

Cambodians in California: Nine Oral History Interviews in One Volume

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Introduction p. 1

Approximately 70,000 Cambodians reside in California, almost all of these escapees from the Communist (Khmer Rouge) rule from 1975 to 1979 and the invasion by the Vietnamese in 1979, which enabled large numbers of refugees to come to the United States in 1979 and the early 1980's. Under the provisions of Title III of the Library Services and Construction Act, the U.S. Department of Education made available grants to promote better understanding of, and to provide better services for, the diverse ethnic groups in the nation.

The Library at California State University, Sacramento, received a grant in 1989 in order to undertake the *Cambodians in California Project: A Cultural and Information Needs Assessment*. The Project has two parts. The first, a needs assessment, was completed in 1992 and a report issued in the same year entitled, *Cambodians in California, An Information Needs Assessment*. The second part was an oral history of 59 interviews of Cambodians living in Stockton, all of whom came to America after the end of the Khmer Rouge rule in 1979.

In 1992, *A Guide to the Oral History Collection of Cambodians in California* was published with an overview of Cambodia, methodology of the study, the questions used, an index to the interviews, 51 one-page abstracts of the interviews processed by that time, and an order form for interview transcripts on computer floppy disks.

The present document, entitled *Cambodians in California: Nine Oral History Interviews*, consists of all of the 59 one-page abstracts, full English translations of nine selected interviews; very brief one-paragraph summaries of the selected interviews for the reader's guidance, a chronology, and a selected bibliography.

MAJOR CAMBODIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES

There were many refugee camps for Cambodians along the Thai-Cambodian border and a few further into Thailand. Many of the emigrants that came to America were held in a “processing” camp, usually for six months, in the Philippines before they were flown on to America.

Major Refugee Camps in Thailand

Khao-I-Dang Khao-I-Dang is about 30 kilometers north of Aranyaprathet and about 15 kilometers from the Cambodian border. It was built as a center for “illegal Cambodian entrants” to Thailand pending their resettlement in third countries or return to Cambodia. It was constructed after Vietnam took over Cambodia in January, 1979, and was opened on November 21, 1979. There is a hospital, theater, temple and Christian church. The new arrivals construct their own huts. In July of 1993 it had a population of 136,000.

This camp and a few major camps are operated by the Supreme Command of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Much of the work is contracted out to “Volags,” voluntary relief organizations.

Nong Samet (“New” camp) and Nong Chan are about 30 kilometers north of Aranyaprathet. The first is also known as “New Camp,” “007,” and “Rithisen.” They are close to the border and parts may actually be on the Cambodian side. Their populations have fluctuated between 40,000 and 100,00. They are run internally by Khmer military and civilian committees. Access to them from the east is controlled by units of the Thai Supreme Command, who also exercise a large measure of control over the Khmer administration. UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and various Volags, provide medical care, supplementary food, and educational and social services.

“Old” Camp, about five kilometers north of Aranyaprathet, was set up before 1979 for early Cambodians fleeing from the Khmer Rouge. This was one camp, among others nearby, from which about 40,000 refugees were forcibly taken in June, 1979, by Thai Military trucks up the mountains to the temple of Preah Vihear, and forced across the border to the Cambodian side. There were many deaths from thirst, starvation, and land mines as refugees made their way down the mountain to the central highways where many turned west for another attempt to get to Thailand.

Sakeo I and II are about 50 kilometers west of Aranyaprathet. The first was set up for Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) military, supporters, and camp followers and had a population of about 25,000. These were moved to Sakeo II and there were movements between these two camps and KID in the following months, as the narrators in this study will attest. These two camps were run by the Thai Supreme Command and UNHCR with services provided by the Volags.

Kamput and Mairut, south of Aranyaprathet, were originally set up for DK (Khmer Rouge) refugees.

Phanatnikom in Chonburi province, south of Bangkok, was set up as a processing and transit center. Narrators tell of short stays at Chonburi just before air flights from Bangkok to the United States or the Philippines.

Note: Almost all of the above descriptive material about the refugee camps in Thailand was taken from Michael Vickery, "Refugee Politics: The Khmer Camp System in Thailand," in David A. Ablin and Merlowe Hood, editors, *The Cambodian Agony*, (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1987). The expulsion of 40,000 refugees at the mountain border pass is discussed in the *New York Times*, for June 11, 1979, and following issues cited in the bibliography in this report.

Philippine Refugee Processing Center

Many refugees accepted in the United States were flown from Thailand to Manila and then bused to the Philippine Refugee Processing Center. The center was on the ridge of a mountain that slopes down to the sea near the village of Morong. The land was provided by the Philippine government and the medical equipment by the Japanese Government. The balance of the costs were borne by the United States government.

The purpose of the camp was to teach English to all Cambodian refugees on their way to the United States, to familiarize them with the operation of modern American kitchen and household equipment, and to familiarize them with U. S. currency. According to the narrators in the project, the typical stay was six months and those that had a shorter stay were proud of that. The narrators enjoyed the freedom of movement out of the camp, particularly to the beaches. Those who had money also enjoyed shopping.

Note: The description of this camp is taken from an oral history by Ven Yem published in Joanna C. Scott, *Indochina's Refugees: Oral Histories from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1989.) pp. 109-14.

CHRONOLOGY OF CAMBODIA

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The following abbreviated chronology of Cambodia from 1884 to 1979 may aid the reader in understanding references in the interviews to names, dates and events.

- 1 1884 Cambodia becomes a French Protectorate.
- 2 1940 Formation of first local Khmer Issarak (Freedom) committee, dedicated to Cambodian independence
- 3 1941 King Sisowath Monivong dies. French decide to revert to the Norodom branch of the royal family and enthrone eighteen-year-old Norodom Sihanouk.
- 4 1941 First Japanese troops arrive in Cambodia. French Vichy administration in Cambodia tolerated by the Japanese.

- 5 1945 Japanese dislodge the French administration and oversee the establishment of an “independent” Cambodian government with Son Ngoc Thanh as prime minister.
- 6 1945 Japan surrenders to the Allies.
- 7 1945 Reimposition of French colonial rule. Thanh arrested and held in France.
- 8 1946 Sihanouk signs agreement with France recognizing Cambodia as an autonomous state within the French Union. However, authority in Cambodia remains in French hands.
- 9 1949 France grants Cambodia qualified independence, retaining some authority in some aspects of foreign relations and military policy.
- 10 1953 France transfers remaining attributes of de facto independence to Cambodian government.
- 11 1955 Sihanouk abdicates in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit, so that he might legally participate in national politics.
- 12 1960 King Suramarit dies. National Assembly revises constitution and elects Sihanouk head of state.
- 13 1970 Prime Minister Lon Nol and Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak stage successful coup against Sihanouk while he is abroad travelling.
- 14 1973 Beginning of “Democratic Revolution” in regions controlled by the communists. Land is collectivized, people are forcibly relocated, and traditional customs and religious rites are proscribed.
- 15 1975 Khmer Rouge launch major and final offensive against the capital, Phnom Penh.
- 16 1975 (April 17) Khmer Rouge take Phnom Penh and forcibly evacuate Phnom Penh and provincial capitals.
- 17 1978 Vietnam, after two years of border fights with Cambodia, launches fullscale invasion.
- 18 1979 (January 7) Vietnamese forces occupy Phnom Penh, form the People's Revolutionary Council of Kampuchea, headed by Heng Samrin. Massive travel throughout Cambodia as people return to their pre-1975 homes and search for relatives. Little planting occurs and a severe food shortage follows. Beginning of large-scale influx of Cambodian refugees into Thailand.

(November 21, 1979) Khao-I-Dang refugee camp opens near the border.

Note: This chronology is extracted from one prepared by Michael Vickery in “Refugee Politics: The Khmer Camp System in Thailand,” in David A. Ablin and Merlowe Hood, editors, *The Cambodian Agony*, (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc. 1987). There are also chronologies in John Tenhula, *Voices from Southeast Asia, The Refugee Experience in the United States*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991) and Arnold R. Isaacs, *Without Honor, Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

INDEX OF MAJOR TOPICS IN THE INTERVIEWS

Note: Listed below are the numbers of interviews that address the subjects indicated in some detail or, if the number is in bold face type, the discussion is in great detail. If the discussion of a subject is very limited, the interview is not cited here.

- 19 Escape to Thailand 1,3,5,11,15, **16**, 21, **23**, **31**, 35, **44**, **46**,49,52,58,60

- 20 Life in Cambodia before 1975
- 21 Early life 1,21,30,60
- 22 Education 7,9,10, **11**, 44,45,46,49,51,60
- 23 Marriage 18,26,58
- 24 Work 1,4,6,7,,42,43,45,47,56
- 25 Civil Service 4,7
- 26 Customs and festivities 9,36,39,43,46,50,54,56,58
- 27 Monks 9,11,15,36,42,43,45,50,51,52,58,59
- 28 Life under the Khmer Rouge (in general) 9,9,21,42,49,52
- 29 Food 26,49
- 30 Punishment 1,11,24,35,36
- 31 Violent deaths 14,15,23,28,35,36,40,46
- 32 Working conditions 1,2,5,6,8,11,12,24,26,30,33,41,44,47
- 33 A member of the Khmer Rouge 3,1
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- 36 In general 5,11,6,7,13,16,21,32,35,42,52
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INTERVIEWS SELECTED FOR PUBLICATION IN THIS VOLUME

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This report contains nine interviews printed in full. (All interviews are available on computer discs) They were selected to illustrate the range of circumstances under which Cambodians lived before 1975 and problems faced by the narrators in life (1) under the Khmer Rouge, (2) the escape to Thailand, (3) the refugee camps, and (4) adjustments to life in the United States. They are described here very briefly to acquaint the reader with their contents. Family names are printed first.

Chim Ol Mrs. Chim never knew her father, was too poor to attend school, and after the rice harvest, wove baskets which her mother sold in the market. Her husband died of starvation under the Khmer Rouge and Mrs. Chim worked in the rice fields. She and three children made an unusually long and terrifying escape trip to Thailand alone. She lived in “New” camp, Sakeo I, Sakeo II, and Khao-I-Dang where she stayed for six years, an unusual amount of time, before she was accepted for emigration to the United States. (Interview No. 3)

Pal Ron Mrs. Pal was also an impoverished peasant. She survived not only under the Khmer Rouge, but under the Vietnamese when they took over Cambodia and again briefly in some territory controlled by the Khmer Rouge on the escape route. She was converted to Christianity and reflects on her reconciliation of the Christian faith with the Buddhist norms and values with which she had been raised. (Interview No. 26)

Srey Kien Mr. Srey was a monk for two years and in 1974 reluctantly joined the Khmer Rouge before it took over the country. His was not a happy life. He was, in turn, a village spy, a member of the secret police, an untrained soldier on the front line without arms, a supervisor of farming and a soldier in border defense. While he was handling land mines, one exploded and injured both legs which never properly healed. When he tried to escape to Thailand, he was arrested by Thai soldiers and spent six months in a Thai prison before release. (Interview No. 31)

Keo Felicia Im was married to an officer in the Cambodian air force who flew her and himself to safety at a U. S. air base in Thailand when the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh. In America her husband delivered flowers for a florist in Pensacola, Florida, and then became a welder in a shipyard. Mrs. Keo worked in a restaurant and later owned one. Life has been difficult in Stockton where her son was killed by a truck. In her interview, she describes a Cambodian wedding in detail and discusses

p. 8 the problems, the bases, and inconsistencies in her mind between Buddhism and Christianity. (Interview No. 39)

Nhem Pete Mr. Nhem was born into a rather well-to-do peasant family with excess rice lands worked by hired hands. He was educated better than most Cambodians and was a teacher. Under the Khmer Rouge Mr. Nhem was the leader of a work brigade. He describes the regulations for food allocation, the pervasive atmosphere of fear, a treacherous escape to Thailand, and his life in the refugee camps. (Interview No. 44)

Sun Bun Mr. Sun was raised in a village and describes in detail the status hierarchy in rural Cambodia, the rice raising and marketing, the rice trade, the mode of capital accumulation of small-landowning communities, and an idyllic way of life before the Khmer Rouge in a village with creeks teeming with fish and fertile fruit orchards. He attended vernacular schools and was a monk for some time. (Interview No. 45)

Loeur Samboeun Mr. Loeur describes, more than others, the condition of the poor before 1975: the difficulty in growing enough rice to stay alive, the necessary borrowing from “the rich,” high interest payments on the loans, and the customary passing of outstanding debts on to the children. Therefore he welcomed Khmer Rouge communism where there would be no poor. Quickly disenchanted, he labored hard in youth camps. Arriving in Sakeo I refugee camp in Thailand was “like going to heaven.” In America, life in Chicago seemed unbearably cold and he soon moved to Stockton. He has lost touch with all of the members of his family. (Interview No. 47.)

Sar Chanyan Mrs. Sar's parents were farmers but when she was small they moved to Phnom Penh where they were musicians on the government radio station and performed often for Prince Sihanouk and his guests. Mrs. Sar sold vegetables in a market. When all residents were ordered by the Khmer Rouge to evacuate Phnom Penh in 1975, she worked wherever she was assigned. Her husband died when he stepped on a mine. At Khao-I-Dang, she had a child and nursed babies whose mothers lacked sufficient milk. Her sponsor to American was a woman in North Carolina. She lived for a time in Boston, but soon joined the Cambodians that she had heard about in Stockton. (Interview No. 57)

Seng Saruot Suon Mrs. Seng was born in Phnom Penh and lived most of her childhood there. Her father was a surveyor for the government and then went into business for himself, operating a ferry on the Mekong River until evacuation of Phnom Penh was ordered in 1975. The family was broken up for work assignments and her parents died in 1976 from disease and malnutrition. In 1979, when the Vietnamese took over, she was readmitted to the medical school in Phnom Penh. In 1982 she traveled to Thailand. Her time in the camps there and in the Philippines was relatively short. Her sponsors were in San Diego where she resumed medical training before going to the University of California at Davis. At the time of the interview she was a doctor's assistant in Stockton. (Interview No. 60)

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Notes: (1) The book by Kari Rene has over 200 photographs taken in the refugee camp at Site 2 near the Thai-Cambodian Border.

(2) The references to *The New York Times* are articles about the forcible expulsion by the Thai Government of about 40,000 Cambodian refugees to a mountainous area on the Cambodian-Thai boundary.

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¹ Oral history, autobiography, or biography.

Shek, Kitty W., and Arthur Auble, editors. 1996. *Cambodians in California: Nine Oral History Interviews in One Volume*.

One-page abstracts are included for all 59 interviews. The selected complete interviews are:

The complete fifty-nine interviews in the study are available on computer disks (IBM and Macintosh). An order blank is at the end of this report.

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Abstract

Mrs. Leang was about 45 years old at the time of the interview. She was born in Khet Kandal county and, with her husband, farmed on family land. She left Cambodia in 1979 and arrived in the United States in 1985, living over five years in Khao I Dang, (KID) the large refugee camp in Thailand operated by the United Nations.

She attended school for about five years and was married, by parental arrangement, when she was 19. When the Khmer Rouge took over the government, she was separated from her family and sent to Takeo county to farm and work at canal construction. Her mother died for lack of medical care. Mrs. Leang suffered from hunger and harsh treatment at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. She tells of one young man beaten and killed because he stole some oranges. Under the Vietnamese government, established in 1978, hunger was still a problem. After quarrels, her husband left her. When she decided to escape and started walking toward the border, she was about ready to deliver a child and did so in the forest near the border with the help of fellow escapees. After a month in New Camp, she arrived at KID. There she was well treated and got work filling rice bags, for which she was paid in kind, chickens, etc. From KID she went to Chonburi and was then flown to the Philippine refugee camp where she stayed for six months before flying to San Francisco and Stockton. (A.A.)

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Abstract

Mrs. Sok lived on a farm and was married to a soldier under Lon Nol's regime. She left Cambodia in 1979 and arrived in the United States in 1985.

