

ABSTRACT

Patron-client relations created strong socio-political bonds in Democratic Kampuchea (DK). These relations were even stronger and more stable when members of the networks were related, as occurs in the Southwest Zone, where cadres were mostly related to Zone Secretary Chhit Choeun aka Mok either directly or indirectly. Every citizen, both cadres and ordinary people, were aware that life during DK was fragile, and was even more in the later stage of the regime, and this caused people to have stronger ties to powerful persons. In the DK administrative systems, the cadres from each hierarchically administrative unit were closely interrelated and orders were strictly implemented by chain of administrative command in a top-down hierarchical system. Orders were issued from the closest higher echelon and from higher to lower-ranking cadres within each unit. For instance, districts issued orders to sub-districts and within districts orders were issued from secretary to deputy. Orders were followed without fail. Cadres of higher and lower echelons respected each other's decisions.

In the beginning of the regime, when there were many former Lon Nol officials, soldiers and other obvious "enemies," and it was clear that there were orders from the top to eliminate them, cadres at all levels of the structure made the decisions to kill these enemies. As the regime proceeded, fears among the cadre increased and the number of obvious targets decreased; therefore, cadres were more submissive to their patrons and orders were implemented more strictly. Before late 1976 or early 1977, power was based in the village level where village committees controlled everything in the villages. During this period, village committees played a very important role in reporting suspected enemies up the chain of command. But then from 1977 until the regime collapsed in 1979, village committees were less powerful as power was shifted to sub-district committees, who played important roles to oversee people and report

enemies' activities up to district committees. Orders to kill people were then implemented by sub-district militia units. Starting from 1977, accused persons were checked in order to look for other strings of networks before they were executed. Therefore, low-ranking cadres were reluctant to get rid of those accused and preferred reporting alleged enemies up the chain of command. This thesis documents this change over time in the Southwest Zone, exploring the process whereby people lived or died based upon their ties or "strings" to particular patrons. The thesis elaborates on who were considered "insiders" and "outsiders" by the regime, and how trust between patrons and loyal clients are keys to understanding the culture of terror inside the DK regime.

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DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA: CHAIN OF COMMAND AND
SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTHWEST ZONE

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Abbreviations and Terms

<i>Angkar</i>	The organization. <i>Angkar</i> is the cadre of Democratic Kampuchea and the members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)
CIA	US Central Intelligence Agency
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
<i>Issarak</i>	A movement, founded in the early 1940s, to fight against French colonialism
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Soviet Secret Police)
KPRK	Khmer People's Revolutionary Party
WPK	Workers' Party of Kampuchea

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The communist regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was responsible for the deaths of at least 1.7 million people of disease, overwork, starvation and execution under their nearly four-year rule between April 1975 and January 1979. During this period, between 500,000 and one million people likely died due to execution on the orders of more powerful cadres (Heder and Tittmore 2004). None of the surviving low-ranking cadres interviewed for this research admitted any killings, although they were blamed by other survivors for the deaths of fellow villagers. Survivors recalled that the low-ranking cadres such as village chiefs had absolute power to abuse them and that people had no right to refuse or postpone following these orders. None of the middle-ranking and senior leaders admitted issuing any orders to their low-ranking cadre either. In addition, some leaders continue to blame one another over incidents that occurred during the DK reign. Yet, not a single low-ranking cadre admitted responsibility for any of the deaths, except by issuing orders to people to work in the fields and other tasks as ordered by higher echelons. I initially hypothesized that village chiefs, who controlled the work camps, made their own decisions to accuse someone of being an enemy, and then reported the accused to the upper-echelons and waited for decisions to take action with those enemies.

To understand the DK system of giving and following orders, I used the concept of patron-client relations, which is important for understanding pre and post-revolutionary Cambodia. Patron-client relations were also dominant during DK, even

though the constitution stated that social hierarchy was abolished to make everyone equal. Thion states that people during the DK era were willing to look for patrons who could help protect and promote them (1993: 132). I argue that all DK cadre had patrons and clients. They had patrons to protect them because life during DK was fragile; they had clients who provided support and services. Ordinary people also looked for patrons that could protect them. Hinton (2005) also wrote that when the country became more unstable and violent, one tended to seek patrons to protect oneself. The orders to lower-ranking cadres during DK were often issued between cadres who were in the same patronage networks. The patrons at the higher echelons issued orders to their clients in the lower echelon and the clients did not refuse those orders since they respected and feared their patrons. Therefore, I also argue that patron-client relations were visible and strong during DK and every cadre respected and followed their patrons and in return his patron usually protected him.

Research Goals

The primary objective of this thesis is to investigate the chain of command of DK in the base areas from zone to the lowest level in the grassroots. Through this research I hope to contribute to the growing literature on the study of genocide in Cambodia that every survivor speaks about, but about which little documentation has been written or recorded. This research could enlighten future generations of Khmer, and help them learn more about their history.

The starting point of this thesis was the assumption that the decisions on how to implement orders in DK were made by the lowest-ranking cadres. This assumes a certain degree of independence from the patron above them in patron/client networks. While I still see some degree of truth in that initial hypothesis, my findings support the idea that patron-client relations were dominant throughout DK since every cadre had patrons and clients. Orders flowed from immediate supervisors in tightly knit networks. While local village leaders had a degree of authority, they would not have dared to take actions without receiving orders before they acted or reported what they had done after the fact. However, the power of local cadres changed over time. In the first stage, starting from DK victory in April 1975 until sometime in late 1976 or early 1977, the power was based on village committee members, who could decide who the enemies were. Village committee members used their powers to screen and abuse soldiers and officials of the previous regime after they were evacuated from cities and towns throughout the countries. However, by around early 1977, as the number of enemies decreased and as the Central government intended to increase agricultural production, people were assembled into bigger groups. During this period, power was shifted to sub-district committee members. However, village committee members were less powerful, but they still played important roles to report suspects to the sub-district committees. Starting from 1977, enemies were made to confess before they were executed as paranoia among the CPK leadership increased.

I investigated where and how lower-ranking cadres received orders to arrest, kill, and assign people to work in the fields. While Becker (1998) and Ledgerwood

and Vijghen (2002) state that local leaders were given power and authority to make decisions on various issues, including how much food rations people received and how secure their lives were, I was interested to know if the local leaders made their own decisions or they received detailed orders from their supervisors. Since local leaders had power over everyone's lives, ordinary people began to create bonds of connections to more powerful people immediately, and by doing so were seen as working for the nation as well as for powerful individuals.

The existing literature states that kinship and patronage networks were the primary building blocks for Cambodian communities in both pre and post-revolutionary Cambodia (Ebihara 1968, Kim 2001, Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). I was interested in investigating whether this concept also applied during the revolutionary period of Democratic Kampuchea. To address the above-mentioned questions, I explore this topic by focusing on the Southwest zone, one of the six zones of Democratic Kampuchea.

I expected to find that during the Khmer Rouge regime the village and commune chiefs played very important roles in implementing the orders from the upper level (*Thnak Leu*). Village chiefs were the ones who directly supervised the people in the labor camps, so they knew everyone under their control.

I expected that village chiefs and commune chiefs were the most important decision makers regarding taking someone's life. Local leaders were encouraged especially to persecute "new people" who were seen as their enemies. The Central government issued orders to arrest and to look for people who were not faithful to the

government or who were educated people such as doctors, nurses, professors, politicians, or ethnic Chinese or Vietnamese. Those people were the most targeted groups to be executed. Village and commune chiefs used their roles and power to arrest and send such suspects to be killed without trial. Some of those suspected were not really from these targeted groups, but were people with whom village chiefs had conflicts.

Further, I expected to find that the central government intended to kill all people who were accused of being connected with the former US-backed Lon Nol government or the American CIA or Russian KGB. The village chiefs used these terms to accuse people even if they had committed only minor mistakes such as picking wild fruit, catching a fish in a paddy field, breaking a spoon accidentally or being unable to work because of illness.

The purpose of this thesis project is to explore how DK cadres performed their work in relation to the upper and lower echelons, how socio-political structures worked in the Southwest Zone, and how orders were passed down from the upper echelon to the village level. The overall purpose is to understand the political structure of the Southwest zone. This research also investigates how the power of local cadres changed over time from the beginning of the regime to the collapse of DK.

Theoretical Framework

In the Cambodian bureaucracy, people in the chain of command tended to work with one another in the form of patron and client networks. These people deal

with administrative tasks as personalized patron and client exchanges rather than as a formal state system.

After the Khmer Rouge took power, most traditional social behaviors, state institutions, and social hierarchies were abolished and everyone was made equal according to the DK constitution. Despite this, the patron-client concept still existed, but, in a more extreme way. The patrons enforced their power by controlling food, population movements, work assignments, and violence (Thion 1993). I argue that the patron-client ties during DK were strong and that none of the DK cadres were without patrons and clients. A cadre could have not been promoted without a patron who granted the promotion and someone else higher who approved it. The promoter and the approver were typically the main patrons of the person promoted and usually knew him or her well. Patron-client ties during DK were strong because the patrons and clients were mostly kin members who know each other well. Hinton (2005) has argued that when the country became more unstable and violent, one tended to seek patrons to protect him.

Patron-Clientelism Defined

The patron-client relationship is common in Southeast Asia. This practice also exists in other parts of the world, such as South America, Africa, as well as in some parts of Eastern Europe (Scott 1972, Neher 1981). Some scholars who have focused their research on patronage systems in Southeast Asia argue that patron-client relationships exist at both the local and the national level (Scott 1972, Hanks 1975, Neher 1981). Patron-client relations existed in Cambodia in pre-modern times, and the

concept is still useful in contemporary Cambodia (Chandler 2008: 24). Patron-client relationships in Southeast Asia are important because people tend to deal with the state bureaucracy using patronage connections rather than formal state systems.

James Scott gives the definition of the concept of patronage in Southeast Asia:

The Patron-client relationship—an exchange relationship between roles—may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron (Scott: 1972: 92).

From the above definition, a patron-client relation is an unequal exchange between a person of a higher hierarchy and another which is lower. A patron is the one who has power and authority in an office that controls resources and properties. According to Scott (1972), a patron-client relation includes three characteristics: imbalance of exchange, face to face character, and diffuse flexibility.

Imbalance of exchange: Scott defines the relationship between patrons and clients as never being equal. In this sense, patrons provide a service that the clients could not fully reciprocate. When clients cannot reciprocate, they owe a “debt of obligation” and this obligation creates ties between clients and patrons that form over a long period and up to a lifetime. In this sense, the term “reciprocity” is the foundation between patrons and clients. Reciprocity always exists in such a relation; there is always an unequal exchange between the two people.

Another significant feature is that these personal relationships occur face-to-face. Both patron and client know what kind of service each partner could provide to each other. Reciprocal exchanges between both partners can create personal trust, solidarity and affection. Through these exchanges, the relationship between the patron and client becomes close and, as the relation goes on, patrons and clients could become close like “blood related” family members. The patron has limited resources and services he could provide to limited clients. However, there could be “intermediaries” who serve as the “middlemen” who could connect the patron to a variety of other clients that the patron cannot reach directly.

The last feature of patron-client ties is what Scott calls “diffuse flexibility,” which means that the relations between patrons and clients are diffuse rather than explicit. Since the relations are diffuse, after loyalty is built up between patron and client that loyalty can extend to other members. This relation is flexible because the exchange between the patron and client happens over a long period of time.

Clusters and Pyramids

According to Scott (1972: 96), a “cluster” is a group of people who are the immediate clients of the patrons who are directly connected to him. The members of the group in the cluster compete in order to build good relationships with the patron. The clients in the clusters are also the patrons of other clients in sub-domains which can extend as far down as the local leader in a pattern called “pyramids.” Even though one’s client has a number of clients, the power is still focused on one person who is the main patron (ibid).

Patron-client clusters allow two people who are not related by birth or marriage to come to be associated with one another (Scott 1972: 97). In the patron-client pyramid, a client who is in the middle of the pyramid could have a patron higher up and clients below him. It is a way to join together people of different status and rank. Resources flow up and down this pyramid; clients typically provide gifts, and services in small quantities over long periods of time, while patrons provide protection and assistance in emergencies. Clients show loyalty and patrons help access other resources beyond the community (Ledgerwood 2002).

The above theoretical model is important for this thesis. Democratic Kampuchea was administratively divided into zones, regions, districts, sub-districts, villages or cooperatives. The zones were very self-sufficient and autonomous in terms of military, economics, agriculture and politics and, of course, the zone secretary was very powerful within his zone. Each level was self-sufficient and its leader was powerful to those below him, but under strict observation from those directly above him.

The zone secretary served as the main patron in the zone. He had absolute power and those below him, such as region and district secretaries, were his immediate clients. None of the secretaries in these two levels were appointed without the approval of the zone secretary. Therefore, these secretaries were the clients in the clusters.

Because the village chiefs during DK had absolute power and could judge the outcome of people's lives, having them dissatisfied with you was very dangerous and

risky. Since the level of violence was very high during DK, people had to work extremely hard in order to please their group leaders and village chiefs. Villagers were in the cluster of the village chief. However, only a small number of those villagers could be on good relations with the village chief. Since the violence was high and the village chief had the right and authority to judge one's life, villagers devoted all of their energy to toil in the fields and help the group or village chief in his personal work in order to please him. Once the personal relations between people and local leaders were built, the high risk was reduced. The village chiefs could moderate the violence by not reporting crimes¹ committed by villagers.

For the cadres, the risk of death was also high, if not as high as the people's. When purges were at their peak, cadres would have been frightened upon receiving a letter of invitation from a higher echelon than their patron's. A DK cadre at the district level, Dok, mentioned an instance when two district-level cadre received letters of invitation to the zone office, where upon the cadre said their good-byes to their close friends, including Dok himself, because they believed that they would never be returning; fortunately, the purpose of the letter was as stated.² Thion states that people during the DK era were willing to look for patrons who could help protect and promote them (1993: 132). After a cadre was removed or purged, the same fate could befall his clients, such as his subordinates, family members, and those who were connected to him. Finally, Thion argues that the patron-client system remained dominant during DK and that village chiefs maintained control of the properties and

activities in each of the cooperatives, such as: food distribution, population movement, and the level of violence in their area (ibid).

Entourages and Circles

Lucien Hanks uses the phrase “entourage and circles” to discuss what Scott calls “Clusters and Pyramids.” Hanks mentions entourages and circles as the fundamental aspect of Thai social organization (1975: 197). According to Hanks, an entourage is a group which includes a man, who is a patron, and his clients who are in face-to-face contact (1975: 200). In the entourage, the patron is the most powerful person and clients have to depend on him for survival and other multiple purposes. Each client is personally in contact with the patron in order to get services from him. The relationship between a patron and his entourage can last as long as the patron is able to provide service to the entourage, or can be until one of the partners dies or disappears.

Since the patron is in face-to-face contact with his entourage, there is not only the reciprocal exchange of service between the two partners, but the relationship is often deeper and more personal. The entourage could effectively be part of the patron’s family as the relationship becomes deeper. The client could be living in the same household or under the direct supervision from the patron. In such cases, a patron can regard his client as a family member and even help look for a spouse for the latter and pay for expenses during the wedding. Entourage size is limited, depending on how many services and how much property he could provide to his clients. The more services he could provide, the larger his entourage base grows.

The Circle is an “extension of an entourage” (Hanks 1975: 202). The circle refers to the clients of a patron’s clients whom the patron is not familiar with or the circle can be the patron of a patron with whom one does not have direct contact.

In applying these ideas to my study case during DK, the patron of the Southwest zone, Chhit Choeun aka Mok, included in his entourage region and district secretaries since they were his immediate contacts. Officials at the district and sub-district level were the “entourage” of the district chief and were the “circle” of Mok. For example, Dok³ was a chief of a youth district unit during DK whose immediate patrons were Som Choeun and Chim, who also promoted him to this position. Chim was related to the zone secretary, Mok, and was in Mok’s entourage. Mok and Dok never had personal contact, but the latter could connect with the former through another person, Chim. After Chim was transferred to control another zone in 1976, Dok was not on the list to go there. However, because of his personal and immediate contact with him, Chim brought Dok to the new place with him in order to carry on new work. Dok was in the “circle” of Mok and Mok agreed with Chim because Mok and Chim were entourage.

The Concept of Trust

Steven Currall (1990) defines trust as one’s reliance on another whom he can depend on and also with whom he takes risks. According to Currall, trust can be “important” and “dangerous”; people need to trust others because they need to depend on them for their services. “Trust” is important because one can create relationships with another so that the former can depend on the latter for whatever he or she needs.

Usually, the latter voluntarily provides what he can to the former. Trust exists not only between people who know each other well such as colleagues, close friends, family members, and lovers, but also can exist between those one has little contact with, which Govier calls *thin trust* (1997: 6). Govier added that trust with close allies has more emotional depth than those with whom one does not know well. However, trust can be dangerous and risky because the trustee may not be loyal to the truster. The truster cannot guarantee that the trustee would be reliable. In this sense the truster accepts some risk when he trusts another person. Trust is risky because the trustee might fail to achieve what the truster wants to get. However, the truster can try to reduce the risk by monitoring or observing the behavior and attitude of the trustee. The more the truster monitors the trustee, the less the truster trusts the trustee (ibid).

In the Cambodian context, trust is always an especially important factor. A leader would rather choose the trusted person as an assistant and would not hire an assistant from an unknown background. The idea of trust was especially important during DK because one's life was at stake. DK leaders announced that they would kill people who were not trustworthy.⁴ DK could only trust poor peasants who supported them during the war before 1975. The deputy party secretary of DK, speaking at a national level summit meeting, said that he did not trust "New People"⁵ who were corrupt and feudalist and that trust was more important than everything else. It is widely known that only poor peasants whom the DK leaders trusted were allowed to hold positions in the regional and local government. DK leaders trusted peasants to work to achieve DK policy. The Secretary and other high-ranking cadres of the

Northwestern Zone were not trusted because they abused DK policy by allowing New People, who were considered bad classes, to hold positions of authority at the local level. This happened because the Northwestern zone was not controlled by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) until April 1975 and the zone lacked qualified cadres: most of them were brought from other zones and had received little political training, while some high-ranking cadres were former school teachers (Chandler 1999b: 69). The Northwestern zones cadres were thus seen as less trustworthy.

Unconditional loyalty

The principles of the Democratic Kampuchea regime demanded purification and the molding society into a uniform group. People had to be totally clean, loyal, non-corrupt, pure without any connection with the modern world, and had to obey orders. Each cadre was placed under observation for a particular period of time to make sure that they met all of the revolution's criteria. After they were admitted to join the revolution, cadres would become the "dictatorial instrument of the Party" whereby they not only cut off their ties to family, but also swore to "serve the revolution without condition."⁶ In his confession held at S-21, Siet Chhe wrote that, "...no matter how I die, I will be loyal to the Party to the end."⁷ Recently, Nhem En, a former Khmer Rouge cadre, said that "my life was for *Angkar* [Khmer Rouge], so everything I did was following *Angkar*'s orders" (Ferrie 2009).

In groups and out groups

The political scientist Carl H. Landé defines a group as “a set of individuals who share an attitude....Groups often...consist of persons whose common attitude stems from the fact that they have some similar background...such as...religion, occupation and social class”(Landé 1977:76). People who are in the group usually share the same interests, are from the same background, have equivalent knowledge and share similar status. Others who have a different character than people in the group are not part of the category. Landé points out that individuals who have some similar aspects seem to act better than those who do not, and that according to Marxist theory, people who are in the group have something in common, are in the same social class and have the same goals.

Insiders and outsiders

Ledivina Carino (2008) distinguishes between “insiders” and “outsiders” in Asian culture when one deals with people. She mentions that this concept is strong in Southeast Asian countries. In this sense, people have low generalized social trust in their behavior toward outsiders. Outsiders refer to those who are not in one’s group or who are not part of one’s kin network. Carino cited Francis Fukuyama⁸ as saying that people tend to deal with their family members or family-like members. Fukuyama concludes that people in Asia trust kinsmen rather than others in general; they lack generalized social trust.

Carino (2008) mentions the Southeast Asian people personalize bureaucracies by dealing with staff they know and that otherwise people have low social trust. They refer to those in whom they have low social trust as outsiders. Even if they have some trust in outsiders, it is very limited. She added that this system is important in Southeast Asian cultures, although it is considered corruption by Western observers.

The concept of “in group/insiders” and “out group/outside” is crucial to understanding the revolution of Democratic Kampuchea. People often ask why the Khmer Rouge killed their own people. One answer is that those people were not in the Khmer Rouge group. Once they took power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge cadre began to kill former government officials and soldiers, then targeted their families and other New People. The DK government continued to search for those who might be out-group members until its collapse in 1979. Starting from 1976, the central government began to purge its cadre who they no longer trusted. After the central government lost their trust toward suspicious cadre, they were no longer part of the in-group. As defined by Landé, the Khmer Rouge considered poor and illiterate peasants and old-hand cadres to be in the in-group.

Using the concepts of insiders and outsiders, DK cadres staffed their bureaucracy through kin members or people they knew well. The secretary of the Southwest Zone, Mok, placed family members in prestigious administrative positions throughout his zone and later sent them to serve at the national level (Kiernan 2008:89). The other secretaries in the other six zones did the same thing, although less successfully than Mok. DK cadres would not trust those who were from different

backgrounds. Mok purged high-ranking cadres from his zone because of their urban backgrounds even though they had joined the Khmer Rouge revolution in the 1960s.⁹

Literature Reviews

Many foreign scholars have written about the chain of command and politics during the Democratic Kampuchea reign. One of the more prominent among those scholars is Stephen Heder, who has done extensive research about the chain of political command during the Khmer Rouge regime.¹⁰ Heder wrote about the leaders who were the main decision-making figures of the Central government and who were responsible for arresting former Khmer Republican officials.¹¹ Heder's main work focused on who was issuing orders among the Central Committee members; he also studied zone administrations and the chain of command that ordered the arrests of main political figures.

Heder's research, however, did not focus on the chain of command from the zone level on down. He only mentioned high-ranking officers of the Central government who played important roles in issuing orders or policies to arrest suspicious people.

In his article, *Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan*, Heder (1991) wrote that Pol Pot was the most powerful patron; his two most trusted lower cadres were Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, while Mok had military power and held administrative positions within his Southwest Zone and on the CPK Central committee. Khieu Samphan at least helped his patron in the process of purging distrusted high-ranking DK cadres nationwide (Heder 1991: 17). Through his personal ties to Pol Pot, Nuon Chea

benefited from this patronage network and this benefit also encompassed his clients within patron-client pyramids.

David Chandler (2008) also makes use of the patron-client concept in his books on the regime. It is apparent that the concept of patron-client ties was operative among the high-ranking CPK leaders. Chandler (1999b) analyzed the way people were swept up in the wave of purges; after cadres were purged, more trusted clients would be assigned to replace the distrusted ones. Most of the cadres brought in to conduct the purges were from the Southwest Zone whose leader was Mok—who happened to be one of Pol Pot’s most trusted clients. One of the cadres who replaced the powerful Chan Chakri, the commander of Eastern Zone, was Siet Chhe, one of the most trusted clients of Pot Pot. Siet Chhe had been a very important client of Pol Pot and was appointed to replace Chan Chakri in order to spy on other high ranking cadres in the Eastern Zone. There he became “Pol Pot’s eyes” (Chandler 1999b: 66). Later, due to the possibility of Siet Chhe trying to build relations among lower cadres in this new zone, and thereby establish his own network of clients, he was no longer trusted by Pol Pot and ended up dying in S-21 (ibid).

In a monograph titled “*Seven candidates for prosecution: Accountability for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge*,” Heder and Tittmore argue that many important, high-ranking cadres of the DK central government were responsible for the purges and the deaths of other Khmer Rouge cadres. Heder and Tittmore conclude that at least seven important cadres had knowledge of imprisonments, confessions, and executions of their countrymen. Heder and Tittmore found this out by analyzing some of the

confessions of prisoners at S-21, where they found that the confessions were marked to be copied and transmitted to certain important cadres that included these seven senior cadres previously mentioned (Heder and Tittmore 2004). One of the seven cadres named was Mok, a member of the DK Central committee and the secretary of the Southwest Zone. Although they mention a great deal about Mok and his knowledge about the arrests and executions, Heder and Tittmore do not state specifically what orders Mok issued concerning the arrests and executions in the grassroots areas in the Southwest Zone.

Meng-try Ea (2004) wrote about the chain of command in the base areas of the Southwest Zone, but he primarily focuses on security prison issues. In his book, Ea attempted to find out where the reports were sent to and from after people were arrested. According to him, arrests were made by the commune chiefs, who then inquired to their upper echelons for a final decision on the arrested—to execute or to imprison. Ea also mentioned that there were many different kinds of security centers in the base areas and those centers served as prisons to detain accused people for a particular period of time. Those centers included sub-district militia centers, district reeducation centers, regional security centers, and zone security centers; prisoners were sent to each center depending on the severity of their alleged crime (Ea 2004: 27-29).

In contrast to Ea, I look into the chain of command in the entire Southwest Zone. Ea also does not note how the orders were passed down from the zone to the cooperatives, where most killings took place.

Ben Kiernan has done an enormous amount of research about Democratic Kampuchea. With regard to the Southwest Zone, he mentions that Mok, who was zone secretary, placed family members in prestigious administrative positions throughout his zone and later sent them to serve at the national level (Kiernan 2008:89). Unlike other zone secretaries, Mok appointed his relatives to hold positions throughout his zone no matter what their initial backgrounds were. One of his brothers named Chong, who was a former Lon Nol soldier, was appointed as the secretary of the Prey Kabas district in Region 35 by Mok.

If a question ever arose as to why Chong was appointed despite being a former Lon Nol soldier—who were among the first targets to be smashed by DK—I would answer that this was because of kinship ties and customs related to patronage. Chong avoided charges because his patron was Mok, who was the most powerful man in the Southwest Zone. This is an extreme example of the patronage system operating under the DK reign.

Vickery wrote that the Southwest was known as the zone of *Pol Potism par excellence*, where Pol Pot power was based (Vickery 1984: 86). I disagree with many arguments made by Vickery relating to his denial of any killings or persecutions occurring in the Southwest Zone (Vickery 1984). Personally, I think that Vickery interviewed people at the refugee camps in Thailand and those interviewees appear to have been not very informative. One of the arguments he makes was that there was no policy to smash former Khmer Republican officials such as soldiers, teachers, or

doctors in the Southwest Zone and that even if the policy was issued from the Central level, it was never implemented in this zone (Vickery 1984: 98).

His argument seems to contrast with that of other scholars, particularly Kiernan. With regard to the Southwest Zone, Kiernan wrote that many New People were killed after Tith, who was Mok's brother-in-law, became Kirivong district secretary. One of Kiernan's informants was Ngol, who was one of the former commune chiefs in the Kirivong district. Ngol told Kiernan that he received orders from his patron to kill all Lon Nol soldiers, teachers, and intellectuals as well as their relatives and those who opposed the revolution—which he then did (Kiernan 2008: 190).

Timothy Carney made some important comments about the chain of command during the Khmer Rouge shortly before they took power. Carney wrote that orders originated in the Central Committee and were passed down through zone, region, district, commune and village (Carney 1977: 8). Each zone administration was ruled by a zone secretary who had all the political, administrative, economic, military, and social responsibility (Carney 1977: 43). Within each zone, the secretary was the most powerful patron and had the power and authority to order his clients in the chain of command to oversee and implement the revolution's rule. Orders flowed from top to lowest level and lower cadres followed their patrons' orders efficiently. Once cadres became Khmer Rouge members, they had to accept the *Angkar*'s principle "to serve the revolution without condition." All cadres had to follow this rule and were given the power to order their clients to do any kind of work. Clients were expected to obey

no matter what the orders were. The clients became the “friend to death of *Angkar*” and could not get out of *Angkar* (“the organization,” meaning the Party or the ruling apparatus) after they were admitted.

So while many sources on the Khmer Rouge period from Kiernan to Chandler to Hinton talk about the importance of patron-client networks and particularly the purges that followed patron client “strings” or linkages, no one has written about the decision-making process at the local level within the Southwest Zone. It is this gap which this thesis aims to address.

