Cultural Connections amidst Heritage Conundrums:

A study of local Khmer values overshadowed by tangible archaeological remains in the Angkor World Heritage Site

Appendix

(Interview Transcripts)

By

Senthilpavai Kasiannan

2011
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( Interviews conducted during November 2006–January 2007)

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

(Interviews conducted during November 2006–January 2007)
Note: All the questions are italicised

**PHUM LOLEI INTERVIEWS**

**Lolei-M56**

30 November 2006  
Man, 56 years old—Second village chief.  
(The primary village chief was not available)

_Are you originally from this village?_  
Yes, I am an original inhabitant, been here for 3 generations.

_Did you have to move anywhere during Pol Pot (Khmer Rouge)?_  
During Pol Pot, I moved to Sarai nearby—(Bakong commune, Lolei village).

_What is your occupation?_  
My occupation is agriculture.

_What is the occupation of the villagers here?_  
Occupation of villagers: There are three—main one is agriculture, second they go to Siem Reap as a labourer, and some people have shops in the village (average income is $2/day).

_Can you describe the boundary of the village?_  
I do not know how big it is—but I know that there are 350 families.

_If I show you a map—can you show me the boundary?_  
The boundary is along the road to Phnom Bok—7 kms to north along the Phnom Bok road.  
On the south, it is along route 6 and on the east up to Phum Stung.

_Why are you living on the embankment?_  
The embankment surrounds the rice fields.

_Do this village have a pchit phum (ceremonial centre of the village)?_  
No, but the temple could be considered as one.

_What are the neak-ta in Phum Lolei?_  
Ta Kahé  
Ta Kwong  
Ta Meung

_Can you locate the neak-ta on the map?_  
One is near Lolei temple (Ta Meung), second at the bridge (Ta Kwong) and one near the road Thnal Kahé —Ta Kahé.
Is the neak-ta significant only to the villagers of Lolei—or do other villagers also come to make offerings?
The neak-ta is only for villagers here. But sometimes when neak-ta hurt people outside the village and then they can also come and make offering.

How often do you go to the wat, and which one?
I go to Lolei Wat, 5-10 times a year for the major celebrations.
It is our tradition to go to wat every month.

Do you go to the prasat?
We don’t go to the prasat, but to the wat.

Have you been to Angkor?
In Angkor Wat, we have visited the old temple. We find the sculptures good, but don’t know any details. I wonder how big the people were at the time of Angkor, to build such massive temples with huge stones. We believe that the early Khmer were bigger than now. We do not know the complete story of Reamker but I know that Lolei is older than Angkor Wat.

Do you know how old is the baray?
It is older than Angkor. The temple and the baray were probably built around the same time. The baray was once filled with water, and so maybe people had to go by boat to the temple in ancient days.

Do you use trapeang?
Trapeang is not used, but we use wells for water.

Can you tell about old/archaeological features?
Ancient road surrounds the baray sngout (dry baray)
There is a small river, and a trapeang near the temple.

Do people live all along the embankment?
Yes.

What are the ceremonies in the village?
Ghatten—when we collect money to buy things for monks and build temples during the Khmer month of khadak (part Oct)—we go to Angkor Wat during this.
Chum Ben—offering of food for the dead in the month of padbok. I go to Bakong and Lolei.
Khmer New Year—first we go to Lolei Wat and then to Angkor Wat.

Are there different names for the village?
Lolum (western embankment of the baray).
Lolei is the village near wat, and Lolum Ba is to the east (which means a break in the baray).

(At this point the chicken starts making loud noise)
The old name of Lolei is *Krahale* (maybe a version of Hariharalaya). According to village stories a man named Ta lay was protecting the prince (future king). In Baksei Chamkrong region—the man who saves the prince was called Ta Lay.

Bakong comes from Bangkong meaning bird sanctuary.

*Do you refer to the embankment as kouk?*

We call it thnal.

All houses in the village have been constructed post 1980 after destruction by Lon Nol. No old house remains. The houses are wooden raised on stilts with little concrete platforms for wooden posts.

*Apart from these wat is there any other wat you go to?*

No in the Bakong commune, there are only 2 wat.

*(At this time the pig/sow started making very loud noises since it was the feeding time. The noise made the interviewing rather difficult at this point in time)*

*Are there any APSARA restriction with regards to rituals?*

APSARA has no issues with cultural practices and rituals.

The people of Bakong district come to the Lolei *prasat* to pray for people who died in the war (did not specify the time of the year when this happens). This practice started since the 1980s. They just go and stand in front of the *prasat* and pray. The people go to the *prasat* when they go to a *wat*, because mostly *wat* are located next to a *prasat*.

*(He suggested that I talk to two older men in the village Ta Touern and Ta Naep)*

*Do you own the houses and the rice fields or are there any restrictions on the ownership of land?*

We own the land.

*Do you know about APSARA restrictions?*

The APSARA will give permission house in wood, but not a cement house. They will follow the rules. For new construction permission needs to be taken from government (APSARA). Digging is not allowed. And getting permission is very difficult.

*Is it difficult to get permission from APSARA?*

It is very difficult to get permission. We sometimes have to bribe to get the permission.
Lolei-M40

8 December 2006
(Male 40 yrs, original inhabitant)

Did you have to move anywhere during Pol Pot?
I moved to Phum Prama (Krau Bay Riel commune) came back here in 1979. The house is next to neak-ta Kahé. When I returned after the PP regime, I had to choose a new place to live, since all houses had been destroyed. Some of the agricultural fields are his from original inheritance, but others are new. I do not have property documents.

This (the house) is part of the village; I cannot say how big it is. It is mainly around the prasat.

At this point I showed him the map to check if he could describe the extent of the village.

Can you describe the village boundary?
The village boundary extends up to route 6 and further to the east.

What is your occupation?
Occupation includes farming and selling produce in the market like tamarind.

What are the ceremonies in the village?
During meak month we have celebrations. We make offering to neak-ta as a group—community activity—people join together and make offering. They offer Khmer noodle, cigarettes, alcohol.

Have you visited any old prasat?
Very rarely. I go sometime, when I go to make offering/food for monk. I go only for this not for visiting temple.

How often do you go to wat?
I go to the wat during some auspicious occasions. We go the Lolei Wat to cook food for the monks. Only during the Buddhist ceremonies and not regularly.

Have you been to Bakong?
Yes, for work, not for visiting the prasat.

Have you visited Angkor Wat?
I have been there during April. I visited Angkor Wat during the Khmer New Year.

Is Angkor Wat a special place?
Yes.

Have you visited the prasat?
Yes
What do you know about that?
Nothing.

Have you seen the sculpture? What do you think about that?
Yes. The sculpture is beautiful.

Have you been to West Baray?
No

During New Year, have you visited Angkor Wat with your family?
Yes we go on moto. Many families go from village—depends on each family.

Have you made offering to neak-ta?
For neak-ta—only at times when we have problem we make offering.

What do you know about this village?
In terms of the baray, I know that this is baray sngout.

Why is it a dry baray?
Because there is no water.

Why there is no water?
I only know that it is dry.

What are the neak-ta in this village?
3 neak-ta locations (same as previous).

Have you had problems with the authority for rituals?
No problems with authorities with regards to cultural practices.

Have you had problems with the authority for building permission?
If you ask for permission it is ok.

Has there been any other people interviewing?
No.

Any NGO doing any work here?
At school barang ask people who need help for digging well.

Was there a meeting in the village?
Yes, in the school they had this meeting. The barang (Khmer word for foreigner) ask which people are poor so they can provide assistance for digging a well.

Do you have any rice fields?
Yes we have rice fields.

Do you sell the fruits from your fruit trees in the house?
Yes.

How do you get water for the garden?
From rain.

_Is there a stream or river nearby, can you get any water from there?_
Yes there is water, but we cannot use the water.

_Do you have a well?_
Yes.

_Do you use the water for only house or also for the garden?_
We use the water for the garden. We have a pump to get the water.
Well water is used for a small portion of land—not for agriculture.

_This neak-ta Kahé—how long have you worshipped/made offerings?_
I do not know, but for a very long time.

_What happened when people left the village during Khmer Rouge?_
No problem—nobody here—all people just moved away.

_During that time you have not made any neak-ta worship—how do you know that the neak-ta is there?_
The villagers just know the neak-ta is there. I came back in 1979.

_When you returned did you have problems settling back into life? Did you come back to the same house? Or did you have to build a new house?_
I returned to the village—but not to the same place—When I returned the house was destroyed by Khmer Rouge—nothing remained—so I had to build from scratch.

_And how did he get land to farm?
Some of the rice fields he occupied are original—belonged to his family from before the Khmer Rouge time.

_But now do you have property documents made?
No I do not have.

_Would it be a problem if the authority wanted to do something with his property?_
Even if I do not have documents, nobody has the right to take my land. Everyone knows that the field belongs to me.

_Is the situation same with his house?
I do not have property documents. But when I borrow money on the house—an authorization needs to be made that the house belongs to me—this is verified by the village chief.

_Is this neak-ta worshipped by this villagers or do people from other village also come?_
Only this village.

_Are there any stories associated with this neak-ta?
Only old people would know.
Are there any old people who could tell the story?
All old people have gone to work in the fields now.

Are you not working in the field?
No I work in Siem Reap.
Lolei-F62

8 December 2006
Woman, 62 years old

An original inhabitant.

Did you have to move anywhere during Pol Pot?
During Pol Pot, I moved to Phum Khnal Po in Srok Bakong (10 kms from Lolei)

How big is the village Lolei?
The village has more than 100 houses, extends up to Phnom Bok road on the east. This part of Lolei is called Phum Kahé (the road/embankment of Lolei Baray is Thnal Kahé). Lolum is a part of the Lolei village near the main road (Route 6).

Ta Kahé origins are a 16th century legend, though I do not know much of it. The road is an old road called Thnal Kahé. The road goes up to Preah Doh.

If I show a map will you be able to show the extent on the map?
She showed an approximate boundary marked on the map.

Do you have a Yeay ta?
No

Neak-ta is one small house. Some families have Yeay ta… but some don’t. I may have one in future…

What is your occupation?
We do farming; we grow rice, bananas and vegetables. My husband works at the police station (small outpost). Some fields are close, some are far. We have a sra in our property, in which we are farming fish. We would like to dig a deeper sra so that we can have fish all through the year. Rain water cannot be used during dry season, because the water table goes down.

The well water cannot be used—water table is very low. (At this point the pigs start grunting as it is the lunch time)

Do you own this house?
Yes.

Do you have documents?
No

Can you dig in the baray?
It is not allowed. By the APSARA law, digging is not allowed. But we will do what we want. Moreover, UNDP has had people sent to interview villagers to help to dig a sra.

Are the UNDP people helping them to dig the sra?
They give a letter, but so far nothing has happened. They came here and asked what I wanted—I said I wanted to dig for sra.

Where will you get water from?
3 metres down there is water—we will farm fish.

Have you been to Wat Bakong?
During New Year and Chum-ben.

Have you been to the old prasat or the wat?
First to wat and then to the prasat.

Have you climbed up?
I want to go up but cannot, so I stop in the middle.

What do you think of the prasat?
The people who built are very clever. I am proud of my ancestors for what they have done. I do not know further details. I am proud of my history.

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
I have visited Angkor Wat 2 or 3 times

Have you been to West Baray?
We have been to West Baray for a picnic, for hobby and for meeting a lot of people. We take some food from home, some we buy there. I am scared of water so I do not go inside.

Have you been to Tonle Sap?
No

Have you been to Angkor Wat prasat?
Yes, we have visited Angkor temples once as a whole family.

Has she visited any other temples?
I went one time. By motor bike.

As a group where do villagers go for neak-ta ceremony?
We go to Wat Lolei.
In meak—in the time of neak-ta—and after that when the family is sick they go to give offering.

Where do you do the ceremony?
Neak-ta: somewhere in the village—the ceremony can be anywhere.
In the whole of meak the people collect money to have ceremony. In the village some families have it in their own home.

What are the other neak-ta in the village?
Ta Kwong—in meak they go to all neak-ta in village—if someone is sick—we go to the medium (medium rup or memot)—who will tell what is wrong.
Has your family made any offering any time?  
Last year we had offering at home.

Do you have any problem with authority?  
No problems.
Lolei-F27

8 December 2006
Woman, 27 years old. Shop keeper near Route 6, on Thnal Kahé.

An original inhabitant.

*What is your occupation?*
Our family runs a small shop and we go to the city to sell produce.

*How big is the village?*
It is about 3 kms square.

*What do you call this part?*
This part is called Phum Lolei.

*If I show a map, can you show the boundary?*
She showed the boundary that has been marked on the paper map.

*What are the neak-ta in the village?*
1. near the bridge—a Chambok tree
I do offering so that I can make good business…

*If you do offering do you take it back?*
We leave it for birds… but if we make offering, we only offer bones without meat. It is only a suggestive offering, not lots of real food.

