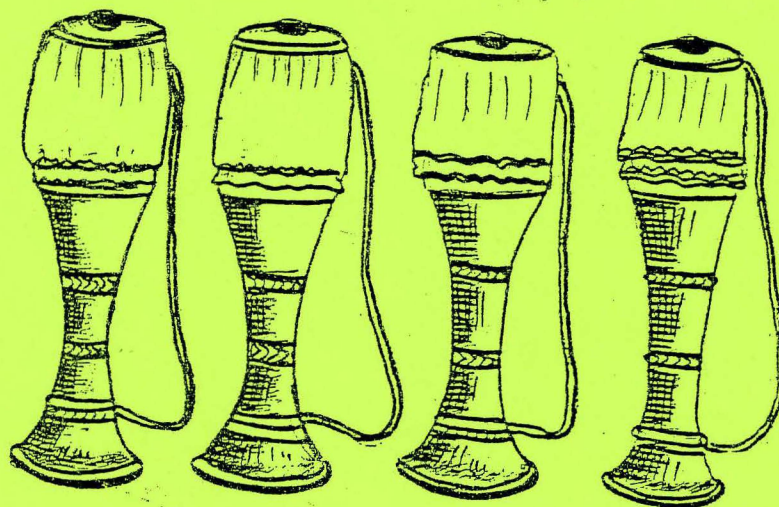


Cambodian Popular Dance

THE CHHAYAM



DRUMS

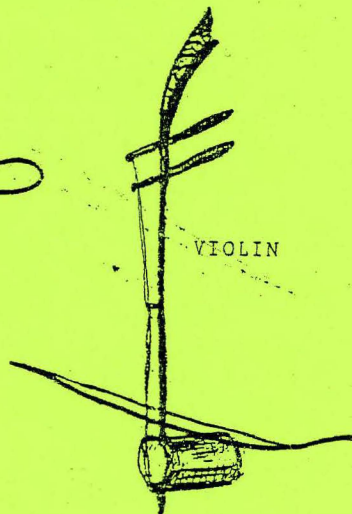


GONG & MALLET

RHYTHM STICKS



CYMBALS



VIOLIN

By: Ngon Som
Yon Pich

ទំនុកច្រៀងមានដូចតទៅ៖

- ខ្នាត ^{២១} សូមគោរព	ពួកម៉ែទាំងអស់	យាយតាមីនមា	បងប្អូនទាំងឡាយ
ញាតិមិត្តតូចធំ	រស់នៅជិតឆ្ងាយ	ដោយភ្នំរករាយ	អស់ពីដួងចិត្ត។
- ម្តាយអើយ!	ផ្លូវលានកាលីទី	អ្នកស្រុកមិនដែលឮ	ប្រពន្ធអែប្តី
អីទៅអែមក	បែកក្រឡទឹកត្រី	ប្រពន្ធអែប្តី	បែកឆ្នាំងត្រីខ។
- ម្តាយអើយ!	ផ្លូវលានឈើមេឃ	បានប្តីខ្លាត់ភ្នែក	ប្តីនដាំបាយឆ្ងាញ់
ចេះស្រ្តីផ្គុក	ចេះបុកត្រីក្រាញ់	ចេះដាំបាយឆ្ងាញ់	ខ្លោចផងនៅផង។
- អូ! បើមិត្តយកប្តី	មិត្តអើយកុំយកប្តីសក់ញែក	យកក្បាលទំពែក	ចេះប្តីនធន់ថ្លៃ
ទំពែកក៏ទំពែកចុះ	ឲ្យតែទំពែកជា	ទំពែកដល់លលាដី	ខំណាមិត្តអើយកុំព្រាចៃ
ទំពែកចាំធំថ្លៃ	ចែកតំប៉ាន់ជើង។		

