

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

An Interview With Chhim Phan, male, 72 years old

Position during Democratic Kampuchea: Deputy Chief of Preah Netr Preah Commune

**Birth Place: Prek Russey Village, Kampong Kong commune, Koh Thom District,
Kandal Province**

Address: Kandoal Village, O Sralao Commune, Malai District, Beanteay Meanchey

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Interviewed by Dany Long and Dara P. Vanthan

01:58:07

Translated by Phalla Chea

- Dany: First, I would like to know what your name is.
- Phan: Yes! Chhim Phan.
- Dany: So we want to introduce ourselves again so that you can know me more clearly.
- Phan: Yes.
- Dany: My name is Dany, and his name is Dara. We come from the Documentation Center of Cambodia which is located in Phnom Penh. The Documentation Center of Cambodia collects documents, especially those that related to the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. We collect documents for the next generation, researchers, and even people who want to know and read about the Khmer Rouge. They can go to the Documentation Center of Cambodia to read or access our website. And I came to meet you because I want to know about your experiences during the war time or the three-year regime, in order to make a collection of documents for the next generation, and the researchers like I told you earlier.
- Phan: Yes.
- Dany: So I want to ask you about your life. Will you allow me to do so?
- Phan: Yes, go ahead. That's no problem.
- Dany: Don't you have any questions?
- Phan: No. I don't have any questions.
- Dany: Yes, so I want to know your name again.
- Phan: Yes. Chhim Phan.
- Dany: Chhim what?
- Phan: Yes. Chhim Phan.

Dany: Chhim Phan. How old are you nowadays?
Phan: I am seventy-two years old.
Dany: Seventy-two years old. Where is your home town?
Phan: Yes. At Prek Russey Village, Kampong Kong Commune, Koh Thom District, Kandal Province.
Dany: Nowadays, where do you live?
Phan: Nowadays?
Dany: Yes.
Phan: Nowadays, I live in Kandaol Village, O Sralao Commune, Malai District, and Banteay Meanchey Province.
Dany: What do you do nowadays?
Phan: Nowadays, I farm, and plant.
Dany: You work on the farms and plant?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: What is your wife's name?
Phan: Choun Rin.
Dany: Choun Rin?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Nowadays, how old is she?
Phan: Her age is...she was born in the Year of the Rabbit. I don't know how old she is. She's maybe over sixty years old, born in the Year of the Rabbit.
Dany: How many years younger than you?
Phan: She is younger than me by almost a dozen, twelve or eleven years.
Dany: Younger than you by eleven years?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: How many children do you have?
Phan: In total there are eight children, but one passed away. So there are seven children left.
Dany: Yes. One passed away, so you have seven children left, right?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: How many males and how many females?
Phan: Four males and three females.
Dany: Four males and three females?
Phan: Yes. These are alive. I am talking only about those who are alive.

Dany: Is the one who passed away male or female?
Phan: Female, the oldest child.
Dany: And what is your father's name?
Phan: My father's name is Chhim Chorn.
Dany: Chhim Chorn?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Is he still alive or has he passed away?
Phan: Yes. He passed away.
Dany: When did he pass away?
Phan: Since I was in primary school.
Dany: Why did he pass away?
Phan: It was because of his illness. He had a stomachache.
Dany: Stomachache?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: And what is your mother's name?
Phan: My mother's name is Min Lach.
Dany: Min Lach. She passed away, didn't she?
Phan: Yes. She already passed away.
Dany: In what year did she pass away?
Phan: Even before my father did.
Dany: Before?
Phan: Yes. At that time, I had two siblings. But we were still young, I don't know clearly, but I just know that I had a mother.
Dany: So how many siblings do you have?
Phan: I have only two siblings.
Dany: Only two?
Phan: Yes. She passed away during the war. I don't know where she had gone, but I could not find her.
Dany: Two, females?
Phan: Yes. Now there is only me and her, one female and one male.
Dany: Only two, you and your sister who is female.
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Are you older?
Phan: Yes. I am the oldest child.

Dany: And you had a younger sister.

Phan: Yes, a younger sister.

Dany: And when did she get lost?

Phan: Oh, she got lost when we were in trouble during American period, the American war.

Dany: The war from year 1970 to 1975, is not it?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Where did she get lost?

Phan: I don't know whether at that time if they sent or moved her because she was in Phnom Penh.

Dany: What is her name?

Phan: Her name is Vorn.

Dany: Vorn?

Phan: Yes. Chhim Vorn.

Dany: Yes. So I want you to describe about your life. Since you were young, where did you live? Which school did you attend? And what grade did you finish? After you finished your school, what did you do until the Khmer Rouge regime and right after that?

Phan: Yes. When I was young, I studied at Kampong Sambuor Pagoda. And then I came to study in Phnom Penh. Then when came to study in Phnom Penh, I studied in Preah Youkunthor High School for three years. And then my father passed away. So when he passed away, I had no money to afford my studies, so my sister worked for other people in Phnom Penh. She lived in Phnom Penh, and normally was someone who works for other people plus she is female and I was in the process of studying, in the mood of studying, so my sister did not have enough money to support me. Then at that time I thought that I could not stay still, that I needed to go out to find a job. To find job, I went to Battambang. When I moved to Battambang, I had no money and my sister also did not know where I went. I came to live in Battambang, stayed in Battambang, I also worked for others. And when I worked for Chinese people, the Chinese people loved and trusted me, and then they let me teach their children. So then I taught some French language and some Khmer language. Then they gave me a salary, and I got paid 600 per month.

Dany: 600 Riels?

Phan: Yes. 600 Riels, but in my generation, it was very valuable. Then I felt that I could not live with them, it seems that my mind felt that it wanted to be rich, seems that I wanted to do other things, so then I went out to work for another family. When I worked for the other one, they saw that I was strict, so they let me get married with their daughter. And when they let me get married, I got their daughter. Then we went away from the family, and I worked as usual with my wife and they gave us some food, money, and even land, and then I grew vegetables. At the time that I was planting vegetables, we were fighting with the Americans. I was the internal; the Khmer Rouge side assigned me to work in the economics section with vegetables. And the external, Lon Nol government assigned me to work as a leader of fifty-something people who I did not know. Then I analyzed both and thought that if I stayed, I would be in danger. So I went to live with my wife's side of the family at Omal. When I went to live at Omal, other people agreed to be on the Khmer Rouge side. So then I said that it's over then. I thought that we went away to Omal to find the relatives from my wife's side to find peace. Then they said we cannot stay still that we needed to get into the forest. I also went to the forest with them. When I went there I was assigned to find the food until 1975, they assigned me to look after the cattle and then there were thieves who stole the Khmer Rouge's cattle.

Dany: In which location, uncle?

Phan: Around Veal Sbov location, Kien Sbov, around Sombour Knach Meas, when it gets down to Kien Sbov. There, those people went to drive the cattle, they wanted to catch me. They said that I had a relationship with the enemy and that I allowed them to get the cattle. Then I went to report to them. Fortunately, they did not punish me. They said that's no problem, that they would observe me more. Then the fighting ended, the Khmer Rouge won the fight and conquered Phnom Penh. I thought that we got independence. They sent me from the forest, from Kien Sbov to Omal. So then I went with them, they then assigned me to be a village chief, and after few months I was assigned to be a commune member.

Dara: Which commune?

Phan: Preah Netr Preah Commune. They let me work as a commune member. After around one year, there was presence of Western Zone people and then it was

all mixed, I did not know who everyone was exactly. I thought that if I acted like an educated person, for sure I would be in danger. So I pretended that I am not an educated person. They started, the western people, to survey my background. They asked me, “Which grade did you finish?” Then I pretended that I am stupid, that I did not know anything.

Dara: Let me interrupt a little bit. When you worked as a Preah Netr Preah Commune member, that’s the time that the fighting finished, that the Khmer Rouge took the power?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: Were there commune chiefs or deputy commune chiefs when you became the member?

Phan: They already had them. There were Krak, Sorn, and me who was the lowest level.

Dara: So it means that you were the lowest among the three?

Phan: Three people. There was another one called Cham, next.

Dara: Yes. There were Krak, Sorn, and another one Cham

Phan: It was me and then Cham.

Dara: So then, the Western people came?

Phan: When the western people came, they fought for the position. They were about to drop our positions. They assigned me to plow the land. They assigned me to plow the land and then I only worked under their command so there was no problem. I just only kept trying to work; there was no time to relax. Then there was not enough rice, I reported to them and then they let us work in a different group—in the plowing group.

Dara: So you were assigned to control all the people who plowed the land?

Phan: Yes. All the people who plowed the land, and after we had worked for more than a month, they called me for a meeting.

Dara: To have a meeting with whom?

Phan: The commune, among the three, they called for a meeting. They also sent me to the district hall to have a meeting there as well.

Dara: Where is the district hall?

Phan: Preah Netr Preah District. When I went for the meeting, the district group assigned me again.

