



[ERN 00562838]

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The village chief named BOU Sim (ប៊ូ ស៊ីម) assigned me to harvest rice in Sdok Sat (ស្ដុកស៊ាត) Village, one of the villages in Samraong (សំរោង) Village. I had to walk past the villages of Trapeang Prey (ត្រពាំងប្រីយ័), Trapeang Chrey (ត្រពាំងជ្រៃ), Prey Kdei (ប្រៃក្តី), Trapeang Thmar (ត្រពាំងធ្ម).... My God, I had to walk for a long distance to reach the destination. I was exhausted to death. How could I work at this time?

Oh! My life! How far could I endure such mental and physical hardship?

With shortness of breath, I sat alone under the *trach* (ត្រាច) tree for just a short while for fear of *Angkar* who had the eyes of the pineapples, waiting to stare at us and to find our faults. To my understanding, that was what they could do.

...

I felt absolutely frustrated. I thought that other people were suffering the same hardship. However, we all were extremely patient.

It was lunchtime. Four of us were sitting in circle, carrying a rice bowl and spoon, waiting for food to be distributed.

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[ERN 00562844-00562845]

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6 January 1976

Angkar assigned me to harvest rice in Trapeang Andaeuk (ត្រពាំងអណ្ដើក).

9 January 1976

I returned from Trapeang Andaeuk with tears, feeling sympathetic towards myself. People liked to allude to me because I was weak and worked slowly.

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9 February 1976

Angkar made a new plan, mixing the new people with the base people. We, the new people, left Trapeang Angk (ត្រពាំងអង្គ) Village. So, my family lived with the new and base people. We lived together in the kitchen of the people in Prakeab Khang Tboung (ប្រកៀបខាងត្បូង). They mobilised us in such a way so that it was easy for them to work and to control us. If we lived with the new people, we could secretly talk about or recall the old memories when we lived in Phnom Penh. Unfortunately, since we lived with the base people, we had to keep silent like the mute. We only use our eyes to watch the road ahead the worksite and our mouth to eat and speak about important things.

At this Prakeab Khang Tboung Village, I had to build a road from Angk Roka (អង្គរកា) to Wat Trapeang Thum (ត្រពាំងធំ). At night, I dreamt of my parents. When I woke up, I realised it was just a dream... It really made me shocked and pine for them... Mum, where were you now? I missed you so much. Mum, you used to take care of me... Whereas this contemptible *Angkar* had me work without mercy.

...

.... Oh my dear, when could we meet? The evil event has separated us. It was completely unexpected.

[ERN 00562849-00562850]

It was the day when *Angkar* introduced the policy of communal meals at the communal kitchen near Trapeang Trach A Leung (ត្រពាំងត្រាចអាឈើង). It applied for both the new and base people.

...

4 July 1976

My family moved to Trapeang Chumrov (ត្រពាំងជម្រូម). We lived in *Ta Ngèt* (តាង៉ែត) 's house. At that time the big house of my mother-in-law and sister-in-law *Nèn* (នែន) was completely removed by *Angkar*, and the used wood was used to build two long communal kitchens close to each other in two lines from the east to the west near Trapeang Trach A Leung.

...

The following day, on the third day of the Khmer month of Asath (ខែអាសាធ) in the period of the waning moon, *Bang* SOU Nai (ស្ទឹង ណៃ) (the seventh elder sibling-in-law) had to make a marriage vow with LAY Phân (ឡាយ ផាន) (the son of LAY Peou (ឡាយ ពៅ) and Pha (ផា)). Many other couples also did the same. I did not know them all.

...

9 August 1976

I went to harvest rice in the south of Trapeang Chumrov Village. After I had worked for a while, someone came and told me that my younger sister fell off the house. I ran very quickly to see her and only saw her being put over a set of burning fire wood, organised as a form of traditional treatment. She was tiny, thin, and pale because of the absence of her periods. I felt extreme pity for her. I found that the house was nearly three metres high, so I did not know how painful she felt. But she appeared from the outside to suffer no single breakage.

10 August 1976

Our villagers began transplanting rice seedlings.

[ERN 00562854]

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My husband's bike fell into a hole..., and then I got back from my deep reflection and thought:

-The long mountain range where I thought nobody would live now became my second place to live after my hometown Phnom Penh since Damrei Romeal (ដំរីរមាស) mountain was my husband birthplace and my village too.