១១- វង់តន្ត្រីឆៃយ៉ាំ

វង់តន្ត្រីឆៃយ៉ាំមានភាពរស់រវើកប្លែក ដែលអាចទាក់ទាញអារម្មណ៍អ្នកស្តាប់ឲ្យរំភើបយ៉ាងខ្លាំង។ ថ្វីត្បិតតែគ្មានប្រើឧបករណ៍សម្រាប់លេងចេញជាសាច់បទ។

ឧបករណ៍សម្រាប់លេងក្នុងវង់តន្ត្រីនេះមាន៖ ស្តរវែងចំនួន៤ (អាចមានតិចឬច្រើនទៅតាមលទ្ធភាព), ក្រាប់, គងម៉ង់, ឈើង, និងឆាប។

ដោយសារវង់តន្ត្រីឆៃយ៉ាំមានប្រជាប្រិយភាពក្នុងសង្គមខ្មែរ និងមានឥទ្ធិពលអាចទាក់ទាញមហាជនបាន។ តើតែងតែរក្សាពិធីសប្បាយផ្សេងៗមានដូចជាពិធីបុណ្យផ្កា បុណ្យភិរិទ្ធ ពិធីបំបួសនាគ។ល។

^{២១} ខ្នាត = ខ្ញុំទាទ បងប្អូនខ្មែរសុខុម ទៅតែប្រើពាក្យនេះដដែល ហេតុដល់បច្ចុប្បន្ន។

Chhaiyaim

Chhaiyaim groups play music with a lively character that draws the attention of listeners despite the fact that the ensemble has no instruments that play a melody. Instruments used to play this type of music include four long drums (there can be more or less, depending on the resources available), as well as a Krap, Kong Mang, Chhing, and Chhap.

Because this music is very popular and can attract crowds, Chhaiyaim is often played at festivals such as the Flower Festival, at Kathen (festivals raising money for the temple), the ceremony to bombus neak (ordain monks).

The musicians who play Chhaiyaim are talented enough to gesture and mock while beating their drums with various parts of the



រូបលេខ១៦៖ ឆៃយ៉ៃមក្នុងពិធីបុណ្យកម្រិតឆ្នាំ២០០១។

Figure 16: Chhaiyaim group performing locally at a Kathen ceremony.

ដោយយោលទៅតាមទេពកោសល្យរបស់
សិល្បករដែលគេចេះឲ្យកថាក្បាច់ ហើយវាយស្ករ
ដោយប្រើបាតដៃ ចុងដៃ កែងដៃ ឬដុំដៃ ធ្វើឲ្យចង្វាក់
ស្ករឆៃយ៉ៃមានការឆ្លងឆ្លើយគ្នាពីសាច់ភ្លេងមួយទៅ
សាច់ភ្លេងមួយទៀត ប្លែកគ្នាជាលំដាប់។

ទន្ទឹមគ្នានឹងការឡកនេះដែរ មានភ្នំអ្នកវាយ
ស្ករម្នាក់ជាអ្នកស្រែកច្រៀងមួយយូរ ហើយអ្នក
ផ្សេងៗទៀតជាអ្នកបន្ត។ ទំនុកប្លែកសុទ្ធសឹងតែជា
ពាក្យកំប្លែង ដើម្បីឲ្យអ្នកស្តាប់មានសំណើច
សប្បាយក្តាកក្តាយ។ តែនិយសេចក្តីនៃពាក្យពេចន៍ខ្លះ
គេច្រៀងសម្រាប់លើកសរសើរថ្នាក់ដឹកនាំ ឬអ្នក
ផ្តើមពិធីបុណ្យផងដែរ (រូបលេខ១៦)។

hand. Chhaiyaim is characterized by phrases
played by one instrument and then answered by
another, passing different rhythms back and
forth. Along with this playful exchange, there is
also a musician who sings out phrases while
others accompany him. Almost all the words
and phrases are comical in nature, causing
listeners to laugh. Some of the phrases,
however, also praise leaders or those who have
organized the ceremonies at which this music is
performed (figures 16).

