

Documentation Center of Cambodia

An Interview with Norng Chanphal, male, 39 years old

Former S-21 child survivor

Currently lives in Chy Trom community, Boeng Tumpun commune, Mean Chey district, Phnom Penh

Interview in Taing Ta Latt village, Phneay commune, Samrong Torng district, Kampong Speu province

13 February 2009

Interviewed by: Vanthan Peou Dara and Chy Terith

- Vanthan: My name is Dara and he is Terith. We would like to ask you about your personal experiences during the Khmer Rough regime. First, I would like to know your name. May I have your name?
- Norng: My name is Norng Chanphal. In 1975, I was evacuated from Damnak Snguol village, Chum Kiri district, Kampot province to Treng Traying commune, Phnom Sruoch district, Kampong Speu province. I was a child at that time.
- Vanthan: Were you evacuated from your birthplace?
- Norng: Yes.
- Vanthan: Where is your birthplace?
- Norng: It's in Damnak Snguol village, Chum Kiri district, Kampot province.
- Vanthan: At Kampot province?
- Norng: Yes. It's between the border of Kampot and Takeo province.
- Vanthan: So, you were evacuated from that village to Kampong Speu province?
- Norng: Yes.
- Vanthan: Were all of your family members evacuated?
- Norng: Yes, the whole family. But I was too young at that time, so I don't remember clearly.
- Vanthan: So, when you arrived in Kampong Speu, did you live with your family?
- Norng: Yes. We lived together. They [Khmer Rouge] evacuated my family to my father's place. The old people and children were separated.
- Vanthan: So, did you live with your family then?
- Norng: I was in the Children's Unit. Someone looked after me.
- Vanthan: At the Children's Unit. What were the conditions of your parents?
- Norng: They lived separately.
- Vanthan: This means that your mother lived in one place while your father lived in another. And then you lived in the Children's Unit, right?
- Norng: Yes.
- Vanthan: And did you see each other often?
- Norng: We often met. I ran away from the Children's Unit in order to see my mother. I had to run if I wanted to see them.
- Vanthan: Whenever you ran to see your parents, did they advise you about anything?

Norng: Yes, they usually did. Mostly they sent me back to the Children's Unit. Sometimes, when I ran to see my father, he sent me back, fearing that Angkar would blame for running home or meeting him in person. Thus, I was sent back to the Children's Unit.

Vanthan: So, what is your mother's name?

Norng: My mother was named Mum Yauv.

Vanthan: And your father?

Norng: My father was named Norng Chin.

Vanthan: Are they alive?

Norng: They passed away. They died at Tuol Sleng.

Vanthan: When you lived in the Children's Unit, what were the conditions there?

Norng: The Children's Unit was like a gathering place. We didn't have enough to eat, as we do now. We had communal eating. They cooked rice mixed with potatoes; sometimes, it was not cooked well. Occasionally, when we ate it, we got diarrhea from the uncooked potatoes.

Vanthan: Did the Children's Unit's chief ever allow the children to visit their parents or vice versa?

Norng: There was no such permission. At that time, I only thought of running away, running without fear of the punishment. At that time, I was young. I risked my life to do this because I was not really aware of the punishments they would impose on me. Occasionally, I was threatened and hit.

Vanthan: How old were you at the time that Khmer Rouge took control over the country in 1975?

Norng: In 1975, I was only five years old.

Vanthan: Five years old?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: Were you able to do labor at the age of five?

Norng: Yes. I did only light labor, for example, earthwork, which I was asked to do in the Children's Unit. Also, I helped build dikes, but because I was young, I was not supposed to do much hard labor. Mostly, I cried.

Vanthan: What did you usually do?

Norng: For example, carrying earth, putting earth into a moving bucket, building dikes and sometimes I was asked to find manure.

Vanthan: Did you know who the Children's Unit chief was?

Norng: There was a man named Yong. He was the unit chief. He was responsible for taking care of children.

Vanthan: Where was your Children's Unit situated?

Norng: At Treng Tra Ying village of Kampong Speu province. Maybe, near the crossroad heading toward Kirirum, another one heading toward Trapeang Koh Sna, and the other one toward Phnom...

Vanthan: So, can you recollect the story of when and how you arrived at Tuol Sleng prison? And what happened next?

Norng: At that time, there were around five or six, or maybe seven or eight, Khmer Rouge. They came in a Jeep. At first, only four Khmer Rouge came. They all dressed in black clothes. At the beginning, they took my father. As far as I

remember, six months or maybe three months later, they took my mother, siblings and I to Tuol Sleng. We did not immediately arrive at Tuol Sleng. We were made to stay at the train station for three days and three nights. Then, we were transferred to Tuol Sleng prison at 7 p.m. At that time, they threatened, pushed, hit and kicked my mother. This made me realize that this was not a good place. Something bad must happen or my mother would not be pushed to the wall. She was photographed and her height was measured. And someone started writing down something on a paper. This happened at the evening around 6 or 7 p.m.

