

The Cham Rebellion

Survivors' Stories from the Villages

Ysa Osman

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Searching for the Truth

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*For those who died for the cause of protecting
the freedom of expression and religion*

សូមទទួលស្មារតីនៃនេះដល់អ្នកដែលបានស្លាប់នៅក្នុងការពារព្រះមហាក្សត្រមាន
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Foreword

This book presents historical information and first-hand accounts of the experiences of Cham Muslims in Cambodia during the period 1970-1979. Its author, Ysa Osman, gathered much of the information contained here over a three-year period of painstaking field research.

Most of the narratives come from residents of Kroch Chhmar district, which lies along the Mekong River in the province of Kampong Cham province. This district was located in what was designated as "Region 21" during the period of Democratic Kampuchea, which was itself within the boundaries of a larger area known as the "East Zone." By 1973, the movement that was to become known as the Khmer Rouge had firm control over almost every village in Kroch Chhmar.

Two of this book's chapters contain eyewitness accounts of events that occurred during the uprisings of Cham Muslims against the Khmer Rouge in two villages of Kroch Chhmar, Koh Phal [Island of Harvest] and Svay Khleang. Tensions between Cham Muslim populations and the movement, which was first known as the "National Unification Front," had been building for years in the district, exacerbated by the arrests of Islamic religious leaders and others, as well as a prohibition of Islamic faith and practice. The revolts in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang occurred in 1975, the year that began the period of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979). Focusing on events in Kroch Chhmar district, other chapters of this book relate part of the greater story of the Muslim experience in Cambodia during the periods both before and after the "Cham rebellions" in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang.

Chapter 1 treats the 1970 arrival in Kroch Chhmar of the movement that was to come under the leadership of the Khmer Rouge. Accounts from the author's interviews describe the social reorganization of village structures into "solidarity groups" (1971-1972), the policy on the development of village "cooperatives" that followed (1973), as well as the circumstances that led to growing tensions between Muslim communities and the communist leadership in Kroch Chhmar. In 1973 there was a riot against party leadership in a settlement along the Mekong River called Trea Village. According to eyewitness reports, this event led to further large-scale arrests of Cham Muslims in Kroch Chhmar as well as the disappearance of Islamic religious leaders throughout Cham Muslim communities in the region. Chapter 2 narrates the experiences of some of those who were sent to prisons in Kroch Chhmar during this period, especially in 1973-1975.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the “Cham rebellions” that occurred in Kroch Chhmar district during the Islamic month of Ramadan in 1975 (roughly corresponding to the month of September of that year). These actions were carried out independently, although they occurred quite close together in both place and time. Accounts indicate that both of the rebellions are remembered as resistance against the pressure that Khmer Rouge policy had put on Islamic faith and practice specifically. The Khmer Rouge had overwhelming power and were able to suppress both uprisings within just few days after they began. First-hand testimony compiled by Ysa Osman shows that the revolts in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang were followed by widespread anti-Islam measures on the part of the Khmer Rouge.

Chapters 3 through 5 demonstrate that the forced relocation of Cham communities was another immediate result of the rebellions. Reports indicate that these evacuations were carried out by the Khmer Rouge in an attempt to disperse the concentrated populations of Cham Muslims from the region of Kroch Chhmar into settlements where a majority of people were ethnically non-Cham.

In 1977 the East Zone’s leadership changed after a confrontational takeover by cadres from the Southwest and Central zones. The Cham were called back to their homes in Kroch Chhmar from the areas to which they had been sent two or three years before. Many of their homes were occupied by people who had also been relocated. A large number of the former residents of the city of Phnom Penh (the capital of Cambodia, which had been “liberated” by the Khmer Rouge in 1975) had also arrived in the East Zone. According to those interviewed for this book, after their return to Kroch Chhmar in 1977-1978, Cham Muslims became the target of waves of brutal killings that were carried out throughout the region. Chapter 5 presents the stories that were told to the author by the survivors of these events.

In the accounts that follow, neither the names of the interviewees nor the people they talk about have been changed. This is consistent with the mission and methodology of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

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Ysa Osman

Chapter 1

The First Years of the Khmer Rouge Movement in Kroch Chhmar District, 1970-1973

Kroch Chhmar is one of the sixteen districts comprising present-day Kampong Cham province. During Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the Khmer Rouge designated the area that now corresponds to Kampong Cham province as "Region 21," which was part of its "East Zone." The northern boundary of both the district and the East Zone was the Mekong River.

Kroch Chhmar district has long been considered the heartland of Cambodia's Cham Muslims. According to legend, it was the first place the Cham people settled after emigrating from Vietnam, which had been a center of the great ancient civilization of Champa. Today, this district is home to a high concentration of Cham Muslims; many religious leaders of Cambodia's Islamic community have also lived there.

The Cham Muslim people of Kroch Chhmar have long made their

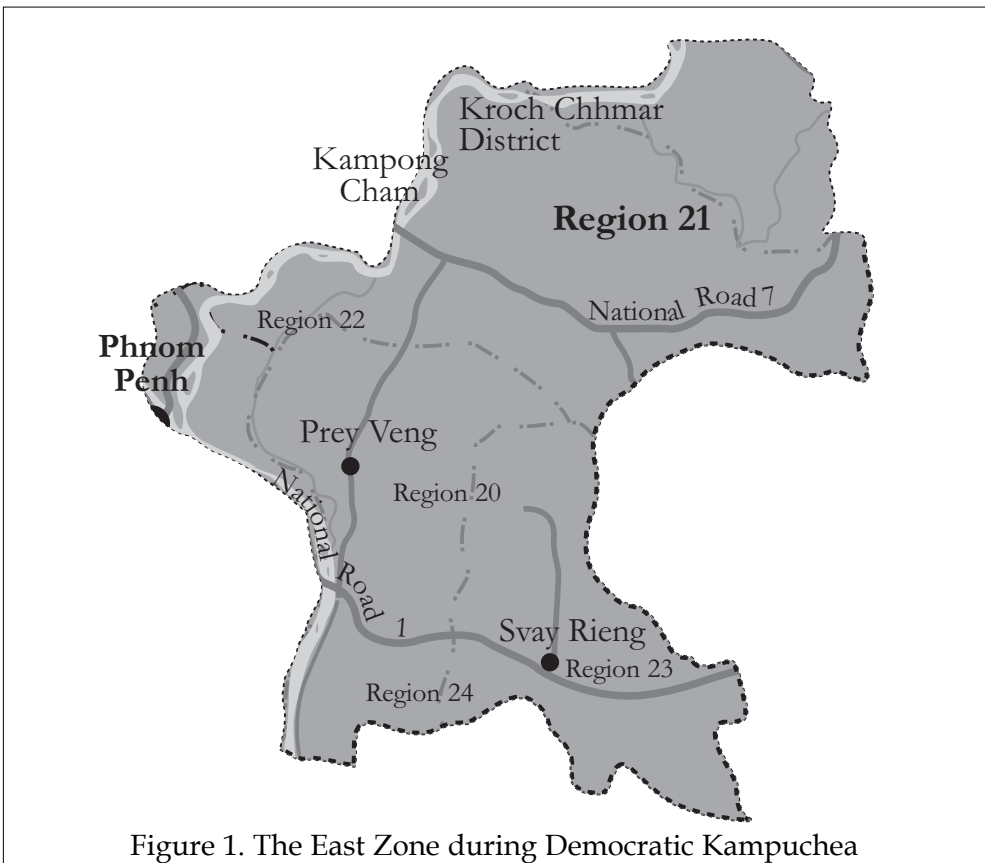


Figure 1. The East Zone during Democratic Kampuchea

living by farming and fishing. The Mekong River deposits fertile silt in the district each year and irrigates the land during the rainy season. In the past, fish have been abundant in the Mekong River; they also breed in countless creeks and swamps nearby, especially during the annual flood season.

The most densely populated area of Kroch Chhmar district is located along the Mekong River about 50 kilometers north of the province's capital of Kampong Cham. Prior to 1970, the villages of Svay Khleang, Koh Phal, Chumnik, Trea and Peus were the most populous settlements of Cham people in Kroch Chhmar. The first two of these settlements, Svay Khleang and Koh Phal, were the sites of rebellions against the Khmer Rouge in 1975.

At the end of the Democratic Kampuchea regime in 1979, very few Cham survived and returned to Svay Khleang and Koh Phal. A generation later, Svay Khleang's population has grown to over 2,000 people. Koh Phal, however, has only ten to twenty villagers. The strong currents of the Mekong have carried away bits of this village's land each year; now virtually nothing is left.

The Coming of the Khmer Rouge to Kroch Chhmar District

General Lon Nol assumed control over Cambodia in 1970, removing Samdech (Prince) Sihanouk from power in March of that year. In radio broadcasts from exile in Beijing, Sihanouk appealed to Cambodians who were loyal to him to take up his cause. Many Cham residents of Kroch Chhmar supported the Prince. Some volunteered to leave their homes for the forests in order to fight against Lon Nol in answer to the monarch's call. At this time another group – a movement known as the Khmer Issarak – joined with those loyal to Sihanouk. They formed a movement that was known as the National Unification Front (*Renakse Ruopruom Chaet*). The Front promoted its stated goal of restoring Sihanouk to power over Lon Nol's Khmer Republic. This also represents the origins of a movement across Cambodia – including the province of Kampong Cham – that was later to become widely known as the Khmer Rouge.¹

Although Lon Nol's rule of Cambodia began in 1970, his forces had little direct influence in Kroch Chhmar district. Only three months after Lon Nol took power, Ta [Grandfather] Sramaum, chairman of the Kroch Chhmar District Committee who had just been appointed to work for the Lon Nol regime, fled Kroch Chhmar. He went to a remote location on the border of Kroch Chhmar and Dambe districts. Known as Prey Ngo-nguy

("Sleepy Forest"), it had already become a base for resistance to the Lon Nol regime. Prey Ngo-nguy was home to approximately three hundred members of a movement under the command of Srei Chhan and Keo Sithan.² As Lon Nol's forces continued to withdraw from the villages of Kroch Chhmar, the forces of the National Unification Front moved out of Sleepy Forest to take control of these areas. Members of the resistance also worked with a communist force that had been sent into Cambodia from Vietnam.³ From their forest base, the Front thus developed into a widespread and consolidated resistance movement in the area of Kroch Chhmar, as it also did across Cambodia.

The resistance movement that emerged out of Sleepy Forest cooperated with other resistance forces in Kroch Chhmar. The movement officially formed a District Leadership Committee in 1970. Its members were appointed from across the area that had recently been renamed Region 21.⁴ The original District Committee of Kroch Chhmar had six members:

- ◆ Sau Pha was the district secretary from 1971-1977 (this position was occupied by a cadre named Sok in 1970 and 1971)
- ◆ Ta Sam-ol was named the deputy secretary for economic affairs
- ◆ Ta Soeu was the deputy secretary for cultural affairs
- ◆ Peun Yut (aka Ta Aok) was in charge of security
- ◆ Chunny was responsible for information
- ◆ Ta Yok, an ethnic Cham, oversaw Muslim affairs.

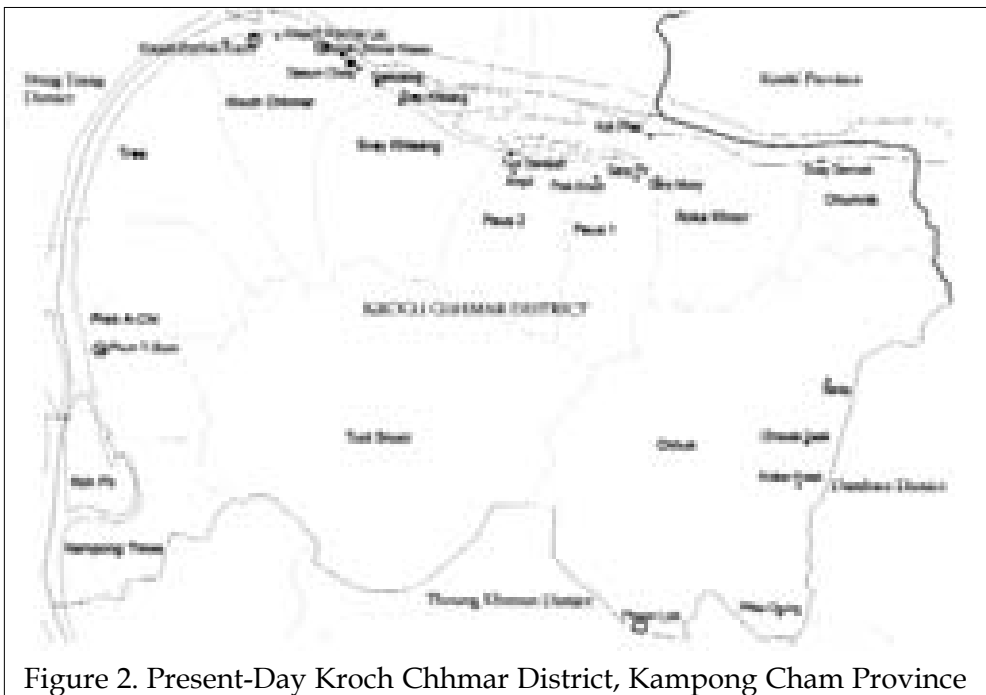


Figure 2. Present-Day Kroch Chhmar District, Kampong Cham Province

There were other high-ranking cadres who did not stand officially on the District Leadership Committee. These included, for example, Ly Sopheap, chief of military affairs; Keo Sithan, who became secretary of economics after Ta Sam-ol was transferred elsewhere; Meng Hun, chairman of the youth organization; and Bren and Chun Leng, who were responsible for public health.⁵

When the National Unification Front first started to govern in the district, the people of Kroch Chhmar tended to support them energetically. Many thought that that this “national liberation movement” would restore Samdech Oeuv (Prince Sihanouk) to power. A great number of the villagers’ children, even those who were still very young, became volunteers in various organizations associated with the Front. The organization that took in the greatest number of young people was, not surprisingly, the military.

Min Man, a villager in Kroch Chhmar who was fourteen years old in 1970, recalled in an interview, “My friends invited me to become a soldier in the Liberation Army. They said it would be a lot of fun. I went to ask Ta Sak [a commander in Stung Trang district] if I could become a soldier. He asked me why I wanted to be in the military. I answered, ‘I have a burning anger [about the political situation in Cambodia].’”⁶ Ta Sak accepted Man as a messenger (*nirasa*). By 1975, Man would become a commander who participated in the Khmer Rouge’s seizure of Phnom Penh.

Chan Thea, who was twelve years old in 1973, reported that one day he heard Samdech Sihanouk on the radio telling the youths to fight Lon Nol. Thea added, “I was moved upon hearing this. I went to ask Ta Pha, the chief of Kroch Chhmar district, to allow me participate in the attack on Lon Nol.” Ta Pha sent Thea to work in the security office.⁷ He was later to become notorious as a prison guard.⁸

In 1970 the Front’s forces were already well-organized. As they fought, many members of Lon Nol’s army in the region were actually collaborating with the Front in secret. According to eyewitness reports, rations and weaponry that had been supplied to Lon Nol by the United States would fall into the hands of the Front’s army through these clandestine channels.⁹ For example, in Stung Trang district, which lies on the opposite bank of the Mekong from Kroch Chhmar district (in what was Region 42 of the North Zone), an airplane belonging to the Lon Nol regime was diverted to land at the Front’s headquarters and never returned to its base.¹⁰

In 1973 the Khmer Rouge seized the last remaining areas in Kroch Chhmar district that had been under Lon Nol's control: Koh Pir and Kampong Treas subdistricts, as well as some subdistricts of Tbaung Khmum and Kampong Siem districts. The name Kroch Chhmar remained in use for the older district, which had already been under the control of the Front for some time. The territory that had been acquired to the east was given the name Peam Chileang. There, new leaders were transferred from Kroch Chhmar and Tbaung Khmum districts to govern Peam Chileang.

Two high-ranking members of the Khmer Rouge were selected to lead Peam Chileang: Ta Aok and Ly Sopheap, who had served as the chiefs of security and military affairs in Kroch Chhmar, respectively. Their former positions, now open in Kroch Chhmar, fell to Chunny and Srei Chhan, respectively.¹¹ Starting in 1973, the district secretary of Peam Chileang was Uk Bun Chhoeun; his deputy was Bien (aka Chom). In 1976 Uk Bun Chhoeun was promoted to deputy secretary of Region 21. Bien, his former deputy, was named deputy secretary of Kroch Chhmar district for a short time before he was sent to work at the Cambodian embassy in Laos. Another cadre named Bin Ban (aka Bau) also served as district secretary of Peam Chileang for a time.¹²

Almost all of the Khmer Rouge cadres who became leaders in these two districts were eventually transferred elsewhere, killed or disappeared in mid-1977.¹³ This was when Khmer Rouge forces from the Central and Southwest Zones entered the East Zone in a takeover of power, allegedly in order to counter the Vietnamese presence in this border region. At that time, a cadre named Hor arrived and was named the new district secretary of Kroch Chhmar.

The Solidarity Groups (*Krom Samaki*)

When the National Unification Front first took control of parts of Kroch Chhmar district around 1970, more populated subdistricts and villages were broken into smaller units. The names of communities were changed and frequently replaced with numerical designations. For example, Svay Khleang subdistrict had once included six villages: Khpop Rokar, Khpop Kandal, Khpop Kraom, Chamkar Mlou, Svay Khleang (Village), and Prek Chroeng. The Front renamed them Villages number 1 through 7. The village that had long been known to residents as Svay Khleang was divided into Villages 5 and 6.¹⁴

All of the villages in Kroch Chhmar district were assigned new

village chairmen in 1970. The new village heads were appointed by the district secretary following recommendations that had been passed up by the various subdistrict chairmen of Kroch Chhmar. The pool from which the incoming village heads were selected consisted of those who were judged to be among the poorest and the least educated in their communities.

At first, Cham-majority villages were assigned chairmen who were themselves ethnic Chams. Roun Saman, a village chairman in Peus subdistrict under the Khmer Rouge, related: "The Khmer Rouge used [gave rank to] ignorant people, people who would kill whomever they were told to kill, because stupid people work without thinking. They would do whatever they needed to do to gain face and be promoted. The ignorant ones would put on airs and act very strong. They would curse even their own parents without recognizing the debt they owed to them. They did whatever served their purposes. I had worked [for the Front] all throughout, but when liberation came [1975] they did not allow the Cham to hold positions [anymore]."¹⁵

After the new village chairmen were instated in areas of Kroch Chhmar that the Front controlled in 1970-1971, village leaders received instructions from above to restructure their communities into what were called "solidarity groups" (*krom samakhi*). This system of labor differed from the old village work arrangements in which the better-off hired or bartered with others to farm their land for them. No family could decline to participate in the new system.

Ly Hak remembered, "After the Khmer Rouge set up Villages 1, 2, 3, and 5 [of Svay Khleang subdistrict] ... the subdistrict chairman called a meeting of my village and announced, 'No matter how anyone feels about it, we will now form solidarity group[s].'" Hak was reluctant to participate since he had never heard of the idea of a "solidarity group." He reported, "I did not know what to say when the subdistrict chief told me to join up; he told me that the solidarity group was going to be a very comfortable situation." He could not, however, refuse.¹⁶ By 1971 villagers all across Kroch Chhmar in areas controlled by the Front were organized into solidarity groups.

The villagers called the new solidarity group system a name that meant "exchange of labor" (*kar ngea pravas dai knea*).¹⁷ The concept apparently showed some regional variations in its implementation. In Kroch Chhmar during this period, one solidarity group consisted of between ten to fifteen families, depending on the overall size of the village.¹⁸ The group members retained private ownership of their land,

homes, and personal belongings. However, the group leaders required every member to participate in all of the farming duties for all members of the group, from the beginning of the season through the harvest. At the end of the season the owner of a plot of land still retained private rights to his or her own harvest.

A report from Svay Rieng province indicates that when the solidarity groups began to be instated in that part of the East Zone, a portion of the land belonging to the wealthy was re-allocated to the poor. In this way, all members of the solidarity group held land that could be worked by the collective.

The 1971 growing season was under the new structure, but that year, the rice harvest was exceptionally poor. There was little to eat in Kroch Chhmar after the first year of the new solidarity group system. Touloas Min, a villager from Svay Khleang, explained, "The solidarity groups did not work well because each member showed a lack of concern for the others and did only [the minimum of] what he or she was forced to do."¹⁹ A number of those who participated in these groups explained that their land could not be fully farmed under the new system. This was because their land holdings were too large in comparison to those of others in the group. The small landowners were not willing to exert extra effort in order to work the larger farms.²⁰ Even though the standard of living declined for those working in solidarity groups in 1971, the system was again put into effect for the growing season of 1972. The inequities of this system, which was supposedly instated precisely in order to address them, led to dissatisfaction and resentment from the outset.

The Cooperatives (*Sahakar*)

In 1973, the solidarity group system was given a new name: the cooperative system, in accord with a plan from the central party leadership. The idea of cooperatives was promoted throughout the period of Democratic Kampuchea, as in the following explanation that appeared in the party publication, *Revolutionary Youth*, in 1976:

The tasks of the cooperatives in the era of the National Democratic Revolution are: (1) to eliminate the system of capitalists and landowners using production to oppress the people; (2) bravely push both politically and militarily as well as economically the attacks against the enemy in the fields of battle; (3) the cooperative is the strongest force to push production in the rear areas of the battlefield; (4) the cooperative is the wall and the defensive force to strengthen revolutionary state power at the village and subdistrict [levels].²¹

After years of an escalating process of “cooperativization” across Cambodia during the era of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the system was propagandized to be a success. In 1978, Pol Pot announced:

For 95 percent of the people life is much better than it was under the old society, because before they had no land, no work, no rice, no water, were ill, sold their daughters and sons, some even sold their wives. Life was uncertain. Furthermore, they lived under oppression, under pressure, existed as slaves, and did not receive the fruits of their labor. They were exploited. Now they are the masters of their labor and the fruits of that labor. They work the same as before or even less than before, but are now more comfortable than before. Only 5 percent work more than in the past, and that is because they never used to work at all, or they only worked very little.²²

Villagers in Kroch Chhmar first heard of cooperatives when district leaders came in 1973 to announce that the solidarity groups in Kroch Chhmar were to be dissolved and reorganized as cooperatives.

In 1973 meetings were held for all residents in the villages of Kroch Chhmar district (which was now entirely under the control of Communist Party of Kampuchea leadership) about the plan to create cooperatives. The hardship of the former solidarity groups, coupled with the persuasion of the cadres, caused a large number of the people to accept the idea of the cooperatives initially. When cooperatives were first set up in Kroch Chhmar in 1973, the membership of each cooperative was fixed at 25 families.²³ The number of cooperatives per village thus varied according to the total number of families in any particular village.

In Svay Khleang, Ly Hak, the villager who had previously not understood the new idea of a solidarity group, now wondered what a cooperative would be. He said that he asked a cadre about the meaning of “cooperative” after the meeting in the village that announced the change. The cadre answered him, “Uncle, you still don’t understand, but just wait and see. Once you are in the cooperative things will be really easy. No matter where you go, you will never have to worry about whether or not your children are hungry.”²⁴

Soem Zain reported that a district cadre told the people of Trea village that, “You will be well-off soon because the cooperative will be easy; whatever you want, you will just have to say so [in order to get it]. If you want rice, then rice it will be, if you want noodles you will get noodles. It won’t be difficult. It will be very comfortable.”²⁵ According to those who lived under the system, however, life in the cooperatives was one of hardship and suffering from the very beginning.

Upon joining a cooperative, members had to give up all personal property except for their houses, granting their assets to the cooperative. The members of an agricultural cooperative were required to work together and their harvest was to be shared among them, stored at a common point for later disbursement. In 1973, the rice harvested was stored at the home of the cooperative chairman. There was no collective dining at that time; it would be instituted later.

At the inception of the system, the cooperative chairman allocated what was to be set aside for seed rice for the following year. For food, he or she apportioned rice to those in the cooperative as the need was seen to arise over time. Rice was not handed out all at once, as several villagers from Svay Khleang explained. In Teh Zain's cooperative, for example, rice was issued two times per month.²⁶ Man Zain recalled that two tenths of a kilogram of rice was issued to each person on a daily basis.²⁷ Along with rice farming, the village cooperative chairman organized fishing, the cultivation of vegetables, and chopping wood. Fish, vegetables, wood and other products were dispensed just like the rice was.²⁸

Unlike the solidarity groups, not everyone was invited to join the village cooperative groups at the outset. Anyone who was considered wealthy was not immediately admitted into a cooperative. Those who had been well-off before the regime remained in their solidarity groups. Those who had considerable property recalled that they were quite alarmed when they saw others around them becoming incorporated into the new cooperatives; they were afraid because they were apparently being singled out by not being invited to join. Hak Mat, originally from a family of some means in Svay Khleang, reported, "The 'pure classes' [i.e., the poor] were all allowed into the cooperatives. I was 'clean' too [because of my actions], yet they did not let me in. There were a couple of families in my group [who were in the same position as I was]." Hak Mat handed over his cattle, his oxcart, his sugar cane field, and the rice in his shed for the collective ownership of his solidarity group. He did this with the hope that his village chairman could see his good qualities and thus would allow him into the cooperative.²⁹

After the cooperatives had operated for a few months, those who had previously been wealthy were allowed to join at last. In Svay Khleang, Toulos Min was also concerned when he was initially not allowed to join the cooperative. "I was very frightened. I did not know what was going on, why they did not allow me to join." Later, after Toulos Min was admitted as a member of a cooperative, he said that he felt more relaxed, "After four or five months they let me join, and I was happy about that."³⁰ Teh Zain also commented, "The Khmer Rouge waited until the rich had

given over everything they owned before they let them join."³¹

All twelve of the former cooperative members in Svay Khleang interviewed for this study reported that the quality of life, already poor after two years under the solidarity groups in 1971 and 1972, deteriorated further with the inception of the cooperative system. Sman Kachi, Man Zain, and Teh Zain described disputes in Svay Khleang over resource allocation. All three agreed that the system was not fair since the amount of food and other materials disbursed was based on the number of members in any particular family. Some families had many able-bodied workers, each of whom had to eat more to stay fit; in contrast, however, other families had many children who would eat less than the adults as a rule.³² Sman Kachi added, "It was just not right. My family had five members, four of whom were workers. But some families had seven or eight children, with only two workers. When rations were issued, even though they had done very little, they still got more [to eat] than my family."³³ There were other problems of inequity as well. Sieu Y explained that work under the cooperatives was not productive in Svay Khleang because "[There were] tens of people [in a cooperative], no one could supervise them all, and many were reluctant to perform their tasks."³⁴

Grievances, large and small, began to mount up. For example, one person recalled how he liked curry soup, but received the ingredients for sour soup instead. Others liked meat, but they got fish. Want and a sense of lack led to stealing and other infractions in breach of cooperative rules. This, in turn, exposed cooperative members to punishment according to these same rules. Soem Zain, for example, reported that his younger brother was arrested for stealing cooperative property as early as 1973.³⁵

Special cooperatives were established that were dedicated to providing materials such as clothing, supplies, and tools that were to be shared and exchanged among all the cooperatives. These were called "trade cooperatives" (*sahakor luk-dau*).³⁶ Open markets disappeared since all merchandise had supposedly been handed over to the cooperatives. Currency still circulated, but it was only to be used in buying and selling that was transacted among the cooperatives themselves.³⁷

In 1973 the trade cooperatives in the villages of Kroch Chhmar received their supplies from a larger, district-level cooperative, which was located in Rokar Khnor subdistrict. This exchange center provided goods for resale to the smaller cooperatives. Saom, the economic chairman of Kroch Chhmar district, was responsible for buying all supplies for the storehouses of Rokar Khnor. Hak Mat from Svay Khleang and Roun Sman from Peus explained that the purchase of supplies in those days involved

Lon Nol forces. This was because the Lon Nol faction still controlled the provincial capitals, such as Kampong Cham, and the capital city, Phnom Penh. These big cities were the only places in which clothing, beverages, cigarettes, and utensils were available. In return, the Front offered the agricultural products needed by the cities.

Thus, during the Lon Nol regime, both sides traded back and forth. Hak Mat claimed that he transported corn, beans, sesame, and rice by boat every week from the main Kroch Chhmar cooperative to Kampong Cham city. On the return trip, his boat carried fabric, fuel, cigarettes, and other supplies. He explained, "At that time the Front lived on the forces of Lon Nol and Lon Nol lived on the Front's production."³⁸

After Phnom Penh was occupied by the Khmer Rouge on 17 April 1975, the members of the district exchange cooperative for Kroch Chhmar, along with others who had done business with the Lon Nol regime, were arrested. This was on the grounds that they had conspired to provide supplies to the Lon Nol forces. They were imprisoned and executed. Hak Mat says he escaped only because he had been evacuated to a new area where he was able to conceal such information.³⁹

Despite the grave suffering under the cooperative system, the Khmer Rouge continued to expand it. According to former cooperative cadre Sieu Y, two cooperatives with 25 families each were combined in 1974 so that each would have at least 50 families. Just after this and for almost all of 1975, the 50-family cooperatives were again combined so that a single cooperative held up to 120 families.⁴⁰ The process of consolidation continued in the years that followed, under the direction of the central party leadership.

Sauv Nhit, a squad member, and other witnesses in Kroch Chhmar district, recalled that early in 1976 the 120-family cooperatives were dismantled and replaced by cooperatives on an even greater scale. All of members of each village in Kroch Chhmar were re-grouped into just one cooperative with only one communal dining hall for all the residents.⁴¹ By 1978, the party publication *Revolutionary Youth* reported: "In rural areas our farmers' cooperatives exist throughout the country. Formerly these cooperatives had just 13 to 15 families, but today these small cooperatives have developed into subdistrict cooperatives of, generally, 700-800 and up to 1,000 families."⁴² The Khmer Rouge referred to this ongoing process of escalating consolidation as "cooperativization."⁴³

The national political figure Math Ly claimed in an interview with the author that the decision to create cooperatives on a village-wide scale was

announced by Pol Pot on 20 May 1975 during a general conference at the Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh. The plan was to be implemented across all “liberated areas” of Democratic Kampuchea. The idea was not accepted by all of the high-level party leadership at first, however. One critic was a high-ranking cadre who had been among those responsible for implementing the cooperative system when it first began. Math Ly recalled that Hou Yuon, who had been appointed minister of the interior for the reform of base areas and cooperatives in 1972, spoke against the idea of enlarging the size of cooperative groups in 1975. He was executed not long after that.⁴⁴

Policy on Islam:

The Front’s Early Appeal to the Cham Muslims and the Incident at Trea Village (1973)

In the early 1970s, the Front sent young soldiers into Cham settlements in order to help villagers farm. Indicative of what was often a positive mutual perception between many Cham villagers and the Front at the time, these representatives and their assistants were generally welcomed. Teu Mat reported: “In 1971 Front soldiers came to help me carry and store water in jars and to harvest my rice. They were properly behaved and addressed me [respectfully] as ‘Father.’”⁴⁵ Teh Zain also described his feelings at the time, “The National Unification Front [in that] era – I saw them as good people. They distributed clothing to whoever needed it.”⁴⁶

Sos Man, who had been a supporter of the Khmer Issarak movement but joined the Front in 1970, was appointed to manage Cham Muslim affairs across the East Zone in 1970.⁴⁷ This zone held more Cham Muslims than any other during Democratic Kampuchea. Based in Ampil village, Peus subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, he traveled often among Cham villages in the zone in order to determine their needs, to the extent that he was able. Sos Man was widely recognized as an elder with a distinguished background in Islam, and was highly regarded by the Cham community. The people of Ampil made donations for the construction of a wooden house with a tile roof for Sos Man.⁴⁸ A villager named Ly Ysa summed up the general sentiment about him: “From 1970 onward, the people praised him, as they saw that Ta Man was a good man, and the people wanted Samdech Oeuv to return from exile.”⁴⁹

Sos Man selected Haji Itres to serve as his personal assistant in the supervision of Cham Muslim affairs. Other Cham leaders were appointed under Sos Man in the East Zone. One was Hakim Li, who was to look

after the Cham in Chhlong district, Kratie province. Popularly known as "Ta Kim" Li, he had been a well-respected Cham representative since the Sihanouk era. He was later to become notorious as a fugitive in Kroch Chhmar after the Khmer Rouge accused him of leading a conspiracy movement against them.⁵⁰ Many Cham Muslims would be arrested by the Khmer Rouge for their alleged connections to Hakim Li.

After 1970, when General Lon Nol came to power, Islamic leaders who had been appointed by Samdech Sihanouk were still recognized by the new regime. These men lived in Chroy Changvar village on the river banks opposite Phnom Penh, an area controlled by the Lon Nol regime. They included Haji Raja Thipadei Res Loh,⁵¹ Haji Sulaiman Shukry⁵² and Haji Math Sleh Slaiman.⁵³

In 1971, seeing that the Lon Nol government had official positions for Islamic religious affairs while the Front had none, Sos Man proposed to the Front that it too appoint Islamic leaders. Sos Man favored Haji Muhammad Kachi from Chumnik village for the top position, and so he was duly appointed as the Front's leader for Islam in Cambodia. Those interviewed for this study report that the people of Kroch Chhmar were pleased overall with this appointment because Haji Muhammad Kachi had long been recognized as a teacher.⁵⁴

Many of the local Islamic functionaries in place before the Front arrived stayed in their positions after it took control. Each Cham village had an Islamic leader called the *hakim*. The *hakim* was responsible for the system of education, with actual schooling being the responsibility of learned individuals who were respectfully called *tuon*. The *hakim* was also to maintain proper religious observance in the community, including acting as a "judge" or arbiter if disputes arose. Finally, following Cham Muslim tradition, each village community was divided into sub-groups called *chum-ah*, consisting of approximately twenty-five families each. The *hakim* would appoint a leader to each *chum-ah*, called a *me chum-ah*. The overall number of *me chum-ah* in a particular village would thus vary with its size. There were also religious figures in the village called *imams*, who served primarily as mosque functionaries in this period, such leading prayers.

The Front trusted and relied on the Cham and actually supported faithful Muslims to follow Islam from around 1970-1973. Many villagers, in turn, accepted the claim that the Islamic message and that of the Front were compatible; according to official announcements later remembered by eyewitnesses, they were even said even to be identical.⁵⁵ Muslim Front representatives who were not proficient in fulfilling their basic religious

obligations and articles of faith – for example, how to perform canonical prayer (Cham/Malay, *sembahyang*; Arabic, *salat*) – were to receive instruction from the community’s religious teachers. Ibrahim, a villager from Svay Khleang’s Village 2, recalled that during this time, “I did not study much and did not know the doctrine well, so the village chairman had me say my prayers before him. I was not so correct, and he sent me for instruction [by the village’s religious leaders].”⁵⁶

In 1972, the *hakims* of the villages of Kroch Chhmar were replaced. In each village, five persons were appointed to a new “*hakim* committee”: this committee was to be made up one *hakim* and four assistants. Sos Man supervised this change. The prevailing opinion at the time was that the new *hakims* (those who had been hand-picked by Sos Man) were qualified for their positions. However, the move was not broadly supported because the former *hakims* had been popular. Furthermore, Sos Man did not discuss this move with the local *tuons* and village elders beforehand. Later, in 1973, the members of these new *hakim* committees were called to undertake 40 days of political training at Rokar Khnor. It is not known whether Sos Man attended as well. Three months later the religious leaders who had been called to attend the meetings were arrested.⁵⁷ Sos Man was arrested in the following year and executed.⁵⁸

By 1973 the official attitude toward Islam and its practice had changed dramatically in Kroch Chhmar. Among the first targets for arrests that year were Islamic leaders, beginning with the new *hakims* (as above), followed by others such as the former *hakim*, the *tuon*, *me chum-ah*, and *hajis* (those who had fulfilled the religious obligation of making the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca). Ta Yok, a Cham district cadre in Trea Village appointed by the Khmer Rouge, started to hold meetings across the district to condemn religious faith.

According to firsthand accounts, the Khmer Rouge also began to shut down mosques and forbade public communal prayer in 1973. Throughout Kroch Chhmar, Muslim women were coerced to uncover and cut their hair, and Khmer Rouge cadres attempted to collect and burn copies of the Qur-an. In some locations such as Koh Phal, the Khmer Rouge announced that Muslims would be forced to raise pigs and eat pork. By the time of the rebellions at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang in 1975, survivors interviewed for this research claimed that such points had become official policy enforced by the Khmer Rouge.

The growing challenge to Islam escalated tensions between Cham Muslims and the Khmer Rouge, which were already rapidly building by 1973. Mass resistance to the Khmer Rouge on the part of the Cham people

occurred in Trea village in that year. The incident at Trea began when a district security cadre named On arrested a villager named Ibrahim at his house in broad daylight. Ibrahim was a well-off member of the community and an influential Islamic religious leader. When On arrived, Ibrahim realized what was happening and fled from his home. On chased him and fired his weapon at Ibrahim. On's shots missed. The villagers were outraged at what they saw and gathered in the *surao* (prayer hall). On, unable to carry out his mission, left the village.

Villagers reported that On's actions exacerbated the frustration and anger they already felt about other past actions of the security cadres. About a hundred villagers went to the subdistrict headquarters in the village of Khsae Luos, but no cadre would come out to discuss the attempted arrest with them. The people then burned down the subdistrict Economics Office before leaving the area.⁵⁹ Two or three hours later, On came back to the village riding in a vehicle along with other security cadres. They began arresting anyone who had been seen with the group that had just rioted at the Economics Office. They could apprehend only ten people, however, since the others had already fled into the forest. After that, the Khmer Rouge accused the Cham of Trea village of being *Khmer Sar* (White Khmer, an enemy faction). They steadily began arresting increasing numbers of Cham Muslim villagers all across the region after that.

Author's Note on the Cover Illustration

The Cham people have long kept swords, like the one on this book's cover, in their homes for defense against thieves. These were the same types of weapons the Cham used when resisting the Khmer Rouge during their 1975 rebellions in the villages of Svay Khleang and Koh Phal. Although the Khmer Rouge had gone from house to house and collected weapons before the rebellions occurred, some had managed to hide their swords.

The sword photographed here was a gift to the author from Sos Ponyamin, who lives in Svay Khleang. He had found it when plowing his land. He surmised that someone had buried the sword during the chaos of the battle between the Cham Muslims and the Khmer Rouge in Svay Khleang.





This text is commonly studied in religious schools throughout the Muslim world. This page, which contains handwritten notes by a student, shows the beginning of the Qur-an's Surah 96 Iqra'. In 1975 this text was wrapped up and buried in Svay Khleang along with other *keitap* (religious books) in the Arabic language that treat subjects ranging from law to grammar. The material was retrieved in 1979.

Chapter 2

Arrests and Detentions of Cham Muslims in Kroch Chhmar to 1975

During the 1970s the Khmer Rouge maintained four security offices in Kroch Chhmar district. One was located in Kroch Chhmar Kraom village in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict. It was the first one created in the district and was established in early 1971 when the Khmer Rouge initially took control of the area. The district security chief supervised this facility directly. The second was in Khsach Praches Kraom, also in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict. Before 1970 Khsach Praches had been a Vietnamese village. The third was in Village 4 of Prek A-Chi subdistrict. The fourth detention facility was located at Phnom Lok in Chhouk subdistrict. This was known by a different designation than the other "security offices"; the prison at Phnom Lok was called a "re-education camp" (*munti kae-prae*).

Prisoners who had been arrested anywhere in Kroch Chhmar district were first sent to the security office in Kroch Chhmar Kraom village for interrogation. The security offices in Village 4 and Khsach Praches apparently were set up as overflow facilities for the main office at Kroch Chhmar Kraom. They were used to detain prisoners awaiting decisions from Angkar's [Organization] regional level, decisions which, when they came, were usually to execute the prisoner.

More prisoners survived detention at the facility in Phnom Lok than the other three security offices. Before being sent to this "re-education camp," prisoners had to pass through one of district's three security offices. Prisoners at Phnom Lok were sent off on labor details during the day to build dikes, dig canals or farm, for example. They returned each night to the spacious detention compound. When there was no work to be performed, the prisoners were free to walk about in the area unsupervised, and were permitted to fish or catch crabs.

After these security offices were set up, the arrests of villagers began. Starting in 1971, the Khmer Rouge arrested those with "high" lifestyles. In 1973, however, after the uprising at Trea Village, arrests in Kroch Chhmar escalated dramatically, especially the arrests of Cham Muslims. The overall methods used to conduct the arrests changed during Democratic Kampuchea. In 1971 the Khmer Rouge would generally employ a ruse to keep the subject and his or her family from knowing about an impending arrest. After 1973, however, arrests were no longer concealed.

The district security office in Kroch Chhmar Kraom village was

tasked with extracting confessions from detainees. No official interrogations were conducted at the other three sites. Most prisoners were not tortured immediately after their arrest, but few escaped torture during interrogation. After interrogation the prisoner would await the decision from regional leadership as to whether he or she would be executed, released, or sent to one of the other three sites for detention.

The main prison at Kroch Chhmar Kraom village was a house. It was spacious and had two stories to hold prisoners since the area below the house had been walled in.⁶⁰ The elderly were kept upstairs, while the able-bodied were confined in the lower level. On the lower level, the prisoners were held together in long wooden foot shackles. Upstairs, the door was locked, but the prisoners there were left unshackled. Each prisoner was given a section of bamboo in which to urinate and defecate. Hunger and disease resulted in the deaths of many prisoners in this facility.

When the Kroch Chhmar Kraom facility was established in 1971, the Khmer Rouge built small shacks in the rear of the site for interrogating prisoners. In 1973, they began to use another method, which was to dig pits 1.5 meters deep to use for interrogation sessions. This was done because the number of prisoners had increased. More facilities were needed from which the sound of the interrogation would not carry to neighboring areas.

In general, the interrogation of a prisoner was carried out in three sessions. Prisoners were blindfolded before being taken to the interrogation site. When an interrogation was finished, the blindfold would be removed and the prisoner ordered to place his or her thumbprint on the confession paper. Intense torture would often result in death during interrogation. After the third interrogation was completed, the prisoner's confessions were sent to the regional level for evaluation and decisions on that person's fate. Many prisoners died while awaiting the decision. Their bodies were buried near the security office.

The Khmer Rouge seldom released a prisoner. Out of the approximately one hundred villagers arrested from Svay Khleang village during Democratic Kampuchea, for example, only one was ever released from the district prison system, according to former prisoners' reports. At the villages of Ampil and Saoy in Kroch Chhmar district, about two hundred people were arrested but only thirteen were set free. If prisoners were released, it was on the condition that they maintain secrecy about all they had seen while in detention.

Before 1973, executions of prisoners were carried out in public. Before

an execution, the Khmer Rouge would summon people to come and watch. At first, the district execution site was a place called "the palm tree field," which was located just behind the Kroch Chhmar Kraom prison. Later, when the number of prisoners increased, these public executions ceased.

When the district security office was first set up in Kroch Chhmar Kraom, Comrade Aok was the district security chief. In 1973 Aok was transferred to the newly-liberated and newly-created district of Peam Chileang to the east of Kroch Chhmar. When Aok left, his former deputy, Chunny, took control of security matters in Kroch Chhmar. A short time later, an interrogator named Phet was appointed to be the new security chief. After 1973, once or twice every month, Yin Sophy, the regional security chief, came to inspect the main security office for Kroch Chhmar district. Most of these personnel were killed when representatives of the Southwest and Central Zones attacked the East Zone in 1977.⁶¹ Many interrogators worked at the Kroch Chhmar Kraom site. According to the firsthand accounts included in this book, some of their names were: Sok Chea, Kep Bun, Chan Thea, Pak, Sang, Nha, Chhun, Yamong, Soeun, Hang, Sam, Neou, Prich, Mao, Sara, Thol, Pheang, and Chhon.

The following passages are the accounts of fourteen witnesses, detailing events related to arrests and detentions at the security sites of Kroch Chhmar district. Seven accounts were related to the author by former prisoners, three were from the family members of prisoners who witnessed prisoners' arrests, three were from former security cadres, and one account was given by a villager who lived near one of the security facilities.