Mrs. Sok helped in the rice fields as a girl, did not attend school, was married by her family's arrangements, and had six children. Her husband joined Lon Nol's army and was killed by the Khmer Rouge after he worked in the fields and forest under them from 1975 to 1979. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge separated Mrs. Sok from her husband and four oldest children. She was forced to work on dams, in rice fields, and in the forest-clearing the brush, a strip four meters wide by 40 meters long every day. Food (rice soup) was withheld if the task was not finished in time. Later she was sent to a forest to make candles out of the sap of trees. Her quota was ten per day, then 15. After the Vietnamese invasion in 1979, she returned to her original village and found it in ruins. She escaped with five of her children, lived in Khao I Dang from 1979 to 1984 waiting for a sponsor; the sponsor was a Cambodian in San Jose. She attended English and sewing classes in camp. In Stockton, she has attended school for two years but "didn't learn anything." Her children do the cooking. One child has married and has two children.

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Abstract

Mrs. Chim, widowed during the Khmer Rouge regime, escaped to Thailand with three children in a long and hazardous walk. She was in Khao I Dang six years before she came to Stockton.

Mrs. Chim was raised on a farm. She never knew her father. The family was too poor for her to attend school. After the rice season, she made baskets which her mother sold. Her family thought she should marry and arranged it with a nearby farmer, who also made baskets. He died of starvation. Mrs. Chim worked in rice fields assigned by the Khmer Rouge and older women baby sat her baby. When the Vietnamese came she began a walk to the Thai border. It was a continual search for rice and shelter. They lived in rice fields, under a mango tree for a month, and in a temple for a time. She joined a group walking directly to the border and finally reached "New" camp (Chumrum Thmey). From there she was sent to SaKeo I and SaKeo II. Finally she was sent to KID where she lived for six years, doing baking and sewing to earn additional food and clothes.

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Abstract

Mr. Neth was born in Preyveng province. He was a farmer but also made clothing. He was a section leader and later county secretary in the civil service from 1946 to 1970.

Under the Khmer Rouge, Mr. Neth worked variously at farming and in food preparation. Three of his children were killed. He tells of the communist meetings after work in the labor camps in which workers were criticized by the Khmer Rouge cadre and by other workers. He escaped to Khao I Dang in 1979. The journey was by car and uneventful except for questioning along the way by the Vietnamese. At KID the food and medical care were good. His stay in the camps was relatively short and after five months in the Philippine refugee camp, he arrived in the United States in 1981. His sponsors were of great help. As other refugees, he suffers from lack of English. However, with a knowledge of French, he became a baker in a French restaurant. He is not, what he calls, a "professional" magic-spell man for lack of medicated ingredients but says that he can cure the mentally ill and deformed patients.

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Abstract

Mrs. Tep Nhim was born in Kampot province and worked on the family farm but also raised silkworms and made clothing.

Under the Khmer Rouge, her husband was sent away to work in a labor camp and she raised the children. She looked after some orange fields in Battambang, made charcoal, constructed dams, worked in food preparation, and in a weaving factory. One of her sons was sent from home to another workplace but they were reunited by chance in 1977. Her husband was assigned to trap fish in deep water and suffered permanent damage to his ear drums. In her escape to Thailand with her small children, she had great difficulty in getting enough rice to eat. In Khao I Dang (KID) she was a group leader in charge of food distribution and received Payment

in kind. She also made money making handkerchiefs. She attended the Christian Church at KID "to follow the society." At KID her husband worked as a carpenter. In the United States, she has been quite ill and has been treated for tuberculosis.

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Abstract

Mr. Nhek was raised in Battambang on a farm but he specialized in carpentry and hand made carts. He was educated in a temple school and the public school in Cambodian, French, and Thai, reflecting the governments that he was under. He received the French "Certificat," roughly equivalent to completion of the sixth grade in the United States. Under Pol Pot he worked in a Khmer Rouge headquarters as a cart repair man. Later he worked with labor groups on farms and dam projects. He vaguely remembers the Japanese soldiers of World War II and recalls life under the French just before independence. At Khao I Dang he divided his time between teaching adults and working in the carpentry shop. He finds a striking difference in family conformity between his older children and his youngest son who watches TV cartoons and like to "hang around" with his friends.

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Abstract

Mrs. Lor received a B.A. degree in Phnom Penh, was a teacher for 23 years, was a gold dealer (unsuccessfully) and then (successfully) a real estate agent and developer in housing projects. Her husband was on Prince Sihanouk's staff. They survived under Pol Pot without physical harm but one daughter died of starvation and another from lack of medical facilities at a work camp. In Khao I Dang she worked and gave her food allocations to others. In Mairut she taught Cambodian. In Stockton, she went to school immediately and received an A. A. degree from Delta College. She taught at Lincoln high school and saw the great need for special tutoring in English for Cambodian students. She then fought hard to establish The Cambodian Institute for

the education of young Cambodian children in the Cambodian language and culture and was successful with the help of churches and schools. She became a member of the Board of Directors of the Stockton Unified School District.

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Abstract

Mr. Moeun was raised on his parents' farm, forced into a youth labor camp under the Khmer Rouge, left Cambodia about 1979 and arrived in America about 1986.

Mr. Moeun had about five years of education in the Buddhist temple school and the public school and had a marriage arranged by "auntie." He describes parts of his life with greater interest than that apparent in other interviews: being in a human chain which passed soil from person to person in dam construction; working from 4 a.m. to noon, 1 to 5 p.m., and 7 to 9 p.m. or later; the communist method of "kasang," forcing workers who "talked back" to attend public meetings where they were criticized; origin and poor sanitation in SaKeo refugee camp in Thailand; improvement in SaKeo 2; a few unfavorable comments about Khao I Dang (KID), the large UN refugee camp; the behavior of Thai soldiers in and surrounding KID; camp training in sewing, mosquito net production, soap manufacturing, and carpentry; duties of a block chief in Chonburi camp; the problems in work vs. welfare in the U. S. where the hourly rate is low, the hours worked in excess of a prescribed limit, the resulting income inadequate; taxes in the U.S. and in Cambodia under Sihanouk; Americans' disregard for respect and maturity and fascination with the beautiful and the flamboyant; and the Cambodian custom of being buried on your own land instead of being buried in a cemetery.

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- 102 Monks
- 103 Customs and festivities
- 104 Life under the Khmer Rouge

Abstract

This is one of the more interesting life histories in the collection. The respondent's recounting of his early life in Takeo provides invaluable information on this province which later became part of the southwestern zone during the Khmer Rouge period. Considered to be one of their

strongholds, the Southwest featured very significantly in the political history of Democratic Kampuchea. From his own life experiences, extending from his ordination into the monkhood, to becoming a school teacher, to enlisting in the Republican army, and finally to being coerced into becoming a Khmer Rouge hamlet chief, the respondent is able to generate rich insights into the various facets of Khmer society and politics. Like most Khmer village boys, the respondent received his primary education in the local vernacular school and was later ordained as a novice. The interview thus consists of a wealth of information on the traditional system of education, and on Khmer Buddhism-its tenets, organizational hierarchy, behavioral and normative prescriptions for novices, on religious rites and practices. As a school teacher in his adult life, the respondent is also able to compare the two systems of education that co-exist in Cambodia. The interview is also particularly detailed in data on Khmer village culture and practices, from courtship, to engagement and marriage rites, to the rite of passage for young women.

Moreover, his vivid description of life under the Communists is also invaluable for the understanding of the mechanisms of social control, food distribution, societal segmentation and the overall internal dynamics within faction-rent Democratic Kampuchea.

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105 Life in Cambodia before 1975 Education

106 Life under the Khmer Rouge

Abstract

Mr. Sous was born in 1933 near Phnom Penh. His father worked for the railroad. Sous San was a teacher, left Cambodia in 1979 and arrived in the United States in 1981. Education appeared adequate under the French. Classes ran from 7 to 11 a.m. and from 2 to 5 p.m. He was able to walk to school, a one story wooden building with tile roof. Tuition was free in the early grades. Students furnished notebooks and pencils. When the Khmer Rouge took over in 1975, he was living in Battambang. They moved him to Sokpea where the family was separated and members put into work camps. His job was making rope from cowhide and working in the rice fields. Food was inadequate in general. The only days off or holidays were for communist anniversaries. He did not see any killing but was told that disobedient workers were taken away and killed. He feels that the Vietnamese fought the communists to help Cambodia but really want to destroy Cambodia. When he escaped to Thailand, he lived in "New camp" then Khao I Dang. He was able to teach elementary school in camp. Departed, as many others, via Chonburi and airport at Bangkok.

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109 Monks

110 Life under the Khmer Rouge

- 111 Food
- 112 Working conditions
- 113 Punishment
- 114 Escape to Thailand
- 115 Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mr. Norm was born in 1947 and was a farmer. He left Cambodia about 1980 and arrived in the United States in 1986.

He describes Khmer celebrations. In some detail, he tells about the life of the young boys who go to the temple for residence and study, including the chanting. Under Sihanouk, he describes the right to trade and do business and how that all stopped with the coming of the Khmer Rouge. He states that former government soldiers in Mounge were killed by the Khmer Rouge. The shortage of rice was severe with rationing of three cans (size of a condensed milk can) for 10 people per day. The comparison of life under Sihanouk and the communists was like "the sky and the earth." He describes the regional organization of the communists and the almost complete restrictions on travel. When he escaped from Cambodia he was first in Camp Chas but because he was ill, he was moved to Khao I Dang. He describes life there including Buddhist celebrations with the Thais. In a later camp, he was made a supervisor. He was in a camp in the Philippines for eleven months before flying to America.

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- 116 Life in Cambodia before 1975 Work
- 117 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 118 Life in camps other than KID

Abstract

Mr. Min was born in Vietnam in a province that was part of Cambodia at one time. He moved to Cambodia in his youth. He left Cambodia with his wife and five children about 1979 and spent about a year in Thai and Philippine refugee camps before coming to America.

Mr. Min was born in Vietnam but moved to Cambodia because "the French and Vietnamese made trouble for him," He served with French troops and after Cambodia's independence with Sihanouk's troops and then with Lon Nol troops. He went to school briefly in Thailand. He was sent by the Cambodian army to a military training school in Laos where he studied weapons and psychology. He purchased a farm in Battambang. As a former soldier fighting the Khmer Rouge, he feared for his life when the Khmer Rouge took over the country. He immediately changed from military clothes to civilian clothes and changed his name two or three times. He was stopped walking on a road by Khmer Rouge troops who assigned him to work cutting trees in the forest. When the Vietnamese took over the country, he heard that some non-communist "liberation" guerillas had a camp near the Thai border. He lived with them for awhile before escaping to the Suon Surin refugee camp in Thailand. After five months in the refugee camp

in the Philippines, he was flown to Washington, D. C. where he lived for some time before moving to Stockton.

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- 119 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 120 Life in Khao I Dang Camp
- 121 Life in other camps (Philippines)

Abstract

Mrs. Thir worked on a farm when young, was separated from her husband and children during the Khmer Rouge regime and worked in the rice fields, and left Cambodia primarily because of hunger.

When the Khmer Rouge took over the country, Mrs. Thir was taken to a farm about 10 miles from her home to work with other women in rice fields. She tells that some regional Khmer Rouge managers were more lenient than others; that only three persons in her district were killed. When the Vietnamese came in, she returned to her native village and found her home destroyed. She could not find work and when food became very scarce in 1979, she went to the Thai border camps to get food, thinking she would then return to Cambodia to live. She then decided to go to Khao I Dang, where she took care of her children and her husband made buckets. A younger sister in American became her sponsor for emigration to America and she then moved through the camps at Chonburi, Transit Center, and the refugee camp in the Philippines, where she was for seven months, studying English. Her description of life in KID and the Philippine camp are more detailed than descriptions of others. In the U. S. she came first to Wisconsin, where she was happy but homesick and worried about Cambodian friends left behind in such poor circumstances.

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- 122 Life in Cambodia before 1975 Army
- 123 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 124 Punishment
- 125 Violent deaths

Abstract

Mr. Kiev was a soldier from 1970 to 1973 and fought the Khmer Rouge until he resigned in 1973. He considers himself lucky, as a former soldier, to survive the Pol Pot regime.

Mr. Kiev was born in 1950, was raised on a farm, and attended a few years of elementary school. He lost members of his immediate family to the actions of the Khmer Rouge. They were in a military camp with 4,000 civilians and soldiers at Taheun which was surrounded by Khmer Rouge troops for 43 days. At the end of this period, the Khmer Rouge guaranteed safety to those who wanted to leave but about one km. from the camp, they opened fire on the soldiers and

civilians who were leaving. Mr. Kiev's father, a brother, a sister, and two brothers-in-law were killed in this attack. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, he could move freely enough to escape to Khao I Dang. He was there two periods: from 1979 to 1982, he felt he was leading a fairly normal life. But when he was transferred back to it (from Kamput camp) in 1983 he said that there was a substantial change and that robbers came out after dark to steal, rape, and kill. In Stockton he wishes that the major Cambodian festivals could be celebrated in a larger fashion and has been active in their organization.

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127	Monks
128	Customs and festivities
129	Life under the Khmer Rouge
130	Violent deaths
131	Torture of father
132	Working conditions
133	Escape to Thailand

Abstract

Mr. May was raised on a farm, became a novice monk at the age of 12, was a healer before 1975, and built dams under the Khmer Rouge.

Of primary interest are descriptions of types of crops, school and temple schedules, monk training, boat races at festival times and a visit to Angkor Wat as a child. When the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh, Mr. May lived in one of two remaining army camps: one at Donchry and one at Prey Svay. Pol Pot troops surrounded both and cut them off from food and water for seven days. When the camp dwellers (soldiers and civilians) surrendered, they were told to leave the area immediately, that Americans would bomb the camps, but that they could return in three days. Instead they were all assigned work. Mr. May was known as a healer in Battambang and states that he cured cholera, diarrhea, vomiting, and infectious abscesses. He narrowly escaped death because he had been a secret informer for the government but friends in Battambang protected him. His descriptions are very vivid.

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134	Life in Cambodia before 1970
135	Life under the Khmer Rouge
136	Escape to Thailand
137	Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mr. Moeung's father owned a large company which harvested fish from Toney Sap Lake, operated it in conjunction with the Japanese, but lost it during the Issarak ("Free Khmer") revolt against the French. Mr. Moeung was a farmer.

Mr. Moeung was raised on a farm until his father decided to go into the fishing business. They constructed equipment or nets of some sort, about 10 km. long, that caught fish when the water flowed out of the large lake. His father was also the mayor of the village and head of the county. Mr. Moeung mentions briefly conditions under Pol Pot but gives details about his escape to Khao I Dang, the large refugee camp in Thailand, and KID itself: the houses, food distribution, teaching children, the schools, and the interview procedures for emigration. He raises the question of rice output under Pol Pot. He points out that before Pol Pot, about 70% of the people were able to produce enough rice for the entire population whereas under Pol Pot, everyone raised rice and, except for two months following harvest, there were shortages throughout the country. Mr. Moeung and his family lived in Texas for a year before coming to Stockton.

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138 Life in the United States

139 Marriage

140 Work

Abstract

Mr. So came to the United States in 1976. When about 38 years of age he asked for help in finding a bride and describes in great detail the trials and tribulations of marriage to a young bride.

The interviewer's first question asks for description of Mr. So's life style in America. Then follows a long story of his marriages. Separated from a wife and children in Cambodia, Mr. So asks friends to find him a Cambodian bride about his age. In 1979, a friend finds a young bride and obtains permission of her parents for marriage to Mr. So. They live first in San Diego and Long Beach and then move to Stockton. He praises her sweet and gentle nature and vows to love her all of his life. She bears him four children, all through Caesarian section and her doctor performs surgery to prevent her from having more children. Through weakness from the child-bearing or other physical or marriage-related problems, she decides to leave him without warning. She secretly buys bus tickets for a trip to her sponsor, a Caucasian in Virginia, with whom she apparently lived before marrying Mr. So. He helps dress the children one day for a visit to a dentist in Stockton and offers to go with the wife and children but she says it is not necessary and proceeds to the bus terminal. By telephone to Virginia, he pleads with her to come back and she does after 23 days in Virginia. She repeats this procedure again, staying only 22 days in Virginia. Finally as the interview closes, she has gone again, someplace. The soliloquy, for that is what this interview is, closes with his desire, in his next life, to meet his children and wife but no one who has double-crossed him.