Vanthan: So, when the Khmer Rouge, armed with guns, came to take your father, did you see it?

Norng: I did not witness the episode, but my uncle did because he was there at the time. My uncle ran toward my mother and said “they arrested [my] brother. They want [my] brother to be educated at Phnom Penh.”

Vanthan: So, what is your uncle’s name?

Norng: His name was Chroep.

Vanthan: Is he still alive?

Norng: He passed away after the liberation day, when the Vietnamese troops came to liberate the country. The Khmer Rouge ran away and they shot each other and also shot ordinary people. My uncle was shot by an automatic gun. They fired around ten shots at him right behind his back. However, I am not so sure of this.

Vanthan: So, did your uncle come to tell your mother that your father had been taken to be educated at Phnom Penh?

Norng: What?

Vanthan: Did he tell your mother that the Khmer Rouge took your father to be educated at Phnom Penh?

Norng: Yes, he did. I was near my mother, so I heard it. At that time, my mother was so worried. Then, around three or four months later, two jeeps carrying several Khmer Rouge soldiers came to take my mother. Also, there were other two women and one child, and then my mother and I and my three brothers. We all got on the jeep and went toward Phnom Penh.

Vanthan: What did the Khmer Rouge say when they took your mother?

Norng: They talked a lot, but I do not remember. My mother was so frightened, and she was also sick at that time. She got swollen diseases due to malnutrition. I know she was so sick that could not even walk properly. She then got in the Jeep along with those soldiers.

Vanthan: This means that when the Khmer Rouge took your mother, there were also two women and one girl in the Jeep, right?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: Along the way, did you or your mother asked anything about that woman, for example, where she lived or her name?

Norng: There was no talk. After we got in the Jeep, both Khmer Rouge soldiers and those sitting at the back did not talk to each other. That was complete silence.

Vanthan: Where were you when the Khmer Rouge came to take your mother? Were you with your mother or were you called from the Children's Unit?

Norng: I was in the Children's Unit. By coincidence, I ran away from the Unit in order to meet my mother. I stayed with her for around one day. Then the Khmer Rouge soldiers came to take her. And I was with her at that time. I ran from the Children's Unit.

Vanthan: So, how about your three brothers? Did they stay with you at that time?

Norng: Yes. We stayed together.

Vanthan: So, the other three brothers were not separated from your parents?

Norng: No, they were not separated.

Vanthan: Was it because they were too young or what?

Norng: Because they were too young and also because my mother was sick. So, they were put together.

Vanthan: So, among your family members, only you were asked to live in the Children's Unit?

Norng: Yes, but also including my brothers, who were in the co-operatives.

Vanthan: How many siblings do you have?

Norng: Including the four at Tuol Sleng, in total, there were nine siblings.

Vanthan: You have nine siblings?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: The other five siblings were grown up?

Norng: They were grown up, and they lived in different place than our parents. At that time, they did not live with our parents. One was in Takeo province, one was in Kampot province and one was at a salt-field cooperative.

Vanthan: So, the other three younger brothers were with your mother while you were in the Children's Unit?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: So, this means that the day you ran away from the unit to see your mother was the day that the Khmer Rouge came to take your mother, right?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: What time did they arrive?

Norng: As I estimated, it was around 1 or 2 p.m. However, I do not remember the date since I was too young and I was not educated either.

Vanthan: When they took your mother, did they tell her the reason why?

Norng: Maybe no. They talked with my mother but I did not hear anything. After the talk, my mother called me to get into the Jeep and we left the place.

Vanthan: When you arrived in Phnom Penh, you did not immediately enter Tuol Sleng, right?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: So, where were you placed?

Norng: We were placed at the train station for three days and three nights. Then we were transferred to Tuol Sleng at around 6 or 7 p.m. in the evening. At that time, it was quite dark but we could still see each other's faces.

Vanthan: When you were in the train station, were there many people there?

Norng: At the train station, there were Khmer Rouge soldiers wearing black clothing and patrolling the place, but there were not so many of them. There were four or five people patrolling that place.

Vanthan: The villagers, or we can say victims, who were arrested along with you, were there many of them?

Norng: Not so many. Only those who were in the Jeep with us. There were two older people along with a child, my mother and the other four old ladies.

Vanthan: Only two?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: How was the food when you stayed at the train station?

Norng: When it was time, they brought us some rice to eat.

Vanthan: What did you notice about the Khmer Rouge's treatment of your family?

Norng: They said rough words. They dropped pots or passed rice to us without showing any politeness and even shouted at us. I did not remember that speech as I was too young.

Vanthan: Then they asked you to get in the Jeep to Tuol Sleng, what did they say?

Norng: They didn't seem to make any threatening remarks. Just simple words.

Vanthan: Was the Jeep that transferred you to Tuol Sleng the same Jeep that took you from the village?

Norng: Yes. Also, it included other people from the train station and then we all were transferred to Tuol Sleng.