Sok Proeung

Author's interview with Sok Proeung, male, age 55, at Kroch Chhmar Kraom village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 30 April 2001.

In 1971 the Khmer Rouge took the house of my neighbor Singuon to use as the district prison for Kroch Chhmar. The villagers commonly referred to him as "the bureau chief," which had been his title in the Department of Topography. In 1970, when the Lon Nol regime took over in Kroch Chhmar, Singuon fled to Phnom Penh. He died sometime during the period 1975-79. [After 1971] I often saw them [the Khmer Rouge] taking blindfolded prisoners inside [Singuon's] house.

Every day I also saw security men leading blindfolded prisoners to be interrogated near a grove of spider bamboo at the rear of my house. Two

or three of them would sit in chairs surrounding the prisoner. Sometimes they would interrogate into the night by the light of kerosene lanterns. I observed that if a prisoner refused to answer or answered in a way they did not like, the prisoner was tortured. Prisoners would scream out in pain. At first we were horrified by the screaming, but as time went on our ears became accustomed to it, as if this was just a normal thing.

Later on the interrogation site changed. The security men dug many pits at the rear of the prison for use as interrogation sites. Each pit was almost as deep as a man is tall, and each was covered with a thatch roof. I never actually saw any interrogations after that, but I heard the screams drifting out of the pits.

I was a barber in those days. Every now and then Angkar called me to cut the hair of their prisoners. The prisoners were let out of their shackles one at a time to sit for me to cut their hair. Some were very skinny and really pale, and they even found it difficult to sit through a haircut.

In the house I saw many prisoners chained together in rows. They were Cham and Khmer, intermingled together. I could not see the prisoners on the second storey. I would cut hair until it was their mealtime, when they would get a tiny chopstick-sized bowl of boiled red corn with a pinch of salt.

Since they employed me in this way, I got to know a few of the security men. First, in 1971, Comrade Aok was the prison chief. In 1973 Aok was transferred to Peam Chileang district, and his duties were handed to a cadre named Phet. (Phet had been an interrogator when Aok was the prison chief.) For a short time District Secretary Chunny personally commanded the prison in place of Comrade Phet, in addition to his normal duties. I also knew a few interrogators: Comrade Pak, Comrade Sang and Comrade Nha.

I also cut the hair of the security group and some Khmer Rouge cadres. One day they had me cut the hair of a senior cadre. I did not know who it was, but when I had finished a security cadre whispered to me that the senior cadre was Yin Sophy, the region's security chief. I was frightened upon hearing that, afraid perhaps I had not given him a good haircut and he would have me killed. I had heard his name before, and heard he was a vicious man. I remembered his face after that. Every month or two after that I saw Yin Sophy enter the prison, riding a motorbike or a Landrover. He would only stop in for a moment.

Some prisoners were released to return home; others were killed. At first the Khmer Rouge killed their prisoners in plain sight of the people. They killed them on the pagoda grounds known as Dei Thnaot [Palm Tree Field], about 400 meters in back of the prison. I, along with many villagers, personally witnessed these killings. I would see three or four cadres lead the bound and blindfolded prisoner to Dei Thnaot and sit him down on the edge of a pit. Then a cadre would take a hoe and strike the prisoner from behind and the body would fall into the grave. Then they would cover it up.

After the interrogation sites changed to the pit system, I never again saw any executions at Dei Thnaot. But I would still often see cadres carrying bodies out of the interrogation pits to bury them in the bamboo grove along the banks of Prek Ta Duong creek. After 1979 I noticed more than ten grave pits there.

Idris Kamaruddin *Author's interview with Idris Kamaruddin, male, age 48, at Ampil (Prek Kroch) village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 7 March 2001.*

After 1970, the Khmer Rouge appointed five villagers to lead religious affairs in the village in place of the former leaders. My father was one of the old leaders. About 8 o'clock in the morning one day in 1973, I saw three Khmer Rouge cadres walking up to my house. My father was downstairs at the time. I was upstairs with my mother. I could not hear what the Khmer Rouge said to my father, but suddenly saw him walking away with the Khmer Rouge toward the rear of the village. Four or five minutes later, a friend of mine ran up to tell me that my father had been arrested. I ran to the house of Hakim Osman to tell him and ask for his help, but when I got there I saw his family in confusion. They had just learned that he had been arrested, just like my father. Then three of the *hakim's* assistants were arrested too.

Four days later, about a hundred religious leaders who had been captured in the villages, my father among them, were marched along the road in front of my home heading to the west. I looked at my father as he passed the house. He signaled to my younger brother to bring him a long-sleeved shirt, and my brother ran along behind and gave him his shirt when he was about 200 meters past the house. The Khmer Rouge guards paid no attention to my brother since he was so small.

Later my family kept inquiring after my father. There were many rumors that he had been imprisoned at the Kroch Chhmar security office. Six months later, we heard a rumor that my father had been sent on to

another prison at Phnom Lok. After that I never heard any more of my father. No one who was arrested with him ever returned home.

El Him

Author's interview with El Him, male, age 70, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 23 January 2001.

When the Khmer Rouge took control of my village [Phum Saoy], Sos, the village chairman, told me not to maintain my religious faith. But as a Muslim, how could I avoid observing Islam? I did not dare pray in front of others; that is true, but behind their backs I did pray just the same. The Khmer Rouge monitored me closely. At night I could see when one of them hid under my house to spy on me. Some of the villagers were frightened and fled to Kampong Cham or Phnom Penh, which were still under Lon Nol control. But I could not force myself to be separated from my wife and children, and I feared that if I did flee, the Khmer Rouge would arrest and abuse them.

In May 1971 the village chairman ordered me to grow garlic on an island near Koh Phal village. I did my best to carry out that duty flawlessly in order to get into the chairman's good graces. Every evening I worked and slept at the garlic field. One day at about 11 o'clock I returned to my home to get some rice. When I arrived a village cadre by the name of Mat Zain told me, "You don't have to sleep in the fields, come back to sleep at home." I was happy because I saw that he felt sorry for me. But I got to spend only one evening with my wife and children. At 7:00 a.m., Mat Zain came to my house again and told me to go to the subdistrict office. I brought a bag of clothes along with me.

When I got to the headquarters of Peus 1 subdistrict, I met three other villagers there. Two of them were Ta Sos and No. None of us was asked a thing by the subdistrict chairman. We were detained in a closed room. Two days later, subdistrict cadres took me to the house of a Khmer near Wat [Pagoda] Peus. I was held there for ten days. Two other prisoners arrived while I was there. There was only one ethnic Khmer prisoner held there; everyone else was Cham. We whispered back and forth among ourselves, all saying, "Nothing unusual happened [that would have led to our arrests]."

Four soldiers came and tied us up and walked us to the district prison. The guards came out and took custody of us from the soldiers. They said, "Oh, Oh! Wrong-headed ones!" I wondered to myself, did the Khmer Rouge know that I had been praying in secret, or didn't they?

One security man took me up into the building. I saw about three hundred prisoners there, all elderly. I bent over and looked through the cracks in the lattice flooring and saw many able-bodied prisoners in leg shackles, all hooked together.

The doors and windows in the upstairs of the building were kept securely locked. When a prisoner had to relieve himself, he had to shout out to the guard downstairs. Sometimes the guards pretended not to hear, and when the prisoner could not stand it any longer, he would defecate, dropping feces on the head on a prisoner held below downstairs. The next day, a guard brought a bucket upstairs for us to use. The bucket soon stank up the place.

After only two or three months, the elderly prisoners' faces were swollen up, and some died. Ta Saleh and Ta Kao died right there in that prison. I observed that the prisoners suffering the most hardship were those who had had easy lives. Kim Sin, the elder brother of Chea Sophara [who later served as the mayor of Phnom Penh], who was really thin, whispered to me, "Ibrahim, if you've got anything to eat let me have some too. I'm so hungry."

About three months later, it appeared that the security cadres trusted me more than the others. They asked me if I knew how to grow vegetables. I said, "Yes, I can." So I was sent to grow vegetables in Khsach Praches village. Whenever the gardening required more people to help, I had the right to take other prisoners with me. I was in charge of gathering the harvest and carrying it back to the prison for all the prisoners to eat. Once I was told to grow tobacco, and when the tobacco was harvested I stole enough to give some to each of the other prisoners. I gave many cigarettes to Kim Sin [the elder brother of Chea Sophara] because I had known him from earlier days. Kim Sin was very happy, and he promised me that if he survived, when he returned home he would give me a plot of land in return for my favors to him. But Kim Sin was never released. The cadres never had me grow rice, so there was little rice for the prisoners, just boiled corn, one serving per man [per day].

When I was free from my duties in the vegetable garden, the cadres gave me jobs in the prison, cleaning up or cooking. So I was able to learn much about what was happening.

Once during Ramadan [the Islamic month of fasting], Tuon Mat, also called Mat Intea [arrested at Ampil village, Peus 1, Kroch Chhmar] and Muhammad Kachi [arrested in Chumnik village and subdistrict] secretly fasted. They each hid the food given them to eat, keeping it for the

designated time to eat in the evening to break the day's fast. Another prisoner reported this to the guards, and I overheard it. I went to tell them that the Khmer Rouge did not allow the practice of Islam here. The next morning, a guard asked them about it. Both answered by claiming falsely, "It was because we were ill and could not eat." So the guard overlooked the matter.

Most of the prisoners were Cham accused of being traitorous associates of Hakim [Ta Kim] Li. Once a significant number of Khmer were arrested and sent there, but their village chairman came to vouch for them and they were released. Only the Khmer with high-level lifestyles were not guaranteed by their village chairmen. After nearly one year, I saw four former Khmer Rouge combatants – all four were Khmer who used to work in contact with Ta Sos Man – arrested and sent there. All four disappeared.

All the new arrivals were taken for interrogation. At first they were interrogated in small huts at the back of the prison. There were four of these huts. Then the methods changed, and interrogations were held in neck-deep pits in the ground. I was also tasked to lead prisoners to interrogation. The cadres had me take a *krama* [scarf] and securely blindfold the prisoners inside the prison, and then escort them to the interrogators waiting in the huts or pits. I would back off about 10 meters from the place of interrogation and sit and wait thirty minutes to an hour until the questioning was over. Then I would take the prisoner back to the cell.

I always listened to the prisoners' answers and then I'd go tell the other prisoners how they should answer if they wanted to avoid being tortured. As I saw it, when a prisoner answered that he had been under official [counter-revolutionary] orders to perform some act against Angkar, or said he had a rank, or that he drew a salary [as a counter-revolutionary], then that prisoner was not tortured and was quickly sent back to the cell. So, I always told the prisoners to answer like that. But the majority did not believe me because they thought that I was in league with the Khmer Rouge. They answered honestly, "I know nothing." Those were the ones who were beaten and strongly persecuted. Some were beaten unconscious on the spot, ending the questioning. I would wait until they regained consciousness on their own before helping them back to their cells. Some were beaten so severely they were unconscious for two or three hours. When they came to, they didn't know a thing. I felt so sorry for them, but I had no way to help them other than to tell them how they should answer.

One prisoner named Loas was from Ampil village. Someone had reported that Loas was spying for Lon Nol soldiers in Kampong Cham. The Khmer Rouge arrested him and interrogated him about the charge. Loas answered it was "Not true" and then he was almost beaten to death. He went unconscious and suffered nerve damage; he didn't know right from wrong or up from down after that.

Prisoners who had been interrogated were locked up and abandoned in the prison. They lay there hungry, sick, and without any medicine. It was pitiful. Some died nearly every day. Some days there were two or three dead. Team and I were the ones who carried out the bodies and buried them in a banana grove in back of the prison. Team was from Svay Khleang village; his wife was named Yum. Where did we ever get the strength to dig deep graves? We were both no more than skin and bones, skeletons really. Sometimes we dug only knee-deep in the ground before covering up a body. Some corpses were left with their hands and feet sticking out above ground. Tuon Muhammad Kachi died right there in that prison, and Team and I buried him with our own hands.

I was different from the others; I lived there almost two years, and the security men never once interrogated me. I kept thinking more and more about my wife and children. Sometimes when I went to cultivate the fields, I met the prison chief and his father who were checking the crops. The chief's father pitied me and told his son to release me to go back home. The prison chief never did agree to that.

One day a security cadre sent me and about thirty others in a truck to go cut wood in Bos Svay village in Chhouk subdistrict. About a week later, I and ten others from that group were trucked back to the prison. After that they fed us better, and we got political lessons every evening. One night they told us Angkar had pardoned us and we could return to our villages. They instructed us that when we reached home we were forbidden to tell anyone about events in the prison. If we did, we would find ourselves arrested again and sent back to prison. At dawn the next day we were all released.

Mat Ysa

Author's interview with Mat Ysa, male, age 68, at Ampil (Prek Kroch) village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 24 January 2001.

On 24 November 1973, the Khmer Rouge called me down from my house and told me I was going for study. When I got to the Peus 1 subdistrict headquarters I saw eight others from my home village, all of

whom were good friends of mine. Shortly after arriving a cadre pointed a gun at us, tied our arms tightly behind us, and had us sit in a quiet room. At 8 o'clock that evening, a cadre named Leng ordered us into a covered truck and drove us to Leng's house in Peus village for one night. We remained tied up, and no one slept a wink that whole night. We were all wondering what had happened to cause our arrests.

The next morning, two soldiers tightened our bonds even more and put us back in the truck. When we were in the truck the cadres tied our hands and feet together and tied us to one another. My feet were tied to two of my friends. The truck headed off to the west. The cadres put a long wooden plank on top of our heads and told us that if anyone made the board fall off, we would get beaten with their gunstocks. The both cadres climbed up and sat on the plank. Despite how heavy that board was, no one dared move.

The truck took us all on to the district prison. When we got there the truck's canvas cover was opened back up. I was surprised to see five or six young Khmer Rouge run up and climb into the truck, like some happy thing was happening. They used sticks to drive us off the truck bed onto the ground while we were still all bound together. I was the first of a group of four whose feet were tied together to fall off, head first, to the ground; the other three fell on top of me. My leg hurt badly and I first thought my leg must have been shattered. My head hit the hard ground with full force. With no questions asked, the gang of Khmer Rouge pulled out their sticks and clubs and beat us unrelentingly. They beat my back until my shirt was shredded into strips and I was covered with cuts and blood. They clubbed me on the head two or three times. The blood from my head wounds just soaked my body. My ears rang and I could not hear anything, and I was blinded by the blood in my eyes. I knew that there was no surviving this, that this was death. My friend Karim was grievously hurt, and I thought he was dead since his body had gone limp. They beat us until they worked it all out of them, then they dragged us inside the jail. That's when I knew for sure I was going to prison.

The building was surrounded by a wall. It held hundreds of prisoners, some lying down, some sitting. Many were people I knew, Cham who lived in the villages of Kroch Chhmar district. I looked upstairs through the cracks in the bamboo lattice floor and saw it was full of prisoners there too. That same afternoon, a guard walked in and ordered the prisoners to count off in sequence one by one. I listened and heard the final number, 399.

On my second day in prison, a guard pulled the rod from my leg

shackles, blindfolded me so that I could not see a thing, and led me outside. I thought to myself that the guard was surely taking me to be killed. I prayed silently to myself. After about ten minutes, my blindfold was removed. I felt a little better about things, and found myself standing in a building. Three Khmer Rouge cadres were sitting surrounding me, one had a club, one had a ballpoint pen and a notebook, and the other was just sitting there, staring at me in a frightening way. Then I was tied to a post in that building.

The man who had been staring at me shouted, "Whatever it is, say it straight away, no need to hide anything." I had nothing to say to him, so I told him "I don't know a thing." The one with the club jumped forward and kicked me once, and shouted, "Angkar does not need any liars." I was really scared, and said, "They had me do their work." The note-taker began to write down my words. I answered questions for three hours, but never spoke a truthful word. Then they sent me back to the cell and told me to lie down and think about it some more because there were still things I was hiding.

One week later they took me out to be interrogated again. I stuck with the same lies I had told the last time. When it was over, the interrogator took me back again and told me to lie down and think again.

After another month, I went for my third interrogation. The interrogator forced out more answers than before. I could not think of anything to say, so the other two brought a big wooden plank in and pressed it to my back and stomped on the board. I had no strength in my body, and being on the receiving end of this weight caused me to writhe in pain, unable to breathe, suffocating. Then they jumped off the board and removed it from my back. That was the last time I was interrogated.

There was nothing more wretched than a Khmer Rouge prison. Initially, they gave us one ladle of *bobor* [rice porridge] at each meal, but later we got only a little bit of boiled corn. This hunger made us all swell up and our faces look almost inhuman. Some prisoners were so weak they could not raise their heads, could not even hold their bowl of gruel or their bit of corn. So their neighbors [those incarcerated close by] had to hand-feed them. Sulaiman from Trea village was on the same long leg shackle with me. He was very sick, so sick that when I tried to feed him by hand he could not swallow. Several days later he died and his body was dragged from the cell by a guard. Another prisoner near me, Chai Phin from Svay Khleang village, died the same way as Suleiman.

Of the 399 prisoners, two were women, both Cham from Trea village.

They were held in a separate cell and were not kept in leg shackles. When the guards opened their cell door to let them out to bathe, I saw that one of them had two children. She carried one in her arm, and led the older one by the hand. The baby died a few days later, the mother being unable to nurse. Later both women and the remaining child were taken away and disappeared.

After being in the prison for some time, I got to know the names of some of the security cadres. As the chief there, Bun was in charge of everything.⁶² Bun was the most vicious of them all. It was Bun who put that plank on my back and stomped on it, and it was Bun who beat me when I fell from the truck, but I did not know his name when those events occurred. Bun had a dog named Pelu. He kept Pelu upstairs, and its feces fell on the heads of prisoners locked up on the ground floor beneath. A prisoner named Ya El looked up once and was kicked in the head by Bun. Ya El's head struck the ground. Another prisoner named Mat, who used to live in the same village with me, escaped when he was let out to bathe. After he was recaptured, Bun and other cadres beat Mat to death.

One day a cadre came to call a meeting upstairs. He told all the prisoners both upstairs and down to listen to his instructions. During the meeting, a prisoner named Him, a man from Svay Khleang, hit the cadre in the head with a section of bamboo used to hold feces. The blow made a popping noise, and the cadre dropped unconscious. Guards then beat Him with their gunstocks and took him away. He never came back.

The cadres under Bun were Sok Chea, Thea and Chhun. They were cruel, just like Bun. One day I was sick and worn out, could not even lift my head, when Thea stomped on my neck. I was still in leg shackles at the time. That really was painful.

Later I learned the name of other cadres, Phet, Yamong, Soeun, and Hang. Phet did not live at the prison, but I saw him come every now and then. Whenever he came the other cadres showed they feared him. I never saw Phet beat a prisoner. As for Yamong and Souen, I recognized them as sometimes having participated in my interrogations.

After about three months in prison, I and eight friends who arrived with me were let out of the leg shackles and escorted to the interrogation place, where we were told to sit down at a long table. A cadre whose name I did not know told us, "Angkar has pardoned you, and forbids you from telling anyone [anything]." Karim and El, two of my friends, fainted right then and there at that table. We carried them out of the prison, and headed for home.

My eight friends were Touloas Karim, Sen El, Sos Musa, Teh Him, Riev Man, El Sen, Loem Tam, and Yunus. All except for Touloas Karim and Sos Musa are now dead. As for the prison security cadres, I know that four of them survive: Bun, Sok Chea, Chhun, and Thea.

What I have described is what I actually witnessed. This is not a case of me blaming the Khmer Rouge. This is simply the way that things were. Look at the shackle scars on my legs and the scars from the beatings on my back. The scars remain. Let me say that if someday this country has a proper set of laws, these prison cadres should be taken for correction according to those laws so that such senseless persecution and killing won't ever happen again.

Touloas Karim

Author's interview with Touloas Karim, male, age 52, at Ampil (Prek Kroch) village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 9 June 2001.

On 24 November 1973, a cadre from Peus 1 subdistrict came to my house to call me away. He announced, "Angkar has scheduled you for training." I walked along with him to the Peus 1 subdistrict office. I was told to wait there. At 8 o'clock, a cadre tied my arms behind my back and put me in detention in a house in Ampil village. The house belonged to a villager named Sorn. There I met eight friends from my home village. They were all tied up just like me. The next morning a cadre who wore a mustache came and tied our hands and legs tightly with a nylon rope. After that, they threw us into a covered truck. Then they took a rope and tied all our feet together in a chain. They put mango tree branches above us. The truck began to move. Three soldiers sat above us.

We arrived at the Kroch Chhmar prison headquarters, which was on the east side of Prek Ta Duong in the former house of a villager who was known as "the bureau chief." The truck stopped. The soldiers opened the canvas cover over the truck bed and came aboard. I looked outside and saw nine guards running toward us. A guard threw me from the truck. Since my legs were tied to the others, I fell headfirst, dangling back and forth. They piled the others down on top of me. I could not breathe and passed out. When I awoke, many guards were dragging us to the prison. Some of us were face up, others face down in the dirt and gravel.

They dragged me about 30 meters to the prison gate. There, the guards, without a word, started beating me. Some of them had bamboo clubs, some used gun butts, and they all beat us without mercy. They beat us worse than animals! After a long time they stopped at last. I was trying

to sit up when suddenly a guard clubbed me on the head from behind, gashing my head and soaking my clothes in blood. The scar on my head today is a reminder of that. The guards beat us until they broke out in a sweat and wore themselves out. Then they untied us and put us inside the prison in leg shackles. I saw many prisoners were held there, some sitting, some lying down, all with one leg in leg shackles like mine. There were about four hundred of them, most of them Cham.

A prisoner sitting next to me whispered, "You'll get beaten again when they interrogate you." I thought I would surely die if I went through another beating, as my body had taken all it could. One day I saw a guard take my brother-in-law, El Sen, out for interrogation. After some time, they carried him back in with welts and marks all over his body and bruises on his face. When it grew quiet, he told me that the security men beat him during questioning and squeezed his face in a vise, a big one, like the kind of vise used to press sugar palm. His face was almost broken. Hearing this, I really got scared. I prayed all the time.

One day at dawn two weeks later, a cadre took me out of the shackle and led me to the rear of the prison. I realized that it was my turn to undergo interrogation. I was terrified because I did not know if I would survive it. After walking about 100 meters, we got to a little hut. The guard took me inside and sat me down in front of two other cadres, one named Sang, who has a large-framed man with a light complexion. The other was Soeun. Sang had a ballpoint pen and a notebook and Soeun, was holding a vise press. My thoughts went back to what my brother-in-law had told me and I started secretly praying.

Soeun asked, "What work do you do in the village?" I answered, "I am just an ordinary citizen. I just farm. I have no job." Sang and Soeun shouted, "We don't believe that! Angkar has never wrongfully arrested anyone." I could only say, "I do not know." I explained, "They just came and told me I would go for training, so I brought along a bowl and a spoon." Then they stopped asking questions and took me back to the cell.

One week later, I was taken again for interrogation. Sang and Soeun were again my interrogators. I gave the same answers. They did not torture me, and sent me back to my cell. After that they never questioned me again. The other prisoners could not believe my luck, not being tortured during interrogation!

After a long time, I got to know the names of some of the cadres: Yangmong, Chhun, Sam, Sok Chea, Neou, Prich, Hang, Thea, and Mao, who was the oldest. All of them were under the command of [Kep] Bun.

Bun was deputy chairman of the prison, and he was vicious.

I was worn out in the prison, lost my strength. I did nothing but sleep all day long. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon one day, I awoke from my sleep, shaking with fear to the sound of a club outside the prison wall. The prisoners whispered that the security cadres were killing a snake, but a little later I saw that the guards had dragged a blindfolded prisoner into the compound. His name was Mat and he was from my village. Bun and the other cadres joined in giving him a strong beating. After they were satisfied, Bun used a large chain to secure Mat's legs. (Mat was not put in leg shackles because all of the leg shackles were already in use that day.) They shoved him next to me, leaving him in the aisle. All the cadres kicked him in the head whenever they came or left. Sometimes when Mat was asleep a cadre would come up and jump on his feet, and Mat would scream out with all he had, waking up everyone else. As time passed, Mat became paralyzed on one side. At mealtime I helped bring him over to eat and helped him back to his place. The prisoners were kept hungry. They were fed boiled corn twice a day, at 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Another new prisoner named Tuon Kaup, just arrested from Khpop village in Svay Khleang subdistrict, was tortured because he was caught washing himself in preparation to pray. One morning when the cadres let prisoners out of their shackles to wash up, Tuon Kaup used the water to perform ritual ablution before prayer. He was seen doing so, and they asked him about it. Tuon Kaup answered truthfully that he was washing up as required before prayer. The cadre was outraged and punished Kaup by making him carry water from the well until the storage reservoir was full. It was a big reservoir. That day, from dawn throughout the afternoon, I watched Tuon Kaup carry water without stopping. That evening the reservoir was still not full. The guard was afraid Tuon Kaup would run off and escape, so they locked him back up.

Another prisoner named Kreiya, from Trea village, fell very ill for a long time. Kreiya was locked up upstairs. One day the guard put Kreiya in a *panhé* [basket for carrying tobacco leaves] and was taking him out to bury him alive. His friend saw what was about to happen and begged the guard to leave Kreiya next to him for a while. By mealtime Kreiya's friend fed him a mouthful of corn, and a few moments later Kreiya took his last breath and died.

Alongside the road to the prison, every evening at 7 or 8 o'clock, I saw the guards take five or six prisoners out of the prison. They were told, "Angkar lets you go home." But when I got home, I learned that those prisoners had disappeared and never returned. New prisoners came in

almost every day, five or six at a time.

After about three months, I was transferred upstairs in the former villager's house. Some prisoners were held downstairs in the space under the raised main floor, and others were held upstairs. Life was easier upstairs, since prisoners were not kept in shackles. We were given lessons in Angkar's political themes. Two days later at about 2:00 p.m., the guard called me and eight friends and took us to the interrogation site. Sang, my former interrogator, told us that Angkar was releasing us to go back to our families. I was so ecstatic, I fainted dead away. My friends carried me out of the prison. When I got home my wife told me that from the day I left home to the day I returned, three months and ten days had passed.

Ya Team

Author's interview with Ya Team, male, age 66, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 7 January 2001.

One day during 1974, I was riding a bicycle from my house in Saoy village to visit my parents in the neighboring village of Ampil. About half way there I saw two or three Khmer Rouge in my path. One of the two was Phoeun, a district security cadre assigned to Peus 1 subdistrict. They stopped me at gunpoint, tied me up, blindfolded me, and locked me up in a tobacco drying kiln at the rear of the village. This site was on the border between Saoy and Ampil villages, and belonged to Kim Sin, a villager. Two hours later, I saw these same Khmer Rouge bring in one of my fellow villagers, Saly, by motorcycle. They stopped in front of the kiln, and they put me on the motorbike behind him, and we went on to the district prison. I saw about two hundred prisoners in the prison, each with one leg in long wooden leg stocks. The guard took me and Saly into one of the stocks which had free space and told us to each stick one leg inside. He then closed the hinged shackle tightly. I was just the same as everyone else, wondering to myself what it was that made them arrest me and bring me there.

One week later a guard let me out of the shackles, blindfolded me and took me out back. When we got to the spot, he told me to sit on a chair. I then heard a spine-tingling question, "Why did they arrest and imprison you?" I answered, "I do not know." I really did not know. The interrogator shouted, "Angkar never arrests the wrong person!" Hearing that, I got even more frightened and answered, "I was tasked by Ta Kim Li to be a major." In fact, no one had told me any such thing. I put the blame on Ta Kim Li because I had heard he was an enemy of the Khmer Rouge who was being hunted down. The interrogator pressed me further,

and I kept on lying. The interrogator praised me, "Good. You understand loyalty to Angkar." Finally, I was taken back to the cell, and they told me, "Keep on struggling to improve yourself."

Six days later I was interrogated again. I stuck to my old story. After perhaps another six days they took me for what turned out to be my last interrogation, which was conducted at the same place as before. I kept with the same answers. The interrogator once again praised me, "Very good that you have dared to lay out your faults for Angkar. That means you are loyal." He told me to keep on working at bettering myself until Angkar reached a decision. This last time I heard the name of another of the interrogators who had been at my three interrogations, Sok Chea.

I waited for Angkar's decision while lying there in leg stocks. All of the prisoners were in pitiful shape, hungry, only receiving a little can of boiled red corn for every meal. There were two meals a day, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Hardly a day passed without some prisoners dying of starvation. One day a prisoner near me whispered that his strength was gone. He passed way within moments.

There was no hygiene in this prison. Everyone defecated in the bamboo container provided to prisoners. When the containers were full, the guard would let out one prisoner to gather them up, empty them, and then redistribute them. Sometimes prisoners used them as pillows since there was nothing else to use for that purpose. This filth caused insects to swarm throughout the prison. The guards issued a strict order that any prisoner who dared to crush a single bed bug would be beaten with a club. No matter how much they bit us, we could only brush them off.

Later on a group of twenty, myself included, was taken by truck to the prison at Prek A-Chi 4 village. The prison there was smaller than the one at Kroch Chhmar village. I saw about one hundred prisoners there when we arrived; like myself, all of them had been moved there from the Kroch Chhmar village prison.

The number of prisoners at both of these places was in flux. I noticed many of my fellow villagers being released after being told, "Angkar releases you to go back home." But when I got back home myself, their families told me they had never seen them. They are still missing to this day.

Along with nine others, I was then taken by truck back to the Kroch Chhmar village prison. There were four Cham from my village among us: Dho, Mat, Saly, and myself. There, we got better food and treatment, and

received political training. Three days later all ten of us were released.

When I got home my wife told me that I had been gone for thirteen months. I cannot recall the date, but I know I was arrested in 1974 and released in 1975. The rebellion at Koh Phal happened a few days after I returned home.

I still wonder today what I did that caused them to arrest me. I did whatever they ordered me to do in those days. They said carry dirt, and I carried the dirt; the same with transplanting rice, plowing, whatever. Even when they told me to mix up feces to make fertilizer, I did it without argument or sign of disgust. I was afraid and I did anything and everything I was told. So why did they have to arrest me?

Roun Mein

Author's interview with Roun Mein, male, age 56, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 20 April 2001.

Evenings at about 6:30 p.m., after the *maghrib* [twilight] prayer time, I usually relaxed and talked with my wife and children. One day in July 1974, at that time in the evening, I was startled when five Khmer Rouge cadres came up to my house. Two of them were male (a security cadre from Kroch Chhmar named Sam and a Peus 1 subdistrict cadre named Boeun); I knew the name of only one of the three females, Saroeun, who was the women's chairman of Peus 1 subdistrict. They invited me to the subdistrict headquarters for a moment. When I had moved out in front of the house, they arrested me and tied my arms tightly behind my back before they escorted me away.

When we got to the mosque, I saw another team of Khmer Rouge arresting a villager named El, who was also known as Sarin. Then two guards kept watch over me and El by the side of the road. An hour later, two villagers from Koh Phal, Ta Res Tort and El Yis, were marched over to our spot. We all knew one another well. Then they blindfolded us and took us away in a horse cart.

When we reached our destination, the horse cart stopped and our blindfolds and bonds were removed. Right in front of me was the Kroch Chhmar district prison. A cadre walked out and led me inside, where I saw about one hundred prisoners, each with one leg locked into long wooden leg stocks, in rows. A guard opened one of them and told me to put one foot in the hole, then locked one end of the apparatus. I was trembling inside, wondering why I had been arrested. I had never done

the slightest thing wrong.

The Cham and Khmer prisoners were about equal in number. Whenever I had to relieve myself, the prisoner at the head of the stocks passed a foul-smelling bucket down the line to me. Tuon Yakub was near me; he had been arrested in Trea village and subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district. He was well-known and very popular in the Cham community. He was almost unaware of what was happening at that time. Another prisoner told me that Tuon Yakub had gone insane because of the severe torture inflicted upon him during interrogations.

Two days later, I was released from the leg stocks and tightly blindfolded so I could not see a thing. The guard walked me away. I was scared, imagining that I was being taken to be killed. A moment later, I was ordered to stop and sit on a chair. I felt more relaxed. Suddenly I heard a threatening voice ask, "Do you know why Angkar arrested you and brought you here?" I remembered the advice that had been given to me by a neighboring prisoner, that when interrogated if one answered "I don't know" the torture would start. So I tried to lie and place blame on a villager named Ta Yaup, saying that he told me to go around and propagandize that this regime would soon start collective dining. I said he made me a second lieutenant and paid me a monthly salary of 5,000 riel. I blamed Ta Yaup because he was dead. In fact, Ta Yaup was an ordinary man just like me, and he never did anything like the things I was describing. If I did not take this approach, the interrogator would have beaten me.

In the end, the interrogator was pleased, and said, "Good! You know how to be loyal to Angkar." He took off my blindfold, and I saw three interrogators in front of me in a small building. The interrogators told me to place my thumbprint on a piece of paper on which they had recorded my testimony. Then I was sent back to my cell. A few days later I learned the name of one of my interrogators, Sok Chea. I have never forgotten his face, even today.

Two weeks later, I was transferred to another prison in Khsach Praches. It was near a Vietnamese temple. The Khmer Rouge had built a long building there with tens of separate cells, each of which held about twenty prisoners in leg stocks like the other prison. In my cell the Cham and the Khmer were about equal in number. There were infrequent interrogations at this place.

Perhaps once every two weeks or a month, the guards would let the prisoners out of the stocks to bathe. The amount of water allocated for

bathing was fixed, three or four coconut dippers full. If one was slow, the water would be gone. After bathing the prisoners were locked lined up along the leg stocks to await the guard to come and lock them back up. Prisoners would generally switch the leg they put in the apparatus since the other leg would be numb.

Talking was absolutely forbidden. One day a guard heard prisoners whispering and came over and asked who had been talking. We pitied the two and did not say who had talked. The guard took a big club and hit every single one of us for that.

I cannot describe how hungry I was. There were times when prisoners got one piece of potato or one green banana for the entire day's ration. As time passed it became unbearable, and we lost our disgust at almost anything. We took an old woven sleeping mat apart and sucked on the strands for the salty taste. The entire large mat was chewed up and gone in just a few days. One day a Cham prisoner named Vanna caught a rat and we tore it apart and ate it raw to hold off our hunger.

One day I saw a banana growing near my cell. I figured that when it was ripe I could reach it and pick it. I watched that banana every single day, and after a long wait the day finally came that it had ripened. Just then a guard saw it, picked it, and took it away. I cried for that loss.

After nine months there, I was in a group of fifty taken away in a covered truck one day. Through an opening I could see that we passed by my own home. Two or three hours later the truck stopped and soldiers ordered us out. I knew from my past experience that this place was Phnom Lok in Chhouk subdistrict of Kroch Chhmar district. There were about two hundred prisoners at Phnom Lok. At this new site, the prisoners could walk around inside a large fenced compound surrounded by guards. Life was easier there since we were allowed to catch crabs, frogs, or other game, which we cooked for ourselves.

One morning that same covered truck took my group of fifty back to the prison at Kroch Chhmar village, where I was first held. We were fed better this time around. Cadres gave political lessons daily. One week later in the daily meeting a cadre announced, "Angkar has decided to release you all." He added, "When you get home you must act as good examples because you have been educated. You are forbidden to speak of matters here in the prison." All fifty of us were let go. The three who had originally been arrested with me were not in this group of fifty.

After I reached home, a former prisoner named Noh, who was a

Cham and also one of my neighbors, told his family about the difficulties of prison life. I don't know how the Khmer Rouge found out about that, but Noh was re-arrested and disappeared forever. Seeing that, I was even more afraid and never dared mention these things, even to my own wife. It was only after 1979 that I spoke about these matters.

Sman Alamin

Author's interview with Sman Alamin, male, age 49, at Ampil (Prek Kroch) village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 18 January 2001.

[At that time] I lived in Chamkar Leu village, Tuol Snuol subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar. In 1974 the Khmer Rouge arrested my father, took him away, and he was never heard from again. My father was El Sman. One day two months later, at about two in the afternoon, a cadre named Eav⁶³ delivered a letter to my house. When I took the letter, Eav said, "Lam, the district commander calls you to meet him at Tuol Trach village in Tuol Snuol subdistrict, 500 meters from Chamkar Leu village" (which is where I lived). Then I opened the letter. It was an invitation, like Eav had explained. I went down from the house to go to Tuol Trach. Before I had gotten far from the house, Eav arrested me and tied my arms behind my back, and blindfolded me. Eav led me all the way to Tuol Trach.

When I got there, Eav untied me and took off the blindfold, but put me in leg shackles. He asked, "What is your involvement with Ta [Kim] Li?" Ta Li was from Kanhchor village, Chhlong district, Kratie province. The Khmer Rouge wanted to eliminate religion from Kanhchor village. Ta Li had learned of that and he had gone to Ta Sos Man, who was the secretary of the Committee on Islam of the East Zone, to negotiate a solution. After that, Ta Li was arrested. Angkar announced that he was a traitor who had incited the people to rebel. Whatever village Ta Li would go to after that, Angkar would arrest the people in that place, accusing them of being in league with Ta Li. I answered, "When Ta Li came to Chamkar Leu village, I did not know anything about his affairs." Eav released me after they were through asking their questions.

Two days later, the Khmer Rouge arrested my two uncles, Yeip and Sos, at 8 o'clock at night. I witnessed this while I hid in a clump of banana plants. I saw the Khmer Rouge tie their feet and carry them off down the road. After they had gone only 20 meters, I heard uncle Yeib scream out, "Help! Help!" Then he fell silent. I did not see what they did to him since they were too far away by that time.

Two months later the Khmer Rouge came and arrested my mother

[Ly Khadijah] during a village meeting. I saw them tie and blindfold her and take her away from the village. Since she was elderly they released her to go back home after three months.

Ly Khadijah

Ly Khadijah is the mother of Sman Alamin and the sister of the former Islamic leader, Ly Musa. Author's interview with Ly Khadijah, female, age 75, at Ampil (Prek Kroch) village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 11 March 2001.

Beginning in 1970 I lived in Chamkar Leu village⁶⁴ with my husband and eleven children. About two hundred Cham families lived there at that time, farming to make a living. In 1973 the Khmer Rouge killed my husband.

In 1975, six days after the Cham had rebelled in Svay Khleang, the Khmer Rouge came into Chamkar Leu. They called all the villagers to a meeting in a field east of the village. During their "meeting" that day, the Khmer Rouge made three announcements. First, they ordered all women to cut their hair short. Second, they named many as clandestine enemies. I still remember the names of two, Van Mat who was accused of being a "sak 5" [colonel] and Van Peas, accused of being a "sak 11." (It was only during the Khmer Rouge regime that I ever heard of there being such a thing as the rank "sak 11.") Third, they created a singing group. They chose some single girls, daughters of the villagers, to practice revolutionary songs. One of my nieces, Hawa, was selected for that group. The aim of these songs was to belittle the Cham and their religion.

The meeting ended after many hours and everyone went back to their homes. When they got back they found that all of their knives and swords had been taken away during the meeting.

One week later they called every single villager back to another meeting. This time the villagers were called in two groups. One group met east of the village and one met to the west. I was in the western group. We were surrounded by soldiers. The group was further divided by age, sex, and class. My small children were separated from me and put together with all the other children. Men were separated from women. The *hakims* and the *tuons*, all the Islamic leaders, were taken out to another place that was even further away from the village. I wondered what was going on with this strange meeting.

After these preparations were completed, a Khmer Rouge cadre named Ang, whom I knew to be the subdistrict chairman, got up to speak.

Ang forbade all [Islamic] prayer, and used the events at Koh Phal as an example for us. He said, "If you want to end up like [they did at] Koh Phal, just try and confront us." We were all quiet. With every point Ang made, he told us that if we agreed we must raise our hands. We were afraid, and we all raised our hands. When he got to some points he told us to raise both feet. So we tried to raise our feet too.

Later Ang called out for "Ly Khadijah" to stand up. There was another villager named "Khadijah," who stood. Her husband had once been the village headman and he had already been arrested. Ang said, "Not that Khadijah, the other Khadijah, the one who is a contact of Ly Musa." I knew that it had to be me because Ly Musa was my older brother and he had been arrested many months earlier. So I stood up. Four soldiers took a rope and tied my arms behind me, tightly. Then the meeting ended.

As they were walking me out of the village, I saw another group of soldiers coming from the other meeting that had been convened to the east. They were escorting an elderly man named Sen. They put me and Sen together in a boat and sent us across the river to the side of Svay Khleang subdistrict. This was during the flood season, so travel from Chamkar Leu to Svay Khleang was by boat. About twenty soldiers rode along in the boat with us.

The boat pulled up to the bank and stopped. The soldiers walked me and Sen to a house in Chamkar Malou village of Svay Khleang subdistrict. A generous soldier gave four bananas to me and Sen. Later two soldiers walked us further west. We reached a place in Kroch Chhmar village. This was the Khmer Rouge prison. A guard came out to get me. I was told to remove the *krama* [scarf] from my head, but I could not move my hand, since I was still tied up. He pulled my scarf off, stared me in the face, and noted my face and name.

Then the guard opened the cell door and took both me and Sen into the prison. I was startled because I never imagined there could be so many prisoners. On the ground floor I saw men in foot stocks locked with long iron bars. The guard took me upstairs where I saw that the male prisoners were not kept in leg stocks like those downstairs. Sen was placed with the other men there, and I was put in a room in the rear with seven other women, four Cham and three Khmer. The four Cham women were Rumlah, from Chumnik village, holding a small child; Maisit, from Trea village; Fisah, from Khpop village; and another whose name I did not know, also from Trea village.

I did not know the names of the three Khmer women in the room with me, but I came to know the story of one of them. She told me she had been evacuated from Phnom Penh. Her husband was a soldier with the Lon Nol regime. On the day the Khmer Rouge took the city she had given birth to a child. Her husband had been killed. She had gotten separated from her newborn infant in the confusion in the city. She was imprisoned after the Khmer Rouge found out that her husband had been a soldier.

A week later I was taken for interrogation in a little hut east of the prison. There was one interrogator there along with four or five other cadres. The interrogator began, "Why were you arrested?" Since I did not know why, I answered, "I don't know." Then they all began threatening and cursing me. I was scared, because I had heard the other prisoners whispering, "During interrogation, at the very least the interrogator will pound on your head for fun." But I still kept saying, "I don't know." Worn out, the interrogator shouted, "That's enough for now. Later tonight we'll learn everything." They took me back to the cell. When I got back, all the prisoners surrounded me asking what had happened, if I had been beaten. I told them the story in whispers.

Then all the women prayed to God to help me and save me from persecution during the coming night's interrogation. I secretly prayed too. At about 7:00 p.m., a cadre came and took me to another hut further away from the prison than the first place had been. Once there, they told me to sit in a chair and wait for the interrogator to arrive. Then a cadre came. I was well-acquainted with him. He was Sara, a close friend of my son. Sara asked, "You're Alamin's mother?" Alamin is indeed my son, and he had been a friend of Sara's. I said, "Yes." I felt better because I knew that now at the very least Sara would know about my being kept in there. But it was not to be as I thought. Sara walked out without saying another word.

I waited. Then three other cadres walked in. I had never seen any of them before. A man who seemed to be the leader sat down opposite me and asked the same question from earlier that day, "Why were you arrested?" Once again said, "I do not know." That was not satisfactory, and he kept pushing for another answer. I did not know what to say, so finally I said, "The other day I bought a sarong for my child." The cadre threatened me and kept saying, "It's not that, but it is something else." He cursed me every way he could for many hours. I could not stick with the denials, so I began to give silly answers, lies. The one with the notebook started writing down my lies. By midnight the interrogation had ended. The cadre pushed the report over to me and had me put my thumbprint on it, and the leader said, "Tomorrow you can go home." I was taken back to the cell. The other prisoners came and checked me over, looking for any

signs of torture.

The next morning a guard came into the cell and told me that I could not go home yet.

