

# [Khmer new year in cambodia](https://assignbuster.com/khmer-new-year-in-cambodia/)

[Countries](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/countries/)

Khmer New Year in Cambodia Khmer New Year, or ‘ Bon Chol Chhnam Thmei’ in the Khmer language, is the greatest traditional festival and national holiday in Cambodia, and the celebration last for three days. Khmer New year starts on April the 13th, 14th or 15th depending on the ancient horoscope “ Maha Sangkran”, 2012 it starts on the 13 of April. The majority of the Cambodians are still farmers and Khmer New Year marks the end of the harvest season when farmers enjoy the fruits of their labor and relax before the start of the rainy season.

In the villages the people engage in traditional Khmer games, they play games such as the Bas Angkunh ‘ seed throwing’, Chaol Chhoung ‘ twisted-scarf throwing’, Leak Kanseng ‘ twisted-scarf hide’ and dance to traditional Khmer songs. The first day of Khmer New Year is called “ Maha Sangkran”, Sangkran means movement and refers to that the sun is moving into a new Zodiac sign and Maha means great. Some say that Maha Sangkran means welcome to the new spirits. In the morning the Cambodians will go to the temple and offerfoodto the monks and receive blessings.

During this time the Cambodians clean and decorate their homes and prepare fruits and drinks on a table or in their spirit house to welcome the new spirits. Elderly people like to meditate or pray the Dharma because they believe that any spirit that comes to their home will stay with them throughout the whole year and take care of theirfamily. The second day is called “ Wanabot” and it is the day that they offer gifts to parents, grandparents and elders.

In the evening of this day many Cambodians will go to the temple and build a mountain of sand to remember their ancestors who have passed away and have the monks give them blessings ofhappinessand peace. The third day is called “ Leung Sakk” and this is the first day of the new year. In the morning the Cambodians go to the temple and perform a ceremony where the mountain of sand gets blessed. The last ceremony is called “ Pithi Srang Preah” and the purpose of this ceremony is to honor and to give a special cleansing to Buddha Statues, the monks, elders, grandparents and parents.

During this ceremony the participators apologize for any mistakes they have made during the last year. The Khmer New Year is not only a great festival it is also an opportunity to pass on the Cambodian traditions to the next generation. The History of Khmer New Year Posted on April 10, 2009 by Chanroeun Pa| 4 Comments ?????????????????????????????? In ancient countries of Chompou Tvip (the central continent of the seven continents surrounding Mount Meru) the elder people adopted the Khmer New Year’s date in Khe Mikase (January), i. e. he early year. According to the lunar calendar, they formerly chose three seasons including Heman Radov or winter, Kimha Radov ir hot season and Vasan Radov or rainy season. Since Chol Sakarach (Lesser Era) they have formally adopted the solar calendar and held the Khmer New Year Festival in Khe Chet (fifth month) that is a free time from their farming. Four main seasons in the solar calendar contain winter, spring, summer and autumn. The Khmer people have adopted the fifth solar month, known as Khe Chet, to celebrate their New Year festival.

Usually, according to the solar calendar, the Khmer New Year falls on the 13th of April although sometimes it falls on the 14th of April. The auspicious occasion of the Khmer New Year is detailed in the astrological almanac and extends over three days. The first day is known as Maha Sangkran or “ Great Almanac Day”, the second day is called Veara Vanabath or “ Worshipping Day”, and the third day is known as Veara Leung Sak or “ Rank and Promotion Day”. Of the three days Veara Leung Sak is considered the most auspicious.

The history of the Khmer New Year is closely connected to the seven signs of the zodiac for the week. The legend of the New Year is detailed in the Almanac which says: In ancient, happier times, a young man by the name of Thoamabal, the son of a tycoon, had an extensive knowledge of three Vedas (ancient books on Hinduism) by the age of seven. Thoamabal’s father built a temple under the spread of a large Chrey tree (a fig tree) on the banks of a river that was home to many species of birds. He had an innate ability that enabled him to understand the languages of birds. Thoamabal’s attributes allowed him to become a layman in charge of religious ceremonies for all classes of people. Upon hearing this news another religious leader Kabel Maha Prohm, decided to challenge Thoamabal with tree riddles. He vowed that if Thaomabal could successfully answer the riddles he, Kabel Maha Prohm, would be beheaded; however if Thoamabal could not answer the riddles correctly then it would be Thoamabal who would be beheaded. Thoamabal insisted on having seven days to answer the puzzling enigma until Kabel Maha Prohm agreed.