Vanthan: When they took you, did you see the Khmer Rouge show any sort of letter? Or did they just come to the place and call you to get into the Jeep right away?

Norng: There was a driver holding a letter and he passed it to a prison guard.

Vanthan: At the train station?

Norng: When we arrived in the prison, there was a person holding the letter and he passed it to a Tuol Sleng prison guard. They called us to enter the office every day. A photographer and note taker were there. They took photographs both in the front and sideways and gave us a number written in white. I did not remember what the number was. I also saw them kick my mother and the other two people said bad words to my mother, calling her *Mi* [derogatory term for "you"]. They pushed her against the wall. I felt so terrified. But my brother seemed not to understand because he was too young. He looked as if nothing happened.

Vanthan: When you got in the Jeep at the train station, were all of you tied up?

Norng: No, we were not tied up. Everything was normal.

Vanthan: When you arrived at Tuol Sleng, bad words were used and photographs were taken. What did they do next?

Norng: They took us to a third building, the one facing to the front. They took us to the second floor. We slept in the second room. The door was closed. We slept in that room and the prison guard locked the door.

Vanthan: So, how about your mother?

Norng: My mother and the other people who came with us were placed in the same room.

Vanthan: So, at that time there were your mother, your four siblings, and two women along with a child, right?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: So, this group of people was placed in one room?

Norng: Yes. Then I was taken to another place. My mother just told me to take care of my siblings. Then I walked downstairs. And the little children were led by a cadre and even carried in his arms to the back yard of the prison where shackles or something else were made.

Vanthan: So, this was the time that you were separated from your mother?

Norng: Yes. I was separated from my mother after that.

Vanthan: When you were with your mother at Tuol Sleng or along the way to Tuol Sleng, did your mother ever mention your father?

Norng: My mother dared not to say anything; she was afraid. She kept silent. That night, she did not sleep and seemed to think a lot. We were sleeping near her and she fondled our heads. She sighed but did not say anything.

Vanthan: She did not say anything?

Norng: No, she did not say anything.

Vanthan: Did you cry at that night when you were with your mother?

Norng: No, I didn't. But my brother cried.

Vanthan: When the Khmer Rouge cadres heard the crying, did they say anything?

Norng: Yes. A voice shouted "Keep silent." My mother said that the prison guard threatened her because they wanted us to keep silent.

Vanthan: So, you were separated from your mother the next morning?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: Then you, your brothers and one child were left in the room?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: Where were you taken to?

Norng: Then I was sent to the rear of the prison where there was a middle aged lady, around 30 years old, taking care of us. She cooked rice for us to eat and also other children, around five or six children. Maybe they arrived [at Tuol Sleng] before us.

Vanthan: So, how many children were there including your four siblings, one child and the other children who arrived earlier?

Norng: Maybe around five or six. I don't remember clearly.

Vanthan: After that, you were separated from your mother?

Norng: When the morning came, and during the afternoon, my mother stood in that building staring at the back of the building through a window and looking at us with sadness. I also looked up at her, but we did not say anything to each other. Then, the next morning, I did not see my mother even till the liberation day.

Vanthan: So, you kept staying in the prison compound?

Norng: I was in that place for a long time. I don't remember. Then the Vietnamese soldiers came.

Vanthan: Do you remember in what year you arrived in Tuol Sleng?

Norng: I don't remember. I only remember that it was in a season that had no rain at all. Since the time that my mother and I had been arrested and placed in Tuol

Sleng and until liberation day, there was no rain at all. I think it was maybe in the dry season.

Vanthan: So, there was no rain at from when you entered Tuol Sleng until the Vietnamese soldiers came?

Norng: There was no rain at all. So I assume that it was in dry season.

Vanthan: Could you please describe the lives of the people in Tuol Sleng, their eating, working? What did you see in Tuol Sleng?

Norng: There, I saw such things as screaming, screaming inside a room full of pain and suffering. I saw prisoners being walked from one building to another. They were blindfolded and their hands were tied behind their back and they wore only a pair of shorts.

Vanthan: How old were those Khmer Rouge cadres? And what was their clothing like?

Norng: They wore long-sleeve shirts, long trousers, caps and scarves. They were sometimes holding a kind of stick, keys, and shackles, but not guns.

Vanthan: Did you ever hear the cadres who were working in the prison chatting with each other?

Norng: They occasionally chatted with each other. I dared not to stay near them since I was still fearful. I was in the back of the building.

Vanthan: Was that the place for children?

Norng: Yes. It was both a place for children and a place where shackles were made. I remember an older man named Takung, a shackles maker. Before, he used to work as knife and hoe maker in the village. After he was there, they asked him whether he was able to make shackles. He said he could do it. Then they allowed him to be a shackles maker in the back of the building. Also, there were sculptors who sculpted Pol Pot.

Vanthan: What was his name? Takung?

Norng: Takung, a shackles maker.

Vanthan: Did they often make shackles?