In that prison the Khmer Rouge gave more privileges to the female prisoners than they gave the men. The women could bathe any time they pleased. They were given work to do. The men were kept locked up day and night. Once every two weeks the guards opened the cells and allowed the men out to bathe. As for food, everyone got the same, male and female. Everyone was really thin, and deaths occurred regularly. One day they had all the women prisoners winnow rice. Suddenly, a Khmer woman, the one evacuated from Phnom Penh, collapsed and went unconscious. She had a very high fever. There was no treatment or medicine. Three days later she died there in the prison. I saw six male prisoners die while I was there.

When the Khmer Rouge made me work, I worked without any thought of fatigue in order to gain favor with them. While I was held there I husked and milled tens of bags of corn. The corn was the daily food for all the prisoners.

One morning I was released along with two other Cham women, Veisas and Rumlas. When I got back home my family told me that according to their notes I had been imprisoned for twenty-eight days.

Mat Team

Author's interview with Mat Team, male, age 39, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 8 December 2000.

During 1974 thirty other villagers and I were ordered by the village chairman to construct dikes in a rice field called Boeng Veng. While we were at work, a squad of soldiers pointed their weapons at us and told us to raise our hands. They tied us up and sent us to the Svay Khleang subdistrict headquarters. When we got there, the soldiers untied us and put us into a room, where they kept us under guard.

At midnight the next day some of us were called outside by name. I was not called. I did hear one name similar to mine: Team Man. I imagined it was my name and before I could stop myself, I had answered, "Here." Then I recognized it had not been my name, but I was too afraid to tell the soldier.

There were four other names called: Ly, Mat, Man, and Saleh. They tied our arms tightly behind us and walked us away to the west. I knew for sure that we were being taken to prison, because there was a prison nearby at Kroch Chhmar village. Four armed guards walked behind us. When we got to Svay Khleang village, I had loosened my bonds with my fingertips. It was dark and the guards had not seen me do this. When I was loose, I ran off toward my house in Svay Khleang. The guards chased after me, but not fast enough to catch me, and I hid in my house. I heard the soldiers shouting, asking my neighbors where I was. It was about midnight and their houses were closed up tightly with everyone asleep. No one dared answer. A moment later they stopped looking for me and walked away.

At 8 o'clock the next morning a soldier named Sao rode a bicycle up to my house. He called for me to come down and ordered me to sit in front of him on the bike. I refused to ride in front, so Sao agreed to put me behind him instead. When we got on the wide path behind the village, I jumped off to run away, but Sao caught me. I struggled to get loose, and his grasp slipped. I jumped on his bike and rode away. Ten minutes later four or five soldiers drove up in a horse cart and captured me. They beat me, and this time no matter how hard I fought I could not get the upper hand against them. They tied me tightly and threw me into their cart. They drove straight to the prison in Kroch Chhmar village.

When I got to the prison I saw many prisoners held there. The four who had been escorted with me earlier were imprisoned there, as were many other people from Svay Khleang. After four days the cadres took me to a quiet room to question me. There were two of them, one with a ballpoint pen and a notebook waiting to take notes and another one there to ask the questions. He asked, "Why were you arrested?" I answered, "I don't know. When I was working on the dike they just came and took me." He beat me and accused me of stealing rice for the enemy. In fact, the day when I was arrested I had taken some rice, but it had only been for my own lunch.

When the beating was over, the cadre put me back in my cell. The next day they took me out for beatings and interrogation two more times. I gave the same answers.

There was great hunger in that prison. They gave out a small chopstick bowl of red rice soup, once in the morning, once in the late afternoon. It was more than a month before they released me, along with another villager from Svay Khleang named Ta Ly.⁶⁵ Ta Ly could not even walk by himself. I let him lean on me since he was in pain and was

swollen from his beatings. Ta Ly died ten days after he got back home.

I went back to my life in the village. My family and neighbors kept whispering questions about what had happened to me in the prison. I did not answer a single word because the cadres had already warned me if I dared to speak about the prison, they would kill me. It was only after 1979 that I talked about the matter.

Chan Thea

Author's interview with Chan Thea, male, age 40, at Khsach Praches Leu village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 30 April 2001. Chan Thea was a cadre assigned to the Kroch Chhmar district security office.

In 1974 I joined the Khmer Rouge and served in the Kroch Chhmar district agricultural office under office chairman Ta Kuong. Five or six months later, after the liberation [the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh] in 1975, I was transferred to the security office.

There were two security offices in Kroch Chhmar, one east of Prek Ta Duong in Kroch Chhmar village and the other in Prek A-Chi village. I worked in the office in Kroch Chhmar village at first, but after three months I was sent to Prek A-Chi village. I was very young at that time and the chairmen of both offices ordered me to watch after the cattle and horses. At the security office at Kroch Chhmar village I watched cattle and horses along with my friend Khoeun. I don't know if Khoeun is still alive or not. I never had any other duties there.

The security office at Kroch Chhmar village had about twenty persons assigned to work there. I can only remember the names of three: Pheang, Chea (born in Prek A-Chi village) and Thol. All personnel were divided into two groups: party members and non-party members. The total number in each group was about equal. The party members made the decisions. The office in Prek A-Chi village had about the same number of cadres as there were working in Kroch Chhmar. It was led by chairman Sang.

More than fifty prisoners were held at each site. All prisoners were first taken to the site at Kroch Chhmar village, where they were locked up in shackles day and night. The prisoners upstairs were not locked in shackles, but were kept in a cell that was always locked. Any prisoners not taken and killed there were sent on to the second office at Prek A-Chi, where they did agricultural work in the daytime and were kept locked in shackles at night. There was not as much killing there as there was at the

site at Kroch Chhmar village.

In 1976 a number of personnel who had worked in various offices were taken out of service. They went back to the cooperatives where they farmed like ordinary people. That is also what happened to me.

Sok Chea

Author's interview with Sok Chea, male, age 49, at Village 4, Prek A-Chi subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 4 February 2001. Sok Chea was a cadre at the Kroch Chhmar security office.

There were five prisons in Kroch Chhmar district, one at each of the following villages: Kroch Chhmar (located east of Prek Ta Duong), Khsach Praches (located at the former Vietnamese place of worship), Prek A-Chi (now the site is in Village 4, Prek A-Chi subdistrict), Tuol Rokar,⁶⁶ and Phnom Lok in Chhouk subdistrict. The chairman at Phnom Lok was Sang, who was born at Koh Pi village in Kroch Chhmar. The prison at Kroch Chhmar village was more important than the others. Every prisoner arrested anywhere in the district was sent there first for interrogation before being sent on to any of the other sites. Chunny was the security chief for Kroch Chhmar district. He ran this prison himself while he also had jurisdiction over the four other facilities. Chunny assumed these duties after Pin Yut, also known as Ta Aok, was transferred to Peam Chileang [district] in 1974.

I worked inside the prison at Kroch Chhmar village. I still remember the names of some of my friends who worked there with me: Chhun, Bun, Thea and Chhorn.⁶⁷

Before 1975 many Cham were arrested and held there. In the beginning, the reason behind the arrests was the charge that they were contacts of Ta Kim Li. Ta Kim Li was the leader of the rebellion project of the Cham people in Kanhchor subdistrict, Chhlong district, Kratie province.⁶⁸ The security teams in Chhlong found out about this beforehand, and they intervened in time. They hunted Ta Kim Li, who had fled from his home village and gone into hiding in the Cham villages of Kroch Chhmar district. The security teams of Chhlong passed information on to other security teams in Kroch Chhmar in order to assist in the hunt. Since we had been carrying out a detailed investigation of the situation, we eventually learned that Ta Kim Li was hiding in Kroch Chhmar. After that, whenever he was known to have hidden in anyone's house, that person would be arrested on that very same day in order to be taken for interrogation.

In general, most interrogators were rough people. If the prisoner refused to answer, the interrogator grabbed anything that happened to be close at hand and beat the prisoner. Sometimes they pulled out fingernails and toenails, or even pulled out teeth by their roots. One day an interrogator named Theang beat to death a prisoner named Yuong Chhel. Later Theang was promoted to the position of security chief to replace Chunny. In order to make things easier for themselves, prisoners would lay the blame on other people. Then we would go arrest those people, and on and on it would go, one after another.

Initially, we did the interrogating in an open field. This type of interrogation operation led to many information leaks to those nearby. Later we got orders from the upper echelon to dig pits, each deeper than a man's head, and interrogate in those pits. These interrogations in the pits enabled us to maintain secrecy. And as an added benefit we could interrogate others in nearby pits at the same time since the noise from one interrogation did not reach and interfere with the other.

Three cadres were present during the questioning of each prisoner: the interrogator, who was in charge and who posed the questions; an assistant interrogator; and a note taker. There was also a guard team of two men. Each prisoner was interrogated three times. The note-taking during the first and second interrogations produced a draft report. The third session produced the official document.

The confessions were transmitted to the [district] security chairman, who sent them on up to the district secretary, who in turn would send them up to the regional level, and then they would go up to the level of the [East] zone. Meanwhile the prisoner remained incarcerated while waiting for a judgment to come down from the region and zone [authorities]. The district secretary had the right to make the decision since he was a member of the region committee. This was often a long wait. Since there was not enough food and hygiene was poor, disease raged and prisoners died almost every day. The bodies were wrapped in tobacco carrying baskets and carried to pits dug in back of the prison for disposal. Those ordered killed were put to death, while those whom the upper echelon decided to release were let go. But according to my recollections, very few were ever released.

Once I interrogated two Cham Muslims. The first one questioned was Kaup Touloas, arrested in Prek Ta Hup village in Chumnik subdistrict. I asked, "Why did they arrest you?" Touloas replied, "I was a *"sak 3"* [captain]. I asked, "Who commissioned you?" Touloas named another Cham prisoner named Him, who was in custody with him. Right away I

grabbed a bamboo club lying nearby and hit Touloas. After one blow, Touloas said, “*sak* 1 [second lieutenant].” I struck another blow. He said, “*sak* 2” [first lieutenant]. I hit him thirty times, and he went all the way up to “*sak* 30.” This was an impossibly high number; no such rank ever existed. I had my fill of it by then, and told him to go lie down and think about it again.

Later I interrogated a Cham named Ly Musa. The interrogation was performed along with six other cadres, including Meng Hun. Meng Hun was chairman of the district youth organization. He was later shot dead by a Cham in the rebellion at Svay Khleang. When I questioned Ly Musa, he said he was born in Svay Khleang. After Lon Nol came to power in 1970 he went to Phnom Penh. Lon Nol had made him “king” of the Cham, and [he confessed under interrogation that Lon Nol had] commissioned him to serve as a lieutenant general. After I interrogated Ly Musa three times, I gave the report of his confessions to prison chief Chunny. Later I received the order to kill Ly Musa.⁶⁹

Din Paet

Author's interview with Din Paet, male, age 65, at Village 1, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 11 June 2000 11 December 2000.

In 1970 Lon Nol led a coup to overthrow Samdech Sihanouk. The Lon Nol government appointed a new district chief for Kroch Chhmar, Ta Sramaum. Ta Sramaum had been a teacher during Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum era. In 1971 Ta Sramaum and the chief of another district fled their areas of jurisdiction in Kroch Chhmar out of fear for their personal safety. This was after rebel forces began to control areas that encroached ever closer on their headquarters. Some district police collaborated with the rebels.

After Ta Sramaum left, the rebels took control of all of Kroch Chhmar district. The rebel force consisted of Khmer and Vietnamese who were working in cooperation. As for the new district Leadership Committee, Ta Pha, a Cambodian, was selected by the Cambodian side as the district secretary [also called the “district chairman”]. Ta Pha was born in Dambe. Bai Tha and Ba Son, Vietnamese military commanders, were appointed by the Vietnamese side. The Cambodians also had a military commander serving on the district-level committee.

In 1974 the Cambodians declared that they wanted autonomy within their own territory. The Vietnamese agreed to this and they began withdrawing their troops back to their homeland. That same year, the

Cambodians strengthened the system of governance. In the area, the leaders appointed after Ta Pha included his deputy Ta Soeu, and District Committee members Ta Eam and Ta Yok. Ta Yok was a Cham, born in Trea village. In 1976 Ta Soeu's position was given to a new cadre who had just come from Peam Chileang, Bien.⁷⁰ After short time Bien was moved to the Cambodian Embassy in Laos.

In 1978 Ta Pha was accused of "moral violations" [with the takeover of the East Zone].⁷¹ Khmer Rouge cadres from Region 21 came to arrest him. Ta Pha's wife was not arrested along with him and she survived after 1979. Before the cadres were able to arrest Ta Pha, there was a clash with his own military forces. Later Ta Soeu, Chunny, Ta Eam, Ta Yok and all the other district [level] cadres were tied up, thrown into the bed of a covered truck, and taken away to be killed. Ta Yok, Ta Eam and another cadre named Ta Try were covered in gasoline and burned alive in Rokar Khnor subdistrict. The subdistrict chairman of Svay Khleang Ta Long and his deputy Ta Yeng were imprisoned at Khnor village in Dambe district. In late 1978 The Khmer Rouge burned down this prison in Khnor village along with all of the prisoners who were held inside.

In 1973 I had joined the militia in Svay Khleang subdistrict. Yeng, the deputy chairman of the subdistrict, commanded my unit. The militia had two missions: first, to guard the property of the people; and, second, to guide the security cadres in the arrests of villagers accused of being clandestine enemies.

Another unit called *Angkar mahachuon* [Mass Organization] had the mission to investigate and spy on the people. Members of that organization operated under deepest cover. Even a militia member like me would never know who they were. The Mass Organization would determine who was loyal to Angkar and who was a traitor. When it found a traitor, it reported to the district security chief. Security cadres, accompanied by the militia, then made the arrests. Those arrested were called "suspects." If they had not yet actually committed any serious offenses, they were called to confess their faults in front of meetings attended by hundreds of citizens. Making this type of public confession was called *thvoe upheasnakkam*. After confessing, the suspect was allowed to return to the cooperative.

Suspects whose offenses were too serious to be pardoned were not called to make a public confession. They were taken away directly to the district security office. I understand that some of those taken by the security cadres had committed no offense at all. A case in point was my uncle Chhai. He lived in Village 3, Svay Khleang subdistrict. He had done

nothing at all wrong, but the security cadres still took him away to prison and he was killed. I could not help him in my position as a militia member. In another case, a Cham at Saoy village in Peus 1 subdistrict was arrested for interrogation. He confessed he had secretly buried twenty weapons. He was asked where to go to in order to dig them up. We took him the spot at which he had indicated the weapons would be located. It turned out that there was nothing there at all. In 1975 Angkar discharged me from the militia and sent me back to the cooperatives to live just like the ordinary people.

Even today some misunderstand that I was once involved with the Khmer Rouge in arrests and killings. In fact I had no way to argue with either deputy chairman Yeng or the district security cadres in regard to the orders they gave me. Sometimes Yeng would hand me a letter to give to someone in the village. I did not know what was written in the letter, but after the addressee accepted it, I could see that it was a kind of invitation. They went in just the way that they had been summoned in the letters, and then they disappeared. Today members of those families still accuse me of collaborating in the deaths of their loved ones. I don't want there to be any more of these accusations.

Halmah binti Hussein

Author's interview with Halmah binti Hussein, female, age 75, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 5 April 2004.

I was born in this village [Svay Khleang], as were my grandmothers and grandfathers. When I was a child my parents told me of the days when their grandparents first came here and lived in a wooden longhouse with a tile roof. The longhouse was divided into tens of separate living quarters, one per family. Later, because the riverbank was collapsing, those houses were demolished. The materials were redistributed to build the homes seen around here today.

During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era, my village was very big, twice as big as it is today, almost three times as big. The Khmer Rouge killed almost all of us. They killed my husband in 1975 because he was a *me chum-ah* [Islamic group leader]. At that same time they arrested the *hakim* and *tuons*, all the religious leaders, making no exceptions.

One day before they arrested my husband, my nephew who was still a child overheard security men meeting in a house in the village say that my husband was a former Lon Nol regime colonel. That was not true. Three days later, when he was asleep at night, the village chairman came

up and called my husband down from out of the house. The village chief was named Ly. I was still awake, looking after my baby. I woke up my husband and told him that he had been called.

He walked out wearing a *krama*, with another *krama* around his neck, as was his style. As soon as he got to the ground a militia man shouted for him to raise his hands. I knew right away without a doubt that they had arrested him. I hurriedly gathered up his clothes in a small bag to give to him, but the militia man would not let me get near my husband. The militia man took just one shirt from me, handed it to my husband, and walked him away. I took the bag back into the house, hopeless. My husband disappeared from that moment forward. That same evening three others were arrested. Later the Khmer Rouge accused my family of being a "bad element." So they removed our family from the cooperative and put us in a solidarity group.

During that same time the Khmer Rouge kept constraining religion, bit by bit. First they forbade prayer during work hours, claiming that it was a loss of labor. Even when prayer did not impact the work hours, such as later in the day, they still would not permit it. They closed the mosque. One day during the *Royaveitaros* holiday [*Hari Raya* or '*Idul Fitri*, the festival that marks the end of Ramadan], some villagers made the difficult decision to ask permission for morning prayers since this is such an important day in Islam. They were given permission to pray, as requested. But that night the Khmer Rouge arrested everyone who had participated in the day's prayers. That is when our village rose up and rebelled. If we had not rebelled, they would have killed us all [anyway].

After the rebellion was put down [in 1975], the Khmer Rouge broke the people up into three groups: senior men, male youth, and women and children. Each group was held in a different place. The women and children were held at the pagoda in Daem Chrey village. One woman jumped into the water and drowned herself there because the Khmer Rouge had killed her husband during the rebellion. I did not know where the other two groups were held. My father was with the elderly men. When we were let go, I found out that the older men had been held in a tobacco kiln in Kroch Chhmar village. No one knew the fate of the group of younger, able-bodied men. After 1979 only two or three of them had survived the killings. Today none of them lives in the village.

When my family had met up again after the rebellion, the Khmer Rouge sent us to Prek A-Chi village. I was assigned to a cooperative there. Two months later the Khmer Rouge sent my family, along with other Cham families, out of Prek A-Chi and told us we would live in

Battambang province, a place with fertile land. But when then trucks reached Sre Veal village they made us get out there to live. Then my family was taken by cart to Angkaol village nearby.

There the Khmer Rouge prevented [the practice of Islamic] religion, forbade the use of the Cham language, and forced us to eat pork. My family was more fortunate than the others because we stayed with a Khmer family that worked in the dining hall. They were very generous, warning us in advance on any day when pork was cooked, and stole other food for us to eat. In 1978 the Khmer Rouge once again arrested and killed more Cham. They took the "lazy" ones first. The new people evacuated from Phnom Penh were purged as well. We survived only because our turn had not yet come when the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown in early 1979.

Chapter 3

The Cham Rebellion at Koh Phal (1975)

The village of Koh Phal is located on an island in the Mekong River in Kroch Chhmar district of Kampong Cham province. It is an old village where, it is said, Cham people have lived for over a hundred years. The settlement on the island once produced abundant agricultural goods (the name Koh Phal could be translated to mean "Island of Harvest"). Prior to the Democratic Kampuchea regime, Koh Phal held 1,864 residents. After the regime fell and the surviving residents came back home, it held only 183 people.⁷²

One reason for the decimation of Koh Phal was the casualties incurred during the rebellion against the Khmer Rouge in September 1975. This was the first of two major independent resistance actions on the part of Cham Muslim people against the Khmer Rouge in that year; both occurred in Kroch Chhmar district and both took place during the Islamic month of Ramadan. Of the villagers who survived the rebellion at Koh Phal, many later perished from disease at evacuation sites soon after. The material in this chapter recounts the stories told by Koh Phal's villagers about the rebellion of 1975 and what happened after it.

In 1973 district cadres entered Koh Phal for the first time to call a community meeting in which they would announce their new social order. In the meeting they laid out the plan to create "solidarity groups." Unlike the other Cham villages in Kroch Chhmar, however, the villagers of Koh Phal refused to cooperate with the Front's plan to reform their system of agricultural production. The Khmer Rouge then cut off contact with Koh Phal, leaving its villagers alone for some time.

One year later the Khmer Rouge called the chairman of Koh Phal village, Res Tort, to a meeting in Peus village. Res Tort attended the meeting, at which he was now ordered to implement another plan. According to his account, he was commanded to collect all copies of the Qur-an from each house in Koh Phal and take them to the subdistrict office in Prek Kroch Village. The order was ignored. The Khmer Rouge then entered the village and ransacked two *surao* (places of worship). The villagers still remained non-confrontational at that time.

Next, the Khmer Rouge arrested Res Tort and several other Koh Phal villagers. The prisoners were sent to the district security office in Kroch Chhmar Kraom. Soon after, the Khmer Rouge called three other villagers,

Ali, Abu Talib and Rony, to a meeting at Ampil village. Their notice of summons charged the three with membership in traitorous forces; the accused were “invited” to come and admit to this openly. Twenty-two other villagers who had not been named in the summons, however, volunteered to accompany the three accused to Ampil. According to accounts, they swore together that they would “confess” to nothing and they pledged to fight, if need be, even to the death.

When the group arrived in Ampil village, the Khmer Rouge did not convene a public meeting, as was their custom, nor they did they tell the three accused to confess. The villagers returned safely to Koh Phal after their brief encounter with the Khmer Rouge security staff had ended. Several days later, however, the Khmer Rouge entered the village and announced there were twenty-five traitors in their midst, directing their statement at those who had gone to Ampil days before. The villagers were now frightened. Some of them decided to swim away, down to Kampong Cham city in Lon Nol’s territory.

In early 1975 subdistrict chairman Chet and five other Khmer Rouge cadres convened another meeting at Koh Phal. The residents of the village attended, as ordered. During that meeting, eyewitnesses recall, Chet announced a new directive: everyone must abandon Islam. No one voiced an objection during the meeting, but the people continued their usual religious faith and practices. The following week, Chet returned. The villagers did not come to attend his meeting this time and Chet and his people soon left. Four or five days later, Chet came again and the situation was repeated. The Khmer Rouge stopped approaching the village for some time after that, according to reports.

Ramadan (corresponding to September 1975) is the holy month in which the Qur-an is said to have been revealed. During this month, Muslims observe ritual obligations specified according to Islamic law, which include fasting from sunrise to sunset every day. The Khmer Rouge sent word that they were entering the village again on a certain day during that month, and declared that they would be calling a “meeting” at that time. This would be an important meeting, according to the communiqué, one that all must attend without fail.

Shortly thereafter, district chairman “Ta” So Pha (known as Ta Pha), along with four or five other high-level district cadres, came to convene the meeting. The group included a Cham official called Ta Yok. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m. in Koh Phal’s mosque. Thirty villagers had decided not to attend. Instead, they hid together, prepared to resist should things start to go badly for the villagers.

At the meeting, Ta Yok, the representative who had been appointed by the Khmer Rouge to manage their affairs with the Cham, rose up first. Witnesses remember vividly that he lit a cigarette as a formal gesture. Born a Cham Muslim, Ta Yok would certainly have been aware that this was the month during which the acts of eating, drinking and smoking were prohibited to observant Muslims during daylight hours. According to reports, Ta Yok announced, "Today begins a new world."

When Ta Yok had finished his address, Ta Pha rose to speak. He ridiculed Islam, according to accounts. Then he made two announcements. First, forty elders, representing the village's religious leaders, were to be removed from the village, and second, all the villagers would now be required to observe what he called a "five-point plan." According to several witnesses, the plan stipulated that all women would cut their hair short and would be forbidden to cover their heads; all copies of the Qur-an would be burned; pigs would be raised by Cham Muslims and they would be required to eat pork; there would be no more canonical prayer [Ar. *salat*] and all places of communal worship would be closed; and finally, in the future Cham Muslim villagers (men and women) would have to wed spouses who were non-Muslim when they got married. These points are offenses according to Islamic legal norms and, following from that, they all represented gravely unacceptable transgressions of the Cham Muslim tradition.

Witnesses remembered that for hour after hour, Ta Pha kept on talking. At 3:30 p.m., the time for the late afternoon worship (*salat 'asr*), Ta Pha kept the meeting going. It went on until 6:00 p.m., which was the time for the fast-breaking meal and also the time to perform ritual ablutions before twilight prayer (*maghrib*). Unheeding, the district chairman kept speaking, according to those who were present. The situation became confused. One old man rose and asked Ta Pha to stop the meeting for a while, but Ta Pha refused. Then another villager stood up in the middle of the crowd and made the Islamic call to prayer. With that, the group walked out in preparation for the evening worship.

At this point, the group of thirty men who had been waiting elsewhere to protect the villagers approached the meeting site. Seeing this, Ta Pha abruptly called the meeting to a halt. He left the village in the same boat in which he had come, along with his entourage.

Tensions in Koh Phal escalated after that. The following week Ta Pha sent a messenger into the village to collect the Qur-ans for burning and to summon the forty religious leaders named in his list to go to the subdistrict headquarters. The messenger left the village empty-handed of

Qur-an texts and without any detainees. It was then, according to reports, that the villagers decided they would need to confront the Khmer Rouge with force if they ever tried to come back into the village.

A week later, Muslim villagers prayed in the mosque on Friday as usual. Apparently knowing that the men would be occupied in worship at mid-day, the Khmer Rouge took that moment to patrol nearby the village. When the patrol came upon two young men watching a herd of cattle, they shot and killed one youth and captured the other. The next week they released the youth who had been detained and sent back with him a message that in a few days' time they would return to destroy all of Koh Phal village. With this report, the villagers readied themselves for combat.

The Khmer Rouge deployed their forces around the perimeter of the village. They put artillery in place and pointed cannons ready to fire at Koh Phal. On the following Friday two or three villagers pretended to be going to tend their fields outside the boundaries of the village, but really they went out in order to conduct reconnaissance. The Khmer Rouge intercepted them and sent them back with a menacing warning, "This afternoon the village will be destroyed." That afternoon the situation was still quiet, however. At night, the Khmer Rouge sent a boat up to the village, broadcasting, "Villagers of Koh Phal, throw down your weapons and come to live together with the Revolutionary Organization." No one surrendered.

The next morning a boat came back with tens of fully armed soldiers. It put ashore east of the village. Six villagers charged the approaching Khmer Rouge squad, but all six fell to gunfire. The advancing soldiers moved on toward the village and came upon a group of ten villagers. Another clash developed. All of the defenders were killed except one. The Khmer Rouge still moved forward but did not enter the village proper; they had no immediate reinforcements. Other forces were unable to support the advance because they were held back in other locations by thick bamboo groves. The Khmer Rouge squad then returned to their boat and left the area. Villagers took the opportunity to recover the bodies of the dead from the field for burial; they also dug four large grave pits to hold the bodies of those who had not yet fallen.

The following day, according to accounts, the Khmer Rouge bombarded the village all day long with artillery fire. Homes, the mosque, and schools all burned to the ground. Cham defenders lunged and hacked at the attackers, but were shot when their knife and sword blows missed. Hundreds of Cham defenders died, and the wounded filled the village. By afternoon the boys who had been retrieving the dead and wounded had

now also been killed in action. At sundown the Khmer Rouge cautiously pulled back, probably fearing the defenders could easily conceal themselves in the darkness.

The next morning the Khmer Rouge attacked even more aggressively, now supported by many types of artillery. Koh Phal shook. Boats patrolled up and down the river, strafing the villagers who were hiding along the bank. By afternoon, the Khmer Rouge had entered the village. According to eyewitnesses, they fired at men, women, children and the elderly and infirm. Those still alive no longer had the ability to defend the village. They threw down their weapons. Some hid, and some fled in boats or swam away.

Those who remained hiding inside the village of Koh Phal were captured by the Khmer Rouge and sent off to Village 6, Rokar Khnor subdistrict. There, the people were divided into four groups of families: "first category enemies," who were the families of village elders and religious leaders (80 families, according to reports); "second category enemies," those who had been seen to openly oppose the Khmer Rouge previously (27 families); "third category enemies," families who had been among the better-off in the village (42 families); and "fourth category enemies," the village poor (36 families). Based on witness estimates, there were approximately 900 survivors after the fighting had ended, and about 1,000 people had died. A week later, these survivors were evacuated in their four groups to various areas in Dambe district.

"First category enemies" were sent to Phkar Daung village, the second group was sent to Krabei Kriek, the third to Chravak Dek village, and the fourth went to Baray village. In each of these locations, Koh Phal's villagers suffered from severe malaria. Death from this disease was frequent. Three months later about a third of those who had survived were moved to Kampong Thom and Kratie provinces. They fared better there, out of the malarial areas. Almost all of those who were left behind in the four villages in Dambe eventually died there. Of those at Baray and Charavak Dek, it was reported that no one was left alive due to disease and starvation.

Some witnesses who had lived near Koh Phal in 1975 later reported that after the rebellion the Khmer Rouge burned all the houses down to the ground. They renamed Koh Phal as Koh Pheh (Island of Ashes). The location was used as a Khmer Rouge security office after that time. According to multiple accounts, forty-nine mass grave pits now surround the former village. The following passages are statements collected from the author's interviews with former residents of Koh Phal and other

villages, regarding the events they witnessed during the Cham rebellion at Koh Phal and its aftermath.

Res Tort

Author's interviews with Res Tort, male, age 67, at Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 13 November 1999 and 19 February 2000.

In 1974 the Khmer Rouge assigned me to serve as the village chairman [of Koh Phal]. One day they called me to a meeting at Ampil village. At that meeting they ordered me to collect all of the Qur-ans from every house in Koh Phal. I gave them no reply. When I returned to the village, I did nothing to carry out that order.

The Khmer Rouge were angry with me. One day many cadres entered my village and ransacked two *surao* [places of worship]. As they were leaving they arrested me and sent me to the prison at the Kroch Chhmar security office. I was released after six months and ten days.

Later a Khmer Rouge messenger came to tell the village that on 12 September 1975 they would come to the village to call a meeting. At 2:00 p.m. on the appointed day, the district chief Ta Pha, and his deputies Ta Bun and Ta Yok entered the village. There actually were two Cham named "Yok" who came; one was born in Trea Village and the other in Chumnik Village. They called everyone to the mosque. Most attended, and I did as well. When everyone had gathered, the Khmer Rouge set up a table right by the door as the place for the district officials to sit during the meeting. [This way it would be difficult for people to exit the meeting.] Outside, twenty armed soldiers surrounded the mosque.

Ta Pha spoke first. He set out two stipulations. First, he was going to remove forty elders, religious leaders, from the village, to send them away for training. Second, Koh Phal would have to follow a five-point plan. Women were to cut their hair short and could not wrap their heads. All Qur-ans were to be collected and burned. We were to raise pigs and eat pork. Right then a boy walked up to Ta Pha and slapped him in the face. Ta Pha just said, "Oh, this one is vicious, when he gets a little bigger we'll make him into a soldier." Then Ta Pha went on to the fourth point of his plan, which was the stopping of all Islamic prayer and closing the mosque. Finally, he said, from that point on, all Cham would have to marry non-Muslims.

The people were silent, did not utter a word. But after the meeting they did not permit Ta Pha to arrest the forty elders and they did not carry

out that five-point plan. So the Khmer Rouge grew angry. On the following day, 13 September 1975, they arrested Sos Osman and shot and killed Mat Saleh. The next day they released Osman. They told the villagers, "Koh Phal will be destroyed one day. That is certain."

Hearing this, the children and youths of the village gathered in groups shouting, "Rise up and fight to keep our religion. Dare to die for our religion." This went on for three days and three nights. All of the grown men of the village grabbed their knives, the long-handled knives we used to cut plants, along with their swords, and headed out to defend the borders of the village.

On 22 September 1975, the Khmer Rouge positioned their artillery around Koh Phal Island. I could see the guns being deployed only 500 meters away. On the 24th they began shelling the village. Not a moment passed without the explosion of a shell. On the 26th the Khmer Rouge entered the village and gunned down hundreds of people. Forty-six bodies were buried after that action. Seeing the situation was going badly, I jumped into the river, hung onto a piece of wood, and floated all the way to Vietnam. It was 1980 before I returned to Koh Phal. Only 183 survived out of the 1,864 original inhabitants. In the bamboo groves around the village I found forty-nine mass grave pits.

San Sulaiman

Author's interview with San Sulaiman, male, age 58, at Ampil village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 12 March 2001.

One day the Khmer Rouge called three leaders of Koh Phal whom they considered to be traitors, Ali, Abu Talib and Rony, to come to Ampil village in order to confess their crimes. Twenty-two other villagers of Koh Phal also volunteered to go with the three. Seeing that, the Khmer Rouge did not dare try to force the three accused to confession.

Several days later the Khmer Rouge announced to the residents of Koh Phal that the village held twenty-five traitors, meaning the twenty-five who had gone to Ampil days earlier. They also announced that the villagers had to round up all the Qur-ans and hand them over to the village chief. No one did any such thing.

Because of this defiance of their orders, several days later, on a Wednesday during Ramadan 1975 at 1:00 p.m., eight cadres arrived to convene another meeting. One of the eight was Cham, Ta Yok. Ta Yok stood at the table, took a cigarette from his pocket and lit it in front of the

villagers, who were prohibited from smoking during Ramadan. He said, "Today begins a new world." Then the district secretary spoke; I paid no attention to what he had to say.

This meeting forced the villagers to miss their 4 o'clock [*asr*] prayer and it went on past the 6 o'clock [*maghrib*] prayer time, which was also the time for the meal that would break the fast for that day. One villager requested that there be a break for prayers and meal, but this was refused. Unable to tolerate this any further, another villager stood up and voiced the call to prayer. The villagers got up and left to do the ablution for their prayers. The district secretary then had no choice but to end his meeting. All the cadres walked out and headed for their boat, which then disappeared toward the east.

A little while later, the same boat returned and the cadres walked back into the mosque. They announced by loudspeaker for all the people to come back to the meeting. The villagers ignored them. After thinking it over, the cadres left again.

The next day, a Thursday, the Khmer Rouge sent a messenger into the village who stated that the district committee had ordered that all Qurans be turned in. Not a single person complied. The messenger departed. After that the villagers decided they would have to declare *masruh* [*fi*]*sabilillah* [struggle for the sake of God] against the Khmer Rouge in order to prevent them from destroying Islam. They sharpened their knives, hatchets and swords, and distributed them to all hands in order to confront the Khmer Rouge if they ever tried to come back.

The next day, a Friday, the Khmer Rouge sent in word through farmers who were returning to the village from their fields: "This afternoon Koh Phal village will be smashed." We readied ourselves even more. At 2 o'clock in the morning a boat passed by the Koh Phal village dock and fired two or three shots. We chased after it, but it did not come ashore and passed out of sight.

At 10 o'clock on Saturday a boat approached again and passed by, stopping at the bank east of the village. Villagers rushed to strike at the Khmer Rouge coming ashore, but instead they shot five villagers dead and then went away. At about 2:00 a.m., a boat came back and fired shots again, just like they had on the previous night.

At 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, the boat returned and docked just below the village, where they now shot six villagers dead. Then many large boats arrived. Hundred of Khmer Rouge soldiers swarmed ashore. Despite their

numbers, the villagers rushed toward the attackers without hesitation, and large numbers of them were shot down by the Khmer Rouge.

I carried bodies of the dead and the wounded. I saw piles of dead, so many I could not carry them all. Blood flowed like water. Houses were destroyed by artillery fire. The villagers could not withstand such an attack, and by 4:00 p.m. they had fled in retreat, some in boats, some swimming. All those who tried to flee in boats were captured and killed down to the last person.

Then I grabbed a basket and hid in a woodpile until dark, when I grabbed a piece of wood and walked into the river. I floated down the river under the cover of the bamboo. Once I had left Koh Phal behind, I swam toward Ampil village where my wife and siblings were staying. My wife was from Koh Phal, but she had gone to visit some family at Ampil before the rebellion. I reached my destination at 1:00 a.m.

When we met up everyone was worried about me, fearing that the Khmer Rouge would punish me [for escaping]. No one could find a solution. My siblings agreed to report to Chet [the chairman of Peus 1 subdistrict] the truth about my situation and beg for his understanding. But instead Chet arrested me and sent me to the security office.

About a month later the Khmer Rouge planned the total evacuation of Ampil. One day before the scheduled evacuation, one of my brothers came and whispered to me that my wife had been selected to go to Kampong Thom province. Chet then visited and told me that I would be released and that I should choose a new place to live, one of three villages, Phkar Daung, Baray or Svay Khleang. I knew I would be separated from my wife at any of those places. I begged him many times to let me be with my wife, but he refused. Hopeless, I saw his wife walk by, and ran to her and begged for her help. She seemed to take pity on me and promised to help me. That afternoon Chet released me to go to my wife and we were evacuated to Kampong Thom [province] together.

Ya Sos

Author's interview with Ya Sos, male, age 47, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 21 April 2001.

During early 1975, Chet, chairman of Peus 1 subdistrict, along with five other cadres, two of whom were named Meng and Morn, came to hold a meeting at Koh Phal. Almost everyone attended. In the meeting the Khmer Rouge forbade the practice of Islam. But no one abandoned our faith.

One week later Chet came back to Koh Phal. In spite of his attempts to convene a meeting, no one concerned themselves with him. Seeing that he was being ignored, he led his cadres away. Chet was had not yet finished, however. Four or five days later he returned again to call a meeting, which only two or three elders bothered to attend.

After that, Chet stop his harassment. We lived autonomously, out of Khmer Rouge control. On the 17th day of Ramadan that same year, at noon, many Kroch Chhmar district cadres entered Koh Phal. When they would not stop their meeting to allow the villagers to pray and to break their fast, eight villagers who had not attended the meeting suddenly appeared and walked into the meeting in the mosque.⁷³ Someone beat a drum to signal that it was time to break the fast and pray. Sen Mat walked to the front of the meeting and cantillated the call to prayer. We all left the meeting together. The Khmer Rouge rushed off to the dock to board their boat and disappeared.

Three days later, on a Friday, the Khmer Rouge surrounded Koh Phal and positioned their artillery to fire into the village. That morning two villagers, Mat and El, spied on the Khmer Rouge forces, disguising themselves as farmers on the way to work their fields. The Khmer Rouge got wise to them and chased them both in an attempt to arrest them. Fortunately, they were able to escape capture. At noon, the boys Saleh and Haroun left again to spy on the enemy forces. They were both about seventeen years old. The Khmer Rouge shot Saleh dead. Haroun ran back to tell everyone what had happened. Saleh Mein, Sman Ly, and Aung Mat went to recover the body of young Saleh. Sman Ly and Aung Mat later died in the rebellion. Saleh Mein now lives in Vietnam.

Two days later, on a Sunday, the Khmer Rouge approached the village. The villagers grabbed their knives, hatchets and swords to defend the village perimeter. The Khmer Rouge bombarded the village with artillery and burned the mosque and tens of houses. One squad penetrated into the village and defenders lunged at them. Noh Lep was shot dead and Sos Min was wounded.

On Monday, The Khmer Rouge came in from the west. I was on guard there and saw a Cham named Tomat commanding the attacking force. Tomat was born in Ampil village. They shot and killed indiscriminately, and people piled up on top of one another as they died. At 3:00 p.m., attackers swooped in from all directions and almost wiped out the whole village. Some villagers swam for their lives. Some surrendered. The first to surrender were taken to Baray village, the next group to Phkar Daung, and the final group to Charavak Dek and Krabei

Kriek villages. My family was among the last to surrender.

By 1979 there were no survivors among those who had been sent to Baray and Charavak Dek. Out of the more than 300 families there [in Koh Phal] before, only 70 returned. This includes seven families who are now living overseas.

Chi Ly

Author's interview with Chi Ly, male, age 60, at Saoy 2 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 14 March 2001.

During 1970 the Khmer Rouge took control of my village [Koh Phal]. I was a member of the village committee at that time. I [still] have the documentary statistics to prove that there had been 267 families [once living there], totaling 1,306 persons.

In 1973 the Khmer Rouge called their first meeting at Koh Phal. In that meeting they set out their plan to form solidarity groups, but the villagers refused to cooperate. After that the Khmer Rouge grew angry and held a grudge against the village. They began arresting people, one group after another, and sending them to the district prison.⁷⁴ The villagers lived in fear. About fifteen villagers swam to safety in Kampong Cham city, which was under Lon Nol control. The swimmers went in three groups: seven in the first, then five more, then three more after that. I cannot remember all their names.

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge started arresting villagers again. I was sent to the district prison, but fortunately I was released in June 1975, after nearly six months. Two or three months after I was released, the situation in the village grew even more tense. The people rejected anything to do with Angkar, and it reached the point where they decided to refuse even to allow Angkar to enter the village.

The Khmer Rouge ran their boats up and down along the banks of Koh Phal Island. They announced by loudspeaker, "People of Koh Phal, throw down your weapons and come to live alongside Angkar." The people pretended not to hear that. At about 10 o'clock one morning a boat tied up to the dock. Many soldiers disembarked and walked toward the village. The defenders who had been lying in wait for them now rushed forward to hack up the soldiers, but they were beaten back by enemy gunfire. Their shots killed one [defender], Saleh Ahmad, and wounded two others. They captured a villager named Osman and took him away.

Two days later at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the soldiers came back to the village. A fierce clash occurred, and thirty-seven villagers were killed. Eleven died on the battlefield east of the village and twenty-six to the west. The defense was broken and scattered. About seventy people rowed boats to the opposite bank and hid in Khpop Ta Nguon village (in Stung Trang district), but they were captured and all but seven women and four children were killed. These eleven survivors were released.⁷⁵

The survivors who were still inside the village were then sent off to four other villages in Chhouk subdistrict: 36 families to Baray; 42 families to Charavak Del; 27 families to Krabei Kriek; and 60 families to Phkar Daung. My family went to Krabei Kriek. People who were the former villagers of Koh Phal would die all the time in these four villages, falling victim to malaria. At Phkar Daung the death rate from malaria was the highest. Out of the 60 families who went there, almost none survived.

Kae Noh

Author's interview with Kae Noh, male, age 53, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 22 April 2001.

One week after the meeting on the 10th day of Ramadan [1975], many subdistrict cadres came into the village and gathered up all the Qur-ans from each home. No one dared to hide them. The Qur-ans were placed in the place of worship [*surao*] and later district cadres came and burned them.

Seeing that Khmer Rouge persecution was increasing, we discussed the matter and decided we must defend the village and stop letting the cadres enter it. We began guarding the perimeter. The men shaved their heads so they could not be mistaken for the Khmer Rouge. On Friday the defenders and guards of the village prayed together at the mosque at noon, as is required by Islam. Seizing that opportunity [that the men would be occupied in prayer], the Khmer Rouge approached the village and shot 15 year-old Mat Saleh. They also set up attack positions around the village.

Every night they sent out their river boats and appealed to the villagers to surrender to Angkar. No one did. After six or seven days they moved in from the east and clashed with ten villagers who were on guard. Nine defenders died on the spot. Several hours later, the Khmer Rouge came in from the west and again fought with the villagers, killing ten more. The bodies could not be recovered since the attackers had set up positions there.

The following day we pulled back our defensive positions closer to the village. The soldiers moved in from the west again and a battle occurred, one that was even worse than before. Right in front of my house I saw at least fifty people killed by an artillery round. Some children helped me carry away the bodies one at a time for burial in a mass grave pit that had been prepared in advance. Everyone was worn out. Some fled and some surrendered.

Immediately after the artillery fire stopped, the villagers were rounded up and sent to Village 7 in Rokar Khnor subdistrict. The elders were arrested, accused of being the leaders of the rebellion. They were sent in horse carts off to the west. The names I remember are Thea Sman, Krou [Teacher] Sos and Sid Sman. None of those elders ever returned. All of the women who had been steadfast and refused to cut their hair were now forced to do so, without exception.

About a week later all of the villagers of Koh Phal were evacuated. On the first day the Khmer Rouge singled out those who had opposed their plans and sent them to Phkar Daung. On the second and third days they selected those who had been active in supporting the first group, and sent them to Krabei Kriek and Charavak Dek. On the fourth day those remaining and thus considered loyal to Angkar were sent to Baray. My family was in this last group.

