Photos of Preah Bat Norodom Psychiatric clinic in Phnom Penh

Waiting Room at the Outpatients Department

The ward with 6 beds for in-patients. Although very rare in Cambodia for patient to be admitted. Only 2 in-patients clinics in Cambodia.

Different Categories of Traditional Healers in Cambodia

In Cambodia it is currently documented that there are 113 different types of traditional healers. Below are a few of these categories

Aacaa kamea than – Spiritual Healer who can meditate and travel, levitate out of his body.

Aacaa Kamoc – Responsible for Marriages and Funerals

Aacaa vat - Temple Clergy

Acaa vat – Temple Clergy / Lustral water

Aacaa Kmaoac – clergy, who assists the monk and learns from him. They use:
Lustral water
Ritual spraying
Blowing
Chanting
Rituals
Dhama’s

Baarea Mey – Kan  famous (royal) ancestor spirit
Sanhet
Laek Taa San Thet – male elder spirit (any)

Kru
Kan - protect guardian, teacher
Santet –Communication support from the previous teacher, spirit. Or communication with the ghost of ancestor

Kru osat boran – Kru who only uses traditional herbs, no spirits

Monk

TBA -  Traditional Birth Attendant

Baramee Santak - Medium who channels a royal spirit –both female and male

Mreeng Koengveel Lol – healer who has a child spirit
Uses Rat claws in a sieve in the 4 different cardinal directions

Sin Sae – Chinese Traditional healer with herbs

Ta Cii Lay – An elder who performs on Holy days

Tabon – An Ascetic who resides in the woods. They use:
Magic
Herbs
Meditation

**Traditional Healers in Cambodia**

While in Cambodia, working with an indigenous research team, I was able to interview several traditional healers. As part of my MA thesis in psychotherapy I researched to see if there are any similarities between the experiences of Kru Khmer and the experiences of individuals in the west who have auditory hallucinations and
who have been given the diagnosis of psychosis or schizophrenia. I also conducted interviews with clients who attended the psychiatric clinic in Phnom Penh. The interview that I used with the clients at the psychiatric clinic was designed by Professor Romme and Sandra Escher who are pioneers of alternative ways of working with people who hear voices.

In Cambodia it has so far been documented that there are at least 113 different types of traditional healers. Within each categories of traditional healers there are several subcategories of healers.

![Image of Soy, a Baramea Mey Kru Khmer](image)

This pictures is of Soy, who is a Baramea Mey Kru Khmer, which means that he invokes and invites a spirit to enter his body who then assists with providing a diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Soy asks the spirit to move the tray (as seen in this picture) in either the north or south direction in order to answer questions with regards to clients diagnosis and treatment.
Clients stay at Soys house during treatment. Clients usually stay about 10 days – 2 weeks.

In the pictures below Soy is praying before showering clients with lustral/ holy water as part of their treatment. This takes place three times a day.

Below is a picture of Koeun who is a Kru Sankhet – which means he communicates with his teachers who have now passed away. Koeun communicates with his old teachers out loud verbally and inside his head. His teachers are on constant call to offer Kouen assistance with his clients. Koeun’s teachers used to appear in visual form, but Koeuns’ grandchild, who lives with Koeun, was able to see the ‘spirits’ and found it disturbing so he had to ask them to no longer appear to me in visual form.

In this picture to the right of Koeun you can see the equipment that he uses to make the talisman used by his clients for protection.

Index / contents page of the training manuscript that Koeun was given by his teachers.
Examples of ‘magical’ diagrams that Koeun hammer draws onto metal, then rolls the metal up and place around some string to create a talisman. The talisman is tied around the clients stomach in order to protect the client.

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**Interview with the Kru Khmer - Koeun**

I was forced to be a Kru, I did not want to be a Kru.

*Why did you not want to be a Kru?*

I did not want to be a Kru because I did not believe.

*What made you believe?*

I did not want to be a Kru but I became sick, I had a fever and I could not walk. Then I said ok, I will become a Kru and all the symptoms disappeared instantly. So then I knew that it is fact, I have to become a Kru.

My father was a Kru

My father had a guardian / protector, who became my Kru, or my alive teacher. This man is now dead and he is now my guardian, protector
When a patient/client comes to see me, I hear from my protector what I should say, or my protector will speak through me.

My protector does not enter my body. I do not always know what to say to my clients, the words just come.

I have three Kru/teachers who I can call on. They used to be my teachers but they are now all dead. However I can still call them whenever I need their help. If the first one cannot tell me what is wrong then I will ask the other one etc..

*When you ask your Kru for help, do you ask them a direct question. Does the reply come from inside your head or outside your head?*

I speak out loud to my Kru, in front of my patients. I can see my Kru and hear him outside my head.

The Kru used to appear before me in visual form but now I have a grandchild who could see them so I had to ask them to stop being here in visual form.

At midnight I meditate to find out my patients progress and to assess if I can treat them or not. When my patients come to see me, as a result of meditating, I can tell if I can treat them or not.

My soul can travel around, it leaves my body to assess my patients problems and strengths. Then I come back to my body. Anyone can do this, but if they do not know how to return to their body then they will die.

Before I did not want to be a Kru because I was younger and I was responsible for my family and I worried that I would get into trouble by meditating and could not get my
soul back into my body. Who would feed my family if I died? Now I am older and I do not mind taking the risk so much.

Some people can be Kru because it is their fate. If you can serve the people then you should. But then some people can try and learn to be a Kru but if it is not their fate then they will not be effective.

Interview with the Kru Khmer - Soy

Soy is a Kru Khmer (KK). He is a Baarea Mey Kru Khmer. Baarea Mey is the term assigned to Kru Khmer who call on spirits to enter their body and then the spirit is asked to diagnose the clients illness or problem.

There are several different types of Baarea Mey Kru Khmer. For example a Baarea Mey Kan is a KK who calls upon a famous royal ancestor spirit to enter his body.

A Baarea Mey Laek Taa San Thet – has a male elder spirit that enters their body.

Soy is known as a Baarea Mey as he does not have any one particular spirit that he calls to enter his body.

What do you see when you are in a trance?

Soy – I see a little bit of shadow but I cannot see much

How did you learn how to do this?
Soy - I knew how to do this from when I was a very small boy. If I had not become a Kru I would have gone crazy. I would not be able to sleep.

In my dreams I hear how to treat my patients, which medicine to use, how much to use.

I have tattoo’s for protection. I used to be a soldier and my Kru gave me these tattoo’s for protection from Ampeu (Spells cast by KK) – and bullets.

When I am in a trance someone could cut me with an axe or a big knife and it would not cut me.

_Do you ask a particular spirit to enter your body?_.

Soy - I cannot control which spirit enters into my body, but once they enter my body my wife can ask them who they are and where they come from.

_Soy gave me a demonstration of what happens when a spirit enters his body_.

_Afterwards I asked him the following question._

_Do you know anything about the spirit that entered you while you were showing me the tray?_

Soy - The spirit was from in front of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. I do not know if they are a dead person or if they are alive or if they are a god. I only know who they were and where they came from.