

Pongrot Koun Kramom / Stealing the Bride



Site of Documentation

Phnom Pehn, Cambodia

Description

Pongrot Koun Kramom is a popular running game played by children from suburban communities surrounding Phnom Pehn. In the game a 'Couple' have to walk around a circle of players and select another Couple to compete with, by hitting their hands. Once selected, both Couples race each other round the game area. The aim is for one Couple to try to 'break' up their opponents by making them lose their grip on each other's hands. The first Couple to make it back to the starting place while still together wins the game.

Who Plays?

Traditionally this game is played by both adult men and women, although children over the age of 10 years also like to play for fun. The game requires a minimum of eight players. Usually couples comprise of a boy and a girl, although same-sex pairs can also play.

Time and Place

This game needs to be played on a smooth, flat surface that is around 7 x 7 meters in size. Although *Pongrot Koun Kramom* is traditionally played during Khmer New Year, it can be played throughout the year at any time of day, as long as it is cool and dry. Each round of the game takes around 30 minutes, depending on the skill of the players.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

This is a game of speed, coordination and mental alertness. The best players are those that can run faster than their opponents. Both players in each pair must be able to coordinate their movements and run in tandem so that they make it back to the starting place without breaking their grip on each other's hands. Players in the circle must be ready to run at any moment. If both pairs are evenly matched for speed, then a key strategy would be to focus on pulling their opponents apart as they pass each other while running.

Popularity

This game is most popular with children and adults living in the suburban communities surrounding Phnom Pehn. The game is traditionally played at Khmer New Year in April, in the grounds of temples, at resorts or at schools. Children were primarily taught this game by peers or older siblings.

History of the game

Although the game was not played by members of older generations in this community, it is still possible that it was played in other areas. As the game is played at Khmer New Year it is highly likely that the game has a long tradition. It resembles the English game of "Duck, Duck Goose" and so it may be that *Pongrot Koun Kramom* evolved from this game over time.

How is the Game Played?

Step 1. First players need to choose a partner. One couple (Couple A) must then volunteer to start the game, while the other players form a large circle by holding hands. If there are no volunteers, then *Rock, Paper and Scissors* can be played to identify a losing pair.



Step 2. Couple A, walk around the outside of the circle, holding hands. They can walk for as long as they like, but when ready, they have to pick on another couple (Couple B) and hit their hands.



Step 3. Once they hit the chosen players, Couple A runs as fast as they can around the circle.



At the same time Couple B, also exit the circle and run in the opposite direction to their opponents. Both couples must keep holding hands as they run.



Step 4. As the Couple's pass each other at the half way point, they can try to break their opponents up by pulling them apart or running into them. The Couple that makes it safely back to the vacant space in the circle, while still holding hands, wins the game.



Step 5. The losers walk around the circle and the game begins again.



Step 6: Play continues until one of the Couples loses three times in a row. Players can then 'punish' the Couple by making them perform a dance for their own amusement.



Rules of the game

1. Any Couple that reaches the vacant spaces in the circle first, wins.
2. Couples should not release each other's hands before they reach the vacant space. If Couples are split up during the game, they lose.
3. Couples who lose three times in row are punished by having to dance in the middle of circle while the winners sing around them.