After one week at the new village [Baray], people from Koh Phal started to fall sick from malaria. The deaths that occurred there were fewer than in the other [three] villages, however.

By 1979, villagers of Koh Phal who had been scattered all over had returned to come home. They totaled 70 families then. Before, there had been 400 to 500 families.

Mat El

Author's interview with Mat El, male, age 63, at Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 19 February and 23 April 2001.

The cause for the rebellion at Koh Phal was Khmer Rouge pressure against Islam. In 1975 many Kroch Chhmar cadres held a meeting in the village mosque. I knew one of them, Yok, very well. He was a Cham, born in Trea village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district. [During the meeting] one of the cadres got up and announced, "There is no benefit to adhering to religion, so it must be stopped."

After the meeting, the villagers refused to quit practicing Islam. The Khmer Rouge grew angry at this “disobedience to orders” and stopped coming into the village. One day a villager named Man led his cattle to the fields to graze. Man was arrested and sent to the subdistrict prison for one day, then released. The Khmer Rouge sent word back with Man that, “In the next several days, we will be back to work in the village.”

But it did not work out that way. Instead they surrounded the village with soldiers and prepared for battle. The villagers got ready too, with knives and swords. Then the Khmer Rouge initiated a large-scale fight by firing artillery into the village and invading a little bit at a time. The villagers fought back, but many were shot dead.

In the end, the villagers did not have the means to resist any further. The Khmer Rouge penetrated the village and divided the people into four categories which they called “first-class enemies” through “fourth-class enemies.” Then they evacuated the villagers according to their assigned categories. First-class enemies went to Phkar Daung, the second class to Krabei Kriek, the third to Charavak Dek, and the fourth to Baray [all of these villages were in Dambe district at the time; today they are in Chhouk subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district]. My family went to Krabei Kriek, since we had been designated as second-class enemies, as had about 25 other families.

At this new place, we began falling ill with malaria. As I recall, 42 people from Koh Phal had died from malaria in one year there. After 1979, 15 families survived to return home to Koh Phal.

Sen Chi

Author's interview with Sen Chi, male, age 53, Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 23 April 2001.

During the 1975 Ramadan, the Khmer Rouge forbade the people of Koh Phal to pray, burned their Qur-ans, and forced the women to cut their hair. Then they announced that they would take village elders into custody. The people opposed all these actions and did not let the Khmer Rouge arrest any of the elders. One day the Khmer Rouge arrested Man when he was outside the village. Three days later they released him and sent word back through Man that someday they would return to “work” inside Koh Phal.

Later, after a tense meeting, the Khmer Rouge wanted to arrest six villagers, but the community was stubborn and defiant, and they could

not make the arrests. Before long they had surrounded the village with soldiers and began firing their artillery. A three-day battle resulted in the Khmer Rouge gaining permanent control over Koh Phal.

Later the Khmer Rouge sent me, along with 40 other families, to live in Baray village. Fifty people died from malaria during our first three months there.

Sman At

Author's interview with Sman At, 41, Prek Kroch village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 9 March 2001.

During Ramadan 1975 the Khmer Rouge began perpetrating acts against my village. The first time, they seized our Qur-ans and burned them. The second time, they ransacked the *surao* [place for prayer]. The third time, they divided up the people into small groups of ten or so and then called each group one at a time to a meeting. The fourth time, they called a meeting of all the villagers in the mosque.

In that fourth incident, Ta Yok, a Cham representative in Kroch Chhmar, chaired the meeting. Ta Yok kept the meeting going, making the people miss their afternoon prayer time, and it went on to 6:00 p.m., the evening prayer time and the time for the meal that would break the fast. Finally, a villager stood up and gave the call to prayer. So Ta Yok had to stop the meeting and he walked out with the other cadres, arresting a man named Putt along the way. Twenty people ran after them and together they were able to drag Putt back as he was being taken away through a bamboo grove at the edge of the village.

The next morning, they surrounded the village with soldiers. That evening the district secretary came to Koh Phal and called the names of 40 people to be arrested. The people did not permit any arrests. The district chief had to withdraw without having accomplished his goal.

On the morning of the second day [the day after the village had been surrounded], a village youth named Saleh volunteered to conduct reconnaissance against the Khmer Rouge positions. He was shot dead. Villagers went after him and recovered his body. Then all the men took up their swords, hatchets, and knives, and moved to form a defensive line around the village. The women and children gathered into one place at the rear of the mosque from where they supplied the men with food.

That afternoon the Khmer Rouge approached from the east and

clashed again with the defenders there. Seven defenders died on the spot, including my uncle Sen. Villagers were able to crawl out and recover only one body since the Khmer Rouge had established a position nearby.

On the third day there was an attack from the west. The defenders who were hiding in the bamboo groves rushed out and drove the attackers back. There were no casualties among the defenders in this action. The situation was getting serious, so some youths and I dug four large pits in which to bury the bodies of those whom we assumed would soon be killed.

On the fourth day, beginning at 7 o'clock, the Khmer Rouge bombarded the village with hundreds or thousands of shells and then attacked from all sides. The defenders lunged at the Khmer Rouge, but were wounded or killed. The casualties mounted. Blood flowed like water. I had never seen anything like it. I carried bodies to their graves. I came upon a pile of bodies in a low spot to the west of the village and carried them in one after another. I must have carried in and buried twenty-five bodies that day. By late afternoon the Khmer Rouge had withdrawn from the village, not willing to fight the villagers on their home ground in the dark.

On the fifth day, the Khmer Rouge raided the village once again. Beginning at dawn, the ground quaked with the reverberations of artillery. Automatic fire from boats raked the river banks. The fighting this day was ghastly since the attackers penetrated into the village and shot people indiscriminately. The defenders still would not surrender. I continued to carry out my task of recovering and burying bodies. Under a milkwood tree on a spot of higher ground near Talib's house, I found so many villagers lying dead and wounded that I could not carry them all. A slope running down to the river nearby the dock flowed with blood, so much that the river water nearby ran red. On this day I was only able to bury forty-six out of the hundreds of bodies that were scattered on the battlefield. At sundown some villagers dropped their knives and swords and just swam for their lives.

On the sixth day the Khmer Rouge stopped shooting and ordered all of the people out of the village. No one dared to keep on fighting; all the survivors walked out as ordered.

Chet Sman

Author's interview with Chet Sman, male, age 57, at Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 23 April 2001.

On the tenth day of the Islamic month of Ramadan in 1975, the district-level cadres of Kroch Chhmar called a meeting of the villagers of Koh Phal. I knew the names of some of those cadres: there was Phal, and Kha, and two who were both called by the name Yok. One of the Yoks was born in Trea village and the other came from Chumnik village. At 11 o'clock the villagers came for the meeting in the mosque. The Yok who came from Trea made fun of the villagers for not abandoning Islam. At 6:00 p.m., the time for late afternoon prayer and breaking the fast, they kept the meeting going. The villagers got up to leave to go for prayer. Seeing that, the cadres left. After the events of that day, groups of youths marched through the village chanting, "Struggle (*masruh*) for the sake of Allah (*fisabilillah*)!"⁷⁶

Two days later, Khmer Rouge soldiers surrounded the village and fired at it for three days, killing sixty people. On the final day they announced that all the villagers had to leave. The people followed those orders, which required them to go to villages 6 and 7 in Rokar Khnor subdistrict. One week later the survivors from Koh Phal were divided into four groups. The first group was sent to Baray, the second to Krabei Kriek, the third to Charavak Dek and the fourth to Phkar Daung. All four of these villages were in Chhouk subdistrict. I was in the first group. [Practically] all the people from Koh Phal who went to Baray fell ill to a vicious strain of malaria, and deaths happened all the time.

After two months at Baray I went to Tang Krasang village in Kampong Thom province along with 27 other families. All of these families had been selected from the four villages I just mentioned. Not matter how sick somebody was were, no delay in making the journey was allowed. Some died immediately after arrival [in Kampong Thom].⁷⁷ A large number of the families who went with me were [later] taken away and killed.⁷⁸

By 1979 only nine of the families that had been evacuated from Koh Phal to Tang Krasang were still alive. When the families returned home to Koh Phal, a total of only 80 families survived; this is out of the 300 families who had lived there before the [coming of the] Khmer Rouge.

Kaup Ruqiyyah

Author's interview with Kaup Ruqiyyah, female, age 63, Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 24 September 2001.

One morning during Ramadan 1975 the Khmer Rouge called a meeting of the villagers in the mosque. They wanted the people to hand

over their Qur-ans, to force the women to cut their hair short; they forbade fasting and prayer, and they were going to compel the people to eat pork. A seven-year-old boy named Hanafy⁷⁹ was angered and tried to walk to the head table, but his father pulled him back. Hanafy had wanted to stand up and oppose the Khmer Rouge. Everyone there saw that as a bad omen. The meeting continued until 6:00 p.m., the time for prayer and the breaking of the fast. Some of the villagers got up and walked off. The cadres had to close the meeting because of the confusion. Several days later a battle erupted between the Khmer Rouge and the villagers, a battle which lasted for one week.

After the defeat the soldiers entered the village. At 1:00 a.m. my family and ten others fled in a boat to the opposite bank at Khpop Ta Nguon village. We had friends and relatives there. When we arrived our friends presented us to the village chairman. He told us that during the previous several days the district secretary of Kroch Chhmar had come to visit every day, riding up in his boat, and had warned him that, "If anyone dares to flee the village you must arrest them and send them back to Kroch Chhmar." So he followed their orders and sent the women and children back to Koh Phal. Nine men were promised that they would be sent along later, but they all disappeared.⁸⁰ Three young boys stayed with their fathers.⁸¹ My husband Ismael Yusuf had been the luckiest of them all since the village chairman assigned him to row the women and children back to Koh Phal. He took them on to Phkar Daung, where about 200 families went, including my own.

The Khmer Rouge called us to a meeting to question us, trying to determine just who among us were our religious leaders. They forced us to eat pork. We could no longer refuse them as we had done before.

I remember the names of two cadres in that meeting: Try (from Rokar Khnor, his mother was named Pok) who had been the subdistrict chief of Rokar Khnor; and Siek Sam, a security cadre in Kroch Chhmar [district]. Try had participated in the destruction of Koh Phal. I know this for a fact because, in the course of this meeting, Try told Ali, "You were dead, how is it you are now alive?" Ali had in fact been captured during the rebellion. His captors placed a wooden pole across his neck and stood on both ends of it. Ali went unconscious, and the cadres, who thought he was dead, left him lying there. We carried him back in afterwards.

Three months after that almost all of the people from Koh Phal got malaria and hundreds died. A day did not pass without from one to four or five deaths. By the end of that one year at Phkar Daung, there were very few still alive.

Saleh Mein

Author's interview with Saleh Mein, male, age 52, at Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 24 September 2001.

One day during 1974 the Khmer Rouge called a meeting at Koh Phal and ordered the women to cut their hair and the men to raise swine. There were four cadres who came: Mitneary Mas, a Cham woman from Khsach Praches and chief of the Kroch Chhmar women's organization; Chumtub [administrative deputy] Mat, a Cham from Ampil and also the deputy chairman of Peus 1 subdistrict; Sam, a member of the Kroch Chhmar district security committee; and Meng, a security committee member for Peus 1. They promised to supply salt and clothing if the villagers implemented these orders within three days. No one complied.

About two weeks after that the Khmer Rouge stationed their soldiers at the village. The military force was commanded by Phal. The soldiers began making arrests, mostly the elders, and sent their captives to the district security office at Kroch Chhmar Kraom. When the situation became worse, about ten villagers swam off toward Kampong Cham city. Six of the ten went on to Malaysia and later returned. When they returned they were captured and killed by the Khmer Rouge.⁸²

Six months later the Khmer Rouge released some of those whom they had arrested previously. They then called those who had just been released to a meeting at Prek Kroch village and forced them to implicate others as a part of an alleged counter-revolutionary movement. Motivated by fear, they made false claims against one innocent person after another. The Khmer Rouge then moved to arrest those on their phony list, but the people helped hide those being hunted down and none of them was arrested.

Ten days passed. Then another meeting was called by the cadres, this one at the mosque. Everyone was required to attend, no exceptions, no excuses. Before the meeting started, cadres checked the houses to look for people in hiding. Seeing that the situation was not good, I decided not go to the meeting. I called together about thirty friends. We all decided that we would not attend and then we hid ourselves in three houses that were adjacent to one other. The cadres searching saw many shoes at the foot of the stairs and became suspicious, but they did not come up into the houses.

When the Khmer Rouge refused to end their meeting for the afternoon prayers, my group moved in three columns toward the mosque. A guard saw us coming and ran off to dismantle the loudspeaker they had

placed up in a tree. We reached the mosque and the cadres withdrew to their boat, pulled away, and disappeared.

Another week went by. The cadres sent in word that forty male elders had to go to a meeting at the subdistrict headquarters. We discussed this and decided, "No need for anyone to go. Live or die, we will all stick together in the village." This defiance caused the cadres to send in one of their own from the subdistrict in order to collect our Qur-ans.

Next they shot a villager named Saleh and they captured Osman. Both [young men] had been tending cattle near the village. Osman was released one week afterward. They sent word back to us with Osman that, "On the eighth day of Ramadan, we will destroy the village." We made our preparations around the village and readied ourselves to fight.

The day came and Khmer Rouge soldiers were deployed to positions nearby. One field gun was placed on an island near Saoy village, and one was emplaced on Koh Komar Island west of Koh Phal. On the first day the soldiers came in from the east. Six defenders charged them, but all six were shot dead. The Khmer Rouge kept on coming and clashed with my group of ten. We rushed them and Lep was shot in the arm. I shouted for him to go back, but he kept attacking. Teh Man, the younger brother-in-law of Lep, was hit. Two of us carried Man back to the village. Then Lep was hit again, this time in the stomach, and two of us carried him back.

Soon only four of us remained in action: me, Rofek (the son-in-law of the village chairman, Res Tort), Ahmad, and Sitloas. We crawled forward toward some soldiers who were only 200 meters from us. Rofek was shot in the head when he rose up to peek at the soldiers. He died right away. Ahmad got to the river bank, and he lives in Vietnam today. Sitloas and I kept moving toward the Khmer Rouge, covered from their view by all the black smoke. Just as we got within reach of them, a round from a pistol pieced Sitloas's chest. He died on the spot.

So then I was the only one who was left, and I had no hope of survival. I stood up and attacked, hacking at them but missing. I headed back to the village. I reached a *makleua* tree and was hit twice from the rear, through and through. I struggled to keep moving and managed to reach a bamboo grove, where I passed out. Villagers preparing positions nearby carried me back into the village.

Up until that time, the western defensive line had not been attacked. Elders ran over to report to them that our forces to the east had just killed many Khmer Rouge soldiers off in that direction. But in fact, we had killed

none of them at all. When the defenders on the western side heard this false rumor, however, they headed forward to the east to join us there, and even more got killed. There was also fighting going on simultaneously toward the rear of the village at that time.

Another two days passed, and by then I could walk again with some difficulty. That afternoon I heard the Khmer Rouge announce on their loudspeakers that the people had to leave the village. Only a few did so. The following day more people began to leave. In all the confusion some decided to try to escape along the river. There were only eight of us still hanging on inside the village.⁸³

We decided to flee to Vietnam, but they would not all allow me to go along because of my unhealed wounds. One of my brothers-in-law asked me, "What if, while we are in the boat, you were to shout out in pain?" I replied, "Then dump me in the water." He asked me again, "What if you died in the boat but had asked us to be buried on land?" I answered, "If I die, throw me in the river." These conditions agreed, they allowed me to go along with them.

At sundown we set out on our journey. We were not seen by the Khmer Rouge guards. We used four paddles, everyone taking turns paddling except for me. By dawn we had reached Koh Pen, near the capital city of Kampong Cham. We went to the shore of that island where there was a dense grove of vegetation. We scuttled the boat, and then hid in the grove. I could not crawl deep inside the because of my wounds. I slept on the ground, covering my head with my *krama*. Ants and flies went at my wounds.

The sun rose higher into the sky, and two or three persons came up to the grove in which we were hiding in order to peg their cattle. They found me, and assumed I was already dead. They said, "Say nothing, or we might die like he did." They led their cattle away.

We stayed on the island until dark and then set off again in our boat. At dawn we reached another island and hid ourselves once again. I did not know that place. For two days we had not eaten. We had prepared two cases of food before we departed the village, one cooked and one uncooked. The boat was so small we decided to take along only the cooked food, but we got confused and took the case of unprepared food instead.

Night fell. We set off once more. As dawn was nearing, we reached another island and hid. This was a very large island with a large open

field at its center and forests around its edges. We assumed that no one was on the island and began digging wild tubers. Then we saw a group of people cutting fodder. We ran back and hid, and the workers also ran to one side. One of us suggested that if we paddled off in broad daylight, the Khmer Rouge would certainly see us, so it would be better if we could make an arrangement with these hay-gatherers. So we walked forward and waved to the workers to stop. We met with them and told them a false story that we were Cham from Baren village, Svay Prateal subdistrict, Saang district, and we were going to fish upstream [in Kampong Cham province]. We said that since everything was liberated now, we were going back home. They told us to go stay at Chroy Metri village because it was a Cham village. We were all happy because we knew that Chroy Metri was nearby and we had a friend named El who lived there [in Chroy Metri in Russei Chroy subdistrict, Mukh Kampul district, Kandal province].

So now we could go to Chroy Metrei since they had shown us the way there. We met El there, and he cooked food for us. Fatimah, the daughter of the *hakim* and a former nurse, cleaned my wounds. Then the subdistrict chief came to tell us that they could not permit us to remain there for long.

After just a single night there, we headed off again in our boat. At dawn we reached an island near Neak Loeung, where we rested up. That night we continued on our way. Near the Vietnamese border, there was a buoy in the middle of the river, lit by a blinking light. We knew there would be Khmer Rouge guards near that buoy. We nudged one another as we drew closer. Tuon Si coughed. Hearing the sound of Si coughing, the Khmer Rouge thought there was someone on the shore and they paddled their boat away to see who it was. So we passed in the middle of the river just as the Khmer Rouge boat reached the bank. Then we saw flashlights searching back and forth, and we figured these were more guards. A dark rain cloud moved over us and heavy winds came up, making large waves. As we neared where the lights were, we nudged one another again. Then Si coughed another time, and they paddled off to one side. Si's coughs echoed across the water and once again they sounded like they had come from shore. We safely passed for a second time.

The border was not far from that place, and the Khmer Rouge patrols were even heavier than before. From a distance, their lights seemed to be everywhere. The wind gusted and the waves got bigger. Our boat bounced from wave to wave. This was even more frightening than anything before. Tuon Si just kept on coughing whenever we happened upon danger. Mat Pel grew angry at this and wanted to cut Si's throat and

pitch him in the river. I told him that we had passed through two crises already because of Si's coughing, but none of us really thought we would pass safely by this third time. We neared a light and could see the Khmer Rouge in their boat very clearly. I tried to warn Si to cover his mouth this time, but I had not even finished talking when Si started his coughing again, louder than ever. The Khmer Rouge headed off again and shined their light on the bank just like before. We passed on by. Then we reached Vietnamese territory just when the sky started to brighten. We were all so happy we almost cried.

Free from danger, we felt our hunger now and hardly had the strength to paddle. We floated along with the current. We came upon the boat of a Vietnamese fisherman. One of us could speak some Vietnamese. We offered a knife in trade for food. That knife was all we had. The fisherman refused our offer. We floated on by, and after quite some time we happened upon another Vietnamese man carrying a full load of sugar cane. He would not make the trade for our knife either. Out of options, we just gave him the knife and told him, "Give us some sugar cane or not, it's up to you." So he gave us one stalk of cane and we broke it up and each ate a piece. That was some very delicious sugar cane.

We paddled on, heading for a Cham village we had just been told about. An old woman standing on the bank waved at us. We turned toward her and saw that she was dressed in exactly the same way as the women of Koh Phal. We figured she had to be Cham. She spoke to us in the Cham language and welcomed us warmly. When we got to her home she cooked for us. She said she had dreamed the night before and in her dream had seen us in our boat passing through danger. That is why she had gone down to the river at dawn to wait for us.

In 1979 we returned to Koh Phal, all except those two who still live in Vietnam.⁸⁴

Sen Sos

Author's interview with Sen Sos, male, age 57, at Koh Phal village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 19 February 2000.

During early 1976 I lived at Ta Paov village [Tuol Snuol subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district]. One day the cooperative chairman assigned me and five other members to go fishing in the Mekong River and we set up our base near the banks of Koh Phal. Koh Phal was then a Khmer Rouge military headquarters, so they did not permit fisherman to go into the village.

Around sunset every day, a boat came in from the east and put ashore on Koh Phal. Hundreds of men and women, young and old, disembarked. I noticed that many of them were Cham. Every evening at about 8 o'clock, I heard terrible screams. I did not know for sure what was happening. During the three months I fished there I witnessed the same thing happening over and over again.

After the Khmer Rouge fell, I went back to Koh Phal to settle my doubts and suspicions about the place. I went to the site from which those screams had once seemed to have originated. I counted 49 large mass graves there, with hundreds of persons probably buried in each grave pit.

Chapter 4

The Cham Rebellion at Svay Khleang Village (1975)

Svay Khleang Village under the Khmer Rouge

Before the era of Democratic Kampuchea, Svay Khleang enjoyed a reputation as a village of the influential and learned. For example, it is said that in the French colonial era a Svay Khleang villager named Sulaiman (also called Ta Borates) was a close friend of King Monivong. The King appointed him the royal representative for the Cham throughout the country. Later, during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period, one of Cambodia's most respected authorities on Islam came to live in Svay Khleang: Tuon Ly Musa. He was head of an Islamic school there, popularly known by his own name; it could accommodate hundreds of students. As the most prestigious institution for the study of Islam in the country in its time, Ly Musa's school attracted young Muslim scholars to Svay Khleang from all across Cambodia.

Ly Musa was born in Ampil village (which is now called Prek Kroch village; his sister, whose interview appears in Chapter 2, lives there today). In 1950, he went to Malaysia, where he studied Islam for five years and then moved to study in India, where he stayed for another two years. After he returned to Cambodia in 1959, he married a woman named Zainab from Svay Khleang village. He founded a school in Svay Khleang that attracted students from every corner of Cambodia; few of them would survive Democratic Kampuchea.

At first, Ly Musa's teachings were somewhat controversial because he challenged some Cham Muslim traditional practices on the grounds that they were incompatible with the norms of Islamic renewal. Another controversy he provoked came from his insistence that Cham Muslim children attend national schools in addition to studying at the village's religious schools. Previously some Cham Muslim families had feared that they might lose their distinctive Islamic identity if they allowed their children to be schooled by the state. But Tuon Ly Musa's arguments were persuasive and his reputation grew throughout Cambodia. Because of his influence among Cambodia's Muslim communities, some Khmer people misunderstood his role, believing that he was like a monarch or "king" of the Cham.

Ly Musa fled Svay Khleang along with his family in 1971, just after the National Unification Front took control of the village. They went to

Phnom Penh, where they stayed until April 17, 1975, when the city was emptied by the Khmer Rouge. They were first evacuated to Prek Bak village, which is not far from Trea Village along the Mekong River. Ly Musa was soon forced to leave and go even deeper into hiding. Some months later, people heard that he had been captured and was being detained in Kroch Chhmar Kraom prison.⁸⁵

The influence of the National Unification Front forces was spreading rapidly across Kroch Chhmar in 1970. This was the year that the movement announced its new district Leadership Committee for this part of Region 21 in what had been recently named the East Zone. It was also in 1970 that the Front took control of Svay Khleang village. Unlike the villagers in neighboring Koh Phal, the inhabitants of Svay Khleang cooperated with the Front's plans to reform social and economic structures. At first, the movement that was to become known as the Khmer Rouge offered a great deal of assistance to the people. Members of the organization helped the villagers to farm, supplied them with clothing and food, and supported their religious faith and practice.

By 1973, however, the Khmer Rouge had changed their policies toward the Cham Muslim population of Kroch Chhmar. In that year six wealthy people of Svay Khleang were called to a "meeting" and subsequently disappeared. There were hundreds more arrests in early 1974. Religious leaders, the *hakim*, *tuons*, and assistant clerics (*me chum-ah*), along with former royal and Lon Nol government officials, were singled out. These arrests occurred almost every night in Svay Khleang.

In early 1975, mass detention began. In one incident in Svay Khleang village, which was also typical of the tactics that the Khmer Rouge employed region-wide, the village chairman called villagers to prepare a plot of land for growing rice at a place called Boeng Veng. The men were told to take along food for their lunch. While they were at work the Khmer Rouge surrounded them and accused them of bringing food to the enemy. Only a few of those arrested were ever released. Along with the arrests during this period, the Khmer Rouge began restricting religious practice and expression.

In 1975, around the time that rebellion was brewing at Koh Phal, the Khmer Rouge went to Svay Khleang to collect Qur-an texts, along with knives, swords and other potential weapons. Some youths buried their swords and Qur-ans. When the rebellion exploded at Koh Phal, the villagers of Svay Khleang were not aware of what was happening only 10 kilometers away. Some of them later reported that they had wondered about the sounds of artillery they heard from a distance, which made

them think that perhaps a war had started somewhere. Some said they saw corpses floating in the river, the bodies of Cham people.

Two weeks after the battle at Koh Phal, a day before the end of Ramadan, a group of observant Muslims from Svay Khleang asked the subdistrict chairman for permission to conduct the obligatory prayer in the mosque on the following holy day. *'Idul Fitri* ("Hari Raya") is the biggest festival day in Islam and public prayer is required of Muslims on that morning. It had been about a year since any prayers had been said in the mosque at all. The subdistrict chairman did not respond to the request. The next morning, about a hundred Muslims conducted dawn prayer in the mosque, assuming that it had been permitted. They did not know that the chairman had sent his assistants to record the names of the worshipers that morning.

The Khmer Rouge cadres responsible for recording the names stayed at the home of a Svay Khleang villager, who stole a peek at the list. The document included an order to arrest everyone whose name appeared on the list. The villager also saw the names of his relatives there. He whispered this news to his family members so they could flee to safety. The news of the list spread until the entire village knew about it.

Four young men, Lep Vanmathh, Saleh Tam, Mat Set Amin and Sos Ponyamin, planned to confront Khmer Rouge that night if they attempted to carry out the arrests. The four hid under the house of Ponyamin's uncle, whose name was on the arrest list. The Khmer Rouge ran across them and shone flashlights in their faces. The young men fled into a banana grove. Seeing that something was amiss with their plan, the Khmer Rouge left without arresting Ponyamin's uncle and went on to look for other targets. According to firsthand accounts, the young men decided that they would need to confront the Khmer Rouge that night at any cost. Otherwise, they reasoned, they would die the next day anyway since the cadres had already seen their faces.

Lep Vanmath collected twenty or so swords that had been hidden away. The group then called on more friends to stand up against the cadres. While they were making preparations, the Khmer Rouge approached them. This led to a confrontation that involved many villagers. The commotion also led to the break-up of another meeting that the Khmer Rouge had been holding in another part of the village. After the situation had quieted down, the villagers learned that Khmer Rouge patrols had arrested four people and taken them away.

The village was in a state of confusion and alarm. According to

accounts, some youths beat a drum, calling for action. Trenches were dug around the village to serve as fighting positions. The people ransacked the village chief's house in an attempt to retrieve confiscated Qur-ans that had not yet been destroyed. Others slaughtered livestock and took food out of the cooperative warehouses. The elderly met and prayed. Before dawn, the villagers began standing guard in their trenches, armed with knives, swords and hatchets.

That morning troops from all levels of the Khmer Rouge military hierarchy (subdistrict militiamen, district soldiers, and regional troops) attacked Svay Khleang. Boats ran up and down the river firing into the village from all directions. The villagers, fighting with whatever they could find, had only two firearms with which to return fire. At first the villagers carried bodies from the battlefield to observe their proper Muslim burial, but as the casualties mounted there were not enough people to recover the bodies. Hundreds were killed and wounded. The ground shook with explosions and houses burned down quickly with no one to put out the fires.

Even though defensive positions had been prepared, the villagers could not repel their attackers, who had all kinds of weaponry, large and small. Sometime in the afternoon the defenders could no longer hold out. They withdrew into the village center. As the Khmer Rouge penetrated the village proper, they killed countless numbers of people, according to witnesses' testimony. The Khmer Rouge then called for the survivors to come out of their hiding places and assemble on the road. Some survivors refused and were dragged out by force.

One survivor managed to stab and kill a soldier inside his house. After this, once the Khmer Rouge knew that someone was hiding in a house, they fired artillery rounds at the house first. Thirty houses were destroyed in this manner, according to accounts. As for the two villagers who had fired the only two rifles, Lep Vanmath disguised himself among the other villagers and Osman jumped into the river and was never seen again.

The Khmer Rouge marched all the villagers off to the west, making them walk with their hands in the air. They did not allow people to take any personal effects whatsoever. When they reached the Prek Cham bridge, about a kilometer west of the village, the march stopped. Families were separated into two groups: one of men and the other of women and children. Then men who had been wounded during the battle were singled out and told they were being sent for medical treatment. Those men were then killed.

The rest of the men were taken to a tobacco drying barn at Prek Ta Duong, about 100 meters from the Kroch Chhmar Kraom district security office (the prison was already full). Others were taken to a school in Daem Chrey village, and some to a school at Khsach Praches. The women were brought to the Daem Chrey and Kanhchak Buddhist pagodas less than 5 kilometers from the village. Men were selected out of their groups almost every day; those selected never came back. Prisoners at all of these sites were tortured. Little food was provided and the villagers were on the verge of starvation. They slept on the ground without mats or blankets, covered with insect bites and sores.

After a month in prison, the Khmer Rouge released the men who had been held at the three sites and let them walk to the two women's sites to look for their wives and children. People were so emaciated by that time that, they later said, they could barely recognize one another. Since so many men had been killed, many women were now widowed. After the families were reunited, they were evacuated to different villages. Some were sent to Dambe district and some across the river to Stung Trang. When they reached their destinations, they were broken into groups of four or five families and mixed in with the Khmer families. There, many died of malaria. In 1978, when the Khmer Rouge called the Cham back to Kroch Chhmar, the villagers who survived returned to Svay Khleang. Many more died after that.

In 1979, after the end of the Democratic Kampuchea regime, only 600 people had survived to return to Svay Khleang; most of them were women and children. When the Khmer Rouge first took control of Svay Khleang in 1970, the village held 6,200 people. Homes, several *surao* (places of prayer), and the village mosque had been destroyed during Democratic Kampuchea. The bodies of those killed during the rebellion had been thrown into wells or buried in graves scattered around the village. Twenty-five years after the rebellion at Svay Khleang, villagers were still discovering buried prayer books (*keitap*) and Qur-ans along with human remains when they dug or plowed the land around their homes.

The following passages are the accounts of Svay Khleang villagers who survived the Cham rebellion.

Ly Tasei

Author's interview with Ly Tasei, male, age 40, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 6 December 2000.

In 1974, I was only 14 years old. Something I will never forget is

when the Khmer Rouge took my father from our home. Thirty of them surrounded the house. Most of them were friends of my father, having gone to school with him.

It was about 11 o'clock in the morning. After eating it was my father's custom to take a short rest. I was underneath the house with my mother. The district soldiers had surrounded us, catching us unawares. A close childhood friend of my father, dressed in a military uniform, walked straight up to my mother. He asked for my father, and she called him down. He told my father there were orders from the upper echelon for him to go meet briefly with them. A commander shouted, "Ly, what is your family name?" My father answered, "San Mat Ly."

My father walked away behind the Khmer Rouge. My mother and I were terribly frightened; we knew they would certainly do something to my father because many other people had disappeared from the village. We hoped that at least they would have some consideration for Father since he had once been friends with them.

As they took my father away, they also tried to find my Uncle Sa, but he was at noon prayers and they did not get him. When he had finished praying, the Khmer Rouge called him from his house, which was close to ours. I saw my father and uncle in front of the house; my uncle was still wearing the sarong he had on during prayers. That day about twenty others were arrested along with my father and marched off to the east. Two days later, at about 8 o'clock in the evening, my father and the others who had been arrested that day were transported past our house in three horse carts heading west. I could not see Father clearly, but I knew that he was with them because he threw his shoes out of the horse cart right in front of our house as a signal to us.

I received no more information about Father until three or four months had passed and a friend of his came to our house. I was very happy [to get some news about my father then]. Mother asked, "Why did they arrest him?" He answered, "A prisoner implicated him (that is, my father) as being a [counter-revolutionary] captain."

A year passed. Our village rebelled against the Khmer Rouge. I did not know the reasons for that. When the villagers could no longer resist, the Khmer Rouge drove us out of the village. My family was herded out along with the others to be held at Wat Daem Chrey. I noticed that only women and children were held there. I was extremely hungry because they gave us only a ladle of food as a meal. The elderly, the children, all got one ladle. The children just kept crying from hunger, and when the

gruel came the mothers would sip only a bit of the liquid and give the solids to their children. I remember that on one Buddhist holy day the monks at the pagoda secretly gave food to the children.

A month after we had first been taken away, any family whose father had survived was reunited and evacuated to far-away places. Families in which the man of the house had died were moved to villages inside Kroch Chhmar district. So my family and nineteen others, all of whom had lost their fathers, were loaded into boats and taken to Village 4 in Rokar Khnor subdistrict.

In late 1978, the Cham families in that village were sent away. They were told that they were going to Battambang or Pursat province because those were fertile places for cultivating rice. My family was the only one left behind in Village 4. After 1979 no one from that group [that was to go from Village 4 to Battambang and Pursat] was left alive.

Man Zain

Author's interview with Man Zain, male, age 49, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 7 December 2000.

In late 1973 the Khmer Rouge began arresting the villagers at Svay Khleang. First they selected six of the better-off people. These were Chai Phin, Paet [doctor] Set, Dangkhao El, Dangkaho Mat, Dangkhao Hak, and Dangkhao Sman. They used a ruse, telling them Angkar had called them to a meeting. The villagers thought that they were really going to a meeting, but since no further news was heard of them, there soon arose suspicions that they had been arrested.

In 1974, others were arrested. The Khmer Rouge chose those who had a good knowledge of Islam along with former officials from the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime. About sixty were arrested during this stage. I cannot remember their names. They were taken away from their houses in the middle of the night without even the pretext of the lies that had been told to the first group. Two days before the arrests, the Khmer Rouge sent out word that no one was to leave their home. Within a month the plan for this stage of the arrests had been fully carried out.

In late 1974 the arrests increased. None of the *hakim's* clerical assistants (*me chum-ah*) or "ten-household group" leaders escaped this sweep. Over two hundred people were arrested in this one action. Svay Khleang village had forty *me chum-ah* and more than a hundred "ten-household groups."

By 1975 arrests were carried out indiscriminately, sometimes at night, sometimes in broad daylight. The prisoners had their arms tied behind their backs in the “parrot-wing style” and were led from their houses or fields. Rumors had it that the Khmer Rouge were arresting anyone connected with the White Khmer movement. Everyone lived in constant fear. Every night the Khmer Rouge militiamen hid and eavesdropped under the houses. Every house extinguished its kerosene lanterns at 6 or 7 o’clock, and people stayed quiet. Hundreds were arrested and led from the village. Some twenty people swam away toward Kampong Cham, the provincial city.

Also during 1975 all practice of Islam was strictly forbidden. The doors to the mosque were closed. Qur-ans were collected and burned. Ta Long, the subdistrict chairman of Svay Khleang, saw to these things in person. Ta Yok, a member of the district administrative committee, called everyone to a meeting and announced that the women must cut their hair and that all prayer was absolutely prohibited.

One day during October 1975, on the religious holy day called “Raya,” prayer was permitted in the morning at the mosque. But the Khmer Rouge recorded the names of those who went to the mosque to pray. That evening they arrested those whose names appeared on that list.

Four Khmer Rouge cadres, Peng Heng, Chet, Thol, and Saleh Mat [a Cham who had been appointed as chairman of Village 6], carried out this mission. But after they had arrested only three men, Sen Lim, Sos Him, and Ta Teh, they were confronted by a group of villagers who were prepared to fight. The villagers attacked and stabbed at the cadres with their knives, but missed them. The cadres fled. The villagers chased them. Talib was the fastest runner; he overcame Chet and stabbed him dead on the spot. Then drumbeats from the mosque sounded the signal for the villagers to rise up together and rebel. There was no more reaction that evening from the Khmer Rouge.

At 8 o’clock the next morning, an armed Khmer Rouge force headed for the village from the west. They attacked the rebels. I, like everyone else, had a sword and was ready to fight. From where I was standing I could see that the Khmer Rouge were district cadres and soldiers of Kroch Chhmar. They were not able to penetrate the village.

At 9 o’clock I saw an additional force of hundreds, just arrived, wearing uniforms different from those of the district troops. They had backpacks and all types of weapons. They fired heavy weapons and small arms at the rebels. Khmer Rouge boats swept the river banks with

continuous fire.

At 10 o'clock, they attacked west of the village and gained ground. Aside from hatchets, knives, and swords, the rebels had only one firearm. It was an AK taken from a Khmer Rouge soldier who was visiting his home before the rebellion. Near me eight older men were hit by an artillery round. Six Khmer Rouge soldiers were stabbed or hacked to death. The bombardment grew more intense and I retreated. Then I moved in again and entered the fight at the rear of the village. A villager who was taking cover behind a large mango tree was standing, firing at the attackers. I crawled up close to him. By the time I got there he had run out of ammunition. We retreated into the village.

At 6 o'clock in the evening, the attackers entered the village from all sides. They sought out the crowds, held them at gunpoint and told them to raise their hands. I threw down my knives and surrendered to them. Everyone was herded to the west of the village. At the bridge at Prek Cham the Khmer Rouge separated the men from the women. Small children stayed with the women. I was separated from my wife and children. They held me in a school west of Wat Daem Chrey. There were three rooms there, all filled with the villagers of Svay Khleang, fifty to a room. They gave us one scoop of food with a pinch of salt for each meal. Then the salt stopped coming. Every time we bathed, the guards had us change into bathing clothing, *krama* [scarves] or *sarongs*, and hold our hands behind our backs. We would run as a group to the river, from five to fifteen in a group, then run back.

Anyone who ran freely without holding his hands behind his back, even for just a blink of the eye, was beaten by the guards who stood lining the path to the river. At night guards lit a torch in each room. The prisoners had to take turns standing duty over the torch, and if it went out during someone's watch, that prisoner would be severely punished. Prisoners were called out from the cells, one after another. In the end, less than half of the original number remained, and everyone was thrown into one room.

Twenty days later they allowed us to reunite with our families. I met up with my wife at Wat Kanhchak. We were together there for ten days before the Khmer Rouge moved us out along with the rest who also remained – about two hundred families.

My family and about 100 others were moved in ten boats to Dambe district. It was flood season then and all travel between Kroch Chhmar and Dambe was by boat along Prek Rokar Khnor, stopping at Cheu

Theang. When we arrived we were all broken into smaller groups and mixed in with the ethnic Khmer. My family was one of ten assigned to Svay Kambet village, Seida subdistrict, Dambe district. The Khmer Rouge had already built some small buildings for us to live in there. We were hit hard by malaria at first, and fifteen people died.

Smas Sa

Author's interview with Smas Sa, male, age 69, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 16 December 2000.

Before the rebellion the Khmer Rouge were arresting people almost every night. Some nights they took four or five people. I never saw any of those arrested do anything wrong, but they were accused of collaborating with traitors or of holding some high rank in a counter-revolutionary movement. I never believed those charges. For example, Ta Tich, my neighbor, was really old. What could he have done to make the Khmer Rouge accuse him of being a first lieutenant, and make him disappear? Chet and Thol, Svay Khleang cadres, they did the arresting.

One day the village chairman assigned me along with sixty others to build a dike along a rice paddy at Sre Khleng Chak, a place which was also known as Boeng Veng. As we were working, many Khmer Rouge soldiers suddenly shot over our heads and tied us up in a line with a long rope. No one could get loose. They walked us to a prison at Khpop Kraom village. The prison had been the home of a villager.

They accused us taking food to the enemy. But in fact we had been assigned to work on the dike by the Khmer Rouge village chairman and had just a few packages of food to eat, that's all. The village chairman never showed his face to resolve this matter. He must have been in league with those who made the arrests, who were just using the pretext of sending us to work on the dike.

Every night four or five prisoners were removed from the prison. The Khmer Rouge told us that those prisoners had been released early. In the end there were only thirty of us left, and we were let go. When we got home the families of those who supposedly had been released earlier asked us what had happened to them. I told their family members what I had been told about them in prison. But in fact, their loved ones had simply disappeared.

Lep Vanmath

Author's interview with Lep Vanmath, male, age 41, at the Special Military Region Headquarters at Banteay Sloek, Phnom Penh, 5 January 2001.

In October 1975 I led the people of Svay Khleang village in opposition to the Khmer Rouge. There were three reasons for the uprising. First, they pressured Svay Khleang more than any other village because its people were highly educated in literature and Islam. The village had distinction of sorts. One villager named Sulaiman, also called Ta Borates, had years before been appointed by King Monivong to look after the Cham and Islam throughout the entire country. Not only that, but King Monivong himself came to visit the village often. Second, the Khmer Rouge made many arrests in Svay Khleang, from twenty to fifty at a time. They used phony pretexts, like the person arrested had high rank or was KGB or CIA. Third, the Khmer Rouge forced us to raise swine in the mosque, made the women cut their hair, and seized and burned our texts of the Qur-an.

For these reasons, the villagers could no longer tolerate the situation and rebelled. I incited this in all the villages of Kroch Chhmar district, not just at Svay Khleang. We met in secret, and organizing each meeting was a real chore. We fixed the date for the uprising to be on the Raya holy day [*Idul Fitri*]. But even before that day arrived, the people of Koh Phal could no longer tolerate the Khmer Rouge's ever-increasing pressure on Islam. So Koh Phal rebelled first. Three Koh Phal villagers, Min, Rany, and Haji Mit, were my agents. All three died in the uprising. While the Khmer Rouge had their hands full suppressing Koh Phal, we rebelled in support of them.

Shortly before the rebellion, Chet, deputy chairman of Svay Khleang subdistrict, was staying in my village in the house of a villager named Osman. Osman got a peek at a list held by Chet that named eighty villagers to be arrested on the evening of the Raya holy day. Osman let it be known that my name was on that list. The evening of Raya happened to be the day we had already set to rebel.

At about 8 o'clock that evening I went along with four or five young men to get the drum from the mosque to signal the people. As we were returning with the drum, but before we had a chance to beat it as our signal, we ran into a group of Khmer Rouge. It was so dark we could not recognize them clearly, and to ensure there was no confusion we greeted them with a "*salaam*" [*Assalamu 'alaikum*," the Islamic greeting that is used among Muslims]. The Khmer Rouge did not know how to reply, so we went at them. Ta Sa hit the stock of one of their guns and it fell from

the cadre's shoulder. There were only three of them: Chet, the deputy subdistrict chairman; subdistrict cadre Peng Heng; and Mat, a Cham and deputy village chairman. The one with the rifle was Chet. Then some of us attacked in pursuit of them, and some beat the drum. Some headed off to deal with a subdistrict cadre named Hao Thol who was also holding a meeting at the time.

In the midst of all the panic, Mat, the village chairman [who had been appointed by the Khmer Rouge], ran into a breadfruit tree. I captured him. He pleaded to me that he had only followed the Khmer Rouge in order to save himself from harm. I released him. Chet bumped into another villager named Sitlep, and Sitlep gave chase. When Chet turned to fight back, Sitlep stabbed at him with his sword, but Chet deflected the blow. Sitlep stabbed him again in the shoulder and Chet collapsed.

Cadre Thol, who had been busy conducting his meeting, jumped from the house and we chased him. We did not catch him, however. Peng Heng escaped too. The uprising came too late to prevent the Khmer Rouge from arresting one villager, Sos Him. Sos Him subsequently disappeared.