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- 142 Work
- 143 Marriage
- 144 Army
- 145 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 146 A member of the Khmer Rouge
- 147 Escape to Thailand

Abstract

Mr. Sophal has led an interesting life, being in the Cambodian army, then in the Khmer Rouge, escaping to the United States in 1976.

This may be the most adventurous story of the project. Mr. Sophal starts with a very detailed description of the village homes, plants, quarters for animals, etc. He leaves' home to work in a private rubber factory; then a government one. He arranges to have lunch prepared for him by a woman near the plant, talks considerably with the woman's older daughter, whom his parents think he wants to marry, but instead gets his marriage arranged with the younger daughter. Going away to another job, he falls in love with another woman but after several pages, rejoins his wife and their children. About 1970 he joins the Cambodian army, is quite successful and is sent to Vietnam for training. When the Khmer Rouge take over, he denies having had any previous military experience, becomes a member of the Khmer Rouge and advances up through the communist ranks. But the oppression is too much for him and with a few close friends he manages to escape to Thailand, spent four or five months wandering around (there were no organized refugee camps in 1976), was interviewed by Americans and arrived in the United States in 1976.

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- 149 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 150 Life under the Vietnamese
- 151 Escape to Thailand
- 152 Life in the United States

Abstract

Mrs. Noun was born in Siem Riep province in 1917. She was 72 years old at the time of the interview.

Mrs. Noun's father was a merchant. She attended only Buddhist schools because there were no other schools in her village. When her husband joined the army, she went to work on their farm. That many years ago. marriages were arranged. In her case, there was an engagement that lasted one year, as a trial period. She had two children, one of whom was killed when the

communists took over in 1975, probably because he was in the army. In 1977, her daughter, the wife of another soldier was killed. She has some memories of life under the French, the Japanese, Sihanouk and Lon Nol, the Khmer Rouge, and finally the Vietnamese. She recalls that life under the Vietnamese was not too difficult and they granted her permission to travel back to her village. The continued fighting and lack of food drove her to New camp but there was violence there and when she heard that the UN was opening a camp at Khao I Dang, she walked from New camp to KID. From there she went to the Kab Choeng camp, back to KID. then to Kamput, Transit camp, and the refugee camp in the Philippines. She was sponsored by naturalized Cambodians in Chicago and after a year there ("It is cold"), she came to Stockton. She is adjusting well except for learning English, which she has tried and tried. She gets along well with Vietnamese neighbors using a little Vietnamese with sign language. She want to return to Cambodia as soon as it is safe. She is bothered by the difference between the role of women in America ("the men are way under the women") and in Cambodia, where the women stay at home. She adopted Christianity in one of the camps and now attends both the church and the Buddhist temple on celebration days.

Her grandchild was injured at Cleveland school in Stockton, where, in 1989, a mad man killed seven Oriental children, including four from Cambodia.

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154	Education
155	Monks
156	Life under the Khmer Rouge
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Abstract

Mr. Ngoeuth was born in 1954. He and his father were farmers; his mother was a peddler. He left Cambodia in 1979 and arrived in the U.S. in 1984. Mr. Ngoeuth stopped school after one year in order to help take care of his father. When he was 17 his father asked him to be a monk for one year. The Khmer Rouge were very active in the forests of Battambang in 1972. Married men were less likely to be forcibly recruited by them so at 18 he was married with parental arrangements to a girl he knew. Later he was tricked into joining the government [Lon Nol] army. He retired in 1975. His assignments under Pol Pot included fishing (with nets) and rice growing. In 1977, he joined a group of "Para soldiers" but failed to escape from Khmer Rouge control. In 1979 after the Vietnamese had driven out the Khmer Rouge, he escaped to Thailand without incident and stayed in the camps at KID, Sakeo 2, and Chonburi before getting a sponsor and flying to the U.S. In Stockton, he has difficulty with English.

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158	Life in Cambodia before 1975
159	Life under the Khmer Rouge

160	Life under the Vietnamese
161	Escape to Thailand
162	Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mrs. Hong was born in Kampot province, left Cambodia at the age of 20 in 1979.

Mrs. Hong led a rather uneventful life until 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took over the government. Her father was, in turn, a builder of stone homes, cattle raiser, merchant, ice cream manufacturer and vendor. He moved to Phnom Penh and then to Pailin, in Battambang province, where he raised cattle and cotton, manufactured cotton products, and engaged in truck gardening. Mrs. Hong attended twelve years of school in Buddhist temples and then was sent to a private school in Battambang. In 1975 she was able to live just outside of her village and was not assigned to a labor camp. When the Vietnamese came in, she was baking cakes for sale. She has early memories of Lon Nol's administration (1970-1975), as well as life under Pot Pot and the Vietnamese. About 1978 she escaped to Thailand and lived in Old Camp, Khao I Dang. Sakeo 2. Kamput, and back to KID for testing. She spent six months in the refugee camp in the Philippines and was then sponsored in the U.S. by her aunt and another Cambodian. She lived for three years in Boston before coming to California. In Stockton her husband took one of their children and disappeared. She is raising two children and is near her mother in Stockton. (A.A.)

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164	Life under the Khmer Rouge Working conditions
165	Escape to Thailand
166	Life in Khao I Dang Camp
167	Life in the United States

Abstract

Mrs. Ly was born in Battambang. Her father was a soldier; her mother worked on the farm and garden. An aunt raised her when she was young, "temporarily," because her mother did not have time.

Mrs. Ly attended two years of school in the Buddhist temple. When the Khmer Rouge took over the government, she was separated from her family, at age 13. and was sent to live in Somrourng temple to work in the rice fields and help build canals. Later she was sent to a mountain range camp where she was a rice-hay picker and a rice shaker. She "ran" to Battambang when the Vietnamese ousted the Khmer Rouge. [Travel would have been easier then.] She "ran" to Thailand later. On the way to Thailand she encountered robbers but made it safely to "Old" camp, where she stayed a short time. With a group, she traveled then to Khao I Dang, led by a smuggler to whom each member of the group paid 50 (Thai) baht. [about \$2.50] On the way, there were bodies of people who had been shot by robbers. She describes KID as a "wonderful

place" with Cambodian ceremonies, bands, theater, and movies. She was there three years before she found a sponsor. In the three months in the next camp, Kamput, she attended school. She flew directly to the United States and lived in Chicago for a year. Moving to Stockton, she attended middle school and high school. With students, she attended a Christian church. She says that there are too many problems and too much stress in America and that she found more happiness in the refugee camps and in life in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge took over. When possible, she would like to return to Cambodia and be a teacher. (A.A.)

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169	Working conditions
170	Violent deaths
171	Punishment
172	Escape to Thailand
173	Life in Khao I Dang Camp in Thailand
174	Life in the United States Education

Abstract

Mr. Sin was only 21 at the time of the interview but remembers quite vividly his experiences under Pol Pot who came to power when Mr. Sin was seven years old.

Mr. Sin was born in Phnom Penh. His mother was a wholesaler of fresh fish and his father was a pedicab driver. When the bombing of Phnom Penh became serious, in 1972 or 1973 as he recalls, his family flew by commercial airline to Pailin (in Battambang province near the Thai border) where they stayed with a wealthy uncle (five vehicles, "hundreds" of houses). He says the price of a ticket rose from 1,000 to 10,000 riels at that time. When the Khmer Rouge arrived at Pailin, the family fled but lost all of the vehicles and personal property. Mr. Sin was assigned, along with another boy and an elderly man, to watch the cattle and keep them fat. He was tied up and put on display in the village once when he did something wrong. He tells a harrowing and detailed story of escape to the border when the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese were fighting in the vicinity. He recalls that some profit-oriented refugees preferred New Camp, with all of its trading opportunities, to Khao I Dang which was safer and had more food. In America, the English language was a problem at first but he graduated from Stagg High School in 1988 and was attending Delta College in 1989. (A.A.)

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177	Working conditions
178	Punishment
179	Escape to Thailand
180	Life in Khao I Dang Camp

181 Life in the United States
182 English language problems
183 Work

Abstract

Mr. Sok was born in Crouch Chmar, in Kampong Thum county. He left Cambodia in 1979 and was in the Khao I Dang and Kamput refugee camps in Thailand and the refugee camp in the Philippines before arriving in the United States.

Mr. Sok lived in a rented house built of wood, two meters above ground level. The roof was covered by thin bricks. They planted various fruit trees around the house. If the family had a farm, the crops in this area would have been coconuts, bananas, peas, and beans. His parents were teachers: the children attended from five to eight years of schooling. Mr. Sok was a monk for a short time before he married. The family was always poor, sometimes without enough food. Life under the Khmer Rouge (communists) was very severe. Families were broken up and Mr. Sok was assigned, alone, to a farm where he plowed, tilled, and raised sweet yams and bananas. In addition he constructed canals and dams. If a worker did not finish his quotas, he was taken away and killed. In 1979, he and his father escaped to Khao I Dang camp in Thailand. The international Red Cross furnished food. He was then moved by bus to Kamput camp and finally to the temporary Transit camp where refugees stayed awaiting transfer to a camp in the Philippines and then, in his case, to Utah. His major problem is in learning English fast enough to qualify for well-paying jobs. (A.A.)

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184 Life under the Khmer Rouge
185 Work
186 Food
187 Life in Khao I Dang Camp in Thailand
188 Life in the United States

Abstract

Mrs. Oeun, a servant in Cambodia, left in 1979, was in several refugee camps before coming to Rochester, Minnesota.

Mrs. Oeun's first husband, a soldier, was killed in 1975 by the Khmer Rouge, as were a brother, aunt, and brother-in-law. She worked on dams and tried to take care of her children. Food was so scarce at one time that she had to use raw rat's intestines to feed her youngest. She appears to be an astute political observer, not believing a statement by the conquering Vietnamese that if the driver is changed, a car's body and engines are still the same. She said, "Their hearts were still the same as those of the Red Khmer." After being shot at, she escaped to the Old (refugee) Camp in Thailand and lived at Khao I Dang. Kamput, Transit, and the Philippine refugee camp. She tells of rumors, reported by other refugees, that the food and water conditions at Khao I Dang were not satisfactory. This deterred her from going there until she heard statements from

others that the rumors were not true. Life was good, so far as food, medical care and survival were concerned, in all of the camps but she felt disadvantaged because many refugees had enough money to buy food and other items that were available in all of the camps. She apparently has not worked in the United States but studies English and takes care of her children. She moved to Stockton to be near a sister. (A.A.)

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190	Marriage
191	Life under the Khmer Rouge
192	Working conditions
193	Food
194	Life in the United States
195	Religion

Abstract

The interview channels one of the rarely heard voices of the community, that of a woman in rural Cambodia. Equally significant, the respondent's socioeconomic background as a member of a sharecropper family makes this an atypical case in a country where the majority consists of self-sufficient, small landowning peasants. Not only as a woman, but moreover an impoverished one, she provides invaluable insights through her reflections on the revolution that, in essence, was claimed to have been made in the name of the poor and the dispossessed. Of added interest, the respondent not only experienced life under the Khmer Rouge but had also lived through the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia and suffered through another brief period under the Khmer Rouge when she, along with others, was "corralled" to Khmer Rouge controlled territory in the aftermath of a military skirmish.

The respondent's subsequent conversion to Christianity upon her escape to the border camp of Thailand adds yet another interesting dimension to her life experience. Her reflections on this process are replete with insights on the effective reconciling of the Christian faith and the Buddhist norms and values with which she had been inculcated as a Khmer. Overall, the interview encapsulates the challenges of adaptation not only to a Western society but to the urban environment. In that respect, the respondent's own migration and resettlement experiences—from rural Cambodia to Kentucky—capture the essence of the diaspora experience of the majority of Khmer refugees in the United States. (K.U.)

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196	Life in Cambodia before 1975
197	Life under the Khmer Rouge
198	Life in the United States

Abstract

Mrs. Krit worked on a farm, did not attend school, cleared forest land under the Khmer Rouge, and escaped to Thailand primarily because of the severe famine in 1979.

One of Mrs. Krit's parents was Cambodian and the other was Laotian. Mrs. Krit and her parents were all born in the same district in Battambang province. The family was too poor to allow her to go to school instead of working. She thought married life would be better than living with her parents. A man from another village moved near to Mrs. Krit's home and raped her. She married him to preserve the good name of the family. When the Khmer Rouge came, they allowed her to stay at home until her baby was older. She was then forced to move to a village about 10 miles away and clear forests with a labor group. The daily assignment for this group of 15 was to clear an area 100 meters square. The group was not fed until the work was done. Food was so scarce that at one time she made a flour from unhusked rice, mixed it with papaya and fed it to her family. Her child and brother-in-law died immediately. She, herself, was quite sick. In America, she is having the usual problems with English. She can write only the numbers 1 and 2 although she can speak the numbers from 1 to 100. She is proud of being able to shop alone. She wants to become a naturalized American because she is afraid that if peace comes to Cambodia, the American government will send unnaturalized refugees back. Unusual among the narrators, she thinks that foreigners can govern Cambodia better than Cambodians can. (A.A.)

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200	Monk
201	Life under the Khmer Rouge
202	Working conditions
203	Violent deaths
204	Life in Khao I Dang Camp
205	In general
206	Food
207	Life in the United States
208	Khmer medicine

Abstract

Mr. Hinn, and his brothers, were monks. The Khmer Rouge killed his wife, three children, and four brothers and sisters in 1977. He does some healing among his relatives in Stockton.

Mr. Hinn was raised in a large family and each child married and moved to separate housing. Under the Khmer Rouge. Mr. Hinn was forced to work on canals, as were many others. The method of killing of his relatives was slitting the stomach and then slitting the throat. His escape to Thailand, in 1979. was difficult. He went with a group of 31 and was in all of the usual camps. His stay in the camps, probably in Khao I Dang, was apparently very long because he did not reach America until 1985. Mr. Hinn practices healing that he learned in the monastery. Normally it involves bathing in holy water and making an arrangement of betel nuts and leaves, cigarettes, candles and incense. Medicines include bamboo roots, "pteal" roots for purging and

"chanch" roots. A common condition that he treats is a "needling sensation," which keeps one from sitting or sleeping. He has improved the sleeping of a few people. He enjoys the freedom he has found in America. (A.A.)

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209 Life in Cambodia before 1975

210 Marriage

211 Monks

212 Customs and festivities

213 Work

Abstract

Mr. Keo was born in the jungle when his parents were fleeing from the French. He had nine siblings. His marriage was arranged and he met the girl's parents before he met her. The gifts to the bride's side might be 5,000 riels, four barrels of liquor, bags of glutinous or plain rice, or pigs. He lived in the subdistrict of Mong in the district of Snom in Siemreap province. Each of the siblings was given a team of oxen and an oxcart when leaving home. He has very pleasant memories of his early life, owning radios, bicycles, and watches. There was a great deal of mutual help with neighbors in planting and harvesting. Apparently there were no renters but only home-owners. He remembers planting rice as "great fun." There was no agricultural machinery except for the plow. He attended only vernacular schools and remembers the chalk being made out of mud. Each boy in the family was a monk for a time. He was one for six months. Building the temple was a cooperative enterprise. The building was of cement and had glass windows. There were no police in the rural areas but people who broke the laws were taken to the village chief. (A.A.)

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214 Life in Cambodia

215 In general

216 Life under the Khmer Rouge

217 Working conditions

Abstract

Mr. Nim was a rice farmer and was 16 years old when the Khmer Rouge put him in a boys' work camp. In trying to escape from Thailand in 1979, he was caught by the Khmer Rouge and beaten with a chain until blinded.