The Organization of the Thesis and Finding

The primary goal of the thesis is to contribute to our understanding of the chain of command and patron-client relations among the population and cadres during the era of Democratic Kampuchea. In order to do this, I looked into the culture of patron-client relations, which is the cultural norm in Cambodia as well as in other Southeast Asian countries, the concept of trust among the kin and non-kin member of Cambodian culture, and the concept of in-group, out-group and insiders and outsiders. The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 1 describes the research goals, theoretical framework and literature review. This chapter provides the major theoretical concepts and reviews the general literature on patron-client relations, the concept of trust and the idea of insiders and outsiders. These theoretical concepts and literature help us to understand the history of Democratic Kampuchea and how what happened during this regime might be generalizable to other contexts. Chapter 2 introduces the research methods used to get data for this thesis as well as challenges encountered by the

author. This chapter also provides readers with the general and geographical aspects of the Cambodian village where I did research for this thesis. Chapter 3 introduces the historical background that led the country to turn into a revolutionary regime in the 1970s and what made the Southwest zone unique in contrast to other zones during DK. After the regime collapsed, the leader of this zone survived the purges while thousands of other cadres were imprisoned and killed. This chapter also includes other points: 1) it describes how society was organized before the CPK took power and how cadres were nominated into positions. 2) describes the screening for enemies within the CPK leadership and the population within their zone. 3) describes how people were treated after they were evacuated to the Southwest zone and also how the people were screened and organized after they arrived in the countryside. Chapter 4 introduces the reader to a general understanding of the Southwest zone including the nomination of cadres, the organization of society, the explanation of administrative units and the roles of cadres. The nomination of cadres explains how cadre were promoted and demoted and to whom those cadres were connected. The organization of society is about how the CPK leaders transformed and organized the society. The explanation of administrative units describes the roles of each unit such as zones, regions, districts, sub-districts and villages and also describes how these units were linked to one another. Chapter 5 provides insight into the purging of cadres and people who were accused of acting to destroy the revolution, as well as the purges of people such as the out-group and untrustworthy cadres inside the Party. The end of the chapter mentions the cadres from the Southwest who were sent out to control other areas because the

Southwest was the most “advanced” zone of DK. Chapter 6 describes the population movements, the division of labor, the population’s range of social status, the lives of people in the work camps and how social statuses were reversed compared to pre-revolutionary Cambodia. Chapter 7 introduces the reader to how the chain of command worked at the grassroots level and also describes who received and issued orders to whom and from whom, such as the orders to arrest former government officials and to assign people to work in the fields. Chapter 8 will analyze this research, focusing on the nature and culture of patron-client relations in DK society.

In conclusion, I argue that every cadre and ordinary person had or sought more powerful patrons to protect them because life during DK was very fragile and risky. Finally, I argue that all DK cadres had power, although not very absolute, within their areas of territorial control and cadres respected one another in higher and lower echelons. Cadres in each administrative level were not so absolute because they were observed by their higher level patrons. I found that power of local cadres changed over the course of the regime. Before 1977, village committee members were granted powers to search for the potential enemies. Village committee members had the power to accuse anyone of being an enemy and probably had the right to execute those accused. However, this power was shifted to the sub-district committee members in 1977 after the Four-year plan was initiated. Sub-district committee members were more careful with the accused. They preferred reporting to their upper echelon, rather than making their own decisions to kill the accused right away. Sub-district committee members were reluctant to make their own decisions towards the accused.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes both ethnographic and primary documents left behind after DK collapsed, such as prisoners' confessions, decisions of the DK government and meeting minutes, all of which are stored at my workplace, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). However, interviews were the main methods used to gather data for this thesis. The methodology involved paying several visits and interviewing the survivors, both victims and former CPK cadres who were the eyewitnesses to the DK regime. The data on the cadre patronage network, including who was connected to whom, was extracted from both ordinary people and CPK cadres, although cadres seemed to be more informative about these issues. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data about life and the sociopolitical structure under Democratic Kampuchea. At the same time, surviving documents left behind after the Vietnamese overthrew DK in January 1979 were also used in order to double check data retrieved from interviews.

Given the limited time available, I spent three weeks in Ang Tasom town and visited the villages every day. The villages where I conducted interviews were approximately ten miles away, so I commuted. Twenty-five people were interviewed including Base people (those living in DK zones before April 1975), Candidate People (those who had relatives in government zone), New people (those living in the government zones until April 1975), and former DK cadre. I had already met most of those people I interviewed when I worked at DC-Cam from 2004 to 2007. This was

also the reason I did not stay in the village, because I already knew most of them before, so my relations with them were well-established. If this had not been the case, I would have needed to take some time to build trust and rapport with them. All of them remembered me as I entered into the villages. This research therefore draws upon previous research, conducted during my three-years (2004-2007) conducting interviews in this area.

Selecting informants was not problematic for this research. I already had the names of people to interview before I went to the village. Between 2004 and 2007, my team and I interviewed 302 people for DC-Cam. The people interviewed for this research were selected from these 302 people. A few interviewees were referred by other informants. The way I selected interviewees was based on how informative they were about the structure of the Southwest zone. Some informants were selected because they were living in the same or neighboring villages with the former Southwest zone secretary, Mok, and could provide information on how people appointed to positions by Mok were related to him. I also selected people who were not related to Mok to avoid bias in searching for facts about what happened. In the villages I visited, I always talked to the village chief in order to inform him about my research project and to ask permission from him to conduct interviews. I was very cautious since the period when I was conducting interviews was just a month before the national election. Therefore, it was important to inform the village chiefs about my political neutrality as a researcher. To keep the confidentiality of the informants, I have changed the names of all informants and the names of the villages.

In the field, after breakfast I headed to the villages at 8:00 a.m. every morning with another colleague who accompanied me in the field (so that I was not lonely, and also to help with the driving). The field research was partly supported by the DC-Cam, who provided me with transportation, accommodation and food. For other research costs, I used my own personal funds. I interviewed two people a day—one in the morning and another in the afternoon, so that I could have more time to rewrite my notes after each interview. I recorded all twenty-five interviews and also took notes. When interviewing, my colleague was also there. We left the village at around 11:00 a.m. because it was lunch time for the villagers. After each interview in the morning, my colleague and I returned to Ang Tasom to have lunch. On the way home or during lunch time, I talked to my colleague about his view on the interview and I took notes. We returned to the village at around 2 p.m. to conduct another interview for the day, stopping around 5 p.m. and then we discussed the afternoon interview on our way to the guesthouse. On weekends, we returned to Phnom Penh to relax and to see family. This was also the best time for me to review notes and cross check information.

Prior to beginning my research, I received research permission from the Northern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB) assuring that my research procedures were consistent with human subject protection ethics. The human-subjects data used in this research were collected with the required prior approval of IRB in May 2008.

Study Site Information

Ethnographic Location

The areas where I conducted interviews span a wide range of the Southwest zone, although most of the informants were interviewed in Tramkok district of Takeo province. The former revolutionary base areas of Tramkok district were the main targets for this research. These areas have the most local DK cadre who survived the Democratic Kampuchea regime because their connection was with the most important cadre in the Southwest, especially zone secretary Mok. Most cadres who took positions in the Southwest zone and later other zones were from these areas given their close network ties with Mok.

The areas are located in Tramkok district at the foothills of the Elephant Mountains. The areas can be reached by road if travelling by National Road 3 from Phnom Penh. The geographic areas are on the slope between the mountain and Mekong plain areas with few water resources. The areas nearby were forested mountains in the 1950s and 1960s. People in these areas invest much of their time in rice farming. No other crops are cultivated because of the distance from water resources. Today some families send their children to the city to work as garment workers to generate income. The population's standard of living is low, which is one of the reasons why the communist revolution could historically attract people because the supporters were mostly poor peasants.

A Brief History of the Area

The villages in these areas are similar to other villages in Cambodia. As one enters the area today, one would be surprised to see many old houses built in the 1960s. This is unusual for most Cambodian villages since almost all older houses were destroyed during the war throughout the 1970s. However, if we look back to the 1960s, these areas were the former revolutionary base areas and were the heart of the Southwest zone. Most of the houses that remain standing today belonged to former CPK cadres and are now owned by their relatives. This area is viewed by outsiders who lived near the National Road 3 as “the Khmer Rouge village or village of the Old People”¹² because of its connection to the CPK revolution.

However, when one arrives in these areas, one can meet many villagers who were also the victims like other Cambodians. It is certain that most of the cadres of the Southwest zone were from this area, but some of them died after 1979 and some are still living near the Cambodia-Thai border, a stronghold of Khmer Rouge after they were defeated in 1979. This area is Mok’s land. It has been the revolutionary base of the Khmer Rouge revolution since the 1950s when Mok became active in the resistance movement. Khieu Samphan, a high ranking official of DK who arrived in this area in 1967, afterward said that by the time he arrived everyone in this area was already aware of how to keep secret, which was the main task of the revolution.¹³ Samphan added that people created associations with the intention of helping the poor as well as the resistance movement in the nearby forest.¹⁴ Therefore, people in the area were the main supporters of the early stages of the DK revolution.

During DK, people in this area were promoted to various important positions because of their trustworthiness and long-term service to the revolution. When Vietnamese soldiers attacked in 1979, most of the DK cadre fled to the Thai border with Mok. Some returned, and some have continued to live near the border until today.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Early Stages of the Revolution

The Issarak resistance movement, founded in Thailand in the early 1940s, was created to fight against French colonialism. November 1947 marked the end of Thai support for this movement after a rightist coup in Bangkok forced the Issarak to accept aid from the Viet-Minh¹⁵ up until January 1949 (Carney 1977: 3). More than a year later in April 1950, the unified communist-led Issarak Front, also known as Khmer Issarak, was created in Kampot province (the Southwest Zone) during a meeting attended by two hundred delegates, led by Son Ngoc Minh, Chan Samay and Sieu Heng (Dy 2007: 5-6). Some of the Front's members were members of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), which had been created in Vietnam in 1930 (Ruane 1998: 4, Chandler 2008: 221, Short 2004: 39).

The Issarak were based in the forested areas near Kamchay Waterfall, in Kampot province, and its members staged guerrilla war across the Southwest (Pen and Neang 2002: 2). Chhit Choeun aka Mok, who was later the undisputed leader in the Southwest Zone, joined the resistance movement in 1949 after leaving the monkhood that same year.¹⁶ He was responsible for overseeing Tramkok district in Takeo and in the nearby district of Kampong Speu province (Ibid). As one of Mok's close messengers, bodyguards, and clerks from 1950-1953, Pen Sovann said that Mok had a clear and sharp political view, was polite, honest to the people, faithful to the Party

and was favored by the soldiers and other movement members.¹⁷ The Issarak movement had four main goals: to conduct secret activities, to propagandize to attract supporters, to build up a revolutionary support base, and to attack the government military camps to secretly steal their weapons (Pen and Neang 2002: 50). The movement criticized the government led by Prince Sihanouk, who had been enthroned by the French, for being a “French lackey” (Carney 1977: 2). Pen and Neang wrote of the Issarak movement in the Southwest zone that Issarak soldiers frequently camped in far-off villages and Buddhist temples in an attempt to flee the government and the French soldiers who attacked the area. The government and the French soldiers attacked where the Issarak had camped and killed villagers, whose relatives then joined the resistance movement. Moreover, the French sent helicopters to attack the Buddhist temples and villages where the Issarak camped to frighten the villagers (Pen and Neang 2002: 23). The French imprisoned or killed those who supported the resistance. At the same time, the government under the French did not allow villagers to move from one place to another in order to prevent them from joining the resistance (ibid). Villagers were kept under control in communities known as “strategic villages” in order to prevent people from being contacted by members of the movement in the forest (ibid).

With limited freedom of movement, the livelihood of farmers gradually became worse due to the French restricting people from going to the fields to farm—because they feared that the farmers would come into contact with the Issarak (Pen

and Neang 2002: 35). The French also tortured the villagers harshly if they found that villagers were secretly in contact with the movement (ibid).

However, this pressure could not stop the resistance movement and the members of the resistance kept conducting activities against the Phnom Penh government. Pen Sovann wrote that the Issarak members were assigned to distribute leaflets to villagers to rise up against the French and its lackeys, and forbid people from going back to their home villages (Pen and Neang 2002: 22). At the same time, the movement showed compassion to the people and performed many humanitarian services for the community such as: cleaning, digging wells, and distributing medicine for free after they settled in the villages and the Buddhist temples (ibid). This service strongly influenced the people's minds to the point where farmers strongly supported them.

By the early 1950s, the Issarak Unit 160's soldiers in the Southwest Zone increased and could stage guerrilla warfare against the French in many locations. Unit 160 was comprised of Vietnamese and Cambodian commanders and soldiers (Pen and Neang 2002:114). Pen Sovann, who was one of the soldiers in this Unit, wrote that his unit traveled on foot, hundreds of miles, to attack the French and that the Issarak movement frequently won (Pen and Neang 2002: 105).

On February 19, 1951, the Vietnamese divided the ICP into three different parties, one of which was Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRK), while others were to be established in Laos and Vietnam as the fighting against the French intensified (Dy 2007: 6). All three parties were under the direct supervision of the

Vietnamese. Before the separation, Mok had been in close favor with the ICP, and then later on, in favor with the KPRK.¹⁸ With Vietnamese supervision, on the afternoon of June 28, 1951, a meeting was held officially to create the KPRP in the O village of Trapeang Reang Sub-district, Chhuk district, in Kampot province.¹⁹ Although this newly created party was led by Son Ngoc Minh, Sieu Heng, Tou Samuth and Chan Samay (Dy 2007: 6), Mok was the one of the influential figures of the KPRK in the Southwest Zone.²⁰

In 1953, the French quickly withdrew, offering full independence to Cambodia. According to the Geneva Conference in July 1954, on the topic of Indochina, the Viet-Minh forces who settled in Cambodia about a decade before were also to withdraw. Vietnamese soldiers in Unit 160 were to be withdrawn, while Cambodia soldiers were to be divided into three groups decided by KPRP (Pen and Neang 2002: 115). The first group was to continue their duty in conducting secret activities throughout the nation; the second group was to go back home and reunite with their families; and the third group, which consisted of the most trusted and experienced members, was to be selected by the Vietnamese and KPRP to be trained in Hanoi so that they could go back home sometime in the future to rebuild the country (ibid). Before leaving, Tou Samuth told Pen Sovann that although the war with French colonialism had ended, and independence had been gained, villagers still did not have enough rights and the feudalists kept exploiting people. Therefore, to deal with this issue, some Cambodians had to be trained in North Vietnam so that they could serve the nation in the future (Pen and Neang 2002: 117). Pen Sovann was one

of 1,040 soldiers from Cambodia who left the country in November 1954 to acquire military and political training in Hanoi (Pen and Neang 2002: 115-116).

On September 30, 1960, the KPRP changed its name to the Worker's Party of Kampuchea (WPK) directed by Tou Samuth as secretary, Nuon Chea as deputy secretary and Pol Pot as number three in the Party (Dy 2007: 8). Two years later, after the disappearance of Tou Samuth in 1962, the trusted French-educated Salot Sar, later known as Pol Pot, replaced him as secretary of the Party. During the 1970s, the government of Democratic Kampuchea viewed this date as the birthday of its party and ignored all activities done before the creation of CPK. The CPK called the period between 1960 and 1967 as the period of "building of the Party."²¹ In the year 1960, the WPK established the Democratic Kampuchea Youth League (literally, *Yuvakap* League) in order to encourage and motivate youth in the revolutionary struggle against the American imperialists and their lackeys, and to also destroy the "fascist regimes of the reactionary feudal capitalist capitalists."²² The *Yuvakap* league had been very important in encouraging youth and had been the right hand of the CPK (ibid). Starting from 1960, Nuon Chea said that the WPK set up a campaign "to make national democratic revolution," which was created to promote fighting against American imperialism, the feudal class, and to liberate the Kampuchean nation and poor peasant class.²³ Then in September 1966, Pol Pot changed his party to the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) to distance themselves from Vietnamese influence.

Early Armed Struggle

By 1966 the Cambodian economy had become so unstable that poor peasants in the northwest province of Battambang, the area with the highest level of rice production, illegally sold about a quarter of the country's rice yield to the North Vietnamese army (Chandler 1999a: 77). Through this illegal sale of rice, the country suffered from a great loss of tax revenue, weakening further an already ailing economy (ibid).

The government issued a policy to prevent potential loss of income by sending government agents to, under suppression, purchase rice from the people at lower prices than those paid by the North Vietnamese (Chandler 1999a: 77). Moreover, the government often did not pay on time after they purchased rice from the peasants (Diep Sophal 2005: 15). The farmers were also dissatisfied with the arrival of South Vietnamese immigrants who were sent to settle in the area because the local people had to share their land with the newcomers due to the fact that the economic situation had deteriorated (ibid). What also irritated the farmers was that the government had taken land from the peasants to build a sugar refinery (Ross 1990: 42, Martin 1994: 112), while other powerful soldiers confiscated land from people illegally.

Gradually more and more people become landless; moreover, peasants had to still pay taxes regularly to the government. In January 1967, unable to live under this pressure, and with the encouragement of the CPK forces led by Moul Sambath (alias Nhim Ros), poor peasants in Samlot killed a tax collector (Ross 1990: 42), attacked the local government offices, and then fled to the Vay Chap Mountain, the long-time

Cambodian communist base area. The protest encouraged other peasants nearby to revolt and in the next few months the uprising spread quickly. Prime Minister Lon Nol responded vehemently by sending military forces to crack down on the protests as well as planes to bomb villagers' homes (Chandler 1999a: 78-79). Further incidents erupted between the angered peasants and the government forces.

In spite of the government's harsh response, the resistance grew. In April 1967, over two hundred peasants armed with axes, machetes, leaflets and banners insulting Lon Nol and Sihanouk attacked government and military offices, killing two soldiers and confiscating some rifles (Chandler 1999a: 77). In return, government forces captured, interrogated, and attacked hundreds of protestors, burning down peasants' houses and causing some peasants to flee their home villages and take refuge in the mountains (*ibid*). Sihanouk supported Lon Nol's quick and brutal response and blamed the protests on some leftist figures in Phnom Penh for encouraging people to protest. He warned of the arrest of those figures, including Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim and Hou Youn, who later became important cadre of Democratic Kampuchea less than a decade later. It is unsure whether those figures masterminded the resistance as Prince Sihanouk accused; however, Chandler argued that there was evidence showing that Khieu Samphan encouraged students in Phnom Penh to protest against the oppression of the government forces in Samlot, even if he was not directly involved with the uprising (Chandler 1999a: 77-78).

For fear of arrest, within a month, Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn left the capital for the Southwest zone and disappeared from public view in 1967 (Khieu 2004:

17). By September, another figure, Hu Nim, also left the capital for the jungle (Chandler 1999a: 79). The location of these three men was kept secret until 1970 when Prince Sihanouk reunited with the three after he was deposed in a coup. It was in the year Samphan and Nim left the capital that they met with Mok in Tramkok district in the Southwest Zone.

According to his book, Khieu Samphan (2004) wrote that he and Hou Youn stayed in the Kbal O village, Cheang Torng sub-district, Tramkok district under the supervision of the zone secretary, Mok. Cheang Tong sub-district was one of the three revolutionary support base areas in the Southwest zone. The others were Samrong and Trapeang Thom sub-districts, which was Mok's homeland. It was not by chance that Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn decided to take shelter in these areas because they were zones strongly protected by the communist movement, of which all three were members.

After the uprising in Samlot, the CPK adopted a new policy of heavily armed struggle against the oppressive government (Chandler 1999a: 77). After gaining some supporters from among poor peasants and confiscating some weapons from the government, on January 18, 1968,²⁴ peasants carrying weapons, stones, machetes, and knives attacked government offices and military camps at Bay Damram in Northwest Cambodia (Chandler 1999a: 80). This was one of the most important dates in the history of CPK and it was later regarded as the birthday of the revolutionary army. Nuon Chea told a trusted delegation of communists from Denmark that "if we had not launched the armed struggle in 1968, we would not have been masters of the situation

at the time of the 1970 coup d'état.”²⁵ Khieu Samphan also praised armed struggle, saying that “armed struggle marked a decisive phase for the CPK, not only did it enable the CPK to defend itself, but also created conditions for it to rapidly become a dominating political and military force”(2004: 37.) Less than a month after the armed struggle in Samlot, Southwest zone soldiers attacked government military camps and confiscated around 200 weapons.²⁶ Pol Pot was very proud of this confiscation and he called the Southwest zone “remarkable” (ibid).

In order to strengthen the party movement, in that same year the CPK created two types of bases in three different zones—the Southwest, Eastern and Northwest. They were support and militia bases. Support bases were very important; they were housed in highly secret places which were hardly penetrated by government agents.²⁷ Khieu Samphan then fled arrest to the support bases in the Southwest zone in 1967, writing that everyone in this base knew how to keep secrets, cooperated with each other well, and that the people in these villages were the most trusted.²⁸

Turning Point: Coup d'état

The coup on March 18, 1970 to depose the then-Prince Sihanouk plunged the country into war. It was alleged that the United States was behind the coup by Lon Nol and his supporters, although the United States government denied it (Clymer 2004: 21-24). By the day of the coup, the United States Air Forces had been secretly dropping B-52 bombs for exactly one year on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border (Kiernan 1989). The Americans were trying to cut off supply lines that resupplied the Vietnamese resistance in the south through Laos and Cambodia. After the coup,

American bombing became more publicized and increased thereafter until the mission was halted in August 1973.²⁹ The coup provided the Cambodia communists with a golden opportunity to gain more supporters, and the war between the Cambodia communists and the US-backed Khmer Republic government spread throughout the country. The circumstances of the war made the North Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge temporary allies, and the Vietnamese provided early support to the KR movement.

Shortly afterwards, the deposed Prince Sihanouk, from Beijing, appealed to all patriots inside the country to take up arms to struggle against the so-called American-backed Lon Nol government. Cambodian communists grabbed this opportunity to attract supporters and ignite the fuel of hatred towards the Americans, capitalists, feudalists, and the Lon Nol government. People protested against the new government throughout the country. In the Southwest zone, one of the biggest protests against the government occurred in the town of Ang Tasom, located about 10 kilometers from the zone's support bases. With encouragement from communist forces, angry pro-Sihanouk peasants marched to the town carrying stones, knives, machetes, and weapons to stage a violent demonstration against the government. The government's soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds of them and leaving many wounded. Lim, one of the demonstrators, later recalled that

A large group of demonstrators were walking from the west [support bases] to collect people along the way and loudly shouted "long lives Samdach Ov (Prince Sihanouk), those who did not join us, we will cut them into pieces and burn their houses down." I was concerned that they would burn my house, so I joined

them. Some of them were armed with weapons, hoes, stones, sticks, machetes.³⁰

With support from the Vietnamese, the Cambodian communists under the name of the “Revolutionary Army” successfully attacked some of the Khmer Republic government’s offices and the liberated zone steadily grew.³¹ The Revolutionary Army used the reputation of Sihanouk to attract supporters and rally people against the American imperialists. Because they were victimized by the American bombing and because they were favored by Prince Sihanouk, more and more people joined the revolutionary army. Tim, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, said:

American planes dropped lots of bombs killing animals and destroying houses in my village. I was angry with the Americans and because they [the Cambodian communists] recruited soldiers, I volunteered to join.³²

In the district of Tramkok, the revolutionary army had arrived in the village quickly after the coup. Public schools, government offices, and factories closed and the workers, students, teachers, and doctors fled to the cities or provincial towns. Most of those who were poor and had no relatives in the cities therefore had no choice other than to stay. Dok, who joined the revolution just a few months after the coup, said that the Vietcong arrived in his village immediately after the coup and all of them wore a portrait of Prince Sihanouk on their shirts or caps. He said:

The Vietcong arrived in my village and all of the Lon Nol soldiers retreated to the provincial towns [his home village is about 25km from Takeo provincial town.] Finally, my village became [a] liberated zone just shortly after the coup. The revolution army cooperated with the Vietcong to fight against the Americans and the Lon Nol government in order to return Prince Sihanouk to power.

Mao's father, who lived in the Tramkok district before 1970, decided to flee to Phnom Penh so that his children could attend school because schools in his home village were closed. When Ith Sarin arrived in the Communist liberated zones in 1972, he found some houses were deserted or destroyed by bombing. Sarin wrote, "I assumed that those houses were owned by Sino-Khmer families. They would have fled to the city. Some of the houses were destroyed by American B-52s" (Ith 1973: 6).

Administrative Organization

After Prince Sihanouk was deposed, most of the lower-ranking officials at the village level were pro-Sihanoukist (Carney 1977: 8). The Revolutionary army did not conflict with them, but allowed them to continue holding positions in their community, but the revolutionary cadre had to settle in the villages, to propagandize, brainstorm, and provide political education to those Sihanoukists (Ith 1973: 6). In some cases, the most popular villagers would also be promoted to the village or sub-district chiefs so that they could attract supporters since it had been the most important task for the revolution.³³ The revolution had not cared much about an individual's background during this period.³⁴ Those who rejected the assignment of the revolution were tolerated, but they were seen to be persecuted in 1973 or after 1975.³⁵ In some villages of Tramkok district, which had long been controlled by the communists, village chiefs were replaced with the poor, uneducated, and trusted people from the same village. Nhep, a villager in the Cheang Tong sub-district, said:

My former village chief was downgraded from his position and then he acted as ordinary people; another

villager, Nob, was promoted because he was a poor and an uneducated peasant. Nob was a gambler; he gambled away all this money and sold all his property. He was poor and illiterate; that's why he was promoted.³⁶

All local leaders in this stage were called “temporary chiefs of the transitional period,”³⁷ which means that they would be under direct observation of an upper echelon and if they were trusted, they would be allowed to remain in the positions.

The role of the village chiefs was to attract youth to support the revolution and to enlist them into the army, to inspire people to hate the Khmer Republic government, to fight the feudalists who were exploiting the people, and to fight American imperialism.³⁸ The village and sub-district chief's role were quite similar, but the sub-district chiefs had more authorized territory under their control than the village chiefs.³⁹ Village and sub-district chiefs selected the most trusted militias, most of whom were youths, to maintain security in the village and to guard the village or sub-district chiefs. Dok, who was in the militia of the sub-district chief, said that “a meeting was held every day with the village chiefs to provide political education about communism and to keep security in hand to protect the liberated zone.”⁴⁰

After one was promoted to the position, he/she was directly supervised and observed by their supervisors of the higher echelon. Supervisors were expected to thoroughly observe the local cadre to make sure that they would follow active and faithful roles to the revolution.⁴¹

In January 1971, the Democratic Kampuchea Youth League, which had been created in 1960, was renamed the “Kampuchean Communist Youth League” known by the acronym *Yuvakak*. The CPK turned the *Yuvakak* League into the “complete”

right hand of the Party and its role became more significant. The *Yuvakak* was a core force and a great source of recruitment of youth into the Party. *Yuvakak* members were said to be sharp, brave, and active in all kinds of circumstances; their work was under direct control of the Party.⁴² All members were unmarried youth and all of them had to go through five steps—being screened, watched, educated, observed, and trained.⁴³ These five steps were to make sure that all members were from clean backgrounds (poor and uneducated), had been trained about political doctrine, and had been faithful to the Party.⁴⁴ Thus, all members had been among the most trusted by the Central Party (Carney 1977: 10). The youth were provided intensive political training which took up to three weeks (ibid). Besides being trained about the political rules of the Party, the youth were also taught to be uncompromising against religion, customs, and parental authority (ibid). After being trained, all of the youth were enlisted as members of the *Yuvakak* and although some of them stayed with their parents, their body belonged to the Party; they were required to follow the party when needed and were “to serve the revolution without condition.”⁴⁵

Dok, who had spent ten days being trained on politics and become a member of the *Yuvakak* in 1972, said that after being made a member of the *Yuvakak*, each had to follow the orders no matter what they were, no matter when or where they were ordered to go, and each member had to continue providing political doctrine to other youths to attract them to join.⁴⁶

All CPK cadres at all levels had to attend political training, which was critical during this stage. According to Ith Sarin, Hou Youn gave a speech during a summit

meeting at the end of May 1972 saying that “each cadre had to receive political training for a long period of time—at least from one to three years—before taking a position at each level” (Ith 1973: 27). Chou Chet, Phok Chay and Thuch Rin were responsible for providing political training to cadres (1973: 29).

Joining the Party

There were three secret organizations of the Communist Party of Kampuchea operating until the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea, although they became less important after 1975. Before 1975, all three had duties to fight against the enemy, to educate about morality, to evoke anger among the masses and to spy on the enemy’s activities throughout the country.⁴⁷ Besides *Yuvakak*, which was the right hand of the Party, the Party also had two other associations which had to produce rice at the home front and to spy on the Lon Nol government by disguising themselves as members of the general public in the government-controlled areas. Two other associations were the Cambodian Farmer Association, which was called *Sakok* and the Democratic Kampuchea Women Association called *Sanakob*—*Samakum Neary Kampuchea Pracheathipatay*.