The next morning the Khmer Rouge sent in their troops from the district, region, and zone levels to suppress the village. They fired large-caliber weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, 12.7 and 12.8 mm machine guns, 60 mm mortars, and small-caliber weapons into the village. They attacked the village as if it were a large military installation, like that. Many villagers were killed or wounded.

Besides a carbine that had been taken from Chet, we had only one other weapon, an AK, and four magazines of ammunition that belonged to a soldier named El Saroeun. He was a Cham who was visiting his home in the village at the time. My second cousin fired that AK. He was an excellent marksman and hit one attacker with every round he fired. He shot and killed one of the district military commanders named Meng Hun. Those with knives and swords killed or wounded many attackers. Chi Kroem and Cheang Riev killed many Khmer Rouge; the attackers' rounds had no effect on them. After the rebellion I learned from Sen, who had participated in the attack [fighting on the Khmer Rouge side], that about a hundred Khmer Rouge had been killed. Sen was born in Saoy village, Peus 1 subdistrict. He told this story to me after he was demobilized from the military and had been assigned to the same "mobile unit" as I had been. Later, Sen died.

At about 6:00 p.m. that day, the Khmer Rouge penetrated the village and began herding the villagers off to the west. Twenty to thirty villagers

still refused to surrender and would not come out of their houses. These included Rumly, Saly, Haji Kroem, Cheang Riev, Ta Mat and his wife. They preferred to die in the village rather than throw down their weapons and surrender to the Khmer Rouge.

While driving the people away, the Khmer Rouge broke them into two groups, the men to one side and the women to the other. Then the men were sent to a tobacco curing kiln at the head of the Prek Ta Duong bridge in Kroch Chhmar village and also to a school at Khsach Praches village. The women went to Wat Daem Chrey and Wat Kanhchak. I was at the tobacco curing kiln, a place that had never been used as a prison prior to that. In my estimation there were four hundred men held there.

The cadres called away the men held at the tobacco kiln, one after another; none of them ever returned. The wounded were the first targets for removal since they were thought to have been actively involved in combat. El Kao, the chairman of Svay Khleang village, was the man who fingered those to be taken away. Fortunately, I was his nephew. El Kao had met with my mother when he visited the women in the pagoda earlier. I learned of that after I was released. My mother had apparently said to him, "Brother! One of your nephews, his life is not in the hands of Allah, but in your own hands. Spare him!" El Kao gave no response to my mother's plea at the time. Two days later, he went to the tobacco kiln and met with me. He blamed me, "Oh! You must be satisfied now, a whole village cursed just because of you!" He walked away. But I survived in the kiln, and no one ever did call my name.

After a month had gone by, the cadres began sending people away in small groups. I, my mother and three other families were sent by boat to the east. Upon reaching Village 2 of Rokar Khnor subdistrict, the boat docked. We lived there, mixed in among the Khmer.

In 1978 all the Cham in Rokar Khnor were totally wiped out by the Khmer Rouge. My mother was taken and killed. I survived only because I fled into the forest. I do not understand why the Khmer Rouge killed on such a huge scale because the Cham had already been scattered and there had been no further reactions by them. Why did Pol Pot so hate the Cham?

Sos Ponyamin

Author's interview with Sos Ponyamin, male, age 45, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 25 January 2001.

In 1973 the Khmer Rouge began to arrest people in my village who formerly had been the best off in terms of their standard of living. These were Chai Phin, Sulaiman, Dangkhao Hak, and three others whose names I cannot recall. Later on such arrests became indiscriminate (*leng reus muk*). Freedom of movement and freedom to practice religion were strictly forbidden. By 1975 at least one hundred villagers had been arrested, never to return home.

On the evening of the Raya holy day in October 1975, my friend Saleh Tam told me that the Khmer Rouge had a plan to arrest eighty villagers. Two of my uncles were on the list, Ya Sa and Ya Saleh. The cadres accused these people of opposing Angkar because they had dared to pray in the mosque earlier that morning. I could not stand it any longer and along with my two friends, Lep Vanmath and Saleh Tam, I was prepared to kill some Khmer Rouge cadres. We decided if we did not kill the Khmer Rouge, they would kill us. So we were going to do whatever we would have to do to kill one or two of them before we ourselves died.

I told another of my friends, Mat Set-Amin, about the plan and he agreed to go along with me. That evening cadres from the district and subdistrict levels held a meeting at my cooperative. I did not attend, since I had already resolved my plan to fight. Mat Setamin and I hid under my two uncle's houses; they were close together.

At 9:00 p.m. I went into my uncle's house to say the *isha* [night time] prayer. When I returned, I came upon a Khmer Rouge patrol intending to make arrests. They shone flashlights in my face. I ran with my three friends into a banana grove nearby, and the patrol moved on to the west. My uncle's house was in the eastern part of the village. All four of us talked it over again. We agreed that if we did not act that very evening, we would be killed because they had already seen our faces. We went to the mosque to get the drum to send a signal to all the villagers to get ready and to come help us fight.

Lep Vanmath went to get twenty swords that had been hidden from the Khmer Rouge back when they collected all the swords in early 1975. Then we headed for the mosque. We invited four friends we met along the way and then called on one more, Saleh, before we got the drum. When we got to Saleh's house we all drank some water. I finished first and left before the others. The Khmer Rouge saw me and moved toward me. I hid by a large milkwood tree and gave the *salaam* [Islamic] greeting. They did not answer and shined their flashlights at me again. I saw them clearly, all three of them: Peng Heng and Chet, the subdistrict cadres, along with the village chairman Mat. I drew my sword from its scabbard and struck

Chet, who was holding a rifle. The cadres evaded my blows and ran off to the east. We chased after them, shouting out for the villagers to help us capture them. Some of my friends ran to beat the drum, and their signal was heard throughout the village.

Confusion swept over the village. The people joined us in attacking the Khmer Rouge. Villager Talib caught up to Chet on the east side of the village and killed him right there. The cadres who had been in a meeting at my cooperative that night jumped out of the windows and ran for their lives. Everyone grabbed a sword, knife or hatchet and made ready to fight at the edge of the village. The women, children and the elderly came down from their houses and gathered in groups.

Lep Vanmath and I walked to the house of Kao, the chairman of [Svay Khleang] Village 5. Kao had already run away. We went into his house and found piles of Qur-ans and *keitap* [Islamic religious books] that had been confiscated from the people. We carried them back to my house. Then we came upon the house of the deputy chairman of [Svay Khleang] Village 6, Ta Sos. Ta Sos had scolded me just a few days earlier for praying in the mosque in secret. His wife refused to let us enter the house and she claimed that he was at the subdistrict headquarters. I did not believe that story and so I kicked the door in. I found Ta Sos inside hiding under a mosquito net. I dragged him outside and tied his hands. The neighbors pleaded for his life, so we let him go.

That night the Khmer Rouge did not attack us, so it was a good opportunity for the villagers to prepare trenches for the fighting to come. At dawn the attackers surrounded the village and began firing. Along the river bank many boats swept the banks with gunfire. Shells of all calibers exploded with deafening blasts. The villagers had only two firearms. One was an AK taken from a soldier who had been visiting home at the time, which was now being fired by Osman. The other was the carbine taken from Chet after Talib killed him. Lep Vanmath was firing the carbine, which held only ten rounds. Osman told me that he killed eight attackers. Lep Vanmath did not say anything about how many he killed.

Hundreds of villagers were wounded or killed. I carried the wounded back into the village. By 3:00 p.m. more villagers were still being killed. Both of our rifles had run out of ammunition by now. Some survivors threw down their weapons and surrendered. I kept my sword. While I was carrying some of the wounded back into the village, my mother and siblings grabbed me and begged me to drop my sword. Because of their pleas, I did so. My father had died of illness in 1973.

At 6 o'clock in the evening the Khmer Rouge herded the people off to the west. When they reached the Prek Cham bridge, they separated the men from the women. I was sent to a site at a school in Kroch Chhmar village, along with a hundred other men. We were imprisoned in the classrooms, of which there were four.

On our first day there, a cadre interrogated everyone, calling us out in front of the school one after another. When my turn came, I saw three interrogators. One pointed a weapon at me the entire time, one asked the questions, and one took notes. The questioners asked what I had done during the rebellion. I replied, "I did not participate. I just hid in my house." The cadre saw my injury and asked how I had become wounded. I answered, "The cooperative chairman assigned me to saw some firewood and the saw slipped and cut my foot."

After they finished, the cadres called names from a list of all the wounded, claiming they were going to be sent to a hospital. I was not on the list. No one who was listed surfaced again. They were all hauled off and killed. Almost every day those remaining who were not wounded were taken out in groups and killed. My friend Saleh Tam, who had helped me form the plan to rebel, was taken away during that time. Village chairman Kao did all this personally. I was lucky that Kao was my first cousin. After twenty-nine days, the twelve who remained out of the thirty men who had originally been placed in my school cell were released.

The food provided to us was just one scoop of *bobor* rice porridge at each meal. I had never been so hungry. Every time I asked the guard to let me go relieve myself, I grabbed a banana leaf to hide in my waistband. Nothing but banana plants was available there. I chewed on the leaf when I got back to the cell and passed out pieces of the leaves to my friends. Others gave me some of their banana leaves, too, since they had also brought them back in just as I had done.

Finally we were released. I met my mother at Wat Kanhchak. Later my family was evacuated to Svay Kambet village [in Sedar subdistrict, Dambe district].

Sman Kachi

Author's interview with Sman Kachi, male, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 13 November 1999 and 19 December 2000.

None of the educated people in my village escaped arrest by the

Khmer Rouge. As I recall, there were about forty-one of them taken off and killed.⁸⁶ This number does not include the average citizens who were also arrested. The Khmer Rouge began taking these people away in 1973.

Along with the arrests, the Khmer Rouge absolutely prohibited the practice of religion and any prayer. If they learned that someone had dared pray, their soldiers would kill the offender. I kept on praying nevertheless. I prayed silently in my heart during the day and at night I put out the lantern and prayed inside my mosquito net. They could never catch me at it. Qur-ans and *keitaps*, the very foundation of Islam, were collected and burned, but some villagers managed to bury theirs. Women were forced to cut their hair as short as their ear lobes. A Khmer Rouge slogan was, "Those with long hair serve their husbands. Those with short hair serve their nation."

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge collected the swords from the villagers. The ancient tradition is that Cham use swords to defend their homes and residences. Two or three days after that, on the Raya holy day, they planned to arrest forty villagers during the night. We learned of this plan in advance and decided that we would permit no more arrests in our village. If we remained silent no one knew who would be arrested next. We knew a rebellion would lead to our deaths, but at least we would kill some of them before we died. When evening fell, the Khmer Rouge began making the arrests as planned. After they had taken Sos Him and Ta Teh, the villagers attacked and chased after the cadres. We killed the subdistrict cadre Chet. Chet had made the arrests in the past.

The Khmer Rouge did not react that night. At dawn, their soldiers came and fired into the village. All calibers of weapons were unleashed. The sound was deafening throughout the whole day, like they were attacking a big city. The defenders had only knives, hatchets, and the swords that they had taken back from the house of the village chairman. In the afternoon the attackers had penetrated the village proper and began driving the people away. The men and women were separated. The men were held at a curing house for tobacco leaves at Prek Ta Duong and also at the school at Khsach Praches. The women were held at the Buddhist pagodas, Wat Daem Chrey and Wat Kanhchak. Children who were under thirteen years old stayed with their mothers.

I was put in the tobacco curing barn. It was a pitiful place. One scoop of gruel made a meal. There was no place to lie down so some people slept in the tobacco leaf baskets. Some slept on the ground. Bathing was difficult; we were made to run out to the river for a dip, then run back. The elderly who could not run were beaten and harassed.

After twenty-five days husbands and wives were reunited. They could barely recognize one another since everyone was just skin and bones by that time, or all swollen up. We were evacuated to different regions, with some families made to go to malaria-infested areas in Dambe, where almost all of them died. I was sent to Saupheas village [in Saupheas subdistrict of Stung Trang] with twenty other families. Life seemed somewhat better there and there were no more arrests. The only ones arrested were those who actually did commit some violation against Khmer Rouge discipline or orders, like secretly practicing Islam.

After 1979 the villagers of Svay Khleang returned to their place of birth. I was made village chairman at that time. After everyone was reunited, I collected statistics again and saw that only 72 families survived out of the 1,240 families who had been living in the village in 1970.

Teh Zain

Author's interview with Teh Zain, male, age 55, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 8 December 2000.

The Khmer Rouge took control of my village during 1970. In 1972, they made their first arrest there. They arrested the village doctor Set. Then they arrested one of the better-off villagers, Dangkhao Mat.

In 1973 they arrested three more well-off villagers, Chai Phin, Dangkhao El, and Dangkhao Hak. All three were arrested at the same time. In mid-1973 the arrests increased, and were no longer carried out without the people learning about them beforehand. Whenever they wanted to arrest villagers on a given night, they had the village chairman announce during the day that no one was to leave his or her house that night since Angkar would be "working" in the village. If an arrest was made during daylight hours, it was done [publicly] in the fields or at a worksite. The first targets were the Islamic leaders, the *hakim*, *tuons* and *hajis*. Ta Yok, a district cadre born in Trea Village, held a meeting to forbid religious faith.

By 1974, the Khmer Rouge were constantly making arrests and were increasing pressure against Islam. Ta Yok ordered the women to cut their hair and announced that they could no longer cover their heads. All our Qur-ans had to be seized and burned, they said.

One day in September 1975, on the Raya holy day Leim, the cooperative chairman, told me that sixty people were going to be arrested that night. The word flashed around the entire village. Some defiant

youths began sharpening their swords, hatchets and knives in preparation to fight the Khmer Rouge.

At 9 o'clock that night the arrests began. Just as Sos Him was being arrested, three cadres bumped into these young men. They chased the Khmer Rouge representatives and killed one of them at the eastern edge of the village. They were all Svay Khleang subdistrict cadres: Chet, Thol, and one whose name I cannot recall. At dawn, the Khmer Rouge began firing on the village. I cooked food for the defending fighters that day.

During the afternoon the soldiers entered the village and began marching the people away. That night we were not allowed to sleep one wink. We had to sit on the ground at the site of the former Kroch Chhmar market. The next morning the cadres split us up and sent us to different places. I was sent to the tobacco curing barn near Prek Ta Duong. The following day they sent me along with some others to a school at Khsach Praches.

Two hundred men were held prisoner in four classrooms there. We slept on the ground in rows without any blankets. There was almost no space to walk between the rows. Some of the men had left the village without any long pants, and they were the worst off since they had no cover and the mosquitoes got to them. Just one scoop was a meal for us. To bathe, prisoners were made to take off their clothes in the cell, then run to the river holding their hands behind their backs for a quick dip, then run straight back to the cells. Anyone who was too slow would get clubbed by the guards who lined the path. I felt so bad for my father when he was hit; he was so old he could not run. The cadres kept removing the prisoners among us to be taken off and killed. Only six out of the fifty men who had originally been held in my cell now survived.

It was one month later before the remaining survivors, including myself, were released and permitted to rejoin our families. My family was then evacuated to Banteay Chey [in Banteay Chey subdistrict of Dambe district] with about ten other families.

Touloas Mein

Author's interview with Touloas Mein, male, age 53, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 9 December 2000.

In 1973 I was called to make a public confession of my faults (*thvoe upheasnakkam*) in the dining hall in Wat Chmakar Malou. The Khmer Rouge had accused me of "going along with the fraudulent schemes of the

enemy." An *upapheasanakam* consisted of a public declaration in front of a gathering of Khmer Rouge leaders and the people. I had to swear that I would stop following the ways of the enemy. Those called to make these public confessions were called "bad elements." There were about a thousand Cham and Khmer citizens assembled there from all the villages throughout the subdistrict.

In 1975, despite the fact that the Cham had already abandoned prayer and fasting and no longer maintained long hair for women, the Khmer Rouge took further steps to eliminate Islam. They forced us to raise swine, eat pork, and hand over our Qur-ans for burning. One day in October, on the Raya holy day, they planned to arrest one hundred people. Just as they were arresting my older brother-in-law, Sos Him, the rebellion exploded.

At dawn, soldiers surrounded us and fired into the village. We had only two firearms, one taken from a Khmer Rouge soldier visiting his home in the village and one taken from Chet, a cadre who had been killed the night before. Other than that, we had only swords, hatchets and knives to defend ourselves. In the battle two cadres were killed; one was a military commander. At least two hundred, maybe three hundred, villagers were killed. I participated in the battle.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the soldiers seized the village and the defenders surrendered. Some refused to surrender and fled back into their houses to hide. San Kaup hid in his home. A soldier entered his house not knowing Kaup was hiding in there and Kaup cut his throat and killed him. The Khmer Rouge were incensed by that, and so they fired a rocket-propelled grenade into the house and burned it to the ground.

In the end, I was detained in a classroom at the Kroch Chhmar village school with about a hundred others. The wounded were removed first, told they were going for medical treatment. Not one of them ever returned. Ten other prisoners were taken away and killed, accused of being the leaders of the uprising. El Kao, the village chairman, made those arrests in person.

After twenty-nine days, we were released to go back to our families. I met my family at Wat Daem Chrey. We stayed there one night before my family and four others were sent by boat to Veal Village Andaek [Kok Srok subdistrict, Dambe district].

Hak Mat

Author's interview with Hak Mat, male, age 52, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 15 February 2001.

One morning at about 8 o'clock, my father, Man Hak, was resting at home as usual. Four district security cadres came up and called him away. Father left wearing his *sarong* and a short-sleeved shirt. I was never to see him again.

Two days later, those same security people came back to search our house and to make a record of all of our household property. They searched every crack and crevice; they even climbed up and checked above the walls. Everything they found was written down in their notebook. They had me place my thumbprint on their list and then they went away.

There were more many arrests after that. I was frightened. I pretended to be loyal to Angkar by selling my motorcycle, cart, and all our livestock. I used the money to buy rice for the solidarity group's use. They made me chairman of the solidarity group because of my good deed.

In 1975 there were more arrests and increasing pressure against Islam. One night villagers Sos Him and Ta Teh were arrested. There was an uprising and the people began shouting, "Absolutely no more arrests!" Chet, a subdistrict cadre who was "working" in the village that night was killed by the rebels, cut into three pieces. Everyone swore they would die for the Cham race and for Islam in what they called "*masruh [fi]sabilillah*" [a struggle for the sake of God]. The night passed without any reaction from the Khmer Rouge. At dawn the Khmer Rouge soldiers attacked and hundreds of people were killed throughout the village. As sunset drew near, many Khmer Rouge reinforcements arrived and the villagers no longer had the means to resist. Soldiers invaded the village and forced women with long hair to cut it short.

They drove the people toward the dock and put them into large boats waiting there. The boats took the men off to the west. After about 6 kilometers, the boats reached Prek Ta Duong, where they put ashore. The men were ordered to go into a tobacco curing barn.

I slept in that tobacco barn until my head was filled with lice, until I no longer looked human. One night a villager named Man had a nightmare [and called out in his sleep] and then he was taken away and tortured. The next day another villager, I cannot recall his name, had a high fever and talked nonsense in his sleep. He was called out of the kiln

and beaten to death right there. I heard the sounds of many blows and heard the death rattle of the victim before he died. It was twenty more days before the Khmer Rouge sent me and the surviving prisoners back to our families and then they evacuated us off in different directions. My family was sent to Village 4, Prek A-Chi subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district.

Ly Hak

Author's interview with Ly Hak, male, age 67, at Village 5, Svay Khleang district, Kroch Chhmar district, 17 December 2000.

Almost every evening they arrested people in my village. In those days as soon as evening fell, I grew very fearful. I kept a bag of clothes by my side at all times at night. I slept next to my wife; both of us were afraid to speak a single word. We knew that spies listened in the open space underneath our raised houses. Subdistrict cadres and village chief Ya Sos handled all of these affairs themselves. Ya Sos was chairman of Village 6. He was bald. He was the guide and interpreter for the Khmer Rouge cadres since the Khmer Rouge who were ethnically Khmer could not understand the Cham language.

One day they called a meeting and “proposed” (their “proposals” were orders) that all the mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters who spoke Arabic go greet an Arab delegation that had come on an official visit to Kampuchea. Eight of the Arabic-speaking *tuons* were led away for that occasion. They still have not returned.

I heard that there had been an uprising at Koh Phal. This was the high season of the river. The cooperative chairman assigned me to paddle a boat to collect driftwood floating down the river for use as firewood. I came across many corpses floating downstream from the east. The bodies were roped together into lines. I wondered how it must have been for people to die so horribly.

Three days later, Svay Khleang village rebelled against the Khmer Rouge. Before the uprising some villagers met in secret and agreed that when they heard a signal from the drum [beating at an irregular time that would not signal canonical prayer] they would all rise up and fight. During the evening of the Raya holy day, the drum sounded the signal as we had agreed. Everyone came down out of their houses. The women assembled at a place east of the mosque. The men grabbed their knives and swords in preparation for combat. At dawn the Khmer Rouge surrounded the village and bombarded it with artillery while they swept

the people with small arms fire. It was like thunder and rain, and I had never before seen or heard anything like it. The villagers counterattacked.

I observed that those who were the most brave, those who ran right to the front, were also those who were hit the least often. The hesitant ones in the rear were more often dropped by enemy fire. We had one gun seized from a Khmer Rouge soldier who had come to visit his family in the village. Ly Osman fired that gun. Osman was later captured and killed.

I had my sword and was ready and waiting in the sugar cane field behind my house. One of us wounded a Khmer Rouge commander and Ly Osman fired one round into him, killing him right there in that cane field. In all the confusion Rasaly captured Khmer Rouge village chief Ya Sos and held him in a chicken coop.

By late afternoon many of us were wounded or dead and we were growing weaker. I heard an announcement the attackers made over a loudspeaker, "Fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, anyone who is loyal and wishes to surrender, do it now or else be wiped out." Since we could not overcome them, the villagers surrendered one after another. Ya Sos, still locked away in the chicken coop, was freed. After the Khmer Rouge had moved into all parts of the village, most of the people were herded to the bridge. Those who had refused to give up were killed.

At the Prek Cham bridge, the soldiers separated the men from the women. Hundreds of men were locked away in the tobacco drying kiln at Prek Ta Duong, squeezed in tight there. After five or six days, we were told that "in order to make us more comfortable" some of us would be taken off to some new place. Ya Sos was present at this announcement. Twenty prisoners were removed. They all went missing forever.

That same night, the villager Man shouted in his sleep, "Strike! Stab! Slash!" At dawn three or four guards came in, asking who it was who had been yelling during the night. They escorted Man away. An hour later, Man came walking back, blood streaming down from wounds on his head. No matter who whispered what questions to Man, Man refused to reply. I thought Man had suffered nerve damage. After that, we took turns secretly standing guard to awaken and put our hands over the mouth of anyone who talked in their sleep. It was only after we were released from the tobacco kiln that Man told us why he had not dared speak. They had forbidden him from opening his mouth again.

All the prisoners held in the tobacco curing barn were starving. There

were only two meals each day, one ladle of gruel for each meal. That was some really tasteless gruel too. So tasteless it was that one prisoner dared to ask the guard for a pinch of salt. He got a serious beating instead of salt.

When I was released from the tobacco barn, the Khmer Rouge told me and some other prisoners that we were now returning to our village. We were so happy. When we walked by Wat Kanhchak, they told us to go inside the compound where we saw women and children all over the yard. I met my wife and children there. About twenty families, including mine, were sent by boat to the west. When we got to a village called Prek A-Chi, we were split up [by families] to go live mixed in with the [ethnic] Khmer people there.

Three months passed. All of the Svay Khleang villagers at Prek A-Chi who had come from Svay Khleang were assembled and sent by boat to the opposite bank at Stung Trang. Two or three big trucks took us on from there. We were told us we were going to Battambang, but the trucks stopped at Saupheas Village. That was where we lived until 1979.

Ly Mai

Author's interview with Ly Mai, female, age 49, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 14 December 2000.

One morning my whole family – mother, father, and siblings – were out transplanting rice, and I was left at home all by myself. I had asked permission from the unit chairman to rest because I was sick. At about 8 o'clock, a cadre named Savy arrested me in my house. He held his hand over my mouth and tried to rape me. I finally twisted free of his grasp and ran outside. I was really afraid when he began following me. But he walked away when I started screaming for help. That afternoon when my mother returned from work I told her what happened. She told me not to talk about it.

Later there was a rebellion in my village. Lep Vanmath and Hakim Mein [Sos Ponyamin] were the leaders. One day I saw Lep Vanmath sharpening a knife. He said he was going to kill Thol and Chet with the knife that very night.

That night Thol was holding a meeting in one of the houses. Lots of people attended. I was there too. During the meeting some rebels shouted from underneath the house, "Stab the rascal Thol! Kill that rascal Thol!" Hearing this, Thol jumped down from the house to the ground and ran off

so fast the rebels couldn't catch him.

After the uprising was put down, my mother and I were held in Wat Kanhchak. My father was taken from us since they had separated the men from the women. Only the old man Ta Ngah Mat, blind in both eyes, was left with the women because he had dressed up and disguised himself as a woman. He died later of malaria during the evacuation to Dambe. In the pagoda there was one old lady whose husband and children had been killed during the uprising. While we were bathing I saw her walk into the river fully dressed. She never resurfaced. She committed suicide.

After two weeks at the pagoda, the Khmer Rouge released my family along with some others and took us off to the west in boats. They turned up into the stream at Prek Rokar Khnor and we arrived at a place called Chheu Theang. There we got out and started to walk. The old men and women who could not walk were told to wait there for carts that would come along for them later. No carts ever brought them into the village. They all disappeared.

At Dambe we were split up again. My family and about thirty other families from Svay Khleang were sent to a place called Chey Sambat Village. Then everyone fell ill from malaria. Four or five people would die every day, until it became hard to find anyone left who could still bury all the bodies. It was there that my father died.

Ly Touman

Author's interview with Ly Touman, male, age 49, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 15 December 2000.

The Khmer Rouge had never permitted prayer in the mosque before, so it was very strange that on the Raya holy day they allowed people to pray in the mosque. Two cadres, Chet and Thol, hid nearby and scribbled down the names of those who had come to pray. That night, the Khmer Rouge came into the village to arrest those whose names were on that list of worshippers. Just as they grabbed Sos Him, a group of rebels beat a drum. I heard it myself. Then I heard villagers chasing down Chet and Thol. Chet was killed on the eastern edge of the village, but Thol got away. There was great confusion. The defenders met in groups in their houses, then took up swords and knives to defend the approaches to the village. That night I had a sword and took up a position next to the cemetery east of the village.

At about 8 o'clock the next morning the Khmer Rouge began firing

into the west side of the village. Bullets fell like rain. We had our knives and swords in hand. They gunned down many villagers. We had one rifle that we had taken from a Cham Khmer Rouge soldier who had come to visit his family in the village. Osman fired that weapon at the attackers. Osman was a very good shot and he killed at least ten soldiers. I saw this with my own eyes. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon columns of soldiers entered the village. I saw Osman throw down his rifle, run to the river, and jump in to save himself. Osman disappeared after that.

At sunset the Khmer Rouge had taken the village and the defenders had thrown down their weapons. The soldiers began driving the people out of the village. When we reached Prek Cham they separated the men from the women. About a thousand men walked to the Kroch Chhmar market. After arriving there they were ordered to form lines and hold their hands behind their backs. We sat right there the entire night while Kao, the village chairman, pointed out the ones who were to be taken off and killed. The old men were pointed out and accused of being rebel leaders. They were removed first.

The next morning some of us were taken to a tobacco curing barn near the Prek Ta Duong bridge. Others were taken to the school in Khsach Praches. I was sent to the school with about three hundred other men. They placed us in classrooms. We were not shackled or tied up there. We had to sleep on the ground with no mats. There were guards outside.

There was only one ladle of thin gruel and a grain of salt for each meal. We were permitted to bathe in groups of five at a time, made to take our clothes off in the cells and run fast to the river and jump in, then quickly run back. Once when I went to bathe I saw Ta San, an old man who was not able to keep up with the others, being clubbed by a guard. After that day I stopped bathing, afraid they would beat me too. On most days they took prisoners out from the room, one after another. My grandfather Saleh was removed like that. He disappeared after he went outside.

After about twenty days, the prisoners in my cell were released to their wives and children who were being held in the pagoda. I met my family at Wat Daem Chrey. Then about thirty families, mine included, were sent by boat from Wat Daem Chrey to go off to the east. We paddled the boats ourselves, with the soldiers guarding us. After one day and one night the boats reached a place called Chheu Theang, and we walked on from there. There were two villagers, along with my aunt, who had stomach aches and so they could not walk. I reported this to the guard who followed along behind us. The guards said a cart would bring them

along later if they stopped to rest. They disappeared.

The last stage of the journey took us to Tuol Sambat Village in Dambe district. The cadres there divided the thirty families who had come from Svay Khleang into small groups and sent us out to different villages to live. My family was in a group of eight families that was assigned to stay right there in Tuol Sambat.

In late 1978 Khmer Rouge cadres from the Central Zone came to take control of Tuol Sambat Village, which had been under the control of the East Zone [cadres] previously. When they arrived, the cadres from the Central Zone told the people that they had "liberated" us and that they would make us happy like we had once been before. They appealed to the Cham people to go back to their villages of birth.

I traveled back to Peus Village, which was next to my home village. I lived there because my old house at Svay Khleang had already been given over to someone else. After a short time at Peus, the village chairman told all the Cham, including the original base people along with twenty-five families who had moved from Dambe, to prepare for evacuation. The next morning at the time assigned for our departure, my wife gave birth to a daughter. We were allowed to postpone our travel until later, when we could go along with the next group. One other woman gave birth at that same time. She was also permitted to stay behind. By 1979 none of those in the group that left Peus Village that day was still alive.

Msas No

Author's interview with Msas No, male, age 65, Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chlmar district, 6 December 2000.

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge took two measures against us: first, they forced women to cut their hair; second, they collected our Qur-ans from our houses for burning. Soy, a subdistrict cadre in Svay Khleang, was in charge of those matters. Before Soy came to my house I hid my Qur-an and *keitap* prayer book in two jars which I then buried. I don't know how Soy knew about this, but he used it to threaten me. I was afraid so I dug them up and handed them over to him.

Many arrests were made; eighty to a hundred were taken at a time. They tied those who were being arrested together into lines, like herds of cattle, blindfolded them, and transported them out of the village in horse-drawn carts. Sometimes they arrested workers who were transplanting rice in the fields. As far as I could tell, not one person taken during the

night ever returned home.

Then came the day of the uprising. I can't even remember how many people the Khmer Rouge arrested [around that time]. The adults my age were almost all taken from the village. Sim Put was a spy who reported to the Khmer Rouge whom they should arrest [next]. Sim Put's wife was my niece. On the Raya holy day she told me that there was a plan to arrest eighty people later that evening.

So we rebelled that night. First I heard the drum, a drum that sounded out of the ordinary [time for prayer], signaling that some had been the first to begin the uprising. My family and neighbors all came down from their houses. There was no clash that night. At 8 o'clock the next morning the Khmer Rouge started firing into the village from the west. At first there were many defenders there, but later almost all of them had been killed. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon the Khmer Rouge launched a big raid, and by 6 o'clock almost all the defenders had fallen and the attackers entered the village.

After we surrendered I was sent to the tobacco curing barn near Ta Duong bridge. More than a hundred men were held in there with me. The first day the cadres removed the wounded to send them to the hospital; they never reappeared. Then they called one or two at a time every day to go out; those people have also gone missing ever since.

About a month had passed, and then the Khmer Rouge told me and some of the other prisoners to go to Wat Daem Chrey and Wat Kanhchak in order to meet our wives and children. I found my wife and children at Wat Daem Chrey. We could barely recognize one another since we were all nothing but skin and bones by that time. My family was evacuated by boat, along with thirty other families, to Prek A-Chi village.

Sen Kaup

Author's interview with Sen Kaup, male, age 55, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 15 January 2001.

In 1975 I was a rubber tree worker at the Bos Svay rubber works, located 15 kilometers south of Kroch Chhmar district. At dawn one morning I was tapping rubber trees as usual, when I suddenly saw about a hundred well-armed soldiers heading toward Kroch Chhmar. Savan, the chairman of my work team, greeted the commander of that force. I overheard the commander say to Savan that they were going off to put down a rebellion of the Cham at Svay Khleang village.

After they moved on I asked Savan about the identity of that unit. Savan told me that they were Region 21 troops from Phkar Daung village (in Chhouk subdistrict of Kroch Chhmar district). About thirty minutes later I heard artillery fire. The sound continued all through the afternoon before it fell silent.

Three days later, at 11 o'clock in the morning I saw the soldiers walking back along the same route. I snuck a glance at the soldiers and I saw they were carrying all sorts of materials and belongings. I could see that some of the bags, not properly wrapped up, held the clothing of the Cham people.

Sieu Y

Author's interview with Sieu Y, male, age 60, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 6 December 2000.

In 1975 I was assigned to be cooperative chairman. On the same night as the Raya holy day, all the members of my cooperative were meeting in my house. Subdistrict cadre Thol and a district security man, whose name I forget, were present at that meeting. Suddenly we heard rebels running up underneath my house and they shouted out, "*Assalamu 'alaikum*" [the Islamic greeting]. The villagers got excited and ran out of the house. I came down to the ground to find out what was going on. But when I reached the ground the rebels saw me and they thought I might resist them because I was the cooperative chairman. They tied my arms behind my back and put me back inside my house, where they guarded me until dawn.

In the morning the rebels untied me and let me go stand guard in defense on the east side of the village. I was unarmed. Suddenly there was the sound of artillery shells exploding into the village. I abandoned my position, ran back to the village, and hid in a trench.

By 5:00 p.m. the uprising was over and everyone had surrendered. I came out of my trench and walked along with the other villagers toward the west. In the end they put me in a school. I was a prisoner now. We were starving. They gave us only one scoop of thin gruel for each meal. A prisoner named Man El looked up at the face of the Khmer Rouge dishing out the food and was beaten for having done so. From then on every prisoner kept his face aimed at the ground when he got his gruel. One day, I was holding my bowl of gruel and walked in front of a cadre. He kicked me and made me spill all my food on the ground.

One very old prisoner named Ta Man was ordered to carry the bucket of urine out of the cell to empty it. Man could not carry it so one of his sons held in the same cell helped him. Seeing that, a guard grabbed a piece of bamboo and hit him in the head, soaking his clothes in blood.

One month passed. The Khmer Rouge let me go meet my wife and children at Wat Daem Chrey and then they evacuated us off to Tuol Sambat Village (in Dambe district) along with twenty-five other families. The first week there we started to fall victim to malaria and we began to die off, one after the other. Within just three months' time, more than half of us were dead. At the nearby village of Banteay Chey large numbers of my former co-villagers also died in the same way.

Tam Man

Author's interview with Tam Man, male, age 50, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 16 December 2000.

At 2 o'clock one day (I forget the year) three armed cadres came in with a cadre named Muoy, who carried a list. They went right up to my house. They called me down out of my house and said, "Now it is your name that is being called." My family was frightened to hear this and they started to cry. They knew that those whose names were called and then taken away never returned. I went without a fight. They marched me along a path to the east.

We arrived at a house in Khpop Kraom village. I was startled to see many of my fellow villagers there. They were under a house, tied together into a long line with a rope, all partially covered with coconut fronds. Most of them were old. I saw Kai Tech next to me. He was so old he could hardly walk, but he was still tied up tightly. Then they tied me to the others.

At 4 o'clock that same afternoon, two or three Khmer Rouge walked up to us with a list. They ordered the prisoners into formation and had us count off in order. I was number 25, and called out, "Twenty-five, Tam Man." The count went on past me, up to number 30 or so. Then it turned out that another prisoner had the same name as I. They stopped the count to clarify his age, his wife's name and the number of children that he had. Then they asked the same questions of me. The other Tam Man was older than me and he had more children. The count continued, and the final count was 50 prisoners, all from my home village.

One of the soldiers walked behind the house and after a moment he

returned. He pointed his weapon at me, fired a round into the air, then untied me and walked me to the rear of the house. I was sure I was going to die. When we got to the back of the house I saw one Khmer Rouge cadre sitting at a table. He told me to sit on a bamboo bed by the table and said, "You are being released. There was a mix-up with the names." I walked back home.

At midnight on the following day I was sleeping back in my home, which was near the road. I heard a vehicle heading west. The next morning villagers collected the *krama* and shoes of the prisoners with whom I had been held the previous day. They had all disappeared and would never return.

The rebellion of my village against the Khmer Rouge occurred a year after those events. During the day of the uprising I was cooking near the mosque, preparing food for the fighters. At about 7:00 p.m., I heard the announcement [made by the Khmer Rouge] for all the villagers to leave. I advised my wife and children that we should do as the announcement had directed. After we had gone a little way, they separated the men from the women and children. I was sent to a tobacco curing barn.

After about one week there, I talked in my sleep one night. At dawn, those near me told me that I had shouted out, "Slash, stab, kill!" I paid them no mind; it had only been a dream, after all. But that afternoon the cadres called me out. About 50 meters from the holding cell a cadre clubbed me on my legs from behind and I collapsed on my face. They stood me back up and walked me forward. Then a cadre grabbed a heavy wood club and struck me twice on the head. Everything went black and I started to fall backwards, face up, but they grabbed me as I went down. They made me walk forward again. After four or five paces, they told me to sit. I tried to open my eyes to look around. I saw a big deep pit right in front of me. I was sitting on the edge of that pit. Then another Khmer Rouge cadre with a shiny sword walked toward me. I was in a panic. I knew that sword was to cut my throat. Someone grabbed me by the hair and pulled my head back. Another placed the cutting edge of the sword on my neck. I knew I would die in that pit.

The Khmer Rouge told me to answer a question, saying that if I did not give the right answer I was going to die. He asked, "Why did you talk in your sleep?" It was only then that I knew what my offense had been. I answered that during the night of the uprising [in Svay Khleang], someone had banged loudly on the door of my house and I had gone outside. I saw [Cham rebel] villagers with knives and hatchets, I said. I was scared, I said; I told [the prison guards] that I thought they [the

villagers leading the uprising] had come to kill me. So that is why I had called out those words in a nightmare, I said.

My answer must have been the right one since they took the sword from my neck and let loose of my hair. They took me back to the holding place and warned me never to tell anyone what had happened. Even if my father asked, I would not say a word. The scars are still on my head today.

El Maismah

Author's interview with El Maismah (aka "Chouk"), female, at Village 5, Soay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 5 February 2001.

After the uprising, the Khmer Rouge separated me from my husband. They sent me and my four children to Wat Daem Chrey to stay with the women and children of the other families. Each meal was just one ladle of gruel. They did not supply any bowls, so we had to use coconut shells or tin cans instead. Those who could not find coconut shells, gourds, or cans had to use their skirts or scarves to hold their food. We broke up coconut frond stems to use for spoons. The gruel had a slightly salty taste. I knew clearly that it was not the taste of true salt, however, but instead it was the taste of a kind of ashes the Khmer Rouge used to for salt.

Twenty days later the Khmer Rouge moved some of us to Wat Kanhchak. When I arrived I met my husband and we stayed there for ten days before they sent us onward. At 8 o'clock one night they called the families who had already been reunited to go into three large boats. My boat held about a hundred passengers. As the boats left the riverbank the rain was pouring down on us. There was no roof on the boat and we had no rubber sheeting to keep us dry. Everyone got soaked to the bone and we shivered with the cold like we were baby animals. I felt so sorry for my four children; they were so small. I took the scarf from my head to cover them, even though I knew that a scarf could do very little to protect them.

It rained all through the night. It was pitch dark so I did not know where we were going. At first light the rain had barely stopped and the boat put ashore at Chheu Theang. Everyone climbed out of the boat onto land and we began walking. My family reached a village called Chitrun [in Sre Prang subdistrict of Dambe district]. We were given permission to live and work alongside the Khmer villagers there. One day when I was free from harvesting rice, I walked off and dug up a wild tuber. I dug up one little bulb. I ate it and was poisoned. I passed out alone right there in the forest.

In late 1978 the Khmer Rouge drove the Cham in Dambe district back to our home villages. I had an older sibling living at Peus village so we went there. Two months later the subdistrict chairman came in one morning to tell my husband, "Angkar proposes that you go help build a house tomorrow along with some other Cham men." I don't know how many other men had their names called to go with my husband. After the subdistrict chief left, I gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Khory. At dawn my husband was given permission to delay his trip because of the birth of my daughter. None of the men who went away that day ever returned home.

Mat El

Author's interview with Mat El (aka El Saroeun), male, age 63, at Pongro village and subdistrict, Chhlong district, Kratie, 20 April 2001.

In 1975 I was a combatant assigned to the logistics office of Region 21. The logistics chairman for Region 21 was named Than. The office was located in Sangke Kaong village, Tbaung Khmum district, Kampong Cham province. One day, probably during October 1975, the office chairman assigned me and another combatant named Long to go get supplies. We went to Svay Khleang village, my birthplace, and the place where my wife and children were living at the time. I arrived at Svay Khleang on the Raya holy day. That night I went out with two of my small children to go fishing. Long stayed at my house to rest. The uprising happened that night. The rebels seized my weapon, an AK, while I was away fishing.

From out at my fishing spot I heard drum beats. I assumed it was another uprising at Koh Phal, knowing that one week earlier there had been this sort of trouble there. At dawn I heard scattered gunfire. I paddled back home and walked into the village. When I got home I saw that there had indeed been an uprising [at Svay Khleang village], and I hid there with my family.

At 3 o'clock the next afternoon the Khmer Rouge entered the village and called for everyone to leave. This was so that Angkar could sweep out the enemy in order that the people could safely return [they said]. They had the people line up. My family, myself and Long ran out to join the line. My grandmother was sick, as were two of her neighbors. They could not walk and so they stayed back at my house.

Then Long and I decided to leave the line in order to show the soldiers our travel permits. Comrade Chan Seng Hong, secretary of

Region 21, had issued our region-wide travel permits. They took our permits and led us to the house of Ta Pha, the district secretary, which was located west of the Prek Cham bridge. When we got to Ta Pha's house, they had us wait outside while a soldier went inside to see Ta Pha. Then a soldier walked us off to the west, saying, "Ta Pha says you should rest at the house of the regional secretary." I knew for certain that there was no house corresponding to the regional echelon in Kroch Chhmar [district].

They sent us to the security office located near the Prek Ta Duong bridge. At the gate a soldier who was escorting us suddenly screamed for us to raise our hands. Then they tied us up tightly, parrot-wing style. They positioned us, one on each side of the gate. An hour later, I saw many of the Cham rebels being led in past us. When they saw me standing there they whispered for me to help them. They thought I had the power to help them. At about 10 o'clock that night, a guard separated Long from me and then I stood through the night there alone. The prisoners kept coming in throughout the whole night, nonstop.

At dawn a guard put me in with the prisoners. The prison was packed with Cham rebels from both Svay Khleang and Koh Phal. I was in there for eight days. At midnight one night about half of the prisoners were called outside. Mine was the last name called, number 500 in the count.

When I walked out, the guards tied everyone into a line with a long thin string. They ordered us to board three large boats that were ready and waiting at the dock. The guards warned us that anyone who broke the string would be killed. We walked forward very carefully, trying not to make a wrong move. Once in the boat I heard the soldiers telling one another that everyone was going to [the headquarters at the] regional level.

At about 3:00 a.m. the three boats set off to the east. Seven guards were posted on my boat. At dawn all three boats stopped at the stream at Rokar Khnol. All seven guards got off to the bank to gather there and eat, but the prisoners got no food. I sat in the bow of the boat. I saw the security chief for Region 21, Yin Sophy, ride up on a motorbike and eat with the guards. Yin Sophy knew me. When he saw me he waved for me to come and eat with him. I did not dare move. A moment later I saw other soldiers arrive with about thirty more Cham prisoners and they put them into the three boats. Most of those thirty were wearing just *sarongs* or a *krama* [around their waists] and they were shirtless. I recognized them as being the residents of Peus, Ampil, Saoy, and Rokar Khnol villages.