THE CHHAYAM

Historical Background:

The Committee on Khmer Traditions, affiliated with the Buddhist Institute of Cambodia, undertook research on the Chhayam in 1964. Making use of various documents as well as interviewing several groups of Chhayam players, they concluded that the history of this popular dance cannot be definitely recorded as to when, where, why, or how it came into existence in Cambodia. It could, however, be assumed that the Chhayam belonged to the pre-historic period of an old Khmer civilization which the researchers in world civilizations have included with an Austro-Asiatic civilization.

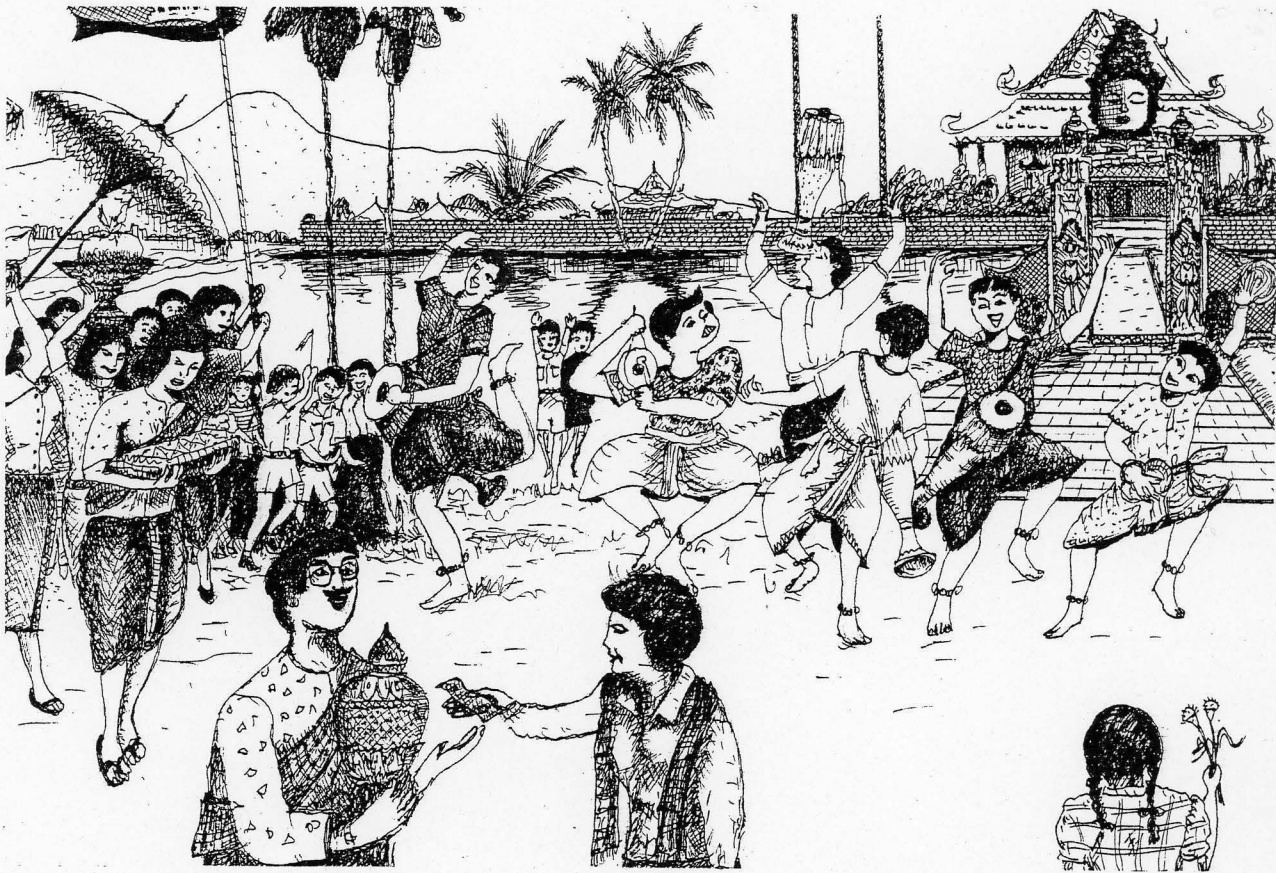
This assumption may be true, because when we watch the Chhayam band, the players often swing their bodies, jump, and leap backwards and forwards, or sometimes from side to side. These gesticulations and the words of the panic-stricken songs of the players also illustrate the sense of fear and joy which the autochthonous people used to have since they did not feel comfortable communicating their ideas, thoughts, or concepts to one another. It appears as though they were trying to persuade other people of their sincerity and humbleness and were anxious to share joy and amusement with others as well. The dramatic unity reveals the real fact that they were eager to live in unity and harmony with others for the sake of the common interests of all.