***Yuvakak*:** The *Yuvakak* league was the primary source of recruitment of youth into the Khmer Rouge revolution. Those who joined the membership of the *Yuvakak* needed to be over eighteen years of age.⁴⁸ Initially, only the zone committee could approve someone to join membership of *Yuvakak*; however, after 1973, the zone offered the authorization to the district committees to approve assigned cadres to be Party members.⁴⁹

***Sakok*:** Unlike the members of *Yuvakak*, all Cambodian Farmer Association members known as *Sakok* needed to be at least thirty years old.⁵⁰ The members consisted of both married men and women. Their role was to work on the home front to produce rice and to pack rice for the soldiers in the battlefields rather than going to the battlefields. Also, the members sometimes disguised themselves as vegetable sellers, rubbish collectors, and fishers to spy on the Lon Nol government in the cities or towns. When they were on duty, they returned home on a regular basis to report about the activities to the sub-district or district committee back in liberated zones about what was going on. The *Sakok* members also held meetings in the cities by doing secret activities that the government could not notice such as fishing near the bank of the river and reporting to each other at the same time.⁵¹

***Sanokob*:** This was the Democratic Kampuchea Women's Association. The members were women, mostly married. Their roles were to provide moral education to the people in the liberated zone so that they could behave well.⁵² *Sanokob* members were also to do the farming to support the soldiers in the battlefields and to spy on the activities of the enemy.

Candidates who wanted to apply for Party membership had to be members of one of the above associations (Carney 1977: 56). The candidates were checked, taught, educated, trained and observed to make sure that they had a clean revolutionary background and attitude, a history of being beneficial to the revolution, and the approval of the general population. They had to have a clean personal background as well, such as being from a poor family; those who used to have positions in the

Sihanouk regime such as police officers, soldiers or government officials were not allowed to join the Party. They could do so, however, if they had influential patrons in the CPK to support them. The candidates had to have good morality in society, including not drinking alcohol, chasing women, fighting or exploiting people and doing illegal business. After one met all the above requirements, he/she needed to go through a three-month training about politics, spirit and the policies of the CPK (ibid). After completing the trainings, candidates could apply for Party membership to be reviewed by a sub-district committee.⁵³ They had to have two sponsors who were Party members who could guarantee and assure the candidate's biography. Then the applications were sent to the district committee for approval. The sponsors and the approver were considered the main backer and patron of the applicant.⁵⁴

At the next step, the applicant attended a ceremony attended by the district secretary or deputy secretary, the sponsors and the applicants. At the ceremony, he was told to salute the Party flag and pay respect to Party members. The applicant was told to take an oath in front of the Party flag by raising his/her hand and reading the oath "I swear in front of the Party flag that I will be loyal and unconditionally serve the national revolutionary Party and class workers for my whole life" (Carney 1977: 57).

After taking the oath, the applicant was given a three-to six-month probationary period during which the applicant was called "*Pakachon Tream*," based on the applicant's biography.⁵⁵ The approver and the sponsor had the responsibility to advise and observe the applicants as they worked on the ground in order for them to

become a good member (Carney 1977: 57). After their probationary period ended, the applicants were given the title as full members of the CPK Party—*Pakachon Penh Sith*.

Each Party member had two duties to fulfill—internal duties and duties among the masses.⁵⁶ As an internal duty, a Party member had to join meetings regularly with cadre to report about their work, strengthen political strength among the masses, and teach about Party policy to encourage more people to join the Party.⁵⁷ As a member, he/she had to love and be faithful to the people, be one of the people and for the people (Etcheson 1984: 157).

Recruiting and Screening

By late 1972, the communist forces captured the town of Ang Tasom and controlled the National Roads 2 and 3 that linked Phnom Penh to Takeo and to Kampot provincial towns.⁵⁸ Government transportation from Phnom Penh to these towns could be made only by helicopter.⁵⁹ Only the provincial towns and small nearby areas were under government control. The CPK revolutionary forces came into the villages near the battlefields at night to evacuate the people into liberated zones located near the Takeo and Kampong Speu provincial border, long-time support bases.⁶⁰ The evacuees were to produce rice to support the soldiers on the battlefield.⁶¹ Some of them who had not been evacuated by the revolutionary forces moved to the town of Takeo or to Phnom Penh for safety.⁶² Those who stayed behind were arrested or even killed.⁶³

The CPK troops increased sharply from 3,000 in 1970 to 40,000 in 1973 and won several major battles against the Khmer republican government (Dy 2006: 11). By late 1972, the relations between North Vietnam and CPK had become very tense. At the time, according to the DK's Black Paper⁶⁴ published in 1978, the North Vietnamese put pressure on the CPK to stop the war because they wanted to join a cease-fire negotiation with the United States (1978: 67-68). According to this Black Paper, the North Vietnamese wanted the CPK to be their satellite, so that they tried to force the CPK to stop the war because they were concerned that if CPK won and gained independence, the Vietnamese would not be able to control it (ibid). The CPK rejected the Vietnamese pressure and was willing to continue the war with the Khmer Republic government because the CPK believed that the Americans would not stop their aggression and ambition in Cambodia (Black Paper 71). In October 1972, Salot Sar alias Pol Pot, the secretary of CPK, told the Vietnamese delegation, according to the Black Paper:

If the Communist Party of Kampuchea ceased fire, even only for one day, Lon Nol's clique would be able to carry only 20 to 30 percent to their needs in armaments and food. But if the Communist Party of Kampuchea accepted the cease-fire, the enemy would be able to carry each month hundreds of thousands of tons to supply their army. Besides, a cease-fire would spread confusion in the determination of the people and the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea in waging their struggle. (Page 71)

Even with the refusal of the CPK, the Vietnamese and the United States finally signed the Paris cease-fire agreement on January 27, 1973. According to the Agreement, the Vietnamese were to withdraw from Cambodia, but thousands of

technical advisors were to stay (Dy 2007: 11). By 1973, the Sihanoukists, pro-Vietnamese, and moderates still held positions at the village and sub-district levels in CPK liberated zones (ibid).

The CPK began to screen cadres and villagers in the liberated zones and imprison or kill cadre and villagers with unclean backgrounds, those who rejected the Party's policies and those who were pro-Vietnamese and Sihanoukists.⁶⁵ The first group to be screened was the Cambodian people who were called Khmer-Hanoi, who used to study in Hanoi and who had returned to the country in 1970. They were accused of being pro-Vietnamese.⁶⁶ Pen Sovann wrote that in 1972-1973 the CPK began to kill cadre who had been trained in Vietnam and others whose background was deemed not clean (Pen and Neang 2002: 124). Pen added that all those cadres were intentionally sent to the battlefields, where CPK soldiers killed them while claiming that the enemy did it. In early 1974, Pen Sovann, knowing that he was next to be killed, fled to Vietnam (Pen and Neang 2002: 128).

At the same time, the Khmer Rouge began to screen and incarcerate people who were not from poor backgrounds or those who had relatives in the Lon Nol government-controlled areas. Educated and well-off ordinary families who had lived peacefully in the Khmer Rouge liberated zones were now being screened and imprisoned. The Khmer Rouge created any pretext to accuse them of being unfaithful to the revolution, of being government agents and spies, and of being feudalists. Vin, an ordinary man who lived in the Kus sub-district until he was arrested in 1973, said that,

They [the Khmer Rouge] accused me of being a spy because a militia member saw the money I dried in my house. Because the country was not safe, I buried my money from selling cows under the ground, and when I dug it up and dried all the money in my house, a militia member saw it. Then the sub-district soldiers came to arrest me for being a spy.⁶⁷

The Khmer Rouge used every pretext to accuse anyone who had relatives living in the Lon Nol government areas. Nhep⁶⁸ said that:

Each family had to pack rice and food to send to the soldiers on the battlefields. The owners needed to write their names on their pack so that the village chief could see that the rice was from all the family. One day, the sub-district deputy secretary, a village chief and militia came to my house and accused me of putting pig dung into a pack of rice. They accused me of trying to poison the soldiers on the battlefield to slow down the army from going fast to fight against the government.

Cadre who were appointed to positions at the village or sub-district level in 1970 after the CPK army captured the areas, and then tried to resign, were accused of being government agents or being untrustworthy and were persecuted or imprisoned. They were also accused of trying to escape duties from the revolution. These people believed that the revolution would bring the country under a dictatorship or communism. Sok,⁶⁹ a Khmer Rouge village chief appointed to the position in 1970 and who was imprisoned for a year in 1973, said:

I don't like communism. Our country should not become communist. After I was trained about the political doctrine of communism deeper and deeper, I felt upset and I requested the sub-district secretary to resign. They did not agree with my request. In communism, once you become a member, you cannot leave. After I resigned, they tried to look for a mistake I would make. Once when I picked up dead fruit and

threw it away, they accused me of destroying the property of revolution, then I was arrested and imprisoned for a year.

Small-scale cooperatives

From 1973 on, the war between CPK soldiers and the government become fiercer. By this time, the CPK had gained control of eighty-five percent of the country (Dy 2007: 12). CPK cadres assumed that the people were under their control. Therefore, by mid 1973, a collectivization policy and cooperative work were initiated in the strong revolutionary base areas controlled by Mok. By 1973, Mok's daughter, Khom, had been promoted to the secretary of Tramkok district (district 105). Tramkok, which was Mok's homeland, was the most "ideologically advanced" of the revolution (Kiernan 2008: 88). The Southwest zone was led by Mok, who served as the secretary, Chou Chet as deputy secretary, and Kang Chap as a member.⁷⁰ Sem Pal and a former high school teacher, Thuch Rin alias Krin, were candidate members (Kiernan 2008: 88). Krin also led Southwest zone newspaper "revolutionary people" (Ith 1973: 19). Ith Sarin, who visited the liberated area in 1972 in the Southwest zone, wrote that the Southwest Zone had the biggest territorial land, the most trained and experienced soldiers, and the most effective leadership framework (1973: 20).

On May 20, 1973 the first Khmer Rouge collectivization and cooperative work system was initiated in most sub-districts in Tramkok and other parts of the Southwest.⁷¹ Those sub-districts in Tramkok (Samrong, Cheang Tong, Trapeang Thom, and Pok Trabek) had already been revolutionary support bases for years.⁷² A Second Grade textbook published in 1976 wrote that "our cooperatives were created

on the 20th May 1973 during which we were in war and gained victory over American imperialists and treacherous elements, and eventually, feudalists, landlords as well as capitalists who were uprooted.”⁷³ Dok, who attended the meeting on the creation of cooperatives with other Southwest zone cadres presided over by Mok in 1973, said that:

Mok masterminded and initiated the plan to establish cooperatives and communal eating in a few of the sub-districts of long-time revolutionary bases in the Tramkok district. The purpose of the creation of the cooperatives was to test to see if it could be successful or not.⁷⁴

Some personal property was to be collectivized, which included livestock, paddy fields, labor, and agricultural tools.⁷⁵ People were grouped into 10 to 15 families or up to 30 families; the group was led by a leader assigned by a village chief.⁷⁶

CPK cadres did not expect bad things to happen if the cooperatives were created. To achieve this creation of cooperative work, Khmer Rouge cadre burned people’s houses and forced them to accept this new policy (Quinn 1989: 181). They collectivized rice yields, livestock, and agricultural tools for collective use. Each group consisted of 10-15 families or up to 30 families, led by a group leader who acted as the judge to make sure that rice yields were divided fairly among villagers based on the number of family members.⁷⁷

However, the plan failed. People did not receive better rice yields. Some villagers, who were poor, were satisfied with this project; but others who had personal livestock and large plots of land did not like the changes. Conflicts erupted during the

distribution of rice.⁷⁸ Nhep, who lived in a village where people quarreled, said that “rice was divided based on the number of each family. Some families had two workers, but had several kids, so they would get lots of rice, whereas some families had fewer members and the same number of workers, so they would get less rice. Lots of people protested.”⁷⁹ Villagers rebelled against the Khmer Rouge cadre. Khmer Rouge cadres used this pretext to arrest some of the protestors, particularly those who owned big plots of paddy fields and had relatives in the Lon Nol controlled areas, for trying to revolt and for opposing the revolution. Ung’s mother was incarcerated and later died in prison after having rejected the cooperative policy; as Ung later reported.

We had enough bulls and paddy fields for our livelihood. My mother was not satisfied with the terms of the collectivization. She did not know much about this plan either. One day, after the collectivization started, the village chief’s relatives came to get her cow dung because it was not hers now; it was belonged to the collectivized group. She did not allow them to. Soon afterward, she was sent to prison and she died there by starvation.⁸⁰

The collectivization project sparked much protest among the villagers. As protests increased, the Southwest zone cadre called for an urgent meeting which was presided over by Chou Chet, a Southwest zone deputy secretary, to abolish collectivization and to allow private eating in early 1974.⁸¹ Dok, who had attended this meeting, said that:

Chou Chet announced the abolition of cooperative work because the war between the Khmer Rouge and government was intensified. CPK was also concerned that people would lose interest towards the revolution, and that they would flee to the enemy controlled areas,

so we decided to abolish the cooperatives and communal eating.⁸²

After the meeting, the village chiefs announced to their villagers that they were eliminating the cooperative work policy right away.

Victory

After several years of armed struggle and civil war, black-uniformed revolutionary soldiers captured the city of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975. The Southwest zone soldiers, who were the strongest, came into the city from National Road 3.⁸³ The Southwest zone soldiers were probably the first Khmer Rouge troops to arrive in the city. Many of them had never been there before.⁸⁴ At 6:45 a.m, the Southwest zone soldiers captured the Phnom Penh radio station and immediately announced, most likely with the intention to appeal to the government soldiers to lay down their arms:

Now our Party has achieved one hundred percent victory over Cambodia. Our Party seeks peace by peaceful methods and discriminates against no group. Our Party invites you all, your excellencies, all groups, those responsible for institutions, to gather together at the National Ministry of Information immediately.⁸⁵

However, thirty minutes later, soldiers loyal to Chou Chet announced in a harsher tone,

Our Party has a complete victory throughout the country over the Khmer Republic, that gang of Lon Nol traitors. This victory has been won at the muzzles of our hot cannons. Our Party need not negotiate with anyone or any group. The traitors must accept defeat; no one recognizes them anymore.⁸⁶

City dwellers included Lon Nol government officials as well as more than a million people who had fled as refugees from rural areas. These people were very frightened and instead of going out to cheer the arriving Khmer Rouge soldiers, they waited at home to listen to news updates. Those who had separated from family members such as those sick at the hospital or at work were very nervous. Most other city dwellers, who were weary of the year-long war, welcomed the Khmer Rouge soldiers and shouted, “Bravo! Bravo!” They believed that the revolutionary soldiers would bring peace to the nation and rebuild the country after the severe destruction of war. However, their joyfulness was very short-lived and their expectations were not fulfilled. Just a short time later, the Khmer Rouge soldiers announced through loudspeakers that the city dwellers had to leave their homes for three days with no exception, and then proceeded to force about two million people, at gunpoint, out of the city. The Southwest zone soldiers were responsible for guard duty at Takmau and the Steung Meanchey Bridge that led people to Takeo and Kampot provinces.⁸⁷

Although most Khmer Rouge soldiers who were interviewed for this research were not aware of the evacuation plan in advance, it was evident that the plan was very well-organized and the soldiers from the different divisions spoke in loudspeakers using the same words. In addition, only specifically trained soldiers were allowed to speak in the loudspeakers on behalf of revolutionary *Angkar* saying,

Phnom Penh dwellers, no matter who they are, must move three kilometers away from the city for three days. [You] don’t need to bring any belongings, which will only create difficulties. Our *Angkar* will be there, wherever you are, providing everything. *Angkar* will

evacuate you, brothers and sisters for a period of time
and then send you all back.⁸⁸

According to his discussion of Barron and Paul's and Pin Yathay's books, Vickery argued that the evacuation ordered by the Southwest zone soldiers was made early in the morning of April 17 without delay, unlike soldiers from the Northern zone who did not implement the evacuation plan until the next day (Vickery 1984: 73). However, Vickery also added that the evacuation ordered by the Southwest zone soldiers showed more tolerance. Some people were given enough time to pack and could stay for one or two days at home before leaving (ibid). There are some examples to support Vickery's point. According to Mao's family, who had fled their homeland in Tramkok district in 1970, they could not leave right away because her mother had to give birth to a baby on evacuation day. His father asked permission from the soldiers, and they agreed. A few days later, Mao's family managed to leave. Mao later recalled that "the soldiers allowed us to stay in the city for two more days because my mother had just delivered a baby and she was too weak to walk. A few days later, the city had been very quiet. My father got a cart, put my mother on it, and we all walked to our homeland in Tramkok district."⁸⁹

During the evacuations, the Khmer Rouge appealed to those who had been soldiers or Lon Nol government officials to register with the Khmer Rouge cadres so that they could put them back in those same positions. In fact, the Khmer Rouge executed all of them. People were given fifteen days to travel to their destinations, from April 17 to May 1, after which they were to stop wherever they were at that point.⁹⁰

The reasons behind the evacuation were never provided to the people by the CPK government. The Khmer Rouge viewed the city as the home of feudalists, capitalists, and imperialists. Those enemies had to be swept up and connections severed among Lon Nol's network that could be dangerous to the new government. A CPK cadre described the evacuation project in his notebook, "We drove all the foreign imperialists from Kampuchea [Cambodia]. On 17 April, we evacuated the feudalists and capitalists out of the cities to become farmers."⁹¹ For the Khmer Rouge leaders, the evacuation was a way to destroy the enemy's plan of attack on the revolution by whatever means. Nuon Chea proudly told a delegation from Denmark, "Right after liberation, we evacuated all the people from the cities. The agents of the CIA, KGB, and the Yuon [Vietnam] had to go along to the countryside and were unable to carry out their pre-conceived plans."⁹²

Greeting Enemies

The Khmer Rouge named people who lived in the government-controlled areas until April 17, 1975 as "New People" or "17 April people." People who lived in the Khmer Rouge liberated zone before that day were called "Old people" or "base people." Base people were trusted by the Khmer Rouge while the New People were not.

All cadres in the countryside, and probably most of the base people, were informed in advance about the evacuation of people from the cities. Ordinary base people were told in meetings to greet the evacuees, to share their houses with them, and to give them rice to eat if needed.⁹³ For the cadre, they were told to confiscate only

two things from the evacuees: weapons and medical equipment.⁹⁴ Pin Yathay's family, who was evacuated to the Southwest zone, said his family was given temporary accommodations and rice by the base people when they first arrived (Pin 2000: 36). At the same time, local cadres were also instructed to search among the evacuees for those who had been Lon Nol soldiers or officials and to keep all evacuees under tight control. A CPK cadre, Em Min aka Sen, wrote in his notebook:

according to the Party plans, [we] had to be prepared to receive the people evacuated from Phnom Penh and various provincial cities, and to keep them under control in one place in the villages and sub-districts of the [base] people. Those who had concealed themselves among the people had to be removed to one place for clear identification and investigation. If it had been found that anyone had been an official they were killed.⁹⁵

People evacuated to the Southwest Zone came from Phnom Penh, Takeo, and Kampot provincial towns. Thousands of evacuees from these cities had been assigned to meet at the Champa pagoda in Tramkok district and to stay there one to two weeks.⁹⁶ It was there that the Khmer Rouge cadres appealed to the New People for the second time for those who used to be soldiers or Lon Nol officials to identify themselves so that they could be reappointed. Men were persuaded to tell *Angkar* about their jobs so they could be provided the same position.⁹⁷ The Khmer Rouge had taken away anyone they found to be suspicious, particularly those who had big bellies, light skin, or wore glasses.⁹⁸

CHAPTER 4

SOUTHWEST ZONE STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The Southwest zone had been under Mok's supervision since 1968 after the disappearance of his superior, Ma Mang. Pen Sovann has stated that Mok then became "as brutal as [a] lion."⁹⁹ Before 1975, the Southwest zone consisted of the provinces of Takeo, Kampong Speu, Kandal, Kampong Chhnang and Koh Kong. After the Khmer Rouge attained victory, power and territorial control was shared between two old-hand revolutionaries: Mok and his deputy, Chou Chet. Chet, a short, thin and dark-skinned man, had joined the Issarak since the 1940s (Vickery 1984: 121) and then joined the Indochinese Communist Party in 1951.¹⁰⁰ The Southwest zone lost some northern part of its territory to a newly created zone—the Western zone, which was led by Chou Chet as secretary and Huot Heng or Heng Pal as his deputy. Pal was believed to be very close to Pol Pot (Heder 1991: 16). Mok's zone committee member, Kang Chap, was promoted to be his deputy.

The Western zone was geographically poor and dry with many mountains, with some fertile areas along the Tonle Sap River which receive flooding approximately half the year. The zone was called by the CPK as "our poorest zone, having poor soil and little water" (quoted in Kiernan 2008: 88). Vickery argued that the CPK knew that the Western zone was desolate with poor quality soil and that this zone could not avoid failure in the future (Vickery 1984: 121).

However, Mok controlled the fertile and populous areas of Kampot and Takeo and the coastal province of Kampot. Mok's Southwest zone was geographically good

for agricultural production. The land along the lowland Bassac River provides fertile soil for vegetable and fruit farming. The coastal Kampot province is a very good source of salt (Kiernan 2008: 168).

By mid 1975, Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was divided into six different zones—the Southwest, Western, Northwestern, North, Northeastern and Eastern zones. Zones were divided into Regions, which continued to be divided into Districts, Sub-districts and villages. All administrative zones, regions and districts were numbered.

The Southwest was made up of Regions 13, 25, 33, and 35.

Region 13

This region covered most parts of Takeo and some parts of Kampot province. It was the second largest rice-producing area in the country (Ea 2005: 24). The region contained lowland fields in the Southern part and upland areas in the northern part with abundant sugar palm trees. The main products were rice and palm sugar. The region consisted of five districts: Tramkok (District 105), Angkor Chey (District 106), Treang (District 107), Koh Andeth (District 108) and Kirivong (District 109).

Region 25

This region was dominated by the fertile soil of the Bassac River. The area was rich in fish and fertile soil for growing vegetables and fruit trees. The living standard of the people in this region was higher than the other regions in the Southwest for its natural characteristics. The region consisted of five districts of Kandal province. The

region was originally part of the Eastern zone before 1971. From 1971 to 1975 it was the Special zone of CPK. After the Khmer Rouge's victory, instead of giving it back to the original Eastern zone after the special zone was abolished in 1975, Region 25 was handed over to the Southwest zone since the CPK favored Mok (Kiernan 2008: 197). Its original secretary was So Pum, a Hanoi-trained Khmer Issarak (ibid). After the Hanoi-trained cadres were screened in 1971, Pum was replaced with Non Suon, a former chief of the Issarak movement in the Southwest zone in the 1950s and a pro-Vietnamese cadre. Non Suon would have purged some of Pum's clients although not much killing occurred before 1975 (Kiernan 2008: 202).

After the region was handed over to the Southwest, Mok appointed Som Chea, former courier for the Central Party, as the secretary of the region to replace Non Suon, who was arrested in 1976 (Kiernan 2008: 203). Som Chea was an old-hand revolutionary who was Tou Samuth's client,¹⁰¹ although Som Chea was one of those later suspected of involvement in Samuth's assassination (Kiernan 1985: 381, Chandler 1991: 338, 1999b: 213). Sek Sat alias Prak, a city man and Vorn Vet's client, was Som Chea's deputy. After Som Chea was arrested on March 15, 1977 (Kiernan 2008: 203), Sek Sat alias Prak replaced Chea. Later, Sek Sat was sent to S-21, the Central government security prison, for his connection to Vorn Vet. At S-21, Sat wrote in his confession that he was appointed by Mok as a deputy of region 25 in June 1975.¹⁰² Although the region became part of the Southwest, most cadres at the district and sub-district level were still loyal to Non Suon and Pum. Sek Sat and Som Chea ended their lives at S-21 since they were distrusted by Mok. Chea's client, Tim Sen,

the secretary of Koh Thom, was arrested and sent to S-21 just two weeks before Chea.¹⁰³ Tim Sen was Non Suon's client who was promoted to district secretary by him.¹⁰⁴ Sat's confession was dated June 23, 1978.¹⁰⁵

Region 33

This region consisted of six districts. It was dominated by paddy fields and some mountains and abundant sugar palm trees. From 1970-1977, the region was led by Saing Rin, a former high school teacher, as secretary (Ith 1973: 9). Mok's brother, Chong, who was a former Lon Nol soldier,¹⁰⁶ was the secretary of one of the districts, Prey Kabas (District 55). In 1977, Mok replaced Rin with Chong as the secretary of the Region (Kiernan 2008: 169). A survivor told Kiernan that Rin was "good to people, [who] did not kill people, and liked making love to women a lot" and he was "not cruel like Mok." However, after Chong was promoted to the region secretary in 1977, the situation became worse (ibid).

Region 35

The region covers mountainous areas and the coastal town of Kampot province. This area has the largest salt production site in the country. It was comprised of five districts. Some of its sub-districts, Sre Khnong and Sre Cheng, were revolutionary bases of the communists in the 1950s. The region was led by Kong Chap, who was also Mok's deputy of the Southwest zone committee.

Southwest Zone Structure

Vickery argued that the Southwest zone was known for “Pol Potism par excellence, the power base of the Pol Pot Central government” from which cadres were gradually spread to other parts of the country in 1976 (1984: 86). The reasons why this zone was special was that it was the oldest revolutionary communist base area and it had achieved the most both during the civil war and after 1975 (Ea 2005); it had the strongest and most experienced soldiers (Ith 1973: 20) and it had achieved rapid advancement and cooperated extraordinarily with the Party during the revolution (Etcheson 1984: 166). Its secretary, Mok, was from a poor background and was devoted to the communist revolution. He was honest to the Party and had clear and sharp political views (Pen and Neang 2002: 2).

Chhit Choeun alias Mok

A village of Prakeap, Trapeang Thom sub-district, District 105 is surrounded by paddy fields near the foot of Elephant Mountain. This is where Ta Mok was born in 1926 into a poor peasant family. Ta Mok, literally meaning Grandfather Mok, was his revolutionary name; another name was Grandfather 15. His original names and aliases included Chhit Choeun, Ek Choeun, Ung Choeun and Nguon Kong. When he was a monk in the 1940s, he was called Achar Choeun.¹⁰⁷ During the armed struggle period based in Sre Khnong and Sre Cheng sub-districts (Region 35) during the 1950s, he was called Voch because he liked climbing trees like a monkey.¹⁰⁸ When he was young, Mok lived with his grandmother because his parents could not support the

whole family. Mok's father, Ung Preak, was a head of the monks at Mohamontrey pagoda in Phnom Penh and his mother, Touch Soch, was a farmer in Takeo province.¹⁰⁹ In later years Mok was thin, tall, light-skinned, grey-haired and balding (Kiernan 2008: 87). Mok had been a monk for more than ten years, one year at his home village temple and another ten in Phnom Penh.¹¹⁰ After he left the monkhood when he was twenty-three, he got married in his home village to his cousin, Ouk Khem, with whom he had four daughters.

Mok was the eldest son in a family of seven siblings, three brothers and four sisters.¹¹¹ Mok's brother, Ung Chok alias Chong, was a secretary of district 55 and then in 1977 he was a secretary of Region 33 (Kiernan 2008: 169-170). Ung Poun, whose husband was a secretary of Neareay district of region 35, was one of Mok's sisters. Another brother, Ung Cham, was a former secretary of Pok Trabek sub-district.¹¹² Others sisters were Ung Kuob, Ung Keoun and Ung Ken.¹¹³ Mok joined the Issarak movement when he was twenty-three in 1949, the same year he left the monkhood,¹¹⁴ probably in Sre Khnong and Sre Cheng sub-district since they had been Issarak secret bases since the 1946. Then he was responsible for overseeing Tramkok district in Takeo province and another district in Kampong Speu province.¹¹⁵

In 1950, Mok joined the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), where he was very much favored. Then, in 1963, Mok became a member of the WPK Central committee (Heder and Tittmore 2004: 100), just three years after it was established. He became a secretary of the Southwest Zone in 1968 after a former secretary, Ma Mang alias Pang, died in the jungle; and he became a member of the CPK Standing

Committee in June 1971.¹¹⁶ Mok appointed his relatives and close friends to various important positions throughout the zone. In the early 1970s, Mok appointed his son-in-law, Meas Muth, as a secretary of District 105 and a deputy secretary of Region 13. In 1973, Khom, Mok's daughter, was promoted to the secretary of District 105, while her husband, Muth, was promoted to be commander of the 3rd Southwest Division (Kiernan 2008: 87). Mok's other daughters worked as medical staff and held important positions in hospitals in the Southwest and in Phnom Penh.