He worked on rice, canals, and dams during the Khmer Rouge regime. When fleeing from them in 1979, he was accused of joining the Vietnamese, arrested, tied to a pole, subjected to electric shocks in his legs, and beaten with a chain until blinded. He was rescued by the Vietnamese. He was in border refugee camps for a time and then brought to Khao-I-Dang. For a time he was in the Kamput camp, which had wooden buildings and electricity. He actually

enjoyed life for a time. Later he was returned to KID, found a sponsor, passed the tests and was flown to the United States. His first home was in Rochester, Minnesota and after two years he went to Stockton. As others, he wishes that his English was better. He does not like to be on a welfare or disability program because of his blindness but wishes that he could work or go to school. He has many Cambodian friends in Stockton and is well-treated. (A.A.)

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219 Monks

220 Life under the Khmer Rouge

221 A member of the Khmer Rouge

222 Escape to Thailand

Abstract

Mr. Srey was "pushed" by a relative into joining the Khmer Rouge and had various military assignments until he escaped to Thailand, was arrested by the Thai police and spent six months in a Thai prison before he got to a refugee camp.

Mr. Srey was a monk for two or three years, as a young man, and in 1974 he "reluctantly" joined the Khmer Rouge at the urging of a cousin-in-law. He became, in turn, a village spy, a member of the secret police, an "assistant" without arms to the soldiers on the front line, a maker of palm sugar near the front, a soldier in the second line advancing on Phnom Penh, then a soldier in the first line, then a soldier in the first line advancing on Siem Reap. When things settled down a little, he supervised farming and was then assigned to border defense. While learning to handle land mines, one exploded and injured both legs. Six months in a hospital did not close the wound. He was sent to a three-week training course for "medics" and at the hospital administered penicillin and other western drugs. He was almost executed in connection with a hospital scandal. He fled toward the Thai border when the Vietnamese came in but kept running into Khmer Rouge soldiers who tried to prevent his escape. Near the border he was arrested by Thai soldiers and spent six months in a Thai prison before release and arrival at a refugee camp. In three months, he was in the United States. (A.A.)

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223 Life in Khao I Dang camp

224 Life in other refugee camps

225 Life in the United States

226 Work

Abstract

Mr. Yim lived in Battambang county. Kdole province, which is very close to the Thai border. Because of lack of food at the village, Mr. and Mrs. Yim, with three children, escaped to Thailand. They first lived in "Old Camp" and then were moved to Khao I Dang (KID) camp, which

he describes in great detail. They were here for about two years, until 1980. From here they were bused to Maroad for testing and evaluation. From there they were bused to Transit camp.

The next stop was Loopiney where they stayed one night before boarding a plane for San Francisco and on to Arizona, sponsored by the Catholics. He describes in some detail the source of money and employment. To keep employed, he moved to Reno then Stockton. He attended church schools and then college.

Under the welfare program, he must go to school or work 60 hours a month in the welfare program, which he was doing at the time of the interview. (A.A.)

Contents

p. 33

227 Life under the Khmer Rouge

228 Working conditions

Abstract

Mr. Ton was a farmer born in Battambang. He left Cambodia about 1979.

When the Khmer Rouge took over the government in 1975, Mr. Ton was sent to another county where he and other men built their own shelter and worked on rice farms. After a year he was sent to another rice area where he worked in the rice farms and gardens and helped construct canals and dams. Those who had a team of cattle used the team with plow and rake. Others used shovels. A daily goal might be 2 or 3 meters of canal per person. A work day started at 4 a.m. and sometimes ran to midnight with very little food, usually porridge with much more water than rice. Originally a very strong man, he lost weight under this schedule. His five year old son carried rice bundles and trapped mice and rats. His wife was in a separate camp and he was seldom allowed to visit her. His shelter was without walls and when it rained hard, the hammocks were taken down and the men sat in the middle of the shelter until morning. In 1977 he was assigned to cut firewood for a cuisine (dining hall) in a deep jungle. With a team of oxen and cart, it took him one day to arrive at the jungle, a second day for cutting and for the oxen to graze, and a third day to return. Later he collected rice husks (for fuel) by riding a bicycle and bringing bundles of husks to the main road side where they were picked up by truck. He was arrested and held for one day by the Khmer Rouge over an argument about identity papers. The following week, the Vietnamese arrived. He lived under them for a year and then escaped to New camp in Thailand. (A.A.)

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p. 34

229 Life in Cambodia before 1975

230 Ceremonies (weddings)

231 Life under the Khmer Rouge

232 Working conditions

Abstract

Mr. Noun was born in a remote village of thirty houses, was very poor, and under the Khmer Rouge was a member of a "Mobile Brigade" that moved from area to area doing agricultural work.

Mr. Noun lived in a wood and grass house where the roof was replaced every year. The stove consisted of a small pile of bricks or earthen mounds. Rice was the only crop. The school was too far away for him to attend. The family paid rent for its rice land and for the land occupied by the house. They did have an ox cart. He says that men become monks to repay their parents and likened the begging bowl carried in front of the monk to the baby carried in front during pregnancy. Children pay respect to their parents with the palm-finger greeting and with a very soft voice. He describes the wedding ceremony in some detail with its live music even in a small village. Under the Khmer Rouge, the members of his mobile group slept in open fields with only broken trees and tarpaulins for shelter. His interview did not cover his escape or his life in refugee camps and in America. (A.A.)

p. 35 Contents

233 Life under the Khmer Rouge
234 Working conditions
235 Punishment
236 Escape to Thailand
237 Life in Khao I Dang Camp
238 Life in the United States
239 Lifestyle

Abstract

Mrs. Vann's interview consists primarily of the perils of the escape to Thailand in November, 1979 and life in the refugee camps.

She was under fire by Vietnamese troops near the border. She was in New Camp for two months and fled from the fighting there to the Old Camp where she was taken by bus to Khao I Dang. There she reports seeing the killing of smugglers and refugees who went out of the camp without permission. She was arrested a few times for selling vegetables. At first they were given bamboo for hut construction only but later they were given enough for beds. Her children attended school where they had cakes and snacks and could have their fingernails cut. She was transferred for about a year to Kapcheung which had permanent buildings with concrete floors and good roofs. After a year she was sent back to KID which by now had better housing. Finally she was at Chonburi for a year before leaving for America in 1985. In America one of her daughters was raped by a Cambodian and her niece was killed by her husband. (A.A.)

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240 Life in Cambodia before 1975
241 Monks
242 Festivities

243 Life under the Khmer Rouge
244 Punishment
245 Violent death
246 Life in the United States
247 Customs
248 English
249 Trading near the border

Abstract

Mr. Chhom lived in the province of Kompong Speur. He arrived in 07 refugee camp in Thailand in 1979 and after a few months in Khao I Dang, he arrived in the United States in 1980.

Among other crops, Mr. Chhom raised bai-toey, betel, cotton, black pepper, and citronella (lemon grass). He owned two elephants and used them for transportation from his village to another larger town. The elephants were taken from him by French colonists. The Cambodians made bicycles of wood with metal chains and rubber cover on the wheels. He recalls the Japanese occupation and French colonization. He had success raising black pepper and building houses with the profits. He describes vividly the punishments and deaths under the Khmer Rouge. In the labor camps at night, after work, he played violin in an orchestra that played communist music. Before staying in a Thai refugee camp, he made trips back and forth across the border to Battambang. His experiences in camp 07 were unpleasant. In the Camp at Chonburi he taught folk dance. (A.A.)

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250 Life in Cambodia before 1975
251 Education
252 Festivities
253 Life under the Khmer Rouge
254 Escape to Thailand
255 Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mr. Va spent his childhood in Phnom Penh and did a remarkable amount of traveling back and forth across the Cambodian-Thai border and did not leave Khao I Dang until 1988.

He decided early that he wanted to study medicine and took relevant courses in school. Under Pol Pot, his father was killed because he had been in the Cambodian army. Mr. Va spent most of the time from 1975 to 1979 in a youth camp doing agricultural work. He escaped before the Vietnamese came into the country and worked for his food on farms in Thailand. From then until his departure for the United States, he was in refugee camps Norng Chann, Sakeo I and II, and finally Khao I Dang, which he entered by cutting the wire fence at night. As an illegal newcomer, he hid with relatives and friends until he was fed officially. Apparently he returned to Cambodia about 1980 and lived in Phnom Penh for a while. From Khao I Dang, on his way to the U. S., he

followed the regular pattern of staying a short time in Chonburi, Thailand, and five months in the Philippine camp for Cambodian refugees. His mother arrived in the U. S. earlier and was his sponsor. The family plan was to reunite everyone in the family in the U. S. (A.A.)

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256 Life in Cambodia before 1975

257 Education

258 Life under the Khmer Rouge

259 Working conditions

260 Life in Khao I Dang Camp

261 In general

Abstract

Mr. Kek was a farmer and a monk. At age 63 he recalls the Thai occupation of a few eastern provinces of Cambodia before the French colonization.

Mr. Kek was born in Battambang province. His village did not have a public school so he attended classes at the Buddhist temple and was also a monk for two years. His early life was upset by the Thai occupation of his province, under which he learned Thai, and by the Cambodian revolutionaries against the French later. Under Pol Pot he worked on dams at sites up to 15 kilometers from his village. Awakened at 4 a.m., he had to start work before the sun came up. He suffered from the cold and his long working hours. During the Pol Pot regime, none of his relatives or close friends was killed but several died from disease and the lack of medication. Unlike other refugees, he reports that the rice supply in his village was adequate throughout that regime. His escape to Thailand in 1979 was relatively uneventful although he did most of his travel at night to avoid Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge soldiers. At the Thai border he lived briefly in Old Camp and New Camp and then spent about four years in Khao I Dang. He said that his knowledge of Thai made his relationship with the Thai guards easier at KID. He was in the Philippine refugee camp for six months. He describes briefly the Khmer wedding ceremony and other festivities and the forms of greeting in Cambodia. He does not discuss his life in America. (A.A.)

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262 Life in Cambodia before 1975

263 Ceremonies

264 Life in the United States

265 In general

266 Work

267 Religion (Buddhism & Christianity)

Abstract

Mrs. Keo left Cambodia for Thailand in 1975 and was soon flown to the U. S. because her husband was an officer in the Cambodian air force.

Mr. Keo's father was a soldier. She attended school and passed in "diploma school"-about the same level as the American high school. She was married at 18 and escaped to Thailand soon after. She was treated well at a U. S. military base in Thailand. In the United States she had a very helpful sponsor and her husband soon had a job delivering flower for a florist in Pensacola, Florida; later he was a welder in shipyards. Mrs. Keo worked in restaurants and later owned one. She describes in some detail the hardships she endured, including the loss of a son killed by a truck. She has a lengthy description of a typical wedding ceremony in Cambodia. Unlike other interviews, hers includes a lengthy discussion of the bases and inconsistencies (in her mind) of Buddhism and the elements of Christianity based on her conversion. (A.A.)

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268	Life in Cambodia before 1975
269	Marriage
270	Life under the Khmer Rouge
271	Working conditions
272	Punishment
273	Violent death
274	Escape to Thailand
275	Life in the United States
276	In general

Abstract

Mr. Da's parents were born in Thailand and he was born in Battambang province in Cambodia. He was a farmer and escaped to Thailand in 1978. After a few weeks in Thai villages, he went to Mirut and Chonburi refugee camps and arrived in San Francisco in 1979.

He was a rice farmer and owned eight cattle, ducks, chickens, two ox carts, radio, and bicycle. He joined the army in 1970 as a groundman. His salary was 1750 riels (about \$20 a month). When the Khmer Rouge took over, they confiscated his property and sent him to another village. He saw people tied up, beaten, and stabbed. He plowed and cut wood. His wife became a rice grinder. His mother watched small children at the day care center. His children worked building dams. He saw them about once every four months. He saw babies bayoneted. Three of his children were killed. He escaped in 1978 and lived and worked on a friendly basis with Thai farmers for two months before going to the Mirut refugee camp. (A.A.)

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277	Life under the Khmer Rouge
278	Working conditions

Abstract

Mrs. Ran lived on a farm and supplemented the family income by retailing polished rice. Under the Khmer Rouge she transplanted rice, worked on the dams and in the gardens, and pedaled the water-pumper during dry season irrigation. Near relatives were killed during the regime. Her escape to Thailand was physically very trying but no one in her group was injured or robbed. She spent the typical amounts of time in refugee camps Khao-I-Dang, Sateo II. Murat and the Philippines. Her husband was assigned as a group leader in charge of food distribution in some of these camps. Like several others interviewed in this project, she adopted Christianity in the camps, retaining Buddhism. In America, her first city of residence was Houston; she subsequently lived in San Diego before coming to Stockton. She despairs of the Cambodian youths who follow the dress and dating customs of American adolescents. She unsuccessfully studied English in the Philippines and in Stockton. One of her daughters has married here. Other children are in school. (A.A.)

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279 Life in Cambodia before 1975
 280 Work (in detail)
 281 Monks
 282 Life under the Khmer Rouge
 283 Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mr. Ros was born in Khum Kampong Chhang Province. His parents died when he was nine years old and he was raised by an aunt and uncle. He went to the temple school from the ages 11 to 15 and, partly to please his aunt and uncle, became a monk. He left the temple at age 17 but became a monk again as a "Phek" monk. Later he moved to Battambang Province. There he met a woman who became his "adopted" mother. He worked on rice farms and later obtained free government land and rented a tractor. Later he did carpentry work. When the Khmer Rouge took over, he was forced to leave his city and was assigned to rice growing. Then he headed a group of carpenters who converted large houses to smaller ones. Because of his knowledge of herbal medicine, his next task for the KR was to go out into the forest and find all of the herbs he could. When the Vietnamese came in, he went first to the refugee camp at Chumron Thmey where the UN was providing food. Later at Khao-I-Dang he worked with the herbal medicine group. Transferred to the camp at Kamput for two years, he "organized" a temple and converted a four room building into a temple. At the Philippine camp, he stayed three months instead of the usual six. In Stockton he worries that, because of his poor English, he may get arrested or lead people to think that he is impolite. (A.A.)

p. 44 Contents

284 Life in Cambodia before 1975
 285 Monks
 286 Customs and festivities
 287 Work (Air Force)

288 Life in the United States
289 Religion (Christianity)

Abstract

Mr. Keo attended college before going into the Cambodian air force about 1970. He and his wife flew out of Phnom Penh to Thailand two or three days before Phnom Penh was captured by the Khmer Rouge.

This is the longest interview in the study. Mr. Keo discusses several subjects in some detail: land holdings of his grandfather and father, palm trees, houses, ponds, and wells, the educational system, his interest in antiquities and architecture, the training of monks and the hierarchies, his great grandfather who was the head of the monks in his temple, the nuns, the origins of Buddhism, the "ajas" (monks who work directly with the people), the "sils" or rules of Buddhism, the lanterns of the New Year celebrations, the burial ceremony, crime and Punishment before 1975, American bombing in Cambodia in the early 1970's, the role of the Cambodian air force, first months in America, his introduction and conversion to Christianity, car accidents and the death of a son, the Moslem religion, the Biblical stories of Eve and the serpent, the tower of Babel, Noah and his sons, and the need for education in Cambodia. (A.A.)