Norng: Yes. I saw him pounding a red-hot iron. And he then turned to look at me. After the liberation day, I met him. He worked for the Yuon [Vietnamese] in that prison after the liberation day.

Vanthan: Named Takung?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: Only one word, Takung?

Norng: Yes. I don't know his full name. I just know he used to work there. Maybe his name was on the staff list of Tuol Sleng Museum soon after the liberation.

Vanthan: How old was he at the time he was a shackles maker?

Norng: I assume he was around 58-60 years old. He was thin, light skinned and tall. I saw he had white hair already. So, he was maybe in his 50s.

Vanthan: If you saw his photo, would you remember him?

Norng: Yes, I would.

Vanthan: When you were in Tuol Sleng, were you ever threatened or beaten?

Norng: Yes. There were threatening, pushing and kicking, but it was not so much. That was because we ran nearby the prisoners. We were threatened. They pointed at us, wanting to beat us, and then we ran back to our place.

Vanthan: Did you lose any members of your children's group?
Norng: When the Vietnamese were about to come, they collected the prisoners. As far as I remember, they gathered the children to get on a truck. An old woman called me to get on the truck. But I did not get on the truck. I then collected my younger brothers to hide in a pile of prisoners' clothes. They called me to go, but I refused because I thought that if I left the place, my mother wouldn't be able to find me later. And if I stayed, then my mother would be able to find me. So, I did not go anywhere. I occasionally heard the sound of shells falling. I then led my brothers to escape from the place.

Vanthan: When you were in the Children's Unit in Tuol Sleng where you and other children were taken care of, did you ever ask anyone there about your mother?
Norng: I dared not to ask. There were threatening voices at the back and front. So, I did not ask them. When a woman came in to collect prisoners to get on the truck, I asked her. She then asked me to get on the truck three or four times, but I refused. I continued collecting clothes and ran back to find a clothing pile. I hid in that pile of clothes. They could not find me. They tried to find me twice. They walked back and forth, left and right, four times, but they did not see me. They then decided to leave the place. After they left, I heard a lot of shells starting to fall down. So, I ran to the back.

About two hours later, I ran along the corridor into each cell to find my mother. Some rooms were opened while some were not. I raised my head to look [into the room], but I saw no one other than recently deceased bodies tied with chains, lying on beds. I saw a corpse that had just been decapitated. There weren't any flies swirling around the corpse and it had not swollen yet. The blood stains told me that the truck that transported prisoners had left just two or three hours before. Also, there were two or more children who went on that truck.

Vanthan: So, you and your four siblings hid in the pile of clothes?
Norng: Yes.
Vanthan: Then that pile of clothes must have been very big, right?
Norng: The clothes pile was big, just like haystack. Thousands of prisoners' clothes were placed there. Before they entered, they had to take off their clothes and wore only shorts. I sometimes wore prisoners' clothes, too.

Vanthan: There wasn't anyone left when you were trying to find your mother?
Norng: No. There were only shells falling, which gradually increased.
Vanthan: You were all running around?
Norng: No. My siblings didn't go anywhere. They stayed in one place. When the shells starting falling, only I ran to find my mother. The doors of some rooms were closed and locked. At that time, we addressed our mother as "*Mae* [mother in Khmer]... *Mae*," not "*Mak* [Mak also means 'mother' but often used only by city people to address their 'mother']." I called "*Mae... Mae*" at that time, and if she were there, then she would reply when she heard my voice. I believed she would recognize my voice.

Vanthan: So, did you run to the room where your mother was detained?

Norng: Yes, I did. But it was locked and I didn't see my mother.
Vanthan: Was the room locked or unlocked?
Norng: The room was locked. I looked through the open window and I saw nothing.
Vanthan: No one was there?
Norng: No. I didn't see my mother, nor did others.
Vanthan: How many rooms had you been to then?
Norng: I didn't go to all the rooms. As I remember, I had been to the middle building and the first building, Building A, Building B. I ran to the front of the building and took four or five steps; then I screamed for her once again. I did this several times, but there was no reply. Then I ran back to where my siblings were hiding.
Vanthan: When you ran back, did you see, for example, many corpses lying there?
Norng: I saw a dead body lying on a bed like what we see in the photos [at Tuol Sleng today]. There were three or four dead male bodies.
Vanthan: When you were in the Children's Unit [in Tuol Sleng], did you ever hear any Khmer Rouge call the woman who was looking after you at that time?
Norng: No.
Vanthan: Do you know her name?
Norng: I don't know her name. I dared not to ask her at that time.
Vanthan: That's why I asked you whether the Khmer Rouge ever called that woman's name when you were in the Children's Unit.
Norng: No, I never heard it.
Vanthan: What did she look like?
Norng: She was tall and had light skin. She wore black clothes.
Vanthan: In Tuol Sleng, did you ever hear the Khmer Rouge call people by their names? I mean anyone being called by their name. Did you hear that?
Norng: I just heard of shouting sounds, but I don't remember what. Sometimes, the prison guards called out loud back and forth to each other.
Vanthan: But you didn't hear them call out anyone's name?
Norng: No. It was only loud voices talking to each other.
Vanthan: Could you estimate the size of the Tuol Sleng compound where you could walk around?
Norng: At the time, I was young and thought it was very big. But now, I realize that it isn't that big. At that time, I nearly got lost when I ran around. It did not seem as spacious as now, but cramped. And now the gardens have been created, which made me unable to recognize it inside.
Vanthan: When you screamed for your mother and could not find her, then you went back to where your siblings were hiding in that pile of clothes, right?
Norng: Yes.
Vanthan: And then how did the Vietnamese arrive? Did you see them?
Norng: When the Vietnamese came, they asked me. I was finding a place to hide, but then I came across them.
Vanthan: Where did you meet?