*Which wat you go to?*
Lolei Wat.

*What do you know about prasat Lolei?*
Lolei prasat is in the middle of baray—people probably went by boat earlier.
We have visited Lolei prasat, when we go to the wat.

*Have you been to Angkor Wat?*
We have been to Angkor for a visit, but did not climb the entire temple. I stopped in the middle level.

*Have you been to any other temple?*
I have been to Bakong for a visit. I have been to another few temples as well.

*Have you been to Ta Prohm?*
Yes

*Have you had any problems with authority, with your house construction?*
The house is a new construction, not in accordance with APSARA design, but we had constructed it before APSARA was formed.

*Is there any festival?*
For neak-ta—only in the meak month.
Lolei-F64&group

8 December 2006
A group of elderly women aged 64, 46, 58 and 60—were cooking food for the monks.

Woman aged 64 from Lolei makes the baisi for rituals in the wat and for ceremonies in the village. (She was making some when we talked to her. She was doing it for the water blessing).

(The group of older ladies cook for the monks and make baisi for rituals and have dedicated their life and time in the service of the wat and monks).

Are you originally from this village?
Yes I am original from a few generations.

Where do you live?
I live near the wat on the west side.

Do you know how big the village is? Is it the baray or is it bigger than the baray?
The village is bigger than the baray. It is known as baray sngout.

The other ladies also participated. Most of them were from this village, some near and some far.

What is the general occupation of villagers?
We grow rice, the villagers are primarily farmers. Some go into city after harvest to work as labourer and some work in hotels. The details of the other women were collected.

Do you do baisi for a living?
We make baisi and we cook for the monks.

How long have you been doing this?
Almost 10 years.

Are you also a nun?
I am not a nun.

Do you make baisi everyday or only during the months when you have lots of ceremonies?
We make them every day.

But, in some months there are not many ceremonies?
Well sometimes not so many people come for water blessing so we don’t make. But it is almost every day.

Where do you do the water blessing?
It happens in the hall below the prasat and in the wat near the prasat on the prasat platform. (Before you do the water blessing, you have to find out who will do the water blessing, depending on the monk’s decision).
(They started questioning me if I had rice fields).

Do you come to the wat regularly for praying or just to make baisei?
We come during the 8th and 15th days in the waxing and waning cycle of the moon.

Have you been to the old prasat at Lolei?
Yes we have been.

What do you know about the old prasat?
When we were young we have seen it.

Do you know why so many tourists come to visit these old temples?
It is a very old wat, and they want to see the carvings.

Have you seen the carvings?
We have seen those on the old walls.

What do you think about the carvings? The tourists come from a long distance to see the temples, what do you think about this?
We like the tourists. They enjoy very much. Because it is our ancestral heritage. Before (the Pol Pot regime) there was a lot of sculpture surrounding the prasat, but after the Pol Pot regime all of that was destroyed.

Do you go to pray in the old prasat?
We do pray at the old prasat. If people go to the prasat it means the starting of rainy season, and we pray at the end of the rainy season. We pray during Khmer New Year, Chum-ben.

Why don’t you go and pray any other time?
This is because we are following tradition, we don’t know why or when it started. But every 8th day we go to the wat to pray to the Buddha.

Do you know about the neak-ta?
Ta Basa—before there was a huge statue of neak-ta, inside the prasat. But now it has disappeared. It was a human form statue, called Basa. It was very powerful and strong. All of this is following from the old people. The old people call it neak-ta, so we also call it neak-ta. If we have problem, if we are sick or something, if we pray we ask to be relieved, and we become cured, so we believe this.
Ta Meung in front of prasat.
Ta Basa inside the prasat.

Inside which prasat is the neak-ta?
The central shrine in the front and in the centre. There is no statue now, but the old prasat structure remains. We pray in front of the structure.

Do you know any story associated with the neak-ta?
There is a story associated which goes like this: In Pol Pot regime, a nurse got sick—they find an old man—they cook medicine but no relief—he did not get better and then—he asks the old man to find out as to why he was not getting better—you do
something wrong with the neak-ta Meung—he threw the statue into the sra in front of the prasat.

Was there a statue at Ta Meung?
Yes

What sort of a statue?
Their used to be two figures—of a man and a woman—srei and bproh.

Do you have any name for the statue?
Srei is Yeay Tep and male statue is Ta Meung.

How old is the Ta Meung story?
We don’t know the story.

What do you know about neak-ta Basa?
Ta Basa is very strong that if a bird flies over the temple, it will fall down and die.

Have you seen it happening?
Only old people say this.

What do you know about the baray?
We don’t know much, except that we have rice fields and we call it baray sngout.

Do you know if the baray was filled at some time?
There is water only in the rainy season, other times there is no water.

Do you know about APSARA restrictions?
Yes, we know.

What do you think about the restrictions?
It is not very good for us, because we want to build something but we cannot.

By this time the ladies had started cooking and no one remained for the interview.
One devotee, who had come to Lolei Wat, started talking. He had a plate of offering.

**What do you have there as offering?**
Depending on the situation, we will have an equal number of items. *Kan bprum*—means 5 items each. We can also have other numbers. When we give to the monk master—he will state the number of items that will have to be in the offering. It can be any number of items depending on the monk’s suggestion. The first thing that has to be given to the monk is *kan bprum*—meaning 5 items. It can range from 1 to 12. It represents the months in the year.

**Why does it have to be a certain number?**
We do not know.

(Is the devotee has problem with his leg, so he has come to pray).

**Is there any specific flower for offering?**
No we can put any flower, but the number has to be 5.

**Have you been to Wat Bakong?**
Yes, not regularly. Only during the New Year.

**Have you been to Angkor Wat?**
Yes, during New Year.

**What do you do when you go to Angkor Wat?**
For visiting the Angkor Wat.

**What are you cooking?**
A sour dish with cucumber.

The devotee felt sorry that he didn’t know anything about Angkor. And he told a story of the Angkor tower. The tower was not straight—it was bent… and one magic man called Pishnukar. He said that to the king that he can make it straight again if the king gave him seven coconut lady every day. But the king didn’t know why he was asking for lady, he was not very clever to understand that Pishnukar was asking for a sweet that is cooked with palm sugar on the inside covered with rice powder dough—called *srey kaum* in Khmer which was misunderstood by the king. The king who did not understand the request banished Pishnukar, who wanted this special cake. It is said that Pishnukar went to china.

I think that it is incredible for very old people to carry such big stones to make these temples… (and the translator explained that they used bamboo and rope).

**When would be the next big ceremony in the wat?**
There is *Meak bochea* and *Pisa bochea* in the Khmer months of *meak* and *pisa*. 2 more months after the harvest season (around February). *Bochea* means to give offering. On that day people give offering.

*On which day of meak is meak bochea?*

There is also Chum-ben ceremony in pisa month.

The illustrations in the hall were discussed. The translator explained the illustrations and the stories of Buddha, where a very strong association with India was represented. The mountains represented Himalayas and people aspire to go there, as there was peace and quiet. But it is regarded as the place we go to when they die. The next ceremony of *lang neak-ta* is coming up in January… which is a ceremony for *neak-ta*.

The devotee mentioned that Angkor world heritage site is the ancestral heritage of the Khmer people. I am very proud of his heritage and history. It is the duty of the Khmer people to safeguard the world heritage site and observe the rules of APSARA. I am from Lolei.
Lolei-M39

30 November 2006
Monk, 39 years old

39 years old monk from Wat Koki, which is 1 km away from Lolei. (He was visiting the Lolei Wat when I interviewed him)

In their wat, we are replacing the statue of Buddha from Pol Pot time with a new one. We need traditional music for the ceremony. Wat Lolei has musicians who perform traditional music during ceremonies and I have come here to arrange for that—to rent the music and musicians. Here the civil people in Lolei play music and in his wat they are currently busy.

I come to Lolei Wat regularly.

Do you know anything about neak-ta?
Sometimes when people die for the country, people make a neak-ta for them. Neak-ta Meung is one such example. He was a general of the 16th century who died during a war. The story has been passed down by the monk master at Lolei. Ang Chan rigê—a Khmer king in the 16th century fighting against Thai. He died and collected a ghost army to fight. He died by jumping into nails and his wife followed and died. The Thais were defeated in this ghost war.

When do you come to this wat at other times?
I come here to Lolei when I am invited by some monk for some Buddhist celebration.

What do you know about the prasat boran?
I do not know much about the old temple at Lolei.

Do monks do anything with neak-ta?
We do not respect the neak-ta normally. But with regards to Ta Meung who is a historical figure, I pay respect but I do not pray. The monk master at Lolei has magical powers and he used that to find the culprits who stole something from the village.
Lolei-F36

30 November 2006
Woman, 36 year old from Lolei.

Are you from this village?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant.

Do you know how big the village is?
I do not know details of the village or the number of houses.

Where is your house?
My house is 250 metres to north of Lolei prasat.

Can you describe the village extent?
The Village extends in front and back till the road. My family does not own any rice fields, my husband works as labourer in Siem Reap.

Which wat do you go to?
Lolei Wat only.

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
No, never. My husband might have gone before marriage because he worked with the military. But now we cannot afford to go because we have neither money nor transport to go there.

Would you like to visit?
Yes, I would like to visit if given a choice, and would like to see it because it is famous.

Can you name the neak-ta in the village?
Neak-ta: Ta Kwang (tree near Lolei Wat—Po tree)
Festivals: we come to Lolei Wat.

Any problems with authority?
We do not have any problems with APSARA because we are away from the prasat and live near the road to the west.
Lolei-M54

APSARA guard at Lolei Wat—Male, 54 years old
8 December 2006

Are you from this village?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant.

Did you move anywhere during Pol Pot?
During Pol Pot we moved to Srok Sone-khum—Phum Thray-pok (1973–76).

Can you describe the village extent?
The village has more than 200 houses. Village extends from west of Baray till route 6, on the other side up to Phum Stung.

What is your occupation?
Most villagers are farmers—palm tree climbers and labourers who work in Siem Reap, I joined APSARA as a guard in 2001. I work at Lolei. (6 am to 6 pm). There are around 4 guards at one time. At night also we have guards.
Shifts: 2—6 pm and 6 pm—10 pm. Though there should be 4 people at one time, at the time of interview there were only 2 guards. (3 had returned home)

Are there a lot of local people coming to the temple?
During Khmer New Year lots of local visitors but not during other times. During Khmer New Year there are lots of local visitors from the nearby villages.

Do you know how many visitors would visit then?
I do not know.

What do people do?
They just visit prasat—burn incense

Is this practice a recent thing or have you always burned incense? Before the place became touris, did you burn incense?
During harvest, people burn incense wherever they go. The villagers always burned incense; it is a very old activity. People have always done this. After the prasat, we go to the Buddhist temple and burn incense. Then we go to the big chedai and burn incense

During New Year, there are a lot of visitors to Bakong. They have lots of games; they throw face powder and cheung (ball of cloth)

Have you stopped any ceremony of the local people?
No one wants to stop them, but we don’t allow them to leave offerings. Before we do anything we also ask for permission, we advise people that it has to be very quick… (before what kind of ceremony)—for any festival they do not need permission, but if there is a special occasion when they want to play music, then they ask permission from APSARA.

When do you play music in the temple?
During *Chum-ben* and moon festival. Like we make offering of *omboak* (traditional Khmer dish), banana, coconut—we sometimes have to make an enclosure of 10 metres square and make offering inside—In front of the *prasat*

*For every ceremony do villagers come here? Or is there any other place in the village where you will go for the ceremony?*

No always at the *wat*. *Neak-ta Meung*—is a special place, so people come only here to make offering.

*Have you been to Angkor Wat?*

During Khmer New Year—for visiting. I pray for good luck at Ta Reach and Peh roi preah penn (hall of 1000 Buddha).

*Has your family visited Angkor Wat?*

Yes they have been to Angkor Wat

*Where do you live?*

Inside the village, near the road (Route 6).

*Do you have a Dong ta in his house?*

No, but I have a shrine for burning incense and asking for good luck called *che neang preh* (spirit that protects house)

(Did not mention anything when asked about problems local people face from authorities—probably because he is working with APSARA)
Lolei-M34

8 December 2006
Head monk at Lolei—34 years old
(I am an original inhabitant, became a monk at the age of 21)

How big is the village?
It is around 4 kms square.
He described the same boundary—west embankment till road to Phnom Bok and south up to the route 6.

Can you describe the village?
It is all around the baray. Population is around 2000 and there are 212 houses.