After finishing his meal, Yin Sophy and his people boarded the boats. We continued on our journey, turning up into Rokar Khnol stream. After a short distance, the boats put ashore again. Then I saw Huy Ek and Chum Hol, the military commanders of Region 21, ride up on an "Opera" scooter. They both knew me. Huy Ek asked Yin Sophy why I had been arrested. Chum Hol took a piece of paper from his wallet and wrote out a general travel permit. He handed it to me and told me to go find Long and return to my unit.

I never knew anything more about what happened to those boats. I walked from Prek Rokar Khnor back to the Kroch Chhmar security office where Long and I had been held previously. On the way I saw that everything was silent in Svay Khleang village. Some houses had been smashed by artillery. I went to my house to find my grandmother and the other ones who had been sick and could not walk out on the afternoon of the uprising. I could not find them. There was not a soul left in the entire village.

I kept on traveling. When I got to the security office, the guard looked at me with some amazement. He was the same one who had hit me with a whip the day before. I showed him my travel permit and he received it warmly. I asked about Long, but I was to wait one more day before I met him. When we met up, Long told me that he had just been released from a prison at Prek A-Chi. Then we returned to our unit.

After 1979 none of those whom I had seen in the three boats and none of those who I saw when I was at the district security office ever returned.



*Cham Muslims observing supplicatory prayer (du'a)
Photo by David Hawk/Documentation Center of Cambodia Archive*

Chapter 5

Cham Muslims in Cambodia, 1975-1979

After the uprisings in the Cham villages of Koh Phal and Svay Khleang, the Khmer Rouge broke up Cham communities across Cambodia. They had evidently determined that allowing the Cham to continue to live together could lead to further uprisings, so they began to relocate the Cham from their ancestral homes. The Khmer Rouge also began making moves aimed at erasing all signs of Cham identity, such as changing Muslim names, forbidding the use of the Cham language and traditional Cham dress, and mandating the eating of pork, along with other measures apparently designed to eliminate Islam.

A week after the Cham rebellions of 1975, the Khmer Rouge held mandatory meetings across Kroch Chhmar, berating and intimidating Cham Muslims. The Cham in the other districts of Kampong Cham, Kratie and Kampong Thom provinces were subjected to similar treatment. For example, Sa Zain, a former villager in Stung Trang district (across the river from Kroch Chhmar), reported that the Khmer Rouge threatened villagers there, just as they had in their meetings in Kroch Chhmar. He reported, "At the meeting sites, soldiers were standing ready all around with all kinds of weapons, large and small. They were ready to fight. If anyone had dared to open his or her mouth in opposition to the Khmer Rouge, even slightly, they would surely have been shot to pieces."⁸⁷

Math Sren, who was in Kang Meas district at the time, said, "In 1975 I heard about the Cham rebellion in Koh Phal village that was brought on by the Khmer Rouge's announcement that the [Muslim] villagers would be forced to eat pork. Soon after, Khmer Rouge representatives came to my village [Pongro Village] and called a meeting. During the meeting they warned us not to attempt to do anything [against them], as the villagers of Koh Phal had done. Otherwise all the people would be shot down [just like they had been at Koh Phal]."⁸⁸ Older members of Muslim communities in districts all across Region 21 report that the Khmer Rouge convened similar meetings after the rebellions and issued similar warnings to them as well.

These meetings were clearly held in response to the uprisings at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang because witnesses who attended them reported that the Khmer Rouge cadres who conducted the meetings often referred to the Cham rebellions elsewhere in the country. Immediately after such a meeting was convened in a given location, the Khmer Rouge would

evacuate the Cham from their homes. A villager in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, Talib Mas, reported that the Khmer Rouge held a meeting in her village of Khsach Praches Kandal in late 1975, just after the rebellions. She also remembered that soldiers surrounded them along the road. They coerced the women to cut their hair by asking, "Who here will cut hair?" She remembered that they had no choice but to answer, "We volunteer to cut it ourselves," and immediately after this the names of a large number of villagers were called to be evacuated from the village. Her family and ten other family members were sent to Kroch Chhmar village, where they lived for two months before being sent to Kratie province.⁸⁹

This wave of evacuations in 1975-1976 was carried out under the direction of the central party leadership, apparently as a direct response to the events of the Cham rebellions in Kroch Chhmar in September and October 1975. The documentary evidence for such a claim includes a communiqué that was written by a cadre named Chhon; it dates to approximately two months after the Cham rebellions in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang (30 November 1975). It was addressed to Pol Pot himself, secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), with copies sent to Nuon Chea, chairman of the Assembly of Democratic Kampuchea and the deputy secretary of the CPK. It was also sent to two other cadres, Doeun and Yem. It describes the implementation of orders that were stated to have come from the Party Center to evacuate 50,000 Cham, as well as plans to evacuate 100,000 more from Kroch Chhmar district, Peam Chileang district and Chhlong district to take them away to the North and Northwest Zones.⁹⁰

The Khmer Rouge allowed ten to twenty families to remain in each Cham-majority village that was being evacuated at this time. These were, in general, the families of people who had clearly supported the movement, such as the former chairmen of village cooperatives. They also included some village, subdistrict and district cadres who had specialized skills or abilities that could serve the interests of the cooperatives, such as being fisherman or construction workers, along with those who had formerly been among the very poorest members of each village.

All across Kroch Chhmar district, before they carried out such an evacuation, the Khmer Rouge would announce that the Cham were being sent to Battambang because that was an exceptionally fertile spot for farming rice. Some Cham even volunteered to leave their homes when they heard this. When they got to Stung Trang, just across the Mekong River in the North Zone, however, they were split into smaller groups of four to five families each. These groups were then sent to live with Khmer

families in that district or in other locations, often in Kratie or Kampong Thom provinces.

Any family that had already lost the head of the household (the husband or father) was sent to another location in Kroch Chhmar district. A large number of the former residents of Koh Phal and Svay Khleang villages had already been sent to Dambe district, where a particularly deadly strain of malaria raged.

Even with these evacuations carried out, the Khmer Rouge leadership still considered the Cham to be an enemy and a viable threat. There is some documentary evidence for this. For example, in April 1976, Ke Pauk, the secretary of the North Zone, sent a report to Pol Pot on the topic of the "enemies" of the revolution. Copies of the report were also addressed to Nuon Chea (see above) and Khieu Samphan. The report specifies these "enemies" as being the following: former Lon Nol soldiers, some former chairmen of cooperatives who had served under the older smaller-scale system, and the entire Cham race.⁹¹ The Khmer Rouge were on edge about Cham populations across Cambodia, as indicated by a memorandum of a meeting held for military commanders, deputy division commanders, and the commanders of independent regiments dated 16 September 1976. This memorandum shows that Comrade Pin, commander of the 703rd Division, reported to the group on the activities of the Cham at Sre Cham Village (Khan Prey Nup, Sihanoukville) stating, "They are sharpening their knives in preparation to revolt."⁹²

Signs of religious difference made the Cham Muslims, who were now minorities in the communities to which they had been evacuated, potential targets. Eating pork is forbidden by Islamic law; the Khmer Rouge expressly ordered Cham Muslims to eat it. Those who refused to do so were arrested, according to countless oral testimonies. A document dating to 1977, coming from the leadership of the party committee in Battambang, reported on the problems caused by the Cham newly evacuated to the area from Phnom Penh who were resisting orders by refusing to eat pork. The document reads, "To address this situation, we have formulated a plan; specifically, we will investigate their [Cham Muslim] networks and identify their leaders for extermination."⁹³ Samas Karim was one Cham Muslim who was arrested and sent to the notorious facility in Phnom Penh, S-21 (Tuol Sleng Prison), for his refusal to eat pork. In his confession to his captors, Samas Karim stated his crime, "[I was] unhappy with Angkar about having to eat food against my custom [i.e., eating pork]. I complained that I wanted to eat separately with my ethnic group." Prison records indicate that Samas Karim was executed on 27 May 1976.⁹⁴

Written records as well as oral testimony point to a conclusion that in 1977 the Khmer Rouge had launched a new policy, which was to eliminate the Cham from Cambodia. One of the witnesses for this claim is the present-day national Islamic authority, Sos Kamry (Kamaruddin bin Yusof). Sos Kamry explained that the Khmer Rouge did not know he was a Cham and so they had appointed him to look after four hundred children in Cheyo subdistrict, Chamkar Leu district, Kampong Cham. One day during 1977, according to his own account, he was called to a meeting in Bos Khnor village in Chamkar Leu district. The agenda for the meeting was to specify a plan called "The Plan to Smash the Enemy." Kamry reported that during the meeting he heard the chairman declare, "The enemies of the revolution are many, but our biggest enemies are the Cham. So the Plan calls for the destruction of all the Cham people before 1980." The next day Kamry said that he read an official document that had been circulated by the Khmer Rouge under the title, "The Plan for Progressive Cooperatives" ("*phenkar sahakor choeunloeun*"). He reported that a statement in the document read, "Our immediate enemies are the Cham. We must smash them all before 1980."⁹⁵

The Khmer Rouge forces of the Southwest and Central Zones attacked the Khmer Rouge forces that were in the East Zone in 1977, allegedly in order to counter Vietnamese influence in the region. In 1978 there was an announcement that the Cham were now "liberated" from oppression in the region of Kampong Cham, as reported by many survivors of these events. Cham Muslims were now instructed to return to their home villages from the locations to which they had been evacuated in 1975, just after the rebellions at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang. Cham Muslims returned to Kroch Chhmar in 1978 as they were told to do, many in fact believing that their situation would now improve. Right after this, however, waves of killings of Cham Muslims began, as if according to a plan that had already been set in place.

In 1978 Cham Muslims returned to the East Zone, where they regrouped in villages and now once again formed concentrated populations. There had already been forced migration into the region by former residents of Phnom Penh and elsewhere. As the Cham Muslims arrived back in the East Zone to locations at or near their former villages, the Khmer Rouge began a new wave of evacuations in Region 21. This time, entire Cham communities were taken away to be killed. Typically, this occurred with the murder of groups of men first, with their families to follow. The ruse the Khmer Rouge employed in numerous locations to implement this was to call Cham Muslim men out from their communities for group labor. In Kroch Chhmar and Stung Trang districts in the East Zone, they were told that they were going to go build houses for new

settlements. In Kampong Siem and Kang Meas districts in the East Zone, Cham adult males were told they were going to clear bamboo; allegedly they were going to be sent out to go to Phnom Chi in Kampong Thom province. These groups of men were then killed. When the men were gone, the Khmer Rouge took their families who had been left behind in the villages or units away for killing as well. The eyewitness accounts to follow in this chapter describe many instances of such events.

Almost no Cham Muslim male who was called to this mass draft in 1978 could escape it. A few men who were targeted nevertheless managed to survive. Among those who remained were some village and subdistrict officials as well as a few who were seen to possess a special expertise or particular skill that was of use to their non-Cham cooperatives. Such skills could include fishing or being a blacksmith, traditional vocations of the Cham. Some others survived because, on hearing rumors about this action, they ran away to hide in the forest. A few Cham, but only very few, survived because of the special sympathy of the leaders of their village or cooperative, for example, those whose wives had just given birth.

In one account that comes from Svay Khleang, a villager named Sauv Nhit, who was a friend of a cooperative chairman, saw a handwritten letter sent from the leadership of Region 21. In his words, the letter he saw ordered local officials to "Propose that the cooperative chairman gather up all the believers in Islam." Four or five days later the arrests of Cham in the cooperative began, under the ruse that all the men were to go build houses at Veal Khsoh Khyol and the women were told they would follow along later to live in those houses. Sauv Nhit said that he warned four or five Cham friends to escape before they were taken away, but he says that no one he knew who was called ever got away.⁹⁶

Firsthand testimony indicates that some of the Cham who were evacuated out of Kroch Chhmar in this way were taken to be killed at grave pits in valleys among the hills at Boeng Deng (also called Boeng Prachaut). Others were dragged into the river to drown, as occurred at Trea Village according to eyewitness accounts. Toulas Musa, who was a fisherman at Trea Village at the time, said he saw Cham prisoners killed in this way: "Before they killed them, the Khmer Rouge would blast out revolutionary songs over their loudspeaker. One time one of the victims started to run off. They shot his head right off his body."⁹⁷

In 1978 women in communities across Kroch Chhmar whose male family members were already gone were lured out by being told they would join the men. These women and their young children were killed as

well. Yep El was the driver of a horse cart that was allegedly to transport them to meet their husbands and fathers in the new houses they supposedly had built. He recalled that two days after the men left, the women and families were told to follow. It did not seem like a trick to them at first, Yep El explained, because the Khmer Rouge told each of the women that her husband wanted her to bring his clothes along, which he had forgotten. Yep El stated,

I took all the Cham women and children from Ampil and Saoy villages to assemble at Wat Peus to await boats to take them on from there. They were all very happy because they had heard that the new place where they would live with their husbands had plenty of food. The Khmer Rouge really paid close attention to them. When they got to the pagoda the Khmer Rouge handed out roasted ears of corn, something the likes of which we had never seen before.

Yep El said that he felt like he wanted to take his own wife and family along too, but that would not be allowed because he was already a transport specialist.⁹⁸ There are no reports of these Cham people ever being seen again, and there are many grave pits in precisely this location.

Within the same month that these killings began, according to survivors' testimony, the Khmer Rouge also attempted to identify the Cham Muslims who were serving in the youth corps, called "mobile units" (*kang chalat*). One eyewitness account comes from Saleh Ahmat, who lived Chumnik Village in Kroch Chhmar district. He was assigned to work in the economics office of the subdistrict. He reported that in late 1978 he drove a motorcycle for the district secretary, who did not know how to ride a motorcycle, to a meeting in Sandan district of Kampong Thom. Since Saleh was not to participate in the meeting, he sat outside to wait. He said that while he waited he could still see the district secretaries of the East and Central Zones inside the meeting. He could also hear what was said during the meeting because they were using a public address system inside. At one point during the meeting, Ke Pauk, who was secretary of the Central Zone (representatives of which had just come to control the East Zone in a violent takeover), asked the district secretary of Kroch Chhmar: "The plan set out by the Party, what percentage has been completed?" Saleh says that Ke Pauk then added in clarification, "You must destroy the Cham [in the] mobile forces first; they are all traitors."⁹⁹

In 1978-1979, the Khmer Rouge cadres had great difficulty selecting out the Cham Muslim youth from within their mobile units. Before this time young Cham people had never been separated out from the rest of the youths who were ethnic Khmers. In addition, the longstanding policy of the Khmer Rouge to change Cham names to Khmer names in those

units now made it hard to determine who had actually first entered the group as a Cham. Some villagers in the cooperatives, in contrast, had never changed their distinctive Cham Muslim names.

In order discern who was really a Cham from among the young people in the mobile units, the Khmer Rouge would call a meeting for all the members of any group they suspected included a Cham. During the meeting the Khmer Rouge cadres would pose questions to each of the young people about his or her identity, including asking their ethnicity. After everyone had replied, those who had answered that they were Cham were separated out. They would then be killed, according to some reports. Some young Cham people escaped because they lied about their ethnicity and claimed to be Khmer. The material to follow includes statements made by several survivors of an event in Kroch Chhmar during which young people who had been taken out of work groups were interrogated in this way. Those among the groups of children and adolescent girls who let it be known they were of Cham descent were stripped and killed; some were raped.

Chhum Kea

Author's interview with Chhum Kea, male, age 51, at Village 4, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 1 May 2001.

I was born in Koh Luong Village, Koh Samrong subdistrict, Kampong Siem district, Kampong Cham. In 1973 the Khmer Rouge attacked and took control of the village. They began driving the people away. My family, like others, was sent all the way to Kroch Chhmar to live. My family was assigned to Khsach Praches Kraom Village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district. Every day I worked in the fields as ordered by the village chief. I saw that one abandoned house in the village was being used as a prison. During the daytime the prisoners were taken to work in the fields; they were kept under guard at all times. In the afternoon they went back to the prison. The way I understand it, that prison was a branch of the big prison at Prek Ta Duong. The security cadres were not permanently stationed there. Every now and then I would see Phet, the district security chief, show up there. After 1979 I went back to that village once and saw many grave sites in the bamboo groves along the river bank.

In 1975 I heard that the Cham at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang had revolted against the Khmer Rouge. Some days later the subdistrict secretary, who was named Chhean, called all of the Cham living in neighboring villages, including Khsach Praches Kandal, to a meeting. I was assigned by the village chairman to stand guard at that meeting.

Chhean punished all the Cham by making them squat there, half-standing, half-sitting, for many hours.

The following day a large number of Cham in the village were sent away. At this same time, fifteen Cham families from Svay Khleang village were dispersed into my village and into others close by. I observed that they were all families who had no male heads of household, no husbands or fathers, because they had been killed during the revolts.

From that time on the Cham families lived along with the [ethnic] Khmer people under the pressure of the Khmer Rouge. In 1978 they selected out all the Cham families for killing. At first they rounded up the men, telling them to go build houses in a new village. About a week after that, the Khmer Rouge invited the women and children to go to this new village, and then they killed them too. After that almost no more Cham remained. Only one old Cham lady named Sok survived. She escaped because she hid her identity from the Khmer Rouge. Sok was taken away from Svay Khleang. Her husband had been killed in the revolt. Today Sok lives in Svay Khleang Village.

Muhammad No

Author's interview with Muhammad No, male, age 58, at Trea 2 Village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 24 April 2001.

In 1970 the Khmer Rouge came and took control of my village [Phum Trea]. One day during September 1973 the Khmer Rouge announced that there were five people present in the village who had been assigned by Lon Nol to carry out counter-revolutionary activities. They did not name the five.

Soon afterwards, district security cadre On came to arrest a villager named Taikang Him ["Gentleman Ibrahim"]. Taikang Him sold noodle soup. Him ran from his house when On arrived. On raised his gun and fired at Taikang Him, but he missed. Seeing this happen, a villager ran off and beat the drum in the *surao* [space for public prayer]. It was the Cham custom that whenever a drumbeat was heard at other than prayer hour, the drum signaled an emergency. More than a hundred villagers met at the *surao*. After they learned what had happened, they marched toward the subdistrict headquarters. The demonstrators burned the [Trea] subdistrict economics office in Khsae Luos Village, then they went back to their homes.

Two or three hours passed before security cadre On brought a large

group of his men by truck into Trea Village. When they arrived they grabbed anyone they could find who had participated in the demonstration. They arrested about ten men. I remember four of their names: Taikang Him, Aung Mat, Set Ly, and Aung Man. The other participants fled into the forest. Later I heard that those protestors had reached Kampong Cham city, which was still under Lon Nol control then. In late 1973 the district security forces came back to the village to arrest eight more people. Not one of these eight had done anything wrong.

A year later, during late 1974, district security forces returned to arrest three religious leaders: Tuon Yakaub, Imam Sulaiman, and Tuon Ibrahim. All three were well-known throughout the country. In 1975, Chhean, a high-ranking cadre from Region 21, led many of his forces into the village to make more arrests. About twenty people were taken away in boats.¹⁰⁰ The group of twenty was made up of students and members of the Islamic advisory council under the three leaders named above.

Several months later, I heard that the Cham at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang had rebelled. Many soldiers with rank in the Region 21 and Kroch Chhmar district echelons came [to Trea Village] to hold a meeting [after that]. It was a tense meeting because a woman who had just given birth was forced to attend. I did not go because I was assigned to the Trea subdistrict economics office and so I was away at work that day.

After the meeting, about seventy percent of the villagers were evacuated to Stung Trang district. Ta Soeu, the deputy secretary of Kroch Chhmar (born in Koh Chrouk Village), who had been a teacher before 1970, said that the number evacuated was even more than originally planned. When villagers returned home after 1979, I saw that a great number had disappeared during the Khmer Rouge years.

Soem El

Author's interview with Soem El, male, age 55, at Chumnik Village, Chumnik subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 19 December 2000.

My village is Chumnik. In 1970 the Khmer Rouge took control of my village in the name of the National Unification Front. At first they did nothing to impact the people negatively, or to interfere with their occupations or their Islamic faith.

In 1974 they changed their policies. First they began arresting our Islamic leaders. They arrested one *tuon* and five members of the *hakim* committee.¹⁰¹ All five disappeared. One, Tuon Muhammad Kachi bin

Musa, was well-known all throughout the country. He had married at the age of 18, and had taught since age 19 until 1973. In 1973 Sos Man (father of H.E. Math Ly) appointed him as director of Islam for a short time before he was arrested. One other *tuon*, Fadil bin Muhammad Kachi, was shot and killed by the Khmer Rouge inside the village. Some villagers fled.

Then the revolts happened at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang. The Khmer Rouge grew very hot. They called another meeting and warned us that if anyone dared resist them like what had happened at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang, they would be smashed. We kept our heads down and did not dare say a word. After the meeting about half the village was evacuated to Kampong Thom. My family was sent there too.

In 1979 my family and the others who had formerly been evacuated returned to our homes. Only about half had survived; the rest had disappeared. Among them were Islamic leaders: Ahmad bin Yakub, who was killed in Kampong Thom; Ahmad bin Ayyub, who starved to death in Kampong Thom; and Abdul Ghani bin Saleh, Ismail bin Ibrahim, and Ibrahim bin Sulaiman, whose causes and places of death are still unknown.

Soem Sen

Author's interview with Soem Sen, male, age 69, at Trea 1 Village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 30 April 2001.

One day, perhaps during September 1975, the chairman of the cooperative assigned me to go fishing along with twenty-four other villagers. We left to fish the waters of the Mekong.

At noon we met together for prayer in our boats. While we were at prayer three boats filled with soldiers suddenly came in from the east. They pointed their guns at us while we prayed. One shouted, "All this praying, what is it that you want from it anyway? I'll shoot you all right now." We stopped in the middle of our prayers, unfinished, all except for my friend Mat, who continued undeterred at prayer. Mat was born in Koh Phal Village, but had married a girl from Trea Village. They aimed their guns at Mat, but Mat continued until he had finished. Fortunately the Khmer Rouge did nothing, and moved on.

Several days later the Khmer Rouge came into Trea Village and arrested the *tuon*, the *me chum-ah* [clerical aides] and many of the well-educated residents. Then they called a meeting and threatened us in every way they could think of because of the events at Koh Phal and Svay

Khleang. At the end of the meeting they recorded the names of some of the villagers on a list and told us that those on the list would be evacuated to Battambang the next morning. Some whose names did not appear on the original list insisted that their names be added because they had heard Battambang was fertile and comfortable. The Khmer Rouge refused to add their names. The next morning everyone was evacuated except those who had not been put on the list to go. My family was one of those left behind.

In 1979 survivors told me that they had been lied to and in fact they had been taken to Kampong Thom, where there was much starvation.

Saleh Ahmad

Author's interview with Saleh Ahmad, male, age 54, at Chumnik Village, Chumnik subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 1 May 2001.

In 1974 the Khmer Rouge arrested four or five Islamic leaders in the village [Chumnik]. Among them was Ta Sa (called Ta Salut) and Yusos (who was the son of Ta Salut). The nationally-renowned *tuon*, Haji Muhammad Kachi, was also among them. They all disappeared forever.

Later the Khmer Rouge came to arrest Aung Mat in his home. Aung Mat escaped before they reached his house. The cadres grew hot when they were not able to make the arrest, and so they shot and killed three members of Aung Mat's family. They eventually did manage to arrest Aung Mat. In early 1975 they announced, "Here in Chumnik Village there are hidden partisans." They arrested fifty people who were so accused. As I saw it, there had never been any suspicion whatsoever that any of those arrested had really been counter-revolutionaries.

In late 1975 I heard that the Cham at Svay Khleang and Koh Phal had revolted. Two weeks after that, at 6 o'clock one morning, the Khmer Rouge called all of us villagers to a meeting. Even the sick and the mentally incapable had to go. There were so many that they had to break us into two groups to meet at two sites. While I was walking to the meeting I saw tens of armed Khmer Rouge soldiers surrounding the site. In the meeting they cursed and insulted us in every way. No one argued.

Two weeks later they made a new plan to evacuate the village. More than a thousand families lived there. Almost all were moved out. Only thirty families were left behind, all of whom were families of craftsmen, mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, and fishermen. I was a blacksmith so my family stayed on in the village.

In 1978 the Cham survivors in the village were taken away to be killed under the guise that they were being “evacuated.” They did not know what was happening to them. They got into one boat and another boat took their belongings. The boats left at dawn, heading west. In the afternoon I saw the boat with their belongings return to the village. I wondered why they boat was still full. That night the Khmer Rouge ransacked the belongings and burned them at the dock. I was the sole survivor because I did not board the boat. I hid my Cham identity.

Karim Ahmad

Author's interview with Karim Ahmad, male, age 47, at Tuol Sambat Village, Peus 2 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 1 May 2001.

Just after the Cham revolts at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang, the Khmer Rouge called the people of Peus village to a meeting. In that meeting they cursed and insulted us without reason, and they warned us not to imitate Koh Phal and Svay Khleang.

Three or four months after that, they came again for a second meeting. They called for some villagers to stand up and asked them in front of everyone, “Are you all committed to Angkar yet or aren't you?” Even though no one was happy at all, in order to stay alive they could not say so. At the end of the meeting they indicated the names of those of us to be evacuated, to be scattered into small groups in all directions. Only fifteen families stayed on in the village. My family was one of them. Those who were not evacuated were the poorest families in the whole village.

San Teimnah

Author's interview with San Teimnah, female, age 74, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 5 April 2004.

I was born here in this village. It is called Svay Khleang Village. In the Pol Pot years the name was changed to Village 5. That name is still used today. The Cham have always called it Prek Kaut. The different names used for the village among the Khmer and the Cham have been customary since the time of our grandparents. When I was a child the people here strictly observed the traditions and culture [of the Cham] since we felt that if we lost those two things we would lose our entire race. That explains why some people [in the past] have taken the extremist position that they would not even send their children to the general [government] education schools, since they feared that to send them would not be maintaining ethnic purity.

In the Sangkum Reastr Niyum years, my village had been home to thousands of families. The Khmer Rouge killed off almost all of them. Take for instance, my own family. They killed my parents, two children, two grandchildren and all of my siblings. My husband died of illness in 1974. My father was arrested in 1973 and sent to the Kroch Chhmar security office. I went to visit him there, but they would not let me meet him. My son Musa was taken from us after the rebellion and disappeared. My daughter Rofiah and her husband and two children were killed for some unknown reason. My village [Svay Khleang] and Koh Phal suffered more than the rest because we rebelled against the Khmer Rouge. Most of those who live here today are newcomers.

In the old days our Khmer neighbors and the Cham villagers respected one another very much. Whenever there was required work to do we helped one another with all of our hearts. But then Pol Pot tried to make the Cham and the Khmer hate one another even to the extent of killing each other. The Cham killed the subdistrict leader [during the uprising at Svay Khleang], and the Khmer Rouge killed countless hundreds of us. The villagers, both the men and the women, joined in the uprising of their own free will because we were all going to be killed off anyway.

During the revolt, the men went to fight and the women gathered to cook. I saw one woman named Teikha hit by gunfire. The Khmer Rouge dumped her body into a well. When I returned home in 1979 almost all the wells in the village held skeletal remains.

As the rebellion was being defeated by the Khmer Rouge, there was chaos because they were shooting down villagers left and right. Then they ran us out of the village and separated the men from the women. My oldest son Musa was taken from me and he disappeared forever. I heard rumors that my boy was killed during 1978 while he was searching for me. At the end [of the uprising] all the women were sent to a pagoda in Kroch Chhmar village.

One month afterwards they removed my family and told us we were being sent to Battambang, a good place to grow rice. But when the truck got to Sre Veal Village [Stung Trang district of Kampong Cham], they threw my family out. Then a cart came and took us to Saupheas. Village We were made to live below the house of a Khmer family. Other Cham families were brought there at that time. Later the Khmer Rouge built little huts outside the village for us Cham. The Khmer Rouge dug into minute details when they asked about my personal history, all the way from my grandparents down to me. They said that if I had any relatives who had

served the Lon Nol regime, I must report that so Angkar could send them or us to a comfortable place.

I knew all their tricks. I told them [the Khmer Rouge cadres] that my family was very poor. I said we made a living fishing on a boat and that we could barely take care of ourselves. The interrogator who was taking down my history told me that my profile should really be recorded as being “middle-level farmers” in order to be accurate. But I protested this, saying that my parents and I were so poor that we had no clothes for our children and they were running naked, we could not make any money, so Angkar should please consider the facts. (Actually, after the revolt the Khmer Rouge had not permitted anyone to bring any of their clothes along from their houses.) They questioned us like this three times and I stuck to my story. Some Cham from Trea village answered truthfully that before they had been well-off, had elephants or cattle. Some said they had been *tuons* or *hakims*. The Khmer Rouge gathered them up and killed their entire families in order to destroy their bloodlines.

Very little food was given to the Cham and there were deaths from starvation [in Saupheas Village]. The Khmer from Phnom Penh were in the same position, but the Khmer base (local) people had enough to eat. The practice of religion was strictly forbidden. They cut the hair of the women who had not already done so themselves. They were always announcing, “You all have the same blood, Khmer blood, so there is no need for separate eating, dress, or language.” When we had left our village, I smuggled out along with me one Qur-an which I had hidden in every way I could think of. If I had not hidden it well they would have arrested me and killed me.

At first I was assigned to fell tall trees. I worked at this with the Khmer who had been evacuated from Phnom Penh. Some died because they did not know how to perform such work properly and trees would fall down on top of them. Their bodies were left as they lay. It was only luck that I did not get killed too.

Then the Khmer Rouge assigned me and eight other Cham to raise pigs. No Khmer people were assigned to that duty. When the unit chief told me to do that, I objected, claiming that I was afraid of these animals. I did not dare to state the truth, which involved Islam. But he forced me and threatened that if I refused, the upper echelons of Angkar would send me off for study. So I did as I was told.

They forced me to eat pork. I said that the pork was for the collective use. I claimed that I had never eaten meat, beef, poultry or fish since

childhood. I claimed that if I ate meat I would lose my strength to work. One day a cadre brought a piece of cooked pork to the person next to me and said it was beef. He chewed a bite. He knew it was not beef, but forced himself to hold it in his mouth until the cadre walked away. Then he spit it out and buried it with his feet.

The next day a pig died in the pen that I had been charged with tending. The Khmer Rouge boiled the meat and gave a big bowl to those tending the swine. They stood and watched at the table. No one could refuse. When I threw up, they thought that I really was not able to eat meat. Later they never gave me meat, but my children could not avoid it. That they did not force me to eat pork did not mean they gave me different food from the others when pork soup was the meal, as it commonly was for five or six days at a stretch. One day I asked the cook for salt and I was told the salt ration was all in the pork soup already. I was swollen from lack of salt.

Once they lied to me that they were taking my child away to study. In fact they sent my child to dig, tend cattle and fertilize the fields. When I returned to my home village in 1979, I had lost my two children forever. My son Musa disappeared after the rebellion. My daughter Rofiah and her husband and her two children, all of whom had lived in the neighboring village of Khpop, had been killed for unknown reasons.

Ly Ysa

Author's interview with Ly Ysa, male, age 65, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 22 April 2001.

In 1970 the Khmer Rouge took control over Saoy village and propagandized to the people, "Help one another fight so that Samdech Oeuv [Sihanouk] can come back home [from exile]." The people were happy to hear that because we had appealed for Prince Sihanouk's return.

In 1973 the situation changed. The Khmer Rouge imprisoned people for no reason. Not only that, they divided us up by social classes. Anyone who had had an easy life became a target for the accusation of being "counter-revolutionary." The people lost hope and were disappointed that Prince Sihanouk would probably not return. That year I was assigned to be a village chairman. When they met to appoint me, I knew nothing about this in advance. I was harvesting rice for hire at Boeng Ket in Stung Trang district. When I came home one day, the former village chief Haroun told me that Angkar had assigned me to be the new village chairman. In fact I was not well-suited to the task since I was illiterate.

In 1974 the arrests increased everywhere, especially the arrests of people who owned property and those who had an education. Some people began to play crazy or pretend to be deaf or dumb. In 1975 it got even worse and people were arrested right and left without regard to who they actually were. Gatherings of more than two people were forbidden, regardless of whether they were close friends or whatnot. The amount of food given out was fixed, and the amount depended on the size of the family. This amount was never enough. In 1975 they restricted religion ever more heavily.

Because of their dissatisfaction with the actions of the Khmer Rouge, The Cham in Koh Phal revolted. The revolt was swiftly and viciously suppressed. After that the Khmer Rouge hated the Cham even more. One week after the revolt, every single villager was called to a meeting [in Peus]. Even one old lady who had been caring for a child who was seriously ill, was forced to attend the meeting. I heard that some big shot had come in from Region 21. They insulted us, using intimidating language like, "All you 'white heads' what is it you want? Do you want what they got at Koh Phal?" This name-calling carried two meanings. One insinuated that they supported the Khmer Sar [the enemy movement called the White Khmer]; the other was a reference to our custom of the men wearing white skull caps for prayer. No one dared stand up and talk back to them.

Finally they pulled their trick of staging an evacuation of the people. They asked us, "Who all wants to go to Battambang?" Seeing that life in our village had become too terrifying, almost everyone raised their hands. When the meeting ended we returned to our homes to pack for the journey to Battambang.

Two or three days later hundreds of families were sent away, but they did not go to Battambang. They went to Kampong Thom instead. Only my family and about twenty other families were left to stay in our village.

San Maisam

Author's interview with San Maisam, female, age 80, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 3 February 2001 and 7 March 2001.

One morning during 1975 the Khmer Rouge called the villagers of Svay Khleang to a meeting. They said they "proposed" to remove thirty of us. At noon they called another meeting and said that Angkar now proposed taking sixty. In the afternoon they called a third meeting and

said Angkar wanted every last one of us to go. The people were upset by this and they started sharpening their knives and swords to confront the Khmer Rouge.

At 7 o'clock that evening the soldiers set up a battle line and fired into the village. Soon after that they entered the village. When they got to my house a soldier pointed a gun at me and ordered me to get down from the house. I was lying by the fire since I had recently given birth. I carried my baby with me and my other little children came along with me. My husband and two older children were taken from me. The soldiers did not let me take any belongings; even a little rice to make gruel for the baby was forbidden. Along the way I saw the village youth fighting the Khmer Rouge and dying along the road.

That night they put me in a Buddhist pagoda at Kroch Chhmar village and told me to stay there with the other women. I did not see my husband and two children and I have yet to see them. My baby just kept crying and begging to go home. It was hard on me. I felt sorry for the child who had nothing at all to eat. Throughout the whole month I was there, we only got one scoop of gruel per meal.

After that my family was sent to Khsach Praches Leu. At the same time other families were sent to neighboring villages, like Khsach Praches Kandal, Khsach Praches Kraom and Kroch Chhmar. My family was made to live with a Khmer family who owned the house. I felt bad for the owners because I had many children. Every evening I cried, thinking of my husband.

Eight months later the Khmer Rouge gave my family a separate house. It was a little hut on the river bank at Khsach Praches Leu Village. I worked at farming duties in a cooperative along with everyone else. Those whose work was not up to snuff were killed. I was always worried, remembering that I was Cham and hearing the other people tell me, "Auntie, you are a depositee [*pracheachuon phanhae*]. Soon they will take you away. Work hard and don't even think about home."

In 1977 I saw the Khmer Rouge take many Vietnamese living in the village and in nearby villages and kill them. Some of the Vietnamese drank poison and killed themselves first. I figured that when they had taken all of the Vietnamese, they would come for me since I was Cham and held the same status [according to the Khmer Rouge] as the Vietnamese and candidate people.¹⁰²

That year the entire population was starving. There was no food.

Sometimes they boiled corn and each person got ten kernels per meal. My children picked up discarded pieces of cane, left over after the sugar-making, chewing out some of the remaining sweetness. Sometimes they stole eggplant in the orchards. Once I went to the edge of the water near the house. I saw a corpse floating by, and some cane and a couple of eggplants were tied around its neck. Then I absolutely forbade my children under any circumstances, no matter how hungry they were, to walk around and take things to eat. I told them just to bear their hunger.

One day in 1978 the Khmer Rouge called all the Cham in every village in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict to meet at a pagoda in Khsach Praches Leu. They were to wait for boats to take them to new places to live. Our family was included in this call. After one full day of waiting, we had still not seen any boats.

At sunset a cadre Kuong from Kroch Chhmar came to check on the Cham who were assembled there. I knew Kuong from earlier days. He saw me and falsely reported to a guard that my family was Khmer. After Kuong had left a guard came up to me and said, "Angkar does not allow Grandmother to go. Grandmother is Khmer." Then he added, "Out of the eighty families who are here, this grandmother's family is the only one that I'm removing [from the group]." The guard led us away to hand us over to a nearby villager named Ta Ngin. That night we stayed in comfort with Ta Ngin while the other families slept on mats and soaked in the fog that covered the pagoda grounds.

At 7 o'clock the next morning, two large boats arrived and anchored in front of the pagoda. I had seen these two boats during the previous several days, cruising up and down the river. The guards called the people together and put them aboard the boats. Some carried bags of clothes and utensils. Others carried children or led them by the hand. When the guards got to the bows of the boats, they ordered everyone to put all of their baggage into piles and to get on the boats. When everyone was on board, the boats pulled away. After leaving the bank a guard fired two or three rounds into the air. I just stood and stared as the boats crossed over to the far side of the river and anchored at a little village called Boeng Prachaut.

After 1979 no one from those eighty families was known to have returned home. I guess they all must have been killed at Boeng Prachaut Village because there are many grave pits there.

Mat Saren

Author's interview with Mat Saren, male, age 77, at Pongro village ("Svay Ta Hen"), Rokakoy subdistrict, Kang Meas district, Kampong Cham, 1 May 2004.

During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era I was a fisherman. Most of the people in my village shared that occupation. Fishing had been our heritage from the time of our ancestors. We were not that involved in agriculture at all, since during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum years the waters were all still abundant with fish. The Khmer people did the farming. The Cham sold or bartered their fish catch for the harvest from the fields of the Khmer people. Today most Khmer have an easier life because their crops bring better prices, while the waters have far fewer fish. Now, when the Cham want to turn to farming it is too late because there is no uncultivated land left for them.

Before the Khmer Rouge years my village had about 200 families. The Khmer Rouge almost wiped us all out. Some of the members of about 20 families survived the killing. Because of marriages and new people coming in from outside, today the population has risen back to about 100 families.

In 1971 the Khmer Rouge army and the Lon Nol forces often fought back and forth to control our village. It became so difficult that the villagers could no longer live there. They took refuge at Ta Nuong Village, also a Cham village, on the opposite side of the Mekong River. The Khmer Rouge controlled Ta Nuong village completely. My wife and I and our five children fled there.

In 1974 the Khmer Rouge took firm control of my home village and the Lon Nol troops had no chance of taking it back again. All of the villagers returned with hope in their hearts that they would now live on forever in peace. The Khmer Rouge organized the people to work in solidarity groups. This meant there would be collective farming of land that was still owned by individuals, with the harvests individually owned as well. It was a sort of a system of mutual assistance. We were satisfied with that.

In 1975 they evacuated all the villagers from my village. They scattered us throughout the Khmer villages of the subdistrict. My family was sent to live in a new village at that time. We were told to live in the space under the raised Khmer houses. The Khmer homeowners held the rights to their house space that was enclosed above us. This forced relocation and dispersal of the Cham population was carried out because the Cham at Koh Phal had revolted after the Khmer Rouge had ordered

them to eat pork. The Khmer Rouge worried that the Cham would rebel again, so they moved us out. They put the Cham into the new locations so that they would be in groups, each group with one, two, or three Cham [families]. This was all still when [we were] under the solidarity group system.

In 1976 they began communal dining. Then they forced the Cham to eat pork. Whoever refused was taken off and killed. Speaking the Cham language and traditional [Cham] dress and observance of Islam were all forbidden. They had already collected our traditional clothing. They called us "Khmer Thmei" [the "New Khmer" people]. They assigned me to fish since the other [ethnic Khmer] people in my cooperative had no expertise in fishing. My children were sent off to the mobile labor unit and children's unit.

In 1978 they began to kill off the Cham people. This time the killing was carried out publicly, not done secretly like before. The killing was known to the Khmer people wherever it was carried out, and they whispered the news to us. They killed the Cham in every village in Kang Meas and Kampong Siem districts. Those who survived were the people who had been evacuated away to far-away areas. Some survived when the Khmer Rouge postponed the killing for a period of time while they were fighting the Vietnamese. One of my daughters and one son had already been killed by then.

Chi Saleh

Author's interview with Chi Saleh, male, age 65, at Prek Kroch Village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 6 March 2001.

After the rebellion they called us to a meeting in a field near the village. They demanded that everyone attend, even children too young to understand what was happening. They had dug trenches surrounding the meeting site in advance. Many soldiers were deployed in those trenches, all armed and ready to fight. We were forced to sit on the ground; we were not allowed to sit on any pieces of wood or bricks or anything else. To the front of us were many cadres, all sitting at a long table. I saw the district secretary of Kroch Chhmar, Ta Pha, along with his deputy Ta Soeu, and the district security chairman Ta Aok. Ta Soeu, the deputy secretary, rose first to speak. He addressed us by saying, "Do you respect and obey Angkar or don't you? If you do, then raise your hands!" We all raised our hands. One cadre shouted, "Look here! If anyone wants to call on Allah to help them, go right ahead!" Then one very old man named Sen answered back, "No one is calling!" The cadre shot him dead. Other

cadres whose names I did not know rattled on for the longest time. Their speech challenged and insulted Islam. We all looked at the ground and no one dared argue.

Three days later they set out a new plan stating that, "The residents of this village do not have a sufficient crop harvest to feed themselves. To solve this problem, Angkar wants some of you to volunteer to go live in new villages in Battambang where the land is fertile for growing rice." Only about twenty percent of the villagers volunteered. The rest were afraid of this move. On the day that was designated for the journey, the Khmer Rouge forced those who did not want to go along to go, and the twenty percent who had already volunteered were not permitted to go, but had to stay where they were. No one dared object to these orders.

My family stayed on in the village. In late 1978 the village chairman Sreng told all the Cham men to go build houses in a new village at an unspecified location. Two hundred and eighty Cham men set out on that journey. I know the number because I heard them announce it in a meeting, "280 men are assigned to build new houses." I was at that meeting. My son-in-law Ismail was among those who went. The following day, the wives and children of those men were told they were being sent along after the men to meet up with them. Ismail's wife Aishah, my daughter, was ill and the village chief permitted her to remain in the village temporarily. No one else escaped. I survived only because they still needed to use me to fish and supply the cooperative.

Yahya Ali

Author's interview with Yahya Ali, male, age 52, at Village 3, Prek Kak subdistrict, Stung Trang district, 23 April 2001.

In late 1978 I was assigned to the fishery. I fished the waters opposite Boeng Prachaut frequently. One day while I was out fishing I saw a boat named "A Saengsang" coming from Kroch Chhmar district carrying people. It came from upstream, anchored and put people ashore. For three days in a row the boats made many such trips. On the third day, a large boat named "A Salang" put one thousand people to shore at Boeng Prachaut.

The people who had been transported by A Saengsang and A Salang walked to the rear of Boeng Prachaut village, leaving their belongings behind on board the boats. Sometimes I stopped to rest at the riverbank. At those times I could see that most of these people were Cham from my home district, from Rokar Khnor and Chumnik villages. One was a friend

of mine from Rokar Khnor named Yousos. He stopped and talked to me for a moment to say he was being evacuated to Battambang. Others told me that they had been evacuated to Kampong Thom. From the first day I saw the boats and continuing for seven days after that, I heard the loudspeakers at Boeng Prachaut. I thought the Khmer Rouge were celebrating something there.

After the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown I made a trip back to Boeng Prachaut. This was now during 1979. I saw four huge grave pits behind the village, filled with men's and women's bodies. Some had not yet decomposed. That is when I understood what had happened to the people I had seen. I noticed that none of them ever returned home again.