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290 Life in Cambodia before 1975
291 Education
292 Life under the Khmer Rouge
293 Working conditions
294 Escape to Thailand

Abstract

A native of Takeo province, the respondent was born into a rather well-to-do peasant family with excess rice lands that had to be worked by hired hands. Like many boys in rural Cambodia, the respondent received his primary education from the local vernacular school, before entering the state educational system from which he received his high school diploma. When Sihanouk was overthrown in 1970, the respondent was working as a teacher in Simreap province. In 1971, Communist presence in both Takeo and Siemreap and their increasingly repressive policies vis-a-vis teachers and bureaucrats compelled the respondent and his family to move from Takeo and Siemreap respectively to Battambang province. The respondent was subsequently relocated following the Khmer Rouge take over to the area west of Phnom Sampeoeu, towards Snoeng where he settled and worked in the Boenug Prey Cooperative. His detailed recollection of his experience under the Khmer Rouge, particularly in his position as the leader of a work brigade, sheds light on the social and economic developments of post-1975 Cambodia. The description of the living conditions, regulations governing food allocation and the pervasive atmosphere of fear are particularly noteworthy. Equally poignant is the recounting of the

respondent's treacherous journey of escape to Thailand and of his life in the Thai refugee camp. (K.U)

p. 45 Contents

295 Life in Cambodia before 1975
296 Work
297 Education
298 Monks

Abstract

The interview consists of a rich description of village life in Cambodia, complete with the description of traditional Khmer homes, of traditional modes of transportation and the various indices of status hierarchy in rural Cambodia. In addition, the respondent is able to tap into his experience as a farmer in shedding insights on the intricate process of rice cultivation, from the need to accommodate the different aspects of agricultural work to nature's cycles, to the categorization of the various types of rice seeds, to the laboring process of husking and milling the harvested grains. From his vivid recollection of his natal village—of creeks teeming with fish and fertile fruit orchards—one can assess the resource abundance that made possible such idyllic lifeways as are described. The interview also consists of scarce information on the rural economy of pre-war Cambodia, particularly on the rice trade and the mode of capital accumulation of small-landowning communities. Like many Khmer village boys, the respondent received his primary education from a vernacular school. From this experience, he is able to impart detailed information on the training that young boys receive at the vernacular schools that extends beyond the acquisition of basic reading and writing skills to the realm of moral and civic education. As a former monk, the respondent also provides valuable, first-hand information on the behavioral and normative prescriptions for Buddhist monks. (K.U.)

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299 Life in Cambodia before 1975
300 Education
301 Customs and festivities
302 Life under the Khmer Rouge
303 Violent deaths
304 Working conditions
305 Escape to Thailand
306 Life in Khao I Dang Camp
307 Work
308 Life in other refugee camps

Abstract

Mr. Sam was born in Battambang about 1954. His father was a customs agent in the government (but was used later by the Khmer Rouge as a healer).

Mr. Sam has a long description of his education in the public school, temple school, and art school. One of his first jobs was to paint pictures for the local movie house; later he painted a temple. He joined the local "commando" group—youths that performed as soldiers but were not part of the army. Later his group fought along side the government (Lon Nol's) army against the Khmer Rouge. He says the officers were corrupt. In 1975 the Khmer Rouge took over the country and assigned him to drive tractors; later, to build dams. He was on leave to visit his parents when the Khmer Rouge took his father, cut off his head, and displayed it on the village gate. The Khmer Rouge killed five of his near relatives. Later they assigned him to drive a horse and cart carrying rice. At one time, the local authorities tied him up to kill him but the regional leader saved him.

In passing, he says that one of the objectives of the Khmer Rouge was to develop a lighter skinned Khmer race and people with curly hair. He describes the fighting between the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge at the time he escaped to New Camp. From there he went to Khao I Dang refugee camp in Thailand, which he criticizes, but worked with the officials in "psychology," mathematics and art education. He then went to Kamput camp, (where he created a University of Fine Arts), SaKeo 2 in Thailand, the refugee camp in the Philippines and finally to the United States. (A.A.)

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309	Life in Cambodia before 1975
310	Education
311	Work (poverty)
312	Life under the Khmer Rouge
313	Working conditions
314	Food
315	Life in Khao I Dang Camp
316	Food
317	Life in other camps
318	SaKeo 1
319	SaKeo 2

Abstract

Mr. Loeur was raised on a farm, worked in a youth camp under the Pol Pot regime, escaped to Thailand, lived in several camps until he got a sponsor in Chicago.

Mr. Loeur describes, more than others, the condition of the poor before 1975, the difficulty in growing enough rice to stay alive, and the necessary borrowing from "the rich." Interest was high and outstanding debts were passed on to the children. Therefore, he welcomed the beginning of the Khmer Rouge regime, where there were to be no poor and rich but one people for which the government would provide. He was soon disenchanted and worked hard in youth camps. In his opinion, the Vietnamese captors relieved the terror. However, he did want to get more security and went to Thailand. He praises the UN and the camps and said that arriving in

Sakeo 1 was "like going to heaven." Camps with markets that followed were even better. He expresses the usual fear of the airplane trip to America: holding his food on his lap and not knowing how to eat. Life in Chicago seemed unbearably cold and he soon moved to Stockton. He apparently has lost touch with all members of his family. (A.A.)

p. 48 Contents

320 Life in Cambodia before 1975

321 Work

322 Life under the Khmer Rouge

323 Working conditions

Abstract

Mr. Ray was a farmer who describes first his farming activities before 1975. Because of his age, his wife answers the balance of the questions. They were in their sixties when they were interviewed.

Mrs. Ray describes graphically their lives as farmers, saying that when they had their second child, her life became harder and harder. "My house looked miserable: I lived in misery with five children." Under the Khmer Rouge, the family was broken up. Mrs. Ray worked on the canals and dams, planted tobacco, corn, soy beans, and bananas, and cut trees in the forest. She ate only rice soup from 1975 to 1978. She said the rice ration went from about one can (empty canned milk can) for two people per day (.5 can per person) down to two or three cans for five (.4) to ten for forty (.25). Under the Vietnamese she continued work in a common rice field. About 1979 she heard that there were refugee camps on the Thai border. With three children, she walked four days to Aranya camp and was then taken to Khao I Dang. She was there for about four years before transfer through other camps to the United States in 1985 where she was met by a younger brother. (A.A.)

p. 49 Contents

324 Life in Cambodia before 1975

325 Education

326 Life under the Khmer Rouge

327 Food

328 Medical care

329 Escape to Thailand

Abstract

Mr. Heng, who was about 51 when interviewed, recalls his early life on a farm, attending the French schools for seven years.

Mr. Heng recalls his time in the elementary school: the building, its teachers, its lack of books and supplies. He served for a brief time in the police but returned to farming. When life in the

countryside became more dangerous because of the Khmer Rouge, he Moved to Phnom Penh and became a cyclo-swing puller, also serving as a commando (civilians who aided the army). In 1975 the Khmer Rouge assigned him to construction of canals and dams. Two of his three children died from malnutrition and lack of medical care. When the Vietnamese came in, he decided to escape to Thailand. The travel from Battambang to Swaisysophon was not too difficult. There he gathered and sold watergrass, water lilies, and tree leaves. The trip on to the border was hazardous with the Vietnamese soldiers attempting to keep Cambodians from leaving Cambodia. His niece delivered a baby en route. After a brief stay in New Camp, his family arrived at Khao-I-Dang where he first helped in the construction of public buildings and then worked as an electrician. (A.A.)

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330 Life in Cambodia before 1975

331 Monks

332 Ceremonies

Abstract

Mr. Rath, a farmer in Cambodia, was about 70 years of age when interviewed and discusses calmly his years as a monk, a soldier from 1970 to 1975, and a laborer under Pol Pot. He brought his family to America through the refugee camps in Thailand.

At age 13, Mr. Rath's parents took him to a Buddhist temple where he worked and studied as a young "nens" monk for three years. Then he went back to become a "purk" monk (middle) and at 21 he returned to become a "pikoh" (more mature) monk. He then returned to normal life, married and had four children. From 1970-1975, he was in the army, "to fight for his country" and "to support family." Under Pol Pot he worked in a forest. He emphasizes the extreme hunger conditions under Pol Pot; one of Mr. Rath's sons died from malnutrition during that regime. He describes in detail the ceremonies at birth and traditional holidays with emphasis on the religious meaning of each. He apparently was quite happy in Khao I Dang and requested emigration to America. He was too old to look for work in the United States but has attended school. As a refugee emigrant he first lived in Texas. (A.A.)

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p. 51

333 Life in Cambodia before 1975

334 Education

335 Monks

Abstract

Mr. Vann was born in a farm family and, on the basis of this short interview, became and remained a monk.

He was born in Kanal Province and had nine brothers and sisters. They had farm land and a garden which was used to grow vegetables for the family. He went to a Buddhist school at the age of eight and studied Cambodian in the daytime and dharma at night. There was no paper to be used in the school and each student had two blackboards one meter long: one for rules and one for general writing. The chalk was very poor and a cleaning liquid made out of the ashes of the hearttree leaves was used. Punishment by the monks was severe. The parents agreed with the severity asking only that the student retained "two eyes and the bones." He attended another temple for a time and then went to study in Phnom Penh where he received a "certificate of Putibatham Studies" at the age of 20. The balance of the interview includes Buddhist beliefs, the daily life of the monks inside the temple (rules about eating), duties outside of the temple (rules about walking and the hours for begging), and the duties of the student monks. (A.A.)

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- 336 Escape to Thailand
- 337 Life in Cambodia before 1975
- 338 Monks
- 339 Life under the Khmer Rouge
- 340 Life in Khao I Dang Camp
- 341 Life in other refugee camps

Abstract

Mr. Phon and his wife were noodle-makers before the Khmer Rouge regime. They stayed in New Camp and Khao I Dang before coming to the United States.

Mr. Phon was born in Battambang province. He was a monk for about a year at age 18. He then married, had children, and the parents supported the family by making and selling noodles. In the interview he describes at length the life and rules of the monks. During the Khmer Rouge regime, he worked on rice fields and helped store and grind the rice. Then he herded cattle, was a carpenter, made plows and rakes, built houses and returned to cattle herding. His wife worked in a vegetable garden for the common kitchens. He has a very detailed description of the trip from his home to Khao I Dang. With no gold to purchase rice, he and his extended family literally lived a "hand to mouth" existence. At New Camp he cut firewood and sold bundles for ten Baht (50 cents). At Khao I Dang, he describes the organization and food and water distribution in the sections. At the Thai camp in Chonburi, he found work maintaining the canals in the camp. In America, he was taken directly to Stockton where he is apparently well settled. He still has children and other relatives living in Cambodia. (A.A.)

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- 342 Life in Cambodia before 1975
- 343 Early life
- 344 Customs

Abstract

Mr. Qung lived on a farm in a very poor part of Kampot Province and describes the conditions of rural poverty, her lack of education, and social customs of the times.

She tells of the difficulties of living with very small parcels of farm land and the ownership, rental, and crop sharing techniques that enabled the farmer to stay alive. There was a lack of schools and an informal system of education developed with local instructors. She married a soldier and moved to Phnom Penh. Under the Khmer Rouge she was separated from her husband and children and was relocated several times. She survived her assignments in agricultural cooperatives with no unusual problems but witnessed the harshness and killings under Pol Pot. The escape to Thailand after the Vietnamese came into Cambodia was without incident but the family would have been denied entrance into Khao-I-Dang refugee camp except for the illness of one of the six children. (A. A.)

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345 Life in Cambodia before 1975

346 Education

347 Work

Abstract

Mr. Young worked at a great variety of jobs in Phnom Penh before the Khmer Rouge took over.

Mr. Young was raised on a farm and had a smattering of education in the public schools. As a boy he was in charge of his grandfather's cows and buffalo and later he was to own many of these. He also studied, off and on, at two temples. He joined the Issarak (Cambodian revolutionaries against the French) for a year. Moving to Phnom Penh, he held a great number of jobs, in many cases being promoted to higher positions. Because this interview is the only one in this project that describes the urban labor pursuits of a young man, the balance of this abstract will be devoted to those activities. First he worked in a cigarette factory, running away after a fist fight with another employee. Next, he carried wood at the train station. For a wealthy man who became his friend, he first was an attendant on a ferry, throwing ropes and carrying cargo; here he learned how to earn and spend money and how to gamble it away. He repaired ferry boat engines in a machine shop. Then he pedaled a bike and was promoted to manager of the cyclists. He learned to make French beds in a small factor. Next he manufactured bricks. He became an expert and moved to Battambang where he made the best bricks and won a competition in brick quality. Under the Khmer Rouge, he made ropes, watched cattle and practiced Khmer medicine. (A.A.)

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348 Life in Cambodia before 1975

349 Work (ruby mining)

350 Customs & festivities (weddings)

351 Life under the Khmer Rouge
352 Working conditions
353 Punishment
354 Food

Abstract

Mr. May was a farmer, a wood cutter, a miner for rubies, a fisherman, a collector of rents at a market, and a construction worker on dams and canals.

Mr. May seems to have led a more adventuresome life than other refugees. He describes the nature and operation of ruby mining and the purchase and sale of the stones. For a while he cut timber in the forests and floated logs on the river to Kompong Thom or to Phnom Penh. He describes the major celebrations, marriage, and childbirth traditions, and traditional medicine. He had problems with Pol Pot leaders and was punished but never beaten. When the vietnamese arrived, he moved about trying to find food but finally gave up and went to the camps on the Thai border. In Khao I Dang refugee camp he mentions the robberies that occurred regularly. He was sponsored by a cousin but did not arrive in the United States until 1985. (A.A.)

p. 57 Contents

355 Life under the Khmer Rouge
356 Working conditions
357 Punishment
358 Life in Khao I Dang Camp

Abstract

Mrs. Sar was separated from her family in 1975 during the evacuation of Phnom Penh and lived alone during the trying time under the Khmer Rouge working in different labor camps.

Mrs. Sar's parents were farmers when she was small and then moved to Phnom Penh where they were musicians on a government radio station and performed for Prince Sihanouk and his guests at times. Mrs. Sar sold vegetables in the market. After the evacuation, she worked wherever she was sent for the Khmer Rouge. She reports longer working hours than other refugees, being awakened at four o'clock in the morning but her stories of hunger are the same. She witnessed the execution of an unmarried couple and their child on the edge of the grave they were to be buried in. At Khao I Dang, she delivered a child and in a medical unit there nursed babies whose mothers lacked sufficient milk. She lost her husband who was a soldier when he stepped on a mine: Her sponsor was an American woman in Charlotte, N. Carolina. After a short time there and in Boston, she joined the Cambodians that she had heard about who lived in Stockton. She now has six children and works at home to keep them healthy. (A.A.)

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Abstract

Mr. Bith was born in Battambang and was a farmer. He left Cambodia about 1979 and arrived in the United States about 1983.

Mr. Bith tells of farming life, marriages, life under the Khmer Rouge and under the Vietnamese and life in the camps, as do other refugees in the project. He goes into more detail in some areas but usually with a philosophical, subjective approach. Much of his education was in Buddhist temples and he talks of the requirements, including the memorization of the chants; he attributes blindness in one eye to the concentration required. He recalls "oub bak che"—cleansing the sins before an older monk. He has reverence for both Buddha and Jesus and finds great similarities in the two. Under the communists he did a variety of things: drove a wagon of supplies and unloaded heavy bags of rice. He was tied to a tree and beaten on occasion and says he witnessed or knew of the deaths of many government soldiers by the communists. He speaks of life and half-life sentences under the older Cambodian rulers. In the United States he is greatly concerned about his lack of English. He feels as if he were a mute. He does not want to become a citizen but urges his children to take seriously the laws of their new country. (A.A.)

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Abstract

Bhanti (Buddhist Monk) Bharmawara lived in Cambodia about twenty years, then in Thailand about seven years and Burma about three years before coming to America. He was born in 1889 and was 100 years old on the date of the interview. He had good schooling in French in Phnom Penh and worked in the French civil service for some time. He was not comfortable in this work and decided to enter the monastery. He describes the training of a young Buddhist monk living in the forest. Anxious to go to India, the home of the Buddha, he moved there, founding a monastery in New Delhi, which still exists. He feels that the younger people today are not following the Buddhist way.

It is of interest to note that after a mad man shot and killed several Asian students (including four Cambodians) at an elementary school in Stockton in 1989, Bhanti Bharmawara was one of the counselors who helped parents and other students in the aftermath of the tragedy. (A.A.)

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Abstract

Mrs. Seng was born in Phnom Penh and lived most of her childhood there. Her father was a surveyor for the government and then went into business for himself, operating a ferry on the Mekong River.