Dara: What was the district chief’s name at that time?

Phan: At that time, it was... Ath, he was the deputy district chief. Kho, he was the member. And the other, I forget.

Dara: Moang?

Phan: Yes, Moang. He was from the Western side.

Dara: So it's before?

Phan: Before there were Ath, Kho...

Dany: Moang came from Northwest, did not he?

Phan: Yes, Moang. Moang came from Northwest, but Moang was next. There was another upper level one, and the next person was Moang.

Dara: There was another one before Moang?

Phan: Yes, there was another one before Moang. As I remember, there were three people. There were Ath, Kho, those who I remember. He was thin, he also was a district member, but I forgot his name.

Dany: And then what else?

Phan: So then I was assigned to do another job. They arranged the plan for me to work with the dike.

Dara: His name was Sam-at?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: His name was Orn Moang?

Phan: I don't know either. I only remember that Kho was also a district member.

Dara: So before that there was another one before you arrived there?

Phan: Yes. Not Moang, he was next.

Dara: Next.

Phan: Next, but it was also still his group.

Dany: And then what happened next?

Phan: Then I was assigned to work with the dike, our dike. The biggest dike in Phnom Srok, they assigned me to make the stone pond. They let me be responsible for that so I was responsible for that then. Later on, the Southwest people called me back. They had me work in the rice field, the rice field in Preah Netr Preah and at that time the Vietnamese arrived. They asked me to go to raise my hands up. They conducted a meeting to see whether who wanted to go to fight the Vietnamese at the border. I thought that it became serious, and I thought in my mind that I would not go to fight with the Vietnamese. In my mind I thought that I would not go but they asked me to

raise up my hands, and I thought what if we don't raise up our hands? At that time I raised my hand up, but they did not get me. I raised my hand up but they did not take me there. And also they appreciated me that I am very brave. But in my mind I did not want to go at all. But if we don't do so, to stay alive [I need to do so]. I thought so. Then that's the time we escaped, when the Vietnamese came, they let us leave. I also left with other people.

Dany: Yes. I want to turn back a little bit. You said you studied at Kampong Sombour, didn't you?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: At that time, what year did you start the class?

Phan: In 1950 or 1960. It maybe in 1950 because I needed to take exam for secondary school.

Dany: So until what grade did you study at Kampong Sombour?

Phan: That's what we called high level.

Dany: What grade is the high level?

Phan: We had primary level, medium level, central level and high level starting from grade 6.

Dany : So, you studied at Kampong Sombour until sixth grade, did you not?

Phan : Yes.

Dany: Did you pass the sixth grade?

Phan : No.

Dany: Did you fail the exam?

Phan: Yes. After I failed the exam, I came to study in a private school in Phnom Penh.

Dany: In a private school?

Phan: Yes! I studied in a private school.

Dany: Private school still existed at the time?

Phan: No. At Kolaboth Niyum.

Dany: So when did you come to study in Phnom Penh?

Phan: I do not know when. I went to Phnom Penh in 1962.

Dany: How many years did you study in Phnom Penh?

Phan: I studied for three years.

Dany: Three years. Where did you study in Phnom Penh?

Phan: Later I Studied at Preah Youkunthor School. My brother first brought me to study in Kolaboth Niyum School, and then brought me to study in Preah Youkunthor School because they knew people there. I studied there for two years.

Dany: So, you studied in Kampong Sambuor until sixth grade, and then you moved to Kolaboth Niyum School!

Phan: Until fifth grade.

Dany: Fifth grade?

Phan: Yes! I was in fifth grade, so I studied in fourth grade in Preah Youkunthor School. I did not study in thirdgrade, as I had already left at that time.

Dany: So you studied in Youkunthor School until third grade in 1962?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: So do you know Men Chorn?

Phan: No.

Dany: How about Hing, do you know Hing?

Phan: Hing?

Dany: Hing, chief of Region 5.

Phan: Ta Hoeng, I did not know him, I only knew that he also studied there.

Dany: Where?

Phan: He studied in Phnom Penh. We attended the meeting with him once. I only knew that.

Dany: So you studied in Youkunthor School until 1962?

Phan: Yes! I was in fourth grade in 1962.

Dany: You were in fourth grade. Did you study in third grade?

Phan: No!

Dany: No?

Phan: No.

Dany: Your younger sister sponsored you while you were studying?

Phan: Yes! My younger sister worked to support my studies.

Dany: What did she do to support your studies?

Phan: She worked for Chinese people such as cooking and washing clothes for them.

Dany: How old was your sister when she worked?

Phan: She was sixteen to seventeen, and I was twenty.

Dany: So your sister worked to support your studies?

Phan: Yes! But then, I thought that she could not afford enough, and we did not have parents. There were only the two of us. So, I decided to Pai Lin to find gems.

Dany: Where did you live in Phnom Penh?

Phan: I was in Langka Pagoda.

Dany: Langka Pagoda?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: How about your sister?

Phan: She was in the Chinese people's house.

Dany: So you studied in Langka Pagoda?

Phan: Langka Pagoda.

Dany: Which building?

Phan: In AChar Che's building, at the South of the temple.

Dany: How did you know Achar Che, and go to live with him?

Phan: Yes. My relative was ordained a monk. He was also Achar. He called me to stay with him, so that I could help carry the food container when he went for his morning food quest.

Dany: What was his name?

Phan: Achar Chy.

Dany: Achar Chy?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: Did you know any teacher when you studied in Kolaboth Niyum and Preah Youkunthor School?

Phan: I do not remember well even Kolaboth Niyum. Before, I remembered.

Dany: How about Preah Youkunthor?

Phan: No.

Dany: You do not remember any well-known teacher?

Phan: No. I just focused on studying; I did not think of anything else.

Dany: Did you go Battambang or Pai Lin after you gave up your studies?

Phan: Battambang.

Dany: Battambang?

Phan: I went to Battambang, and then I worked for the Chinese.

Dany: Why did you come to work for the Chinese people in Battamabang in 1962, but not in Phnom Pehn?

Phan: At that time, I did not know much, I just wanted to find a job. My friends called me to dig for gems, so we came to Battambang. But, we did not reach the target yet because of the Chinese. We worked for them to earn the capital first.

Dany: So what and where did you work for the Chinese?

Phan: Yes, he was in Damnak Sdao.

Dany: What did that Chinese do?

Phan: He sold groceries, and had a plantation field near the mountain, too.

Dany: What mountain?

Phan: I did not know. It was a mountain near Damnak Sdao.

Dany: In Ratanak Modul District?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: What did you do for him if they sold groceries?

Phan: At that time, I went to the plantation field. They tested me by letting me pick fruits, or transport bananas and oranges to their car. Then they drove me home. They let me sleep in the yard, and it had a medium bed that we could sleep and tired up the blanket. I thought that I came to work for them, so I got up early in the morning to clean their house and transported water to fill their jar. They did not order me to do that, but I did it. So when the house owner came out, she saw the house was clean. I did not know what she talked about with her husband. They only said to leave this one here.

Dany: What was their name?

Phan: I forgot. Choek Hoeung.

Dany: From what year to what year did you work for them?

Phan: I worked for them for a few months only. I do not remember which year, but I just know that I left for work in 1962.

Dany: So you only worked for them for a few months?

Phan: I worked for them for two to three months, and then I moved deeper. I went to another Damnak Sdao.

Dany: Did you teach the Chinese's children Khmer and French?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Where did you teach?

Phan: I taught at home.

Dany: Choek (uncle) Hoeung?

Phan: Yes, Choek (uncle) Hoeung.

Dany: How did you teach them?

Phan: I just taught them i, u. and for Khmer, just taught A, B and the vowels.

Dany: How many of them?

Phan: Two, three, four, or five. I just taught when we were free.

Dany: How many months did you teach?

Phan: Two to three months.

Dany: What was next?

Phan: I just left there.

Dany: Where did you go after you left Choek (uncle) Hoeung's house?

Phan: Then went to live in Reaksmey Sangha.

Dany: Where was Reaksmey Sangha?

Phan: Yes! Reaksmey Sangha was at the North of Andaek Het. It was along the road heading North to Kiri Chum Phnom Padak.

Dany: Where was Kiri Chum Phnom Padak?

Phan: In Battambang.

Dany: At which bloc? Which district?

Phan: It was in Ratanak Mondul District.

Dany: Ratanak Mondul District is that what you called Sdao and Treng area?

Phan: Yes, Treng was West, but I went to the North.

Dany: Did you go to Sek Sak?

Phan: No.

Dany: What work did you do in Reaksmey Mondul and for how long?

Phan: I did the plantation field, and cleared the grass.

Dany: Which plantation field?

Phan: Corn and bean field, and fruit field planting oranges, jack fruits, coconuts, and bananas.

Dany: Did you work alone or with others?

Phan: There were many of them. But I went to join them.

Dany: How many months?

Phan: Until I got married

Dany: What year did you get married?

Phan: In 1970.