How important is Wat Lolei?
This wat is important for 10 surrounding villages including Bangkaong, Trapeang Run, Thnot, Lolum, Lolei, Ta Pok, Stung, Kok Thray, Bun Ro, Kathreang, Sray chey and Roluos.—Srok Bakong district. There are around 17 wat in Siem Reap

The wat has 31 monks, 150 nuns and 30 children. Old people from the village become nuns. The villagers visit the wat regularly (every 7 days—following the moon cycle). Sometimes there is a special ceremony.

Why the number of nuns is more than monks?
They are from the surrounding 10 villages—when people get old they become a nun.

Kot: where a monk lives (head monk) there are 5 monks live here.

Do Lolei villagers come regularly or from other villages also?
Almost all of the villages—people come.

Do you have any special ceremony during the days that the people come?
Sometimes they have special ceremony.

Is today anything special?
Today is 15th day—full moon—Buddhist year is 2550.

What do you do? What kind of a ceremony happens? And how you do?
During Khmer New Year, Chum-ben, pisakh bochea—people bring food to the monk, before we give to the monk, we have to give food to their own parents.

What happens today?
For people who got fear—come here for blessing from monk, so people’s fear can be defeated.

What offering do they make?
They offer money, baisei

Bambook neah—ordination ceremony
What happens during this day?
The people who want to be monk are normal people. They have to learn Buddhist ways before becoming a monk. They have to respect the rule of the monks. This is the day when people send their children to be a monk. Lots of people join together and make the ceremony together.

Is there a special day when you do the ordination ceremony?
On an auspicious day… in the month of pisa bochea—roughly during April–May.

Do the monks go to any other wat on any special occasion?
Yes, during kathen.
I visit the other wat to collect money for this wat (during the month of kathen) Wat Thray, Wat Ban Thee-ay, Wat Ban Rau, Wat Sayk, Wat Koki, Wat Sophi, Wat Kon Sat, Wat Roluos, Wat Kompong Plok

Have you been there once, or do you go regularly?
Some wat I have been only once, but some I go regularly. All these wat are in srok Bakong.

When people invite me for wedding, or for water blessing—I go to their places on this occasion.

I visited Wat Bakong for Banteay sna (ceremony where we explain to people about Buddhism—give them knowledge and advice and education).

Does this happen anytime?
Yes

Have you visited Angkor Wat?
Yes.

Why do you visit Angkor Wat?
He visits Angkor—for thadong ru Khmei for meditation (once a year—in Angkor Thom)

When is that?
On the 15th of meak.

Which wat do you go to near Angkor Wat?
I go to Kok Thlok near Bayon, not to Angkor Wat. We will meet together near Angkor and we walk to Kok Thlok.

Have you been to the Angkor Wat temple?
I have been to Angkor Wat two times. I have seen the bas-reliefs and I know some stories of Reamker.

Which stories do you know?
I know Ramayana… I have visited Preah Vihear.

Have you visited the other temples in Angkor?
I have visited Bayon, the temples were dedicated to Hindu gods.

_Do you know anything about Bayon?_
I have studied about that, but I do not remember anything.

_What do you think about these temples? Since there is a bit of confusion as to whether they are Buddhist or Hindu?_
The temples are not for Buddhist, but for Brahma or Brahmanism Hinduism.

_How do you relate to it, do you have any connections … do you think it is important?_
The temples are very important.

_What do you think should be done to them?_
Nothing, but the people living surrounding the temples have to protect.

_How can this be done?_
To protect the temples from looting.

_What about the structural damage—the way things are falling?_
I am a monk, I cannot do anything, but there are the other authority like APSARA who can do it.

_Do you know anything about the Lolei temples?_
This sandstone is from the Kulen Mountains brought down by elephants. For laterite, we have a place to make the brick.

_Do you know any details about the temple?_
The temple is dedicated for putting the bone (ashes) of the son of king Jayavarman III.

_Any other information?_
This is the island and surrounding is the baray. The three temples that are related are Bakong Lolei and preah ko…

_Neak-ta that people respect is Ta Meung. Where is it?_
In the front of Lolei.

_Do people do anything in the temple at all?_
They come during the traditional festivals. All of the Buddhist ceremonies, when people come to the wat they also visit the prasat.

_What do you do during this time?_
The people burn incense and pray.

_Any other monk who can give further information?_
No, only I can give the information here.

_Is there any problem from the authority?_
We cannot build any new construction.

_Is it a problem?
The problem is they will have to train monks on how to meet their costs of building new construction. APSARA will bring some expert here and tell them how to do their new construction.

*Has anyone come to tell them about these details?*
Yes they came once. We are going to have a meeting in November.

*Do you know which department?*
I do not know who, but one from APSARA, one from provincial department, an organisation called (NGO) volunteers. They speak related to the monk rules.

On the 15th of Meak month I go to Kouk Thlok near Bayon for meditation.

*What do you know about neak-ta?*
Buddhism does not have anything to do with spirit worship.
Interviewed some monks in the monk quarter of the Lolei Wat. There were 5 of them in the age group 19—29. One monk spoke willingly.

What is the name of this wat as you call it?
Wat Lolei

Are you from this village?
I am from Phum Lolei. My family lives in the village. I studied at Wat Bo in Siem Reap for one year. I have been in the wat all his life. I became a monk at the age of 19.

Can you describe the village in terms of its extent? (cock crows loudly in the background)
I do not know much about the extent of the village or any other details. I showed him a map so that he/they could describe the boundary of the village. (the Khmer radio was on in the background)

He pointed to the mat and located the wat and the village boundary—said that the wat is here—the village boundary is up to the route 6 and a bit to the north.

Do you know how many families live in this village?
No, but you should ask the village chief.

Do you have any interaction with the villagers? Do you meet them during rituals or something?
Some times when neak-ta—when villagers get affected—the villagers come here to meet the monk—or sometimes they come to say sorry to neak-ta—so they come to the monks. It happened in 2005.

What are the big festivals that you celebrate here?
The biggest festival is the moon festival

Do you know anything about the neak-ta in the village?
For neak-ta—sometimes in the village there are lot of sick people because of neak-ta—so the villager, they collect a lot of people and play music—if there is no music—there is an old man who is a representative body—the neak-ta will go inside his body—the representative person—and talk to the villagers—when that happens—the person who is the medium even if he is very old—he becomes very strong—but after the neak-ta leaves his body—he becomes very tired.

How old was he when he became a monk?
19

Do you go to any other wat for any special occasion?
We don’t go to any other wat during festivals or big celebrations. But sometimes when another wat has a special occasion, people collect money and collect morning alms—they will come to invite the old monks to that pagoda—then the monks join.

Have you been to any such wat in the recent years?
I went last year during Choul Chnam (2005)—I went to a wat in Siem Reap

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
Yes

How many times?
2 times

Have you visited the old prasat there?
Yes

Have you looked at the sculptures there?
I have looked but I do not understand it.

Do you know anything about Reamker?
I know the story—I can understand some bas-relief—I know some stories—so I can understand some, but not others.

Do you know where the neak-ta locations are in this village?
Ta Meung—in front of the prasat
Another at the beginning of the road that turns into Lolei—neak-ta Yeay Mao.

Festivals: Moon festival during Kattik (15th, 14th or 13th day of rising moon)

Do you have any problems with the authority? Regarding the old temples and their wat structures?
It is very hard, the monk always have problems with the APSARA authority. When we have to do some structure, it is very hard to ask permission, to build monastery and the library—very hard to get permission.

Do you understand why you have to get permission?
If we build a new structure close to the old structure—then APSARA says no. But APSARA does not give permission even to build around the prasat platform away from the old structure.

Do you have any problems because of that?
I am not very much happy.
When monks come, we need a lot of place and room to stay—so it is very difficult.

So if APSARA give permission to build away from the temple—will that be okay?
But they don’t get permission even if it is away.

But you have built all these new structures? Did you not get permission?
During the construction of the building APSARA always come—they try to stop—but we still try and make it because we don’t have any rooms to stay—and after we build
it completely APSARA says ok—because they can’t do anything after the construction is complete.

*Do you know anything about the old temples?*
He hesitated and the translator gave some clues.

*Do you think that is important—what do you think about the temples?*
The temple is showing that the people is very clever—and they build it big with stones and is very beautiful.

*But, do you feel that it is important?*
Yes, he feels that it is important.

*But do you understand that building new structures closer to the old temple will cause damage to the old structure?*
Well, if we build a structure like the one they are in—it is okay, but if we build a bigger one then there will be problem for the old structure.

*Is the main wat on top of the kouk?*
Yes.

*Do you know anything about the old temples?*
They are old and Hindu and they are on a kouk (raised ground). The temple shows the cleverness of the ancient people. The temples are important and they have to be protected. Construction of large new structures is not right, but APSARA should allow us to build small buildings to help with our needs.

The structures on the kok—there is no problem because they were built before APSARA authority was established and before APSARA tell them that it is wrong

*Do you have problems with tourists?*
Because the numbers are increasing.
There is problem with tourists because of big numbers. Tourists need space to see the temples—but the new structures are very close to the old temples making it very difficult for the tourists to see the old temples.
Lolei-M13

30 December 2006
Male 73 years

Are you from this village originally?
Yes, original Inhabitant.

Does your family live here?
All my relatives and family are here in this village.

Did you go anywhere during anytime? During Pol Pot?
During Pol Pot regime I went somewhere near south of Phnom Kulen

Do you know how big the village is?
Village description: around 150 families.
(The boundary matches with the other descriptions).
It extends from route 6 on the south to road to Phnom Bok on the east. On the west it is closer to the Lolei Wat, and the village on the western embankment (Thnal Kahé) was referred to as Lolum. On the east after Phnom Bok, the village is Stung. In the north it goes up to Trapeang Asuh.

Are there any other names?
No it is only referred to as Lolei.

What is Lolum?
From the bridge, along the embankment (along Thnal Kahé) till Trapeang Asuh—it is referred to as Lolum.
To the east of the road to Phnom Bok—it is Phum Stung.

What do you know about the village?
Wat Lolei

Do you know anything about the temple?
I do not know anything.

Can he tell about the neak-ta in Lolei
Ta Meung
Ta Teyk—it was difficult to find any stone there—it is just a kok

Yeay Mao—where is it?
It is on the other side of the wat. There is a small shrine.

What do you do at the neak-ta?
We bring offering—come during meak—baay kaat of meak: we bring baisei

Can you tell the name of the sra in front of Wat Lolei?
It is called sra Wat Lolei.

If I show you a map, will you be able to tell us any details?
(The group of people gathered around are very amused. Everyone was laughing) Baray sngout; Lolei village; were located on the map.

*Is there any canal coming into Lolei baray?*
Pralay Lolum Ba—where the concrete pipe is—formerly a laterite aqueduct that has been replaced.

Most of the villagers grow rice. But there are a small section now working in Siem reap.

*Which wat do you go to? And how often?*
Wat Lolei—daily

*Have you ever seen the prasat?*
Of course.

*Have you gone closer and seen the sculpture?*
I have walked around the prasat but I have never been inside.—There is Ta Basa

*Do you know any details about the prasat? Have you heard any stories about the prasat from your parents?*
I do not know, but I know that it is older than Angkor Wat.

*When you was younger have you seen any sculpture?*
I have never taken a closer look out of interest. There used to be a sculpture of a naga, lion and a human figure in the prasat when I was younger. There is no name for the sculpture.

*Have you been to Angkor Wat?*
Angkor Wat? Yes, I have been a few times.

*Have you gone inside the old part of the prasat?*
I have seen the bas-reliefs, but I have never been inside beyond that. I have been there during Khmer New Year.

*Have you seen the 1000 Buddhas?*
No, I have never been inside.

*What do you think about all these old temples that are here?*
I have no idea about the old temples. A lot of tourists come to visit every day. I do not understand why tourists come to see them.

*When you have a celebration, where do you do it in the village?*
They come to the wat.

*At what times during the year do you come?*
*Lang meak; Chum-ben; moon festival; New Year; bon vassa*

*Do you ever have water in the baray during the rainy season?*
Yes they have plenty of water.
Cultural practices:
*Is there a pchit phum in this village?*

_Pchit phum:_ I do not know about one in this village.

Village celebrations that take place at the Wat: festivals include Chum Ben, Moon Festival, New Year, and starting of the rainy season

Rituals at Ta Meung:
We play traditional Khmer music
Offerings made on Baay Kaat (in the month of meak)
Baisei
Sra Wat Lolei—offerings are sometimes made here too…

_Néak Ta_
Ta Meung
Ta Taek—recorded
Yeay Mao—on the other side of the _wat_. To the south

Heritage features:
Lolei is known as _baray sngout_
Pralay lolum bah—is located towards Phnom Bok road.

*Have you had any problems with the authority in practicing their rituals?*
No problems with authorities—problems occur only when we build house
No problem when we do something here, but only when we build something.
Lolei2-M42

30 December 2006—Male, 42 years old
(short interview—spoke to the man when asking directions to a *kouk boran*)

I have lived in Lolei for a long time.