Mrs. Seng and her family were forced to leave Phnom Penh immediately when the Khmer Rouge took over the city in April, 1975. They moved to Battambang where the family was broken up for work assignments. Her parents died in 1976 from malnutrition and disease and she became head of the family. When the Vietnamese took over in 1978, they sent her to the suburbs of Phnom Penh. The city itself was reserved for government officials. She was readmitted to the medical school in 1979. In 1982 she decided to get to the United States and took a bus to Battambang. The trip from there to the border was harrowing. However, the time spent in the usual refugee camps in Thailand and the Philippines was relatively short. She flew to San Diego, where her sponsors lived. She resumed medical training there and at the University of California at Davis before moving on to Stockton where she was involved in medical work at the time of the interview. (A.A.)

p. 1 Interview no. 39 Tape No. PS080289KF2 Narrator: Keo, Felicia Im Interviewer: Phon, Savoeun
Translator: Kheng, Hean Editor: Arthur Auble Date of interview: August 1, 1989 Place of
interview: Stockton, California Length of interview: 120 minutes

Tape1 sideA

My name is Phon, Savoeun. Today I'm interviewing Miss Felicia Im Keo at her home which is situated at 5735 Lorraine Avenue, Stockton, CA. And today is Wednesday, August 2, 1989.

Phon:

What nationality were your great grandparents and where did they come from?

Keo:

On my father's side a great grandfather of mine came from Hmong (Mongolia) and he got married with my great grandmother who was a Cambodian. And on mother's side a great grandfather of mine came from China and he married a woman with Cambodian-Thai background.

Phon:

How many children did your great uncle have when he came here?

Keo:

On my great grandfather's side, he had four children. On the side of my mother, there were twelve in all.

Phon:

Do you know all of those children's names? On both sides of your great grandfather and on your mother's?

Keo:

I don't know all because there are a lot. Let's start from my great grandmother by blood: for her she had twelve brothers and sisters. She was the eldest. My own mother is the eldest, too. There were twelve brothers and sisters; my great grandmother also had twelve children. But they were not alive. All were born but didn't stay alive; and it was only the eldest sister, my mother, who is still alive. She was named Ban, Kong because she was raised by another person. Later, she had a second son and third daughter. In all there were twelve children. But they died and there were only three left alive. On my father's side I don't know very much because I lived with my mother's side. I knew that my father was the third child and he has one sister. In his family there were only three children. My father joined the army when he was 18 years old in Cambodia which was then a colony of France. At a later day he got married to my mother in Battambang. He

had me, his first daughter. I was born in 1956 in the county of Bakaan in Po Ti Saht province.

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After that he had another son. He had only two children. And he was in the army from the age of 18 until 1975. I was separated from him at the soldiers' camp, Mon garden in Phnom Penh.

Phon:

Do you know what date your father was born?

Keo:

I can't remember the way American dates are used. He was born in the year of the rattle-snake (ma-sihn); he is about 60 years old. My mother was born in the year of the Pig (chor). My name used to be Saronee Im. My younger brother's name was Sokunna Im.

Phon:

In what province were you born?

Keo:

I was born in Po Ti Saht province in the county of Bakaan. My brother was born there as well. Later, I went to school in Po Ti Saht. My father was moved to Neak Loeurng in Prey Veng province. I went to school till 1970. I passed in diploma school. Its grade was about the same level as high school. I took the diploma test in 1973. I got married after I took the diploma test. As soon as I quit school, I got married. I just turned 18 years old. My husband was a pilot of transport; that is an army airplane. But we had a license to operate it. It was not like the T28 plane which was used to drop bombs. He was just a fly-carrier. And he had the ability to open fire from it toward the ground. In 1975 when our country was falling apart, I left Battambang and went straight to Thailand.

Phon:

What were your parents' occupations?

Keo:

Soldiers. My mother didn't do anything. On April 17, 1975 our country fell apart. I heard that our country was falling apart. I left Cambodia to go to Thailand. I flew with the plane that my husband had flown and we landed in O Ta Paang.

Phon:

Is O Ta Paang a Siamese village?

Keo:

It is a Siamese village. At that time I had one son. He was a little more than a year old at that time.

Phon:

What is his name?

Keo:

His name is Meth Thuom Kaet; it means a star with a tail, and in English it is Comet. I had not brought anything with me when I made my escape. I brought with me only my son and a small bag of clothes. I didn't bring any belongings because I didn't know that the country was falling apart like this. I hoped that I could go back home. I arranged to leave the country temporarily because I didn't know what the Communist people would do to us. That's why I needed to leave the country for a while. After a few days in Thailand, I heard on the radio that people were forced to leave the city of Phnom Penh. And it was true in Battambang as

well. They were forced to get out of the city. I thought to myself that my parents were forced to get out like those people. He was at the Mon garden in Phnom Penh while I was separated which is close to the palace of prince. His rank in the army was third (saak bi). And my brother was with him, too. After one month in Thailand, I departed to America, in Sivenia camp.

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Phon:

Did they take you to America without paying any air fare?

Keo:

They took us here without paying fare because we're a soldier's family. Most of them were not from the army or navy; most of those who came here were from the air force. And the embassy people who had been working outside the country had come, too. Therefore, Americans at that time were crazy to help us. Living in camp one, I was given three meals every day. And most Americans came to us. They served us in Thailand three meals per day. There were no other nationalities except Americans. Everything such as foods, cakes, building camp was set up by Americans. And everything else was had American support.

Phon:

What was that place called?

Keo:

That place is called O Ta Wao. O Ta Wao existed only at that time. Later, it was closed. O Ta Wao was close to one airport, American B Force, which is an American airport. Therefore, whoever needed to fly had to come to that airport and they would be taken into the camp which was close to the airport. In that time they didn't build the camp far away like now: they built the camp so far from the border. They moved the camp close to the seashore so that it has a lot of beautiful sights. There are coconut trees in the city of Kaeb in Cambodia.

Phon

At that time how was your house built?

Keo:

The camp was built like the tents of the soldiers and they gave us fabric cots to sleep in. We also got pillows and blankets. The meals were served three times a day. All the food was so well-cooked and prepared under clean conditions. There was nothing which gave us trouble. And I didn't expect that they would really welcome us like this. I always thought that we were refugees, and wondered what they were going to do to us. Later they took us to America. I didn't know where I was when the plane landed the first time. I forgot everything. Then it landed in Hawaii for awhile. And then they continued to fly till the plane landed in Pennsylvania, state of Philadelphia. That was the camp I lived in. The camp was not the same as the camp of the American soldiers. It was not the same as their camp. At that time I met a lot of marine soldiers. I didn't know where the plane landed. Suddenly, we arrived at the camp and I met them there. That was the time I met mostly marine forces. I didn't know where they were going. When I arrived

p. 4 at the camp, we met one another: for those water soldiers. [Apparently Cambodian sailors.] Marine forces and air forces had the chance to come. But ground forces hardly had a chance to come. There was a very small number of them who came to this country.

Phon:

Did you know the English words used at that time?

Keo:

It is spelled "WVIA Town Gulf." I don't know how it's spelled. If you ask Americans, they surely would know it. I stayed in that camp for a month and half. And I have a sponsor who was the former teacher of my husband in Thailand. He [my husband] came to school in Thailand for three months. He had already learned how to fly in Cambodia. But he had to learn some more in Thailand. And that teacher's name is Will Alatch. He knew that we were going to come into this country; so he sponsored us to live in his house, which it is called "Fort Walton Beach" in the state of Florida. He guided and supervised us for six months because we didn't have anything to do. He even taught us some English. Anyway we already knew some English when we were in Cambodia. But it was not quite fluent. Since we got here, we don't know anything. Besides, he tried to explain it to us some more.

Phon:

On your first arrival how did you use American things?

Keo:

To use American things at first, they were explained briefly. At that time there were still some people who knew English. They translated for us how to use the bathroom and shampoo. Americans sought one or two interpreters. But in that time it didn't mean that there were no educators. Most of them already knew some English because they used to learn in

Cambodia. Like my husband, he was with the Air Force; he had learned a lot of English. Because Cambodia wasn't the only place that he flew, he also flew to Thailand, Vietnam, or Singapore. But they still needed to explain to us how to use things. In that camp they cared so much about us — more than when we were in Thailand. We had three meals a day. They changed food for us; like today it is fish but tomorrow it is chicken. They even changed fresh fruits every day in that time. Then I left the camp to live with my sponsor. And during those six months, my husband first worked in the Flower Shop with fresh flowers. We had to deliver flowers door to door, church to church, and school, etc. He was the flower delivery man.

Phon:

Was it hard to look for a job while he was seeking one?

Keo:

To look for a job, while I was in the camp of Fort Walton Beach, there were not many jobs out there for people to apply for. That place is where it provides a lot of happiness. It is the place where adult people try to catch their breath. But most

of the areas are camps of the soldiers. Most soldiers who stayed there were retirees. Therefore, p. 5 there were no jobs for anyone to apply for. Then I had to move from from my sponsor and live in Pensacola. I then met one gentlemen who was an engineer. My husband came to meet him because he also learned to design houses. He almost finished with his career before he joined the army. Thus he came to that engineer so that he could continue his career as an engineer.

Phon:

What is that engineer's name?

Keo:

He is Mr. Hoo Wrig. He has a flower shop. And he designs the houses for others as well. He also makes flowers for people who place orders. [when he] went to work my husband was the only one who worked at the beginning. Mr. Hoo let us live in his house for free. We didn't have to pay for house rent. He paid for it all. But we just worked for him. In one hour the pay would be \$2.50. But he took care of everything for us. My sponsor bought food and everything else for us every week. And if we went to the market, in 1975, for only \$20.00 to \$25.00 we got everything for cooking because the money at that time had more value. I got support and food from my work and sponsor. And that uncle [friend] let us live in the house free. Hence there were no problems. For me I only stayed home to baby sit my son. I lived there about six months. Later, our lifestyle in that time it was...In that time all of my friends who came with me were moving away. In the whole state there were only a few people that we could live with because in our family there are a few as well. We followed our sponsor here and there. And our communication was so difficult. We could only communicate with

letters; but we couldn't telephone because we didn't have much money. Therefore, we wrote letters telling one another whether the jobs were available or not, good or bad. One day a friend of mine who lives in Mobile, Alabama, which is about three hours from Pensacola, came to visit and told us that over there workers were paid \$5.00 per hour. See, over at Pensacola we got paid only \$2.50 per hour. It was less than it was over there at Mobile, Alabama. We thought about moving to that place, and finally we did move because we wanted to get a little more pay.

Phon:

At that time did you have a car or did your sponsor take you to work?

Keo:

At that time I didn't have a car yet. Oh! I forgot I already had one car. When I lived with my sponsor, I saved money which my sponsor gave to me; and my husband, whom I lived with for six months at the time, was mowing lawns or he went to work for something else; and there were some other kind people who gave us donations. At least each of them donated to us about \$100.00 per month. Some helped us with \$50.00 per month. However, I saved about \$1,000.00. When we

p. 6 moved away from our sponsor, and came to live in Pensacola, I already had a car: Datsun Station wagon, four doors. I lived in America with him for only two weeks. I then was told to get a driver's license because I was driving a car in the United States. So it was no problem at all. I only had to learn the regulations. As soon as I got my driver's license, I decided to buy a car from the money that I saved because we depended on him (sponsor) in food and housing. And then I moved to Alabama which was my own decision. At the time I left, I didn't have many things with me. I had only clothes. I rented a house to live in when I moved to Mobile. In that time it was only \$150.00 per month in 1976. Our jobs were to weld ships and we were paid \$5.00 per hour. My husband was selected for a program of how to weld, without paying the school tuition. They helped support us in food stamps. At that time he had to go to school for three months. And he passed the test with a high grade. Then he was hired to work as a welder and his body was burned because of the sparks. He worked for ships welder for six months. Then he was laid off because there was a lack of work. While we were unemployed, one New Orleans company came to recruit workers to weld ships in its company: Arvondell Cepichact. This company had made a contract with the American government for big ships (navy) for carrying troops. My husband took the test with the second highest grade. Then we had to move from Mobile to New Orleans by car. That is, we moved step by step because it is not that far. It is in the same state. It's on the same way. After that he was hired to work there as a welder, with the start of \$6.00 or \$7.00 per hour at first. Later, I rented an apartment. Any way after that I was pregnant with another stillborn child in 1977. So I had two sons. Workers in Arvondell never got laid off even if they have been working for 30 or 40 years. Those workers expected that the jobs would last longer. In May or June of 1977 I bought a house.

Phon:

In what year did you buy a house?

Keo:

I bought a house in May or June of 1977.

Phon:

Was the cost of rent in that time the same as it is today?

Keo:

In that time the house had three bedrooms and a two-car garage. The houses over there they are not the same as the houses in California at all. At that time the house was only \$50,000.00. And we were required to deposit only 10% of it, about \$5,000.00. For all the paperwork it cost only \$2,500.00 more. I quit work when I bought a house. After I had a baby for three months, I took him to a Cambodian baby sitter; and I returned to work as normal.

Tape1 sideB

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Phon:

What kind of job did you have?

Keo:

At that time I worked in the grocery store, selling foods like in Fry's. But at the beginning it was so hard because they needed workers with experience. That's why, in order to have experience I did whatever I was told as long as they let me in. When the cashiers finished calculating, I put all items in the bags for the customers. That is, they needed everyone to help put items in the bags. It is not the same as workers in California with the pay of \$3.00 per hour.

Phon:

When you got here the first time, did they give you welfare?

Keo:

I never received welfare or food stamps because I had help from my sponsor. And in that time everyone didn't know everything. The important thing was based on our sponsor. If he wanted us to apply, he would let us know. If he didn't want us to apply for it, he wouldn't tell us a bit like it is today. I didn't know that there was help from someone. Therefore, I had

to look for a job. I didn't know anything until the year 1981, when a lot of Cambodian refugees came into this country. Then I heard that there was help from someone.

Phon:

After you quit working in the grocery store, what else did you do?

Keo:

At the grocery store I worked for one month. My two children were not well baby sitted by a baby sitter. When the oldest son was three years old, he was hit by a car when he played outside. The street limit is so slow. Therefore, my son just had a minor injury. It was not a very serious injury which threatened his life. At that time I was at work, and suddenly an ambulance drove with my child inside to a place that I was working. I was so scared then I went with my son to the hospital. I quit working since then because I needed to stay home and take care of my children. I was afraid about my children's accident if I went back to work again. One year later I got a job in a Chinese restaurant. I worked as an order taker for whoever wanted to take an order home. I got quite good pay at that place. Each hour I got paid \$4.00 plus tips. I think it was more than \$5.00 per hour. But I had to work long hours. And my children were baby sitted by an American. My husband worked at the ship welding company at night. He started from 3:00 P.M. and got off at 7:00 in the morning. We were very busy in earning a living. We never thought of anything very seriously. But my family was well, no problems, since the years of 1981 and 1982. In the year of 1981 I only let my children go because there was a Sunday school. Both of them walked to school by holding hands. Like, there were some neighbors who went to school and so they just came to

p. 8 ask me to let my children go with them. I did let them go. Sometimes when I was free on Sunday, I went with them periodically. But it was very often. Later, I had sponsored some relatives to come and live with me. They said, "We are Buddhist; we need not go to church." But I just always let my children go. But for myself I must offer foods to monks and light incense because I am part Chinese, too. Since I started to offer and light incense, my life was turned around (not well) like before. In the year of 1981, I took my children to Disney World in Florida about three days. When I returned home, our car was damaged because the tire was blown out. The highway is high and it made the car turn over three times off the side.

Phon:

Was that while you were driving on the highway?

Keo:

Yes, it was on the highway. My husband had a serious injury on his head. At that time he was sleeping in the back while I was driving with my two children in the front. My children and I did not have any injuries. But his head swayed and was hit by the car door. I liked to declare that since I started to light incense (in praying to the spirit of our ancestors), our lives were

changed dramatically; it was not like before. At the time that I never thought about it, our lives were going fine. After getting a car accident, we stayed home for three months without going to work. We asked our employers to rest at home (on disability); my husband's job was still reserved for him even though he just got in an accident. After returning to work about one week, our house's door was broken and everything in the house was gone. And around that place we never had any thing missing. I never locked my door. Sometimes working in the car garage with the door open. If there were some relatives coming to visit, they wouldn't find us in the house. And we never missed anything. After everything was stolen about two or three months, then I started work as usual. I worked for two places at that time: At night and day. My aunt has one daughter, so I had her baby sit my children at night. Her name is Im Phaen, a widow. I started at 11:00 A. M. till 3:00 P. M. And I started with another from 5:00 P. M. till 11:00 P. M.