For six days Thoamabal could not solve the problems and knew that he faced the prospect of being killed by Kabel Maha Prohm the next morning. He therefore decided to hide himself and let his life fade away by natural causes. He hid himself beneath a pair of sugar palm trees in which a pair of eagles were nesting, that night Thoamabal overheard the eagles talking. The female asked, “ What will we eat tomorrow morning? ” The male eagle replied, “ We will eat the flesh of Thoamalobal because tomorrow he is going to be beheaded by Kabie Maha Prohm due to his inability to solve the riddles”.

The female then asked, “ What are the riddles? ” The male answered, “ The first riddle is, where is luck to be found in the mornine? ” Of course the answer is that luck is on the face because people always take water to wash their faces. The second riddle asked, where is luck located at noon? It is on the chest because people always take water to wash their chests. Finally, the third question asked, where is luck located in the evening? The answer is that luck is on the feet because people always wash their feet in the evening.

Thoamabal overheard all of the conversation and so happily returned to his temple. In the morning Kabel Maha Prohm came to ask Thoamabal if he could answer the three riddles. Thoamabal successfully answered each of the riddles. Kabel Maha Prohm realixing he had failed, called his seven daughters, who were maids of Branma, to learn of his fate. Kabal Maha Prohm said, “ Your father is foing to be beheaded in front of Thoamabal. If my head is set on the earth , if will set fire to Earth, if my head is thrown into the air, the rain will evaporate, if my head is thrown into the sea, the sea will dry up.

Therefore I ask you, my seven daughters to get a holy metal tray on which to set your father’s head”. Having said this, he beheaded himself and his head was passed to Neang Toungsa, the eldest of his daughters. She placed her father’s head on the holy tray and then proceeded to walk around Mount Meru for one hour, respectfully keeping the tray on her right hand. She then took the tray to the temporary sanctuary of Phnom Kailas. At Phnom Kailas, Preah Visakam created a hall where seven holy glasses (Pheakabatei Saphea) were set. The glasses were for use by angels during ceremonies.

Each year the seven angels took turns to invoke the head of Kabel Maha Prohm to and complete a holy procession around Mount Meru. Following the holy procession the angels returned to their heaven. The Seven Angels of the Almanac: If the annual procession talls on a Sunday then the day will be known as Toungsa, Monday is Kooreak, Tuesday is called Reaksa, Wednesday is  Kereney, Friday is known as Kemera and Saturday is Mahaotra. During the Khmer New Year Festival, youths gather to play popular traditional games such as Chaol Chhoung (throwing a ball) and Bas Angkunh (throwing brown seeds).

The youths are normally divided into female and male teams to play these games. In some parts of Cambodia, e. g. Siem Reap and Battambang, they play a game known as the “ Trot Dance”. Trot performers dance and ask for alms from house to house in their village. A man will ride on a long curved stick with a deer’s head on one side and with a cluster of grass on the other side like the deer’s tail. Two men pretend to be hunters and are armed with a crossbow. When they receive alms they will donate it for the benefit of the local pagoda.

In villages along the Mekong Riverinthe province of Kandal women gather to rowboats in front of the pagodas. This action is believed to appease the crocodiles. This custom originated long ago when many crocodiles lived in the river. In some villages, people trample on effigies to appease the ghosts that live in the trees near the pagodas and ask for happiness in the coming year. The Khmer people will gather together and visit pagodas and temples on the occasion of the Khmer New year. Each year many residents from other provinces visit Angkor Wat to worship to the powerful gods and trace their ancestors’ heritage.