He described the boundary of Lolei to the north.

He worked on the Angkor Conservation with the Indian Team during 1989-91.

I was a very good (first class) worker, and I enjoyed the restoration work with ASI. They were a very good team. They restored the steps at Angkor. They had to collect stones dismantled by the French. The Indian team restored the temple. They were experts in using cement or something like cement.

He now works with the Cambodian army. At first he said there were no *neak-ta* in the village, but during the course of the conversation, he mentioned

*Neak-ta Kahé*
*Neak-ta Meung*
*Neak-ta Kwang*
*Neak-ta Zamko* (kok near *trapeang*, on the thnal kahe going north)
*Yeay Mao*—inside Wat Lolei—this is the new sculpture near the pipal tree in front of the *wat*
*Neak-ta Dong Kambat*—north of village
Lolei1-F62

23 December 2006
Lady at shop—62 years old—northern embankment of Lolei Baray

I am an original resident

Stopped to ask her about the water channel—water entry to Lolei Baray—was trying to find out about the laterite aqueduct.

Is it a trapeang or a water channel?
The channel is human-made channel. The trapeang used to be very deep before, but now it has become smaller because there is a lot of silt. The channel is human made, but the trapeang is deep, but now it has reduced in size due to soil infill.

Can you describe the boundary of Lolei to the north side?
Around 300 metres to the north.

Are you from this village?
I lived before on the other side of the embankment—in Lolei, after her marriage I have moved here.

Can she tell us about neak-ta in this village?
There is no neak-ta anywhere here. There is neak-ta only in front of the wat.

(The lady was busy at the shop and was not interested in talking to us further. So I had to finish the interview).
Lolei-M71&M58

4 January 2007
The interview conducted at the new crematorium construction of the Lolei Wat which has been stopped by APSARA—two men 71 and 58 years old.

Have you lived here for long?
I cannot say, but I have been here all my life. All my grandparents, parents are from this village. We are original inhabitants who have lived here for a few generations.

Did you move from this village during Khmer Rouge?
In Pol Pot regime I moved to Chlok Kombot village in (Sonekhum district). During Khmer Rouge people from Siem Reap were moved to here.

Are there any new comers to this village?
Most of the people who have moved here, they have moved because they have married someone in this village. They moved before Pol Pot regime, and some of them moved back to their own village.

How big is the village?
From the Lolum bridge, up to the road to Phnom Bok. In the north up to Bangkang village, and west up to Rohal village.

Is Lolum part of this village?
Yes.

If I show a map, will you be able to tell the boundary?
(They studied the map in detail (major landmarks are indicated)). He showed the Lolei boundary along route 6. On the road Thnal Kahé—goes to Preah Doh.

Is this an ancient/old road?
It seems like ancient road—it is an ox cart road.
He says that the road going north goes up to a Wat Kbal Chean, a bit further down is an ancient road which goes to Ang Chanh village up to Angkor Park.

Is there an ancient road to the west of Lolei?
(Along Thnal Kahé—is referred to as an ox cart) the ancient road surrounds the baray—entire embankment.

What is your occupation?
We are like nun, come here to ask advice from the monks. But now we are like guards here for the building material—new construction of the crematorium.

In this crematorium, Will you cremate bodies inside or outside?
They will cremate inside. For the monk it will be at higher level, but for ordinary people it will be at a lower level.

Do you know if the construction has permission?
We got verbal permission from APSARA, but when we started building, APSARA intervened and has stopped the building for a while. They have asked us to go again.
and get permission from APSARA. APSARA has many departments and if one department gives permission another department stops it. There is complexity in the process.

Is the construction stopped now?
Postponed until we get permission.

Who will get the permission? Will it be the monks or will it be the villagers?
Achar—who is from the wat consul/committee—Ta Touern is the head—master of achar consul/committee. He will go and get the permission.

Which wat do you go to and how often?
Lolei Wat: 4 times in a month (lunar cycle)

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
Yes, when we were younger (around 30s)

Have you seen the older prasat?
Only when I was younger. Both of us have visited. We used to visit the Angkor. In the earlier days when they visited they could only go on foot. But now, not anymore because I am getting old.

Have you climbed to the top?
Yes, I have.

Have you seen the sculptures in Angkor Wat?
Yes

Can you name the neak-ta in the village?
Ta Taeyk—to the north
Ta Kwang
Ta Meung
Yeay Kaven—at kok ta ok—north of the village
A long time ago, I have been to this kouk with my father, when a French researcher was excavating. It is a long-time ago during the 1960s. My father was a tree climber for palm juice.

Can he tell us where the kouk is—the exact location?
It is just behind his house along the northern embankment (Kouk Chapou Teng)

Do you know what the French scholar did?
Digging—they found a head.

Have you visited any prasat on any of the other kouk to the north?
I have seen prasat Chapou Teng.- the khassan goes around the temple.

Is there a trapeang? Trapeang Ta muang.

Was there any road at that time?
It was just a path. Now the road divides the temple and the trapeang.
Is there any other prasat that you have seen?
No, we have not seen any other prasat

Do you know about the bulldozing—what do you think about it?
That place is now someone’s property. After the owner has sold to someone else… they can do whatever they want. We can’t do anything. But we feel very sorry. This is the ancestor property for the next generation—in my generation everyone know that there is a temple Chapou Teng—but in my grandchildren’s time—maybe the site will disappear—and, no one will get to know of its existence.

How do you know that this is ancestral heritage?
I have seen it a very long time ago… and also my parents and grandparents have told him about it. I have learnt about it from my grandparents.

Have you learnt about what APSARA does? Do you know anything about what APSARA does?
We have to get permission before doing anything. At least 3 months before.

Do you know what APSARA does or what is its role?
Their role is to clean the prasat, to look after the prasat and to protect the prasat from looting.

Have you visited Bakong?
Yes.

Do you go to the wat regularly?
I have visited Bakong, when some villager invites me.

Have you visited the prasat at Bakong?
I have visited the prasat.

Was it recently or when you were young?
I visited recently.

What about other temples in Angkor?
I have been to Bayon, Ta Prohm, Kravan, Pre Rup, Banteay Srei, Baphuon (called Chhap boun—means park for king’s children to play)
He has been to all the temples in Angkor.

Is there anything of (archaeological) significance on the north side of the village—is there any old canal or anything?
There is an old beng—ta pok (Stung) and Trapeang Bangkoang to the north. There are no canals only Stung Roluos.

Any old remnants like stone?
No. When they dig for house construction they have come across laterite—Lolum Ba (junction of Lolei and Stung) it is a small bridge/aqueduct—which was replaced with a concrete bridge in 2003.
Why did you replace the bridge?
The old bridge/aqueduct was broken, and there was no way to get across

But who replaced the bridge? The villagers?
By an organisation from Phum Stung.

Location of neak-ta:
Yeay Kaven located at Kok Tha Ok (to be added to the rest of the list, this is to the north of the village)

Festivals and locations in village
People come to Ta Meung—to ask for rain, good fortune etc.,
Bay kaat pisa month—they cook—the ask for rain only at neak-ta shrine—not in the wat

Is there a pchit phum in this village?
No pchit phum—the centre of the village is to the north of the prasat.

To the north of the wat, we feel there might be some kiln—we found some bricks

Are there any remnant bricks now?
They are not on the surface, we have to dig.

Is there any other time when the villagers come for offering?
Important festivals: Choul Chnam Thmei—most important
Moon festival—Bon Omtouk/Omboak –flat rice—can only be made from new rice (Baay Kaat)
Chum Ben
And other times when we make offering for monks - chaan

Do you have any problems conducting your rituals?
No
Lolei-M53

4 January 2007
Male, 53 years old

I am not an original inhabitant. I came here after marriage. I have lived here for more than 35 years.

I am originally from Puok district. During Khmer Rouge, I went to Phnom Kulen

*Can you tell us how big the village is?*
From *Prasat* Chapou Teng up to route 6/ road to Phnom Bok to Thnal Kahé

*Do you know what is happening at prasat Chapou Teng?*
I learnt from my children who go to collect firewood that there are workers with bulldozers there.

*Have you seen anything there when you were younger?*
There were some stones, but no significant structure

*What do you think about what is happening now?*
It is a very bad thing, it is v. sad. It is one that we can keep for the next generation, but now it will disappear. So I feel very sorry. And also they are cutting trees, destroying forest.

*How long have you lived in this house?*
1979 onwards.

*What do you do?*
I am a rice farmer

*What do you know about neak-ta in the village?*
Ta Meung, Yeay Mao, Ta Basa

*Which wat do you visit?*
Lolei Wat

*Have you been to Angkor Wat?*
Yes, and I have visited all the old temples in the Angkor Park

*Neak-ta: Ta Meung/Yeay Mao*
Ta Basa
Ta Teak—north of Lolei Baray
Ta Sao: has a piece of stone pedestal—when animal gets sick, they go to give offering—Kok Ay Cheun

*Is Ta Sao the name of the owner as well?*
I do not know anything about the name.

*How far is it?*
It will be difficult to notice the location. Kok Ay Cheun is possible to locate.

*Do people from Lolei go there?*
Only when the neak-ta—strong spirit, make people sick

*Do you know about APSARA and what it does?*
They don’t allow us to do anything without permission. No digging on the kok…

*What do you think about the kouk being damaged with relation to APSARA rules?*
I don’t know what APSARA will do. APSARA soldiers came and saw the bulldozing and they have stopped it.

*Do you have any restrictions when you do the rituals with neak-ta?*
No problems

*What about Bakong?*
I have climbed up to the top.

*Do you know why APSARA has restriction on no digging?*
Their role is to protect the heritage for the next generation, because it is ancient and precious. So we have to keep it and protect and conserve it for the next generation.

His wife—mentioned that: the bulldozing of the prasat site does not mean anything to me. It does not make me feel happy or sad that the prasat site is damaged. I do not think anything about the prasat.
Lolei-M62&M80

Interviewed achar and a monk—aged 62 and 80 respectively

(The interview was performed in the sala of the Lolei Wat, and the monks were chanting in the background. It was an auspicious day)

I am not an original inhabitant; I am from Trapeang Thom, moved here after marriage. I have 4 children (2 died) and 2 live near me in this village.

During Pol Pot I moved to three places—first to Preah Loak (far west) near Kulen Mountains and then went to Preah Dotung nearby in Sonikhum district.

I returned after the Khmer Rouge occupation was finished.

*Can you describe the Village extent?*
From Lolei temple till road to Phnom Bok to east
Up to the school near the prasat Chapou Teng—up to prasat Ta Pok
From the route 6 to bangkaong village.
From the spean kaek on route 6 until ampil commune (along Thnal Kahé)
(Another monk joined in the conversation and mentioned the village extends from spean kaek up to ampil commune.)

*Do you know about the bulldozing of prasat Chapou Teng?*
Yes.

*What do you think about that?*
Nobody is happy with that. I know that it is being destroyed. I am not very happy and nobody is happy as well.

*Have you seen anything there?*
There were a lot of old bricks on that site before. A friend had told me that there used to be a long line of sandstone.

*Anything else?*
I could see because there were looting pits.

*Do you know about any French researcher who came years ago?*
I do not know about that. During Khmer Rouge, they (KR) tried to clear the canal—they found a lot of ceramics. The canal goes to the river—it was a kind of dam for water.

*Have you visited Angkor Wat?*
Only once—I had a very quick look.

*What can you tell about neak-ta?*
Ta Meung is the main one in front of Lolei Wat.
Ta Basa inside the prasat, where you give offerings.

No, it is a pralay (canal) from Trapeang Roun.
(At this point, the older man who had joined in started answering questions, but his
interruption disturbed the interview. He was not answering any question, but talking
about an unrelated topic. It was difficult to do anything about that. The line of
questioning was changed because it didn’t go anywhere)

**What did you do when you cleared the canal?**
They took stones from the prasat site. There was a lot of confusion because of the
disturbance from the second person and the chanting of the monks in the background.
The line of questioning was dropped completely.

**So what does it mean being an achar?**
I am the achar—when people celebrate any Khmer ceremony, they come here and ask
for my availability and place order for making baisei and book me for function.

**Is being an achar a hereditary occupation?**
No, my father is not an achar. I am the one in my family. I was trained by a previous
achar in the village. Though I was not born an achar (not hereditary), I have been
blessed by the monks to be an achar. Only when a monk blesses, can you become a
complete achar.

**Some ceremonies that he officiates- does it not all belong to Buddhism? Like those
related to neak-ta?**
Achar perform rituals for both Buddhism and Brahmanism… (Buddha was in
Brahmanism before becoming Buddha)
After Buddha became enlightened—when he was meditating, he said that when
people die, their spirit is not finished. There is after life.
Neak Pean—after the final incarnation he will never be born again. The last birth—
delivers human being from the suffering of life. In Brahmanism people are born
again—suffer in the cycle.