Phon:

What kinds of job?

Keo:

I was a waitress in Chinese restaurants. While I was working in the restaurant, one of my neighbors telephoned me and said that there was one truck driver who drank and drove and drove the truck and hit my car garage; it broke. My children used to play in the garage and when there is good movie on the TV, they just went to watch it. My children got out of the garage before the truck broke into it. If both of them had been in the garage, they would be flattened because of the big truck. When I arrived home, the truck was already towed away and I didn't see it. I am so

scared in the United States of America. It is very seldom to see a truck hit a car garage like this. p. 9
Then my oldest son insisted that we move out of the place, not to live there anymore. He also insisted that we buy another house or rent a house to live instead.

Phon:

What is your oldest child's name?

Keo:

Tom Keth but at school he is called K. D. I think that I wanted to find another house. But my husband said we could not find any house which is cheap like this one. Each month we only paid \$375.00 and the house is ours. Then I decided to continue living in it till 1982. In 1981 we had five accidents. But I only count the big accidents. In 1982 I celebrated my birthday. I was born on September 12. On September 12, it was a Sunday. My two children went to church; I arranged things at home and invited guests (everyone) who lived in New Orleans. For the Cambodian guests in that time I knew them all. It was about 100 people. They all came with no hesitation. My oldest asked me to have it as a big celebration. Every year I do that for my children; I never missed. But for myself I never missed it at all. I did it

too but I only had a cake. But at that time I had a big one. The time to meet was at 3:00 P.M. At that time my children came from church and they had already eaten. A lot of guests arrived at 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. I was at the reception and was taking some pictures in the room. Then suddenly, someone screamed out loud that my oldest child was hit by a car. I didn't think the car hit him because at that time I didn't see a lot of cars going back and forth. Then the ambulance was called to take him to the hospital. I didn't think that my son was going to die. I thought that he just had a minor injury like before. The big truck which hit him was carrying motorcycles as well. The truck dragged him about 100 feet when it hit my son and then he was off. There were a lot of injuries on his chest. The truck was so tall. My son was about 8 to 9 years old. I was restrained not to go with my son when an ambulance came. They only let my husband go. By the time he arrived at the hospital, we were told that my son already passed away. I thought that it would not be that serious at all. I had so many things going in my mind. That time my husband worked as a Cambodian community president. He sponsored one Cambodian from the island. He indicated that person is his relative so that he could sponsor him to come. He sponsored about 100 families to come to USA already. He worked with USCC, with church members. I have some adopted mothers. A few of them came to help me in arranging my son's funeral ceremony. I didn't do anything in that funeral ceremony. Whatever had to be done in the funeral time, he volunteered to do everything like interpreting for the police. He

p. 10 knew all of them. So, in that funeral ceremony they helped us arrange with big ceremonial activity and there were police escorts as well. In 1982, we had problems so we both quit working for a few months. And they had asked us if we should sue the truck driver? In that time my son just ran a little bit faster in blocking the car. [not clear] But the driver couldn't see. Both sides were wrong. They told us that we must sue so that we could collect for emotional damages. We did sue the driver. If my son just became a handicapped child, I would have sued for money to raise him. But my son already passed away. I didn't want the driver to be suffering because of me. If we sued, we had to go to court; it was just a waste of time being in the court. It also would remind me of what happened. Therefore, I didn't sue. That car's insurance paid me about \$5,000.00. My insurance paid me \$10,000.00. In 1982, I quit living in that house. I rented that house to someone else. I decided to go rent an apartment so that I wouldn't see that house again. Later, I never drove a car in front of that house. I rented to an American family, but I never got the rent fees from them. They lived there for only one month; and in the second month they moved out. I rented to someone else; and he lived there for one, two, three months; and then he moved out again. Then I put that house on sale. As it is, today my relatives live there.

Phon:

How much did you sell it for?

Keo:

At that time I sold it for \$60,000. I sold it very cheap because I wanted them to continue the payments. I collected \$10,000 from them because the balance was about \$40,000. I got

about \$20,000 because the cost of sale was \$50,000. And the price of the house was going higher. After everything was done we both returned to work as usual. Later, we opened a restaurant business so that it wouldn't make us think of the past again. At that time my brain was so confused. I had a Chinese restaurant. I opened it with my partner because she is a cook. We are not cooks, so we just put the money in. We let her cook. After a few months she didn't want to do it. If we don't know anything, they will cheat us. I said, "You could take it, but my husband doesn't want it to be yours." It was just not to let that person cheat other people. It's like if we don't know, they will do anything to cheat us. Then my husband forced that person to get out, and he bought that restaurant instead.

Phon:

How did you do with your restaurant?

Keo:

I worked there for a few months. Anyway, I used to work in the restaurant for a few years. I knew how to cook a little. Whatever they can, I can too. My husband didn't know anything about it. But I can do it by myself. But I needed help. I

hired a cook with a salary of \$2,000.00 per month. I assigned that cook as a chief cook. And I was the only the person who was responsible in that place. My husband worked as usual. If our business went broke, we had work. It was so hard after a year; he quit working from the federal job; then he came to help work in the restaurant. But our business was working smoothly. We still wanted to go on until we lost a lot of money in three years. We couldn't stay in any longer with our business because it was getting worse and worse. Neither of us got paid. We wanted to earn profits, but we lost more and more. We invested in the business \$30,000 each. In total we lost about \$60,000 to \$70,000. Then we sold it for over \$10,000. At least we got some money back. If we kept it any longer, we would declare bankruptcy. Otherwise, we wouldn't get any money back. We would lose everything. I sold that restaurant in 1984. In that year I had another child. His name is Kre Sothur, born 1984. I sold the restaurant after he was born. Later my husband bought a boat for fishing close to the sea. It takes about one hour and half, 70 miles from New Orleans, to get there by car. He stayed at sea. But I did not go with him. I worked as a waitress again. And then I had another accident with him in 1986. His rib was broken by a car accident. I had three ribs fractured. At that time we drove the car for someone else. Those people didn't know the way so he designated himself as a guide by driving. Everyone was in the car accident including the owner. The insurance company didn't pay us because they said that we were wrong.

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Phon:

Did anyone die?

Keo:

No one died. But we were seriously injured. This time we had luck from death because the other car hit right where it did. Our car was Maxima, and their car was Camero sport. It had a long nose. They hit us right in between the driver and the passengers: in the middle of the body. After my husband was recovered, we moved out of New Orleans. I went with him. After he was well, he went to fish and net shrimps. But that work did not given us any profits. It was just enough to support our family. I had problems. In the past I used to work for others. I had health insurance coverage. When we needed to be hospitalized, they paid us 80%. But when we went fishing, we didn't have health insurance. I lived with him for eight or nine months. In April I moved to California. I moved away from him because there had been no insurance. It was not possible to live. I was pregnant. Therefore, we had to separate for awhile. Then I went to apply for AFDC. I had someone help me in applying for that after the car accident was over. I knew one pastor, Thy Sithi, who told me the good news about Jesus Christ. I read the Bibles.

p. 12 I strongly believe in Jesus. He is the real God whom I have been seeking. I have been baptized since then.

Keo2

Phon:

Had you any change after believing in Jesus Christ?

Keo:

I had no big change. But we strongly believe that God stays with us, protects us such as while we are on our trip; in our daily lives. We are told not to be greedy. Like in the past I worked with a few different jobs so that we could have saved some money. But every desire has failed because God won't let us have it. Everything I had earned was gone. I also lost my son. And when I believe in God, I rely on welfare assistance, from the government. Our lives are happier than before. I filed an application to study in the Bible school so that I can work to serve God; if they help me in some kind of grant at San Jose, I will; but I don't know yet. I hope that I will work hard to become a missionary. I will help other Cambodians to believe in God; God will help save their lives. God purifies himself in his own mind. We don't know who we are. Though I don't have a job and money like before, I am not worried. I don't worry about the debts. I must have money. If I don't have it, I can't live. In the past I used to think like this. But now I don't think like that any more because God will start us with some thing. There is no mental illness like before. On the other hand, I don't worry when my children are sick because I always pray to God. Even if we are on the trip, we do not worry like before. We had not traveled anywhere in the past because we encountered a lot of danger. We didn't even drive in the night or day. Now I don't have any worries at all. Any place I want to go, I must go. Even if it is night or day. And I always pray to God. Furthermore, our lives are changed with a lot of happiness, more than ever. If I go to school, I will study hard for the future.

Phon:

Have you become a U. S. citizen yet?

Keo:

I became a U. S. citizen in 1983. I changed my name, from Savanee to Felicia, when I applied to become a citizen. Savanee was not easily pronounced because it was so strange from others. A lot of people know me by Felicia.

Phon:

Why did you want to become a citizen?

Keo:

I wanted to become a citizen because: first, we live in America. If we don't have any business, it is a lot better being a Cambodian citizen. I needed to become a citizen because I had business. It is a lot easier to apply for a liquor license for instance. We have to be citizens so that they will allow us to operate a business.

Phon:

Did they ask you a lot of (test) questions when you were interviewed?

Keo:

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They asked a lot of questions. They gave us a book to study. The questions were like the following: how many states in America? What is the name of our present government? They asked about the history of America. We need to know how to write English. They asked us to spell or write whatever they wanted. It was difficult if we didn't know. But we must study hard.

Phon:

Was it easy for you to take the test?

Keo:

In that time I got questions and answers from one person. If we had 30 questions, we had to study all because we didn't know what questions they were going to ask. So we had to study all to become a citizen.

Phon:

And your husband became a citizen, too?

Keo:

Yes, he did as I.

Phon:

What was the name of the president in the time you applied to become a citizen?

Keo:

The president's name was Ford...in the time I got naturalized.

Phon:

Did Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese like you while working in the restaurant?

Keo:

First, I worked in the Chinese restaurant. There were Chinese and Vietnamese. Later, I worked in the Japanese restaurant. I had to dress like Japanese. They called it Pinino. There were Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese customers. And the last restaurant I worked in there were Japanese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese customers. And also there were other Asians. I worked for most restaurants. I got along well with Asian people. I had no problems. I never had any fighting or quarrel with other people.

Phon:

I want to know how Cambodian and American laws differ from each other? Driving regulations for instance.

Keo:

Driving regulations do not differ much between Cambodians and Americans. The regulations seem the same. Most regulations or laws are derived (copied) from the French. They seem more sophisticated in operating vehicles than they are in America.

Phon:

How do Cambodian and American customs differ? For example, in the wedding ceremony; how is a wedding ceremony arranged?

Keo:

When I got married, the groom had to arrange to go to the bride's parents. He is to ask for an engagement from the consensus of both bride's parents. It has to be at the bride's parents' agreement (consensus). And it is also the bride's agreement. Then a date of wedding

ceremony is set. Most of the time the groom's parents have to ask if their son can marry the girl. It is not that the girl can ask to be engaged with the boy (girl has no priority to ask boy to be engaged but boy has the priority to ask the girl to be engaged.) For a wedding ceremony it is to be set up

for three days at least. When I got married, a tent-like thing was set up because in the house there was not enough room for the guests reception. We had to set up a tent-like (pavilion) in conjunction with our house. The pavilion is like an American tent. The pavilion takes a day to be set up. We had a party for those who come to help in setting it up. Most of them are our neighbors and relatives who live in the same village.

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Phon:

How many meters is the size of the pavilion?

Keo:

It is about 4 square meters in most cases. On the second day we begin the ceremony. The ceremony is mostly at the bride's house, most of the time. It is not on the groom's side. All events are the responsibility of the bride's side. But on the groom's side they had to buy things.

Phon:

What is the bride's responsibility?

Keo:

The bride must stay in the shade (in the room) for a week before marriage begins. She must not go anywhere. She stays in the house. She is not supposed to let anyone see her. She must take care of the house. When it is time, a wedding ceremony begins usually early in the morning; the groom will be paraded to the bride's house. The groom is not allowed to stay with the bride yet. Instead, he will have to stay in the house which is next door or a little far away from the bride's house. In my wedding ceremony, my husband stayed in my aunt's house which it is little away from my house. He was dressed in the sarong caught up in a roll at back (a typically Cambodian way of wearing sarong `kbin') with a straight-collared jacket. And then they paraded him. The groom's side had to buy fruits, clothes (plain with an embroidered border); then the parade will bring him to the girl's house. Most of the time they eat pig head and fruits. They have to parade the groom from his place to the bride's house. Most guests who help parade the groom are from the bride's side. Everything they hold in their hands are properly wrapped in plates.

Phon:

Why do they have pig head, aunt?

Keo:

It is the tradition from our ancestors. By offering things to the deaths of our ancestors are not that important. We are Buddhists. So, we have to follow Buddhism. The parade will arrive at the girl's house. There are bell-like (pnouh), guider, priest (archa), and the groom's representatives. When they arrive at the girl's house, they propose for a ladder to go by (pretending only); and sometimes the bride's representatives tease by not letting them go by. They converse long until it is boring to listen. It is not that when the parade arrives, they will be allowed to use the ladder right away. They question the groom where he is coming

p. 15 from. What is his name. They ask you till you have answers for them. Then the groom will be allowed to get on the ladder (pretending only). For the bride's side, she must wake early in the morning so that she can put on her makeup and dress up. Dress up in the morning is for worshipping the time before the sun rises. It is to wish for a best luck in life. Both the bride and groom wear sarongs caught up in a roll at back. It is Cambodian culture. They will continue with the other activities after worshipping the sun for luck. Then they will do a hair cut ceremony. After that they will have the bride and groom paired up with many surrounding relatives. I hired the orchestra to play in my house when I got married. They didn't use radio or stereo for my wedding. A Cambodian orchestra consists of drum, gong, violin, xylophone, and a beautiful singer with a lot of interesting tunes. Hair cut ceremony is for a newly wedding couple. It is the time that they must have good hygiene in marriage. Then comes the wrist-thread-tying activity which wishes the new couple happiness and love. It is like going to church. Then the priest says, "We agree with each other." Tying ceremony is Cambodian culture. It is the wish for a newly wed to live with love and happiness forever. We wish and bless them at a final activity of the tying hands in wedding celebration. And then we eat and party. We must welcome our guests to celebrate, eating the foods we cook for them.

Phon:

Why do they have one sword while the newly wed couple are at the paired-up activity?

Keo:

It is the story of our ancestors. It is in the story of Chey Souh "Orn uey Srey Orn movie." It is the true story of Chey and Souh. Chey is a good person. Souh is not a good person. Both of them used to be good friends while studying magic scripture with the same Venerable (magic hermit). Souh is the rich son when they separated from each other. Chey is the poor son. One day Chey's parents owed a lot of money to someone. That person came to collect money from his family. Chey and Souh became devoted friends (like brothers). Though a brother is poor help must be provided. They swore an oath before leaving their venerable. When Chey went to borrow money, Souh ignored him because he is the rich son. He tempted to forget their promise, and beat up Chey. Chey decided to leave and break up the friendship. When Chey came home, there was one girl who was the next door daughter. She used to be considered a friend in the past. Her name is Orn (pronounce "On"). She is

very beautiful and she has only a mother. For Chey's father has been sick, and he passed away. He has only a mother. Then he asked Orn to be engaged with him. Orn was completely in love and consented. But Chey was

poor and always peddled noodles (a kind of noodle with curry). Souh was the rich child; he always looked for a beautiful girl in different villages. One day Chey and Orn were about to be married; Souh arrived in the village. He saw Orn and he felt in love with her. He found out Orn was Chey's bride. Then Souh had an idea of cheating. When it was time to get married, Souh came and asked Chey to forgive him. He said he wanted to help Chey. He asked Chey to look for honey. Chey was ordered to be deported or killed. Souh thought that Chey was already killed. He was still alive because the villagers helped free him. Souh thought that Chey had died. Then he forced Orn to marry him. While the wedding ceremony was going on, Chey came just in time and killed Souh during the ceremony without an advance notice. That's why, all old people had that custom. When the bride and groom are getting married, both of them have to have a sword in hand. At least, they have a sword near them. If there are enemies, they have a sword for their protection. While in the pair-up activity there is no protection. When someone has weapon, he can kill us if we don't have sword to protect ourselves. Most used to say, "Chey horng Chey; Souh horng Souh." I don't know quite well about this in the past. They do this because they want to remember the old story. This is why the newly weds have to hold a sword in their hands to protect themselves.