Dany: In 1970. Was it after the coup d'état?

Phan: I do not know if it was after the coup d'état. I had a wife in 1970, and left there in 1971. In 1971 and 1972 were having serious fighting.

Dany: Do you remember the month that you married?

Phan: No, I do not even remember the month.

Dany: Because the coup to overthrow the King was on March 18, 1970.

Phan: Because I got a wife in 1970 already.

Dany: So your wife was a daughter of Reaksmeay Sangha?

Phan: No. It was another one. Her relatives had a plantation field. She was a niece of the plantation field owner.

Dany: So your wife was the owner's niece?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: What is her name?

Phan: The owner?

Dany: No. Your wife.

Phan: Her name is Chuon Rin.

Dany: Chuon Rin was your wife?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: So where was your wife's hometown?

Phan: She was born in Bak Prea. Her mother's hometown was in Omal, Bort Trang.

Dany: So you met your wife while you worked with her in Reaksmeay Sangha?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: How did you two love each other?

Phan: Yes! We loved each other...laughing.

Dany: Love that led to marriage?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: The wedding was properly arranged?

Phan: Yes! We did not spend much money like now. It was about one to two thousands only.

Dany: Yes. Did your relatives attend your wedding?

Phan: No, only me. My younger sister was in Phnom Penh.

Dany: Did she know?

Phan: No! Only I and my wife's family knew. I was alone.

Dany: What happened after the marriage?

Phan: After the marriage, I asked them to leave for planting vegetables and selling them.

Dany: Where did you ask them to go to?

Phan: I asked to go to other people's fields to plant. The area that had water.

Dany: Where?

Phan: We went to, for example, we were here, so we went to Tik Pous Commune. We went there to plant vegetables in Tik Pous.

Dany: Where was Tik Pous?

Phan: Tik Pous was there, too. It was near Reaksmey Sangha, too.

Dany: Was it also near Reaksmey Sangha in Ratanak Mondul District?

Phan: Yes, it was about four to five meters from there.

Dany: How did you plant vegetables? Or did you only plant with your wife?

Phan: Only the two of us, we were very poor and did not have money. We asked for vegetable seeds, such as Spey Cheung Tea (a kind of vegetable), Khatna (a kind of vegetable), and cabbage from other people. They gave us a little of it, so we planted it. It was quite good with the plantation.

Dany: How many years did you plant vegetables?

Phan: After about one year, we had enough capital.

Dany: So what did you do after one year of planting?

Phan: As I said, after planting, the Khmer Rouge from the forest assigned me to work in the economic field. Meanwhile, the internal people assigned me to be a chief of a 50-member group. Seeing the two who assigned me to different jobs got into an argument, I felt that it might be dangerous. So, I gave up planting, and went to find my wife's relatives in Omal—a shortcut. Arriving there, they said they all entered there, so I also joined with them there.

Dany: Did you just say that the Khmer Rouge assigned you to control the economy?

Phan: Yes, the economy.

Dany: In 1970, so after you planted vegetables for one year, it would be in 1971 or 1972, is that right?

Phan: Probably 1971.

Dany: So where did the Khmer Rouge who assigned you to work come from?

Phan: They might come from Vai Chap Mountain, I did not know much. After they saw me plant vegetables, they assigned me to control the economy.

Dany: What did the Economy mean?

Phan: This Economy meant that, when they needed vegetables, I offered them.

Dany: We offered vegetables for them in a unit? Or was it regarded as the economy in a district?

Phan: I did not know. It was just for their group only?

Dany: Do you remember the name of Khmer Rouge coming from Vai Chap Mountain?

Phan: No.

Dany: Did you know where their chief came from?

Phan: I did not know any chief. I just saw the situation was not good for a few days, and then I escaped.

Dany: Where was Veay Chap Mountain?

Phan: Veay Chap Mountain was in Andaok Hem, South of Damnak Sdao.

Dany: The sSuth. Was it near?

Phan: I did not know if it was near or far. I only heard about Veay Chap Mountain, so I did not know it was true.

Dany: When did the Lon Nol assigned you to be a chief of a 50-member group?

Phan: Yes, it was later. After the Khmer Rouge assigned me, they assigned me to look after a few house buildings near my house. They assigned me to ME 50 Khnang.

Dany: Was chief of a 50-member group similar to a village chief?

Phan: Yes, it might be. I did not know much.

Dany: Where did the Lon Nol who assigned you work from?

Phan: They were from Battambang, but I did not know which village. They arrived, and told me that only I was competent. Then they arranged me to work. But I told them that I did not dare to accept because I was poor. It would not fit me. That was my excuse. So they only arranged, but I did not do the work.

Dany: How long did you stay there before you left for your wife's relatives in Omal, which is Bort Trang?

Phan: Three months.

Dany: Three months?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: How many children did you have at that time?

Phan: We had a daughter.

Dany: One daughter?

Phan: Yes, that daughter was a few months old before she died. After she died, I had another son. My son was there, too.

Dany: Where?

Phan: In that village, Reaksmey Sangha.

Dany: You had another son in Reaksmey Sangha?

Phan: Yes, another son.

Dany: Was he already born?

Phan: After he was born, there was a coup d'état.

Dany: After how long? How old was he?

Phan: I do not remember how many months. I carried him in my arms to run.

Dany: You ran back to Omal?

Phan: Yes, back to Omal by a shortcut.

Dany: Was it far from Reaksmey Sangha?

Phan: It was far. We could reach there by either the water way, or road. I went along the tributary to Bak Prea, and then to Omal by a shortcut. But it would be very far if we went along the tributary. We needed to go to Peam Seima, and then went up.

Dany: Was it very far?

Phan: Yes, very far. If we went on the car road, we went from Battambang to National Road 6.

Dany: Which district was Omal?

Phan: Yes! It was in Preah Netr Preah District.

Dany: Omal was in Preah Netr Preah District?

Phan: Yes!

Dany: At Bort Trang, Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes! At the North of Siem Reap, it might be in Srei Snam District.

Dany: Srei Snam?

Phan: It might be Srei Snam. It was at the North, but I did not know which district.

Dany: Did you mean Omal and Bort Trang were in Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes! Half of it was in Preah Netr Preah, and another half was in Siem Reap.

Dany: Did you, your wife, and child run there together?

Phan: Yes, all of us.

Dany: What happened after you arrived in Omal which was your wife's hometown? Did all the villagers join the Khmer Rouge?

Phan: They all joined the Khmer Rouge.

Dany: Which forest did they go to?

Phan: The forest was Prey Roneam.

Dany: Prey Roneam?

Phan: Yes. When I arrived there, I joined with them because I did not know where to go. Before that, we arranged to stay in the village. But when we arrived, and they all went to the forest, so I decided to join them in the forest.

Dany: What year?

Phan: It was in 1971.

Dany: The same in 1971?

Phan: Yes! It was 1971, near 1972.

Dany: Did you remember who the leader in the forest was?

Phan: It seemed to be Siem Reap people.

Dany: Siem Reap?

Phan: Yes! But I did not know the name because I did not know them. I did not know how that person communicated, and brought me to the forest.

Dany: Did you not know the names of any leaders?

Phan: No.

Dany: You never heard?

Phan: No. I just knew that person came from Siem Reap.

Dany: Siem Reap? Was it in a different region?

Phan: Yes, it was. But I did not know how they arranged it. They came from Siem Reap to arrange forces, and control the people who joined.

Dany: Did you see Ta Hoeng at that time?

Phan: No, Ta Hoeng was later.

Dany: So he was not in that struggle?

Phan: No, it was different.

Dany: How about Ta Hoeng, Ta Sam-at, and Ta Moang?

Phan: Ta Mong was later.

Dany: Were you assigned to find food while you were in Omal?

Phan: Yes, I looked for food.

Dany: Why you were assigned to look for food?

Phan: We were in the economic part, so they assigned us to find fish, tools, and honey.

Dany: Who assigned you at that time?

Phan: He passed away. I did not know his name. He was from the army.

Dany: What was his name?

Phan: I cannot recall.

Dany: What kind of soldier?

Phan: Yes, he was a soldier. He was the commander.

Dany: Where did he go when it collapsed?

Phan: We were separated after the collapse in 1975. Some people who came from the upper area or Siem Reap came to control.

Dany: Do you remember anyone who struggle with you in Omal?

Phan: No, I do not remember. They all died.

Dany: How long did you stay there from the end of 1971, or 1972?

Phan: I was there in 1971, 1972, and 1973. I was also in the forest in 1973. I went to Kien Sbov in 1974.

Dany: You went to Kiem Sbov in 1974?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Was it near from Omal to Kien Sbov?

Phan: Quite far. After crossing the forest, there were another two tributaries.

Dany: Was Kien Sbov Sombuor near Kambut Tributary?

Phan: Yes, Kambut Tributary was near too.

Dany: Was Kambut tributary also in Mongkul Borey District?

Phan: Yes, Mongkul Borey District.