**Do you do weddings or other rituals?**
I perform rituals for wedding, old age, good luck, good fortune, building house and
when someone is sick.

**Do you do anything when someone is sick?**
I make baisei and I conduct the rituals.
I saved my mother 3 times from illness through my ritual practice (She is 91 years
old)

**You know when you go to a medium—is there anyone in this village here?**
Yes.

**Can you give me the names of mediums?**
Yeay Hoy.

**Is there anyone else?**
If there is no one here, we will go to another village to find someone else.

**When are you most busy during the year?**
I am busy all through the year.
Which months do you have more ceremonies?
Building house, ceremony to increase age.
5 months I am more busy—meak, chattir, mea kase, mea thom, cheahs

Can you tell us about the neak-ta in this village?
There are lot of neak-ta.

Where do they do the ceremony?
Ta Meung—in front of the temple.
Inside the prasat—Basa

What do you do at Ta Basa?
We ask for good fortune—make offering.

What about the other neak-ta? Or are these the most important?
There are a lot of neak-ta in the village. But all villagers come here to Ta Meung at the wat.

What does neak-ta mean?
It is one of the spirits that protects the villagers. Before the villager does anything; like beginning something or doing anything, the villagers should get permission. Neak-ta in the countryside protects the village.

Neak-ta outside village is called neak-ta chum pleuh (guardians of the way)
Names of neak-ta and kok
Neak-ta Don Aev
Neak-ta Teyk
Neak-ta Dong Kambat

The monks chanting reached a crescendo at this point. More monks had joined in the chanting

Do you know about trapeang and kouk around here?
Kok dam dong
Kok chas
Kok thnaut
Kok unsam ko
Kok Trapeang Phlong
Trapeang Kla Teah (behind army HQ—on the way to Trapeang Roun (1.5 kms from here) in a different village)
Trapeang Baay (trapeang 3)—3 trapeang are nearby—the trapeang is going to disappear because it has been filled up

People are proud that their ancestors could carry big stones to build the old temples—the temples are falling down because they are old!

Do you have any problems with APSARA?
There are no problems from the authorities to perform rituals
Lolei-F18

30 November 2006
Shop keeper in front of Lolei Wat Female, 18 years old

The shopkeeper refused to talk, because she did not want to say anything. And she claimed she knew nothing about a neak-ta, or the temples or anything. She was only interested in selling things to tourists; she was a young girl 18 years old.

Later she talked a bit. She did not know much about the temples. The shop has to pay 2000 riel per day to APSARA for the shop like rent.
PHUM OVLAOK INTERVIEWS

Ovlaok-M36

24 November 2006
Village Chief—Male 36 years old

Can you draw the boundary of Ovloak?
Boundary of Ovloak—around 700 metres south of Bakong.
On the west up to the spean near lolum. On south up to Phum Oo.

How many people live in the village?
333 houses

Are you the chief of Ovloak village?
Yes

Are you an original inhabitant?
We are original for 3 generations.

Do you know where you lived before 3 generations?
No as far as I know we have always been in Ovlaok.

Did you have to move elsewhere during the Khmer Rouge?
During Pol Pot, I went to Phum Srong-ai in SR nearly 13 kms from Ovlaok. And then I moved to Bai Kam Pleuh village.

When you came back did you have any problems in gaining your own land?
I returned in 1975. All the houses in the place were destroyed, and I had to build a new hut.
(Showed the extent of Ovlaok in his own drawing)

What is the normal occupation of the villagers?
Occupation: is working on the restoration of Preah Ko temple –23 people are working on the temple restoration projects of APSARA. The village chief is currently working on the Preah Koh restoration which is being managed by APSARA and GACP.

Nearly 500 people from the village are working in the SR province.

Are you not doing agriculture?
Because there is not enough money for agriculture.

According to the village chief, more people from Takkal province own the land in Ovlaok, because villagers from Ovlaok cannot afford to buy land.

Do the people from Takkal province lease the land here or have they purchased the land, and have they paid the local villagers the money for that?
They buy the land and they get the local people to work for them.
What is the average income here?
50 USD/month

Do you know the location of neak-ta in the village?
Preah Ko—Ta Di
Bakong—Yeay Mao
Chambok tree near preah ko

Bakong temple: Yeay Mao (gee Mao)
Chamba tree in Wat Bakong—neak-ta

Which wat do you go to?
Bakong—I visit regularly.

Temples/Wats you have visited?
Wat Roluos chas (near roluos market) and Wat Lolei

You don’t go to Angkor?
We go.

When do you go?
Angkor—only to visit the temple like a visitor—very few times for religious reasons—when we are free.

Why do you go to the temple? Is it because it is important in Cambodian history? Do you go to see the temple or is it because of some religious significance?
Sometimes we go for a ritual, sometimes we go for a visit because it is an important place in Cambodia.

Do you go every year at the same time? Do you go annually during any holidays? Or do you go anytime.
We go every three months to pray at Angkor.

So you don’t have any fixed time?
We go whenever we like.

Do you have dong ta?
Ancestral deity: Each house has a small shrine
There is the constant noise of welding in the background, which caused significant disturbance in the audio recording.

What kind of rituals do you have for neak-ta? Do they have a pchit phum?
There is a pchit phum in the village—near school and community centre (pillar at centre of village) where rituals related to village welfare are performed.

Name of other festivals:
Festivals: Meak Bochea: Buddha gets enlightenment—celebration happens during February
And when someone cooks for the monks
Are there any other rituals in the pchit phum?  
Three days of celebration during New Year: Choul Chnam Thmei  

Can you tell names of people in the village that I could talk to?  
Ju Chem and Khut Rem  

There is a trapeang behind here, do you know its name?  
There is a moat around. There is also a trapeang—showed the map.  
It is called khassan ta keo.  

Have you had any problems in your rituals? Have you been stopped by APSARA?  
There is no problem with APSARA in the performance of their rituals.  

Are you working with DMA1 or DMA2?  
I do not know, I only know that I work with APSARA.  

Is preah ko neak-ta significant only for this village or do people from other villages come as well?  
Only for this village.  

Has this been a neak-ta for a long-time?  
Yes, it has been here a long time.  

At this time some tourists were sitting on the Nandi in front of Preah Ko posing for a photo. I asked why they did not stop it—was it not wrong?  
We don’t mind that. We don’t think it is bad.  

What is the meaning of Ovloak?  
I do not know.  

Are there any other names for Ovloak?  
No other names  

23 November 2006  

Visited again with another PhD student. The following is the other student’s interview with the village chief.  

I am an original villager (age: 35).  

Can he tell about his family?  
I have a wife and two children. The visit was during the restoration on Preah Ko.  

He works for APSARA. What is his role?  
I do not have any rice fields. His wife has a shop in front of Preah Ko.  

How many people live in Ovloak 1540? Do you live in the village?  
Yes.
Do you own a house, land in the village?
I have.

Do you have documents to support his ownership?
I do not have any documents, but he got the property from his parents.

Is he aware that documents would be helpful?
He can make the documents anytime he wants.

Can he describe the process of how the documents are made?
First you have to meet the village chief, and then go to commune chief, then to planning office. So I do not have to go to APSARA. There is no need to go to APSARA. But if they are going to build a new house they have to go to APSARA.

Is this the same process for a rice field?
The process is the same.

Are there any other villagers who have documents?
A few people have documents.

Is it possible to meet them?
It is not possible to meet them to see the documents because they are people from other villages.

I would like to ask about mediation role of the village chief in case of a problem.
When there are problems with boundary, or with people from other village, and then we talk and decide how much each one’s land is.

Do people ever disagree about boundaries?
They will have problems with boundaries.

If there were problems what is the process of resolving it or how do you fix it?
The people come together and they go to commune chief and if the situation doesn’t get resolved they go to court.

Has anyone used a court in this village.
Only one person. I am nigh.

Would it be possible for me to speak to him?
Got the details.

Can he tell his perception of the mediation process. What I am trying to ask is—are there other disputes, and does the village chief have a role in mediation. Does the village chief have a role in mediation?
the village chief tries to mediate, but then it goes to commune chief. This is a standard process.

Ask his knowledge about the world heritage classification—about the impact of the world heritage classification on the village
In this village, the people cannot sell the land the outsiders. But they can sell within the people in the village. But when they have to construct a house they go to APSARA.

*Can he tell me about the regulations the laws of APSARA?*
Before the APSARA consul comes here two times a week. But now they have an office in the commune office.
The commune chief is the village chief’s father.

*Are there many NGOs who work in the villages?*
There are some NGO offices here, but some come from Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. I will come back and arrange time to meet him again.

Thank you!
APSARA guard at Preah Ko.

*How many guards are there?*
8 how long do they work? In the morning 7-12 and 12-5 in the afternoon.

*What about night?*
All people are local villagers. Lolei has 3 guards, and at Bakong they have more guards. All the temples in the villages have guards—during day and night.

The other student produced an aerial photograph and asked the village chief to draw the boundary of the village. And the village chief said ‘I have never seen such an image before’.
Ovlaok-M78&group

24 November 2006
(M 78)—the oldest man in the village—an original villager.  
His wife (F 63), Man (M 71), Man (M 64), Man (M 60)

This turned out to be an impromptu group session.

Did you go anywhere during KR? 
During Khmer Rouge, we went to Phum Sra in 1973 and returned in 1976.

What do you do for living? Are you into agriculture? 
We own two hectares of rice fields. Farming is primary occupation. We grow rice in 
one season and vegetables in the other. 
There is no water for rice. We have to wait for rain. We have to make ceremony for 

(A dog starts barking intermittently)

Are you going to have a ceremony now? 
We have to do it when we need the rain so much. We have to collect money from 
villagers to buy a pig and make offering to neak-ta.

When you say neak-ta - is it inside the Bakong?  
Yes.

Is it the old prasat or the wat. 
It is near the temple.

What is the name of the neak-ta? 
Ta Kwang and Ta Chong.

Do you go to the wat regularly? 
We go when we have to have a ceremony for neak-ta. 
We go to Bakong prasat when we need to worship the neak-ta. 
We go when we have to have a ceremony for asking for rain for example during meak.

Do you go the old prasat at all for having a look? Do you know who built it? Do you 
like it? 
The king who built is called varman. This temple is built around the same time as 
preah ko. It is the first temple in the Siem Reap province.

What are your feelings about Bakong prasat? 
It is a very important temple. We like it very much.

Have you been there recently or have you been there only when you were young? 
I go every 8 days to the wat. I and my wife are like nun. We go early in the morning 
every 8 days for praying and get blessing from the monk.

But do you go to the old prasat?
It is all part of the wat.

_Have you ever walked inside the old prasat?_
Only when I was younger, when I was a monk—at the age of 40. Every Cambodian man has to be a monk at some stage in his life. I have visited the _prasat_ some 38 years ago when I was younger. The reasons are that now we are too old to climb the temples.

_Are there any religious trees or trees that are sacred?_
There are many trees. Po tree
I am not sure because sometimes when someone walks past and gets affected, they say it is a devil tree. Po tree is only devil tree—they have to ask to be freed from devil. It is similar to _neak-ta_, because they have to respect. They should not disturb them.

_Do you cut trees?_
We have to keep the trees. Also because Buddha gained enlightenment under the Po tree, it is significant.

_Do have a ritual to cut a Po tree?_
If we want to cut the tree, we will make a _baisei_ offering and then cut the tree.

_Which wat do u visit?_
Bakong Wat.

_What are the rituals?_
In February, we perform a ritual to the _neak-ta_ shrine to ask for rain.

_What other trees are sacred?_
Cheuteul, - anywhere there is a big tree, there is a spirit.

_Are there any old stories associated with these features?_
I do not know.

_What village is this?_
Phum Ovlaok

_Is there any khassan near here?_
No, it is only around temple. There is a _trapeang_ here. Villagers often interchange the use of the words _khassan_ and _trapeang_. _Trapeang_ is an old pond and _khassan_ is a moat. The temple of Prei Monti has a _khassan_ around it. _Trapeang_ comes because of buffalo—when they lie in swampy places and keep digging it becomes a _trapeang_. It is an old wives tale.

_Is there any kouk?_
The whole of the area is _kouk_—which has now become Ovlaok village. Outside the village there is _kouk_—east of the village.

_Do you use the water in the trapeang?_
The trapeang is to the east of the residence. No one use the trapeang. In the past we used to use the water. But during the 1970s the soldiers filled up the trapeang, and the water became muddy and less and people stopped using it.

Did you try to clean up the water? Where do you get water from? We don’t use the water, because we can make well by themselves by digging—bore well.

Do you have any well? NGO helped them dig the well.

How do you use the water? By using pump. For rice agriculture, it is rain fed. For growing vegetables and fruits, we use the water from the well.