In other words, we may assume that the autochthones merely knew how to jump and leap in some type of performance, but that their articulate abilities and artistic feelings were inaccurate and unorganized. The exclamatory sounds of the words in their songs, such as Oh! Aih! Ah!, or Kawei Kawo!, and so on, which have no clear meaning, can be interpreted as a kind of expression of joy bursting from the hearts of the autochthones who did not seem to have a definite language in those days.

We may further assume that in a later period of time, when the ancestors of the Khmer people became aware of the significance of artistic expression, they developed the Chhayam into a new form with more rhythmic songs, and better musical instruments and costume decorations. The old form, which belonged to the autochthones, remained the same, although a new series of actions had been added to meet the need for artistic value. The lyrics, the epics, the movements, and the gestures of the players constitute other forms of artistic expression of the country, which might explain the basic principles of Cambodian manner and their joy of life.

The traditional Chhayam band always played a very important part in Cambodian society. Some Chhayam bands were organized in the villages, while others were organized by the laymen members of monasteries. A Chhayam band performed in parades and for certain important religious ceremonies and at traditional festivals, such as Kathina, an annual ceremony during which the laity gave clothing to the Buddhist monks during November, and Bon Phka, a traditional festival at which monetary contributions were collected to build a school or temple. The musicians usually played in the yards of houses, gathering in a circle to perform, and then led the processions to the pagodas. As they led the way to the pagodas, all the people would come out to watch them pass by, to listen to the music, to help sing songs, or to dance in the

road if they wished. Sometimes, a band from one village met another band from another village as they traveled toward the same pagoda. They would join together for the rest of the trip, teasing each other while playing exactly the same happy music. They encouraged the people along the way to join in the festivities. Everyone had fun. The audience responded with laughter as they watched the antics, and often unconsciously mimicked the musicians. In other words, the audience would be so engrossed in the music, swaying back and forth with opened mouths and eyes staring ahead, that a fly landing on one's nose would go by unnoticed.



In ancient times the Chhayam performance never took place on a stage, but in modern times they very often do.

It has been noticed that the Chhayam survived so long and still popular among the Khmer people for two reasons:

1. The simplicity of its musical instruments and other materials needed for the band, and the limited number of players needed, as compared to other forms of popular dance.

2. Onlookers were made to feel happy, cheerful, and brave, even when worried, or in a state of sadness, by the tremendous sound of the music, the humorous lyrics and the excited movements, jumping, and leaping of the players.

Sampot: A brightly colored sarong-like garment, the Sampot, is pulled up between the legs to produce a pant-like effect when tucked in at the waist in back.

Shirt: A brightly colored short sleeved, slipover shirt is worn.

Scarf: A $1\frac{1}{2}$ meter length of fabric is tied around the waist with both ends hanging down on the right or left side to allow freedom of movement in playing the drums or other instruments.

Masks: laughing-face masks (or make-up) are used by the performers to alter their appearance.

THE PLAYERS

A Chhayam band has four or more drummers, one gong player, one cymbal player, one rhythm-stick player, and one violinist. All the players are men who have been carefully chosen for their wit and sense of humor. They are very exuberant and play each instrument as if they were part of it. The drummers, for example, perform with a jerky style and lots of movements as they keep the rhythm going. Some players pantomime as they play, performing now like a monkey, now like a clown, and later as a jumping, kicking, karate fighter.