Dany: Was it also near Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: No, you are wrong. Kambut Tributary was there, and Preah Netr Preah was here.

Dany: Was it far to Sambuor?

Phan: Yes, it was far. It was in Mongkul Borey Tributary.

Dany: Were you in Mongkul Borey Tributary until 1974 when you left for Kien Sbov?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: What did you do?

Phan: They assigned me to find food as normal.

Dany: You were the one who looked for food to support them?

Phan: Yes, to support my group which comprised of about ten families. They assigned me to find food, and everyone worked for Angkar.

Dany: What did they do?

Phan: They farmed or harvested.

Dany: Farmed and harvested?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Did you find food alone?

Phan: No, there were three to four of us.

Dany: Were you able to find food for them every day?

Phan: Somedays we could find food, but somedays we could not. So we looked for other vegetables to substitute.

Dany: So did you find food to support ten families?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: So who controlled the ten families?

Phan: There was not any appointment yet. I just served for the ten families only.

Dany: Did not they assign you to lead?

Phan: No, I was not the leader. I was the doer.

Dany: You looked for food in 1974. So when did you stop finding food?

Phan: Until 1974, I was assigned to tend cattle. On the day they came to get the cattle, I thought that I had made a mistake. But then, they just gathered us.

Dany: Where did they get the cattle if it was in the forest?

Phan: I did not know where they got those cattle from. They just brought the cattle, and assigned different groups to look after them. I just followed them, it was not difficult.

Dany: How many cattle?

Phan: Quite a lot.

Dany: How many approximately?

Phan: About fifty to sixty teams of cattle.

Dany: About fifty to sixty teams of cattle?

Phan: Yes, a lot.

Dany: How many people looked after them?

Phan: Many. There were about fifteen people in a group. The cattle care group.

Dany: You said, there were only fifteen families. So who looked for food if you took fourteen to fifteen of them to look after cattle?

Phan: No, it was at that place. When I came here, there were a lot.

Dany: Where did you look after the cattle?

Phan: It was there too. I was assigned to look after cattle, so the ten families were left there.

Dany: So after leaving the ten families, there were many people during the cattle care?

Phan: Yes. I left again.

Dany: How about your wife and children?

Phan: For my wife and children, I sometimes could ask for permission to visit them, sometimes not.

Dany: Where were they?

Phan: My wife and children were in a group controlled by others.

Dany: Were they part of the ten families?

Phan: Yes, the ten families.

Dany: So your wife was in the ten families, too?

Phan: Yes! But I left there later.

Dany: So what did your wife and children do after that?

Phan: My wife and children did not do anything. During the harvesting season, they were assigned to transplant the seeds and harvest.

Dany: Could they harvest in the forest?

Phan: Yes. They called us to transplant rice seeds which looked like cucumbers and eggplant. We were careful when we transplanted. We transplanted on some land. We needed to watch out, when we heard the sound of airplanes, we moved a little bit to the forest.

Dany: Were there airplanes to drop bombs?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Did they drop on you?

Phan: No, they never hit us.

Dany: But they dropped the bombs?

Phan: When the soldiers saw those who went to fish, they would open fire.

Dany: You built a house in the jungle?

Phan: Ah, the house was not really a house. We made a house of canvas and our mosquito nets were old and damaged. Life was so miserable.

Dany: How about the food you ate? Was there enough while you farmed so little?

Phan: Yes, we lacked food. We picked up wild vegetables, waterlilies, wild bananas. In the jungle, there was lots of fish oil and we fried wild bananas with fish oil.

Dany: Fried wild bananas?

Phan: Yes, wild bananas. Sometimes we ate it with honey if we had some. We had a shortage of food.

Dany: Did you enter the villages controlled by the government to steal some rice and food?

Phan: It was impossible. But sometimes, we got some when the Khmer Rouge troops encroached into villages and then they asked villagers to bring food to them.

Dany: In 1975, you were assigned to herd the cows, how long had you done that job?

Phan: For about a few months. I plowed the paddy fields and herded the cows until the end of the regime.

Dany: At the time, were you separated from your family?

Phan: Yes, I did not live with my family. Sometimes we met every two weeks.

Dany: At the time, did you eat communally or privately in the family?

Phan: We ate in a group.

Dany: Ten families in each group?

Phan: Yes, we ate in a group. Sometimes, the chefs were lazy to cook, so they gave us rice to cook.

Dany: Since late 1971 until early 1972, when you lived at Omal inside the jungle, you ate in a group?

Phan: At the beginning, we ate privately but later we were put to eat in the group.

Dany: Sometimes, you ate in a group and sometimes you were given rice to cook?

Phan: Yes, sometimes the chefs were lazy to cook.

Dany: If you got some fish, you shared it with the group?

Phan: Yes, I shared with them if I got some fish. They shared with me, too, if they found some.

Dany: You said when you herded the cows, some cows had gotten lost, can you tell me when that occurred?

Phan: I don't know clearly. I just know that I lost some cows in 1975. It was the day before the Khmer Rouge got victory. The next day, the Khmer Rouge got victory. I know that event because the next day, the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh and at the time I lost some cows.

Dany: How many cows did you lose?

Phan: All. The Khmer Rouge cadres took all the cows. They were armed with M-79s, artillery, and other weapons and I dared not refuse. They took all my cows. I was not armed.

Dany: Who took those cows?

Phan: People from other areas.

Dany: People came to take the cows?

Phan: No, I thought they were soliders.

Dany: Khmer Rouge soldiers?

Phan: No, Lon Nol soldiers.

Dany: Lon Nol soldiers?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: On April 17, the Khmer Rouge got victory. How come the Lon Nol soliders came to take the cows?

Phan: Yes, I don't know. Maybe they didn't know that the Khmer Rouge had defeated them. They would not know about that. If they knew, they would not come to take the cows.

Dany: Lon Nol soliders did not know that...?

Phan: No, our [Khmer Rouge] soldiers did not know about the victory either. I lived in the jungle and I did not know anything about victory. After the soliders took my cows, I found outw that the war was over and then I was brought to live inside the village.

Dany: What was next after you lost your cows?

Phan: I informed my bosses. They did not blame me. They said "don't be afraid." They said that they captured Phnom Penh and I did not need to worry. We will go to get those cows. That's what they told me.

Dany: Who was the one you informed?

Phan: I don't remember his name. I didn't report to him directly. Other people reported to him directly. It was not easy to go to meet with them. Their office was not approachable.

Dany: Where was their office?

Phan: Their office was in the jungle.

Dany: What was the name of their office?

Phan: I don't know the name. That office was very strict. You might be able to go there, but I couldn't. When I was herding the cows, only one person was allowed to go to that office.

Dany: Who was the chief of your team?

Phan: I don't remember his name.

Dany: How many people were in your team to herd the cows?

Phan: A lot. Some were unmarried youth, some were married and old—lots of kinds of people.

Dany: How many people?

Phan: About ten people.

Dany: About ten people?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: When you lost your cows, Phnom Penh was captured at the same time?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: On April 17, 1975?

Phan: Yes, when I got up the next morning, I heard that Phnom Penh was captured. When my team went to report to the bosses, they said "no need to worry. Those cows will always belong to us. We were successful."

Dany: After the 1975 victory, you were sent to Omal Bort Trang?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: You were sent to Omal Bort Trang?

Phan: Yes, I was an ordinary person at the time.

Dany: Earlier, you told me that you were promoted to a chief of village?

Phan: After the war ended, the Khmer Rouge reshuffled the leadership. They checked my qualifications and assigned people to group or village chiefs.

Dany: How long after you arrived in the village did they hold the meeting?

Phan: A few days.

Dany: Who organized the meeting?

Phan: Ta Krak and his team.

Dany: Ta Krak?

Phan: Yes, Ta Krak. I heard that Ta Krak was a soldier. He knew me when he was a soldier. He said I was qualified to work with him so he brought me to work with him.

Dany: What did Ta Krak do when he was in the jungle?

Phan: He was in charge of economics like me. But he was a solider. I am not sure if he was a solider who was just demoted or not. But I think he supervised me at the time.

Dany: A demoted soldier? What was it? Was he a Khmer Rouge soldier?

Phan: Yes, I think he made some mistakes and he was demoted from being a solider. He was sent to live with villagers.

Dany: To supervise villagers?

Phan: Yes, he came to supervise villagers. It was at that time that he got to know me. So he took me to work with him.

Dany: When did you know Ta Krak?

Phan: Since 1975.

Dany: You said that during the meeting, Ta Krak asked you to work with him. Had you known him before?

Phan: Yes, I knew him when I was herding the cows.

Dany: You knew him when you were herding the cows?

Phan: Yes, he was working in another unit. When I went to his unit, I began to get to know him. When he was assigned to return to his home village, he asked me to come with him. I came here through his connection.

Dany: Ta Krak was a Khmer Rouge solider at that time? What unit he was in?

Phan: I don't know what unit he was in.

Dany: He was a district or regional solider?

