

chakhe

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The *chakhe* is a floor zither with three strings and frets, played in Thai and Khmer music. The name is derived from *chorakhe* (Thai) or *krapeu* (Khmer), which means **crocodile or alligator**. The raised frets are reminiscent of the back plates of crocodiles, but the resemblance to the animal can only be guessed at due to the strong abstraction.

Curt Sachs, who in 1915 described the instrument type on the basis of an old instrument (*mi gyaung*, left side) from Myanmar, which has more clearly zoomorphic features, was unable to decide whether the animal symbolism influenced the shape of the instrument or whether its shape was the reason for the name.

In Thai musical tradition, the *chakhe*, which is part of the *mahori* ensemble, can be traced back to the 14th century (early *Ayutthaya* period).

Usually the instrument stands on five feet, and there are sound holes in the bottom. The player, sitting next to the side of the instrument, grips with the left hand and plucks with a ca. 6 cm long cone-shaped plectrum in his right hand made of ivory or water buffalo horn.

Watch a student of the music department at Khon Kaen University playing the *chakhe* (2018).



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