THE PERFORMANCE RITUAL

To begin the performance, the cymbal player gives a loud shout, "Yak Aaah!" The other players answer, "Hey!" At the same moment, the drums, the rhythm-sticks, and the cymbals are played rhythmically, in unison, first loudly, then dwindling to a quieter, steady sound. This is done three times. Then, the gong player beats the gong giving a cadence of regular musical rhythm. The cymbal player moves to the center of the semi-circle, beginning grimaces, making funny gestures, turning his face from side to side, walking with bent knees and shaking his buttocks, which are aimed upwards. After a few moments, another player, with a laughing-face mask or colored painted face, joins in the dancing, teasing other players in his own witty way. The drummers and the rhythm-stick player may join the dancing in the same manner. In recent times, a girl usually dances with the group. She performs gracefully and smoothly. The musicians tease her and make fun of her as she dances. Since the men may not touch her, she teases them by dancing closer and closer to them and then moving dramatically away.

THE SONGS

After the introductory action described above, the players begin to sing songs that follow the cadence of the music and dancing. There are a large number of unwritten songs by unnamed composers which many different groups have sung from generation to generation. The following are some of the popular imaginative Chhayam songs sung by almost every Chhayam group throughout Cambodia:

One singer:

1. ទ័ពរេយាម៉ាស្កាត់ !

Hayo ma-skat!

Entire group:

ទ័ពយ៉ាត់ម៉ាស្កាត់ !

Hayat ma-ski!

ទ្រុឌទ្រោមម៉ាស្កាត់ !

Hayo ma-skat!

មេម៉ាយកូនពីរ !

Memay kon pee!

ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី !

Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi!

ទ្រុឌទ្រោមម៉ាស្កាត់ !

Hayat ma-ski!

ស្អាតហើយសមផងៗ

Sat heoy sam phang!

2. កាវ៉ៃកាវ៉ូ !

Kawei kawo!

កាវ៉ៃកាវ៉ូ !

Kawei kawo!

លោកខ្លាំងឆ្អែត !

Lokkhe bang chhat!

ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី !

Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi!

ខ្លែក្រវាត់ !

Khse kravat!

ខ្លែក្រវាត់ !

Khse kravat!

ឆ្អែតប៉ុនលោកខ្លាំង

Chhat bang lokkhe!

3. ឯណាវើយ ?

Ena veuy!

ឯណាវើយ ?

Ena veuy!

លបមើលកូនគេ !

Lapmeul kon ke!

ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី ! ហេ, អី !

Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi! Hey, Hi!

ឯណោះទេ !

Enes te!

ឯណោះទេ !

Enes te!

គេមានប្តីហើយ

Ke mean bdei heuy!

Songs # 1 and # 2 do not seem to have much meaning. For example, Hayo ma-skat! Hayat ma-ski! and Kawei kawo! Khse kravat! in the first two lines are only a kind of expression used to attract the attention of the audience, but the third lines of the songs show clear words and definite meaning. In the third line of the first song, one singer sings, "A two-children widow," and the entire group answers, completing the sentence, "Is pretty and fit." In the third line of the second song, one singer sings, "The moon is on the halo," and the entire group replies, "The halo is on the moon." The Khmers interpret the word "halo" as the umbrella of the moon, so that it means the sun has an umbrella, and the umbrella has a moon. The words, "Hey, Hi!" in the fourth line of every song, are sung by all the singers. This is an additional line made up of exclamatory sounds or words that all the players use to tease one another at the end of each song.

The third song seems to be simple words with a definite meaning which can be translated, "Where are you? We are right here! Look secretly at someone's daughter! She has just got married!"

All the Chhayam songs are dialogs that the players use to question and answer one another in such a way as to create a pleasant atmosphere among themselves as well as for the audience. Studies of the sounds of the words in the songs and the gestures of the players indicate that the Chhayam was indeed the oldest dance form found in Cambodia.