Phan: Probably a district solider.

Dany: Which district?

Phan: Maybe Preah Netr Preah, but I am not so sure because I was in the jungle at that time.

Dany: When Ta Krak came to join the meeting what was his position?

Phan: Maybe he was in charge of something, which is why he had the ability to ask me to work with him. He told me that "you come to work with me. Now, come to work with me because you can read and write." He could not read and write.

Dany: Ta Krak could not read and write?

Phan: He just could read a little, he was not completely illiterate.

Dany: Where was he born?

Phan: He was from Siem Reap.

Dany: He was from Siem Reap?

Phan: Yes, but I don't know where in Siem Reap he came from.

Dany: Then he appointed you to be a village chief?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Which village?

Phan: I don't know much. I just know that the village was along the Kralanh River. I was a village chief for two days only. Then I was assigned to come to Preah Netr Preah.

Dany: You were a village chief for two days?

Phan: Yes, just two days.

Dany: At a village along the Kralanh River?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Do you know the name of the village?

Phan: Maybe Prasat Village.

Dany: Prasat Village?

Phan: Yes, I did not organize the village yet. It was in a meeting that I was assigned to be a village chief. I did not perform my work yet. Then, I was assigned to come to Preah Netr Preah.

Dany: What was Ta Krak's position when he appointed you to be commune chief?

Phan: I don't know what his position was. I don't know at all. He would have a power of authority. I don't know what the district office has approved.

Dany: Who else went with Ta Krak?

Phan: I and others, a lot more. I don't know all of them. Some were appointed to be group chiefs, but I forgot their names. It has been a long time ago.

Dany: So, you were a village chief for two days?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Who took you to Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Ta Krak.

Dany: Ta Krak?

Phan: Yes, he told me that that now he had to go to Preah Netr Preah and that I needed to go with him.

Dany: Ta Krak said he was going to Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: And you went with him?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Only you and he went?

Phan: No, lots of people went. They were villagers. Then, some of those villagers lived in some villages. Some went to their village. Lots of people were asked to go to Preah Netr Preah.

Dany: Lots of people?

Phan: Yes, they came out of the jungle—hundreds of them.

Dany: Those people were assigned to be village chiefs in each village?

Phan: That depends on their assignment. They were living in the jungle of struggle and when they returned to villages, they were leaders. They were group chiefs, unit chiefs or village chiefs. They had positions of authority.

Dany: So, when you went, you went with Ta Krak?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Only you and Ta Krak held positions in the commune. Was there somebody else?

Phan: Lots of people came with us, but they were assigned to each village.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: And I and he held positions at the commune level.

Dany: Commune level?

Phan: Yes, Preah Netr Preah Commune.

Dany: Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes, Preah Netr Preah.

Dany: Ta Krak was a commune chief?

Phan: Yes, when I arrived I found out that Ta Krak was a commune chief. Sorn was a deputy chief.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: At first, Ta Krak did not appoint me in the commune. Ta Krak said "Now, you have to be with me. I will organize our forces later."

Dany: Yes.

Phan: When I arrived at Preah Netr Preah, I worked for him. I could write and he asked me to write for him. And later, he organized the commune's structure and he assigned me to be a member of the commune.

Dany: A member of the commune?

Phan: Yes, a member of the commune.

Dany: Ta Krak was a chief and Sorn was a deputy?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Where did Sorn come from?
Phan: Sorn was from O Kambot.
Dany: O Kambot?
Phan: Yes, O Kambot near Mongkul Borei.
Dany: On the Kambot River near Mongkul Borei?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: You were a member of the commune?
Phan: Yes, I was a member.
Dany: What were you in charge of?
Phan: I don't really know clearly about my duty, but the commune chief always asked me to do something. He always asked me to write a letter or take notes, to organize and assign forces to work. I don't really know about my duty. Ta Krak and his deputy were always together.
Dany: Ta Krak and Sorn?
Phan: Yes, they joined any important meetings and I was in charge of the office when they were away.
Dany: How about the one whose name was Cham as you said earlier?
Phan: Yes, Ta Cham held a position below me. In total, there were four of us.
Dany: Yes.
Phan: Ta Cham was appointed after I was.
Dany: Ta Cham held the position after you did?
Phan: Yes. I don't know what his position was.
Dany: He was a member of the commune?
Phan: There were in total four people in charge of the commune.
Dany: Four people?
Phan: Yes, four.
Dany: Ta Krak was in charge?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: How about Ta Sorn?
Phan: I think he was a deputy chief of commune. Ta Krak and Ta Sorn always went somewhere together.
Dany: Yes.

Phan: For me, I rarely went with them. I just stayed in the commune office doing some work on their advice. I did some work such as writing reports. If they did not assign me a job to do, I did not do anything.

Dany: So a few days after Phnom Penh was liberated on April 17, you came home? And at the time, Ta Krak assigned you to come here?

Phan: Yes, he assigned people to go anywhere.

Dany: Two days later, you came to Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes, Ta Krak called me to come to Preah Netr Preah with him.

Dany: By the time you arrived at Preah Netr Preah, what were your plans to do? When you held the position at the commune, you wrote reports and at the time did you have any plans or policies? How were the villages divided?

Phan: No, I was assigned to work in the commune—without power. I don't know much about some important work. I did what I was assigned to do. I did not refuse. I don't know anything.

Dany: What were you assigned to do?

Phan: Sometimes, I was assigned to oversee the plowing team; sometimes I oversaw people farming. Sometimes, I was assigned to oversee people picking up rice stalks. Sometimes, I did work with people. I did not just stand and watch people; I did the work. For instance, the village chief assigned to me to see the plowing team, to see which rice field needs people. They assigned me to see, not just to see and observe, but to do as well. I was not just watching people working. I ate what people ate. When people had nothing to eat, I also had nothing.

Dany: Did you see people who were evacuated from Phnom Penh?

Phan: Yes, I saw some of them. Ta Krak and Ta Sorn assigned those people to work.

Dany: So, you did not work with them at all?

Phan: No, I did not work with them. I just did what I was assigned to do.

Dany: Can you tell me how people were assigned under your supervision? How people were assigned differently such as New People, Candidate People, and Full Rights People.

Phan: I don't know much. Ta Krak and Ta Sorn knew about this.

Dany: Those two were to assign any work?

Phan: Yes,.

Dany: But I want to know how people were classified? What made them to become Candidate, New People, and Old People?

Phan: I don't know.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: I don't know. I was just assigned to do and I followed. I worked like a clerk during that period. I was assigned to write reports. I don't know more.

Dany: You were one of their members, how come you did not know about such things?

Phan: Yes, I did not know. They did not allow me to know any issues. Ta Cham was allowed to know some work. For me, they did not allow me to know anything.

Dany: Ta Cham held a less important position than you?

Phan: Yes, he was inferior to me, but he was connected to more powerful people. His patron was at the Rrgional level who assigned him to hold position in this commune.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: I was an ordinary person. It seemed like I was Ta Cham's inferior. So, when we implemented some works, only Ta Krak, Ta Sorn and Ta Cham, were the ones who implemented the work, not me. I just wrote what they told me to. I wrote what I was told to write.

Dany: Do you remember what you wrote about? Did you report about people?

Phan: Yes, I wrote something. I did not write how many people were good and how many were bad. I wrote the exact number of people who lived in this area. I wrote the number of people who went to farm. I wrote based on the real things.

Dany: Did you write about any people who were accused of being enemies or something?

Phan: No.

Dany: Did you classify people who were former officials duing the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period?

Phan: Yes, later other people did it. I was downgraded and another one replaced me and did that kind of job. At the time, did not have any position. I was with all of them, but I was like ordinary person. They assigned their own people to do the work. I didn't know any important positions.

Dany: At the time, Ta Krak was the chief of Preah Netr Preah Commune?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Did you know any chief of nearby communes such as Phnom Leap Commune?

Phan: At the time, I did not join any meetings, so I did not know any thing.

Dany: You never join any meetings with them at all?

Phan: Yes, I joined in some meetings. But I did not pay attention. I did not join the meetings as often as they did. Sometimes, I was asked by the commune chief to join, sometimes not. I was not very active.

Dany: So, how many communes were there in Preah Netr Preah District?

Phan: Hmm, let me count—Phnom Leap, Prasat, Tean Kamm, Preah Netr Preah

Dany: Four?

Phan: Yes, I don't know more than these. I don't know that area very well.

Dany: Teuk Cho?

Phan: Yes, Teuk Cho is another commune. Also downstream near the river there was another commune. I don't know what it is, oh, Prasat Commune.

Dany: How about Rohal Commune? Did it exist at the time?

Phan: Yes, Rohal Commune.

Dany: Chup Vari did not exist. Did it?

Phan: Chup Vari was in Preah Netr Preah at the time.

Dany: So Chup Vari did not exist at the time?

Phan: No.