Do you buy vegetables or do you grow their own? We grow vegetables that can be sold to other villagers. (The group was very amused by the questions and they were laughing very loudly) We buy some vegetables.

Do you sell vegetables in Siem reap? No, we sell in Roluos market.

During the course of the interview some more men had joined and it became an impromptu group session.

Can we get the other people’s names also? Amidst a great deal of amusement and laughter they gave their names and age. Moreover, since APSARA has laid restrictions on the use of trapeang, the local villagers do not clean-up the trapeang for using the water. Instead they harvest the lotus, and sometimes they use the water for their buffaloes/cattle.

One of the other villagers (Male, 60) had very strong views about the ancestral deity worship and the superstitions. He said: These are superstitious beliefs and people should stop believing in them. (According to translator, he had very strong communist views). For neak-ta—it is now going to disappear—because the villager—when they are sick they will not go to the hospital—they will stay at home and ask neak-ta to make them better—for some people it works, for some it doesn’t work and the villager just dies. (loud laughter in the background)—some NGO are trying to teach people about how to stop believing in neak-ta and go to the hospital—but it will not completely disappear—because there are lots of people who still respect the neak-ta.

Do the younger people believe in neak-ta in the village? Are there any youngsters involved in the rituals? The young men do not believe or do not say that they believe in neak-ta—but they are very afraid when they go near a big tree or a neak-ta shrine.

Do they join with you, when you are making a ritual offering?
According to (Male 60): I asked some younger people as to why you are afraid, because you have never seen ghost before. I had heard from some old man in the village that—before Bakong was very powerful—a bird flying above, it will fall down dead—because the temple is very powerful—something like that never happened—but I do not believe it.

Do you think that there might be problems about your culture if younger people don’t follow neak-ta?
The other villagers supported the fact that the villagers will follow neak-ta.
Ovlaok-F80

24 November 2006
(F 80)

Another older person suggested by the village chief
Originally from this village.

*How many generations have you been here?*
During Khmer Rouge, we went to Koul Krasan and returned to Ovlaok in 1979. We
only own a house now, and do not have any land to grow rice.

*Do you know about neak-ta and what you do there?*
I make offering in the Bakong temple.

*Have you done the offering from when you were young?*
Yes

Cultural practices: Make offering to the *neak-ta* in Bakong.

*Is there any ceremony you have done in their family?*
No, I don’t know much about it.

*How often do you go to Bakong?*
Every week to Wat Bakong—make offering to the Buddha (8th day)

*And what is the big festival you celebrate?*
Choul Chnam Thmei,

*Pchit phum*—near community hall where village rituals are conducted.

*Is there any ancient kouk nearby?*
I don’t know.

*Do you know any old stories?*
I do not know any old stories.

(The lady did not offer much information, maybe she was very old or not a local from
the village).
Phum Thnal Trang Interviews

ThnalTrang-M25
Male, 25 years old
(His house site had an excavation done by some French archaeologist)

Are you from this village?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant; my parents live in another part of Thnal Trang. My brother lives here and in future I will also come and live here.

Do you know how big the village is?
The extent from front of Wat Bakong to the end of the road where it has a bend.

Can you show on the map?
Village details: the boundary extends from Bakong to the road (psar Roluos); and from behind this road (south) up to route 6 in the north—shown on map.

Are you studying or have you finished studies?
He stopped studying.

So what do you do for a living?
Occupation: TV mechanic/radio + electronics/family is involved in farming

Do you also do farming?
Yes.

Located the community hall. He said it is at the end of the next road.

Is there a pchit phum?
I do not know.

What do you know about old traditions?
In the month of meak—people have a big gathering and have big cooking—they make Cambodian noodle—and invite monk for food.
For moon festival—amtuk or ambok sampeah preahay (moon) People go to community hall—they collect money—put it in a collection (in the shape of a flower called money flower)

What do you think about the old temples?
I like this temple very much. I like all the old temples.

How many prasat have you seen?
I have seen so many of the prasat in the Angkor area. But I have also seen some smaller shrines.

Have you been to Bakong?
Yes
Have you been to Lolei?
Yes

Have you been West Baray?
Yes

Have you been to other provinces to see temples?
Kampong Cham—old temples in the province

Did you go to these temples to see the temple or for some other reason?
I went there for a wedding—and saw temples then.

So after the wedding you went to see temples?
Yes.

Do all people do this?
Yes. For example some people from Kampong Cham got married here—they will bring the man to take photos in Angkor Wat and bring him for a visit.

How many times have you been to Angkor Wat?
20 times… I went inside only 4 times…
The other times we just drive around—go to the park.

Do you only drive around when you go with friends?
I am driving around and looking for shady place for relaxing.

Have you seen the bas-reliefs in Angkor Wat? What do you think about it?
Yes I have seen. I think that it is very wonderful, for old people to carve in the stones and the stones are very big stones.

So what do you know about neak-ta?
If we do something wrong with the neak-ta and we have any problem—then we have to give some offering like chicken skin—the meat is taken out and it is stuffed with something—it is made to look like chicken but it is only skin. It is a gesture of offering not real offering.

Is there any neak-ta nearby?
Neak-ta undong preang—cheuteul tree—hole with a khassan surrounding.
Neak-ta chook un dah
Neak-ta srang-ai (name of a grass)—it is a prasat in ruins like prei monti -

Ta chong/Yeay Mao—where is it?
It is in Bakong—anywhere around in the prasat

Is there any problem with authority when you have neak-ta ritual?
When we give offering in front of prasat—sometimes it is not allowed because it might be a narrow place—very small space where tourists walk

Any other problems that you have heard about? Do you know about the problem with the construction?
Yes, that house is his grand aunt’s.

Are all the families here related to each other? Is there any family who is an outsider? 90% are related to each other. Only 10% not related.
ThnalTrang-F64

26 December 2006

Woman, 64 years old
House construction over the prasat—interviewed the owner after learning that there was a new house construction, and it had been stopped by APSARA.

Asked about the neighbouring house if it was hers... it was her daughter’s house. I have nine children—big family. Her relatives also live nearby.

Do you know that the French have excavated in one of these houses before?
Some ten years ago, some French people asked if there was a prasat here and she said no. And when they asked the French if there was a prasat the barang also said no.

But do you know that there was an excavation done in one of the houses near the Bakong on this road?
The excavation was done in her sister’s house—they found some pieces of ceramics.

How long has the construction been going for?
Since one month.
I asked for permission to construct. But the permission given was only to repair the old house. But the old house is almost all of it broken, so cannot repair.

But at that time, did someone from APSARA come and explain about the rules?
They said we cannot do that here, because they were on a prasat platform. At that time, someone from APSARA came to explain that they could not build new house. But they can just repair the existing one. And they explained that it was on a prasat platform.

But last time when we talked—when I asked if you knew about the prasat you said you did not know?
We don’t know. APSARA said there is prasat, but when my son dug for evidence we did not find any. So I am not sure.

But if it is on a prasat platform would you build on it?
I respect what APSARA said, and if I knew that this was a prasat I will not stay here and build on it. But it is not a prasat.

Can you explain why you cannot stay if there is a prasat?
One reason why I cannot build a house on the prasat is because in the prasat there is a spirit. The spirit will hurt me or make me unlucky. And before I started construction, I consulted a kru called Kru Cheun.

When asked if she consulted a kru (like an astrologer, a person who sets auspicious times, and advises with regards to any activity) with regards to her new construction, she said she had consulted Kru Cheun. He can see the luck and unluck. He will tell the good location for the house. According to the kru, the land is very good for building a house.
The *kru* will look at the land and will tell if it is good to build a house. And he can find out if something is wrong. He can suggest which part of the land is good location for the house. He is a guru who will help people locate the best spot for building a house. He said there was a hole at the site before, and he said that it is *bhukman* land in Khmer which means that means that the land is very good to build a house on. It will make her house lucky for any business and that’s why she asked her children to fill up the hole so she could build.

*How big was the hole?*
It was bigger than this house.

*Would it be like a pond or what?*
No not a pond, but just lower ground same as the road.

*But why would this be depressed, because this is supposed to be a kouk, right?*
No answer.

*So was it bigger than the house here?*
Yes.

*Is there a khassan around here somewhere?*
There are 5 *trapeang* around the location of this house.

*Why is the thnal at a lower level? Do you know anything?*
Because the road is being heavily used.

Names of *trapeang* around:
- Yay Seurn
- Kooang moo-aych
- Trapeang Chukung Das—large water body
- The names are derived by the people who lives on the property.

The locations and the name have been marked out on a map. Her daughter helped locate the *trapeang* on the map. Trapeang Sala—next to school.

Undong preang—*Prasat* site with moat around

Her daughter, gave the names of the *trapeang*.

Thnal Trang has around 200 families.

Kouk Sambo sroh ka—she knows from old people and old times. During Pol Pot, the name was changed to kouk ko (Ko means you don’t talk—when people had to be safe—so it’s called ko)

*So when did it become Thnal Trang?*
Well the whole village is Thnal Trang, this is only the name of this *kouk*. 
Did you have to move during Pol Pot times?
I was shifted to the Phnom Kulen area.

And did you return after that?
During Pol Pot regime I was taken to the Phnom Kulen area. I was in a place where they look after lot of animals—live stock. I lived near Ol chaoud—is a canal that is very high from the mountains—(I was far away from her husband but still could have a baby—the lady was very sad with tears in her eyes), but was also joking at the same time. She was very scared at night because they said there were tigers around and she was afraid that the tiger might want to eat the baby. She said that when she asked her father about the sounds he did not say much so that she would not be scared. At the day she also saw big birds, because people had been distributed everywhere in the country and she was scared to be in areas of animals. She was also scared of the bomb and the air force. Whenever she saw a plane she always prayed so that they may not drop any bomb.

Can she explain the extent of Thnal Trang?
Road in front of Bakong—starts around 500 meters to east of that and all the way up to Roluos to the east. On the north till route 6, on south till sala

On the map, the extent was discussed and the lady was very impresses seeing the map and baray sngout. She had just learned about baray sngout and was quite impressed. She said: I knew about a sra but I did not know about the baray.

Have you been to Wat Lolei?
I have been, I go during chum ben, moon festivals.

Do you do farming?
We do farming. But our farms are closer to the lake, so we also do dry season farming. It is about 6 -7 kilometres from here. Around March, it is the harvest season—we also fish—there are lots of people there, but no shade because no trees. We have a small place for shelter there.

We go in the morning and come back in the evening. Some people stay there for the period of the farming. Someone from my family stays there, but I stay here to look after the animals in the house.

Ta Chaay—the kouk on which the house is - when someone is sick they go to a medium for help.
The lady was talking with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement. There was expectation on her side that I would help her in her crisis with APSARA.

Before when they were young, there were lots of sculpture—lot of neak-ta—but after Pol Pot, it has all been looted and gone.

The snake—naga on the causeway—was in very good condition—but now damaged.

(A dog starts barking in the background which had to be moved because it was disturbing the audio recording)
Names of Kok: Kok Sambor sroka (in front of Bakong)—name from old times—
during Pol Pot the name was changed to Kok Ko
Kok Ta chaay—where the house is
Ta chong—in front of Bakong
Sculpture of man with lots of arms inside Bakong (was a neak-ta)
Outside Bakong—a lion statue on the lower level of the prasat is revered as a neak-ta

neak-ta Krong yung—broken prasat
At the Ta krong yung, one of her brother was taking the cow to the field—the cow
was a bad cow, and he took it to the neak-ta and asked for the cow to be killed—some
passerby said to her brother that the neak-ta should kill you—and the man got very
sick—and they go to a medium—who said that the neak-ta was angry and wanted
chicken. They gave chicken and the man got better.

Have you made any offering to Ta Chaay?
Offering can be made anywhere in the area. The neak-ta had made my water buffalo
sick and that it wanted a pig head so I made an offering.
I had made the offering to Ta Chaay around 2 months ago.

Which wat do you go to?
Bakong

How often?
Every 8 day according to the moon cycle.

Are you a nun?
I am a nun, and I go to the wat regularly to cook food for the monks
Yeay Mao Ta chong—in Bakong

Have you visited Angkor Wat?
I have been to Angkor Wat to visit. I always get lost in the temple. I always go from
the east and never from the west—I always climbed up to the sanctuary. But the last
time I went there I prayed to Yeay Mao (Bakong) and requested that “please don’t
make me get lost in Angkor Wat” and the last time she never got lost.

How often do you go to Angkor Wat?
I go there for visiting and for Buddhist ceremony. Chum ben, ghatten ne tien
(ceremony of collecting money for monk)

What do you know about neak-ta?
We use the term Loak ta or neak-ta, the term Loak Ta is used more.

What is the big celebration here?
Khleung meak—baay kaat
New Year
We will make Cambodian noodle, and go to community hall and make offering to
neak-ta and then enjoy the food together.