Norng: We met at the rear of the building where the shackles were made, at the rear of the workshop. When I entered, I came across them. They wore normal clothes, not Vietnamese suits, and each of them was armed with a gun.

Vanthan: How many people did you meet?

Norng: Two people, one of whom could speak Khmer and the other one could not. He asked me whether I was Pol Pot's child. I said I wasn't and I did not know anything either. And he continued asking me who I was. I replied that I had parents. I was a child of Ta Chin and Yeay Yol. My mother was named Chin and my father Yol. After that, he asked me why I was here. I told him that someone brought my mother here, so I came along with her. At that time I didn't even know where this place was.

Vanthan: When these two people came, did they use any cameras?

Norng: No, they didn't. Only the next evening around 5 6, or 7 p.m, did the Vietnamese soldiers arrive.

Vanthan: When did you meet with the two people armed with guns at Tuol Sleng who you then perceived as Vietnamese soldiers?

Norng: Around 3-4 p.m.

Vanthan: Around 3-4 p.m?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: After they saw you, did these two people bring you to meet your siblings? Could you tell us about this?

Norng: At that time the situation seemed to be quiet. I did not want to continue hiding in that pile of clothes anymore because it was too stuffy. But when I was about to hide in the pile of clothes again, I came across the two soldiers who were wearing normal clothes, but armed with guns. I was also frightened when they asked me the kinds of questions that I described earlier.

Vanthan: After that, did you bring them to your brothers or did you lead them anywhere?

Norng: They met us at the place where we were hiding. They met four or five of us. The child who came with the two old ladies was sick due to having nothing to eat.

Vanthan: Was the child still alive after the Khmer Rouge had gone?

Norng: The child seemed alive at that time. However, he didn't talk but slept all the time. He didn't move but I believed he was still alive because he was still breathing. The next evening, the child seemed to breathe his last. He stopped moving his hands, feet or even belly.

Vanthan: When you led the two people who first arrived at Tuol Sleng to meet your siblings, by that time, it was around 5 or 6 p.m. right? Then where did you bring them? What did you see?

Norng: I didn't lead those two soldiers anywhere. They seemed to know things well. They knew where things were. And then they went back for a while.

Vanthan: Did they help you before they left?

Norng: They cooked rice for us. I had no idea where they got rice from. Maybe they brought it with them. They made us a big pot of rice and duck soup. In the prison, there was a duck and they killed it to make soup for us. Then they went back.

Vanthan: So, you and your brothers, along with another child, stayed in the prison and did not go with the two soldiers?

Norng: No, we didn't go anywhere.

Vanthan: You were in the prison?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: You still slept in the prison on that pile of clothes?

Norng: Yes, I slept there for one more night. Then the next day around 6 o'clock, a lot of Vietnamese soldiers came. I could see that they wore Vietnamese soldiers' uniforms and there were also soldiers from the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea (UFNSK). But I am not sure whether they were from UFNSK. The only thing I am sure about was that the soldiers were mixed together. Some soldiers spoke in Khmer and some spoke Vietnamese.

Vanthan: So, you slept there for one more night, and when you got up, you saw a crowd of soldiers came in, right?

Norng: Yes. Then they collected us to get in a truck, and we left the prison.

Vanthan: So, can you recollect the time when the soldiers entered Tuol Sleng? And how did you get on the truck?

Norng: As far as I remember, it took long time for the trip. They dropped us at a place, now known as the Municipal Maternity Hospital near the TV5 station. They tried to save my brother by giving him an IV injection and dropping water into his mouth since he was starved for several days. And then my youngest brother breathed his last. As for my sister, a Vietnamese soldier tried to help her by giving her an IV injection. But my brother and I could walk and stand normally, and they gave us food to eat.

Vanthan: And how about the child who was brought by the two women?

Norng: Oh, that child died. The soldiers brought the body and buried it at the rear of Tuol Sleng.

Vanthan: Then when the two soldiers who first came in to meet you and cooked rice and duck for you, was that little child able to eat at that time?

Norng: He could not eat, though I tried to feed him. He could not eat since he was too young. He was about one year old and still needed to be carried in arms.