Dany: So, in total, there were six communes?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Preah Netr Preah, Phnom Leap, Tean Kamm, Rohal, Prasat, and Teuk Cho?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: There were six?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: How many commune chiefs did you know? Those who held positions since 1975?

Phan: I know only Ta Krak.

Dany: Only Ta Krak?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: So, you did not know the names of the other commune chiefs?

Phan: When I was demoted, the cadres from the Southwest Zone took over.

Dany: Who was the committee of Preah Netr Preah District? Where were they from?
Phan: Ta Kho, Ta Ath, Ta Moang, three people.
Dany: Three people?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Ta Moang was a chief?
Phan: Yes, Ta Moang.
Dany: Ta Moang was a chief?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Who was his deputy?
Phan: Ta Ath.
Dany: Who was a member?
Phan: Kho.
Dany: Only three people?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Which region was Preah Netr Preah in?
Phan: Region 5.
Dany: Who was the regional chief?
Phan: I think Ta Hing and I had no idea of who was below him. By that time, I was demoted to an ordinary person.
Dany: When was Hing arrested?
Phan: I don't remember. I don't know. I was an ordinary person. But they did not tell me about my demotion. I was just assigned to do farming.
Dany: How long had you worked with Ta Krak?
Phan: From 1975 to 1977.
Dany: You were separated in 1977?
Phan: Yes,.
Dany: What month? Do you remember?
Phan: I don't remember.
Dany: In the dry or rainy season?
Phan: I think it was in the rainy season.
Dany: Early or mid or late in the rainy season?
Phan: At the time, Ta Krak was arrested. Then, I was sent to farm at a dam area. It was called Spean Sreng.
Dany: Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: What year?

Phan: I don't remember in which year Ta Krak was arrested. At the time, I was assigned to transplant rice stalks. New cadres called for those who had a connection with Ta Krak. I was also included. All those who were connected to him were called. I don't know why later, I was set free. They told me to work and I never thought about other things. I did not care about anything. I just focused on work only.

Dara: Where were those people from—those who were connected to Ta Krak?

Phan: They were working with Ta Hing. When the car came, they came to arrest them. I don't know who arrested them.

Dara: They were arrested along with Ta Krak?

Phan: I don't know.

Dany: Did you meet Ta Krak for the last time?

Phan: Yes, I met him when I was at Spean Sreng.

Dany: I mean that did you meet with Ta Krak when those who were connected to him were arrested?

Phan: No, I left him several months before he was arrested. Ta Krak assigned me to work at a dam site. Then, he never called me for any meeting. I just focused on my farming only.

Dara: Mostly Ta Krak was in the office. Where was his office?

Phan: Yes, at Preah Netr Preah.

Dara: At the current commune office?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: At Preah Netr Preah Pagoda?

Phan: No, his office was to the North of that pagoda.

Dara: To the north?

Phan: Yes, to the north of the pagoda near the mountain. His house was there.

Dara: When you were working with Ta Krak, do you remember an important event when lots of people were called for a meeting at Preah Netr Preah Pagoda? Please try to refresh your memory.

Phan: Yes.

Dara: In an event at Preah Netr Preah Pagoda, lots of people attended. Did Ta Krak attend that event?

Phan: I was living far from them at the time.

Dara: Did you know about the meeting at Preah Netr Preah at the time?

Phan: I seem not to remember.

Dara: During that meeting, a couple was judged and sentence to death. They had committed a moral offense and then people were called to attend the meeting. Do you remember that event?

Phan: I don't know about that event.

Dara: Two people committed a moral offense—a man and a woman—they were killed at Preah Netr Preah Pagoda. Do you remember?

Phan: I don't know much.

Dara: At the time, Ta Krak presided over that meeting?

Phan: I don't know.

Dara: When you were working with Ta Krak, did you walk past Preah Netr Preah often?

Phan: Occassionally.

Dara: You walked pass that pagoda, too?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: When you walked pass that area, had you ever seen any meeting taking place?

Phan: No, I don't know much.

Dara: At the time, a man and a woman committed a moral offense. They were killed in front of the public in order to reeducate others not to follow that couple. Were you there at the time?

Phan: No, I don't know where the meeting took place.

Dara: In front of the pagoda under the Ampil Baraing Tree, the big one. Now it is still there in front of Preah Netr Preah Pagoda.

Phan: Oh, there was lots of that kind of tree.

Dara: But in front of the pagoda, there is a big Ampil Baraing Tree. According to my interviews with survivors, I found that Ta Krak also joined the meeting too in order to re-educate the couple who committed the moral offense.

Phan: Yes.

Dara: At the time, the couple was sentenced to death?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: Lots of people were called to join the meeting. Do you remember that meeting?

Phan: I don't know.

Dara: You don't know?

Phan: No.

Dara: After Ta Krak was arrested, were you still at Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: At the time, I was at Phnom Leap.

Dara: Then?

Phan: After Phnom Leap, I went to Dach and then Spean Sreng.

Dara: Do you know who the chief of Phnom Leap Commune was?

Phan: I don't know. I worked there—near the dam site.

Dara: Who took over Phnom Leap?

Phan: Yeay Chaem.

Dara: Yeay Chaem?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: Yeay Chaem lived at Phnom Leap or was she in charge of Phnom Leap Commune?

Phan: She was not a commune chief. She would be a regional chief or she would be a district chief—either one. She was in charge of general affairs. I don't know much about her.

Dara: Sraeng Chaeng was the place you worked?

Phan: Spean Sreng.

Dara: How far is it from Spean Sreng to Phnom Leap?

Phan: It was far. It was a whole morning walk.

Dara: What year did you go to work at Spean Sreng?

Phan: I have trouble remembering the year. The district was in trouble; arrests were sought. I went there after the arrests were over.

Dara: After Ta Krak was arrested, who replaced him?

Phan: Ta Nonh.

Dara: Nonh replaced Ta Krak?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: Where did Nonh come from?

Phan: From the Southwest Zone.

Dany: Who was his deputy?

Phan: Tha.

Dara: Tha was a deputy?

Phan: Yes, the deputy.

Dara: Who was a member?

Phan: I don't know was a member. I don't know much.

Dara: How did you know that Nonh was a chief and Tha was a deputy?

Phan: In the meeting at Phnom Leap when they assigned me to leave the commune, Nonh and Tha were chiefs.

Dara: You attended the meeting with them?

Phan: Yes, all group leaders were called for a meeting.

Dara: In that meeting, you were assigned to go to Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes.

Dara: How was the working situation at Spean Sreng?

Phan: There was a big flood at the time. The flowing water destroyed the paddyfield. Then, I was sent back to Phnom Leap. At Phnom Leap, I was assigned to help harvest rice which was flooded because the flow of water was strong. By that time, all cadres were arrested. I was sent back to Phnom Leap.

Dany: When you were working with Ta Krak, what were you assigned to write in your report?

Phan: I just wrote about the yield that people produced and then I sent those reports to the district office. I wrote statistics and sent them to upper echelons—about the number of plows and people that were in the village.

Dany: When you were working with Ta Krak, where was the security prison?

Phan: Maybe at his house?

Dara: At Ta Krak's house?

Phan: Yes, there was no place to put prisoners. Ta Krak used his house. I don't know much more than this.

Dany: What kinds of people were arrested?

Phan: I don't know. It was a confused situation.

Dany: Where was the security prison of Preah Netr Preah District?

Phan: Yes, it was down from the paved road.

Dany: Where is it?

Phan: Near the paved road at the market. It was a concrete house.

Dany: A concrete house?

Phan: Yes, the one at the left hand side when we travel from here.

Dany: At the left hand side?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: It is at Preah Netr Preah market?

Phan: Yes, at the West of the market.

Dany: At the West of the market?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: It was a security prison of Preah Netr Preah District?

Phan: I don't know what it really was. I just know that it belonged to the district.

Dany: It belonged to the district?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: It was a place where people were kept?

Phan: Yes, I don't know more.

Dany: Had you never seen people who were kept there?

Phan: I don't know. I just know that it was Ta Krak's place. That was his house.

Dany: You told me earlier that the cadres from the Western Zone came here?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: When did cadres from the Western Zone come here?

Phan: I don't remember. After the Western Zone cadres left, the Southwest Zone cadres arrived.

Dany: So cadres from Western Zone arrived here before cadres from the Southwest Zone?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: What did the Western Zone cadres do here?

Phan: They came to take over this area. They came here to reorganize teams and groups. My old team and I were ignored. When cadres from the Southwest Zone arrived, Western Zone cadres were demoted.

Dany: They arrested cadres from the Western Zone?

Phan: Yes, I don't know how the arrests occurred. I don't know much.

Dany: When cadres from Western Zone arrived, had Ta Krak been arrested yet?

Phan: He was demoted and he was ignored.

Dany: But he was not yet arrested?

Phan: Not yet.

Dany: Do you remember the month and year that the Southwest zone cadres arrived? And when the Western Zone cadres arrived?

Phan: I don't remember.

Dany: How long did cadres from the Western Zone work here before Southwest Zone cadres arrived?