Baay Kaat of every moon (3rd day of waxing/waning) we go to the community hall for
prayer
During New Year we have celebrations as well

Achar in this village—none. We go to an achar in Ovlaok by name Achar Deum (he lives to the south of the Bakong prasat)

What do you think will happen to the house now?
If I stop building, I will not have any house to stay. If I continue then APSARA will come to stop. But I will continue to build, no matter what.

Did you have problems when you built the adjacent house?
They also asked permission, but they didn’t get any. But no one came to check, so they completed the construction unauthorized.

And what about the house across the across the road?
That was built before APSARA.

Can we walk to the trapeang?
It is too hot to walk—just look at the map.

What are the traditional terms for water bodies?
Trapeang is shallow, beng is bigger and water never dries even in dry season… and undong is a well.

Do people believe in neak-ta and do offerings?
Yes. Only people who are changing from Buddhism to Christianity do not believe. There are no such villagers here in Thnal Trang, but in Ovlaok. 90% is Khmer and if they change to Christian—they will never go to pagoda and respect a wat.

(The lady was happy with my presence. Because every time we made an appearance during the APSARA visit, the APSARA staff and DOC staff mellowed down. They were always threatening her loudly, and they stopped when we went there during those times).

On 27th December, met the APSARA representative who was responsible for stopping the construction:

A big battalion of army arrived in a truck (around 20 men)—the owner, the old lady was made to sign the promissory note to state that she would not proceed with the construction. The group of people included the village chief, the APSARA representative from the DOC, commune consul.

When the APSARA man was asked for details, he mentioned that he was only aware that the construction had happened without permission and they were building with cement and brick which is not allowed.

His job was to look at unauthorized constructions within Zone 1 and keep a check. And he was proceeding to Roluos to check on the illegal constructions there, which are many in number.
This house has evidence of prasat—old bricks and laterite platform lining the edge...

26th December 2006: (discussion when I went with a colleague)—with the staff from DOC
For this house construction they sought permission from village chief, commune chief and up to APSARA authority, but APSARA authority not allow them to build a new house. They only allow them to repair the old house.

Colleague: that’s right, that’s the rules
This lady does not respect what the APSARA authority said—they pull down their old house and just build a new house.

Me: Was the old house in this spot?
Yes in the spot of the present construction

S: How big was the old house?
Not much information

Me: Can you ask which department he is from?
He is from Department of Security and Cooperation.

Me: Is he from DMA2
No, he is with the DOC.

When asked about the name of the deputy director—General Dom Ha (from army) who was directly under Bun Narith.

He had a form—when asked what it said—they said that it was the prohibition order.

Colleague: Have you given a copy of that to the lady?
They showed the brochure produced by DMA2—on the model house

Colleague: Have you given a copy to the lady?
No, to the commune chief. This is a green zone, and APSARA wanted people to have a fence and grow plants and flowers. They want the people to keep the trees and not cut. They want the people to keep the zone green.

Me: Ask if he has heard of ‘Living with Heritage’ and if he has come for any meetings.
No, he had not been to the meeting.
The document they had was put forth—which deals with land management: dated 2004. The document is in official language—about the zone boundaries and land management in Angkor—this was later translated.

How often do you do this?
5 days a week.

Me: Have you had other incidents like this—people building without permission. Is there any other example?
There are a lot, but I cannot remember.
Moreover, his job is new.

Me; *Do you know where the zone boundary is?*
Yes, our department is responsible for the entire zone 1—in 21 communes.

Me; *How many people work doing this?*
40.
Discussion continues with a map in the document they gave. They explain the zones.

Colleague; *Do you know where the zone boundaries are on the ground?*
From the centre of the Bakong temple—the zone boundary is 3 kms on all sides.

Me; *But on the ground, when we are walking, can he identify the boundary?*
There are boundary markers along the zone boundary. Some are left, while the rest have been pulled out by the local people. Yes we can see on the ground. Boundary marker in concrete with the top painted in red. We are willing to show them.

Colleague; *Have you finished your job?*
They have to get the promissory note signed—they need the commune chief and the village chief—but they were busy and were in Siem Reap.
This was an act of cooperation with the commune chief and village chief—he is responsible for 50% of the zone and the village chiefs and commune chiefs are responsible for the remaining 50%.
His boss is Set Sarouen—deputy of the deputy director Dom Ha.

Will it be possible to meet him?
We fixed an appointment for the following day—8 am.
Name of the person spoke to—Sok Bora (from DOC)

Colleague; *Why have you come?*
We have come to stop the lady from continuing the construction of the house until she gets permission from the APSARA authority.

JO; *And why do you need the village chief and the commune chief?*
Because this is the cooperation. If we come to work here we have to work together with the village chief and the commune chief.

JO; *Last week the second storey was not constructed. Are APSARA likely to do something more drastic—take tougher action or be strict with this particular house?*
They will get the lady to sign the promissory note with her thumb print acknowledging that she will not build any further. This will be submitted to the department of security and cooperation and handed to APSARA.

And is that’s all they do at that stage?
I do not know as yet.
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

(Interviews conducted during March 2008–April 2008)
PHUM LOLEI INTERVIEWS

Lolei-F42

Woman—42 years old
27 March 2008

Are you from this village?
Yes.

Do you have any family nearby?
The village chief is better off than me, so I have moved to his house. Before marriage
I was living near Route 6 where my family lives—opposite to the road to Bakong.

Is your husband from this village?
Yes.
I got married in a very small ceremony called Seyn just a month ago. I was married
before, but divorced. I have 2 children from the previous marriage—1 boy, 1 girl.

Do the children live with you?
No, they are living in my parents’ house and are being looked after by my younger
sister.

Does your husband have any children from the previous marriage?
2 boys and 1 girl and one is married and lives in Roluos village.

What is your occupation?
We do rice farming.

Are you also involved in the farming? Or do you do something else?
I help with farming. I also have a small shop in front of prasat Lolei selling various
things to tourists.

Do you have a good yield [with farming]?
We have 2 sets of rice fields which are totally 5 hectares. We find it difficult to
manage it all—because it is a big area. One set of the rice farms are south of the Lolei
Wat (south-west of the school towards Route 6—100 metres from Lolei Wat).
Another set of rice fields are located to the north of the wat to the west of the road.

We have very good harvest, because my husband uses natural fertilizer using cow
dung and compost—he has built his own composting shed in concrete using leaves
and organic waste.

Do you know how big the village is?
I do not know.

If I show you a map, will you be able to point out your rice fields?
[She showed the rough location—marked on a hard copy map]
It is around 100 metres from wat and it is near Route 6. Big rice fields are to the north of wat.

[She started talking about her sister’s illness: She was not well, she went to Vietnam and they told her that she had polyp, something like polyp inside which is very hard to treat and the doctor in Vietnam just gave her some medicine—and she came back here—when she was better she wanted to be operated—but she die just after coming back from Vietnam. She was just healthy like any other people—she fed the chicken and then she felt dizzy and she went to sleep and never woke up]

**What are the community rituals? Where do you do the community rituals?**
We do it near the wat. In front of the wat—in front of the Ta Meung shrine.

**Where do you do neak-ta offering for the village?**
Near the wat in front of the Ta Meung shrine in front of Lolei prasat. Sometimes we also make offering to Yeay Mao to the west of Lolei prasat.

**Are there any other neak-ta locations in Lolei?**
Somewhere of the south of the wat, there is a small house for Yeay Mao. I do not know any more.

**Have you done any offering to neak-ta?**
We made an offering in the Khmer month of Meak in front of Ta Meung.

**Did you do any ritual when your sister was not well?**
We never made offering. But we made a Kru kamnat—the kru did not allow her to travel to the north—but she went to pra dak—and the day after, she died.

**Do you feel that she died because she went to the north?**
Yes.

**How often do you go to the wat?**
Only for the festivals like Chum-ben, Choul Chnam. On the day before New Year, we give dry fish and water melon as offering for the monks. [during New Year this food is popular—dry fish and watermelon—because it is seasonal]

**Do you know of any neak-ta to the north of the baray?**
No, I do not know.

**Have you studied in school?**
Only till class two.

**Have you visited temples in Angkor?**
Yes. I have been to Banteay Srei, Ta Prohm and Bakong.

**Do you know anything about Lolei baray?**
It is baray sngout (dry). We sometimes use the term kouk to refer to the baray as well, because it is dry. We call it baray kouk (which means no water). (Kouk is also used to refer to ‘dry’—sometimes synonymous with sngout).
Do you know anything about prasat Lolei?  
Nothing. I met a Siem Reap student who said that the place was called Ta Lay [possibly a corruption of Hariharalaya]

Do you know this is a World Heritage site?  
No

Have you had any problems with APSARA for any construction?  
Yes. For example like this house—before we had wooden poles supporting the house—but when we had to put concrete on the ground—they did not allow—we asked permission for one month—but we did not get the permission—so we just decided to do without permission. And also there was problem with the construction—like the space around the house—APSARA will never allow to build a house—and everyone have to have the old house—and we cannot build over it

Do you know about the bulldozing of prasat Chapou Teng?  
Yes, I heard about that.

What do you think about that?  
I do not have any opinion.

Is it good or not good? (A leading question posed by the translator)  
Not good. I had visited that place [Prasat Chapou Teng] during Pol Pot time—I saw some temple—some part—there was brick lying around—during Pol Pot time they used the area for jhamkar agriculture—jhamkar means cutting the tree and burning—and then growing (slash and burn technique)

So at that time you saw the prasat?  
It was about half metre above the ground. I never visited that site again after that.

How old were you when you saw the temple?  
I was 9 years old.
Lolei-M38&F38

27 March 2008
[Husband and wife along with their children and a neighbour present during interview]
The house was opposite to the village chief’s house (Lolei-F42).

We have 5 children (2 boys, 3 girls). The boys are studying in Siem Reap School, 2 of the girls go to a school in Lolei, older girl does not study, because we cannot afford.

*Why are you not educating the girls in Siem Reap?*  
Oldest daughter is not studying because we were poor before. We cannot afford educating all the children in Siem Reap. So only the boys go there.

*Are you originally from this village?*  
We both are original inhabitants from Lolei.

*Is your (to the man) family from this village?*  
Our families live nearby [Our parents are no more]  
[They were preparing ground crabs for cooking]

*What is your occupation?*  
Farmers—we grow rice. Besides farming, the husband also goes for construction work in the village after farming duties are finished.

*Where are your rice fields?*  
Our rice fields are to the north of the *baray*, 500 metres from the house.

*Do you [wife] do anything other than farming?*  
I stay at home and cook. I also help with farming.

*Can you tell about the place where you make offering in the village?*  
In the *wat*—front of *neak-ta*

*Is there a name for the neak-ta?*  
Ta Meung in front of the *wat*.

*Is there any other neak-ta?*  
There are a lot of *neak-ta* in the village. It is hard to count.

*Can you tell me what ever neak-ta you know?*  
Ta Meung  
Ta Teyk—north of Lolei *baray* (located)  
Yeay Gomvan—north of Lolei  
Srei Ka Mau or Yeay Mao—south of *wat*—the spirit lives in the *wat*

*Did you make any offering during Meak this year?*  
Never.

*Have you never done offering before?*
We have done sometime.

When did you make an offering?
About 3 months ago.

[When asked if they had ever made an offering for neak-ta—they said never. But when asked when was the last time they made offering, they mentioned 3 months ago!! (that was probably due to some confusion—maybe they did not understand the question)]

Where did you do the offering?
Ta Meung

What did you offer?
Pig head, liquor, 5 incense (no cigarette)

Did you make offering because a memot (medium) advised you?
We did the offering on our own not through memot. Only when someone wants to achieve something or did something bad with neak-ta—when they feel better or achieve what they want—they will buy a pig head and liquor (it is called seyn—they give what they promised to give)

Are there any kru in Lolei?
No. There used to be one person, but he has died.

Where do you go when you are sick?
To another village.

Are there any achar?
Ta Naep and Ta Toeurn. [One achar has been interviewed]

Do you go to the wat regularly?
Not regularly—only during celebrations

Is it only older the people who go to the wat regularly?
Yes. Only older people go to the wat regularly.

Which wat do you go to?
We go to Wat Lolei.

Have you been to the wat at Roluos?
We go only to Wat Lolei
We believe that when people die during Chum-ben, the spirits go looking for the offering their children make in the wat, and if they cannot find any they just curse.

Have you visited the prasat in the Lolei?
Yes

Do you know anything about the prasat?
It is just a broken temple—just ruin
Do you know that this is World Heritage?
Tourists come to visit.

What do you think about so many tourists visiting the temples?
They come because their country doesn’t have such ruined temples.

What do you know about Lolei Baray?
Lolei Baray is called baray sngout or baray kouk.