Ya Min

Author's interview with Ya Min, male, age 63, at Village 2, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 8 February 2001.

Two weeks after the revolt, the Khmer Rouge called all the people of my village to a meeting at the mosque. Even the elderly and those who had just given birth had to attend. The cadres checked all the houses before the meeting to make sure everyone had gone there. During the meeting the district security chairman, Chet, called out the names of eight individuals and had them stand at the front of the crowd.¹⁰³ Chet declared, "All of you either had rank or took a salary from Lon Nol to bore into our base community clandestinely." Then Chet asked the eight, "True or not true?" Several of the eight accused just collapsed from fright right where they stood. Finally, Chet asked all of us, "Are there clandestine elements inside Koh Phal?" He continued, "Are any relatives of the people of Koh Phal?" We answered as one, "No."

After the meeting ended, the cadres walked through the village and confiscated Qur-ans, hatchets and swords from each house. They left only one small knife for each household to use to clean fish. Later they began evacuating people from the village. The evacuations were carried out in many waves, four or five families at a time. My family was sent to Samaki Village [or Thmei Village] in Saupheas in Stung Trang district.

In 1978 they assigned me to fish on the river at Stung Trang. One day at 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning I saw a large boat stop at Boeng Prachaut. Many people disembarked and walked to the village. Most of them were Cham. I could recognize this by their clothes. I kept seeing this happen for many days consecutively.

On the opposite bank, at Trea Village, there was a house used by the Khmer Rouge as their district headquarters. It was at the exact site of the ferry dock today. Nearby that headquarters was a killing field. Every night I heard the sounds of screaming coming continuously from that site.

Ahmad Sofiyah

Author's interview with Ahmad Sofiyah, female, age 40, at Khsach Praches Kandal village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 25 January 2003.

During the Pol Pot era I worked in a mobile labor unit that was stationed in Chhouk subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district. One day I was visiting my mother at Khsach Praches Village, my birthplace. Most Cham people who came from Khsach Praches had already been evacuated from the village, but my mother and a few other Cham villagers still remained there. I had been with mother for only two or three days when a cadre called both me and my mother to Wat Khsach Praches. When we got there I saw hundreds of people gathered in a crowd.

Later they separated me from my mother. She was taken away in a boat with the other older people. I was told to go along with thirty-five other Cham girls, all unmarried, to harvest rice at Koh Samrong in Kroch Chhmar district. We began walking at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and after an hour we reached Trea Village. A cadre told us to rest in a house that seemed to have been abandoned by its owner long ago. We sat inside that house, hopeless and exhausted. Then I noticed a noise like the sharpening of a knife. I heard men talking to one another, "Hone that knife sharp because the pigs are very big today." I wondered what this could mean and I listened for the sound of any pigs below. But I heard only the sound of the knife being sharpened.

A moment later six cadres come into the house. Some held notebooks and Bic ballpoint pens and they questioned each one of us. Among them were two female cadres. When they got to me, a cadre asked, "What is your name? Where all did you work before you came here?" I answered truthfully. Then the cadre asked, "What race are you?" I lied, "I am Khmer." The cadre recorded my answers in his book. Then the prisoner next to me was asked the same questions.

When they finished questioning everybody a cadre shouted, "Angkar proposes to tie you girls up!" So we raised our hands and let them do their business with a rope. I was the last in line, and the only girl whom they had yet to tie up. One of them asked, "Are they all tied up yet?" I blurted out without thinking, "Not yet, not yet, I'm not tied yet." A cadre

walked up to me and praised me while he was tying me, commenting on what a good heart I had. I replied, "No matter where I would ever go, I would still be revolutionary." I did plead for him not to tie me too tightly. Everything now completed, the cadres searched our pockets and the hems of our skirts, and confiscated everything that they found.

Then a cadre shouted the order, "Cham to one side, Khmer to the other, and mixed race to another." I had already lied and said I was Khmer, so I had to go to the Khmer side. Fifteen others who had given the same answer were standing with me.¹⁰⁴ Besides us there were twenty girls separated into two other groups, those self-declared "Cham" and all others, who were [supposedly] of "mixed race." My first cousin Teicheu was with the mixed race group. In fact all thirty-six girls were good friends of mine and we were all pure Cham. The lying was done for the sake of survival.

Four or five minutes later, the "mixed race" girls were taken from the house one at a time. The cadres said they were being taken to be given food to eat. I looked out through the cracks in the wall boards to see where they were going. The sun was already down, but I could still see in the light of the moon. I saw a cadre walking one girl to a pit only 8 meters from the house. A plank stretched across the pit. The cadre laid the girl face down on the board and cut her throat from behind with a shiny blade and dropped the body into the pit. The pit was not very deep. I could see the girl's hands and feet twitching up and down. Then another girl was killed the same way. One after another they died. No one dared scream or cry. Some girls were stripped naked and raped before they were killed. Watching all this I was so terrified my soul left my body and I knew that my turn was soon to come.

After the cadres had killed the twenty girls of the Cham and mixed race groups, my group of sixteen, the "Khmer," were still inside the house. They left us there all through the night. At first light a cadre came and untied us and walked us to another house nearby. We felt better again. The Khmer Rouge killed a large pig and made soup for us in order to test us. As we ate they watched us closely. Everyone tried to eat everything in her bowl so they would not be suspected of anything.

Two weeks passed and then we were sent to Kroch Chhmar Village. They had us wash a huge pile of clothing scattered at an office there. I don't know which office this was. After 1979 the state used that office as the economics office for Kroch Chhmar district. One day when I was taking that clothing to wash, I saw my mother's clothing and her betel and food containers. I knew for certain that they had belonged to her. I cried in

pain as I washed my mother's clothes. I knew they had killed her and that I had lost her forever.

Mao Maisam

Author's interview with Mao Maisam, female, age 44, at Khsae Luos village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 6 February 2001.

In 1975 I was evacuated away from my place of birth, Khsach Praches Village, and sent to Samrong Village. These are both villages in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district. My mother and father had already died, leaving me an orphan before I was old enough even to know my parents.

One day during 1978 the Khmer Rouge sent me to harvest rice at Kampong Thmar Village (Baray subdistrict, Kampong Thom). I took my three younger siblings, including my younger brother, along with me. On the day of the journey we all traveled by horse cart off to the west.

The cart stopped in Trea village. They told me and my siblings to go into a house which was located at the site of the present day Trea-Stung Trang Village ferry dock. I saw many young girls inside. I knew most of them. They were all Cham. A second later two female cadres walked up and started counting us. The final count was 240 girls. There was not a single male in the group, aside from my little brother. After the count, the two female cadres tied us all up.

Ten minutes passed and two male cadres came inside. I knew one named Hor. Hor was white complexioned and tall, with red eyes. I had just seen Hor arrive to take control of Kroch Chhmar district when the Central Zone took over in 1978. I heard that before he had been a major leader in Kroch Chhmar. Hor asked each of us, "What is your race?" Those who answered "Cham" were placed to one side; those who lied and claimed to be Khmer were set off to another side. Those who lied and claimed to be mixed Khmer-Cham were also set off separately. My three younger siblings were not old enough to know how to lie and they answered truthfully, "Cham child." A great number admitted they were Cham. Then those who said they were the children of the Cham were all taken outside. My little brother was taken away first. All of them, including all three of my younger siblings, disappeared forever.

No Satas

Author's interview with No Satas, female, age 44, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 5 December 2000.

My father was killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. My family had six children, including me, living along with my grandmother in Svay Khleang village. After the revolt against the Khmer Rouge in 1975, they moved everyone away. My family was one of about thirty sent to Khsach Praches Leu in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district. I observed that each of those thirty families had lost the male head of the household.

In 1978 another group of Khmer Rouge from the Southwest Zone came to where I now lived. They searched out the Cham so they could wipe out every last one of us. The eight members of my family were all killed. I was the sole exception because I disguised myself as being of another race.

In late 1978 the Khmer Rouge ordered the Cham men and youths to go build houses at a far-away village. About twenty men left our village for that assignment. Two or three days had passed when there was an announcement that our new homes were ready. They "proposed" that we Cham now relocate to the new village.

My mother, grandmother, siblings and I traveled to a *wat* in Khsach Praches Kraom as ordered. We arrived at about 8 o'clock in the morning. There were about thirty Cham families waiting there to board a boat. All of those who were waiting there were female except for some very young boys. I was about to get on the boat with my mother and grandmother when a cadre appeared and pulled me back. I was placed in a group of about forty unmarried girls who had also been pulled away from their families. I looked back at my mother and saw her leading the little ones by the hand onto the boat. This was the last time I ever saw any of them.

We girls were ordered to walk to Trea village. They told us that we would meet up with our mothers there, but that was just a lie. At 5:00 p.m. we reached Trea. A light rain was falling. They told us to go into a house at the site of the Trea-Stung Trang ferry. We slept on the floor, exhausted. We had been given no food all day. Everyone was silent when suddenly the district secretary Hor and three of his messengers came into the house. He had just arrived from the Southwest Zone. I knew him from before when I was in my mobile work unit. He spoke with a different accent so I knew he was from the Southwest. Hor spoke loudly and said, "Get up, nieces! Uncle wants to tie you up." We stood as ordered and put out our hands to Hor and the messengers. They tied us with hammock rope. Then Hor asked each one of us, "What is your race?" The first to answer admitted the truth that she was Cham, and others followed her response. Then my turn came, toward the end. I lied and said I was Khmer. Hor pulled me off to one wall. Seeing that, the next ten girls after me also

claimed "Khmer" and were put alongside me.¹⁰⁵

A moment later those who had answered that they were Cham were taken down below. I looked through the cracks in the wall. It was late, but I could still see clearly in the moonlight. I saw them march a girl blindfolded with a scarf to the river bank in front of the house. Then a cadre pulled the girl's head back by the scarf, cut her throat with a knife, and pushed her into the river. The river was very high at the time. All of the others were killed one by one in the same way. No one screamed.

When those girls were all dead, the cadres untied us and handed us a bucket of gruel to eat along with some banana stalk soup. I was so scared that I could not eat the food that was in my one little bowl.

At dawn they took us to another house and held us there for nine days. During that time Hor made pork soup for everyone at every meal. We tried to act natural when we ate so Hor would not suspect us. Hor was not yet convinced. He researched base areas to ask people about our identities. Some Khmer villagers lied to them and claimed some of their Khmer girls had been mixed in with the Cham. I learned of this after 1979 when I met with these Khmer people. Hor and his cadres had just arrived, coming in from the Southwest Zone, and they could not tell for sure who was Cham and who was Khmer. With his investigation now finished, Hor sent us to the economics office in Kroch Chhmar district to wash piles of clothes that were stored in a warehouse there.

Ten days later I ran off into the forest with two other girls, Sary and Saros. There we survived for three months; then the Khmer Rouge were overthrown during early 1979.

San Saros

Author with San Saros, female, age 43, "Kilo 3" Village, Prek Kak, Stung Trang district, 12 February 2001.

One morning during 1978 my mother and I were rounded up and put in the pagoda at Khsach Praches village. There were hundreds of families there who had been gathered from different villages and subdistricts. All were Cham. During the afternoon they separated all of us young unmarried girls from our families. Then the adults and children were taken away by boat. I was with the unmarried girls who were transported by horse-drawn carts; others girls had to walk. They told us we would meet our families again once we reached Stung Trang.

At about 6 o'clock in the afternoon we got to Trea Village. They ordered us up into a house at what is now the site of the dock for the Trea-Stung Trang ferry. Then District Secretary Hor and several other cadres arrived. Hor screamed out orders for us to stand and raise our hands, and he tied our hands behind our backs. Hor said that the Cham should stand off to one side, the Khmer to another. In fact there were only Cham present, but in an effort to save themselves, some girls lied and said they were Khmer. I claimed that I was mixed Khmer-Cham.

Then Hor and his people took away the girls who had admitted they were Cham. There were only about ten of us who claimed to be either Khmer or mixed race. Some I knew by their revolutionary names: Chheng An, Sary, An, Saren, Savoeyun, and Chanthly. The Khmer Rouge spared us from death and released us.

Saleh Saros

Author's interview with Saleh Saros, female, age 46, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 15 December 2000.

I lost my father during 1975 when the Khmer Rouge killed him. I lived here in my home village [Svay Khleang] with my older brother and two younger sisters, Aminah and Saufiyan. In 1975 they moved our family to live with the Khmer in Kroch Chhmar Village.

One day during 1978 Angkar assigned my brother to go build houses. The next day they called the rest of the family to meet at a site that had been a market during the former regime. When we arrived we met many other Cham families, all of whom had been told to go live in the "new houses" that our men had built for us.

That same afternoon they broke up the families. The unmarried girls went as ordered to Trea Village. The adults and children were sent away in boats. I was separated from my mother from that point on. Both my younger sisters went with me. There were about 200 girls who went, mostly Cham.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon we got to Trea. They put us into a house there at the site of what is now the ferry dock. Then two female cadres came with a big roll of *khoboy* rope. I knew those two women from before; one was Ol and the other was Thol. They were both from Angkar's medical personnel [nurses] in Kroch Chhmar. Ol shouted, "Get up, follow Angkar's orders, your assignment has begun." Everyone who had been resting on the floor stood as one. At that instant twelve Khmer Rouge

cadres arrived. The two female cadres had come up the front stairs, but the men now came up the back. The men shouted for us to raise our hands. They tied our hands together, one girl at a time.

They took the girls outside five at a time to a pit in a nearby orange grove next to the river bank, about 20 meters west of the house. I saw this with my own eyes. A team was waiting at the pit. They stripped the girls naked, put them on a plank across the pit, and cut their throats. The bodies twisted and fell into the pit. They did this to one girl after another until they were all gone. Not one girl dared to scream. It was raining then. Even though the sun had set, I could see because they had lit a kerosene lantern. By 7 o'clock that evening almost all of the girls in the house were gone.

I was shaking from what I had seen. I felt like I would die of fright before my turn came. I moved my two little sisters to the rear of the group. Then Hor came up into the house. He asked me first, "Niece, are you Cham or Khmer?" I said, "Khmer." Hor asked, "If you are Khmer, why did they send you here?" I explained, "I live near the Cham village." Hor pulled me to one corner. My two little sisters were crying. Hor did not know that they were my sisters and he asked them, "Why are you crying?" I answered for them, "They are my sisters." Hor put them next to me. Then the killing stopped long enough for Hor to finish his investigation. He questioned the other girls. Some said that they were Cham and he put them to one side. Some said, "Mixed race, Cham and Khmer." Hor put them to another side. Only five others besides me and my two sisters claimed that they were "Khmer."¹⁰⁶ Of course, all of us were pure-blooded Cham. After the questioning stopped, all those who claimed to be Cham or of mixed race were taken from the house and killed.

Those who claimed they were Khmer stayed in the house that night and were moved to another house in the same village the following morning. We walked past the grave pit that I had seen earlier. The clothing of the girls was still scattered near the pit and some clothing was on the fruit trees. The next month we were released, and we stuck to the story that we were Khmer after that.

Tam Rahimah

Author's interview with Tam Rahimah (a.k.a. Chouk), female, age 46, at Khsach Praches Kandal village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 6 April 2004.

At the time that the solidarity groups began, I was studying writing

in the village. In early 1976 the Khmer Rouge evacuated the people from the village. My family was assigned to live along with the Khmer people at Khsach Praches Kraom. Several months later my family was broken up. My little sister and I were sent to the subdistrict mobile labor unit. My older sister was assigned to the district mobile labor unit and my parents to the village cooperative. The three little ones went to the village children's unit. Every two or three months I returned to visit my parents for an hour or two before I had to run back to my unit.

I will refer to a subdistrict mobile labor unit as "*kor*" [third letter of the Khmer alphabet, like the letter "*C*" in English].¹⁰⁷ A *kor* had more than 200 girls, all ranging in age from 15 to 20 years old. My *kor* had only a few Cham mixed in with the Khmer girls. We all worked and ate together, but when the food included pork, we were put in some difficulty. The Khmer Rouge in the unit always announced, "'Cham' is not permitted any longer. You are all Khmer now so the food is the same for all." Nevertheless, sometimes the unit chairman felt sorry for us and gave us different food. But whenever there was a celebration of some kind we had no choice. One day after a meeting ended and they provided pork for the meal, I asked for salt and gruel without pork instead. The cook told me, "There are no Cham here anymore." Because of this they called me to a re-education meeting and accused me of having a "bad characteristic" (*kunvibat*) because I had refused Angkar's food. I confessed to my offense and promised that I would never do that again.

In 1978 they called about fifty Cham girls from all the mobile work units in the subdistrict to a meeting at a pagoda (Wat Khsach Praches Village). When I arrived I saw my mother and two sisters there along with other Cham people who had been rounded up from the villages in the subdistrict. I had only been with them for a moment when we were told to go to Samrong Village. One of my little sisters who had arrived from my unit with me was permitted to stay with Mother, however. So my mother had three of my sisters left with her.

When we got to Samrong the team chief, Rokeas (a Cham born in my home village), went to a meeting in a house. Rokeas returned and said we had been assigned to go west to Kampong Thom. So we turned and went back down the same road by which we had come in. Soldiers guarded us at all times. When we got back to that same pagoda, I did not see my mother and three sisters. Other families had disappeared too. My father and younger brother had been taken away by boat and killed the previous day.

We walked on to Trea. They told us to go into a house there. The

house was right on the bank of the Mekong. Inside they questioned us in detail about our personal histories and recorded the answers in a book. After sundown they brought in a spool of rope. They shouted, "Here, damn it, take rope and tie up our dogs." Then they began to tie us in the manner known as "parrot wing." Then they shouted for us to get in lines and counted us off, asking were we Khmer or Cham? My first cousin was the first in line. She admitted, "Cham," and was shoved to one side.

Then my older sister (who had also come from the district mobile unit) whispered to me, "You must tell them our parents are Khmer, and we will answer the same." I did as she told me. Fifteen others answered the same as I did and then we were pushed into a room.¹⁰⁸

They interrogated my older sister outside the room. No one else was taken out with her. I don't know what they did to my older sister, but she struggled, pounding loudly against the floor boards. Then they came into the room we were in and asked, "How about it girls, do you want to ride on the socialist bike?" I said, "I do." Then they untied us all. I felt better again. I strained to listen for my sister. I heard them ask her loudly if she was Cham or Khmer. They asked over and over, and she said she was mixed Cham-Khmer. They dragged her away. I looked at her and she looked back at me. She said good-bye in the Cham language but I did not dare answer her for fear that they would find out that we were sisters. A Khmer Rouge cadre screamed, "You are Cham, they are Khmer, why greet one another?" I almost fainted as they took my sister out and collapsed to the floor. After a moment one Khmer Rouge came up to check on us and then he left.

We stayed there three days. They used us to cut grass and clear clumps of bushes around the house. At every meal they cooked pork to test us. I had to eat it like it was a normal thing so they would not suspect me. Once while I was eating gruel I saw the Khmer Rouge grab one of their own and accuse him of releasing his relative who had been arrested by Angkar. I was frightened at seeing that. Later they sent us back to our old unit. In 1979 I was the only surviving member of our entire family.

It Sen

Author's interview with It Sen, male, age 52, at Prek Kroch Village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 12 March 2001.

Ten days after the revolt at Koh Phal, my family and about half the others in Ampil village were sent away by boat by the subdistrict chief. He told us that we were going to live in Battambang, but the boat put us

ashore at Stung Trang. There we were broken into smaller groups. Some of those groups were sent away in trucks, some in carts, and some had to walk. My family was in a group made up of twenty families taken away in the same boat in which we rode before, now heading back toward the direction from which we had come. Our boats reached Prek Sangke Village and headed to shore. We were ordered to disembark and live in that village. Twenty days after that some families, mine included, were gathered up and taken by boat to Prek A-Chi Village.

In 1978 the cadres of the Central Zone came in and set up a new administration structure. The people welcomed this because these cadres claimed they were uncorrupted and had come to liberate us from the clutches of the [Khmer Rouge] traitors. They announced that those people who had come from far away should now go back home to their places of birth.

This announcement gave us hope again for the Cham race. The subdistrict chairman gave a pair of cattle and a cart to each family as the means to make the journey back home. Still, some Cham were hesitant to trust the cadres and did not dare go back to their homes.

My family and twenty others drove our carts back home. We reached Ampil Village safely. Ampil Village was also now under the control of cadres from the Central Zone. We went to our houses, but those who were now living in our houses claimed that they had the rights to the property, granted to them long ago by Angkar. I observed that there were only ten Cham families left in the village, out of the hundreds that used to live there. My older sister Afiah was among those who were still there. I stayed with her.

Three days later the subdistrict chief told me and the other newcomers to go back to Trea Village. We had passed through Trea on our journey from Prek A-Chi to Ampil Village. Some families requested to leave one or two children with relatives in the village, fearing that something bad was about to happen. The subdistrict chief denied those requests.

We left Ampil at dawn. Along the way we met other Cham driving tens of carts from other villages, all heading in the same direction. I questioned them and found their stories to be just the same as our own. All along the way a district cadre named Seng rode back and forth on a motorcycle to watch over the travelers. Seng was a military commander who was newly arrived from the Central Zone.

That afternoon we reached Khsach Praches, a Cham village. As we passed through an old Cham woman asked me, "Where are you going?" I told her the story. She whispered to me that she had seen cadres blindfold people and take them to the riverbank at Trea. She then turned and quickly scurried away from my cart.

We kept driving the carts forward, never daring to stop. We got to Trea that afternoon. Seng, the district military commander, told us to stop at the mosque. He separated the men from the women. Small children stayed with their mothers. I went with a group of sixty men. They told us to go to a house by the river to eat, but did not tell the women and children to go along. I felt sorry for my child who was so hungry. I asked to take my child along, but was refused.

Along the road I saw lots of people sticking their heads out of their windows, watching us. They had probably also been brought in from other villages and subdistricts just like us. We arrived at a house and were told to get in line. They shouted, "Respect the orders of Angkar! Everybody put your hands up!" We did as we were ordered. They tied our arms tightly behind our backs. Then a cadre said, "If anyone is Khmer, raise your hand." Some claimed they were Khmer, and they were beaten with gun stocks. When they could not stand the beating any more, they admitted they were Cham. The cadres were only testing us; they had known we were Cham all along.

At 7:00 p.m. they walked us into a house on the river bank. We were all exhausted and leaned against the walls, looking at one another hopelessly. No one slept that night. At daybreak I looked outside through a crack in the wall. I saw other men who were tied up just like us in the house next door. I didn't know where they had come from or when they had arrived. I recognized a few of them, and all of them were Cham.

At about 7 o'clock I saw five or six Khmer Rouge cadres go up into a house nearby. They dragged out the prisoners, each tied up and blindfolded. I stared, watching them. Then I saw them walk the prisoners one by one to the river bank. A boat was anchored there and there were about thirty prisoners waiting nearby. They undressed the prisoners down to their shorts and put them in a line. All of the prisoners were men. They took a rope from the boat and ran it through the bonds of each prisoner from one to the next. One end was tied to the last prisoner in line and then they tied the other end to the stern of the boat. Then they took off the blindfolds. I was completely terrified as I watched the men, some crying, some screaming, as they fell to the ground and rolled as the boat pulled away toward the middle of the river. At midstream one Khmer Rouge

loosened the end of the rope that was tied to the boat. Then the boat turned back to shore to repeat the process. We began to whisper to one another as we watched this. We knew our fates would be the same. The boat kept repeating this over and over throughout the entire day.

That night we were all exhausted and scared. We had had nothing to eat for two days. I leaned against the wall in the back of the house, hopeless. At 8 o'clock that evening three cadres pushed in the door and came inside and kicked the wall with a boom. They told us all to stand and walk, as we were going to harvest rice in Steung Treng on the other side of the river. They tightened our bonds and sent us down out of the house. I did not believe we were going to harvest rice. I knew we were being taken to be killed. I knew that I would do anything I could do to escape before I died. I was at the rear and rolled quietly back into the pitch dark. I managed to loosen my bonds. I ran my hands along the planks to see if I could find some kind of gap through which I could fit. I pulled back a board to see if there was a space for me to slip down through. There was a board that seemed to have a broken nail. I lifted that board carefully, crawled through, and quietly slipped down toward the ground. Luckily my feet reached the top of a chicken coop and I threw myself down on top of it. I hid there for a moment.

I took my shirt off when I was still on top of the chicken coop and lowered myself to the ground. I crawled a little at a time to a clump of *sakou* potatoes near the house. I strained to listen for the sound of the boat, but I heard nothing. After all the prisoners were outside, I saw the Khmer Rouge light a torch and look around in the corners, but they apparently did not see or pay any attention to the pulled-back board through which I had just escaped. Then they started to take prisoners out from another house that was nearby.

At midnight the cadres stopped to rest, eat, and drink. I crawled out of the *sakou* potatoes and headed for the river, where I saw a big pile of clothing. I crawled on by and made it to the water. Then I saw a bag of clothing that had belonged to my family. My wife had been holding that very bundle when I was separated from her. So I assumed that my wife and children had already died. I looked nearby and saw a canteen. It was mine. I took it and walked into the river and floated along with the current, clutching that canteen.

The currents took me to an island. On the opposite bank I recognized Prek A-Chi village, where I had once lived. I knew that a villager named Teh Set was still living there. I could trust him. I swam off the island to look for him. After I reached shore I hid in a corn field. I pulled some ears

of corn and ate them.

The sky was turning red in the east and I moved on to look for Teh Set. He had not yet awakened when I reached his house. I woke him up and asked for some food. Teh Set told me that he had some but he could not cook it for me. I begged him, telling him that without food I could not walk any further. He gave in and I put one handful of rice in a pot and lit a fire. I tried to hide the smoke.

When the pot was boiling I heard a woman knocking at the door, telling us to open it up. I recognized the voice of Mit Neary [comrade] Sokhly, the village chairman. I was frightened since I knew she never gave anyone a break. Teh Set opened the door, came inside and asked, "What are you doing?" I replied, "I have come to ask you if I can come back here to live." She refused, "Anyone who has left cannot come back." She looked at the pot on the oven and added, "You need not eat here. I invite you to come eat at the office." Then she left. I was dead sure she would make trouble for me and have the militia arrest me. So I rushed away from the house of Teh Set without even one mouthful of rice having gone into my stomach.

I had no choice other than to walk back to my home village, a full 20 kilometers away. Along the way I mixed in with villagers who were going to the fields. Luckily those whom I met along the way were kind to me and I made it safely all the way back to Ampil Village.

When I got home I hid in my older sister's house. She stole food from the dining hall every day for me. I never saw my wife and children again. None of those who left for Trea Village with me on that terrible day ever came back.

Amin Maryam

Author's interview with Amin Maryam, female, age 45, at Sachso village, Peam Chikang subdistrict, Kang Meas district, 2 May 2004.

I was an orphan. My father and mother died when I was very small. My two siblings and I lived with our aunt. When the Khmer Rouge came to this village they evacuated my aunt. She did not take me along because she had many children of her own to care for. About a hundred families remained in the village. In 1978 they killed my elder siblings. I was the only surviving member of my family.

At first they sent me to work in the district mobile work unit. Each of

the units was subordinate to the district-level unit and had one hundred ten members. There were between three to ten Cham youth in each unit. Every Cham had to change his or her name into a non-Cham name. They did not permit us to choose our new names as we pleased. The unit commander told each of us what our new name was. Whenever there was pork in the food, the security people watched us. Any Cham who did not eat the pork would be "removed." So we had to eat it and then run off so no one would be suspicious and throw up out of sight. They reminded us every day that Cham and Khmer were the same flesh and blood and so we would all eat the same food, and eat it together. Speaking the Cham language was strictly forbidden.

In 1978 they started taking measures to destroy the Cham, every last one. I saw this purge with my own eyes when they sent me to Wat O Trakuon. They arrested me because I had left my unit to go get a sleeping mat from home. After one night at O Trakuon pagoda I was released back to my unit. While I was there, I saw a large group of children, some who could not yet walk, some who could. Their parents had already been killed. I knew that most of them were Cham children from my village, and others were the children of the April 17 people. The Khmer Rouge tossed some children in the air and speared them with knives. Some were bashed against tree trunks and then thrown in pits on top of the piled bodies of adults.

After one night they released me to go back to work. Two or three days later a military commander named Ta Kan came and singled out all the Cham from the unit. Ta Kan told the unit chief that he was going to kill those Cham with his own hands. There were eighty-three Cham girls, including me, taken away from various units by Ta Kan. We got to Ta Kan's headquarters at Anlong Chrey behind the Skuon market [in Cheung Prey district]. Ta Kan told us that he had brought us there to save us from being killed. It was just as he said. He was a kind man. He supplied us with plenty of food. Eight months later the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown. We left Ta Kan and returned to our homes. When I got back to my home village, the former Khmer Rouge village chairman asked me, "All the Cham were killed, so how come you are still left around?"

Ismail bin Abu Samas

Author's interview with Ismail bin Abu Samas, age 57, at Kampong Krabei village, Kokor subdistrict, Kampong Siem district, 2 May 2004.

Beginning in 1970 my village was pulled back and forth between the Lon Nol government and the Khmer Rouge army. Battles between the two

armies were frequent around my village. The villagers had to adjust to the twists and turns of the situation to look out for their personal welfare. In those days the Khmer Rouge tried to please the Cham. Some Cham even volunteered to join the Khmer Rouge revolutionary army after seeing those good acts.

Starting on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge had full control over my village and Lon Nol troops were not involved with us anymore. The Khmer Rouge began with splitting the village into two villages, which were called Kampong Krabei "Kar" ["A"] Village and Kampong Krabei "Kho" ["B"]. The people were assigned to work in a cooperative and there was only one communal dining hall for all. One day I heard that there had been a revolt at Koh Phal. The uprising was caused by an order to force the Cham to eat pork. The people of Koh Phal refused and rose up in opposition; they were shot down indiscriminately by the Khmer Rouge.

About two weeks after those events, the cadres of Kang Meas district called all of our villagers to a meeting. They warned us, "Do not do what they did at Koh Phal. If you are headstrong, this village will be destroyed and turned to ashes just like Koh Phal." Then they evacuated both Kampong Krabei "A" and "B," approximately 600 families. Only 25 families were permitted to remain. My family was among them, with only two members left, myself and my wife. Those evacuated were scattered throughout all of the subdistricts of Kampong Siem district, fifteen in all. Then they brought in the Khmer living nearby to occupy the now-vacant houses of the evacuees.

The Khmer Rouge did not allow the Cham to live together in their own communities [after that]. Each Cham [family] was assigned to a group of twelve [families]. This was because the Khmer Rouge were afraid the Cham would rebel again. They also increased pressure against Islam. The forced eating of pork was the heaviest burden to bear. Those who refused were taken away and killed. Those who tried but vomited up the pork were severely criticized. No one escaped that criticism.

In 1978 the Khmer Rouge announced that there were two thousand clandestine enemies within the subdistrict. That caused me some amazement, as the number seemed really excessive. Several days later their cadres came and wrote down the names of every single Cham in the subdistrict. That certainly made me suspicious because there were about 2,000 Cham residents, just matching the number of enemies that they had calculated in advance and had already announced. Then they chose Cham men for killing first. Every night five or ten would be taken. At first we did not know that those who were taken away were actually being killed.

It was only later that we knew this, when they issued the men's clothes and shoes back to the villagers. After the men had been rounded up they gathered up the women and children for killing.

My turn came later than most because they had hung on to me as a fisherman for a period of time. One morning when I was coming back from fishing I saw four subdistrict militia men waiting for me at the dock. None of them was armed. When I saw them from the distance I knew immediately what was going on. I thought to myself, if they try to arrest me now I'll fight back and escape in my boat. As I pulled into shore I rushed up the bank and warmly asked the militiamen how they were doing. I acted as if I knew nothing at all. Finally they told me, "Tonight you need not go out to fish. We propose that you stay home and rest up." I knew for certain then that they had a plan to arrest me that night. Right away I headed straight off to meet my wife in the handicraft building. I took her to my boat and we paddled away toward Phnom Penh. We intended to head for Vietnam. Along the way four Cham men whom I knew waved at us. I paddled up to them and took them along with us. They were fleeing just like we were.

At about 5 o'clock in the afternoon we got to the sand bar opposite Rokar Kaong. We stopped to rest there. While we were resting, a fishing boat headed toward us. The fishery chairman on board asked us for our travel permits. I responded, "I have no travel permit." He took us to the subdistrict headquarters and then on to the district headquarters. That was in Khsach Kandal district of Kandal province. Finally they sent us all to prison.

Twelve days later, they released me and my wife. They had me help them destroy pagodas, *stupas* [monuments of Buddhist veneration] and former schools in that district. One of their cadres, Sauny, ordered me to do those things. Sauny used the phony excuse that Angkar needed the metal and said that those sites had to be dismantled to get the iron bars out. But some *stupas* that we knew did not have even a single steel rebar inside; they still had me destroy them anyway. I did this for about six months before the Khmer Rouge were finally overthrown in 1979. My wife and I returned to our home village then. There I found only six families who had survived the killings. Twelve other individuals had fled to Vietnam. Today the population has increased to 114 families.

Ismail Maisam

Author's interview with Ismail Maisam, female, age 63, at Pongro Village (Svay Ta Hen), Rokakoy subdistrict, Kang Meas district, Kampong Cham, 1 May 2004.

Because the Cham of Koh Phal were steadfast and refused to abandon Islam, the Khmer Rouge burned and destroyed Koh Phal, reducing it to cinders and ashes. Then they forcibly evacuated all the Cham throughout Kampuchea. The people of my village were sent to live in the open spaces under the raised houses of the Khmer people throughout Kang Meas district. My family was sent to a house in a nearby village. I really tried hard to please the owner of that house because I had many children.

They forced us to eat pork. On days when pork was used in the dining hall, the Khmer Rouge kept a coil of rope handy, ready to tie up any Cham who refused to eat it. We had to eat it if we wanted to stay alive. The Cham language was prohibited too. Every night members of the militia hid under the raised houses, listening for the sound of anyone praying above.

From early on they planned to kill my family, but they had not yet found an excuse to do so because I was never negligent in my work. One day they brought in a thin cow for me to look after; this was above and beyond my daily assignments. They said that if I did not fatten that cow or if I got careless and let her eat the cooperative's crops, they would kill me. My son was very ill then and was only skin and bones. I knew then that the Khmer Rouge placed a higher value on that cow than they did on my son, and our lives now depended on the cow. When I was free from work I watched over that cow more closely than I did my own son. Whenever I heard the meal bell I had to go straight from my work site to cut fodder for the cow instead of going to the dining hall. I had to eat whatever was left over when I finally got there. I cared for that cow until she got fat and so saved myself.

The Khmer Rouge starved us. Every day we got stewed papaya mixed with rice bran and soup with no meat or fish or spices. They called this soup "*samlor siep*"; no one had ever heard of it before. I almost died of starvation. After my son recovered, my husband fell seriously ill and his body swelled up. He had to stay at home without any medicine. My oldest daughter was working in a mobile unit and would steal a little rice and smoked fish to give to her father whenever she came home. My daughter who was working in the children's unit was assigned to mill rice in the evenings. Some nights she would come home with a pocketful of stolen rice husks. I passed out the rice bran, a little for each child and a little for myself, and we would chew on it. It seemed so much more delicious than our daily food.

The Khmer who were with us in the same cooperative got more food than our family because they were long-standing base people. Also they

were treated with more lenience than the Cham people. For instance, one time a Khmer youth stole a tiny potato and gave it to a Cham to roast. The Khmer Rouge saw this and killed the Cham but forgave the Khmer. After that I forbade my children to take any of the food of the cooperative, even the squash that was growing near the house.

One afternoon when I came home my oldest daughter told me, "Mother! The potatoes we were growing, someone took them all!" I told her, "Child! We have no private rights at all, everything belongs to the cooperative." At dawn I went out to work as usual. My daughter was allowed to stay home that day to look after her six-year-old sibling who was ill. She felt sorry for the little one, who was sick and without food. She dug for any potatoes left over in the plot which had been dug and cleared out the previous day. She found two small potatoes and roasted them. A patrolling militia member saw her, arrested her and took her away, leaving the little sick child alone.

When I got home that evening someone in the dining hall told me about what had happened. They said not to be afraid, my child was not to blame. I waited for news of her from one day to the next, but heard nothing. I asked the unit and cooperative chairmen. They both said not to worry, and added, "Whoever's head it is, it's that person's hair" [*"kabal neak na, sak neak neung,"* an expression which meant, "whoever it is who takes the blame it is they who have the punishment coming"]. They had in fact already killed my daughter.

In 1978 they sent the Cham men to cut bamboo at Phnom Chi in Kampong Thom. While the heads of the families were away, they rounded up the families in the village and their children from the mobile units, and killed them. Every night without exception the Khmer Rouge rounded up Cham from different units. One night I knew it was my turn because earlier that day children in the mobile and children's units were all permitted to stay home with their mothers. Their chairman had said, "Go home to die with your mother." We were all terrified, as if our souls left our bodies. My son Ahmad, whose health was the weakest of all of us, told me, "Mother! I am afraid of the pain when they beat us to death." He stopped breathing until he fainted, trying to die before he was beaten to death. I snatched him up and consoled him, "Child, don't die just yet, before your mother. We will all go together. The carts will come for us soon."

By chance it was raining as if the sky was falling. Our hut flooded with rainwater. It rained until dawn. The rain stalled the Khmer Rouge, who were coming to take us away and kill us. At dawn the rains stopped.

I saw a cadre ride up on a horse to meet with the cooperative chairman. I knew he was a messenger for the district secretary [of Kang Meas] because I had seen him before. Later that day I heard a rumor that Angkar would delay the purge of the Cham for a while so they could send their forces to fight the Vietnamese. There were no further killings after that day. Only 19 of the original 2000 Cham families were as lucky as we had been. The men who had been sent to Phnom Chi were all killed while the families they had left behind at home were also killed. Only a small number of men, members of the 19 families that remained, including my husband, survived. Three months later the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown.

Him Man

Author's interview with Him Man, male, age 53, at Sachso village, Peam Chikang subdistrict, Kang Meas district, 2 May 2004.

I was born in Sachso Village and lived there. The Cham called this village Ta Sou Village, and why this is the case I do not know. Many villages had two different names, one used by the Khmer and the other used by the Cham. In the Sangkum Reastr Niyum years my village was home to 400 families, and almost all of them were killed by the Khmer Rouge. By 1979 only 50 families had survived the killings. Today the number of both old-timers and newcomers totals about 100 families.

In 1972 the Khmer Rouge took control of my village. At that time they were extolling Islam, holding it up as being equal to Buddhism. I heard them announce that Islam and Buddhism and the revolution were really all one and the same. In 1973, once the people trusted them, the Khmer Rouge turned on the Cham. They started to use tricks as they changed their party line. High-level cadres would come and criticize the village chairmen, "Why don't you give the people enough to eat and why do you dismantle their houses?" Or, "The village chairman has to accept responsibility for raising the living standards and constructing new homes for our brothers and sisters." The people were happy to hear this, and some signed their names to complaints against the village chairmen. And then the people who had done so were immediately taken off to be killed for not supporting the revolution. That year the Khmer Rouge evacuated about twenty families from my village to provinces that were far away. They were all well-educated in Islam and they were the religious leaders of the village.

In 1974 they pressured us even more. They announced that the Cham was "enemy number one." The Khmer enemy was "enemy number two." I do not know what either the Khmer or the Cham had done to become

enemies. Those arrested were charged with stealing this or that property that belonged to Angkar.

In 1975 they evacuated villagers once again, but on a much bigger scale this time. Only about thirty families were not evacuated. They intended to kill the Cham by hunger and disease. As for the remaining thirty families, they died sooner or later, or were killed off. The Khmer Rouge wanted to break the strength of the Cham because they saw that leaving us together could lead to the same thing that had happened at Koh Phal. I heard that they used their marines at Koh Phal and fired their artillery to smash the village, but still they could not subdue them. In the end they arrested a religious leader and tortured him until he shouted for the villagers to surrender, and only then did they throw down their swords. Then the Khmer Rouge burned the entire village of Koh Phal, and after that they called it Koh Pheh [The Island of Ashes].

My family was with the thirty families that remained. Then they split us up again, and spread us out to almost every village in the district. Only my family and one neighboring family were allowed to remain where we were. My family had only three members: my mother, my younger brother, and myself. My father had died of illness in 1973. The Khmer Rouge arranged my marriage to a Cham girl and we are still together today. Fifty couples were married that day in a ceremony that was conducted in the revolutionary style.

The Khmer Rouge wanted to put an end to religion. Islam was the main target for them to eliminate. They forbade the Cham to worship or to speak their language, and they compelled the Cham to eat pork. Those who did not follow these orders were killed. They announced regularly, "There are no more Cham; we are all now one nation, a nation of Khmer. We all eat the same food and eat together." When there was pork to eat, the group chairman and cooperative chairman did not [even need to] stand around to watch whether we would eat it or not. [This is because] almost everyone around us in the dining hall was [already spying for the] Khmer Rouge. People wanted to be favored and survive, so they reported the offenses of others. But before long even those who were so favored were killed, one after the next.

In 1978 they told all the Cham "brothers and sisters" to rest inside their homes since there was no need for them to work. There were four in my house: myself, my wife, my mother, and my younger brother. At dawn all the Khmer were told to leave the village. I was suspicious about all this. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the Khmer Rouge began evacuating all the Cham throughout Kang Meas district. Most of them were former

residents of Sachso Village, Antong Sar, and Angkor Ban. That amounted to hundreds of people. Those who were regarded as being able-bodied enough to resist were tied up parrot-wing style. The women and children and the elderly were not bound. They walked in a long group, filling the roads, with security cadres on guard on both sides.

When the crowd reached my house, a security man called me down. I went out with my wife, mother and little brother. Luckily for me it seems they did not think I had the strength to run, so they did not tie me. I saw some people walking without shirts. Some wore only shorts because when the cadres came to a house they gave no one time to dress. Children without parents were running around through the villages. The Khmer Rouge grabbed their feet and smashed them into tree trunks or house pillars, killing them. They marched us to Wat O Trakuon, their killing site.

I walked quickly with my wife to the head of the crowd. I knew they were going to kill us so I was going to run away if I could. About 100 meters before we got to the Wat O Trakuon I told my wife my plan. She agreed. When the guard was careless on his watch my wife and I ran off. They did not notice us go at all. We hid in a clump of bamboo. That night the killing began. We heard the sounds of the clubs, "*phous, phous.*" I did not see it with my own eyes, but I heard the screams. I heard my little brother scream. I knew it was him. Before being killed the people screamed out to Allah for help, screamed for their mothers, all of this in Cham. And there were screams of pain. My mother and little brother were among those killed. Just before dawn, the killing was over. I figured they would stop patrolling after they had carried out their mission. My wife and I crawled into the swamp water nearby.

For three months and twenty-four days we hid there. During the day we went into the water and hid our heads in clumps of reeds, just breathing, doing nothing else. At night we climbed up to sleep on the branches of the little *tros* trees that were growing in the swamp. Sometimes it rained all night long. Whenever we had to cough or sneeze we stuck our head down into the water to silence the sound. Every night there were people sleeping on a nearby dam. For the first ten days or so tens of Khmer Rouge searched the swamp. They must have figured we were hiding there when they looked at the names that were checked off on their killing lists. They fired into the swamp, strafing nearby me. My wife lost hope and whispered, "We must go and confess." I refused because confession meant death. We moved on from spot to spot. Sometimes they came to cut wood at a place I had only just left.

We had not one grain of rice to eat. Each day when I heard the gong

that signaled mealtime I got even hungrier. The food in the cooperative was too little but it was better than my present situation. When I grew hungry I saw food in my dreams, day and night. I wanted just a fistful of rice before I died. I ran out of hope. Every now and then I caught a minnow, a frog, toad, crab, snake or rat, or a shellfish that I would chew up and eat raw. One day I caught a large eel and tried to tear it up for me and my wife. The taste was so bad we threw up. I dried the remaining piece for two days, and then we could manage to eat it. We ate swamp plants for vegetables. Nothing was too disgusting. On days when we could catch nothing that was edible, we looked for rat droppings. When we saw that the rats had eaten some plant or another, then we figured we could safely eat it too.