Phan: I don't remember how long. After cadres from the Western Zone come to re-organize the areas, the Southwest Zone cadres arrived. I don't remember the date.

Dany: After the Southwest Zone cadres arrived, the Western cadres were arrested?

Phan: No, Western cadres were restructured and demoted. Big groups were divided into smaller ones. Then, the Southwest Zone cadres took over.

Dany: By the time the Southwest Zone cadres arrived, was Ta Krak arrested yet? Were the Western Zone cadres separated and divided into small groups?

Phan: Yes, they were separated.

Dany: When was Ta Krak was arrested? Who arrested him?

Phan: I don't know who arrested him. I don't know much. I know the Southwest Zone cadres arrested him because Western Zone cadres didn't make any arrests. Only Southwest Zone cadres made arrests.

Dany: Ta Krak and Ta Sorn were arrested?

Phan: Yes, Ta Sorn committed a moral offense. He was killed before he was arrested.

Dany: He was killed?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Who killed him?

Phan: No, I don't know who killed him. I just know that he committed a moral offense.

Dany: Ta Krak's team arrested him or what?

Phan: No, the district soldiers arrested him.

Dany: District soldiers?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Which district?

Phan: I don't know much. I just know after Ta Sorn was arrested.

Dany: Ta Sorn was arrested was killed before he was arrested?

Phan: I don't know where he died.

Dany: How about Ta Cham?

Phan: I don't know either about him.

Dany: Was Ta Cham arrested?

Phan: Yes, all were arrested.

Dany: How about the district committee such as Ta Moang, Ta Ath, Tha, and Kho?

Phan: They just disappeared. I don't know much.

Dany: Then, cadres from the Southwest Zone replaced them?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Nonh who took over Preah Netr Preah District was from the Southwest Zone?

Phan: Yes, Nonh was from the Southwest Zone.

Dany: How about Tha?

Phan: Tha was from the Southwest Zone, too.

Dany: Tha was a female cadre?

Phan: Yes, she was.

Dany: Was she young?

Phan: Yes, she was young then.

Dany: She was young?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: How about Nonh?

Phan: Nonh was in his fifties.

Dany: Were you a member of that commune?

Phan: I am not sure if I was a member of the commune or not. In some cases, I was not a member because they did not care about me. They just assigned me to go somewhere.

Dany: Go to take over in other areas?

Phan: Yes, to take over.

Dany: So, they assigned you to control the mobile unit?

Phan: Yes, to supervise the mobile unit.

Dany: Did you supervise the mobile unit at Sraeng Pagoda?

Phan: Yes, but I don't know more.

Dany: At the time, Ta Moang, Ta Ath, and Ta Kho were Preah Netr Preah District committee members?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: After they were arrested, who took over for them?

Phan: I know only Nonh and Tha in the commune.

Dany: How about the district level?

Phan: At the district level, I know only Yeay Chaem.

Dany: Yeay Chaem?

Phan: Yes, Yeay Chaem. That's what I know.

Dany: You were a member of Preah Netr Preah Commune and you were assigned to supervise at Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes, but I don't know what position I was assigned to hold. I just worked like others.

Dany: Was it under the supervision of the district mobile unit?

Phan: Yes, all mobile units were under district supervision. I was just assigned to do this and that.

Dany: Who was the chief of the district mobile unit?

Phan: I don't know. He was newly assigned. I don't know anyone else.

Dany: Do you know a man named Soeun?

Phan: No, I don't know him. Hmm, let me try to recall my memory...I don't know.

Dany: When Yeay Chaem came to take over Preah Netr Preah District, she lived near Phnom Leap?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Where was the security office?

Phan: Hey, I don't know the security office was.

Dany: You don't know?

Phan: No.

Dany: Did you hear about Phnom Troyaung Security Prison?

Phan: Yes, I did. But I don't know much more about that place.

Dany: You heard about it?

Phan: Yes, I did.

Dany: What did you hear about that place? Did you hear people say something about it?

Phan: I don't know. I just heard that it was an office. I don't know where it exactly was. I don't know much. I was too silly and I don't know such a thing. I did what I was assigned to do. What I needed was to survive. I wanted to be safe.

Dany: How long did you work at Spean Sreng?

Phan: About three to four months.

Dany: Three to four months?

Phan: Yes, I returned to Preah Netr Preah when the water subsided.

Dany: You came to Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: You came to work with Nonh and Tha?

Phan: No, I farmed with their people.

Dany: Did you join the meetings with Nonh and Tha?

Phan: No, I did not join the meetings with them. Since that time, I had never had a meeting with them. I just had a meeting with my team.

Dany: Which team?

Phan: Our farming team. We discussed about the yield of rice we produced.

Dany: Where were your wife and children living at the time?

Phan: They lived at Preah Netr Preah.

Dany: At which place?

Phan: Hard to tell you. My house was near the pagoda.

Dany: At Cheung Wat Village?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: What did you wife and children do?

Phan: They worked like the others did—they farmed.

Dany: She was not a chief of the women's unit?

Phan: No.

Dany: How many children did you have at the time?

Phan: Two children.

Dany: Two children?

Phan: Yes, a son and a daughter.

Dany: The first child was born in 1971?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: During the three year period, there were two others?

Phan: Yes, two more. Then, we fled.

Dany: When Yeay Chaem worked at Phnom Leap, where was her office?

Phan: At that place.

Dany: Which place?

Phan: At Phnom Leap.

Dany: At exactly Phnom Leap?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: She did not come to work at Preah Netr Preah?

Phan: I saw her at Preah Netr Preah occassionally. But her real place of work was at Phnom Leap.

Dany: At Phnom Leap?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Do you know her clearly?

Phan: Now, I almost forgot her. It has been a long time ago.

Dany: But at the time, you knew her well?

Phan: Yes, we talked to each other like you and me. She visited our work place where I worked.

Dany: Where did she visit?

Phan: At the work site.

Dany: Which work site did she visit?

Phan: When I was harvesting, she visited. When I was picking up rice stalks, she chatted with me about this and that. I was just working.

Dany: What was she like?

Phan: She could be a bad and good cadre. Sometimes, she was friendly as a Khmer woman. She looked like a farmer; she was a real farmer. She could do lots of work. She was a farmer.

Dany: When did you hear about Phnom Troyaung Security Office?

Phan: At the time, I was assigned to farm near that place. I heard others talk about Phnom Troyaung, but I did not really care about it.

Dany: What did people say about it?

Phan: They told me about a security prison at Phnom Troyaung, but I don't know exactly where it was.

Dany: It is far from here?

Phan: I don't know. I know Phnom Leap only. I know her house at Phnom Leap. For Phnom Troyaung, I don't know where it was.

Dany: Where is Nonh living now?

Phan: I don't know where he is since we separated from each other. I even never heard about him.

Dany: You have heard about him?

Phan: No, I don't know where he is living now.

Dany: After region chief Hing was arrested, who replaced him?

Phan: I don't know who replaced him. I don't know the other members of the Region. I know only Chaem, who was a district chief.

Dany: You told me earlier that after the meeting at the district, you were assigned to supervise Trapeang Thmar dam site. Weren't you?

Phan: Yes, at the time, I was called to the meeting. Then, I prepared my labor forces to dig Trapeang Thmar. After they told me to do so, I went to work.

Dany: Went where?

Phan: I went to Trapeang Thmar to build the dam.

Dany: Can you tell me in some great detail about that? How many people were in your team?

Phan: I was in charge of three groups. Each group had ten people. Each group had to dig five meters wide and five meters long. The dike had to be three meters high. That's was the plan. Sometimes, our group could not achieve our work, and then I had to have a meeting with them in order to strengthen their forces. Sometimes, we could achieve our objectives. I am not sure if we needed to complete those jobs per day or per week.

Dany: Who assigned you to do those jobs?

Phan: Ta Krak.

Dany: Ta Krak assigned you to do those jobs?

Phan: Yes, Ta Krak called me to the meeting.

Dany: Ta Krak was there as well?

Phan: Yes, he was there too.

Dany: Who supervised that place in general?

Phan: Maybe Preah Netr Preah District committee such as Ta Sam-at, Ta Moang. Oh, no, those who were in charge of that place were not district, but were from the Region. But the district mobile unit joined that too.

Dany: How long had you worked there?

Phan: Pretty long—nearly a year. But I don't know what year.

Dany: Before or after you were sent to Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: When you built the dam at Trapeang Thmar, was it before or after that you were sent to Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes, when I was sent to Spean Sreng, Ta Krak and his team had been arrested.

Dany: So, you went there before Spean Sreng?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: You had lived there for a year?

Phan: I am not sure.

Dany: At the time, how many people were under your supervision?

Phan: Maybe thirty people.

Dany: You supervised thirty people?

Phan: Yes, but later only about ten people were left. Initially, there were lots of people, later, the number became less and less.