Administrative Units

During the less than four years that the Khmer Rouge were in power, the Southwest zone reshuffled its cadre frequently; Mok turned his zone to be the “clan dynasty” region of DK. Before 1975, all cadres were the clients of Mok, Chou Chet and other cadres. After the Western zone was separated from the Southwest, some cadre who were loyal to Chou Chet were transferred to the Western zone; however, some remained, occupying positions in the original Southwest. But these cadres were purged later; only those who were trusted by Mok were kept in their positions.

There was no mandate or term for cadre. Interviews with cadre in the Southwest showed that most of them rarely stayed in one position. One could be promoted or demoted; he/she could be promoted if they had a clean background or had important patrons. Usually, cadres who achieved high positions in their own territory were transferred to less developed areas for improvement.

Administratively, the zone was divided into Regions. Zones were also numbered, but these numbers were not widely used among people I interviewed.

Cadre never referred to the assigned number of the zone either. Regions had no name and they were generally known by numbers (Vickery 1984: 67). Compared to the current government structure, a Region is equivalent to a province, but the regions during DK did not follow pre-revolution administrative boundary lines. For example, Region 13 of the Southwest contains most of the districts of Takeo and some parts of Kampot. How the Regions were numbered remains unclear.

Zone Leadership and Administration

Administratively, the Southwest zone was headed by three permanent and several non-permanent cadres who were also members of the zone committee. The permanent members included a secretary, a deputy secretary and a permanent member who permanently held positions at the zone level. Non-permanent members were to hold positions at the Region level as secretaries. Therefore, non-permanent members of the zone were the secretary of the region or if one was promoted from the lower level as secretary of a region, he/she would become a member of the zone committee automatically.¹¹⁷ This inter-relationship continued down to sub-district level.

Zone and Region cadres were usually former intellectuals and old-hand members of CPK who joined the movement in the 1940s or 1950s. Some of them were former members of the ICP, *Issarak* and *Pracheachon* groups (Vickery 1984: 68). District-level cadres mostly joined the CPK in the 1960s and were promoted to positions by the Region or zone committee. Sub-district level cadres may have joined the revolution somewhat later, but no later than 1972.¹¹⁸ The lowest administration level was the village. The village committee was comprised of three members, all of

whom were nominated by the sub-district committee. The village chiefs, although they had not served CPK for long periods of time, were chosen from among the poor and illiterate peasants in the villages. In Region 13, the village committees were the residents of the same villages, although Ledgerwood and Vijghen write that village committees in other regions were brought from other areas, rather than serving in their own villages (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). Ledgerwood and Vijghen's argument could be said to apply to other regions of the Southwest, however, where village committee members were brought from Tramkok.

The Southwest zone secretary was Mok, who had held the position since 1968. Kang Chap took the position as deputy secretary since mid 1975, and Chan Von aka Som, a former teacher during the Sihanouk regime, was a zone permanent member. Kang Chap was the resident of the long-time revolutionary base of Chhuk district and Som was originally from Koh Thom district of Region 25. Sam Bith was a permanent member and also the chief of the zone military unit. According to a former district youth unit chief, Dok, among the four zone committee members, Mok and Bith were the most important cadres in the Southwest.¹¹⁹ Dok's analysis seems reliable because the other two members—Kang Chap and Som—more actively held positions at Region 35 and 13. Therefore, Mok and Bith played more important roles on the zone committee.

As Vickery has written, before 1975 zone and regional secretaries took over the armed forces and had political and administrative power within their territorial control (1984: 69). Vickery goes on to quote Heder as stating that when CPK leaders

Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan arrived in Phnom Penh, the Central government had no armed forces in hand. It was not until July 1975 that the armed forces were organized into national armed forces.

The Zone secretary had political and administrative power in the zone; the secretary took over economic, social affairs, and military affairs and he was also a member of the Central committee.¹²⁰ The Zone secretary had absolute power and he was referred to as the “king” of the zone by some low-level cadre.¹²¹

Kang Chap, who was a deputy secretary of the Southwest zone, was also the secretary of Region 35 where he controlled the area where salt was abundant. His deputy was Rin Nhev.¹²² Prior to 1975, almost all the cadre holding office in Region 35 and at the district level in this region were from the revolutionary support bases of Sre Khnong and Srey Cheng sub-districts in Chhouk district. All the cadres at the district and sub-district level were well-connected to Kang Chap and Rin Nhev.¹²³ Based on interviews with one of the sub-district chiefs in Chhouk district, in the Southwest zone, only Region 35 cadres were independent of Mok’s kin patronage network prior to 1975 because most of the district secretaries, deputy secretaries and members as well as sub-district secretaries were directly or indirectly connected to Kang Chap and Rin Nhev.¹²⁴ Others who held positions as secretaries in other regions did not have clients at the district and sub-district level; instead they were all Mok’s clients.

The Southwest zone non-permanent members included Sangha Heoung (before 1975) Non Suon, Ai, Yeay Chhim (literally Grandmother Chhim) and Saing Rin.

Saing Rin ran Region 33 until 1977 after he was replaced by Mok's brother Chong (Kiernan 2008: 169).

In late 1976 or early 1977, Kang Chap, the second member of the zone committee in the chain of command, was transferred to the Northern zone, probably to weaken his influence in the Southwest, and he was replaced by either Sam Bith or Mok's son-in-law Kol.¹²⁵

Region Leadership and Administration

Dok said that Region 13 had nine members on its leadership committee. Three of them held permanent positions in the Region office, while another six non-permanent members went down to hold positions at the district levels. Therefore, all five districts in Region 13 were the non-permanent members of the Region. Another region member held the position as the chief of region military unit.¹²⁶ Unlike the zone administration, from the region down to the sub-district level there were youth units whose role was to assist region, district and sub-district committees in daily administrative work. At the right hand of the CPK, the youth unit in each level was led by a unit committee which consisted of three members—a chief, a deputy chief and member.

The youth unit of each level did not have administrative and political power, but its role was important to assist with administrative work. Dok was appointed as the Tramkok sub-district youth unit chief in 1972 and then was promoted to district 105 youth unit chief a year later, after a former chief, Yon Horn, became military commander.¹²⁷ Kong was a youth unit chief of Popel sub-district. Dok's patron was

Region unit chief Som Choeun. Dok recalled that Choeun was his “*me*,” which means “leader” or “patron.” Dok referred to Kong as his “*kon chao*,” which means ‘child,’ ‘client’ or ‘follower’. Dok mentioned that as a district unit chief, he did not have political and administrative power and did not have the authority to make decisions because his youth unit was not independent of district 105. Every administrative communication needed to go through the administrative body. Dok added that, if the zone wanted to request some youth to be soldiers, the zone administrative committee had to send letters to the region secretary who would pass orders down to the region youth unit chief. The district youth unit was under the command of the region youth unit, the district youth unit was under the direction and supervision of the district administrative committee. The district youth unit was under the direct command of the region youth unit, but orders needed to go through the district leadership committee. The district youth unit chief had the political power to order the lower echelon of the youth unit chief, but communications had to go through the district committee. Monthly, Dok had to send a report to both the district secretary and the Region youth unit chief without fail. Dok referred to his tie to the region youth unit chief as *Ksae Bandoy* (straight line) and to district secretary as *Ksae Toteung* (opposite line).

The district youth chief could promote or demote the sub-district unit chief by sending a request to the sub-district secretary through the district secretary.

Before 1975, the role of the youth unit was to attract and educate youth to join the army and after 1975, its role was still to serve as the primary forces in ‘mobile units’ whose task was to work in the agricultural and irrigation system.

Region 13 was the great region of CPK.¹²⁸ Kiernan has called it “the heartland of the Pol Pot zone” (2008: 181). The region contains five districts, one of which was Tramkok, known as district 105 and as Mok’s birthplace. Som, the zone permanent member, took the position as secretary of this important region. Som’s deputy was Mok’s son-in-law Meas Muth or Khe Muth. In 1973, Muth was promoted to be the secretary of the 3rd Southwest Division of the Navy (Kiernan 2008: 87). The permanent member of the region was Neary Kheoun (Lady Kheoun) and all the district secretaries were non-permanent members of Region 13.

District Administration

Administratively, the district was similar to the Region. The district had a youth unit chief who served as the assistant to the district committee. All district secretaries in Region 13 were non-permanent members of the Region. District secretaries were mostly educated Party members who joined the CPK in the 1960s.¹²⁹

District administration perhaps involved more work with the local people than the Region. The district committee worked closely with sub-district chiefs in the field of agricultural production. Interviews showed that that district secretaries implemented their work in assigning of people in the village through their sub-district secretaries as well as giving orders to execute former Lon Nol government officials and base people who were ‘no-good’ elements. Although district secretaries were not widely known among the ordinary population, they were administratively close to local people through the sub-district secretaries. A former sub-district secretary, Neang, mentioned

that it was the district secretary who ordered and transferred him from one sub-district to another.

Tramkok or District 105

People and cadres who used to live in District 105 said that it was the model district of the Southwest. Ben Kiernan also wrote that Tramkok was the most ideologically advanced district of the CPK (2008: 88). In 1977, District 105 was awarded the revolutionary red flag by the Central government for its achievements and leadership. District 105 was Mok's birthplace and it had been the revolutionary base of the Southwest zone since the 1950s. Dok said that the district was run by Tiv Kiev, who joined CPK in 1968, until 1973 when he was replaced by Mok's daughter, Khom.¹³⁰ Tiv Kiev was an orphan who was adopted by a peasant family in Tramkok at a very young age and in 1973 Mok demoted and accused Kiev of "not having a clear heart" toward the revolution. Four years later in 1977, Mok completely lost trust in Kiev and he was sent to Chey O Panov prison along with his family members and men. Kiev was connected to Dok by marriage since Kiev's wife was Dok's aunt.

After serving as secretary for three years, Khom was promoted to the deputy secretary of Region 13 in 1976 before she died of illness a year later (Kiernan 2008: 169). Khom was replaced by another relative from Trapeang Thom, Chim, who was also Dok's patron, until 1977 when Chim was transferred to take over a rubber plantation section in Kampong Cham.¹³¹ Chim was replaced by his own older brother, Kith, until late 1977¹³² after he was replaced by Mok's brother-in-law and a former schoolteacher, San,¹³³ who remained in Tramkok until the Vietnamese arrived.

The permanent member was an illiterate man, Chay, who was Mok's brother. In 1978, according to a reliable source, Neang was promoted to be the permanent member of Tramkok, although Neang himself when interviewed did not provide that information. Ung Cham, another of Mok's brothers, who served as the secretary of Pok Trabek sub-district, was also a committee member of Tramkok (Kiernan 2008: 87).

The district 105 contained fourteen sub-districts—some of which, such as Trapeang Thom, Somrong and Cheang Tong—were former revolutionary bases. It was at this revolutionary base that Khieu Samphan and Hu Nim safely hid themselves after fleeing from government arrest in 1967. Most cadres in the Southwest zone came from these revolutionary bases.

The Model Cooperative

One of the sub-districts, Leaybo, in District 105 was selected by the zone committees during the meetings as the model sub-district in the Southwest in 1976.¹³⁴ Leaybo is located close to and west of Takeo town. It was the place where foreign delegates and journalists were sent to visit if they were sent to the countryside.¹³⁵ At least twice, foreigners were brought to visit this cooperative during Democratic Kampuchea. One visit was at the end of 1977, when a group of delegates from Europe and China were sent to visit there, and again in 1978 (Kiernan 2008: 184, 191). Sarun¹³⁶ told Ben Kiernan that once at the end of 1977, people were informed about guests visiting; they were told to finish work at 10:00 in the morning and to take a bath and get dressed to receive the guests when they visited the communal hall. Sarun

added that on that day workers were given enough food to eat. Tramkok was probably one of the most important districts of DK and it was where cooperative work and communal eating was first introduced; the model irrigation systems were also implemented in this sub-district. Dok, who oversaw youth in District 105 and who joined the meeting with Mok, said that after 1975 the Khmer Rouge prioritized the agricultural system and that the Southwest had the policy to develop the agricultural system throughout the zone starting from Takeo town to the west. Dok added that,

At the first stage, small paddy fields were merged into the bigger ones, some dikes are destroyed, and the surfaces of the fields were made even. There were no small paddy fields again; the puddles in the fields were filled out and the hills were made flat.... The plan was also to build model houses four by four meters for each family.

However, the plan to build model houses was not completed. “Since the woods were very far from Leaybo, only thirty percent of the model houses were completed,” said Neang. The reason of selecting Leaybo to be a model cooperative was because it was the closest sub-district to Takeo town, which became an important headquarters of the Southwest zone after 1975. Another villager, Sophal, who was a native of Leaybo and then in 1972 was evacuated to the Khmer Rouge liberated zone in Borset district of Kampong Speu province, and then was allowed to return to his native village in late 1974, said that “Leaybo was chosen because it was close to Takeo town. Foreign guests were put to stay in the town when they visited and Leaybo was where [foreign guests] were allowed to see when they visit the countryside.”¹³⁷

Neang was a Southwest zone cadre. He was transferred from one sub-district to

another within District 105. In 1976, Neang was promoted by the district secretary from a non-permanent member of Nheng Nhorng sub-district to Leaybo to take up the position as a permanent member. By the time Neang took the position as a permanent member, Leaybo was about to be selected as a model cooperative. Nov said that “upon arriving [in Leaybo], I found that this sub-district did not have enough livestock for agricultural production and people were living in famine. The annual yield was very low and people ate porridge.”¹³⁸ Neang and his sub-district secretary, Hoy, and his deputy, Po, sent requests to the district secretary to find better ways to improve people’s livelihood. The district secretary responded by ordering livestock and an additional labor force from a youth unit to be brought to Leaybo.¹³⁹ The district youth unit chief, Dok, said that his unit, which consisted of a mobile youth labor force, was sent to dig canals in Leaybo. Neang added that soon afterwards tractors and bulldozers were sent to Leaybo for development and then it was turned into a model sub-district.

Neang was a permanent member at Leaybo for a year; near the end of his term he observed that Leaybo made significant progress and achieved much higher yields and people had a better standard of living. “Leaybo was a model sub-district,” said Neang, “because it was the first to achieve three tons per hectare.”

Sarika, who left her home village in Leaybo sub-district to Phnom Penh in 1972, was classified as a New Person when she returned. She was persecuted by her old friends who were full rights people. Sarika recalled that although Leaybo was turned into a model sub-district, the people’s living standard was not improved; people

still lived in starvation like before. People ate gruel and they worked much harder.

Sarika added that:

The New and Base People did not eat together. Base People had better food and were better treated when they were sick. New People still ate gruel as before. A beautiful and young adult girl from Phnom Penh was sent to commune militia center because she said that she did not have food to eat. She was used to having enough to eat, and delicious food. She was detained for nearly a month. My relatives who were Base People told me that that young girl was raped and then killed.¹⁴⁰

In 1977, Hoy was transferred to Kampong Cham and another man, Ke, from Trapeang Thom sub-district replaced Hoy as secretary. Nieng, a native of Tramkok sub-district, replaced Po as deputy secretary after Po was transferred to Romchong sub-district. Neang was transferred to Srei Ronong sub-district.

After Ke came, the situation was even harsher towards New People. Sarika recalled that Ke, the new Leaybo secretary, came to observe people working at the worksite every two or three days and village chief came every day.

Honorary Red Flag

Each district throughout DK competed to get an honorary red flag; the competition included comparing the amount of rice sent to the Central government and other services that the zone had performed for the nation.¹⁴¹ On June 30, 1977, District 105 was one of three districts in the country to be awarded an Honorary Red Flag by the CPK.¹⁴² The red flag was awarded to Tramkok as a model in “three fields” which included defense, continuation and construction of socialist revolution. The Honorary Red Flag was used as a tool to encourage people to improve agricultural

production and at the same time to encourage cadre to focus on destroying the enemy, who was said to be burrowing inside the population and the Party (ibid).

The CPK Central committee wrote in the *Tung Padevat* Magazine in 1977 that it had sent cadre and farmers in Tramkok:

In order to encourage the active involvement of the masses to achieve the tasks of defending the country, continuing and building the socialist revolution with the speed of a great leap forward in consecutive years, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, hereby decided that any district with the best qualifications in terms of defending the country, continuing and building the socialist revolution, is entitled to be awarded the Honorary Red Flag (page 1).

The Party focused mainly on the amount of rice they received from each district throughout the country. For this reason, District 105 sent the most rice to the Central government, regardless of how much rice was left for the people in the base areas. The Honorary Red Flag announcement continued:

The fact is that, these three districts are poor, having farming soil with less quality. Villagers had been living in poor conditions since the old regime. However, their rice production climaxed as a result of the implementation of the Party's 1976 plan. Sufficient seeds were well-prepared; problems of people's living were tackled, while much rice went to the state....This is a prominent victory for your comrades. Also it is a prominent victory for our people as a whole, our army, our revolution and our Party (Page 3).

Dok, who was proud for the success in his district, mentioned that in that year after Tramkok was awarded an honorary red flag, the population throughout the district was given abundant rice and desserts to eat to congratulate them on the success. They were also given a day off work after the party.¹⁴³ Another Base person,

Ung, whose mother was imprisoned and tortured to death in 1973 when she rejected the order to begin communal eating, said “everybody applauded to congratulate the award.”¹⁴⁴

About the people’s living standard, the Honorary Red Flag continued:

Generally speaking, in the past six months, our people’s living conditions are improved, meaning the Party’s regiment are implemented....In comparison, it is better than last year....So, it implies that there are active movements for socialist revolution and the construction of socialism (Page 13).

This award was not only to encourage the district itself, but also to inspire, as well as warn other districts to make sure that they receive high yields of rice. “Try harder to solve the problem. It must be done without fail, for the near future and far future,” the Honorary Red Flag continued.

Ung,¹⁴⁵ a native of the revolutionary base at Samrong sub-district of District 105, objected to what was written in the Honorary Red Flag. Ung said that even after District 105 was awarded the red flag, the people’s living conditions did not improve. The people in his village still ate gruel, although he did not know the situation in other villages.

Angkor Chey or District 106

Pen Yon held the position as secretary in District 106 until he was arrested after 1975. Yeay Ran, who was originally from the former Southwest zone revolutionary support base of Cheang Tong sub-district, replaced Yon as secretary. The arrest of Pen Yon was probably because he was Pen Yuth’s brother. Pen Yuth was

the *Pracheachon* newspaper writer who worked with Nop Bophan and Chou Chet. Pen Yon was closer to Chou Chet rather than Mok and the arrest was probably because he was Chou Chet's client.

Later Som Choeun, who was the chief of the youth unit of Region 13, was promoted to be vice-secretary of Angkor Chey. At the same time, Nhen, who was Yeay Kheoun's husband, was promoted to be a permanent member of the district. Nhen, originally from Cheang Tong sub-district, was small and short.¹⁴⁶ Nhen's wife, Yeay Kheoun, was a permanent member of Region 13.

Treang or District 107

Ven had been the secretary of district 107 after the coup in 1970, with Keat as his vice-secretary. In 1975 or 1976, Ven committed a moral offense with the chief of the women's group, and he was demoted to deputy and another cadre, Khaem, replaced him.¹⁴⁷ Although Ven committed a crime, the zone committee did not harm him until about a year later when he disappeared from Treang. After Khaem was Neary Phorn, whose husband was Som Choeun, who was then a region youth unit chief. In 1977, Mok's son-in-law Soeun was promoted to be secretary of Treang after serving as division commander in 1975 (Kiernan 2008: 88,180).

The arrival of Soeun brought significant changes to Treang. The new secretary wanted to cut off connections among people who were loyal to the former secretaries. The first thing that he did was to demote all the full rights people to become 'ordinary citizens' and give new people better food rations (see Kiernan 2008: 188). Soeun perhaps did not trust full rights people; that were why he brought some people from

Tramkok with him after he took the position as a secretary at Treang (ibid). Soeun's arrival saw people's living conditions improve, but at the same time the killings increased. This reason was probably Soeun's wish to eliminate people who were connected to the former secretaries.

Koh Andet or District 108

Sean was the secretary and Pal was his deputy in District 108. San Ouch or Neang Ouch alias San was a permanent member. San, a former high school teacher, was originally from Koh Thom district, and was Mok's brother-in-law. San's background was not good in revolutionary terms because he had brothers who were high-ranking commanders in the Lon Nol government. But since he was connected to Mok by marriage he was safe in DK.

Sometime before 1977, San was promoted to be the secretary of Koh Andet after Sean was demoted to a member. In 1977, San was given the position as the secretary of Tramkok district.

Kirivong or District 109

Another of Mok's brothers-in-law, Tith, became secretary of District 109. It was unclear who had the position as secretary before Tith, but Dok mentioned that Yeay Kheoun was also the secretary of Kirivong before she was promoted to be a permanent member of Region 13.¹⁴⁸ There was no sign that Kheoun was harmed by her supervisors at that time. A sub-district secretary in Kirivong told Ben Kiernan that the former district secretary before Tith was kind to new people, so he/she was

replaced by Tith (Kiernan 2008: 189). Before Tith arrived, most village chiefs in Kirivong were not local people; instead, they were brought from Damrei Romeal region in Tramkok. Another survivor told Kiernan that Tith was very harsh to New People and under his leadership many people were sent away and killed (ibid).

Kirivong borders Vietnam. Tith's taking up the position in this district was probably to control people and stem the flow of people fleeing to Vietnam.

Dany was a native of Tramkok. During the DK regime, she was put in a mobile unit where she mostly worked in Kirivong. Dany said that cadre did not allow people to walk to other villages without permission. "Some families succeeded in fleeing to Vietnam and others were arrested when they tried to cross the border and then the captives disappeared," said Dany.¹⁴⁹

In 1977, as the tension with Vietnam increased, hundreds of thousands of people were brought to Tramkok to prevent them from fleeing to Vietnam (Kiernan 2008: 190). People who were evacuated from Kirivong were dubbed *Cho Prei* 'bandit' by Tramkok cadre, probably because of their intention to flee to Vietnam. Dany, although she was a Base person, was treated like other New People. "I worked hard from morning till dusk under strict observation from the village cadre and ate inadequately like other people" said Dany (ibid).

Sub-District Leadership and Administration

The sub-district committee consisted of a secretary, a deputy-secretary, a permanent and a number of non-permanent members depending on the size of sub-district. Neang, who was promoted to sub-district secretary in 1975 after joining the

revolution in 1970, and then to district member in 1978, said that the sub-district secretary took charge of politics and general tasks; a deputy-secretary looked over economics, culture and social affairs and a permanent member controlled education in the sub-district, and the non-permanent members' duties were to join with people working in the worksite.¹⁵⁰

In 1975, the sub-district committee was given the responsibility to maintain security in the community. The sub-district's militia center '*Kang Chhlop*' was responsible for guaranteeing security and tracking down enemies among New People in the sub-district. The chief of the militia center was a permanent member of the sub-district.¹⁵¹ For security purposes, Neang added that "the militia unit chief could send militia '*Chhlop*' to any village in his sub-district to spy on people without informing the village committee since his duties were that of a sub-district permanent member."

The duty of the militia was to spy on 'candidates' and 'depositees' at night to see if they were speaking badly about the revolution, and also to determine if there were enemies hidden among the people at the worksite. The militias were to report to their chief right away if something unusual occurred among those people.

However, the militia center also had the duty to reeducate people who made minor mistakes in the village, such as stealing fruit or showing up late for work. Ea, who did research about the Southwest Zone security system, wrote that the sub-district's militia center had the duty to reeducate those who committed minor mistakes in the village. After this reeducation, if those punished showed respect to the Party, they were allowed to go back to the village (Ea 2005: 12).

Like the region, and the district, the sub-district had an assistant association known as the youth unit whose job was to assist the sub-district committee in implementing their daily work. During the war in the early 1970s, there was a youth unit in the village which was intended to attract young people to join the army. After 1975, the youth unit was abolished at the village level and all unmarried youth were sent to the sub-district youth unit. Kong, a former youth unit chief in Popel sub-district of Tramkok said that he led unmarried male youth in Popel to farm, dig canals, clear the woods, climb palm trees for sugar production, raise animals and look after livestock. “Only unmarried youth were assigned to be in the youth unit. Female and male youth were in separated groups, sometimes worked and ate together, but did not live together,” said Kong.¹⁵²

From early 1977, the sub-districts were given more duties. Sub-district cooperatives were created under committee members’ control; each sub-district cooperative consisted of more than one thousand families.¹⁵³ However, this was not applied to all villages depending on the situation and the population of the villages. Some villages were not formed into these categories; instead two or three villages were combined into one larger ‘multi-village cooperative’ *Sahakor Ruom Phumi* with a population of less than one thousand families.¹⁵⁴

Neang’s role became more tense in 1977 after the sub-district cooperatives were established. Neang said that:

From 1977, sub-district secretaries were called sub-district cooperative chiefs and everyone on the [sub-district committee] was busier than the previous years. [We] had to go to the field every day to encourage

people to increase production to meet the requirements of not less than three tons per hectare. Every ten days, all sub-district cooperative committees had to join the meeting with all people throughout the sub-district to promote farming production and to teach about farming techniques to make sure that the rice yield was not below three tons per hectare.

Keng, another sub-district secretary, said that from 1977, sub-district cooperative committee controlled all rice and property in the sub-district. Every month on the 10th, 20th and 30th, people had a day off from work and were allowed to return to their villages where they were served a large meal which included beef or pork and desserts. They then had to join a meeting with the sub-district and village committee. The sub-district secretary talked to people to encourage them to increase farming production. Then, people were told to express their opinions about the revolution. Although many survivors said that people disappeared when they mentioned hardship in the cooperative, Keng said that this never happened in the sub-district he controlled. However, he also heard from other districts that people were taken away after they complained about something during the meeting.

The sub-district secretary had the right to appoint people to be village chiefs, but only the district secretary had the authority to approve it.¹⁵⁵ After one was approved by the district committee, a meeting was held in the cooperative to inform people about the new chiefs.

The connections between district and sub-district level were also linked. Among the fourteen sub-districts of Tramkok district, only some sub-district secretaries, especially in the former revolutionary support bases, were members of the

district committee and sub-district secretary at the same time. Mok's brother, Cham, served as the secretary of Pok Trabek sub-district and at the same time he was also a committee member of Tramkok (Kiernan 2008: 87). Boeun, who was the secretary of Cheang Tong, was also a member of Tramkok district with Cham.¹⁵⁶ Boeun's husband was Chorn, a Popel sub-secretary. Kong, who worked very closely with Chorn, said that Chorn was originally from Kampuchea Krom (present-day South Vietnam). He spoke Khmer with some Vietnamese accent. Chorn was kind and popular and loved people; and unlike other secretaries, he ate with the people most of the time. Chorn often provided clothes to needy people (ibid).

CHAPTER 5

PURGES IN THE SOUTHWEST

Purges of the Untrustworthy: Lon Nol Officials

“The Communist Party intended to kill people considered to be untrustworthy, such as former civil servants and soldiers.”

A note from a former CPK military commander.¹⁵⁷

After the CPK victory there was evidence showing that the CPK had a policy to kill former Lon Nol government officials including soldiers, doctors, teachers and other officials. CPK cadres were instructed to kill former officials right away if found. A CPK cadre, Em Min alias Sen, wrote in his confession, “If it was found that anyone was an official they were killed one at a time.”¹⁵⁸ At the first stage, the CPK aimed at executing defeated Lon Nol military officers from top commanders down to the lowest level military officers (Etcheson 2005: 7). CPK was very clear that those soldiers would be executed with no exception since they would never be trusted. Party deputy secretary Nuon Chea ordered, “the old soldiers, do not keep them for anything, since they cannot easily abandon their old ideas; so smash and destroy them all.”¹⁵⁹

Interviewed people who were evacuated from Phnom Penh in April 1975 recalled that they saw Khmer Rouge soldiers escorting former Lon Nol soldiers away and they were convinced that they were executed.¹⁶⁰ Rank and file soldiers, teachers, doctors, engineers and educated people were identified among the population and persecuted later when they arrived in the base areas.