It was quiet along the way. There was only my bike, travelling on the road. I wondered if the current society was... not the same as the previous one... in which a great number of people were travelling constantly. Now it was as quiet as a ghost town.

At a house near the road, I saw soldiers wearing black with khaki (កាគី) caps and Cambodian scarves seemingly travelling somewhere and ending up staying and eating here.

[ERN 00562857]

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... It seemed it was just a dream for one night. Everything had gone beyond expectations. Where was my life drifting? What else would I face? These days, frankly speaking, I appeared to live unhappily because I had no strength as other people, or maybe I was bored with the regime without the right to freedoms, i.e. freedom to speak, to sing, to dance, to laugh. And our routine activities were: sleeping, eating, and working only.

One day I stood on the rice field embankment. My body was so light as if I was standing in the middle of the sea of transplanted rice seedlings. I turned to all sides and saw nothing but transplanted rice seedlings under the blue sky. The different views of the green bed of rice seedlings and the blue sky with flying clouds as white as cotton make me feel nostalgic and cry the hardest to call for kith and kin who used to associate with me....Oh my...

[ERN 00562858]

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After speaking, my friend continued to cycle slowly passing our residence (we were staying in the Angkor Conservation Area at that time). My friend kept cycling on my orders (every time I wrote about my past memory, I often wept and my soul flew in search of freedom) along the pitch-black road with *rumduol* (រុំដួល) flowers blossoming on both sides.

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[ERN 00562859]

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Oh! We lived side-by-side only in the photo. But actually we were very far away from each other. I, Sophani (សុផានី), had only the right to think about you in my heart...

“Khuni (ក្មុំនី)! Where are you now? How are you? For me, I wither day by day. I am not happy at all. I do not know when this unfortunate body of mine vanishes into the air...And I do not know whether or not we can meet. I dream of you every single night.”

These days so many people died. To my knowledge, they died of malaria, fever, and other strange diseases, especially heartbreak...I had never been happy even

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4/9

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for a single day. The only thing I heard was separation and separation. Oh, my poor mum, I was calling you through the air, but you would never hear me.

On the 13th day of the Khmer month of Kadoek (ខែកក្កដា) in the period of the waning moon, I was 30 years old. For my birthday this year, I received only sorrow and separation, unlike the previous years, when I enjoyed happy times and good wishes. I felt that I was expecting a baby at that time because I was getting bored with meals and exhausted. It was not certain, however. If fortunate, I would not have any baby, which would lead to a miserable life.

...

[ERN 00562860]

How sad! I was sure that I was expecting a baby in this November. In my mind, I was going to name the baby *Neang Soriya* (ស៊ីរិយា). Why did you begin your life during this time when our country was facing hunger? Are you a *karma* or a fortunate baby?

...

Oh God! I missed the books...I wanted to study...I did not know when I could go back to school.

...

[ERN 00562864]

...

- How did they (*Angkar*) allow him to come home?

My husband answered:

- “Nothing, Mum.”

My husband came to visit me until dinner and went back, leaving me with three messages:

1. Do not politically resist them (*Angkar*).
2. Do not get angry.
3. Do not reply to what is said.

....

In the evening, I went to get my cows/oxen. Another nephew of my husband, named HENG Punleok (ហេង ព័ន្ធក៍), who was Punleu's younger brother, told me that:

- *Ming!* I saw your husband (SOU Non (ស្វីណុន)), carrying earth with three prisoners.

[ERN 00562876]

- You were making the effort in a wrong way.... Using too much strength at your throat could not deliver the baby.

Admittedly, I did not know the correct way to make the effort to deliver the baby.

Time flew, but I was still in bed.

...

... My abdomen was often painful. A hospital chairwoman came to see me. When she saw me giving birth with difficulty, she very often came to see me. After the examination, she said:

- “Your baby in the womb is not alive (meaning that the baby is dead).”

I told her that:

- “If so, please take it out because I feel a lot of pain.”

[ERN 00562880]

...

I moved my bed next to the door. The hospital was composed of three long buildings. The one in the south was for slightly ill patients; the one in the west for seriously ill patients; and the one in the north for deliveries – this building was composed of only one room for deliveries with two rows of beds with an aisle. Here if five women delivered babies at the same time....