Dany: You said earlier that when the Vietnamese were approaching, there was a meeting to look for volunteers to go to the Thai border. I would like to know who presided over that meeting. Where did the meeting take place?

Phan: At Yeay Chaem's place.

Dany: What was the meeting about?

Phan: They looked for volunteers to fight with the Vietnamese.

Dany: Who attended the meeting?

Phan: Lots of people. They were chiefs of groups and other chiefs from several places. District soliders also attended.

Dany: Lots of people?

Phan: Yes, as many as the house could accommodate.

Dany: Was the meeting held inside the house or in the open space?

Phan: In the house, but it was a big house.

Dany: On the ground floor or upstairs?

Phan: Upstairs.

Dany: Upstairs?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Who presided over the meeting?

Phan: Yeay Chaem.

Dany: Yeay Chaem?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Only her?

Phan: And others.

Dany: Who were they?

Phan: I don't know them. I just knew Yeay Chaem clearly.

Dany: Do you know the date?

Phan: No.

Dany: How many days later did the Vietnamese arrived?

Phan: At the time, the Vietnaemase were approaching. I don't know more.

Dany: When did the Vietnamese arrive after you finished the meeting?

Phan: I don't know the time span between the meeting and the Vietnamese arrival.
At the time, we were transplating rice stalks.

Dany: You were transplating rice stalks?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: At the time, there was a meeting?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Did they find volunteers?

Phan: We were transplating rice stalks. Then, we were called for the meeting.

Dany: Meeting?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: What was talked about in the meeting?

Phan: I don't remember. They just looked for those who wanted to fight with the Vietnamese. We were asked to raise our hands if we volunteered.

Dany: Lots of people raised their hands?

Phan: Yes, all of them raised their hands. She said "good." Then, nothing happened.
It was just quiet and we continued to work as usual.

Dany: After people raised their hands, they were not brought to fight with the Vietnamese?

Phan: No. No one was taken.

Dany: Nobody said anything?

Phan: No, she did not say more about it.

Dany: What words did she use to praise those people?

Phan: She was happy when we raised our hands. If we were to be taken to the border, we would go.

Dany: Later, all those people were not taken to fight with the Vietnamese? They went to work as usual?

Phan: Yes, they went to work as usual.

Dany: Where did you go then?

Phan: I returned to work at the same place.

Dany: Which place?

Phan: Phnom Leap. At the time, water was rising up and it was harvesting season. We needed to harvest very quickly in order to save the rice.

Dany: Where did you harvest the rice?

Phan: Near the bridge. Near Phnom Leap, there was a bridge. That was where I worked.

Dany: Who supervised the harvesting team?

Phan: Yes, it could be right to say that and could be wrong. I did not lead all of them; I just led my group.

Dany: What was the food ration like during the leadership of Ta Krak, then under the supervision of the Southwest Zone cadres?

Phan: Oh, about the food ration, it was very bad. Frankly speaking, there was little rice to eat. For this big jar, we had about two ladles of rice. For five to six of us, we had too little.

Dany: A small jar for five people?

Phan: Not five, sometimes up to seven people. We ate watery porridge.

Dany: You had only porridge?

Phan: Yes.

Dany: Did you have rice to eat?

Phan: No, we had rice occasionally when we went to the meetings. At those times, they cooked rice for us.

Dany: You ate rice since 1975 until the collapse of the Khmer Rouge people?

Phan: Yes, in 1975, we had porridge and rice, but in 1977, we had only porridge. In 1976, we had rice sometimes, sometimes porridge.

Dany: By 1977, the cadres of the Southwest Zone were here?

Phan: Yes, under the leadership of both Western Zone and Southwest Zone cadres, we had porridge.

Dany: Do you know the reason why people were given porridge to eat?

Phan: I can't make any comments. They said we were poor, so we needed to save. I don't know what it meant.

Dany: At the time, you were a commune member, how come you did not know the reason?

Phan: No, I know nothing. Frankly speaking, I was powerless to be a commune member. I just followed their orders. I just did what I was told to do.

Dany: You ate like other people ate or you had your own food?

Phan: No, I was spied on all the time.

Dany: How about Tha and Nonh? What did they eat?

Phan: I don't know. I ate porridge. I don't know what others ate.

Dany: So, you did not eat with them?

Phan: Sometimes I ate with them, sometimes not. I don't know what they ate.

Dany: What did Ta Krak eat?

Phan: Like what I ate, Ta Krak also ate with people—porridge. I don't know more because I was separated from him at the time. For me, I ate porridge.

Dany: When people were arrested, did you know what mistakes they made?

Phan: I know some, but I don't know what mistakes they made. Sometimes, they dug for potatoes. They were considered a thief if they were arrested.

Dany: When they were arrested, were they tortured or beaten?

Phan: Some people got angry, they fought each other.

Dany: They were spies?

Phan: Yes, spies. Fighting also occurred.

Dany: When the Vietnamese arrived in 1979, how did you flee? With whom?

Phan: Oh, with lots of people. I don't remember all of them.

Dany: Did you flee with Yeay Chaem or not?

Phan: No, Yeay Chaem went on her way. I was on my way.

Dany: Who did you go with?

Phan: I went with soliders.

Dany: You did not go with Nonh and Tha?

Phan: First, we went together, but later, we were separated. We lost each other at the intersection.

Dany: Which place?

Phan: At the North of this National Road 5. When we arrived at Poipet, we were completely lost. I separated from them.

Dany: At the North of the road?

Phan: Yes, at the North of the road.

Dany: At the orth of the road?

Phan: Yes, at the North.

Dany: Then you were separated?

Phan: Yes, we all went to any place that we knew of.

Dany: When did you return to this area?

Phan: I think it was in 1993. When the refugees returned home, I came home from "Site 8".

Dany: When did you go to a refugee camp?

Phan: Since I left Preah Netr Preah in 1979. Then, I went to refugee camps. First, I arrived at Prey Mann Camp. Then, I went to Kruos Kraham Camp and finally to Site 8 Camp.

Dany: Why did you go to refugee camps?

Phan: I just fled from fighting and I had nowhere to go. I heard that at the refugee camps, there was rice to eat. So I went there.

Dany: In 1993, after refugee repatriation, why didn't you go somewhere inside the country? Why did you decide to live here?

Phan: When the fighting occurred, I was at Yeay Ort.

Dany: Where?

Phan: Yeay Ort.

Dany: Where is Yeay Ort?

Phan: Yeay Ort is near National Road 5, near Poipet.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: Yeay Ort was there.

Dany: In what district?

Phan: Poipet District.

Dany: Yeay Ort?

Phan: Yes, in Poipet District.

Dany: In 1993, you came to live in Yeay Ort?

Phan: Yes, I was sent there as a refugee.

Dany: Yes.

Phan: I was given some pieces of land. Fighting still occurred; I didn't know where to go, so I came to live here.

Dany: You have lived here since then?

Phan: I planned to return to Site 8 Camp, but I was not allowed to return. So I came here.

Dany: Had you visited your home village?

Phan: No, I never did. Not at all. If I go there, I don't know if I will meet my relatives. Some of them would have died. And I don't have any pieces of land there.

Dany: Have you ever visited Preah Netr Preah?
Phan: No, I never go there.
Dany: Why did you not visit there?
Phan: I sometimes went there, but I never went to the village. I just visited some relatives along the Kralanh River.
Dany: Kralanh River in Siem Reap?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: At Omal?
Phan: Yes, I have some relatives living there.
Dany: The relatives of your wife?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: Have you been there?
Phan: Yes.
Dany: If your wife wanted to go to Preah Netr Preah, would you want to go?
Phan: Why not?
Dany: If you are asked to go there, would you go?
Phan: Yes, I would.
Dany: Do you feel scared because you used to be a commune member there?
Phan: No, I don't feel scared. I never abused anyone.
Dany: If you have to go there, you are not afraid to go there?
Phan: I used to go to some ceremonies there too.
Dany: Oh, you have been there?
Phan: Yes, I went there to join the ceremony.
Dany: At Preah Netr Preah?
Phan: Yes, Preah Netr Preah.
Dany: Did you meet some people there?
Phan: No, I did not know any of them. They were mostly new comers. Some were old villagers.
Dany: When you were there, did somebody know you?
Phan: Yes, some people knew me.
Dany: Did they talk to you? Were they friendly with you?
Phan: Some were friendly to me. Because I am poor, I don't have any chance to visit there more often. I went there occasionally—only when there is a ceremony.
Dany: Do you know Mr. Sal?

Phan: Sal?

Dany: Sal. During the three year period, he was a young boy. He used to be a messenger at Tean Kamm and Rohal Commune and later he was sent to Troyaung Prison. About four or five years ago, he came here to pick corn for a living. He said he met you and he called out your name.

Phan: I don't know. I did not pay enough attention. I am very old and cannot remember very clearly.

Dany: I ran out of questions. Do you have any comments to give?

Phan: I don't have.

Dany: Thank you very much.

Phan: Yes.

[END]