

JRAE LEAF SCREENS¹

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The *jrae* tree belongs to the larger palm family, known by the botanical name *palmae*. This tree looks very similar to the *drāmñ*, known by its botanical name *coryphe lecomtei* (Figure 1). When mature, the *jrae* tree contains literally tons of a substance that can be processed to make edible powder. Peoples from China to Africa, including Cambodia, extract this substance for consumption.

Here I will discuss another form of exploitation of the *jrae* tree particular to the inhabitants of Trapeang Po village in the Ponhea Leu district of Kandal province. Here the villagers use *jrae* leaves to make screens in the form of large fans to shelter parts of their houses from rain and sun. What I have observed most frequently are *jrae* screens arranged in rows around the otherwise open ground-level portion of the house (Figure 2-3). To make this screen, a *jrae* leaf is cut from the tree, and briefly dried so that it becomes easy to weave. Weaving freshly cut leaves can easily cause damage to the leaf. There appears to be a clear division of labor between men and women in this work. Men climb the tree in order to cut the leaves down, whereas women weave the leaves to make the screens (Figure 4).

The leaf is woven starting with one section from each side (Figure 5-6), with the weaver continuing to pull in sections up to the top of the leaf (Figure 7). Finally, the top part is beautifully woven together (Figure 8-11). After completion of the weaving, the screen can be used right away, as shown in Figures 12-13.



Figure 1

¹ “Rapāmñ dhvōe bī sleuk jrae,” *Khmerrenaissance* 2, 2006-7: 10-12.

² Translated by Siyonn Sophearith and Ashley Thompson



Figure 2

Figure 3

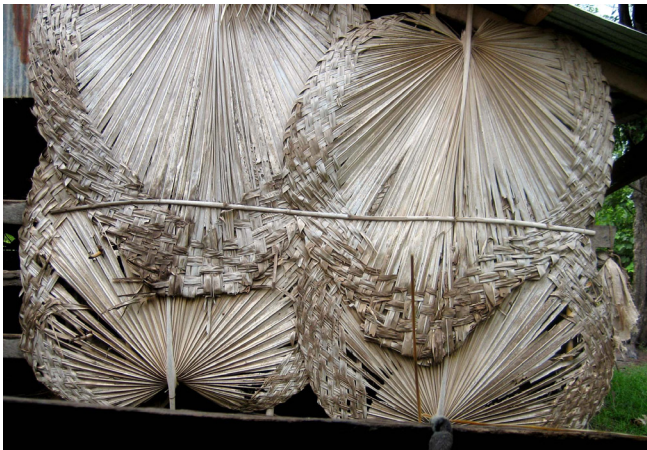


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13