...

On the 10th of the waxing moon in the Khmer month of *Srap* (ស្រាពណ៍) 1977 (August 1977),

The hospital issued a new circular saying that:

- “All the patients, except those who are seriously ill, are not allowed to have companions.”

When the circular was released, I became better – I could sit, but could not walk. My husband returned to the village, but ...

[ERN 00562881]

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Bang Chea (ឃ្លា), *Pou Cheng*'s wife, came to give birth, but she might have been so old or weak that she died in the hospital. Her body was carried, and kept near my bed with a space of two beds. The body was kept there for a night before it was buried. I was not very afraid. When I woke up at midnight, I saw a white piece of cloth covering the body.

[ERN 00562885-00562886-00562887]

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In Chamkar 160, the children care center was very far from the workplace. At noon break time, I could not take a comfortable break. After I finished my work, I had to walk to breastfeed my baby in Trung Maon [chicken coop]. When I met anyone carrying cooked rice on the road, I begged them for it. If I did not meet them, I had to pack the food to eat at Trung Maon so that I could look after my baby.

My elder sister did not come to Chamkar 160 because she worked in the village. Only my younger sister and I came here. After having grown crops, potatoes, we changed our unit to the village.

When we changed our unit to Trapeang Slat Village, there was an important meeting in which deputy village chief named Chring (ជ្រឹង) asked the attendees for comments:

- “Can all comrades all raise your hands to support the Party’s decision? The policies are as follows: for those who are passive, the decision is that there is no gain in keeping you, and there is no loss in removing you.”

No sooner had he finished reading the decision than the attendees kept quiet as if nobody was there. Through my observations, each of them could hardly breathe. At that time, even children slept very quietly in their mothers' *sarongs*. After a long while, I stood up, and this also made all the attendees move, changing their sitting positions and moving their numb legs. They were worried about me, thinking what would happen to me.

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...

I sat down. I thought that their thoughts might be the same as mine because they saw their thoughts were consistent with what I was reporting.

I was not afraid because I spoke with specific reasons. However, *Y Kák* (កាក់), my mother-in-law's younger sister, told me that:

- "Phani! Do not be too brave. Be careful!"

...

When the dry season came, we were assigned to carry earth, build dams, dig canals, and carry the earth from a hill to fill the rice fields. At that time, I changed my unit to Prey Preal (ប្រៃសណីយ៍) Village, I asked for permission from my unit chief named Phum (ផុំ) to visit my elder sister who was in Trapeang Thum hospital. The chief denied and said:

- "There were doctors there."

[ERN 00562893]

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I returned to my unit. After we finished harvesting the rice, *Angkar* assigned us to harvest the rice in the south of the village which was very far from the Trapeang Kul hospital.

On 8 June 1978,

My elder sister died. I learned the news of her death after many days later. I was crying alone, standing while going to work. I was crying because we would not meet each other forever. I recalled our childhood memories. She liked knocking on my head.

...

.... Now you stay away from me forever... You went to rest in peace before me... You are no longer hungry and suffering... You will no longer miss and worry about me... When you rest in peace, please help bless me with peaceful life. The regime broke off the relationships between the siblings. Even after my sister's death, the regime did not let me know... I feel grief-stricken alone.

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[ERN 00562903]

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In late 1975, I composed two songs:

1. 'Inhuman Torture' and 2. 'Oh, eyes!'

1- Inhuman Torture

I. Go, go, go. Goodbye Phnom Penh, I relentlessly suffered. I knew that we had no freedom since we left it.

II. Build, build, build. We built dams and dug canals. We were concerned about this college knowledge. We learnt how to dig and carry dirt. We did not have to learn at school.

R. I was standing in the model rice field to relieve the pain. However, I was even more saddened since I had been separated from my parents, siblings and relatives.

III. We had been asked to be prepared both mentally and physically. Do not ask if someone had disappeared. They were expected to have been killed. What a poor Khmer fate!

[ERN: 00562905]

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At the end of the year, I witnessed the prisoners, young, old, male, and female, being tied up and walked in queues to the south via Trapeang Thnaot (ត្រពាំងត្នោត) Village. Where were they taken to? There were a lot of prisoners arrested. Having witnessed this event, I trembled with fear alone; I did not dare to ask anyone; and I was standing still and speechless.

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