

Cambodian Traditional Marriage

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Wedding in Khmer

- Wedding = អាវាហ_វិវាហ_ + អាវាហ" = វិវាហ"
 - **Gavah³** = Aviahak = bringing bride to groom's house
 - **vivah³** = Viviahak = bringing groom to bride's house
- The meaning of the word tell us where the celebration of Cambodian traditional wedding is taken place.
- Story of male and female mountain in Kg. Cham
- Sources:
 - Preah Ream and Preah Neang Sitha
 - Preah Thorng and Neang Neak (Naga Princess)
 - Krishna and Cheali (Son & Daughter of Versondor)
 - Many more
- Ceremonies and Songs that lasts from 3 to an entire week during which families, friends, and other member of community come together to share in the celebration. Each ceremony and songs symbolizes a particular religious ceremony or epics/stories in the religion or Khmer myth.
- Why 3 days? Auspicious number in our belief
 - 1 for Buddha
 - 1 for Dhama (teaching of Buddha)
 - 1 for Sangha (brotherhood of monk)
- In modern day, the celebration is just completed in one and a ½ day. That is to say some steps or ceremonies in the celebration has been shorten, re-ordered, mixed, or excluded.

- Day I: Tnay Chol Rorng – Building wedding houses
- Day II: Sisa Kamnot – Eating areca nut & betel leave
- Day III: Salutation or kow-tow

Day I: Tnay Chol Rorng

- We build wedding houses of 3 blocks/rooms
 - 1 for bride's house, ritual and food
 - 1 for reception of guests
 - 1 for groom's house in front which there is a devada's house
- Note: this first day is like a preparation for the other 2 days. The families bring in equipments, materials, fruits, Khmer desert (esp. An Sorm, Khorm)

Day II: Sisa Kamnot

- **Sen Doun Ta** – Call to ancestors: to express gratitude to both bride's and groom's ancestral spirit as well as to inform the spirit about the celebration and ask for blessing.
- **Sisa Kamnot** – Eating areca nuts & betel leave: parents of bride and groom eat the nuts and leave to acknowledge the marriage date they promised.

Day II, Sisa Kamnot, Cont.

- **Kat Sork** – Cutting hair – cleansing ceremony
It represents a fresh start to their new relationship together as husband and wife. The ceremony is said to purify and cleanse the bride and groom to bring blessing, well-wishes, good fortune, beauty, happiness, prosperity, and longevity. The Singers representing visiting deva and parents cut bride's and groom's hair and then throw away. (Preah Thorng & Neang Neak story)
- **Sen Krong Peali** – to inform the local spirit and offer the blessing and merit to Peali (story of Peali and Buddha).

Day II, Sisa Kamnot, Cont.

- **Sot Mun** – Blessing from the monks
Traditionally, three to five monks or as many as seven will invoke blessing for the couple
- **Counting the fruit** – the more the better
- **Bok Leak** – Getting artificial dye
We pound the plant to get the artificial color and apply it on the bride's teeth (story to tell)

Day II, Sisa Kamnot, Cont.

- **Kat Khan Sla** – Honoring of the parents
This is a reminder to the bride of the hardship of raising a child. There is a song of parental duties, which the bride and groom will one day experience. The bride holds an umbrella over her mother, a gesture that symbolizes the reversal of protective role of her parents. The groom offer some amount of money or gift to the parent as to thanks for their hardship.
- **Areca flower ceremony** (story to follow)

O sweet daughter of mine,
Daughter with the smooth, bright face,
Your mother is waiting
To give you a way
And do as tradition says
While I was heavy with the child

O daughter of mine,
I was so worry,
Food with salt and spice
I dared not eat
And when I neared my term,
O daughter of mine,
My body would tremble and shake,
I was afraid I wouldn't cross the waters

O daughter of mine,
That I wouldn't cross
And reach the other side

As for your father, he worked so hard
O daughter, he worked day and night,
Without thought for himself
O beloved daughter, beloved daughter of mine
You are fulfilling your mother's dreams
O daughter of mine
Now that a husband you have

Day III: Salutation/Kow-Tow

Early morning wise man leads the groom to kow-tow deva and waiting for the sun rise. When it comes the right time, the groom kow-tow to the sun before the procession to the bride's house

- **Hér Kaun Kamloh** - Groom's Procession

It symbolizes the journey of the prince Preah Thorng to meet his bride the Naga Princess Neang Neak. The procession approaches the bride's home bearing wrapped platters of gifts, usually fruits and Khmer desserts, and is led by a band of musicians and singers.

Day III: Salutation, Cont.

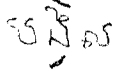
Upon arrival, me ba (a well-respected member of the bride's family who serves as its representative) comes out greet the procession. Mé ba and chao maha (representative of the groom's party) run through a rhetoric verbal to invited the groom and the rest into bride's house

Traditionally, the bride cleanses the groom's feet and offers him areca nuts and betel leave to eat before he goes up into the house, sitting toward east and waiting for upcoming ceremonies.

Day III: Salutation, Cont.

Then a marriage female invites the bride to come out of her room to sit in pair on the left hand of groom for the ceremonies.

- **Bongvil Porbil** – Passing the blessing or candle rotation
4 married couples are asked to gather in a circle around the bride and groom. Three pure wax candles are lit and handed from person to person who passes his or her right hand over it in a sweeping motion toward the bride and groom sending a silent blessing. The candles are passed clockwise for 7 times. (story to tell)



Day III: Salutation, Cont.

- **Sompeas Ptem** – Pairing ceremony or knot tying
The guests come forward and tie the cotton thread a knot on the right wrist of the groom and left wrist of the bride. The couple have to wear the knot at least 3 days. This ceremony is customarily considered an ideal opportunity for the guests not only bless the couple but also to take picture with them.
Then it comes to an end, the groom holds the bride's part of the dress (represent tail) to go back into her room where both of them feed one another food, Khmer dessert, coconut.

After Marriage

The couple go to offer to the monks for homage to the ancestral spirit. After that they visit their families, relatives, etc.

Note: The ceremony is not to legitimize the husband and wife relationship. Only after the acknowledgment from the authority of application for marriage registration concluded can legitimize their relationship.

Thanks