Vanthan: So, how could this little child stay with you? You hid him?

Norng: Yes. I collected them all and we hid in the pile of clothes. I thought that that the child was young and he was the one who came along with my mother too.

Vanthan: Then how many of your siblings detained at Tuol Sleng were able to survive?

Norng: There were four.

Vanthan: So, which one did you say died?

Norng: No, he isn't dead. Later, he was taken to the orphanage near Calmet Hospital. Then someone adopted him. I was so young at that time that I do not remember. My brother's caretaker said someone adopted him and told us that he was near Stung Mean Chey. I went to find him, but I was so young at that time that I did not pay much attention. And he has disappeared. I heard that my sister was also taken to the orphanage and later was adopted by a German, but am not sure if it is true. There was a journalist interviewing me. He told me that...

Vanthan: What did he tell you?
Norng: He asked me whether I wanted to meet my sister. I answered that I wanted to. Where was she? He said my sister was adopted by a German. But I don't know whether what he told me was true. And after that, there has been no further information at all.

Vanthan: About what year were you interviewed by that journalist?
Norng: Maybe at the end of 91 or 92. In 1991 or 1992, I knew that my sister was in Germany. 1991 or 92 was the time of UNTAC's arrival.

Vanthan: Were you sure that the journalist knew you and you sister?
Norng: The journalists were Japanese and German. As I remember, there was also a man who claimed that he came from Cambodia National Television [TVK]. He was the one who brought the journalists to meet me. Then there was no further information from him. He didn't give me his card. He just told me he came from TVK.

Vanthan: What does he look like? Is he Khmer?
Norng: You mean the one who told me?
Vanthan: Yes.
Norng: He is tall and he has bean-colored skin. I mean he is neither black nor white. He is tall and well-built. But I don't remember his face.

Vanthan: Since then you have never tracked down the man who worked at TVK in order to discover your sister's whereabouts in Germany?
Norng: No. I don't know where I would find him. I don't know the place. Until now there hasn't been any information.

Vanthan: What about your brother who was also adopted? Have you ever searched for him?
Norng: I just asked the caretakers at the orphanage for information on him. But I didn't know who or where I should turn to. Thus, I don't know. Also, I didn't even know the names of his adoptive parents. When I asked someone from the orphanage, they stated that there was no any notification about where he was taken or who adopted him. I don't know what he looks like or whether he is alive or dead.

Vanthan: How old was your brother at the time of liberation?
Norng: He was about a year and a half. He was still breast-feeding.
Vanthan: What was his name?
Norng: He did not have a name yet. Later, when the Vietnamese saved us, he was named La Thaing, a Vietnamese name.

Vanthan: What name?
Norng: La Thaing. In Khmer, it means the first month of the year, Makara [January]. The soldiers, Vietnamese or UFNSK, named him Makara.

Vanthan: So, what about your sister who was adopted in Germany? What was her name?
Norng: Her name is Socheat.
Vanthan: Socheat?
Norng: Yes. Her name is Socheat. When we were in the orphanage, she was named Cheat Rumduol. We were not together. We were placed separately. The caretakers did not ask me what her name was, so they named her Cheat

Rumduol. In the orphanage, there were so many orphans who didn't know their real names; thus, the caretakers gave them names.

Vanthan: So, what about you? What was your name at that time?

Norng: During the Khmer Rouge period, they called me Koma Lan [Truck Child].

Vanthan: Koma Lan?

Norng: Yes. Later on, people made fun of my name, saying "What? Lan? It's like a name of metal or machine." That's why my name was changed to Phal.

Vanthan: Soon after the Vietnamese liberated the country, you were brought to a school. Then what name did you use?

Norng: Phal.

Vanthan: Ok. Then how about your other brother?

Norng: Because he had dark skin, then he was named Pinit. Later on they called him A Nit. His name is A Nit.

Vanthan: Is he alive?

Norng: Yes, he is.

Vanthan: Does he live with you?

Norng: He has his own family now. He lives separately from me.

Vanthan: Thus, you lost two siblings?

Norng: Yes. I lost two siblings.

Vanthan: Makara and Cheat Rumduol, right?

Norng: Yes.

Vanthan: So, do you want to find them?

Norng: Yes, I do. I had filled out a form with an organization where many people did so in order to find their relatives. They said if they had any information, they would inform me. But since then, there has been no any information at all. At that time, I stayed at Kolap Ti Muoy. I heard that the organization was closed after the election held by UNTAC.

Vanthan: So, if you still want to find your two siblings, you can write a story or biography of your two siblings and give it to me. Then we can publish it in the magazine. If we're lucky, maybe we could find someone who knows about them. Then, we can give the information to you. So, if you are free, you should write and we will help you to publish it. What do you think?

Norng: Yes. I'll find some free time to write it myself.