As mentioned earlier, in the Southwest zone, evacuees were placed at *Champa* pagoda in Tramkok for weeks for ‘biography investigation,’ where men were encouraged to tell CPK cadres about their previous jobs so that the cadre could bring them back to resume the same positions. Some former Lon Nol officials who survived this stage were hunted down again in the villages or at the labor camps. Those soldiers and officials were tracked down throughout the regime (Ea 2005: 10).

Ea described how the CPK used various methods to track down the enemy in the villages, including having villagers write personal histories, reports, surveillance as well as have them spy on one another (ibid). CPK cadre pushed people to work productively, while simultaneously another intention was to search and wipe clean the enemy. A slogan confirmed this policy, “one hand raises the crops, the other hand attacks the enemy” (Chandler 1999b: 41).

CPK cadres began to arrest, imprison or execute Lon Nol government officials within weeks after those officials returned to their home villages. Mao’s father was a technician at a cement factory in Kampot province until 1972 when his family moved to Phnom Penh to avoid persecution. In 1975, the family returned to their home village in Nheng Nhorng sub-district of Tramkok. New village committee members knew clearly about his father’s job before he left Nheng Nhorng three years before. Within a week after the family arrived in the village, Mao’s father was called by the village chief named Thorn, ordered by the sub-district chief to join a “meeting” and never returned home. “Thorn came to tell my father that a sub-district chief needed my father to go back to work because he was a former technician. My father accepted the

invitation and left quickly with Thorn,” said Mao. Mao has a vivid memory of his father wearing shorts and a blue T-shirt at the time. He said he expected that he would never see his father again. He added, “my father did not say good-bye to us and I watched him being escorted to the sub-district office. He disappeared forever.”¹⁶¹

Don was a base person living in Samrong sub-district of Tramkok. He never fled Samrong, but three of his brothers went to Phnom Penh to study and work. In 1973, Don’s father, a former village chief during Sihanouk time, was imprisoned and executed six months later because he had sons working in what was called “the enemy-controlled zone.” In April 1975, all three of Don’s brothers returned home to Samrong sub-district. They were assigned to work in other areas. One brother, who was a soldier, was killed in late 1975. Another was sent to Sanlong prison in Region 33 (Kampot province) and a third was assigned to work in a mobile unit and later disappeared. Within two years, Don lost all three brothers.¹⁶²

The so-called Khmer-Hanoi,¹⁶³ who had been being purged since 1972, continued to be hunted down for execution. Pheap’s husband, Hok, was a Khmer-Hanoi. Hok was originally from the former Issarak base in Sre Khnong sub-district and was sent to Hanoi after 1954. Han was not purged until 1976, probably because he had a cousin working as a village chief. After returning to Cambodia in 1971, Hok was assigned to work as a technician with responsibility to build bridges and to make iron tools and repair weapons. In late 1976 or early 1977, Hok was sent to work in a Phnom Penh suburb and disappeared. Pheap said she knew that Hok was killed.¹⁶⁴

In the next stage, the relatives of those deceased persons were also persecuted. CPK cadres continued to purge other living relatives. Pheap recalled a woman who was in the same group with her named Porn, who was persecuted after her husband was arrested and disappeared. Porn's husband, Torn, was arrested during lunchtime in the communal hall in front of other people. Porn and Sorn were evacuated from Kampot town. On the day Porn was arrested, Pho remembered that it was at noon, just after they finished work. A cooperative chief spoke softly to people in her group "before going to lunch, we will have a meeting; New and Old people, please sit separately." On that day, Porn was arrested and disappeared.

Purges of the Untrustworthy in Patronage Networks: CPK Cadres

"We are not worried about the external, military aggression. We worry most of all about the enemy inside."

Nuon Chea told his Danish counterpart in August 1978.

The CPK was convinced that internal enemies, hidden among the populations and cadre, were trying to destroy the revolution from inside—*khmang bonkop si rong phtey khnong*. In 1977, Party Secretary Pol Pot announced to CPK cadres, "External enemy were relatively easy to identify. External enemy had been scared by Cambodia's powerful Chinese friends. Internal enemies were hard to locate and considered more dangerous" (Chandler 1999b: 43).

Chandler divided the purges into two phases. The first purge targeted soldiers and civilians who were connected to the Lon Nol regime. They were arrested and killed right away. The second purge, which started in October 1975, targeted people who were accused of working to destroy the revolution. These enemies were tortured, interrogated, and forced to write “confessions” to search for their patronage networks before they were executed (ibid).

The April 1978 issue of the *Tung Padevat* Magazine noted, “the majority of internal enemies are from the petty bourgeois; a few come from the farmer class, but [they are] farmers without the nature of farmers: phony, playful bourgeois.”¹⁶⁵ Among those enemies, an S-21 cadre wrote in his notebook, were: “10 percent of the zones, twenty percent of the regions, twenty percent of the districts and 40-50 percent of the cooperatives.”¹⁶⁶

The CPK believed that in order to destroy the revolution from inside, the internal enemies committed even small offenses such as breaking their spoons or plows, hurting the cows when plowing or other acts that local cadres might not notice. The magazine continued, “the enemy destruction begins with the breaking of stalks during transplanting seedlings; they do not transplant from the stalk and roots at all—they wreck the stalks to destroy them, they destroy during the harvest, they destroy during transport, and they destroy during threshing.”¹⁶⁷

Although internal enemies were ‘smashed’ in the Southwest after April 1975, it seemed that the purge of cadres was related to the rooting out of untrustworthy cadre and cadre in certain patronage systems. These cadres were purged because they were

connected to former zone committees who were rivals of Mok. Mok began to purge cadres in his home area of Region 13 before spreading to other regions in the Southwest. After the purges, most of them were sent to the zone prisons rather than the Central security prison S-21. As revealed by Heder and Tittmore, only about thirty cadres were brought from the Southwest zone to S-21 (2004: 102).

The first cadre to be purged by Mok was probably the former district 105 secretary from 1970-1973, Tiv Kiev. The demotion of Kiev was probably because Mok no longer trusted him or because he failed to implement CPK tasks to Mok's satisfaction in his home district of Tramkok. Immediately, Mok replaced Kiev with his own daughter. Little is known about Kiev's alleged treachery. The only information was exacted from Kiev's nephew-in-law, Dok, who said that Kiev was demoted because he was under suspicion of *Angkar* and he was accused of not 'having a clear heart'.¹⁶⁸ However, Dok did not know his real mistake and did not believe that Kiev betrayed the CPK. Kiev was probably the first cadre to be demoted from his position before 1975; however, Kiev was still alive in 1977 when he was sent to Chey O Pnao prison in Region 13.

Shortly thereafter, Mok continued to search for Kiev's client network. First, his family members, including his wife and at least two of his children, were sent to the same prison.¹⁶⁹ The purge also continued to envelop Kiev's trusted cadres who supported him in Tramkok. A young cadre, recalled by Dok, was Kiev's close messenger, who was also Dok's brother-in-law. Dok recalled that his brother-in-law

was accused after Kiev was purged in 1977; he was sent to a labor camp and then to Sanlong prison in Region 35 (Kampot province).

In mid 1975, Chou Chet, who was then Mok's zone deputy secretary, was promoted to the secretary of the newly created Western zone. At the time the Southwest was separated, Chet was likely to be seen as Mok's rival (Kiernan 2008: 88). Chou Chet was a native of Kampong Cham province and joined the ICP in April 1951 in Vietnam. Chet returned to Cambodia a year later, and then married in 1954 to Nen alias Ly who was the secretary of Oudong district during DK. It is not sure when Mok and Chet's relations became torn apart. However, Kenneth Quinn reported that in 1973 Mok probably turned against Chet because of his stance in support of the Vietnamese and Sihanouk. The same year his authority and influence were reduced and his followers began to have disputes with Mok (Cited in Kiernan 2008: 78, 1985: 374). Another reason that Chet did not get along well with Mok was that Chet rejected the population evacuation plan of Phnom Penh, which had already been approved by Mok (Kiernan 2008: 80).

After Chet left, some of his clients were still holding positions in the Southwest. These cadres were gradually purged by the zone committee with Mok's knowledge. Mok purged all untrusted cadre and replaced them with trusted ones who were originally from the former revolutionary base in Tramkok district. Purges in the Southwest began with Mok's distrust with former revolutionary cadres such as Chou Chet, Sok Thuok and Non Son.

After 1975, old-time cadre Pen Yon was dropped as District 106 secretary and replaced by Mok's trusted cadre, Yeay Ran (Lady Ran), from Cheang Tong sub-district. Although no written documents were found related to Yon's disappearance, it was clear that Yon was purged because of his connection with some of Mok's rivals such as Non Suon and Chou Chet. Pen Yon was the brother of Pen Yuth, who was an editor of the leftist *Pracheachon* newspaper which criticized the Sihanouk regime (1954-1970).

Non Suon alias Chey joined the anti-French resistance movement in mid 1940s with other figures: Keo Meas, a veteran revolutionary and Ney Sarann, the secretary of the Northeast zone (Chandler 1999b: 54). Before that period, he was sent to prison by Sihanouk in 1962 until 1970 when he fled the city to join the revolution (ibid). Before 1975, Chey was also a member of the Southwest zone committee; however, he did not have good connections with Mok. The special zone, created in 1971, was run by Vorn Vet alias Thuok until 1974 when he was sent to take over Region 11 (Koh Kong province).¹⁷⁰ Vorn Vet appointed Non Suon as secretary of Region 25 where he took a position until 1975 when he was promoted to be the minister of agriculture of DK (Chandler 1999b: 54). Although he was one of the Southwest zone committee members, Non Suon had never been close to Mok. In his confession at S-21, Suon wrote, "we were not good friends although we worked with each other since 1945 and I was also afraid of Mok" (Kiernan 1985: 380). After Region 25 became the Southwest's property, Mok replaced Suon with Som Chea alias Sdeoung.

The conflict between Mok and his rivals such as Chou Chet, Non Suon and Vorn Vet became clear after the CPK took power in 1975. The problem was about the division of power. At the time, some of Mok's rival's clients still held positions in the Southwest. In Region 13, Mok began to purge those cadres and replaced them with his relatives and close friends.¹⁷¹

In early November 1976 Non Suon was arrested by the CPK when he had just gotten off the plane from a visit to China (Kiernan 2008: 203, Chandler 1999b: 54). A year later, in 1977, Vorn Vet, who was then a deputy prime ministry of DK, was arrested and sent to S-21. As one of Mok's rivals, Vorn Vet wrote in his confession that Non Suon and Chou Chet were very close allies and that they had both agreed to fight against Mok (Kiernan 2008: 80).

During 1976, there were widespread arrests among Region 25 cadre (Ea 2005: 100). Most of them were accused of trying to stage a coup against the CPK. This was because the names of senior Region 25 cadre were in the confessions of cadres who were sent to S-21 (ibid). Soon after that Non Suon was arrested in November 1976. At S-21, Suon continued the pattern by naming his close associates at Region 25.

Som Chea was probably in favor with his former secretary Non Suon rather than Mok; and Chea probably disagreed with Mok on some points. The first thing he did after he became secretary of Region 25 was that he moved the region headquarters to Takmao, twenty miles from its former site, probably to have closer contact with Suon (Kiernan 2008: 202). A few months after Nuon was arrested in November 1976, Chea was also arrested, on March 15, 1977 and sent to S-21. Chea was replaced by his

deputy, Sek Sat alias Prak, who was also Vorn Vet and Non Suon's client.¹⁷² Sek Sat served as secretary until May 13, 1978 when he was arrested and sent to S-21.

Meng was a base person. In May 1976, he was promoted from village chief to deputy secretary of a sub-district in Sa-ang of region 25. Meng recalled that from 1975, another person named Sean from Tramkok was promoted to secretary of Sa-ang district and the former secretary disappeared. Meng heard from other districts that most district secretaries were brought in from Takeo province.

My district secretary was Seang; he came from Tramkok. Ta Sdeong [Som Chea revolutionary] was promoted to be the secretary of Region [25] to replace with Ta Suon [Non Suon]. After Ta Sdeong arrived, lots of cadres from Takeo came to take positions in the Region 25. I do not know the destiny of the former secretaries, but I think that most of them were accused of being connected to the former secretary, Ta Suon, said Meng.¹⁷³

Kompha led his family of six to flee to Phnom Penh in 1971 because he was frightened by the CPK army because he was from a well-off family in Koh Thom district, where he worked as a pig raiser and seller.¹⁷⁴ After the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, Kompha's wife wanted to go to Pursat because her home village was there; however, Kompha refused and insisted on going back to his birthplace in Koh Thom. Kompha said that after Som Chea became the secretary of Region 25, there was not much change. Somebody told Kompha that Non Suon and Som Chea were close friends. Kompha said,

Chea was nice and talked to people in a friendly way, but the district secretary was not as nice as Chea. He [the district secretary] ordered the arrest of New People who used to work as soldiers, doctors and engineers. A family of eleven was arrested immediately after they were found out

that they were a doctor's family; but the situation was good, people had some food to eat. New and Old people ate together. In 1977-1978, more and more people were brought from Takeo to take power in the Region 25. Since then, the situation became worse. Some people from Phnom Penh and some base people with unclean background were executed. People were brought deeper into Cambodian territory from the Vietnamese border because the cadres were worried that they would flee to Vietnam.¹⁷⁵

Purge in Region 33 (Kampot)

Region 35 was the place where cadres were purged the most. The region was run by Mok's deputy, Kang Chap, until late 1976 or early 1977 when he was transferred to the Northern zone. The exact date Kang Chap was transferred to the Northern zone is unknown. According to Kiernan, Kang Chap was still a representative of the Southwest zone during the talks with Vietnamese counterparts in May 1976 (see Kiernan 2008: 111-115). By that time, the Northern zone secretary, Koy Thuon, had already been placed in CPK custody (Koy Thuon was taken into the custody on April 8, 1976 after an explosion occurred in Siem Reap province of the Northern Zone) (Chandler 1999b: 46).

However, by April 1977, Kang Chap was the secretary of Kampong Thom province and the president of the DK "judiciary committee" (Kiernan 2008: 343). Kang Chap was believed to replace Koy Thuon after Thuon was nominated the president of the DK Commerce Commission (Carney 1989: 92). Another sub-district secretary, Keng,¹⁷⁶ also mentioned that Kang Chap disappeared from the zone committee at the end of 1976 or early 1977. Another survivor from Region 35, Sopheak, said that when Chap was transferred to the Northern zone, there was no sign

of purge in Region 33; it was after he left that cadres at the district and sub-district level were purged.¹⁷⁷ “Chap was sent to the Northern zone where he was promoted to the secretary....There was no sign of purges when he left,” recalled Sopheak.

In the northern zone, Chap was the secretary of Kampong Thom province while another cadre, Sok, who was also from the Southwest, was the deputy secretary of the Northern zone, which was run by Ke Pauk. Chap probably worked closely with Sok since they were from the same original zone (Kiernan 2008: 403). Sok fled to Vietnam in 1978, when he was transferred to the Eastern zone to take over the zone, then Kang Chap was arrested quickly on August 2, 1978 (Carney 1989: 102).

Kang Chap’s absence from the Southwest sparked difficulties for cadre who were loyal to him. Keng, who worked as the secretary of a sub-district in Kampot province, said that the purge of Region 13 cadres at the region, district and sub-district level began in early 1977. Keng believed that Mok sent Kang Chap to the Northern zone in order to cut off the patronage line between Kang Chap and his supporters who were old veterans in the Southwest since the 1950s or 1960s. Keng recalled that:

Cadre in the district and other sub-districts began to disappear one after another after Ta Chap [Kang Chap] was removed from the Southwest zone. The transfer [of Kang Chap] was probably something wrong with him. He should not have been moved because he was Mok’s deputy. After that, Mok purged almost all of old cadre and replaced with new cadre from Takeo.¹⁷⁸

The next person to be purged after Kang Chap left was his Region deputy secretary, Rin Nhev. Rin Nhev was a close ally of Kang Chap; both of them were from the same area of Chhouk district.¹⁷⁹ Nhev, who was Keng’s patron, was a former

monk who studied at Buddhist University in Phnom Penh and joined the revolution shortly after he left the monkhood.¹⁸⁰ Then, district secretaries disappeared. Although he did not know where those cadres were sent to, Keng assumed that they were killed. Keng recalled one of his close friends, Chen, who was the secretary of Chhouk district, was purged and was replaced with Chen's deputy, Ty, who was also originally from Chhouk district. However, Ty disappeared after he held the position at Chouk for only six months. The disappearance of Ty was also confirmed by Sopheak, who said that Ty and former secretary Chen were very close friends and both were also close to Rin Nhev.¹⁸¹ Keng himself said that he narrowly escaped being purged by Mok; because he worked very hard for the Party he could avoid arrest. Keng added that in July 1977, there was a policy from the Southwest zone committee to pardon all cadre in Region 35, which meant that cadre who were connected to other deceased cadre were forgiven and allowed to hold positions as usual.¹⁸² He said, "after the pardon policy was implemented in July 1977, cadre no longer disappeared and there was no reshuffle of cadre until the Vietnamese attacked." Keng was the only cadre in Region 35 who mentioned a pardon policy for the cadre in the region, district and sub-district level. This information appears reliable since by late 1977, most cadres in Region 35 were already from Takeo, sent there by Mok. One of Mok's brothers-in-law held the position as secretary of Noreay district in this region. The pardon policy may also have applied to the New People who were considered enemies of the state.

Mok's Umbrella: The Spread of Power

Hinton argues that the purges during DK centralized power of a specific group of people who were in the same patronage network (2005: 126). This could imply that the purged cadre was not in this set of networks of the most powerful patrons. Hinton added that those patronage networks were under the leadership of *Angkar*, literally meaning “the Organization.” *Angkar* was sacred, a body that everyone needed to respect and obey without fail. Mao’s father, when asked by *Angkar* to attend the meeting, decided to go without hesitation although he knew that the risk of being executed was very high. Hinton compared the respect for *Angkar* to Buddhism, which was the state religion in pre-1975 Cambodia. In Buddhism, those who harmed the religion would receive sin or bad karma in the future or in the next life. Similarly, during DK, those who were against *Angkar*, were warned, punished or even killed. *Angkar* was the institution that everyone had to love, believe in and thank for all the good it had done (Hinton 2005: 128). *Angkar* was the patron of the cadre and loyal followers, who provided them with rank, food and prestige; and in return, the CPK expected respect, loyalty and support to *Angkar* (ibid). If one was not loyal to *Angkar*, by stealing food, running away from cooperatives or betraying *Ankgar*, this would result in punishment or execution.

Base people were already trained to love *Angkar*, while the New People were educated to love and work for *Angkar* when they arrived in the countryside. In the base areas, the CPK cadre taught that nothing was more important than *Angkar* or that *Angkar* was everything. New People recalled that when family members got sick, they

were not allowed to visit them because CPK cadres told them that the sick were taken care of by *Angkar*. As mentioned earlier, cadres were required to take an oath to commit “to serve *Angkar* without conditions.” After some political training, youth found that *Angkar* was even more important than their parents. *Angkar* is like the patron of everyone (Hinton 2005: 131). CPK cadres taught youth to hate their parents, but to love *Angkar*; their parents did not deserve to be their parents, but *Angkar* did (Maguire 2005: 58).

Therefore, all cadres who were purged were accused of being against *Angkar*’s rule. In the Southwest zone, I would divide the purges into two phases. The first started after April 1975 when CPK took over the country. During this stage, Mok began to wipe out former cadre who had joined the revolution years earlier and placed his relatives and trusted friends to control the district and sub-district levels throughout his zone. During this time, the Southwest zone had completed the second evacuation of the ‘no-good element’ people to the malaria-infected areas of the Northwestern and Northern zones.

The second phase started in late 1976 or early 1977 until DK collapsed, during which Mok’s trusted cadres were sent to control other zones throughout the country.

Mok, the king of the Southwest zone, was the head of *Angkar* who had more power than anyone else in his zone. The secretary of a zone, like Mok, was powerful and influential; he was able to establish patronage networks throughout the area he controlled (See Hinton 2005: 134).

Before the April 1975 victory, all DK zone secretaries including Mok had absolute power both politically and militarily in their zones. Seeing this as a danger to the Party itself, the CPK committee members merged all military forces under CPK control. As a result, three months after the victory, an important ceremony was organized in which those secretaries handed over their military forces to the Central government to control (Hinton 2005: 136). However, Mok was one of the two zone secretaries who were trusted the most by the Central government; therefore, his power was increased after 1975. Mok was the cadre who had provided the most loyalty, support and respect to the communist movement since the early stages of the revolution in the 1940s.

Hinton added that Pol Pot favored Mok because he was from a peasant background and was enamored to CPK (ibid), unlike other zone secretaries such as So Phim of the Eastern zone, Ney Sarann of the Northeastern zone, Nhem Ros of the Northwestern zone, Chou Chet of the Western zone and others who were connected to the Indochinese Communist Party, the *Pracheachon* group, the pro-Sihanoukist and the pro-Vietnamese group. Compared to others, Mok had a “clean heart” since he was from a poor peasant background, which was considered as pure in DK. So, Mok was the most trusted cadre.

CPK’s trust in Mok can be seen clearly after 1975, when the populous and fertile Region 25, which originally belonged to the Eastern Zone, was given to the Southwest. Non Suon alias Chey, who was believed to be pro-ICP, was kicked out of Region 25 and replaced with Som Chea by Mok. Chey was promoted to be the

Minister of Agriculture in Phnom Penh to cut him off from the patronage network within his zone (see Hinton 2005: 134). Hinton argues, knowing that Chey had clients throughout the region he controlled, that Mok purged Chey's clients and placed his 'strings' of relatives and trusted friends to control the district and sub-district levels in Region 25 as well as throughout the Southwest zone (Hinton 2005: 137). The promotion of relatives to take over in a zone also occurred in the Central Zone run by Ke Pauk, another trusted cadre of the CPK. For this reason, Hinton pointed out that it was common for DK cadres to place their relatives to hold important positions when they were in power; therefore, this patronage network was even stronger and more reliable (Hinton 2005: 137).

Hinton's argument is important for the Southwest, where it is clear that the first thing Mok did was to purge former cadre who were not of his family or in his patronage networks and replace them with his relatives or trusted friends and neighbors. Hinton added that this 'sibling-sm' patronage system was very important in DK 'sociopolitical organization' and all seniors DK leaders such as Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, Mok, Son Sen placed family members to hold positions, throughout DK (ibid); however, Mok probably placed the most family members to hold important positions; therefore his patronage system would be stronger and more reliable than others.

Several real or imagined coup attempts occurred in Phnom Penh and in Siem Reap on February 25, 1976, creating some paranoia among the CPK leaders. The events probably inspired the Central government to issue the policy to "smash internal

and external enemies of the Party in order to centralize power” on March 30. Three days later, after the need to eliminate internal enemies was already at the forefront, some grenade explosions occurred at sunrise in central Phnom Penh near the residence of seniors CPK leaders (Chandler 1999b: 52, Jackson 1989: 299, Kiernan 2008: 321). Several military forces of the Eastern Zone’s Division 170 led by Chan Chakrei were arrested for interrogation. Soon afterward, those captives implicated Chan Chakrei for his involvement in the attack. Less than a month and a half later, Chakrei was arrested on May 19, 1976 (Hinton 2005: 138) and sent to S-21 for interrogation to find out more about his patronage networks or ‘strings of traitors’. When Chakrei wrote in his confession about ‘strings of traitors’, he described a patronage pyramid which connected him up to his patrons or patron’s patrons and down to his clients and client’s clients (ibid). Those who were in these ‘strings’ were in the same patronage network that needed to be eliminated. The CPK viewed that when one was connected to a patron, he/she stuck to that patron and he/she could never change.¹⁸³ For this reason, others who were in Chakrei’s patronage network were executed. Hinton added that by November 1976, six months after his arrested, 241 members of Chakrei’s “string” including his deputy and staff members were arrested (Hinton 2005: 139).

On March 30, 1976 the CPK Central Committee issued several important decisions, including changing the founding date of the CPK anniversary. The founding date of the Party was changed from 1951, the year that the KPRP was created under Vietnamese supervision, to September 30, 1960, the day that the WPK was created. A special edition of *Revolutionary Red Flag* wrote “the [CPK decided] to arrange the

history of the party into something clean and perfect, in line with our policies of independence and self-mastery.”¹⁸⁴ The statement could imply that the Party intended to purify those who joined the revolution after 1960 into a group which was considered ‘clean’ and ‘perfect’. Those who joined the Party within this period were called the ‘in-group’ of the CPK. However, those who were in contact with the Vietnamese, such as the *Issarak*, the *Pracheachons*, the Khmer-Hanoi and others prior to 1960, would be ‘unclean’ and ‘imperfect’; therefore they were an ‘out-group’. Only those who were loyal to the CPK were considered as an ‘in-group’. In July 1978, the DK deputy secretary Nuon Chea told his trusted Danish guests that CPK ignored activities before 1960. “Before 1960, we did not have a clear Party line. 90% of our bases in the countryside were destroyed and our [secret line] in the city was not strong either,” said Nuon Chea.¹⁸⁵ However, he added that after 1960, CPK was on its way to progress: “from 1960, we regarded the worker, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and progressive patriotic personalities as strategic forces....We set up a strategic line.”¹⁸⁶

CPK ignorance of activities before 1960 sparked outcries among cadres who had joined the revolution with Vietnamese support, including Keo Meas who, just before he was executed, still maintained his stance against the CPK’s decision to change the date of the founding the Party (Hinton 2005: 141). The changing of the founding date created controversy and division among senior CPK cadres, some of whom had joined a Vietnamese-led communist movement since the 1940s.

The secretary of Region 25 of the Southwest, Non Suon, who was promoted to be the Minister of Agriculture, and who was Mok’s rival, was arrested on November

1, 1976. He was linked to comrades who also had a pro-Vietnamese stance, including Keo Meas. On January 25, 1977, Koy Thuon, who was nominated Minister of Commerce after moving from this position as secretary of Northern zone, was arrested and sent to S-21. Thuon was replaced by Ke Pauk, a CPK trusted cadre. After Koy Thuon's arrest, several cadres in the Northern zone and the Ministry of Commerce were sent to S-21 because Thuon listed them in his confession as in his patronage network. In March 1977, approximately 1,059 people were sent to S-21, most of them accused of being connected Koy Thuon and his clients. The arrest of Koy Thuon and his patronage network sparked the CPK to bring trusted cadres out from the Southwest zone to take over from the ousted and purged cadres at the Northern zone as well as in the Commerce Ministry in Phnom Penh.

The Southwest Zone Cadre Movement

From the Southwest zone, Kang Chap, Mok's trusted deputy secretary, was probably among the first to be transferred to the Northern zone. No one knew for sure how many cadres were sent on this trip, but another cadre who joined this first trip was Sok.¹⁸⁷ It was clear that Chap and Sok took some of their clients with them to the Northern zone. But most of Chap's clients still held positions at Region 35 after Chap left. The position of Sok in the Southwest was not known or confirmed by cadre in the Southwest interviewed for this thesis; however, Carney wrote that Sok was the secretary of Region 33 until 1976 (Carney 1989: 102). A reliable source did state that in 1977 the leadership of Region 33 was replaced by Mok's brother, Chong, and

Chong's predecessor was Saing Rin¹⁸⁸ rather than Sok (Ith 1973: 9, and Kiernan 2008: 169).

However, after arriving in the Northern zone, Kiernan wrote that Sok held the position as Deputy Secretary with Ke Pauk as Secretary and Chap in the position as Secretary of the Kampong Thom Region. By early 1978, Chap was promoted to be secretary of the Northern zone, probably after Ke Pauk was nominated to be secretary of the newly created Central Zone and Sok remained Pauk's deputy in this new zone.

In April 1978, as he was transferred for the second time to take over the Eastern Zone, Sok fled to Vietnam because the chances were high he would be the next to be purged. In the Northern zone, Sok and Chap were probably working closely together since they were originally from the Southwest zone. After Sok fled, the next person to be purged was Chap, who was arrested on August 2, 1978 (Kiernan 2008: 403).