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Phon:

After the pair-up activity, is there any other banquet?

Keo:

In the morning after the pair-up, we must meet our relatives and guests. We cook special foods to party them all in that morning. We finish by noon (lunch time); then we meet all of our guests and relatives. But at the night banquet we invite our guests from far away to help cheer up the newly weds. The guests will meet with the bride and groom. At all times we must let everyone in the village know that we arranged a wedding party for our children. It is the same as a wedding ceremony in America. They must let the village and county leaders know. They post signs. It is in case someone comes to bother. For a person who has a fiancée can come to argue before the date of marriage. It is to advise that we don't want to have any problems during the ceremony. Brides and grooms do not know who hates or loves. Therefore, they have a sign posted up a week in advance. Then we must invite our guests again to come join the banquet in the evening. Foods are in all time served in the evening. They have chairs and tables for the guests. But in the city they go to a restaurant, like in America. For the people who live in the countryside, they have to hire the cooks from the city. The chairs and tables are to be shipped by truck to be set up at our home. In my marriage, I hired Chinese cooks to come to my house. They brought everything with them: dishes, plates, chairs, tables,

pans, and pots (complete set). We didn't have to worry about anything. When our guests come to eat dinner, they give (hand-thread-tying ceremony) money in most cases. Americans give household supplies or other gifts beside money. For Cambodian people we give the newlyweds money. Its purpose is to replace money which has already been spent for everything. And then the newly weds can begin their new lives together.

Phon:

Did you have to go live with your husband's side, or did he come to live on your side after the marriage?

Keo:

As the custom says for Chinese children, after marriage the bride has to go live with her husband. But for Cambodians the groom has to go live with his wife's side. This is the difference. For me my husband came to live on my side. My parents didn't want us to leave. They let us live with them until I had baby. It was until I had to leave them from Cambodia.

Phon:

Would you tell me about the funeral ceremony, what do they do?

Keo:

The funeral. Suppose, there is one person who is very sick. In the hospital there is no hope that he will live. He has to be taken out of the hospital. They won't let him die in the hospital. At home we invite monks to recite dharma or preach to commemorate the soul that went out. It is the goal not to let the soul go to hell. It is the goal to let the soul go to heaven. It usually lets brothers, sisters, and other relatives see the final face and say farewell. My grandmother already passed away; but she was taken to the hospital; we knew there was no hope; then she was brought back home so we family members can see her at the last. Family members have to come close to a person who is dying. Americans say they have to pay respect. We must clean his or her hands and legs to be forgiven. And when he or she died, we must give him or her a bath. We put new clothes on him or her. Family members have to help in setting up. Then a casket is used to put his or her body in. And they keep the body at home for a few days before it is cremated. While the body is at home, most family members have to be there. In most case, the house for keeping the death body is empty. [not clear] No one lives in it. Before the body is buried or cremated, family members and others—during those three days—must cook continuously special foods for those who come and join. The dharma is continuously recited. The dharma is never cut off. The dharma's song (preach) is also sung. We Cambodians use big speaker systems even in the wedding ceremony. For the funeral ceremony they also use them. Every villager will know what it is. The neighbors bring such as money, rice, incense, and candles for the funeral donations. After three days, they have to bury or cremate. Cambodian people wear

regular black clothes; but Chinese people wear all white clothes.

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Phon:

When your grandmother died, what kinds of clothes did you wear?

Keo:

I wore white when she died: white sarong, white shirt, and white head-cover-cloth. For men they wear: white pants, white shirts, white handkerchief wrapped around their heads, and white scarf tied on their arms.

Phon:

Why?

Keo:

It is for the mourners. After three days of funeral ceremony, they must pin all white cloths to their shirts; they must keep it for a month, and then they can take it off. Cambodians pin black cloths. It is not the same as Chinese.

Phon:

How big is the cloth which it is pinned onto their shirts?

Keo:

It is about the size of thumb. People know they are mourners with that mark. But for most Cambodian mourners, they must have their hair shaved. It is to commemorate the people who passed away. It is like we must send the dead good things. Some must become monks/nuns in front of the fire while cremating. That is, we must accompany him or her until he or she reaches the heaven.

Phon:

Would you please explain about mourning?

Keo:

Mourning is that we have sorrow and regret. For the cloth—which it is pinned onto our shirt in the front—is to let the public know that someone in the family has died. The body is kept for three days before it is buried or cremated. And about a week or a month after that, they will have another funeral ceremony. This is what the Cambodian and Chinese do. Since the time of Nova [Noah] until today it is for all human beings on earth. Namely, He the God who knows in advance. It was since God created the world. However, our world originated with

Adam. It was until Noah's time. The next was the Bible [Babel] Tower. All human beings were born and wanted to go to heaven on their own. They created a ladder (tower) to get to heaven. They went up in the sky. God thought that they wanted to go to heaven without my [His] ways. That is, they attempted to go on their own. Therefore, God had to break up the language. That's why, we have different languages since then.

Phon:

Excuse me, Uncle, what is Towel (porm)?

Keo:

Porm is Towel. In Cambodian language it is called their seashore. Porm is built to get away from fire for example. In English it is called Towel. Cambodians call it porm. We think that from Adam to Novah, God said we only should eat fruits. At that time if God said, "eat only fruits," we will not die. We don't need meat. It means that fruits provide us vitamins. But when Novah took out meat (animals) from his boat, God told him we can eat meat. Therefore, God said we can eat meat of the animals. See, we have to think about it. Who can avoid the meat: get rid of

p. 19 killing animals for meat. Even Buddha ate pork kor. Buddha ate pork kor before he passed away. Can you imagine that? Buddhist dharma forbids human beings from taking animals' lives. All kinds of animals which are in Cambodia. In America we can't avoid it. If we don't have it, our bodies will lack vitamins. That is, we don't have iron. Whatever God said was just like that because God is God. Whatever God wants to happen, it will happen magically. You see, those who are religious believers don't want to touch animals' lives. They said we will have sin. No one tries to get away with it. Even the abbots had to eat pork kor. Clergies had to eat. If there is [no?] pork kor, it is not a good meal. If we don't have meat, the meal really does not do any good. If you don't believe, you just take beans and offer them to monks. Monks will not eat them. The religious advisers advise people not to harm animals' lives. And even the living trees, they said we should not bother. We will have sin too. This is Buddhism. The ways to discipline are not right. It is wrong for that point. If we don't eat, there are not enough vitamins in the body. Each person goes to Buddhist temple to pray to be forgiven from sin in the time of killing animals. But each one of them eats meat every day. The stew or soup that has no meat or fish does not taste good. If it has only vegetables, it is impossible to eat. Can you imagine, it is wrong. But for God he said everything is right. Like I told you before. God said we should eat only fruits in the time of Adam; they survived in that time on till it came to Novah. When Novah came, we had to eat meat; if we don't eat meat, we don't have vitamins in our bodies. Perhaps, you already see that if we don't eat meat, we don't have vitamins.

Phon:

What about the people who don't do anything, but they are sick?

Keo:

When Adam was persuaded by Satan-in karbaht world (chapter 3)-God was not forbidden not to eat fruits. [not clear] But there was only one tree in the garden. God told them not to eat its fruits or touch it, or he will die. The word in case one has to "die" means Eva [Eve] already ate that fruit. She also had given her husband some. God said don't eat; otherwise, you'd die. Remember what God says is power. When we eat it, we die. God created human beings on earth to live forever. But we were forbidden to eat that food; were forbidden to eat; when we eat it, we die. That is how death on earth began. God forbade us. We instead didn't follow God's words. That's why, we have sin because of Satan's persuasion. Then the Satan snake said to the women that: "You didn't die, did you? Though God knew what date you ate it. That is the time your eyes would be cured (able to see). And You will become like God." You would know what is wrong and what is right. The snake concealed (deceived) us. All human beings wanted to be liberated. The snake was

the persuader (accomplice). It was the Satan's leader which deceived us human beings. That is p. 20
the point of death of all human beings. On the other hand, why we had to expose our energy in working: getting sweat. So, we can live well. It was because that God said, "When Adam didn't listen to God's words, God wanted to test all human beings." Then God Jehovah said, "See, one human being has become into us." "He even knows what is right and wrong." "It is afraid that he might touch and eat the fruit too." There were two trees: the right and wrong tree; the tree had a life. At that time if we ate the fruits that had a life, we would live forever. But we ate the right and wrong fruits first. Therefore, God would not let us live forever because we had sin. We didn't do the right thing. God would not give us power to live forever. God said now he knew what was right and wrong; now God is afraid that he might touch and eat the one who has life more. And he would live everlasting. Then Jehovah forced them to leave the world of Eden because in the garden of Eden the tree has a life. It was that we already ate the right and wrong fruits; we had sins. If we ate the live fruits, we would live forever. We would do bad things to the earth. However, God gives us lives to live short enough. Because we had sins, God Jehovah forced us to leave from Eden. We had to go back where God created us; and we had to plow and rake in the rice fields. After God forced us to leave the garden, the Robin was assigned on eastward of the garden of Aden. The wells of fire are all set up for every position: south, north, and so forth. It was to keep the life of the tree.

Phon:

Excuse me, Uncle, what is Robin?

Keo:

Robin is the name of the angel whom God assigned to protect the life of the tree. As today the tree is situated above the earth. But God assigned Robin to protect. It was the purpose not to let human beings search for. God sent Adam and Eve back where they were created; they were to plow and rake the rice fields. If we tried to work with soil, we can live freely. Like in Cambodian words we call "farmers" which means that later God wants us all to live happily. What we need to eat is the fruits. But we have sin and have been cursed by God.

Therefore, we need to work with our energy in the farms. The thing that made us have sin was the Satan snake's persuasion. We didn't do as God said. We believed in Satan, in addition, God Jehovah asked, "Woman, why did you do this." She answered, the snake came to persuade me and made me eat it." Then Jehovah said to the snake, "Because you have done this, you will crawl on your stomach and you will eat dust (soil) for your whole life—among the world animals in the forest you are cursed. The snake is called "serpent" which has four legs that we used to call "dragon." But now it does

p. 21 not exist because they were cursed to crawl, not to walk with legs any more. "I will make you and female; all your next generations will have to bite on one another's head; and you will bite people's ankles." God said to the woman: "I will make you suffer more and more when you are pregnant; you will give birth to your children with pain; in your mind you will rely on your husband; and your husband will dominate you." Therefore, women are so worried when they are pregnant. When women are giving birth, they are so scared. This is what God said. Whatever God said, it will go along well. Then God said to Adam: "Because you listened to your wife and ate that fruit—which I forbade you, you are cursed and you have to work hard for your whole life on earth." That's why, if we don't sweat, we don't feel well. When we work as hard as farmers or others, we can feel very well after work. The rich who have money can't live happily. We today call it "exercise" because God said so. It was God's goal that we have to work hard so that we can collect profits later to support our families. It (goal) was to make us to feed ourselves. If we don't exercise, it is against the God's words. For this goal we had to do a lot of exercise to sweat. At the time God broke up the languages, we all ran to here to there, to get away from God. Especially, Southeast Asian people don't know anything about God. That is, we are so far away from God. So, one time a person comes to share the news and tells us about God; and we will kneel down. When we kneel down to be forgiven of our sin, the purity will be isolated. God will forgive us. God will bless us. He will let us have the purity. We don't know it before. God broke up the language; there was only one language before. Later, God broke it up into several. The same people speak different languages. They couldn't understand one another. Now He chose to let everyone understand one another. All people in the world become friends. Americans go to Cambodia. Cambodians come to America. Chinese live everywhere. Americans go to China. People can communicate one another. They communicate and only speak one language as we see today. As I know, God will choose one language to fit the world and it is going to be English. It is to make people understand among themselves. When I went to the University Convention in Missouri—that was the time one nationality united well with other nationality. For example, Americans got married with Cambodian, Chinese, and others around the world. That is, we are walking back to our old steps (God's time). They understand and get along very well. I know that a lot of Americans spoke Cambodian when I went there. We also speak English. When I remember those things, my tears almost fall. In the past God isolated languages. Now God chose to let us use only one language so that we understand one another.

p. 22 We understand English, and they understand ours. When I was at the meeting there was one American sang Cambodian songs. First, they spoke in Cambodian. Later, one group sang Cambodian songs. As I looked at them, I saw that they were Caucasians. But they speak

our language. Everyone in the meeting was so surprised and they applauded. That is the point. I think that God will choose one language to fit the world so that everyone will understand everything.

Phon:

Can you, Uncle, explain about kneeling to be forgiven—to be forgiven from the sin or is that related to something else?

Keo:

It is as follow: we have been away from God for a long time. It was since God separated the languages. Some went to Europe. Some went to Asia. Some went to Africa. At the time of the language separation, for Novah had three brothers-Hum, Sim, and Yaketh. [In Genesis 5:32 the names of Noah's sons are "Shem, Ham, and Japeth"] Yaketh is white and Asian is Sim. That was in the three groups. Hum is African who was cursed when Novah was there.

Phon:

Did he see his father was eating grapes?

Keo:

Right, Novah overslept. When he slept, his naked body was seen. Hum laughed when he saw that. But Sim and Yaketh brought something to cover their father's body. When their father woke up, he knew everything. He then cursed Hum. So it is the word "curse." We receive the world "bless" from God. We don't give our children many detailed "bless." But the word "curse" we give them easily. Don't ever get your fortune told. Don't make our parents angry. If our parents give us a curse, we won't live long. God said, "Respect your parents." It is for you to live long on the earth which God gives you. And please show your respect and love God. It is for you to live everlasting. It is the life from heaven. Whoever makes his parents suffer, he won't live long. It is to follow the Bible entirely. Let's go back about kneeling to be forgiven. Because we are from God, we don't know anything. God said, "It is because we don't know about sin." So, when we meet God—no one tells us—God is arisen. We believe in the truth God. We must kneel down to be forgiven for what we have done in the past. We have had sin since our forefathers: Adam and Eva. In that time we must kneel to be forgiven. It was to consider that we are honest. God will have to accept it and forget about sin. And we must follow God: whatever he says. Suppose we have promised our parents not to do this and that. But sometimes we do it by accident. Then we children come to ask our parents to forgive us. It was because I didn't know or I have great anger. I would like you mom and dad to forgive me. We parents can't whip them when they ask to be forgiven. They kneel to ask from us. Whereas, God will do the same thing. God

always forgives us. Whatever we had done wrong will be finished. God loves all human beings on earth. Therefore, he had arranged the plan to have Jesus Christ born on earth. And let him die on the cross. It was to wash away our sin. It was to save us. After we kneel to be

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forgiven, in the Bible we must do this: We must do whatever we promised with God because at the beginning we don't know anything. When we know, we must follow his advice. Hence we need to divide in purity. And then we will be safe from sin at last.

Phon:

For example, children make their parents mad and the children believe in God; but parents had cursed children before and after believing in God; can those children be forgiven from sin?

Keo:

It is possible because God has power. God has power more than our parents. Suppose, our father passed away and he didn't believe in God; we help our father by praying to God so that he will help our father's soul. That is the time our father's soul goes to the world of soul (spirit). We worship God like we do to our parents. We pray to God because our father's soul is still in the world of soul; and he doesn't know that we believe in God. That is, we pray to God for help in getting our father's soul to go with us to the heaven. It is to save our father's soul from sentenced. But when we pray to God, our father's soul will be rescued from being sentenced.

Phon:

What about the Bible—for whoever does not believe, they always ask what kinds of evidence there are in the Bible to showing the truth statements about God?

Keo:

The Bible is written by people. We take it for comparison. We the speaker want to win if it is possible to win in this argument. But if we consider the statements in the Bible, the normal person can't say such things. The intellectuals from all around the world on earth always overact about themselves.