p. 86). One of the major challenges is the regional and demographic differences in how beliefs are practiced. While some regions continue to maintain traditional rituals, in other areas, due to the impact of modernization and urbanization, these rituals have been simplified or significantly altered. The state has attempted to establish regulations to preserve traditional values, but the implementation and oversight can be difficult due to the complexity and diversity of belief practices across the country (Nguyen, P. L., 2019, p. 75). The state's cultural management policies also affect the preservation of religious sites and spaces. The preservation and restoration of religious monuments not only protect tangible cultural values but also the spiritual and religious values associated with these sites. However, some restoration projects have faced criticism for diminishing the ancient and authentic appearance of these monuments, leading to backlash from the community and researchers (Tran, H. L., 2006, p. 88).

Overall, cultural policies and state management play a crucial role in guiding and preserving folk beliefs. However, for these policies to be truly effective, close coordination is needed between managing agencies, researchers, and local communities. Only with consensus and active participation from all stakeholders can folk beliefs be sustainably preserved and promoted in modern society.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth look into the adaptation and transformation of folk beliefs in the rapidly changing social context. The adaptation of folk beliefs to social changes is clearly evident through the integration of modern elements into traditional rituals. People have creatively maintained and promoted belief values by combining tradition with modernity. Additionally, the revival and development of traditional belief forms in new ways also demonstrate the flexibility of folk beliefs. Rituals like hầu đồng in the Mother Goddess worship have become more popular, especially among the youth, showing that traditional beliefs still hold strong vitality and attract interest from various social strata.

Media and education play a vital role in maintaining and transforming folk beliefs. Modern media, especially social media, have become effective tools for promoting and spreading belief values to the public, particularly the youth. However, this also presents significant challenges as information about beliefs can be distorted or inaccurate, leading to improper practices of rituals. Education, particularly within the national education system, needs to place greater emphasis on teaching folk beliefs and traditional cultural values. This will help younger generations better understand the origins and significance of folk beliefs, thereby contributing to the preservation and promotion of these values in the modern context.

Cultural policies and state management have a significant impact on the preservation and development of folk beliefs. The state's cultural preservation policies have helped maintain traditional values, but the implementation process sometimes encounters difficulties due to the diversity and complexity of belief practices nationwide. Policies for the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including religious monuments and traditional rituals, must be implemented in a balanced manner to ensure that preservation does not compromise the authenticity of cultural values. Restoration of monuments should be carefully conducted to avoid "modernization" that diminishes the ancient and original appearance of these cultural sites.

Modernization and globalization have brought many challenges to the preservation of folk beliefs. Foreign elements infiltrating Vietnamese cultural life have altered the practice and perception of beliefs. However, this also provides an opportunity for folk beliefs to evolve and adapt to the new context. Preserving and promoting folk beliefs in the context of modernization requires a close combination of tradition and modernity. Specific measures and reasonable strategies are needed to ensure that traditional cultural values are not only preserved but also flourish in modern society. This requires active participation from the community, researchers, and cultural management agencies.

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