Vanthan: Yes. Writing it yourself is better since you can give more detail about your siblings, like how many siblings you have and how were you separated. So, I think I don't have any further questions. But, Terith, if you still have any questions, please take the floor.

Chy: I would like to confirm something. In the 1980s, when the Vietnamese took you from Tuol Sleng, were you taken to a center right away?

Norng: Not yet. I was staying with the Vietnamese troops.

Chy: Oh, how long were you with Vietnamese troops?

Norng: I was with the Vietnamese troops for about one year.

Chy: Where was it?

Norng: They changed their office to Chamkar Daung. Nowadays, we call it the Agriculture School.

Chy: The Royal University of Agriculture.

Norng: Yes. It's the Royal University of Agriculture. There was a man there named Nita Keochenda. As far as I remember, he was one of delegates of the Municipal Party. I then stayed with him at his home. And there was a lady who took care of us. Later on, I went to Wat Koh School in Phnom Penh.

Chy: What was that lady's name?

Norng: Her name is Pen Nhen or Pen Chen. I'm not sure about her name, but I just know that she was the one who took care of me.

Chy: Who old was she in 1980s?

Norng: She was around 45.

Chy: So, she is now in her 60s?

Norng: Yes. She took care of me and brought me to school.

Vanthan: What's her name again? Pen... what?

Norng: The one who took care of me is Pen Nhen... hmm... Pen En.

Chy: Pen Nhen or Pen En?

Norng: It sounds like Pen Nhen or Pen En. I didn't remember clearly. What I knew of her was that she gave me advice, brought me to school, and took care of me. I went to Wat Koh School near Keo Chenda's house. Later on, there was a ceremony held in the Royal Palace and there was a film screening too. So, Keo Chenda asked to get in a car in order to watch the film. As I remember, three of my siblings were riding in that car, but not my little sibling who was too young to bring along with us. So, the lady, the caretaker, took care of him at home. Then, Keo Chenda drove us to Samdach Hun Sen's house. He asked us to greet Samdach Hun Sen, but at that time we didn't know how to show respect or greet in the Khmer culture. Then Samdach Hun Sen said to Keo Chenda that "you let them stay with you, and then they do not learn anything. So, you should take them to an orphanage, so that the teachers can teach them." Next, we went to watch the film screening in the Royal Palace. About a week later, he took us to Kolap Ti Pi Center [an orphanage]. At there, the state sponsored us to study. We had clothes.

Chy: Where is Kolap Ti Pi Center?

Norng: It's was near Ang Eng School. At that time, it was around 1982 or 1983.

Chy: Who was taking care of you at Kolap Ti Pi Orphanage?

Norng: There were a lot of teachers who took care of us, such as Lay Im, Mom Leang, Chhim Sovan, Lay Say and other teachers.

Chy: So, today, can you meet them?

Norng: Yes. Like Teacher Mom Leang, I can meet him. He is now working at [Phnom Penh's] Social Affairs [office].

Chy: Where is that?

Norng: Near Maha Muntrei pagoda. I often meet them, especially Teacher Lay Im and Mom Leang. I visit them occasionally.

Chy: Did you know if Keo Chenda has passed away?

Norng: I knew that, and I also attended his funeral ceremony and he was cremated at Preah Puth Pagoda.

Chy: In what year?

Norng: It was around in 1987 or 1988.

Chy: Does everyone living in Keo Chenda's house know you?

Norng: Yes. His children know me, such as Keo Phalla, Keo Phalline and Keo Phally.

Chy: Where do they live?

Norng: Now, I hear that they live in Russey Keo [commune], near Russey Keo petroleum station.

Chy: So, since Keo Chenda died, have you ever contacted his family?

Norng: No, because they changed their address. When he was alive, I often dropped by whenever I rode a bike past his house, but after his death, I didn't. Though I drive pass his house, I dare not to.

Chy: I would like to go back a little bit, when you were in Tuol Sleng, do you remember how long you were in Tuol Sleng before the Vietnamese came?

Norng: I don't remember. It was around three or four months. Maybe it was in the dry season since there was no rain at all.

Chy: As you said, you saw your mother in the cell. Then, where were you and where was your mother standing?

Norng: At that time, she was standing in the second floor of the second room. She was looking at me and I looked back.

Chy: Which building was it?

Norng: Building C.

Chy: Building C?

Norng: Yes.

Chy: Then, where were you? At the back or in the front?

Norng: I was in the rear of the building where there was a workshop.

Chy: So, did she see you?

Norng: Yes. She saw me and I saw her too. We looked into each other's eyes.

Chy: Did she scream or say anything?

Norng: She dared not to do so because there were prison guards outside. And maybe I was a bit far away from her, so I dared not to call her.

Chy: You didn't call her?

Norng: And my little siblings cried for her since they wanted to be with her.

Chy: So, you met her only one time?

Norng: Yes. I met her only one time that afternoon. And then I never saw her again.

Chy: How far away was she when you saw her?

Norng: I assume it was maybe around 30 to 40 meters from the building to the place where I was standing.