Selecting the Cadres in the Southwest

The highest ranking cadres of Democratic Kampuchea I interviewed for this research were probably Dok and Neang. Dok, who was the district 105 youth unit chief, was transferred to the Eastern zone and was promoted to be secretary of a commercial rubber plantation under the direct supervision of the Central government. While most cadres were transferred to other zones, Neang was promoted from sub-district secretary to the Tramkok committee in 1978. I extracted information about the criteria for cadre selection to be sent out to control other zones from Dok, who was one of hundreds of cadre who were transferred out of the Southwest. To respond to the

events occurring in the Northern zone, Mok and other senior cadres at the Southwest organized an enormous meeting attended by military commanders; zone, region and district committees; and also Dok's youth unit. Those attending were informed about transfers of Southwest zones cadres to other zones to take over from cadre who then went missing. Dok mentioned that Mok did not say what was exactly happening in the Northern zone during that meeting. "Mok said that there were problems at the Northern zone and there were not enough cadre [in that zone] so cadre from the Southwest needed to go to take over from some cadre there," said Dok.

Dok added that during the meeting, Mok advised district committees to select 'trusted,' 'loyal' and 'good biography' cadres to be dispatched to the Northern zone. Cadres from the Southwest zone were to control from the zone down to the sub-district level. The selection of region committees in the Southwest was probably selected by Mok himself. The district committee members, advised by Mok, were the decision makers who chose cadre to be sent to take over other zones. They did this by focusing on the loyalty and trustworthiness of the cadres. Then, the lists of cadre were to be sent to the zone committee for a 'background check' and the zone committee was the body that approved who could go and also nominated the cadre for important levels such as the Region and Districts committees. "The selection of cadres mainly focused on 'background'". Dok added that cadre with 'good background' were like they had a 'diploma'.

Then the nominated cadre to be transferred to other zones, who would hold positions on Zone, Region or District committees, could choose their trusted clients to

go with them to serve on sub-district committees or in other positions under their control. The names of selected cadre were to be sent to zone committees again for background checks.

In the last step, after enough cadres were approved, the group joined a series of meetings about the plan they would implement in the new zone. When they arrived in their newly assigned zone, the new secretaries in turn assigned cadre to go to specific places under their control.

In 1977, cadres in the Eastern zone were purged. This time, Dok's patron, Tramkok district secretary, Chim, selected Dok to go with him; however, Dok was not approved by the Southwest zone committee because he had an 'unclean' background since he had siblings who had been soldiers in the Lon Nol period. As a youth unit chief, he had a good relationship with Chim, and Chim was related by blood to Mok. In this way, Dok was connected to Mok through Chim. Therefore, Dok was in Mok's patronage network through Chim.

Chim was sent to the Eastern zone in mid or late 1977, but not his most trusted client Dok. A few months later, Chim felt unsafe and unstable in his new Eastern zone position because he lost some of his trusted clients, including Dok, who were not allowed to go with him. However, through his connection with Mok, Chim could subsequently convince the Southwest zone committee to allow Dok to join him so that he felt more secure.

Dok said that a few months after Chim left, Chim called him to take a position as a permanent member of his rubber plantation section. Dok added that "when he lost

me, he felt like he lost his right hand.” ‘Right hand’ in this context could mean that Dok had been a very important client of Chim and although Chim was sent to another zone, Chim wanted to bring his most trusted clients with him so that he felt more comfortable.

Most of the cadres sent to other zones were promoted. In 1977, Hoy, who had been the secretary of Leaybo sub-district, was promoted to be secretary of the Region in the Eastern zone. Chim and Dok were also promoted from district secretary and youth unit chief respectively to be the secretary and permanent member of the commercial rubber plantation, which was equivalent to being the secretary and member of a Region.

Dok said that by the time he left the Southwest zone, the purge was at its peak. “They [the CPK] needed lots of cadre from the Southwest. Since there were not enough administrative cadre [in the Southwest zone], the zone committee selected cadre who were sent to the salt fields in Kampot after 1975 to take over other zones when the purges intensified in late 1977 or early 1978. Medical staff were already sent to other zones earlier,” said Dok. This was also confirmed by Hinton, who wrote that from mid 1977, CPK began to replaced cadre who were linked to Koy Thuon with cadre from the Southwest (Hinton 2005: 154).

By the end of 1977, the relations between Vietnam and Cambodia deteriorated following Vietnamese attacks on Cambodia in the Eastern zone run by former ICP cadre, So Phim, and the Cambodian attacks on Vietnamese provinces that killed hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in 1977. Finally, Cambodia broke off diplomatic

relations with Vietnam in January 1978 after Vietnamese troops were withdrawn from Cambodian territory of Svay Rieng (Chandler 1999b: 72). By the end of the year, most of Phim's cadre had already been purged (Hinton 2005: 139) and replaced with cadre from the Southwest.

People who lived in the other zones recalled that after the Southwest cadre arrived, they purged all cadres who were linked to the previous leaders. Dok did not tell me if he purged the 'strings of traitors' of his predecessors. Evidence of purges occurred everywhere after the Southwest zone cadre took positions in other zones. Several sub-district secretaries in Kampong Siem district in the Eastern zone were arrested just one month after the Southwest zone cadres arrived. Chi's patron, Seuan, who was his Kampong Siem secretary, had already been purged (Hinton 2005: 154). As a former cadre in the Eastern zone, Chi was interrogated by the new Southwest zone cadre, who told him, "You are part of a traitorous string. We have already killed your boss and his entire line of traitors" (quoted in Hinton 2005: 154). Chi added that Southwest zone cadres purged all district and sub-district cadre and continued on down to village chiefs (*ibid*). A base person told Hinton that the Southwest cadres were very powerful, "they were strict and dared to kill people" (Hinton 2005: 157). Some of the soldiers loyal to Phim were sent to work at the Kampong Chhnang airport as punishment. Pol Seb, a security guard for Chinese technicians at the airport, said that "those soldiers were accused of being in So Phim's patronage networks and the Central government intended to exploit them before they executed them."¹⁸⁹ Another Eastern zone soldier named Heng, who was sent to work at Kompong Chhnang airport

and who survived the executions, said that after working there for a period of time, a group of soldiers, including Heng, were sent to be executed. “The soldiers were told to stand in line and then the soldiers opened fire at them.” Heng added he survived because he fell down after he was hit, then his dead friends fell on him and he fled after the executioners left.¹⁹⁰

The secretary of the Eastern zone, So Phim, felt unstable when most of his clients had been purged. Some of them had been purged in 1976 when he was in Beijing for medical treatment from May until August (Hinton 2005: 167, Kiernan 2008: 324). By mid 1978, the CPK’s suspicion fell on Phim because of his long association with Vietnam and the success of the Vietnamese invasion into his zone in late 1977. Phim was also listed in the “strings of traitors” by Hu Nim, the Minister of Information and Propaganda who was purged and sent to S-21 on April 10, 1977 and executed less than three months later. Actually, So Phim had been under the CPK’s suspicion since mid 1976 when one of his clients, Chan Chakrei, was arrested and charged with an unsuccessful coup attempt. At the time, Phim still had a strong patronage network and was “too powerful to arrest” (Gottesman 2003: 30, Chandler 1991: 194). Then when Phim went again to China for further medical treatment in March-April 1978, Pot Pot and his trusted cadre from the Southwest launched a major assault on the Eastern zone (Hinton 2005: 167).

During his absence from the country, another of Mok’s rivals, Chou Chet, was arrested on March 25 (Chandler 1999b: 73, Heder 19991: 16). Chou Chet was not only Mok’s rival, he also did not have good relations with his deputy, Heng Pal, and his

committee member, Soeung. Pal and Soeung were believed to be Pol Pot's clients and they replaced Chet as secretary and deputy secretary after Chet's arrest. Just before Chou Chet was purged, Pal and Soeung recruited some cadres to work in the Northwestern zone, probably to check the power of Mok and his clients, as some of them were dispatched to work there (Hinton 2005: 166).

After Chou Chet was purged, the next person who was purged was his wife, who was arrested the same day. As mentioned by Thion (1993: 132), after one was removed and purged, the people who were connected to that person had a good chance of meeting a similar fate. Thion's claim is affirmed by what happened to all those in Chou Chet's *khsae*. Sana,¹⁹¹ another member of Chou Chet's clientele, recalled that after her main patron (Chou Chet) had been purged, many of Chou Chet's relatives committed suicide because they knew that their turn would be next. However, at the same time, Sana was also close to Pal; therefore she survived the purge after Chou Chet was arrested.

In April 1978, when Phim returned from Beijing, he was shocked to find that most of his clients had been purged (Hinton 2005: 167). Just a month after Phim's arrival, Ke Pauk, who was then the secretary of the Central Zone and one who was trusted by CPK, invited Phim and his clients down to the battalion soldier level to a meeting at Pauk's headquarters (Chandler 1999b:73). Sensing a trap, Phim refused to go; others who insisted on going were arrested and killed on the spot. Pauk continued to invite Phim to meet and Phim kept refusing. Phim's refusal sparked more and more

suspicion by CPK. Pauk responded by launching a military attack on the Eastern zone; however, the attack was repulsed by soldiers loyal to Phim (ibid).

On May 31, unsafe even in his zone with all of his clients arrested, Phim decided to go to Phnom Penh to meet with Pol Pot (Chandler 1999b: 73). Instead of entering into the city, he fled after soldiers were sent from Phnom Penh to arrest him. Three days later, Phim committed suicide as his arrest was imminent (Chandler 1999b: 73-74, 1999a: 147, Hinton 2005: 166).

Eight days later, Nhem Ros, Phim's in-law, was arrested (Hinton 2005: 166). Nhem Ros was the secretary of the Northwestern zone until his arrest on June 11, 1978. Nhem Ros's arrest sparked the CPK to purge most of Ros's patronage circles including his zone deputy down to village chiefs (ibid) and they were replaced by cadre from the Southwest. After Ros was arrested, Mok's brother-in-law, who was the secretary of Kirivong district of Region 13, was promoted to replace Nhem Ros, and hundreds of Southwest zone cadres came along with Tit.¹⁹²

After Phim committed suicide, Mok and Pauk's clients continued to purge other former cadre in the Eastern zones as well. Kiernan estimates that at least 250,000 cadre and people within Phim's patronage network were executed. They were accused of having "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds," that is, of having loyalty to Vietnam (2008: 404). Thereafter, hundreds of Phim's clients escaped to Vietnam (Hinton 2005: 169).

The last two senior leaders who were purged were Mok's former rival, Vorn Vet, deputy prime minister, and Vet's long-time friend Cheng An, the deputy prime

minister of industry, who were arrested in November 1978 (Chandler 1999b: 74). A month later, CPK was suspicious of one of their most trusted comrades, Son Sen, who had replaced Phim as Eastern zone secretary after Phim's suicide (Chandler 1999b: 74-75). Son Sen had been very close with Vorn Vet since the 1970s (ibid). Dok, who was in the Eastern zone at the time under Son Sen's supervision, mentioned that the suspicion on Son Sen was certain. He was under CPK suspicion of being associated with Vietnam. Dok said,

At the end of the year [1978], his [Son Sen's] headquarters was equipped with eight Chinese high-tech artillery. The artillery was equipped with radar that fired automatically if planes came under radar control. There were four of those artillery batteries. However, when Vietnamese planes attacked in late 1978, none of that artillery worked. Another reason he was accused was that during the tensions with Vietnam [in late 1978], Son Sen ordered his troops to kill Comrade Pin, the commander of Division 703, but they did not....It was not reasonable to kill Pin when the fighting with Vietnam was in progress.

By mid 1978, Mok's power increased throughout the country, as he commanded several zones (Hinton 2005: 166, Chandler 1999b: 76). Mok alone took over three zones by the end of the year: the Western, Eastern and Northern zones (Carney 1989: 93). By that time, except Mok and Ke Pauk, all the secretaries who held zone positions since 1975 were purged and executed. Mok enjoyed a brief period as the most powerful leader who had the most patronage networks throughout the country. His clients held positions in many administrative units throughout the country, not only in zones but also in factories, hospitals and other military divisions. Mok played a key role at the apex of a national network of pyramids and clusters.

CHAPTER 6

POPULATION

Second Evacuation

The Southwest and the Eastern zone were crowded with peasant populations since they had been long-time revolutionary bases of the CPK (Kiernan 2008: 216, Chandler 2008: 260). However, the Northwestern zone, which was under Lon Nol's control until April 1975, was home to densely forested mountains with scarce population. Most of the peasants in this zone were "New People" who were evacuated from the town of Battambang along with others evacuated from Phnom Penh after April 1975 (ibid).

By early 1976, the CPK had completed two large population movements. After April 1975, when millions of people were evacuated from Phnom Penh to other parts of the country, the CPK began to transport the same persons up north to the more isolated Northern and Northwestern zones. These zones had been isolated since the pre-war period and forested areas were high risk for malaria and dangerous creatures.

In July 1975, the Southwest and Eastern zone local cadre began moving New People and "unclean" base people to the new zones. The reason for the second deportation was due to the fact that the CPK wanted to increase agricultural production, which was considered the main task of the country after CPK took power. The 'new' and 'unclean people' were the instruments to achieve this goal (Chandler 2008: 260). Chandler added that the CPK used the phrase "keeping you is no profit; losing you is no loss" which meant that their absence from the Southwest zone would

not prevent the regime from progressing. The Southwest was overpopulated and thus “unclean” people were seen as unproductive (ibid).

The Northwest zone contained large areas of forested areas in Pursat and vast paddy fields in Battambang; however, the zone was underpopulated to bring those paddy fields under production. Kiernan quoted a former mathematics teacher who was deported from the Southwest in late 1975 as saying that before the deportation to the Northwest, the population was already one million and that the zone needed more population (Kiernan 2008: 216). A former high-ranking cadre of the Northwest zone, Heng Teav, told Kiernan that the secretary of Northwest zone, Moul Sambath alias Nhim Ros, requested the Central government to deport additional population from other zones to the Northwest (Kiernan 2008: 216). It was apparent that the Northwest not only lacked population to increase agricultural production, but also did not have enough cadres to hold positions in the zone. After the end of the deportations, the population in the Northwest doubled in number from 908,000 in 1968 to 1,790,000 in March 1976 (Kiernan 2008: 97). Approximately 800,000 people were sent to the Northwest (See Chandler et al 1988: 52).

A Southwest zone sub-district secretary, whom I called Ra,¹⁹³ said that in July 1975 he received orders from the district 105 secretary to choose some “weak labor” new people in his sub-district to send to the Northwestern zone. The district secretary repeatedly told Ra to choose only people who were unproductive to his cooperative—those who were often sick, worked slowly and whose family members were former soldiers or teachers in the Lon Nol government.¹⁹⁴ Upon receiving these orders, Ra

called a meeting with all village chiefs and deputy chiefs to relay the order and to have them make up lists of families who would be deported. The families themselves were told that they were to be sent to new houses. Ra confirmed that,

After I received the orders from the district secretary to list 'bad element' people to be sent to the Northwest, I told the village chiefs immediately to list down the New People's names and their backgrounds. After getting the lists, I checked them and then asked the messenger to send them to the district secretary to see. About two weeks later, [the district secretary] ordered me again to tell the people on the list to leave for the Northwest zone.¹⁹⁵

The date of the announcement to the people about the deportation varied from one region to another in the Southwest. Region 13 seemed to have received the news about the deportation soonest. Pin Yathay, who was evacuated to Region 25 and then to Region 33 of the Southwest zone said that during a meeting in September 1975 a village chief asked all the New People who were originally from Battambang to show up so that they could be allowed to return home (1987: 67). Knowing that this offered him a good chance to escape to Thailand, Pin and his friend, Chan, raised their hands. The village chief agreed to Pin and Chan's request to be deported to the Northwest. Pin wrote that "we packed that evening. The next morning, a convoy of thirty ox-wagons rolled up to the pagoda, ready to take us northwards" (Pin 1987: 68). The ox-carts took Pin and other evacuees to National Road 2, where they were all told to walk another five miles to meet waiting trucks to take them to Battambang (1987: 69).

In Region 13, the plan for deportation was made earlier. There, however, it appears that the plan did not give any choice to the population. New People were

listed in the village chiefs' sheets of paper and they were called to leave immediately on the set departure date.

Manith, whose family lived in district 105 of Region 13, fled to Phnom Penh in 1972. Thirteen-year-old Manith returned to her home village, along with other family members, in April 1975. A week later her brother, a former Lon Nol soldier, was invited to a meeting and disappeared. One evening in July or August, a village chief came to their house and told them to pack to leave for the Northwest the next day. On that morning, Manith's family got up at three o'clock in the morning to walk to the train station near Takeo town. When they arrived, they saw many New People waiting at the station. Then, they were loaded into a train heading to Battambang. The train made several stops to pick up other people along the way. The train was packed. Some children lost their parents as they got off the train to look for food. Some died in the carriage or fell off the train and died. It took them about two weeks to reach Battambang. Upon arrival in Battambang, all the transportees were allowed to stay overnight in the town before they were spread out to other districts.¹⁹⁶

Social Hierarchy

There must be complete equality among all Kampuchean [Cambodian] people in an equal, just, democratic, harmonious, and happy society within the great national solidarity for defending and building the country together. (Article 13 of Chapter 9 of Democratic Kampuchea Constitution.)

Although the CPK constitution stated that everyone was to be equal, survivors said that inequality and injustice occurred everywhere. Ledgerwood argues that the

social division during DK was hierarchically structured and that these divisions were visible among the cadres and general populations (Ledgerwood 2002). Martin supports this argument by writing that “the abolition of privileges among revolutionaries was not real” (Martin 1994: 205). The higher status one had, the better treatment he/she received. Among the cadre, the number of dishes per meal one got depended on one’s position in the hierarchy. The higher-ranking cadres possessed cars, lower-ranking ones owned motorcycles or bicycles while the ordinary population owned nothing (ibid).

Pol Pot, during the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the CPK,¹⁹⁷ also discussed the social hierarchy in DK society. He divided Cambodia’s classes into five categories: feudalists, capitalists, petty bourgeois, laborers and peasants.¹⁹⁸ Feudalists included the royal family and powerful people who possessed big plots of land and could oppress people to work for them.¹⁹⁹ Capitalists were the rich, who gained property by exploiting the peasants and laborers. Both feudalists and capitalists were the biggest enemies of the revolution. The petty bourgeois were middle class people, who were neither the oppressors nor the oppressed. They could be sellers, teachers, students, and low-ranking civil servants. They exploited laborers to meet their needs such as hiring women to look after their children. The peasants were divided into rich and poor farmers. Rich farmers were viewed as exploiting poor farmers, such as hiring poor farmers to work for them. Peasants who were poor farmers had long been supporters of the revolution and this class was called the ‘backbone of the revolution’.

Laborers, who were the best class of the revolution, were those who earned their living by selling their physical strength to the capitalists, feudalists or rich farmers.

After 1975, although members of the feudalist, capitalist and petty bourgeois classes were downgraded to lower than “farmers and laborers”, their past history would never be forgiven. They were persecuted by CPK authorities and by the commercial labor and peasant classes.

Generally, the population was divided into base (or old) people, who were those who lived in the CPK liberated zones before April 17, 1975, and new or (17 April) people, who were those who were evacuated from cities or towns on April 17, 1975. Base or old people were sub-divided into divided into two categories: full rights and candidate people. “Full rights” people were poor farmers who did not have relatives living in Lon Nol-controlled areas prior to April 1975. Candidates were well-off farmers and those who had relatives associated with the Lon Nol government. Full rights people were the most trusted among the classes. Full rights people, and sometimes candidates, were given positions of authority in DK. Candidates were given positions as long as they could show that they had ‘sharp heart’, which meant they could abuse or even kill their relatives who were New People.²⁰⁰ Candidates could give advice, but could not make decisions. However, they were reluctant to do so since they could be accused of errors easily.

New (or 17 April) People were evacuated to the countryside shortly after the CPK armed forces captured Battambang and Phnom Penh. The majority of them were long-time city dwellers, some were provincial town residents, and the rest were war

refugees who fled the US bombing campaign, persecution by CPK cadre, and fighting in the early 1970s. They were classified as “parasites” of the society or the “losers of the war.” New People were seen as contaminated by a corrupted urban culture and were regarded as the enemies of the state of Democratic Kampuchea. New People who committed minor mistakes and had family members killed by CPK were called “depositees.” Depositees would be brought to be killed right away if they committed repeated mistakes.²⁰¹ Not a single new person was allowed to hold responsibility in authority in the Southwest, although some instances of this have been confirmed in other zones (Chandler 1999b: 69.)

Insiders and Outsiders

In 1970, the CPK began to divide people using the terms ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in order to discriminate against the Lon Nol government and its supporters such as the Americans and South Vietnamese, and to fuel anger among CPK supporters to fight against the enemy. “Insiders” referred to people who lived in liberated zones before 1975, while “outsiders,” which meant “outside of CPK control,” were those who lived in government-controlled areas. The terms insiders and outsiders were equivalent to “old and new people;” however, the former were more discriminately considered as the enemy than the latter. Not until 1975 did people know that they were dubbed “old and new” people. However, the terms “insiders” and “outsiders” had been used since the early stages of the guerrilla war. One ‘old’ person said that when his brothers were in the city under government control, the village chief

kept warning him that he had connections to ‘outsiders’ and therefore was associated with the enemy.²⁰²

I divide ‘insiders’ into two sub-groups—in-group and out-group. The term ‘in-group’ refers to CPK cadre from the lowest to the top rank as well as core and progressive members. Core and progressive members were those who had some relatives in the Lon Nol government, but who were given some trust for their three or four years of service to the revolution during the civil war. They had been educated about politics and communist doctrine, but not deeply, in those three or four years. These members were given some low positions such as village or sub-district chiefs because they had shown ‘clean heart’ or were harsh towards their relatives.²⁰³ Other members of the “in-group” were “Party members.” These people held positions at least from the sub-district level up. Most of these members did not have relatives who were New People, or if they had, they had shown that they had completely cut off their blood relatives. All Party members were educated deeply in Party politics and communist concepts. They joined meetings with the district committee at least once a month and with the zone secretary at least once a year, especially on the victory anniversary of April 17.²⁰⁴ Some party members also had some relatives in the enemy zone. They could be in secure positions because they had powerful patrons. For instance, Dok and Chong had Mok as their indirect or direct patron as their shelter.

Social Hierarchy Reversed

As Ledgerwood and Martin have confirmed, instead of equality among everyone as defined by the constitution, the social hierarchy during DK was reversed

compared to pre-revolutionary Cambodia. The reversal of social hierarchy is also confirmed by first person narratives (see May 1986, Ngor 1987, Criddle and Mam 1987, Pin 1987, Him 2000, Ung 2000). Ledgerwood (2002) discusses three points to clarify ways in which the social hierarchy was reversed during DK—social status, age and gender roles. In social status, the wealthy and the elite who were considered high status in the pre-revolutionary period were treated as the lowest class in DK society (Ledgerwood 2002). Poor peasants and laborers, in contrast, became the cleanest and highest class of the revolution. For instance, the king was deprived of all status and power and locked in the palace while his royal children, with a few exceptions, were sent to toil in the fields and died. Haing Ngor tried to hide his identity as a medical doctor and to obey the poor peasants who had power over the educated, which would have been impossible in the pre-revolutionary period (1987: 190). Before one was appointed to a position in DK, one needed to have his/her “biography” checked in order to ensure that he/she was from the peasant or laborer classes. During dialogues with Danish delegates who supported the DK regime, Nuon Chea said “laborers and peasants...were the biggest and most progressive class....The Party needs stance more than ability in building the country.”²⁰⁵ The speech implied that education and degrees were less important than the ‘stance’ of the members of the biggest and most progressive class. One ‘candidate’ person, Nhep, also said that the Party replaced her village chief with Nop, who was an illiterate, poor farmer and a gambler. A DK village chief, Hong, also agreed and acknowledged that class was more important than

education: “I was appointed a village chief [in 1971] because I had little education and was the poorest in the village.”²⁰⁶

Age was also an important visible reversal. The CPK considered young children as pure and clean and easily indoctrinated, while adults and the elders were seen as poisoned and contaminated by the previous regime (Ledgerwood 2002). After some political indoctrination, young children were seen as fierce and contemptuous of their parents and willing to reject traditional religion (Jackson 1986: 191). Therefore, these children were the core of the revolution. Sihanouk concluded that the CPK’s propaganda was successful because they used young children to serve the revolution:

Once [children] were enlisted in the revolutionary army, these children were separated from their families, removed from their home villages to Pol Pot’s indoctrination camps. They began their military careers at the age of twelve. Taken in hand so young, these *yotheas* [soldiers] were convinced before long that the party was doing them the greatest of honors by naming them ‘the dictatorial instruments of the Party’ (Sihanouk 1980: 28).

In some cases, children were told to spy on their parents and report back to village committees, while others were told to kill their parents once they were found guilty.²⁰⁷ Dok also mentioned that youth had always been crucial to the revolution both before and after 1975 because a youth’s heart was *Sruoch Srav*, literally meaning ‘sharp’. “Youth had always been the right hands of the CPK. During the civil war, they were special forces because they did not have emotional connections back home and after 1975, they were the main labor force in mobile units” said Dok.²⁰⁸ Kong,

who led a mobile unit of male unmarried youth, said that youth units were the strongest labor forces: “they could even destroy mountains and thick forest.”²⁰⁹

The reversal of status during DK was related to the abolition of Buddhism. Buddhism set differences in status based on how much one could provide in service to the temples. In Buddhism, the more service one donates and provides both physically and financially to the temples, the more merit one could gain. The more merit one gains, the higher status one has. During DK, this concept was eliminated and also reversed. The most merit one gained in the pre-revolutionary period, the less status they received under the DK. The CPK saw Buddhism as a ‘reactionary’ religion that needed to be forbidden. Therefore, the elimination of Buddhism turned the social hierarchy upside down. In terms of making merit and status, the CPK used the term “*Angkar*” to replace Buddhism in a violent way. The more and longer one provided service to *Angkar*, the more social status one received.

As researched by Frank Smith (1989), many survivors linked the reversal of the hierarchical order during DK to the prophecy known as the *Putumniay*. The *Putumniay* were the Buddhist predictions about what would happen in the cycle between the coming of one Buddha and the next. According to the prophecy, everything would be reversed; the country would be destroyed by war and the *Tmil* (the non-believers) would rise to power; the uneducated, hooligans and drunkards would rule over the kingdom; people’s minds would change from right to wrong; children would be assertive over their parents and teachers. The prophecy also included metaphors of reversal, such as the shrimp would climb up to the top of the

mountain to lay their eggs (Smith 1989: 19-20). The Lon Nol government also used this prophecy to propagandize people and warned that the ‘dark period’ predicted in the texts would come if the communist forces took over (Becker 1998: 191).

Although the prophecy was imaginative rather than logical, survivors often linked the prophecy to what happened in DK. Whether the prophecy was reliable or not, the reversal of the social hierarchy was certain and thus the prophecy was believed to have been fulfilled between 1975 and 1979.

Division of Labor

“There is absolutely no unemployment in Democratic Kampuchea.”

Article 12 of Chapter 9 of Democratic Kampuchea constitutions

Everyone, including family members of cadre, had to work without exception. In the Southwest, after 1975, a large number of young women, including Mok’s daughters, were sent to work as nurses or couriers in some ministries in Phnom Penh since they were more trusted by the Central committee. Others, the majority of base people, were sent to work in Srae Ambil (the salt field unit) in Region 35 (Kampot).

The priority after 1975 was increasing agricultural production. This is one of the reasons why all people were evacuated to the countryside. Region 13 had already launched its first cooperatives in mid 1973, although the project failed. At that time, the project was launched by grouping people into 10-15 or up to 30 families. Then the CPK launched cooperative work and communal eating throughout the county at the

village level from April 1975 until the end of 1976, when cooperatives were increased in scale to the sub-district level. In village-level cooperatives, the population was put to work in *Krom Pravas Dai* (Mutual aid teams) because New People who were evacuated from the cities or towns did not possess farming tools and the plan was to assign people to work in team group of 10 to 20 families. They worked together, Old and New People, but ate privately in their houses. All the teams in the village were called village cooperatives.²¹⁰

Villages had to be self-sufficient. The village was run by a committee of three people: a chief, a vice-chief and a member. The three were appointed by the sub-district committee based on their popularity among the mass and patronage network.²¹¹ The village committee had responsibility to hold regular meetings with all group leaders in the village in order to get reports about what they had done and about what people's behavior was like in the group.

From the beginning of the regime, village chiefs were granted power within their own villages. They were given the power to make decisions that dramatically impacted on people's lives. They were the ones who decided how much food that would be distributed and to whom, who would be recruited for the army, which children would be assigned to work in the mobile groups, who would live in which house, and who would be accused of being the enemy (Becker 1998: 188). The village chiefs held the list of all people in their villages and they were between the people and the patrons at the higher echelons who worked closely with them to transfer and issue orders to farmers.