Finally we could no longer stand it. We risked walking into the village at night to steal food from the cooperative. The villagers saw us and raised an alarm. There was nowhere to run and they arrested us both. They allowed me to live because they had no other blacksmith to make tools for them. Two months later orders came down once again to kill all the Cham, with no exceptions made for technicians. They took me and my wife away by boat along with some other Khmer craftsmen to kill us at Reay Pay Village. The boat's motor died soon after we left shore. Then the Front's forces and Vietnamese soldiers arrived. The three security men who had been with us in the boat jumped into the river. My wife and I were saved.

Ly Tei

Author's interview with Ly Tei, female, age 71, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 20 December 2000.

After the revolts, the Khmer Rouge evacuated me to Dambe district. In late 1978 I returned from Dambe thinking I would go back to live in Svay Khleang, my home village. Before I got to Svay Khleang, however, I went to stay with relatives in Peus village for several days. Some Cham had never been evacuated from Peus and remained there.

I went first to ask the chairman of the cooperative in Svay Khleang for permission to go back to live in my home village. He was not at home so I met his wife, Chouk. I presented my request to her. She told me not to come to this village at that time since there was a shortage of food in Svay Khleang. In order to prove this to me she led me to the dining hall and showed me the gruel in a shallow pan. She dipped in a ladle, lifted it, and turned it over for me to see that there were only two teaspoons of rice in the whole scoop. She told me that this was the ration for the people of

Svay Khleang, 150 families and an additional 150 Cham families who had just returned. Then she took me out so I could see them.

I walked along behind her to a house formerly owned by Paet [doctor] Sa. There were 150 Cham families there. They did not live in their former houses since they were now occupied by Khmer people who had been moved in from other places. I saw a long row of carts lined up in front of that house. Six soldiers were arresting the Cham and tossing them into those carts. The Cham who were there were all former residents of Svay Khleang Village before the evacuations. I knew them all but did not speak to them because the soldiers were arresting them and threatening them. I saw one woman screaming in labor, about to give birth. A soldier pitched her into a cart where she screamed until she delivered the baby. It was a pitiful sight. I was shaken at what I had seen. I left in a hurry and went back to Peus Village. After 1979 none of those people ever returned home.

Sou Harun

Author's interview with Sou Harun, male, age 50, at Village 2, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroh Chhmara district, 7 April 2004.

I was born in this village, Khpop. When the Khmer Rouge took control in 1971 they changed the name of the village to "Village 2." The names of the other villages in the subdistrict [of Svay Khleang] were also changed. The new names were numbers from 1 through 7. Those names are still in use today, but unofficially the villagers still prefer to use the old names.

At first the Khmer Rouge and the Lon Nol Khmer Republic traded with one another commercially. The Khmer Rouge had plenty of agricultural products like rice, corn, beans and sesame. The Lon Nol side had plenty of industrial products like clothing, salt and spices. But in 1973 those connections were cut off and the villagers experienced difficulties. Villagers used ashes in place of salt, for example.

At that time we had full rights to practice Islam and to hold celebrations. Listening to radio stations other than Radio Peking was strictly forbidden, however. Some villagers volunteered to send their children to become soldiers with the Khmer Rouge in order to help overthrow the Lon Nol regime.

In 1974 they began arresting the better-off among us and the educated ones,¹⁰⁹ accusing them of being partisans with secret contacts with Lon

Nol. In fact, these were loyal people. Ta Sos Man, the representative for the Cham inside the Khmer Rouge establishment, once came to our village and appointed a five-member *hakim* committee. A while after that the Khmer Rouge arrested Ta Sos Man along with those whom he had appointed to the committee. The arrests began to become a constant thing. Some who were arrested were later released, while many others simply disappeared.

In late 1975 the Cham at Koh Phal and Svay Khleang rebelled. I understood that the Khmer Rouge intended for the rebellions to happen. They wanted the Cham to revolt so that they would then have an excuse to wipe them out entirely from Kampuchea. I saw that the Khmer Rouge suppressed Koh Phal and Svay Khleang more than any other place [before the rebellions]. They did whatever was necessary to make it unbearable for the Cham so the Cham would have to make a move [against them].

After those events the Khmer Rouge oppressed the Cham people all over [the country]. They absolutely prohibited adherence to Islam. The Cham everywhere were considered to be traitors and their communities were broken up and they were relocated. The Khmer Rouge soldiers who were ethnic Cham, those who had formerly been serving in separate Cham units, were then mixed in with other military units [of Khmer people].

Half of my village was sent to Stung Trang district on the opposite bank of the river, inside the territory of the North Zone. Those evacuated could not take their belongings along with them. There were generally twelve families sent away at a time in a group, but when they reached Stung Trang the group was broken up and assigned to different places, one or two families to each village.

My family was placed in Samaki Village, in Saupheas subdistrict. Once we were there, we were known as “depositee people.” We lived in the spaces under the raised houses of the base people. They worked us night and day. They gave us one scoop of food per meal. Unable to endure this hardship, one of my younger siblings died of starvation there, then so did my father, then finally my mother. My father and mother both died of starvation combined with malaria. I nearly died myself. As for the other Cham families, their members died off just like my family.

In August 1977 they began purging the Cham and also the people who had been evacuated out of Phnom Penh. This process was carried out in several stages. In the first stage, they selected out the weak ones who could not work, the sick, the emaciated. In the second stage, which began in 1978, they rounded up entire families of Cham from their villages and

killed them without regard to who they were. The April 17 people were killed in the same way. However, the April 17 people were fewer in number than the Cham in those villages and subdistricts [of Stung Trang]. I escaped death because I was a fisherman by trade. At this same time, the Khmer Rouge wiped out those in my home village in the East Zone.

When I returned to my home village in 1979, only about thirty percent of the population had managed to survive. The others had been killed or had died of disease and starvation.



*Cham Muslims performing canonical worship (salat)
Photo by David Hawk/Documentation Center of Cambodia Archive*

Chapter 6

Postscript

This book offers multiple perspectives on the shared experience of Cham Muslims in Kroch Chhmar district and elsewhere in Cambodia during the years 1970-1979. These statements preserve part of the history of the Cham Muslims during the era of Democratic Kampuchea as well as the period that led up to it. Together, the accounts narrated here represent a Cambodian story, an Islamic story and a human story of Cham Muslims.

For Cham Muslim people themselves, this work offers a way to know in the present what has happened to Cambodia's Cham Muslim heritage in the past as their own families, their leaders and Islamic faith community confronted the rule of the Khmer Rouge. There are many ways to bring the past into the present. It is hoped that these eyewitness accounts of the "Cham rebellions," as well as the firsthand experiences narrated by those who lived through such events, may now also reach into the future, speaking to the generations to come who will be "searching for the truth."

Appendix

A Note on Place Names

Before and during Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the Khmer Rouge redrew the map of Cambodia. Figures 1 and 2 show the area they called the "East Zone," which included an area known as "Region 21." Region 21 contained the districts of Kroch Chhmar and Peam Chileang, among others. The first of these two districts was called Kroch Chhmar before Democratic Kampuchea and retains this name today. Peam Chileang, on the other hand, was created by the Khmer Rouge; it now a subdistrict within present-day Tbaung Khmum district.

This book is primarily concerned with events that occurred in Kroch Chhmar district, which also includes a subdistrict of the same name. Since 1994, Kroch Chhmar has comprised twelve subdistricts: Chhuk, Chumnik, Kampong Treas, Kaoh Pir, Kroch Chhmar, Peus 1 and Peus 2 (formerly, they were one subdistrict), Prek A-Chi, Roka Khnor, Svay Khleang, Trea, and Tuol Snuol. Some of these subdistricts hold fewer Cham-majority villages than others, notably Koh Pir and Chhouk.

When the National Unification Front first took control of the area in 1970, subdistricts and villages throughout Cambodia that covered a large area or had large populations were broken down into smaller settlements. The names for these villages and subdistricts were changed; most were given numbers. Some villages in Kroch Chhmar still retain the names the National Unification Front gave them. For example, in Svay Khleang subdistrict, the numerical designations "Village 1" through "Village 6" are still in use, as they are in Roka Khnor and Prek A-Chi subdistricts. The residents of these areas, however, prefer to use the pre-Democratic Kampuchea names for these villages. The author follows this convention as well.

Long before Democratic Kampuchea, many locations across Cambodia were known by two names: one name was used by the Cham people; the other was the non-Cham name. Some examples from Kampong Cham include:

Non-Cham Name	Cham Name
Akmok	Speu
Kdol Leu	Kingkavet
O Beng	Sreveal
Pongro	Svay Ta Hen

Sala Phnom	Se-Sala
Svay Khleang	Prek Kaut
Ta Nuong Krao	Kavang
Tuol Chambak	Prek Khcheay
Tuol Sambat	Peus

The village of Svay Khleang has a particularly complicated naming history. The Cham, who have lived in this village for hundreds of years, call it “Phum [village] Prek Kaut” (broken canal in the Cham language) after a nearby canal that had been dug out and redirected from its original course by the flow of the river. The Khmer people preferred instead to call it “Prek Cham,” as a reference to “the canal that had been dug by the Cham.” Later, both names were applied not only to the canal but also to the Cham-majority village that was located close to the canal. Today, this village is called “Svay Khleang Village.”

During the colonial era, the French government built a storage warehouse under a large mango tree in Prek Kaut. The people called this warehouse “Khleang Svay” (the mango warehouse). Later the village’s name was changed from Prek Kaut or Prek Cham to Khleang Svay, and not long after, it was changed again to Svay Khleang. That was to be the official name of the village throughout the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era (1955-1970). The subdistrict that held a Svay Khleang and five other villages was also named Svay Khleang.

When the National Unification Front gained control of the area in 1970, the movement that was to come to represent the Khmer Rouge faction gave new names to all six villages in Svay Khleang subdistrict. At the same time, it also split the village that had been known as Svay Khleang into two. The new naming system used numerical designations. The eastern-most village was called Village 1 and the western-most Village 7. What had been Svay Khleang village became Villages 5 and 6. These designations remained in effect throughout Democratic Kampuchea.

After 1979 when the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, the new government of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea retained the village names that had been in use under the Khmer Rouge. Because so few of the two villages’ residents survived the regime, the government reunited them under the name Village 5. Then the adjacent Village 7 was renamed Village 6 to eliminate the numerical gap in the system of naming villages.

Today Village 5 is still known officially by its numerical name, as are the rest of the villages in Svay Khleang subdistrict. The people who live in the area, however, prefer to use the place names from the Sangkum Reastr

Niyum era. So, Village 5 is still popularly known as Svay Khleang. The Cham, however, still call the village by its traditional name, Prek Kaut, as they have done for generations. Both Khmer and Cham people still use the name Prek Cham when referring to the canal near the village of Svay Khleang, but do not use it when referring to the village of Svay Khleang proper.

Telegram 15

(Documentation Center of Cambodia Cataloguing Number L0001045-01bbk)

Dear respected and beloved Comrade Brother Pol [Pol Pot],

We would like to report the withdrawal of people from the East [East Zone] to the North [North Zone]. There is some disagreement on this issue, and we have deviated from Angkar's advice regarding the receiving points, as noted below.

On November 30 both sides agreed that the Eastern side would hand over people to the Northern side at the Districts of Stung Trang and Preah [Prek] Prasap. The Preah Prasap receiving point agreed to admit people from the Chhlaung District, and the Stung Trang receiving point agreed to admit [people] from the Peam Chileang and Kroch Chmar Districts. The Region and Districts have gathered the number of people we required to be moved from Region 21. We have already transported these people to the other side of the river. However, both receiving points absolutely refuse to accept Islamic people and are only accepting purely Khmer people. Therefore there is turmoil amongst the people removed on November 30.

I immediately advised the Region and Districts to temporarily halt the withdrawal and await further instructions from Brother and the North Zone. Comrade Pok [Ke Pauk] is probably not aware of these problems. I advised the Region and Districts to return the Muslims to their villages. In accordance with the consensus reached at the meeting, Muslims were not to be sent to the Kratie Province. The Northwest and the North Zones must accept the Muslims as to separate them from Mekong River, so the atmosphere will be relieved. However, these Zones did not accept Muslims. Brother, please advice us on how to deal with this problem.

According to our policy, 50,000 people had to be moved from the East Zone and sent to the North Zone. Yet there are over 100,000 Muslims remaining in the Eastern Zone. We only withdrew people from key locations along the river and at the border, but we did not withdraw people from the Tbaung Khmum District. This withdrawal is the dispersal strategy we agreed upon in previous discussions. But if the North Zone refuse to accept Islamic people, we will continue to do our best to retain control over them. That will not be a problem. But we will not have withdrawn the required 150,000 people if the North Zone does not accept Muslims.

Wishing you, Brother, good health and success,

November 30, 1975

Chhon [reporter's name]

CC: ♦ Brother Noun [Noun Chea]
 ♦ Brother Doeun
 ♦ Brother Yem
 ♦ Documentation

Glossary

Angkar - "The organization"; the term used to refer to members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.

Cadre - A member of the Khmer Rouge.

Cham - An ethnic and religious minority group in present-day Cambodia and Vietnam; there has been a Muslim presence in mainland Southeast Asia dating to the earliest period of Islam, and Cham people converted to Islam in great numbers during the rise of Islam in Southeast Asia in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Champa - An ancient kingdom of Cambodia and Vietnam. Once a rival to the kingdom of Angkor, the Cham people trace their heritage to this civilization.

Cooperative (*sahakor*) - A community grouping throughout Democratic Kampuchea, typified by shared property and collective dining.

Democratic Kampuchea - The official name of the state of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979.

East Zone - The Khmer Rouge's designation for the region covering the eastern part of present-day Kampong Cham province as well as a part of Kratie province, a part of Kandal province, and the entire area of the present-day provinces of Svay Rieng and Prey Veng. This zone contained an area, designated "Region 21," which included Kroch Chhmar district.

Haji (*Hajji*) - A pan-Islamic title for a male Muslim who has fulfilled the religious obligation of undertaking the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca according to religious stipulations); a woman who has undertaken the Hajj is called "Hajjah."

Hakim - The designation for an Islamic community leader at the village level; this is also a pan-Islamic term for a figure of legal authority.

Hakim [Ta Kim] Li - A leader for Cham Muslim affairs appointed in the first years of the Khmer Rouge movement in Kroch Chhmar. Well-respected by the Cham Muslim community, Hakim Li was accused of being the leader of a counter-revolutionary movement. After a period of

time as a fugitive, he disappeared in 1974.

Issarak – A Cambodian nationalist movement that began as an anti-colonial movement and subsequently split into many factions.

Kampong Cham – A Cambodian province that includes the district and subdistrict of Kroch Chhmar; the capital of the province is also called Kampong Cham.

Keitap – An Islamic religious book in the Arabic language; although these are usually considered to be books of supplicatory prayer, a *keitap* may be a book on any religious subject, including Arabic grammar, Qur-an commentary, Islamic law, and doctrine or theology.

Khmer Rouge – The communist movement that controlled Cambodia from 1975-1979. It was under the leadership of Solath Sar (also known as Pol Pot).

Khmer Sar – “White Khmer”; a movement the Khmer Rouge considered to be an enemy faction.

Khsach Praches Kraom – A former Vietnamese village in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict that was the site of a Khmer Rouge security office (prison).

Koh Phal – “Island of Harvest”; an island in the Mekong River, Kroch Chhmar district, that is now practically uninhabited; it was the site of a revolt against the Khmer Rouge in 1975.

Kroch Chhmar – A district in Kampong Cham province that lies along the Mekong River; it includes a subdistrict of the same name. The Khmer Rouge also used the name Kroch Chhmar to designate a district in Region 21. Historically, this area has been home a large population of Cham Muslims. As of 1994, there were twelve subdistricts within the district: Chhuk, Chumnik, Kampong Treas, Kaoh Pir, Kroch Chhmar (subdistrict), Peus 1 and Peus 2 (formerly one subdistrict), Prek A-Chi, Roka Khnor, Svay Khleang, Trea, and Tuol Snuol.

Kroch Chhmar Kraom – A village in Kroch Chhmar subdistrict; the site of the Khmer Rouge’s principal security office (prison) and the primary interrogation site for Kroch Chhmar district.

Lon Nol – A leader of the regime that took control of Cambodia in March 1970, ending the political rule of Prince Norodom Sihanouk; this

regime fell to the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. Lon Nol was a general in the armed forces of Cambodia.

“Liberation” - The term used by the Khmer Rouge for the control of an area and its incorporation into what was to become known as the state of Democratic Kampuchea; the expression refers especially to the occupation of Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975 and the fall of the Lon Nol regime at that time.

Ly Musa - An influential Islamic teacher (*tuon*) in Cambodia during the 1960s. Having studied overseas in the 1950s, Ly Musa directed the most prestigious school for the study of Islam in Cambodia in its day, which was located Svay Khleang village, Kroch Chhmar district. Ly Musa fled Kroch Chhmar in 1971 and was later captured by the Khmer Rouge and killed in 1975.

Me chum-ah - A Cham Muslim religious group leader at the village level.

Mobile unit (*kang chalat*) - A Khmer Rouge youth work group.

[National Unification] Front (*Ronakse Ruopruom Chaet*) - The movement preceding the Khmer Rouge in Kampong Cham province and elsewhere; the Front controlled many areas of Kroch Chhmar district by 1970 under a District Leadership Committee; it had control of the entire district by 1973.

Peam Chileang - The name of a district in Region 21 that was created by the Khmer Rouge. Today it is the name of a subdistrict in Tbaung Khmum district, Kampong Cham province, comprising just a part of the area that was called Peam Chileang during Democratic Kampuchea.

Phnom Lok - The site of a Khmer Rouge “re-education facility” in Chhouk subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district.

Phnom Penh - The capital of Cambodia.

Phum - Village.

Pol Pot - The leader of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Born Solath Sar, Pol Pot led the state of Democratic Kampuchea, which ruled Cambodia from 1975-1979. He died in 1998.

Prek A-Chi - The site of a Khmer Rouge security office (prison) in

Kroch Chhmar district.

Qur-an – Islamic holy scripture, an Arabic “recitation” understood by Muslims to have been sent down from God as dictated to the Prophet Muhammad by the Angel Jibril (Gabriel).

Ramadan – The month of the Islamic lunar calendar in which the Qur-an is said to have been revealed; Muslims are required to abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset during this month, among other obligations.

Raya (Malay, *Hari Raya*; Arabic *‘Idul Fitri*) – The Islamic holy day marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan; congregational worship is obligatory on this day.

Region 21 – The name of an area within the Khmer Rouge-designated East Zone. It included present-day Dambe, Kroch Chhmar, and Peam Chileang districts (the latter was created during Democratic Kampuchea, but is now the name of a subdistrict in Tbaung Khmum district), and parts of Chhlong, Memot, Ponhea Krek, and Tbaung Khmum districts. It also comprised a district formed by the Khmer Rouge, Toek Chreuv, which no longer exists.

Sangkum Reastr Niyum – The “People’s Socialist Community,” the official use the name for the regime under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. It was founded in 1955 and ended in 1970 with the takeover by the regime led by Lon Nol.

Solidarity group (*krom samakhi*) – A type of community grouping that preceded the organizational structure of “cooperatives” in areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Solidarity groups showed regional variation, but were typified by communal work arrangements, private property rights and no collective dining (these would be instated under the cooperative system).

Sihanouk (Samdech Sihanouk, Samdech Au) – Norodom Sihanouk, former King of Cambodia. Crowned in 1941, Sihanouk abdicated the monarchy in 1955 in order to establish the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime; at that time he received the rank of Samdech (prince). Norodom Sihanouk was elected King in 1993 and was renamed King-Father of Cambodia in 2004.

Surao – Across Southeast Asia, the name for a semi-formal space

designated for Muslim worship.

Svay Khleang - "Mango Storehouse"; a village in Kroch Chhmar district that has been known by several names, including Prek Kaut and Prek Cham. Svay Khleang is also the name of a subdistrict and was the name for a grouping of villages during Democratic Kampuchea. It was composed of two villages: Village 5 and Village 6 (later these two villages would be designated as Village 5). Svay Khlean held a major Islamic school in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era and was the site of a 1975 revolt against the Khmer Rouge.

Ta - (Grandfather); a title of respect or term of address for a male elder. The equivalent term for a woman is *Yeay* (Grandmother).

"Ten-household group" - A village administrative grouping dating to the period before Democratic Kampuchea.

Trea - a subdistrict and village along the Mekong River in Kroch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province. It was the site of a brief uprising against the Khmer Rouge in 1973.

Tuon - An honorific title used in Cambodia for a learned Islamic religious teacher.

Ukhna - A title given by the king for those who have donated \$100,000 or more to help the Cambodian people through building schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, etc. Almost all of them donate their own money, but a small number have raised funds from foreign donors. In the Cham community, there are two *Ukhna*: Sos Kamry and Kai Toam.

Wat (*watt*) - A Theravada Buddhist pagoda, sometimes translated into English as "pagoda."

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Ysa Osman is a researcher with the Documentation Center of Cambodia. He was born in Svay Khleang village, the site of one of the Cham rebellions. Ysa Osman is the author of the 2002 book *Oukoubah: Justice for the Cham Muslims under Democratic Kampuchea regime*, and several articles on the lives of the Cham during the regime.

End Note

¹ The term “Khmer Rouge” was applied at differing times and in various contexts. In the 1960s, Sihanouk referred to the leftist movement in Cambodia as the “Khmers Rouges.” However, “The Documentation Center of Cambodia refers to the Khmer Rouge as those who worked for and/or led Democratic Kampuchea” (Ysa, Osman: *Oukoubah: Justice for the Cham Muslims under Democratic Kampuchea*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2002, p. 2, n. 4). Some of the differing perspectives on this question are presented in Issue 6 of the Center’s magazine, *Searching for the Truth* (June 2000).

² Author’s interview with Sim On, former soldier in Kroch Chhmar, at Khsach Praches Kraom, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 22 January 2001.

³ Author’s interview with Din Paet and Hao Thol, former cadres at Villages 1 and 2 3, respectively, at Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 11 December 2000. Din Paet reported, “The Vietnamese leaders I knew were called Ba Son and Bai Thai.”

⁴ Author’s interview with Din Paet, op. cit., 11 December 2000.

⁵ Author’s interviews with: Sim On, former soldier in Kroch Chhmar, at Khsach Prahes Kraom village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 24 January 2001; Din Paet, op. cit.; Sok Chea, former interrogator at the Kroch Chhmar district security office, at Village 4, Prek A-Chi, 4 February 2001 and 21 February 2001; and the prison confession of Bin Ban (aka Bau), former district secretary of Peam Chileang. This last document also states that Ta Pha (Sau Pha) and Chunny were born in Wat Thmei village, Kok Srok subdistrict, Dambe district; Soeu was born in Koh Luong village, Kok Samrong subdistrict, Peam Chileang district, Kampong Cham; Aok was born in Prek A-Chi subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district; and Yok was from Trea village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district. Bin Ban’s confession is Tuol Sleng Museum Document No. N-45 and Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-13483.

⁶ Author’s interview with Min Man, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 12 December 2000.

⁷ Author’s interview with Chan Thea, at Khsach Praches Leu village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district, 30 April 2001.

⁸ Author’s interview with Mat Ysa, former prisoner of the Kroch Chhmar district security office, at Prek Kroch village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 24 January 2001.

⁹ Author’s interviews with: El Toulloas, age 62, at Baren village, Svay Prateal subdistrict, Saang district, Kandal province, 6 November 1999; and Din Paet, op. cit.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Yahya Ali, at "Kilo 3" village, Prek Kak subdistrict, Stung Trang district, Kampong Cham province, 23 December 2001.

¹¹ Author's interviews with: Sim On, op. cit.; Din Paet, op. cit.; and Sok Chea, op. cit.

¹² Author's interview with Din Paet, op. cit.

¹³ For example, the wife of Bin Ban stated that her husband had been called by Angkar to go away for studies at this time, and that he had disappeared. Author's interview with Soeung Kroeung, at Peus village and subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district, 2001. In fact, Bin Ban was arrested on 1 June 1977 and taken to the prison known as "S-21." As noted above, his prison confession is Tuol Sleng Museum Document No. N-45 and Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-13483.

¹⁴ See the Appendix for more discussion of the designation of Svay Khleang village over time.

¹⁵ Author's interview with Roun Sman at Tuol Sambat village, Peus 2 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 9 February 2001. The author interviewed eight other persons who gave similar reports.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Ly Hak, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar district, 17 December 2000.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Hao Thol, former member of the production committee of Svay Khleang subdistrict, at Village 3, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 11 December 2000. Nine other witnesses gave similar reports.

¹⁸ Author's interview with Soem Zain, at Trea 1 Village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 14 February 2001, and others.

¹⁹ Author's interview with Touloas Min, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, 9 December 2000.

²⁰ Author's interview with Sen Kao, at Village 7, Areak Thnaot subdistrict, Stung Trang district, Kampong Cham province. Six other witnesses in Kroch Chhmar district made similar statements to the author.

²¹ *Revolutionary Youth* ("Yuvachun yuvaneary padevoat"), Issue 6 (6 June 1976), published by the Democratic Kampuchea regime, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-0096. The source also reports, "[T]he Central Committee met and decided on 20 May 1973 to create cooperatives."

²² "Remarks of Comrade Pol Pot, Secretary of the CPK, First Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, during his Meeting with the Belgium-Kampuchea Delegation," 5 August 1978, Phnom Penh, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-00108.

- ²³ Author's interview with Sieu Y, former cooperative cadre, at Village 5, Svay Khleang subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 6 February 2001. Three other witnesses made similar statements in interviews with the author.
- ²⁴ Author's interview with Ly Hak, op. cit.
- ²⁵ Author's interview with Soem Zain, op. cit.
- ²⁶ Author's interview with Teh Zain, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 8 December 2000.
- ²⁷ Author's interview with Man Zain, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 7 December 2000.
- ²⁸ Author's interview with Sieu Y, op. cit.
- ²⁹ Author's interview with Hak Mat, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 12 February 2001.
- ³⁰ Author's interview with Touloas Min, op. cit.
- ³¹ Author's interview with Teh Zain, op. cit.
- ³² Author's interviews with Sman Kachi, Man Zain, and Teh Zain, at Village 5, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 7-8 and 19 December 2000.
- ³³ Author's interview with Sman Kachi, op. cit., 19 December 2000.
- ³⁴ Author's interview with Sieu Y, op. cit.
- ³⁵ Author's interview with Soem Zain, op. cit.
- ³⁶ Author's interview with Roun Sman, at Tuol Sambat village, Peus 2 subdistrict, 9 February 2001. Four other informants made similar remarks.
- ³⁷ Author's interview with Hak Mat, op. cit. Eight other interviewees also gave the same report to the author.
- ³⁸ Author's interview with Hak Mat, op. cit.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Author's interview with Sieu Y, op. cit.
- ⁴¹ Author's interview with Sauv Nhit, Village 4, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 2 May 2001.
- ⁴² *Revolutionary Youth*, Issue 3-4, March-April 1978, page 6, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-21407.

⁴³ Author's interview with Sauv Nhit, *op. cit.* Five other witnesses gave similar reports. In an interview conducted by Keokanitha Kim with Dul Chim, age 54, at Trapeang Pring village, Popel subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo, 2 June 2001, the interviewee said that in his village of Trapeang Pring a communal dining cooperative was created in 1973. Three other witnesses in Tram Kak district gave similar information, indicating that the same plan was in effect in Takeo province at the time.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Math Ly, now deceased, at his house in Phnom Penh, 27 March 2000. The son of Sos Man and an influential political leader himself, H.E. Math Ly passed away in 2003. See also Ysa Osman, *Oukoubah*, *op. cit.*, p. 12 for more information on the opposition to cooperatives.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Teu Mat, at Pre village and subdistrict, Stung Trang district, Kampong Cham, 12 December 1999.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Teh Zain, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ "The Confession of Chek Brahim," Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-02687, states, "Ta Man was the leader of the Cham within the Front faction." This information is corroborated in the author's interview with Math Ly, *op. cit.* Math Ly, the son of Sos Man (see n. 44 above), said that Sos Man had joined the resistance movement during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era.

⁴⁸ This house still exists today. Author's interviews with Sos Maisam, age 66, the wife of Haji Idris, and with Idris Kamaruddin, age 48, the son of Haji Idris, at Prek Kroch village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 7 March 2001. Ten other witnesses also verified this information.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Ly Ysa, at Saoy 1 village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 22 April 2001.

⁵⁰ Author's interview with Krevan, son of Hakim Li, at Kanhchor, Kanhchor subdistrict, Chhlong, Kratie province, 24 April 2001. Sman Alamin (Prek Kroch village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 18 January 2001) as well as many other witnesses made statements on the respect afforded to Hakim Li by Cham Muslims. It is still not known what happened to Hakim Li after he disappeared in 1974.

⁵¹ Author's interview with Muhammad Zain, at Chroy Changvar, Phnom Penh, 2 December 1999. Zain reported, "Before 1975 Haji Res Loh lived in Chroy Changvar.... I saw the Khmer Rouge arrest Haji Res Loh in Mesar Prachan village, Peam Reang district, Prey Veng province, in late 1975."

⁵² Author's interview with Haji Abu Talib, hakim at Vihear Kien Khleang in the Chroy Changvar section of Phnom Penh, 3 December 1999. He stated, "Sulaiman Shukry was the first deputy director of Islam before the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh. He lived in Chroy Changvar and was arrested at Kohe village, Rokar Kaong subdistrict, Mukh Kampul district, Kandal province in late 1975."

⁵³ Author's interview with Sulaiman Hafizah, 46, daughter of Haji Math Sleh Slaiman, at Chroy Changvar Khnong village, Phnom Penh, 13 October 1999. She said, "In 1976 my family was evacuated to Bak Rotes village, Prek Luong subdistrict, Ek Phnom district, Battambang. During that year my father fell ill and was sent to the hospital. He died immediately after he received an injection and his corpse was thrown into a swamp by the medical cadres."

⁵⁴ Author's interview with Uknha Sos Kamry (Kamaruddin bin Yusof), Chief of the Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs in Cambodia, at Chrang Chamres, Phnom Penh, 20 June 2001; and author's interview with Sok Pry, the *hakim* and representative of Kroch Chhmar, 22 April 2001.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Ly Hak, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Author's interview with Ibrahim bin Musa, at Village 2, Svay Khleang, Kroch Chhmar, 14 March 2001.

⁵⁷ Author's interviews with Idris Kamaruddin, *op. cit.*, and Sman Mat, age 65, at Trea 2 village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 24 April 2001.

⁵⁸ The arrest and execution of Sos Man was probably not only due to his role with Cham Muslim people. It seems also to have been connected to his former membership in the Indochinese Community Party, which had been centered in Hanoi; many people with connections to this movement were also killed at this time.

⁵⁹ This account of the incident at Phum Trea is based on the author's interview with Muhammad No, at Phum Trea 2, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 24 April 2001. A complete version of the information from the author's interview with Muhammad No appears in Chapter 5.

⁶⁰ The building had been the home of a man named Singuon (known to villagers by his title in the Department of Topography, "the bureau chief"); some still remembered the prison as having been "Singuon's house."

⁶¹ Phet was the youth chairman of Kroch Chhmar from 1975 to 1977. He was born in Kok Srok village and subdistrict, Dambe district. Aok was security chief of Kroch Chhmar in 1970-1972; he was born in Prek A-Chi subdistrict. Chunny was a member of the District Committee of Kroch Chhmar from 1970 to 1977, and was born in Wat Thmei village, Kok Srok subdistrict, Dambe district. This information is from the confession of Bin Ban (aka Bau), *op. cit.*

⁶² Practically every former prisoner interviewed for this study who was interrogated and tortured in the Kroch Chhmar Kraom facility mentions Kep Bun by name, frequently calling attention to his extreme cruelty. From these accounts, it seems that he could have held overall responsibility for the interrogation activities of the prison. During the author's interview with Kep Bun himself, in Sangkum Meanchey village, Tuol Snuol subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 7 February 2001, however, Bun expressly denied that he had ever been assigned to the prison

in any capacity.

⁶³ Sman Alamin reported in this interview that today Eav lives in Khsach Praches village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict and district.

⁶⁴ In her interview with the author, Ly Khadijah clarified, "This was in Tuol Snuol subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar district. Some call the place Kampong Veang. Today there are no Cham-majority villages there."

⁶⁵ The individual mentioned here by Mat Team is not the same person as "Ta [Kim] Li," who is another figure mentioned in many of the accounts in this chapter and also discussed in Chapter 1.

⁶⁶ A prison facility allegedly located at Tuol Rokar was only mentioned in Sok Chea's account. No other informant made reference to its existence.

⁶⁷ Sok Chea also noted that Chhun lives in Tuol Rokar village, Tuol Snuol subdistrict. Bun is living in Sangkum Meanchey village, Tuol Snuol subdistrict. Thea is living in Khsach Praches village, Kroch Chhmar subdistrict. Chhorn's current residence is unknown.

⁶⁸ There is further discussion of this figure, who served under Sos Man, in Chapter 1.

⁶⁹ Sok Chea refers here to the renowned Islamic teacher, Ly Musa (see Chapter 4 for his biography). After years as a fugitive evading capture by the Khmer Rouge, Ly Musa was arrested in 1975. Many Cham people believe that he had been apprehended in Prek Bak village along the Mekong River, the last place he was known to be hiding. During the course of this research, it was only this evidence from Sok Chea alone that confirmed that he had been arrested in Memot. Memot district borders on Vietnam and so it is in fact quite plausible that Ly Musa had been planning to flee there next before the Khmer Rouge captured him.

⁷⁰ Din Paet added here: "Bien was well-educated. He was a nephew of Keat Chhon, the current minister of economics and finance. Bien was born in Thmei village, Khsach Andet subdistrict, Chhlong district, Kratie province."

⁷¹ According to the interviewees, such charges often took the form of some kind of allegations of sexual abuse.

⁷² In the accounts to follow, there are significant differences in the figures that former villagers have given for the populations of Koh Phal before 1975 and after 1979. The author uses the estimate given by Res Tort on the assumption that he, as the former village chairman, would have the most accurate recollection.

⁷³ Their names were given in this interview as: Mao Id, Kao Rany, Sen Mat, Sen Ya, Saleh Mat, Teh Youb, Sman Ly and Mat Min.

⁷⁴ Chi Ly clarified in the interview: "First they took four: Hakim Yahya, Ta Leh, Ta

Mouhaddin, and Saleh Sok. Then they arrested Sman Ibrahim, called Lohim. Then nine more went: Riev Lep, Ya Yakub, Res Tort, Ya Yeb, Mao Saleh, Saleh Raset, Saleh Mat, Sos Al Yeus, and Yeb Imran. The fourth and final arrest was of two women, Sman Aminah, and Him Kas."

⁷⁵ Chi Ly added the following information: "The seven women were: Yeb Mas (today living in Malaysia); Yeb Aminah, Mao Maisam, Mao Aishah, Fatimah, Kaup Keas (these five live in Koh Phal today); and Yeay [Grandmother] Nas, who died in 2000. The four children were: No Tayyib, now living in Malaysia; Sren Math, now in Thnaot village, Chhlong district; Him Maret and Ly Amin, now deceased."

⁷⁶ Chet Sman added in the interview, "These youth leaders were named Rany, Saleh, No, Chi Hak, Chi Sos, and Mat."

⁷⁷ Chet Sman also said, "I remember some of their names: Ta Sos, Haji Leh, Haji Riev, Pra-el, Haji Some, and Haji Imam Noh."

⁷⁸ In the author's interview with him, Chet Sman gave the names of the heads some of those families as: El, Chao, Loas, Nah, Mat, and Tort.

⁷⁹ Kaup Ruqiyyah added: "Hanafy's father was Sos. After the rebellion Hanafy's family was evacuated to Krabei Kriek and later to Kokoh village, Tang Krasang subdistrict and district, Kampong Thom province, in the North Zone. None of that family survived after 1979."

⁸⁰ Kaup Ruqiyyah gave their names as: Luong No, Ma'at, Rumly, Sen, Mat, Mao, Yeb, Haji Mit, and Haji Mat.

⁸¹ Kaup Ruqiyyah also said: "The boys' names were No Tayyib, Ly Amin, and Him Maret. Five months after I had lived at Phkar Daung, the three boys were sent there to their mothers. Maret and Amin did not get to see their mothers, who had already died from malaria. Tayyib did reunite with his mother. All three boys said that they had been held at the Kroch Chhmar prison. Two of the three boys survived: Tayyib is now in Malaysia and Maret lives in Saoy village. Amin died after he returned to Koh Phal in 1979."

⁸² Saleh Mein stated during the interview that these ten men were: Haji Saleh, No Yousos and Ya Mat, all of whom now live in Malaysia; Peang Ponyamin, whom he identified as a member of the National Assembly from 1998-2003; and Teu Yaub, Sousos, Sul, Ahmad (husband of Ming Chouk), Tort, and one other whose name Saleh Mein could not recall. These last six were the ones, he said, who went to Malaysia and later returned to Cambodia, where they were killed.

⁸³ Saleh Mein added in the interview that these were: "myself, Mat Pel, Sen Ahmad (my elder brother-in-law), Chivan Mat (also my brother-in-law), Res Tort, Sos El Yeus, Chilanghim, and Tuon Si."

⁸⁴ Saleh Mein also said, "Mat Pel and one of my brothers-in-law, Sen Ahmad

whose wife died in the evacuations, stayed in Vietnam. Six returned [to Cambodia]: myself, Chivan Mat, Res Tort, Sos El Yeus, Chilanghim, and Tuon Si. Tuon Si and Chilanghim later died.”

⁸⁵ Ly Musa was captured in Memot district in 1975 and sent to the security office in Kroch Chhmar Kraom, where he died. Source: Sok Chea, prison interrogator (see interview in Chapter 2).

⁸⁶ These consisted of the following, according to Sman Kachi’s account: four members of the village *hakim* committee, Man Touloas, Res Tam, Do Sen, and Sulaiman Mat; eight *tuons*, Sim Prohim, Mat Saleh, Touloas Sulaiman, Ly Musa (from Malaysia [*sic*]), Saleh Chvea (from Malaysia), Mat Ayyub, Muhammad Tort, and Saleh Aminah (a woman); three hajis, Haji Karim, Haji Hussein, and Haji Yusuf; seventeen members of the *hakim* advisory group, Khut Saleh, Kak Ly, Chai Phin, Chumtup Sa, Tauny, Dangkhao Sman, Min Ly, Him San, Khru It, Sit Sos, Sit Sim, Sit Saleh, Paet (Doctor) Set, Aung Kao, Mat Sok, Dangkhao El, Dangkhao Mat; and eight students, Him Mat, Sa Min, El Kaup, Sos Him, Sa Sary, Mat Saleh, Pin Mis, and Ly Hak.

⁸⁷ Author’s interview with Sa Zain, former villager of “Kilo 7” village in Stung Trang, now residing in Svay Khleang, 11 February 2001.

⁸⁸ Author’s interview with Mat Saren, at Pongro Village (“Svay Tahen”), Roka Koy subdistrict, Kang Meas district, Kampong Cham province, 1 May 2004. There were similar reports given by the following: Ya Math, at Pothi In village, Ponhea Krek district, Kampong Cham, 29 April 2004; Mohamad Saleh, at Roka Popram village, Tbaung Khmum district, 5 May 2004; and Kae Sulaiman, at Kor village, Tbaung Khmum district, 5 May 2004.

⁸⁹ Author’s interview with Talib Mas, at Khsach Praches Kandal village, Kroch Chhmar, 30 April 2001.

⁹⁰ “Telegram of the Khmer Rouge No. 15,” dated 30 November 1975, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. L-01045.

⁹¹ “Telegram of the Khmer Rouge No. 94,” dated 2 April 1976, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. L-01187.

⁹² “Commanders’ Meeting Memorandum,” 16 September 1976, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. N-01449.

⁹³ “Weekly Report of Region 5 Committee,” 21 May 1977, Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. L-01425.

⁹⁴ Ysa, Osman, *Oukoubah*, op. cit., p. 68. Samas’s account is given in pp. 65-68, following “The Confession of Samas Karim,” Documentation Center of Cambodia Catalogue No. D-02686. Samas entered the Tuol Sleng Prison, on 8 January 1976.

⁹⁵ Ukhna Kamaruddin bin Yusof (Sos Kamry) serves as the chief of the Highest

Council for Islamic Religious Affairs in Cambodia. Fuller discussion of this information may be found in Ysa, Osman, *Oukoubah*, op. cit., p. 6.

⁹⁶ Author's interview with Sauv Nhit, op. cit.

⁹⁷ Author's interview with Touloas Musa, Trea 2 Village, Trea subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 6 February 2001.

⁹⁸ Author's interview with Yep El, Prek Kroch Village, Peus 1 subdistrict, Kroch Chhmar, 11 March 2001.

⁹⁹ Author's interview with Saleh Ahmat, Preah Sihanouk Blvd., Kratie subdistrict, district, and province, 30 September 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Muhammad No reported in the interview that he remembered some of their names as: Haji Set, Aung Loas, Him, Saleh, Osman, Ahmad, Luong Sa, Ngah Loas, Aung Saum and Chieng Kao.

¹⁰¹ In this interview, Soem El gave their names as: Muhammad Kachi bin Musa, Haroun bin Ayyub, Ma-at bin Ayyub, Muhammad Tort bin Hussein, Yusus bin Qasim and Abdul Rahman bin Hussein.

¹⁰² "Candidate people" was a Khmer Rouge designation. See Ysa, Osman, *Oukoubah*, op. cit., pp. 79-80, for a complete explanation of rankings given such as "old people," "new people," "17 April people," etc.

¹⁰³ Ya Min added in the interview, "I can only remember four names out of the eight total: Ya Roun, Smas Sa, Teu Mat, and Saleh Mat."

¹⁰⁴ Ahmad Sofiyah added: "I remember the names of twelve of the fifteen girls [who also claimed that they were Khmer]: Chan Sok, Na, Net (all three are revolutionary names, not their actual birth names), Satas, Sa-ei. All of them are today living in Svay Khleang. There was also Chouk and Maisam, who now live along with me in Khsach Praches. Saros is today at "Kilo 3" village, Prek Kak, Stung Trang. Atikas is now living at Phum Thmei, Khsach Andet, Chhlong district, Kratie. Teiyom, I don't know where she lives. Aisah and Yam are dead."

¹⁰⁵ No Satas added: "I remember the names of some [of the girls who also claimed that they were Khmer]: Saros, whose revolutionary name was Chan Sok; Aminah, revolutionary name Net; Saufiyan, revolutionary name Na; and, Sa-y, Soh, Maisam, Sar, Chouk, and Sary. My own revolutionary name was Chheng An."

¹⁰⁶ Saleh Saros added: "I knew two of their names [out of those who claimed that they were Khmer]: Satas, whose revolutionary name was Chheng An, who is living today in Svay Khleang; and Hafisah, who lives now at Prek Pra, Khan Mean Chey, Phnom Penh."

¹⁰⁷ The first echelon ["A"] had twelve people, the second ["B"] had 20, and a "kor" ["C"] held over 100. Translator's note: these groupings were thus roughly the

equivalent of squad, platoon, and company, respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Tam Rahimah said that she remembered the names of those with her: “Maisam, Maisam (there were two girls with that name), Sofiyah, and Maisah, who were all from my village. And there were Satas, Saros, Aminah, and Yan. There was also Sa-y who came from Svay Khleang and Saros who was from ‘Kilo 3’ [village]. I can remember only those ten names.”

¹⁰⁹ Sou Harun also reported: “I remember the names of some who were arrested then. They included: Ta It, Tuon Kaup, Ta Kim Tuol, and Ta Sa. They were all leaders of the community.”