Chy: She was on the second floor, right?

Norng: Yes. So, it was around 30 to 40 meters.

Chy: Did you see that she was shackled? Or did you only see her standing near the window?

Norng: No, I didn't. I saw only her half her body standing near the window. And I didn't see if she was shackled.

Chy: I would like to go back to the time prior to your mother's arrest. Was your father arrested first?

Norng: Yes.

Chy: What did he do? Did they say that he had done anything wrong?
Norng: He was a worker [cadre] at a train station.
Chy: Which cooperative?
Norng: Treng Traying commune of Kampong Speu province.
Chy: Treng Traying cooperative.
Norng: Yes.
Chy: So, he was only a worker?
Norng: Yes.
Chy: Then they came and arrested him, right? Did you hear anyone saying why he was arrested?
Norng: I didn't know what he had done wrong. I just heard that he had been called, then my uncle came to tell my mother.
Chy: He was arrested?
Norng: Yes, he was arrested.
Chy: So, did your uncle say who arrested him, where he was brought to and who came to arrest him?
Norng: I didn't know about this. But when he came, he was in a rush and he seemed to be afraid of being seen.
Chy: Then, when was your mother arrested after the arrest of your father?
Norng: Around three months later.
Chy: So, when they asked all of you to get into the truck, did they say anything?
Norng: Yes. Someone talked to her, but I didn't pay attention as I was a young boy.
Chy: How many people were there in the shackles making workshop?
Norng: There were four or five old people.
Chy: Do you know who they were?
Norng: The one that I remember the most is Ta Kung. Later, after the liberation day, I met him and he also told me about this. There were Ta Kung, Ta Chea and other people. I don't remember, but I'm sure there were four or five old people. They were a sculptor, shackles maker, and carpenter who repaired broken windows and doors. They were old people in their 50s, I think.
Chy: So, you did meet only Ta Kung?
Norng: Yes.
Chy: What about the others?
Norng: But Ta Kung had passed away.
Chy: Why did you know about his death?
Norng: Because whenever I visited the museum, I often asked about someone working there, such as Ta Kung, but he had retired.
Chy: So, who else working at Tuol Sleng do you know well since the 1980s?
Norng: Bang Phalla.
Chy: Her full name, please?
Norng: Maybe Pen Phalla.
Chy: Was she still working at Tuol Sleng?
Norng: Oh, there are Pen Phalla and Pen Chivy. Also Pen Nhen, but she died of diabetes several years ago.
Chy: The one who took care of you, right?

Norng: Yes. She was an old lady who took care of me when I was young.

Vanthan: So, when you were in Kolap Ti Pi Orphanage, do you remember any teachers' names?

Norng: Yes, I do. I have told you [Dara] already.

Chy: So, I think I don't have any further questions to ask you. Do you want to add anything that we have not asked about? Anything you are interested in, for instance, did you witness killings in Tuol Sleng or beatings or anything?

Norng: Yes, I did witness beatings. I heard screams. I saw prisoners being threatened and kicked. For example, when the prisoners felt dizzy and could not walk straight or properly and fell down, they would be kicked and beaten.

Chy: Did you ever witness killings in Tuol Sleng?

Norng: No, because the back door was closed and we could not go through it.

Chy: When did you hear the screams? At night or during the day?

Norng: Not at night. It was about 8 or 9, or 7, 8 or 9 in the morning. And then about 2, 3 or 4 in the afternoon, I heard the screams too, but later on I didn't hear it. And at night, I didn't hear the screams at all. In the morning, I saw the truck that took the dead bodies away. Maybe there were beatings as the screams would reveal. Then the beatings would somehow inflict serious injury until death. So, there was a truck that was waiting outside the prison to carry the corpses away, but I didn't know where they brought [those corpses].

Vanthan: By the way, what do we call this village?

Norng: Taing Ta Latt village, Phneay sub-district, Samrong Torng district, Kampong Speu district.

Vanthan: Taing Ta Latt village, Phneay sub-district, Samrong Torng district, Kampong Speu district, right? Then what is your current address?

Norng: I live in Boeng Tumpun commune, Mean Chey district, Phnom Penh city.

Vanthan: What about the road and house number?

Norng: It does not have the house number yet. I'm living in a community and it's now under the Municipality's ownership.

Chy: So, what's the road's number?

Norng: The road heading to Tumnun. And there is a garment factory called Chy Lang Hour. At the back of that factory, there is a community called Chy Trom community.

Vanthan: So, how many children do you have?

Norng: I have two children.

Vanthan: How many girls and boys?

Norng: Both are girls.

Vanthan: How old is your eldest daughter?

Norng: She is 12 years old and the younger one is 6 years old.

Vanthan: What is your wife's name?

Norng: Her name is Lay Saroeun.

Vanthan: How old are you?

Norng: I'm 39 years old.

Vanthan: So, that's all. I really appreciate it.

Norng: That's ok.

End.