

Abstract

This doctoral thesis discusses the manifestations of animism among Khmers in Cambodia and in south Vietnam. The subject is viewed from the culturally-anthropological perspective and attention is paid primarily to the specifics that are present in the everyday life of Khmers. The paper characterizes the manifestations of animism within the scope of the selected hypotheses and perceives this topic through various ethnological paradigms. The doctoral thesis marginally introduces animism as a phenomenon, the Khmer as a people, animistic rituals, and traditional Khmer feasts. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the importance of the shaman and other spiritual figures in the Khmer religious conception, the topic of healing, rites of passage, specific Khmer supernatural entities, and places where they are worshipped. The entire thesis includes the comparison of theoretical knowledge with the results of empirical research in selected areas. Using specific examples, it is demonstrated that animism is a part of syncretism, which is still an important component of the Khmer culture and significantly influences important life decisions. Rather than a unified discourse that would strictly subscribe to linear composition, the doctoral thesis is a prolegomenon to the phenomenon of animism in the Khmer culture and aims to spark a discussion about whether this religion may today be interpreted only as a certain historical resentment or as an aspect so much intertwined with contemporary Buddhism that it influences the everyday life of the population of rural Cambodia more than any other kind of faith or socio-political customs.

Key words: religion, animism, faith, Khmer people, ritual, magicman, natural medicine, shrine, pagoda, buddhism, syncretism