Village chiefs were reported by first account narratives to be fierce, brutal and frightening to the villagers. Nhep said of her village chief, “the village chief was as powerful as a monster; I dared not look at his face; I was scared to death of him”²¹² Although he did not speak of himself, a former village chief in Tramkok sub-district said that:

Some village chiefs were very brutal; they killed people. The group leaders had the right to kill people whom they were not satisfied with; they do not need to ask permission from the upper echelon. The sub-district chiefs were more brutal than village chiefs. Cadres killed people to show that they had sharp heart so that they could be promoted. I did not kill people; that’s why I was not promoted.²¹³

The mutual aid team was organized into teams known as *Krom*, or groups. Each group consisted of 10-20 or up to 30 families; each group included those who had plows and other farming tools, combining the Old and New people.²¹⁴ Each group was led by a base person assigned by the village committee. Usually, village committee members’ wives were the group leaders. Group leaders acted as the middle persons who received orders from their patrons, village chiefs, and passed them to the villagers in the fields to implement the work and also reported the behavior of people to their patrons (Ponchaud 1978: 89). Group leaders were seen as important patrons of villagers and the ones who could set the fate of villagers’ lives. Sarika worked hard to gain trust from her group leader, whom she called *mae* (mother) in order to get closer emotionally.²¹⁵

Large-Scale Cooperatives

In mid 1976, the CPK standing committee drafted a four-year plan which was aimed at “building socialism in all fields” (Chandler 2008: 260). The plan, which was to go into effect in late 1976 or early 1977, included the collectivization of all personal property and increasing rice production throughout the country that was targeted at achieving at least three tons per hectare (1.4 tons per acre) in the first year and 7-8 tons in the next two or three years, a wildly optimistic estimate that had never been achieved in the pre-revolutionary period (ibid). The four-year plan clearly marked the division of people based on their status, social class, age and sex.

After the four-year plan was drafted, the plan was implemented in the cooperatives in most of the country immediately. Private eating was abolished, and all personal property including kitchen tools were confiscated and kept in communal halls and the population was merged into larger groups. Neang attended the meeting with Chim, the Tramkok district secretary, to receive the news about consolidating mutual aid teams into large scale cooperatives. Regarding the purpose of these large-scale cooperatives, Neang said that “it was to abolish private property and to make everyone equal—no rich and no poor. People were put into cooperatives and they worked and ate communally.”²¹⁶

People were reorganized into *Korng*, meaning group, but larger than *Krom*. People were grouped based on their status such as—full rights group “*Korng Penh Sith*,” Candidate group “*Korng Tream*” and depositor group “*Korng Panher*.”²¹⁷ The people were also divided by sex and age, such as men’s group, women’s group, uncle

group, auntie group, widow group, grandfather group, grandmother group and children group. Each *Korng* was assigned to work according to particular tasks such as plowing, transplanting, fishing, palm tree climbing or gardening. Each *Korng* consisted of up to one hundred members and was run by a *Korng* leader and all work was assigned by a cooperative chief. All the members of each *Korng* ate separately. Usually, the full rights group ate first. For instance, if the full rights group ate at 11 a.m, the candidate group ate at 11:30, and the depositee group ate at noon.

By the end of 1976, most former officials such as teachers, soldiers, doctors and students from the previous regime had been executed, although DK continued pursuing enemies as though they were still active. The creation of large-scale cooperatives coincided with a population decrease as people died of starvation, disease or execution. In the large-scale cooperatives, two or three villages were merged into big cooperatives called “multi-village cooperatives” with members numbering less than one thousand, and cooperatives in the sub-districts called “sub-district cooperatives” with populations of thousands of people.²¹⁸ Village chiefs with the cleanest backgrounds were selected after the villages were merged. Other village chiefs became *Korng* leaders in the work camp. The sub-district committee members had more responsibilities in order to increase rice yields after the four-year plan was announced. The sub-district commercial unit had responsibility for controlling all property such as rice, confiscated property, clothes, trees, fruits and all property sent from the upper echelons. Each sub-district had one or two rice millers and all rice yields had to be transported to the sub-district commercial office.²¹⁹ Members in each

Korng ate communally in groups, separately from other *Korng*. Each *Korng* leader had the responsibility to bring rice from the sub-district commercial unit to cook for the people.²²⁰

People I interviewed in the Southwest said that initially people were satisfied with communal eating because they did not need to cook; however, the food ration decreased after a few months, as they continued to toil long hours in the fields to increase rice yields. A survivor, Don, recalled that in late 1976 in a village in Sarong sub-district, Tramkok district, before the large-scale cooperative was launched, the village chief called for a meeting with all the people in the village; he encouraged people to increase production in the fields and discussed the new plan.²²¹ Don said that,

One day, the village committee called for a meeting with people to inform them about the plan to collective. The village chief announced that ‘now, all of you have to put all your property in the village communal hall such as oxcarts, livestock, trees plates, and bowls. What you all can own is a spoon or kettle to boil water. We will eat ‘sacred’ food in a communal place together. You all do not need to spend time cooking, just work and eat three meals a day. During each meal, two or three kinds of food will be served. Every ten days, you all will have one or two kinds of dessert’.

Don said after the speech, the people applauded cheerfully and expected to receive better food. Don continued:

In the first two or three months, everything was done as promised. People enjoyed eating communally. In the morning, all people were served with chicken porridge and people ate cheerfully. Fruit were hanging on the communal hall for people to eat.

However, after a short period of time, the same village chief held another meeting which dramatically changed people's lives. "Now, our cooperative ran out of rice and meat. So do not waste too much food. We want to save some rice." Don added that after that meeting the meals per day were reduced to two; breakfast was cut off and people received small rations of rice per meal that lead to widespread starvation. In a nearby village, just about five miles away from where this informant lived, another survivor, Channa, said that the village chief held a brief meeting to discuss the confiscation of personal property and the reorganization of the population. She said "after the meeting, all people were served *Nom Banh Chok* [Cambodian noodles], which we had not had for a long time, then the next day, the village chief and *Korng* leader came to confiscate all property."

Ten Days a Week

Every ten days, which CPK cadre referred to as every "week," people had a day off work and they were allowed to visit home to meet with their family members. It was a treat day when better food and dessert was served. Sub-district cooperative chiefs decided which animals would be slaughtered for people in each of the cooperatives. On the day off, all the people in different *Korng* had a chance to meet one another in a meeting, which was usually held in the evening, attended by all *Korng* leaders and the sub-district committee members.²²² The agenda of the meeting was to encourage people to increase production in the fields in order to achieve three tons per hectare.

Social Affairs Unit

Revolutionary medics have to be from the worker-farmer class because it the biggest and most progressive class....The Party needs stance more than ability in building the country.

Nuon Chea's statement to a Danish delegation in July 1978.²²³

The social affairs unit was the place where people with “pure hearts” worked.²²⁴ “Pure heart” people referred to those who were from the poor social classes and whose parents had served the Khmer Rouge revolution for a long period of time. All medical staff, most of them young girls below eighteen, were the children of Old People; none of them were New People. Being medical staff was a high-status job for young women. Initially, most medical staff was trained for at most three months before becoming medics.²²⁵ Before 1975, most young girls who were not enlisted to the battlefields were put into the social affairs units to work as medical staff.

The Southwest zone hospital called M-22 was located in the former revolutionary base area in district 105 near the Kampong Speu and Takeo provincial border.²²⁶ The M-22, chief named Kang, was originally from Kampuchea Krom (Southern Vietnam). His origin was probably the reason why he disappeared after 1975. The Region 13 hospital called M-190 was located near the Elephant Mountain of district 105. M-190 was led by Sim Leanghak alias Sey, a former teacher from Phnom Penh who joined the revolution in the Southwest zone in the late 1960s (ibid). In 1975, Mok's daughter, Ho, replaced Sey as chairwoman of the Region 13 hospital,

the same year her husband, Vin, was promoted to be the commander at Pochentong Airport (Kiernan 2008: 87-88).

To become medical staff, one came under thorough investigation and had to be from the poor peasant class and have a clean background. During the war between 1970 and 1975, the medical staff was sent to the battlefield to cure injured soldiers. In addition to medical training, medical staff needed to go through political education and were under observation from the Party for a long period of time before being allowed into the social affairs unit. The DK minister of defense, Son Sen, wrote in a letter to all military divisions that “medical staff must have good political attitude and clean social class.”²²⁷ In an interview on August 5, 1978, Pol Pot similarly told a Belgian delegation that “...*Angkar* promoted young women from the poor social class because they had no chance to go to schools like the capitalists’ children as they were busy devoting themselves for the revolution” (ibid). Most DK cadres sent their daughters to work as medical staff. Like other senior cadre, Mok put all his four daughters to work as medical staff. Som Chea, the secretary of Region 25 of the Southwest zone, also sent his daughter to work as a nurse in Phnom Penh. Minister of Social Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, Ieng Thirith’s three daughters also worked as nurses. One of them was a chief of a hospital in Phnom Penh (ibid), and another was the chief of a pharmaceutical factory.²²⁸

After 1975, young women went through a very rigorous investigation and background check before being permitted into the social affairs unit. At the same time, the Party began screening medical staff who did not have completely clean

backgrounds. Vanny, a former medical staff at District 105 hospital, saw a big reshuffle of medical staff after 1975 as some of them disappeared. Vanny said “some of my co-workers went missing; some were transferred to work in other hospitals, while some disappeared without a trace.”²²⁹

At the same time, Mok expanded his influence by sending medical staff to work in Phnom Penh after 1975 through his connections with the Central government. The Party was very cautious about sending medical staff to work in Phnom Penh, so the Party carefully screened all medical staff in the Southwest zone before sending them. Only medical staff with influential patrons was sent to work at hospitals in Phnom Penh and other parts of the country after the Khmer Rouge victory. Only trusted staff was to be sent to Phnom Penh because they treated the senior cadre or their children, while not a single ordinary person was allowed to live in Phnom Penh after 1975.²³⁰

Keum Si was sent to work at P-1 hospital, later known as 6 January hospital (present-day Calmette) in 1976.²³¹ P-1 was supervised by Minh, who was Ieng Thirith’s daughter. Minh was nasty, never smiling, and silent.²³² Minh’s husband, Peuan, was the chair of another hospital in Phnom Penh.²³³ P-1 was the place where cadres’ wives delivered babies and where cadres’ children were sent. Phalla also recalled that Minh gave birth at P-1.²³⁴ Sometime near the end of the regime, Peuan replaced Minh at P-1 after Minh was transferred to supervise the 17 April hospital (present-day Russian Hospital).²³⁵

Moreover, after the Western zone was separated from the Southwest in mid 1975, the newly promoted Western zone secretary, Chou Chet, brought his trusted medical staff to work in his newly created zone. Chou Chet also sent some of his trusted staff to work in Phnom Penh to expand his influence.²³⁶ By mid 1975, the medical staff in several Phnom Penh hospitals were mostly from district 105 and the other districts of Region 13.²³⁷ Sau Hau, a medic from the Eastern zone, said that “almost all the hospital personnel came from the Southwest, with some from the Central Zone and only a handful, ten or so, from the East.”²³⁸ From 1976, the Southwest zone medical staff was sent to other zones throughout the country. Kry Benghong wrote in a report of the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal in 1979 that in 1977 and 1978 several medical staff from the Southwest zone were sent to the Eastern zone to hold position in hospitals there.²³⁹ Kry Benghong added that “[medical staff] from the Southwest were very powerful and influential.” They were sent there, not only to perform their regular work, but also to investigate other medical staff in other zones.²⁴⁰

Sana was living in Cheang Tong sub-district of district 105. Her hometown was a revolutionary base of the Southwest zone since the 1960s. Her father, Sieng, had been with the Khmer Rouge revolution since the 1960s and had good connections with Mok and Chou Chet, then the deputy secretary of the Southwest zone. Sieng was the chief of the economic unit at M-22 hospital. In 1971, when Sana joined the revolution, she was initially assigned to bring rice to support the soldiers on the battlefields. She worked as a messenger to a member of Region 13, Mrs. Kheoun, who was from the

same village as Sana. Through her father's connections to the zone committees, Sana was sent to work in Phnom Penh after 1975 by Chou Chet. Sana recalled that:

My father worked at the hospital of the Southwest zone called Munthi 22 (Office 22 or M-22). In 1971, when I was 14 years old, Som, a secretary of Region 13, told me to bring rice to the soldiers on the battlefield. And a year later, Mrs. Kheoun, a member of the Region [13], took me to work as her messenger where I took her everywhere she told me to by bicycle. I was very close to Kheoun at the time. In early 1975, I was trained to work as medical staff; I remembered once my trainer was a Chinese doctor who taught me how to give injections. In August 1975, I was sent to work at a hospital in Phnom Penh suburb with Ho, who was one of Mok's daughters. At the time, Ho was the chief of the surgery section. When I was a medical staff, I received additional training several times from experienced staff including Ho. In December 1975, Chou Chet took me to work in the Western zone because I had more experience with social affairs.²⁴¹

After they were sent to Phnom Penh and other zones, medical staff was not allowed to visit home. If they requested to do so, they would risk being accused of not having a "pure heart;" as a result they could be imprisoned or even killed. Like other medical staff, Sana mentioned that she never had a chance to visit home since she left in August 1975 and she had not heard any news from her parents either.

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS

How the Chain of Command Worked

Orders flowed from the Central government to the zone, then the Regions, the Districts, the Sub-district and finally to the village. (Ith Sarin, who toured CPK liberated zone for nine months in 1972 in the Southwest zone)

When there is an order, no matter what it is, the lower echelon needed to follow without delay. A CPK cadre, Dok.

The importance of following orders traces back to the first stage when a cadre was admitted to be in the Party. When a cadre became a member of the Party, he/she was required to salute the Party flag and take the oath saying that “I give my body to the Party, and will serve it without condition.”²⁴² Cadre from the lowest to the highest rank had to commit themselves to the Party as stated in the oath. The cadre had to give complete ‘unconditional’ loyalty, become the ‘dictatorial instrument of the Party,’ and obey all orders. Siet Chhe, one of the highest ranking cadre, a close client of Pol Pot since the early 1960s, who was sent to S-21 once trust in him was breached, wrote in his confession before he was executed “...no matter how I die, I will be loyal to the Party to the end.”²⁴³ A photographer who worked at the same prison also said that following orders was the obligation of each cadre: “my life was for *Angkar*, so everything I did was to follow *Angkar*’s orders” (Ferrie 2009). Following orders was also mentioned frequently among the lowest-ranking cadres I interviewed who were

accused of killing people in the base areas: “what I did was to follow the orders; if I failed, I would be killed too.”²⁴⁴ Chandler also wrote that orders were effectively followed in part because of the culture of deference and respect that is rooted deeply in Cambodian culture (1999b: 149). Since DK organized society in more violent ways, the orders were followed more strictly.

When I kept asking cadre in CPK leadership positions in hierarchical order from the village chiefs up to district committee members about who gave them orders, they told me they received their orders from their closest upper echelon who in turn received them from their immediate upper echelon. This implied that orders needed to be passed down in hierarchical order. Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, who is currently on trial for crimes against humanity, told the court that, “every order, I passed through my deputy. I never skipped my deputy when I ordered the lower ranking cadre to implement a task.”²⁴⁵ The data I have found in my research is consistent with what Ith Sarin and Dok said above.

Thus I conclude that following orders was very important in DK. Lower-ranking cadre had to follow upper-ranking cadres’ orders no matter what they were. Upper-ranking cadres were equally loyal to ‘the Party’, which subordinated all individual needs to serve without conditions. Lower-ranking cadres were encouraged to track enemy activities. From April 1975, when CPK took power over the country, until late or early 1977, when the four-year plan was implemented, village committee members had absolute power to accuse and arrest someone if they thought that the accused intended to destroy the revolution. Village committee members played

important roles to search and eliminate enemies in the grassroots areas. In this stage of the regime, the enemies were plenty because new people had just arrived in the countryside from cities and towns, and the village committee members made their own decisions to accuse suspects and even to kill them right away with or without reporting to their upper echelons. After the four-year plan was implemented in late 1976 or early 1977, when the number of enemies in the grassroots decreased, sub-district committee members who were granted more powers and responsibilities were hesitant to make their own decision to execute the accused although they were authorized to search and eliminate enemies. Instead, the sub-district committee members preferred reporting to the upper echelon and asking for decisions first before they took action against the accused. Once they had received the orders, the lower echelon needed to follow them immediately and effectively. Upper echelon cadres could order lower echelon cadre to do anything; however, they respected the rights of the lower echelon as well. All cadres interviewed reported that the cadres of each level were committed to do their work only; they could not interfere with others in different positions and places.

Following the nomination line

Since 1972, cadre and people who failed to follow orders issued by the upper echelon were regarded as enemies. Failing to accept the nomination to a new position was considered as failing to follow orders. Those who did so were imprisoned for a long period of time, and then released or executed. For example, Sok in the previous chapter was sent to prison because he rejected the Party's nomination by resigning from his post as village chief. Turning against cadre who rejected orders was even

harsher after 1975 when such people were sent to prison with no chance of being released. Nhep was another example. Her husband was imprisoned at Kraing Tachan after he refused to be promoted by the sub-district committee to be village chief in 1971-1972. The act of rejecting an order was seen as a crime. As a result, he was sent to prison and a few months later, the whole family including Nhep met the same fate. Nhep said “my husband knew that communism would bring the country to destruction. He joined the meeting with them [CPK cadres] a few times, and he did not like their policy. When they [CPK cadre] appointed him to lead the village, he refused. So we were imprisoned for this reason.”

The Party statutes adopted in January 1976 stated that,

Any Party members or Party echelon that oppose the political line of the Party, the ideological stance of the Party, the organization stance of the Party or Party statutes, that cause fissures in the Party’s internal solidarity and unity...and abandon their party duties must be punished by transferring or removed from duties, exclusion from the Party in accordance with the crime.²⁴⁶

Cadres constantly reminded one another about following the Party line or orders during Party livelihood meetings which all cadres of every level were required to attend. Better known as self-criticism sessions, the Party livelihood meetings were held on a regular basis—every evening or twice a week (Short 2004: 233). Every ordinary citizen and cadre of every level had to join these meetings. Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch said that joining the livelihood meetings were so mandatory that no cadres could skip it: “we need to attend the Party livelihood meeting like we need food to eat. We cannot skip eating, and cannot skip the meetings either.”²⁴⁷ The purpose of the

meetings was to make sure that cadres had performed their work well in the previous weeks and followed the Party lines developed by the top government of the Central committee. Other purposes were to correct cadres if they strayed from the Party's line and to build up cadre's discipline to follow assignments and orders.²⁴⁸ "Having personal discipline, following the orders of the upper echelons, respecting the decisions of the Party are the most important attribute," Duch told the court. For ordinary people, the purpose of the meeting had the same purpose—to encourage them to love collectivization policy; to give up individualism, power and personal property; to cut off relationships between family members and to work hard and purify individuals.²⁴⁹ However, the livelihood meeting could get anyone into trouble since everyone was required to speak out about their work performance in the previous weeks, to confess about their shortcomings and failures at work, and to report about their work mates' mistakes (Ea and Sim 2001: 22).

Orders to Kill the Enemy

After CPK took power, encouragement and orders to kill were issued from the top leadership of the central government. On behalf of the central committee—in this case the deputy secretary of the CPK, Nuon Chea, issued orders to all zone secretaries and finally to the lowest ranking cadres to kill former Lon Nol soldiers, "the old soldiers, do not keep them for anything...so smash and destroy them all."²⁵⁰

I argue that during DK, people were ordered and encouraged to kill politically and culturally and indirectly. The direct political orders refer to the killings ordered by CPK upper echelon to lower echelon cadres to kill people who were considered

enemies. However, indirectly cultural orders refer to a general atmosphere that left room for low-ranking cadres to eliminate people, when they were not directly ordered by their higher echelons to do so. The low-ranking cadres committed killings based on slogans that were widely known during DK such as “keeping you is no gain, losing you is no loss.” The goal was to purify society.

Political Orders

The Southwest central committee from 1975 was Mok as secretary, Kang Chap alias Sae (until late 1976 or early 1977) as deputy and Som Chea (until his arrest in March 1977) as a member and Sam Bith as a member who took over the military in the zone. Among the four, Mok and Bith were the most important leaders in the zone and both of them survived DK.

On March 30, 1976, the CPK central committee issued some important decisions, one of which was to empower the zone committee, in this case the four people named above, “the right to decide on smashing within and the outside ranks.”²⁵¹ The decision stated that the zone committee had the right to issue the order to kill ‘internal and external’ enemies at the grassroots level. Undoubtedly, the grassroots level would consist of the village and sub-district levels. As one of the Central committee members, Mok would have had power over other zones.

Pol Pot believed that when low-level cadre had power, they could maintain security at the grassroots level. He announced “our security is the first priority guaranteed by the people themselves. It is our policy to prevent insecurity first, which means that people resolve big and small conflict among themselves.”²⁵² At the

grassroots levels, village and sub-district committees played very important roles in searching for and accusing the enemy by the deployment of militia (*Chhlop*) to implement this work. As a zone secretary, Mok already enjoyed autonomous leadership in his zone with authority over each administrative level. The announcement of March 30, 1976 gave the zone committee even more power.

Heder and Tittmore, who did extensive research about the chain of command at the top level of the regime, wrote that the Southwest zone secretary, Mok, was one of the most important figures in implementing execution policies of the CPK, first by ordering his trusted subordinates to arrest CPK cadre in his zone, and second by failing to prevent atrocities perpetrated by his subordinates (2004: 100). A surviving Southwest zone cadre also confirmed that Mok ordered the arrest of those cadres who were connected to Chou Chet and Non Suon after 1975 as well as other untrustworthy cadres.²⁵³ Mok seemed to have purged cadre with whom he had class and patronage conflicts rather than based on evidence of wrongdoing by the cadre themselves. The purges included sending Non Suon's clients in Region 25, the newly appointed secretary Som Chea and his deputy and other clients at the district and sub-district levels to S-21 and zone prisons from 1976 to 1978. Evidence shows that after Som Chea was promoted to Region 25 secretary, Mok ordered Chea to arrest the clients of the previous secretary and kill them.²⁵⁴

At the same time, Mok also ordered the purges of cadre in Region 35 after the region secretary, Kang Chap, was transferred to the northern zone and then was appointed DK president of the juridical committee. Keng, who was a sub-district

secretary in region 35, said that after Kang Chap left, a large number of cadres at the district and sub-district level disappeared one after another. Although the disappearance of those cadres was not clear, Keng concluded that they were purged because they were connected to Kang Chap.²⁵⁵

In Region 13, Mok's homeland, the purges also happened to cadres who were connected to Chou Chet, Mok's rival since 1973. Interviews with Southwest zone cadres ranging from village committee members up to district committee members shows that orders were passed down from their upper to lower echelons. For instance, the zone passed orders to regions and regions to districts continuing down to the grassroots level. The frequent assignments that CPK cadre received from their upper echelons were orders to increase rice production, deal with people's livelihood and root out enemy activities.²⁵⁶ These three assignments above were mostly talked about during the meetings. Dok, the district youth unit chief, said that orders he received were only from his close upper echelon, Som Choeun, who was the region youth unit chief. Then Dok passed those orders to his subordinates who were sub-district youth unit chiefs. Kong, a youth unit chief of Popel sub-district, described how he received orders from his "district" youth unit chief to implement his work in his sub-district.²⁵⁷ Although Kong did not specify whom he received the orders from, he implied that the orders were issued by Dok. Kong added that he received orders from Dok to implement various tasks, including tracking enemy activities. Orders were issued in both written and oral form. However, since the relations between upper and lower echelons were in the same patronage networks, most orders were issued orally. At the

low level between the village and the sub-district the orders usually were given orally, probably because most village chiefs were illiterate; while at upper levels such as the sub-district, district and region, orders were issued through letters.²⁵⁸ The lowest ranking cadres were ordered to keep their eyes open for enemies among ordinary people working in the fields and to send reports upward monthly. Their role was to maintain national security with the help of the sub-district military unit (*Korng Chhlop*). Reports were sent upward to the upper echelons, then new orders were sent back down to the lower echelons after the upper echelon reviewed the reports (Ea 2005: 30-31).

Throughout nearly four years of DK, very few orders were issued in writing, while only a few survived after 1979. The surviving orders were those issued from district secretaries to sub-district secretaries to send suspicious people upward for punishment.

At S-21, after a prisoner was arrested, he/she was forced to name others in his/her string of traitors. Then the “confession” was sent to the central committee so that they could pass down orders to the zone committee to arrest people on the list (Ea 2005: 32). It is certain that the zone committee passed the orders down the chain to the lowest level in the grassroots. Regarding one of the confessions at S-21, the DK Minister of Defense, Son Sen forwarded it to Nuon Chea, noting: “This document is most clear that it is related to Comrade Mok.”²⁵⁹ After reviewing the confession, Nuon Chea ordered Mok to send to S-21 all those listed as strings of traitors. The next step, it is safe to say, is that Mok ordered his lower echelons from region to district on down

to sub-district to implement arrest orders. After the suspicious people were arrested, reports were sent back up the chain from the village to the zone level.

Based on interviews with village chiefs and others survivors, I conclude that the sub-district level played the most important role in the arrest as well as the execution of the accused prisoners. The sub-district had a militia unit (*Korng Chhlop*) which had the duty to main security in the base areas. Village chiefs also played a crucial role in reporting about wrongdoings in their cooperatives. They were to report the accused persons to the sub-district committee and then the sub-district committee ordered arrests. If the sub-district committee passed information up to the district level, the district level would issue orders back to the sub-district to make arrests.

None of the village chiefs I interviewed told me that they reported someone as an enemy to the sub-district committee. However, like other village chiefs, Hong said of village chiefs in general, rather than speaking about himself, “village and group chiefs could accuse anyone of being an enemy if they complained about working conditions or starvation. Village chiefs were the ones who made mistakes; if they had not reported up, the upper echelons would not have known.” The idea that village chiefs and group leaders possessed real powers is supported by another survivor, Sokhom, who found that after she gained the trust with her group leader by working hard and helping her group leader personally, her life as a New Person in a mobile unit became safer and she was protected by that group leader. Sokhom called her group leader *mae*, which means mother, in order to get closer to her.

Although the village chiefs had power, the most important positions were held by the members of the sub-district committee who connected between the grassroots and the district committee, the body that decided who was to be killed. Evidence shows that the sub-district secretary played an important role in arresting these accused by village chiefs, group leaders or regular people.

Chorn, the Popel sub-district secretary, reported to the district secretary in April 1976 to seek a decision after he arrested several men (Ea 2005: 47). In his reports, Chorn wrote to his patron to ask for a decision concerning captured Lon Nol soldiers, about whether to send them down to the base areas or to send them up to the district level. To “send down to the base areas” meant ‘kill’ them right away, or “sending them up” meant ‘for further interrogation or investigation.’ Either way, however, the captive had to be executed. Chorn wrote:

I called into my place an inciting enemy Lim Song and ranking enemies. I request *Angkar*’s opinions or decisions to be passed down to the base level...what does *Angkar* decide? Should I send them, or what? They are now at my place. As for some teachers and soldiers who are opposing and destroying our revolution, request *Angkar*’s opinion or let the base make the decision if that is *Angkar*’s opinion. Popel sub-district Chorn. (Ea 2005: 48)

Surviving reports also showed that people were arrested who the sub-district secretary did not trust or was personally dissatisfied with. This happened in Cheang Tong sub-district run by Boeun, who was Chorn’s wife. In August 1978, Boeun accused two widows of being ‘bad elements’ and then wrote a report to the Tramkok district secretary, San, to ask for decisions concerning the two (Ea 2005: 51). In the

report, Boeun wrote, “they [the two widows] refused to do any work and in July they fled for one night and two days. These two cannot be trusted, because they have many conflicts.”²⁶⁰ Shortly after receiving the report, San wrote a letter to the district security guard named Chhoeun to order him to kill the two widows at Boeun’s request, “Beloved Comrade Chhoeun...as for the widows, smash [kill] them.”²⁶¹ It is clear that the two widows were killed after San ordered the district security guard to smash them.

Survivors confirmed that people were arrested after they made minor mistakes such as stealing rice, digging potatoes, or breaking a spoon or plough. These data were also confirmed by one of the sub-district secretary’s reports wherein he wrote to the Tramkok secretary, San, about two men whom the sub-district secretary, Chhaom, accused of being unfaithful by committing mistakes. Chhaom wrote that “[the two men] broke open rice bags to steal rice to cook and eat.” At the same time, Chhaom asked for his San’s decision “what is *Angkar*’s decision?” On a letter to Chhaom from San dated October 18, 1977, San replied, “As for the two men, I have decided that Elder Brother Chhaom send them to District 105 [Tramkok].”²⁶²

After Chhaom received orders from his patron San, he implemented them immediately (Ea 2005: 51).

The upper echelons respected the decisions made by the lower echelons while the lower echelons immediately followed every order issued by the upper echelon. For example, on September 9, 1977, Kus sub-district secretary Soeun asked the Tramkok secretary for permission to arrest seven former Lon Nol soldiers in his area (Ea 2005:

52). Soeun wrote in his letter sent to the Tramkok secretary, Kit, “All these people will be arrested and transported on September 9 or 10 or else whatever *Angkar* may order.”²⁶³ Kit replied to Soeun the same day, ordering his district security chief to arrest the seven Lon Nol soldiers requested by Soeun. A similar example also occurred in Kpob Trabek sub-district run by Chom, Mok’s brother. Chom reported to Kit about a former Lon Nol soldier and after reviewing the report, Kit ordered Chom to send the accused up (Ea 2005: 52).

Ea (2005) argues that most people were arrested based on reports from the sub-district and village committees and that this process occurred widely in the Southwest zone. In only a few cases did the sub-district or village committee send the accused to the district reeducation camp without first asking permission from the district secretary. Therefore, the sub-district and village committees played very crucial roles in reporting and arresting people in the cooperatives.

Cultural Indirect Orders

As stated above, the district committee ordered the arrest immediately after reviewing reports from the sub-district committee. This is because the low-ranking cadres were encouraged to look for the enemy in the cooperatives.²⁶⁴ A village chief, Hum, said that whoever and whatever the village chief accused, the upper echelon would never refuse to make the arrest.²⁶⁵ However, Hum acknowledged that some village and sub-district secretaries personally wanted to arrest people they were not satisfied with or people whom they used to have conflicts with in the pre-war period. Hum’s account was supported by a new person who stated that her husband was

arrested and disappeared because her family had not gotten along well with one another since the 1960s.²⁶⁶ This case was also confirmed by several other survivors I met who mentioned that the arrests were made because they did not have good relations with others or the village chiefs.

After one was arrested, the family members would mostly meet the same fate. The slogan “to dig up grass, you must dig up the roots” was the instrument that encouraged the lower-ranking cadres to pursue other arrests of relatives or in the patronage strings of those arrested. Hinton argues that CPK encouraged its cadre to have feelings of dissatisfaction, anger and unrest against the enemy by using simple sayings, leaflets and songs which were sung regularly in the cooperatives where people worked (2005: 72-73). The slogan “keeping you is no gain, losing you is no loss” was a tool to arrest and execute people after they made some minor mistake. When one made a mistake, he/she was no longer useful to the revolution; therefore, he/she had to be killed. The death of the accused would not cause the revolution any loss.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to investigate the question of what motivated low-ranking DK cadres to kill people. Another question pertains to where those low-ranking cadres received their orders from to arrest and kill. The research also explores the relationship between the upper and lower echelons by investigating the chain of command in the Southwest zone. It explores whether the orders were passed down by memoranda, statements or letters, where the orders originated, and to whom they were given. The study concludes that: 1) low-ranking cadres made their own decisions to accuse people by writing reports about an individual's guilt that would lead to the arrest of that person. Cadres such as village chiefs were encouraged by their patrons, who were sub-district secretaries, to search for potential enemies in their work units and they could decide who the enemies were. The study found that some of the accusations were related to issues of class and were sometimes personal. All or almost all people reported up the chain by low-ranking cadres were considered guilty. However, the sub-district level was responsible for the arrest of the accused after they were dubbed as enemies by the village chiefs, because the sub-district level was responsible for security matters in the grassroots. 2) Orders were strictly passed down by hierarchical levels: zone to region, region to district, district to sub-district and then to the lowest level of village. None of the orders passed over any level. Therefore, every order needed to go through each administrative unit. Cadre at each level needed to follow

the orders, no matter what they were. Rejecting orders was considered unfaithful to the revolution, which could lead to self-destruction. This pattern began from the time when one took an oath to when they were admitted as party members “to serve the revolution without conditions.” Most of the orders given to the low-ranking cadres were made orally, while at the upper echelons orders were given both orally or in writing. 3) In DK socio-political life, each cadre had both patrons and clients. Each cadre was connected to those above and below him. One had patrons because when he was admitted into the Party, he needed to be guaranteed by two cadres and needed to be approved by local leaders. These guarantors and an approver were one’s main patrons. Later, the new member could continue to guarantee others as well creating other clients and networks. 4) I also found that the way that this system worked changed over time; before 1977 local level officials had more authority to independently make the decision to kill within the categories of enemies that had been announced from the higher levels. But after 1977, when the numbers of enemies had been reduced and fear had spread within the ranks of the cadre by incessant purges, local cadre sought permission from higher levels before they eliminated “enemies.”

Patron-client relations have a deep foundation in Cambodian society. Although in 1975, CPK cadres evacuated city dwellers to the countryside in order to cut off patronage networks which were considered dangerous to the new regime, and supposedly destroy social linkages, people still looked for others that could protect them. This study points out how important patronage networks continued to be under DK.

Patron-client relations during the revolution of Democratic Kampuchea tied stronger bonds than during the pre-and post-revolutionary periods studied by Ebihara (1968) and Ledgerwood and Vijghen (2002). Chandler wrote that the culture of obedience, protection and dependency between those who were in upper and lower echelons were never distinguished in Cambodian society and it was strengthening during DK (Chandler 1999b: 149). I argue that DK society organized cadres into patron-clients pyramids, as defined by Scott (1972), in which clients in the middle of the pyramids have connections to patrons higher up and clients below. To analyze Scott's definition and to confirm what I have argued, I found that cadre in DK were all connected to both upper and lower echelons, which were their patrons and clients in the pyramid. A cadre is always in the middle of the pyramid, since when a cadre was admitted into Party membership, he/she needed to be guaranteed by at least two cadres, who had been members for at least one month,²⁶⁷ and a local leader to confirm his biography and who could confirm that the appointee deserved the full trust of the Party. After being a Party member for at least one month, he/she could guarantee others to join the Party. Therefore, the cadres in DK were all locked in patronage networks. None of the cadre stood alone. One needed to provide unconditional loyalty to his patrons and his clients needed to place their complete trust in him with no limits.

Through these patronage ties, cadres were all connected from the lowest level in the village to the highest level in the zone. In the Southwest zone administrative system, cadres were connected to the lower echelons through providing cadre with two positions in different units. For instance, from the highest level, Mok was one of the

members of the Central committee and he was also the secretary of the Southwest zone. Chan Von alias Som was a permanent member of the Southwest zone, and also the secretary of Region 13 at the same time. Chim, who was a non-permanent member of Region 13, was simultaneously the secretary of district 105 (Tramkok). Chom was a non-permanent member of district 105, and he was also the secretary of Pok Trabek sub-district. This inter-relationship between each administrative unit was unique in DK and was not seen in pre and post revolutionary Cambodia.

This inter-relation of cadres was not studied in depth by previous researchers such as Kiernan and Chandler. About Mok's connections, Kiernan wrote a great deal about how Mok's networks included close kin. However, Kiernan wrote only about the closest kin of Mok such as siblings, children and in-laws. This research goes beyond Kiernan's findings to reveal more of Mok's network, including: cousins, friends and neighbors who were promoted to important positions in DK. As I gained access to people in the former revolutionary support base, I found that most cadres were connected to Mok either directly or indirectly. Most data found for this research were consistent with Kiernan's in terms of Mok's kin network. Some data were not consistent with reference to cadres holding certain positions in administrative units. This could be because during DK there were many movements and reshuffling of cadre. Meas Muth, whom Kiernan said was one of the secretaries of Tramkok, was not confirmed by my informant, who was a native of Tramkok and also a former cadre in Tramkok district. Kiernan wrote that Mok's son-in-law, San, replaced Khom as secretary of Tramkok in 1976. This was not confirmed by my informants, nor by

surviving documents from the Southwest zone. In fact, San was not nominated to the Tramkok district committee until September or October 1977, as his first signature was found in October 1977. The secretary before San was not Khom either, but Kit and Chim. My research was more reliably based on informants who used to work in Tramkok district and on surviving documents. Kiernan's information was gathered through interviews with people who fled to the Thai border in 1979.

Patron-clients relations were predominant among DK cadre. Cadre often allowed their relatives to hold important positions because these relatives had more personal and stronger ties to them and thus were more reliable than non-kin clients (Hinton 2005: 137). Patronage networks were very strong during DK and were the strongest, unsurprisingly, between patrons and clients who were blood related. These activities created 'strings' of loyal people from the lowest to the highest level of the administrative system. The Central Committee tracked down and abused people in the 'strings' of patrons who were purged. Mok followed the same pattern because he viewed that cadre often appointed their close clients and kin to hold positions. The purge of clients of former patrons occurred in the Southwest zone after 1975, after Non Suon was transferred from Region 25 to become the minister of agriculture and was replaced by Som Chea alias Sdeung appointed by Mok. Two years later, Som Chea wrote in his confession at S-21 that Mok ordered him to kill all people connected to the previous secretary of region 25 (Ea 2005: 38). The same fate was true after Som Chea was purged and sent to S-21 in March 1977.

Patron-client relations among ordinary people were also important. Since the nature of violence was high, people seemed to seek patrons to protect them. People provided sincere service to their patrons, who were group leaders, by providing loyalty and working hard for those patrons. Furthermore, clients also tried to work for their patrons personally as well as work for the revolution to please those patrons.

Like other DK senior leaders and zone secretaries, Mok was very powerful in his zone; the power of the zone secretaries was not only granted by the state following the decisions adopted on March 30, 1976, but also received from his long service as a secretary. Among senior figures, Mok appointed the most relatives and close friends to hold important positions in DK, both inside and outside the Southwest (Kiernan 2008: 29). From this fact, we can see that Mok's networks were the strongest compared to those of leaders in other zones. Since patron-client relations were very common, and since the CPK led the country by kin and patronage systems rather than exclusively by political structures, it is obvious that those zone secretaries created strong bonds throughout the zone through kin and patron networks. The appointment of kin into important positions helped deal with the problem of trust which was crucial during DK. Only Base People were trusted, while New People were not. Before a cadre was appointed to hold position, he/she needed to have their biography reviewed to make sure he/she was trusted. Dok said that cadres from the Southwest zone who were transferred to replace purged cadres in other zones were chosen from among the most trusted. When a patron and client tie together, a client provides service and trust to his patron. In times of danger, a patron could provide protection to his client. The

secretary of Tramkok, Chim, although he was transferred to the Eastern zone in 1977, still needed his trusted clients. Because Chim had trouble finding trusted persons when he arrived in a new place, he brought his client, Dok, to go to the new place with him. Dok was trusted by Chim because he gave complete loyalty to him. Chim also trusted his patron, Mok. Since Chim was related to Mok, this patronage network was even stronger and more reliable.

Findings

The data found was similar to what I expected. As I researched in greater detail, I found that village and sub-district committees played very important roles in observing people engaged in agricultural production, although the village committee was more directly involved with the people. Group leaders in each work group were the right hands of village committees. The group leaders were actively involved with people in the fields, working, observing and reporting to the village committee about any “treacherous act.” Mostly, village chiefs reported about an individual’s guilt to the sub-district first and waited for orders. In the first stage of the regime, village committee members could make their own decision to execute the accused. I initially did not expect that the village chief would wait for his sub-district secretary’s decision to give the green light in order to arrest the accused. But I found that this changed over the course of the regime. In the first stage, village committee members, who were authorized to search and destroy enemies, made their own decision to execute them or report the accused to the upper echelon. Starting from late 1976 or early 1977, sub-district committee members were granted powers to oversee populations at the

grassroots level and to continue searching for enemies. In this stage, sub-district committee members preferred reporting the accused and waiting for decisions from upper echelon first before they took action against those enemies. Sub-district committee members were reluctant to make their own decisions to execute the accused because the paranoia among cadre was higher as the regime proceeded, as the number of city enemies declined and purges were within the ranks of the cadre themselves.

The research found that village chiefs had the right to do anything in their villages; however, they needed to inform their upper-echelon first, particularly the sub-district committee. In DK, a cadre was powerful, but not absolute. One needed to inform his/her upper-echelon. However, the upper-echelons did not interfere with the lower-echelon either if the lower-echelon decided to do something. One of the orders that was passed down from the CPK central committee to the lowest echelon of village base was to pursue potential enemies and smash them if found. Although the village chief did not have absolute power, he was encouraged to kill enemies if he found them. The sub-district secretary influenced village chiefs greatly if he wanted to arrest or kill someone. Hong, a village chief during DK, mentioned that one of his sub-district secretaries, Mak, was very harsh and brutal to New People. Hong said that Mak gave orders to kill hundreds of people in Treang district when Hong was a *Korng* leader.

After the village chief arrested or killed an enemy, he reported to his patron, the sub-district committee, which was important.

In the DK chain of command, the leaders of each level effectively observed and interacted with one another. The zone committee had to observe and pressure regional committees that did the same with the district committees. This continues down to the lowest level. The lower echelons had to respect and follow the upper echelon, which was crucially important during DK. For instance, village chiefs had to follow the orders of sub-district secretaries. The lower echelon had to report to their upper echelon, at least monthly. A surviving telegram that Ke Pauk sent to Pol Pot dated April 2, 1976 showed that all zone secretaries sent reports to their patron, Pol Pot, at the beginning of the month every month. The lowest ranking cadres also mentioned the same thing. Hong needed to write a report to his sub-district chief every month to report about rice cultivation, people's living standard, and about the enemy's activities in his village. "I wrote reports to him every month, and had a meeting every month as well, to report about the speed of work in the cooperatives" said Hong.

After, receiving orders it was mandatory that they be fulfilled. The patron-client relations were predominant and clients needed to provide unconditional and sincere loyalty to their patrons. When a patron issued orders to a client, a client was reluctant to reject them because he trusted, feared and respected his patron.

Endnotes

¹ During DK, stealing potatoes, breaking spoons, picking wild fruit...etc. was considered a crime. If caught, the accused was sent for “re-education,” from which most would never return.

² Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008. In line with Institutional Review Board policy at Northern Illinois University to protect human subjects, all the names of interviewees have been masked with pseudonyms. Only the names of higher ranking cadres already well known such as Mok are left unchanged.

³ Author’s interview with Dok, Takeo province, July 2008.

⁴ DK document D00710 stored at the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

⁵ New People were those who lived in towns beyond Khmer Rouge control until the Khmer Rouge took power in April 1975.

⁶ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁷ Siet Chhe’s confession at S-21. Quoted in Chandler (1999: 67).

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, Trust: *The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York: The Free Press, 1995.

⁹ Kaing Guek Eav aka Duch testifying to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, officially known as Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, on May 18, 2009.

¹⁰ Stephen Heder, “A sampling of documentary evidence linking the Khmer Rouge leaders”, *Searching For The Truth*, issue 1-13, 2000.

¹¹ The Khmer Republic, which was supported by the United States, ruled the country from 1970 to 1975.

¹² Author’s interview with Ming in July 2008.

¹³ Sam Borin of Radio Free Asia interviewed Khieu Samphan in January 2004.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Viet-Minh, meaning League for the Independence of Vietnam, was founded in May 1941 to seek independence from the French and later oppose the Japanese.

¹⁶ Pen Sovann’s interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Pen Sovann’s interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

¹⁹ Pen Sovann's interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

²⁰ Pen Sovann's interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

²¹ "Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

²² "Kampuchean Communist Youth League: The Right Hand of The Party," *Searching For the Truth*, Number 20, August 2001. Extracted from *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, Issue No. 5. May 1977.

²³ "Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

²⁴ The official birthday of Revolution Army was on January 17, 1968. According to Kaing Guek Eav's confession at ECCC, the birthday was moved to January 17 in order to coincide with April 17, the victory day of Cambodia communism.

²⁵ "Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

²⁶ Pol Pot speech on the 17th Anniversary of the CPK, Tuol Sleng Archives, D07409, page 47-48.

²⁷ Pol Pot speech on the 17th Anniversary of the CPK, Tuol Sleng Archives, D07409, page 47-48.

²⁸ Sam Borin of Radio Free Asia interviewed Khieu Samphan in January 2004.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Author's interview with Lim in May 2005.

³¹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

³² Author's interview with Tim in July 2005.

³³ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ People who rejected the assignment of the Khmer Rouge were seen to be persecuted in 1973 or after 1975.

³⁶ Author's interview with Nhep in July 2008.

³⁷ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

³⁸ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Author's interview with Sok in June 2004.

⁴² "Kampuchean Communist Youth League: The Right Hand of The Party," *Searching For the Truth*, Number 20, August 2001. Extracted from *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, Issue No. 5. May 1977.

⁴³ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Author's interview with Keng in July 2006.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ ibid

⁵⁸ Author's interview with Sarika in July 2008.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Author's interview with Sopha in July 2008.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Author's interview with Sarika in July 2008.

⁶³ Author's interview with Sen in January 2005.

⁶⁴ *Black Paper: Facts and Evidences of the Acts of Aggression and Annexation of Vietnam against Kampuchea*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea. Published in September 1978.

⁶⁵ Author's interview with Hong in July 2008.

⁶⁶ Khmer citizens who were brought to North Vietnam after 1954 for political and military training. Most of them returned home after 1970.

⁶⁷ Author's interview with Vin in July 2004.

⁶⁸ Author's interview with Nhep in July 2008.

⁶⁹ Author's interview with Sok in July 2004.

⁷⁰ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁷¹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *People of Kampuchea*, "Searching for the Truth," Issue 2, February 2000. Page 14-15.

⁷⁴ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁷⁵ Author's interview with Nhep in July 2008.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Author's interview with Nhep in July 2008.

⁷⁸ Author's interview with Marem in July 2008.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Author's interview with Ung in July 2004.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁸² Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁸³ *Situation in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, and the Reasons why the People had to leave the city*, Documentation Center of Cambodia catalogue number D00710, page 1.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Rasmey in July 2008.

⁸⁵ *Situation in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, and the Reasons why the People had to leave the city*, Documentation Center of Cambodia catalogue number D00710, page 1.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Marem in July 2008.

⁸⁸ *Situation in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, and the Reasons why the People had to leave the city*, Documentation Center of Cambodia catalogue number D00710, page 3.

⁸⁹ Author's interview with Mao in November 2004.

⁹⁰ *Situation in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, and the Reasons why the People had to leave the city*, Documentation Center of Cambodia catalogue number D00710, page 3.

⁹¹ "*Brief History of Our Revolutionary Movement of 17 April (1975)*," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00712.

⁹² "Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

⁹³ Author's interview with Meas Sokha in July 2008.

⁹⁴ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

⁹⁵ "*Confession of Em Min, called Sen*," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00374.

⁹⁶ Author's interview with Sarika in July 2008.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Author's interview with Channa in July 2008.

⁹⁹ Pen Sovann's interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ San, Kalyan, "Confession of Chou Chet at S-21," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 50, February 2004.

¹⁰¹ Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch testifying at the ECCC on May 18, 2009.

¹⁰² So, Farina, "Confession of Sek Sat," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 53, May 2004, p 4-7.

¹⁰³ San, Kalyan, "Tim Sen and his Purported Activities in Region 25," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 8, August 2000, p 2-4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ So, Farina, "Confession of Sek Sat," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 53, May 2004, p 4-7.

¹⁰⁶ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Vanthan Peou Dara, Pheng Pong Rasy, Yin Nean and Chheng Veng, "Mok's biography," *Searching for the Truth*, issued 37, January 2003, p 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁰⁹ San, Kalyan, "I only want justice," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 8, August 2000, p 6-9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

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¹¹² Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹¹³ San, Kalyan, "I only want justice," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 8, August 2000, p 6-9.

¹¹⁴ Pen Sovann's interview with Radio Free Asia on July 25, 2006.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Vanthan Peou Dara, Pheng Pong Rasy, Yin Nean and Chheng Veng, "Mok's biography," *Searching for the Truth*, issued 37, January 2003, p 13-14.

¹¹⁷ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹¹⁸ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹¹⁹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹²⁰ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Author's interview with Keng in July 2006.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹²⁶ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹²⁹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹³⁰ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹³¹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ San would take position as Tramkok secretary between September 10 and October 17, 1977. It is due to the fact that the last written orders issued to a sub-district were signed by Kith, who was San's predecessor, dated September 9, 1977. And another written order firstly signed by San was on October 18, 1977. Therefore, San took the position between September 10 and October 17, 1977. Source: "Report to Party District 105 (Tramkok) District," Documentation Center of Cambodia. D00227.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Kiernan's interview with Sarun (quoted in Kiernan 2008: 192).

¹³⁷ Author's interview with Sophal in July 2008.

¹³⁸ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Author's interview with Sarika in July 2008.

¹⁴¹ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁴² "*Honorary Red Flag*," Special Issue, 1977-1978, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21421.

¹⁴³ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁴⁴ Author's interview with Ung in July 2004.

¹⁴⁵ Author's interview with Ung in July 2004.

¹⁴⁶ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Author's interview with Dany in January 2005.

¹⁵⁰ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹⁵¹ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹⁵² Author's interview with Kong in July 2008.

¹⁵³ Elementary Class 2 textbook published by the Ministry of Education 1977, pp. 9-10, *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 2, February 2000. Documentation Center of Cambodia.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.

¹⁵⁶ Author's interview with Kong in July 2008.

¹⁵⁷ *Situation in Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, and the Reasons why the People had to leave the city*, Documentation Center of Cambodia catalogue number D00710, page 1.

¹⁵⁸ "Confession of Em Min alias Sen," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00374.

¹⁵⁹ “Confession of Chou Chet, Secretary of the Western Zone,” Documentation Center of Cambodia J00456.

¹⁶⁰ Author’s interview with Sarika, Channa, Ming in July 2008.

¹⁶¹ Author’s interview with Mao in November 2004.

¹⁶² Author’s interview with Don in September 2004.

¹⁶³ The Khmer-Hanoi were Cambodian people, who were sent to Hanoi after the 1954 Geneva Peace Accord for political and military training. They were allowed to return home after the 1970 Coup to help the CPK develop the country. Later, most Khmer-Hanoi were not trusted and were killed. A few, who managed to get back to Vietnam, returned to Cambodia in 1979.

¹⁶⁴ Author’s interview with Pheap in July 2008.

¹⁶⁵ *Honorary Red Flag*, Issue 4, April 1978, op. cit. Quoted in Ea (2005: 5).

¹⁶⁶ Notebook of an S-21 cadre, Documentation Center of Cambodia, D00512. Quoted in Ea (2005: 5).

¹⁶⁷ *Tung Padevat* Magazine, Issue 4, April 1978, op. cit. Quoted in Ea (2005: 6).

¹⁶⁸ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Youk, Chhang “Vorn Vet aka Sok Thuok,” *Searching for the Truth*, Number 9, September 2000, p 11.

¹⁷¹ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁷² Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch spoke at ECCC on May 15, 2009.

¹⁷³ Author’s interview with Meng in July 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Author’s interview with Kompha in July 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Author’s interview with Keng in July 2006.

¹⁷⁷ Author’s interview with Sopheak in July 2008.

¹⁷⁸ Author’s interview with Keng in July 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Author’s interview with Keng in July 2006.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Author’s interview with Sopheak in July 2008.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ “*Confession of Chou Chet, Secretary of the Western Zone*,” Documentation Center of Cambodia J00456.

¹⁸⁴ *Revolutionary Red Flag*, quoted in Hinton 2005: 141.

¹⁸⁵ “Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Sok was reported by Ben Kiernan to be sent from the Southwest.

¹⁸⁸ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Em, Sokhym “The purge of cadres in the Eastern zone,” *Searching for the Truth*, Number 57, September 2004, p 25-27.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Author’s interview with Sana in July 2008.

¹⁹² Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

¹⁹³ Author’s interview with Ra in August 2004.

¹⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Ra in August 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Author’s interview with Ra in August 2004.

¹⁹⁶ Author’s interview with Manith in August 2005.

¹⁹⁷ “17th anniversary of Independence Day,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D21464.

¹⁹⁸ Ly, Sophal “Social Classes in Democratic Kampuchea,” *Searching for the Truth*, Number 34, October 2002, p 14-17.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Author’s interview with Don in September 2004.

²⁰³ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.

²⁰⁴ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

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- ²⁰⁵ “Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.
- ²⁰⁶ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.
- ²⁰⁷ Author’s interview with Channa in July 2008.
- ²⁰⁸ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.
- ²⁰⁹ Author interview with Kong in July 2008.
- ²¹⁰ Elementary Class 2 text book published by the Ministry of Education 1977, pp. 9-10, *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 2, February 2000. Documentation Center of Cambodia.
- ²¹¹ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.
- ²¹² Author’s interview with Nhep in July 2008.
- ²¹³ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.
- ²¹⁴ Author’s interview with Sarika in July 2008.
- ²¹⁵ Author’s interview with Sarika in July 2008.
- ²¹⁶ Author’s interview with Neang in July 2008.
- ²¹⁷ Ibid.
- ²¹⁸ Author’s interview with Neang in July 2008..
- ²¹⁹ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.
- ²²⁰ Author’s interview with Neang in July 2008.
- ²²¹ Author’s interview with Don in September 2004.
- ²²² Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.
- ²²³ “Statement of CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark in July 1978,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.
- ²²⁴ Author’s interview with Kunthy in July 2008.
- ²²⁵ Ibid.
- ²²⁶ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.
- ²²⁷ Em, Sokhym “Revolutionary Female Medical Staff in Tram Kak District,” *Searching for the Truth*, Number 34, October 2002, p 24-27.
- ²²⁸ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher’s interview with Sau Hau in June 2003.

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- ²²⁹ Author's interview with Vanny in July 2008.
- ²³⁰ Author's interview with Kunthy in July 2008.
- ²³¹ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Keum Si in May 2004.
- ²³² Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Phalla in November 2003.
- ²³³ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Sau Hau in June 2003.
- ²³⁴ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Phalla in November 2003.
- ²³⁵ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Bok Rin in May 2004.
- ²³⁶ Author's interview with Sana in September 2004.
- ²³⁷ Em, Sokhym "Revolutionary Female Medical Staff in Tram Kak District," *Searching for the Truth*, Number 34, October 2002, p 24-27.
- ²³⁸ Documentation Center of Cambodia researcher's interview with Sau Hau in June 2003.
- ²³⁹ Em, Sokhym "Revolutionary Female Medical Staff in Tram Kak District," *Searching for the Truth*, Number 34, October 2002, p 24-27.
- ²⁴⁰ Author's interview with Vanny in July 2008.
- ²⁴¹ Author's interview with Sana in September 2004.
- ²⁴² Author's interview with Dok in July 2008.
- ²⁴³ Siet Chhe's confession at S-21. Quote in Chandler (1999b: 67).
- ²⁴⁴ Author's interview with Ching in July 2008.
- ²⁴⁵ Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch spoke at ECCC date: unknown.
- ²⁴⁶ Party Statutes passed in January 1976, quoted in Steve Heder, *Searching for the truth*, Number 2.
- ²⁴⁷ Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch spoke at ECCC on April 8, 2009.
- ²⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁹ Author's interview with Neang in July 2008.
- ²⁵⁰ "Confession of Chou Chet, Secretary of the Western Zone," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00456.
- ²⁵¹ "Note on the Decisions of the Central Committee on Miscellaneous Matters," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00693.

²⁵² “Conversations of Pol Pot with the Delegation of the Belgium-Kampuchea Society, 5 August 1978,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00108.

²⁵³ Author’s interview with Dok in July 2008.

²⁵⁴ Confession of Som Chea at S-21, quoted in Ea (2005: 38).

²⁵⁵ Author’s interview with Keng in July 2008.

²⁵⁶ Author’s interview with Neang in July 2008.

²⁵⁷ Author’s interview with Kong in July 2008.

²⁵⁸ Author’s interview with Dok, Hong and Kong in July 2008.

²⁵⁹ Quote in Ea (2005: 32-33).

²⁶⁰ Boeun’s reports to Tramkok secretary, San. Quoted in Ea (2005: 51).

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Soeun wrote a letter to secretary of Tramkok. Quoted in Ea (2005: 52).

²⁶⁴ Author’s interview with Kong and Hong in July 2008.

²⁶⁵ Author’s interview with Hong in July 2008.

²⁶⁶ Author’s interview with Channa in July 2008.

²⁶⁷ Temporary Statutes of the Communist Youth League of Kampuchea of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 13.

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