Do you know of any old [boran] features? Trapeang, roads etc that are old?
[Husband] I do not know much. But I know that there is one trapeang that is old, but I do not know how old it is.

Do you have any name for the trapeang?
Trapeang Chrei—it is somewhere near the wat to the north of the embankment—Nearby this house.

That trapeang is like a sacred place—a neak-ta crocodile lives there. We believe that there is a magic crocodile—from Angkorian stone. In rainy season you cannot find any stone—but in dry season, the stone just returns back to the same place under a tree.

Is it because it gets flooded during rainy season?
No the crocodile escapes during the rainy season and comes back as a stone in dry season—In rainy season we hear some sound like a crocodile and in dry season, when water is receding, we cannot find any fish in the trapeang (which is unusual because catching fish in receding waters happens everywhere—and almost everywhere you can find fish) and that’s why we believe that there is a crocodile.

Is it close to Ta Teyk?
It is far from Ta Teyk.
(dog barking in the background)

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
Boundary of the village: - east to Phum Stung
South to Route 6
West to Baray embankment—but I am not sure if Lolum was part of this village (the west boundary could be up to Phum Trang)
North there are rice fields—could be up to the rice fields of the Phum Sarai
(the sound of pounding spice in the background)

Have you visited any prasat boran?
I do not know because there are too many temples. I know only Angkor.
I have visited Angkor Wat and some temples.

So you have visited most temples but you do not know their names?
Yes, I have visited a lot but I do not know any names.

Has your wife and family visited the temples?
She never visited. I have been to Angkor, West Baray

_So she hasn’t visited other temples?_
No

_Has she not been to Bakong also?_
Wife: have been to Bakong

_When do you go to West Baray?_
During New Year—we go to have a swim and a picnic

_At any other time do you go visiting the temples?_
Only during New Year.

_Do you go to Angkor Wat during New Year?_
Not very often. Only one or two years we have been there.
We do not have money to go (for buying things like food etc.,)

_Are there any restrictions for you here?_
Yes, by APSARA

_How about house construction?_
Yes there are restrictions. Even if we follow the APSARA model, we still have to obtain permission.

_Are there any other APSARA restrictions?_
Yes—no digging, no cutting trees and no new constructions.

[The next few minutes they started interviewing me—regarding heritage regulations in my country and about neak-ta spirits]
Lolei-F64

[Interview at Wat Lolei]
27 March 2008
Woman, 64 years old.

*Are you an original inhabitant?*
Yes, original inhabitant (*Khmai Daem*). I was born in Lolum (the western embankment). After marriage, I moved to my husband’s place on the road to Phnom Bok (eastern side of Lolei)

*Do you have any family in Lolum?*
My sister and some other family also live in Lolum.

*Where is your house?*
On the north side of Lolei.

*How big is your family?*
Family—8 children—1st son unmarried, (4 married) and 3 unmarried ones live with her and her husband.

*What is your family’s occupation?*
Occupation: rice farming, we have dry season rice field. I am worried about the rain affecting the harvest. The rice is ready to harvest and in 3 days I will be able to transport the rice. But if it rains, the rice will be destroyed—some harvesting has begun [For four people we have more than 20 hectares].

*Where is the rice field?*
It is very far away—near the lake in Jikraine district. It is about 70 kms to the east of Siem Reap—we bought the fields from someone.

I had rice fields in Lolei—land is very unproductive. So, I sold 1 hectare of rice field here, and bought 8 hectares of rice field in Jikraine district.
[shows how land value has increased in the park and surrounds]

*Does someone live there to look after?*
Yes, but not permanent. We stay temporarily from time to time—it is safe, so we can leave the fields alone for periods of time - We go and stay for short periods in the field to prepare the field and perform farming activities from time to time, the only problem is rat.

[It is not so much of a problem around her fields because it is open space—only near forests the problem of rats and mice is high—problem of birds can sometimes be damaging to rice field specially sparrow. It is high near Siem Reap, but my fields are quiet].

*Did you have to move anywhere during Pol Pot?*
During Pol Pot, we moved to Phum Thlau Kambot (near prasat Chau-Srei Vibol—also referred to as Wat Srei). We moved back to Lolei during the Vietnamese liberation in 1979.
What are the community rituals in the village? And what are individual family rituals?
Sometimes they come together.
Community festivals for the villagers: Villagers gather during the rainy season Vossa, Chum Ben, end of rainy season; moon festival, the third rising of the moon in the month of Meak and New Year. During all these celebrations the people mostly come to Wat Bakong. People to Bakong during New Year and come to Wat Lolei during moon festival.

Choul vossa
Chen vossa
Chum ben
Moon festival
Water festival
Lang Meak—3rd day of waxing moon
New Year

Where do you go to celebrate?
Mostly we go to Wat Bakong—during the New Year.
[She said a saying which meant—during moon festival they come here and during New Year they go to Bakong—A saying which means to eat banana they come here and to eat guava they go to Bakong]

What do you do here [in the wat]?
I am a nun cooking for the monks, I help in washing and I am always here in the wat.
When a ceremony happens, it happens here, it happens in this part of the wat—hall (sala).

Do people go to the prasat when they come for giving offering?
Some may go, some don’t. But most villagers will go back home straight after they give food to the monk.

Have you done any offering to the neak-ta in the village?
Yes during Meak (3rd rising moon)—we gave some rice—we made a cart from banana (using the trunk) and we gave rice in it and we offered it to Ta Meung. We offered paddy, rice and money—offered as a thanks after harvest to neak-ta

(Her son joined the interview—a lot of commotion in the background)
We do a similar ceremony during 3rd rising moon of Pisa (Visakh) when we pray for rain.

Have you done any offering?
My family (her children) made offering this year.

Can you tell us names of other neak-ta in the village?
Only Ta Meung for me.

Have you visited Lolei prasat?
Yes.
What do you think about the prasat?
[She laughed loudly] I do not know

Do you know this is World Heritage site?
No [She was very amused and started laughing]

Why do so many tourists come, what do you think about that?
(laughing continues) I do not know.

Do you know anything about the bulldozing of the prasat Chapou Teng?
Yes

What do you think about that?
I do not know. Maybe it has been sold to someone else. It is someone’s property. The owner has sold it to somebody. The new owner can do what they want.

So that property (Chapou Teng) does not belong to anyone from this village?
Before it probably belonged to someone from this village, but now it is not.

Do you know anything about old features in the landscape?
I have used the cart track—old road to Phnom Bok. I have used the road when I was young.
(monks chanting loudly in the background)

Any trapeang?
Trapeang towards East near Phum Stung—Trapeang Lom Chum (but it might be destroyed due to a road across it no).
(monks chanting loudly and rapidly in the background)

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
Boundary of Lolei—all along the baray embankment. (she was getting very impatient at this time and did not seem to be interested in the interview)

Any APSARA problems?
No

[The interview had to be wrapped up]

Everyone was very busy in the wat. The monks chanting rapidly, the old ladies cooking and preparing food for the monks. The area was abuzz with activity.
Lolei-M33

Lolei Wat—Interview with Monk, 33 years old
27 March 2008

Originally from Phum Kouk Trach (Bakong commune). I have been at Wat Lolei since 1997, I became a monk here.

Do you have any family in your village?
I have 5 siblings, 4 live with my mother. My father died during Pol Pot. My family does rice farming. The family visits me during some special occasions.

What do you know about neak-ta in the village?
Ta Meung, Ta Kwang and Yeay Mao.

Neak-ta Basa—it is in the temple protects the temple. There used to be a statue inside the temple, but was looted during the 90s. One statue was stolen in 1993 and another stolen in 1997—used to be very strong power. Ta Meung is considered very powerful to the extent that a saying goes—a bird flying over his head will fall down dead! It still has strong power though the birds don’t fall down dead. [To illustrate the power of the neak-ta the monk recounted an incident when some people in a truck did not pay respect and the truck got stuck and would not move]. The neak-ta Basa in the temple protects all the monk children. The Basa spirit came into a lady in the village.

(At this point monks had started chanting in the background)
During the 3rd rising moon of Meak, the villagers collect rice in a bag and give as offering to Ta Meung for thanking. They do a role-play one person enacting the neak-ta and one enacting the villager. During the start of the rainy season, they do the same thing asking for rain.

What about the problems with APSARA?
There are issues with new constructions and sometimes toilet. The restrictions have now relaxed.

What do you know about prasat Lolei?
The prasat site is in good condition because the monk master is strong and the monks look after the site. The monk master (head monk) is here since 1997, I have been protecting the prasat. [He also recounted a story when a thief tried to come to collect a treasure buried during Pol Pot, but couldn’t because of the head monk’s powers…]
I live on the prasat platform near the old prasat. It is now very difficult to see the temple because it is falling down, and it is risky.

Do you know if this is World Heritage?
Angkor is world heritage, but not this temple (Lolei).

Do you visit Angkor Wat?
I visit Angkor very often. Whenever I am stressed I go there to the prasat. I take other monks from other parts of Cambodia to visit Angkor (like a guide).

There used to be a lion around prasat Lolei, but not now.
Lolei-F21

Woman, 21 years old—shopkeeper on Route 6
2 April 2008

Are you from this village?
I am from Battambang. I followed her husband here.

Is your husband from this village?
This house belongs to my brother-in-law. My husband is from Siem Reap. We are new comers to the village.

What is your occupation?
I do not do anything—I just look after the children (she runs the shop). My husband is a farmer, we help our brother-in-law. Sometimes he works as a labourer.

Do you have any rice fields?
Only my brother-in-law has.

Do you know about neak-ta in this village?
I do not know any details because I recently moved to this village (2 months ago)

Do you have to get permission from APSARA to have a shop here?
I do not know.

Do you know what village this is?
I do not know about the name—is it Stung? The visitors to her shop corrected and said it was Lolei.

(There was constant noise of the traffic. And a cock crowing in the background. Her baby was also constantly crying)
Lolei-G24

Two brothers 32 years old and 42 years old
Interview near Ta Kahé location on Thnal Kahé
2 April 2008

*What do you do?*
We just stay at home. We do not have job. No rice fields.

*How long have you lived here?*
This land belongs to our parents. We came here in 1979.

*What do you do for a living?*
I am a cook for the golf course construction workers.

*Are there lots of workers staying here in the village?*
There are around 200–300 people staying within the site
I cook only for 2–3 bulldozer drivers.

*How long is it since the construction started?*
Since one year, but work has speeded up since dry season this year.

*Is this your brother?*
Yes

*Do you know about any neak-ta near here?*
Ta Kahé

*Is the Ta Kahé still here... or is it gone, because the road has been built new?*
When the bulldozers came to flatten the road, I moved the stone. I just move the stone to inside the fence.

Ta Kahé was the strong commander in the past. He always travels from Lolei to Angkor on the ancient road.

*Do you know anything about the trapeang up north? Is it still there or is it destroyed?*
The *trapeang* is just filled up. The other one—only half is there—the other half is the road. This is *trapeang* Zamko. There are three *trapeang* with the same name Zamko. Of these two have been filled up.

(there was a constant traffic of construction trucks and vehicles going past to the golf course site)

*Do you have any idea about how big this development is?*
The golf course is around 2 km X 250m - 300 m (approximate).

*Is it around 1 km to the golf course?*
It is around 150 metres from here.

*Do you know of any kouk nearby?*
I know only about *trapeang* Zamko, *thnal* Kahé
Do you think your lives will be better off because of the golf course?
Could be, I hope to get a job as a gardener.

And people have sold the rice fields also for the golf course?
Yes, but it was sold long time ago. Government officials came here and said they
wanted to buy the land for improving the country like development. They buy it very
cheap. Like 5 hectare cost only 5 hun of gold. (approximately half gram of gold for
one hectare). And they said people can use the rice for rice field—and they said it will
be a long process to develop the country to develop the site—so the people just agree
to sell it

So most of the villagers sold their rice fields at that time?
There was some complaint—but it did not work.

So who complained to whom?
The people from this village complained to the company—but did not work.

Did you complain to the company that purchased the land?
Yes, but did not work.

Why did you not complain to the government?
Because the people from district office said it was the land for developing this area—
so people think that it belong to government—so they keep quiet

[The rice fields have been sold a long time ago… since late 90s… the buying was
through Cambodian officials who approached the villagers for building a university
and they convinced villagers to sell as it was for their country’s development. And
when the land acquired was being developed into a golf course, the people
complained but nothing happened].
Lolei1-M42

2 April 2008

(He was from Lolei—a property developer—talked to him while waiting at the deputy village chief’s place)

What do you know about land price?
The land price has gone up 5 times since last year. It was 10$/sqm last year, now it is 50$/sqm (April 2008)

What do you know about the sale of land for golf course?
The process of land acquisition started since 1997 (at that time price was 200$/hectare). Maybe it is a Korean company developing the place. The land was acquired with the help of government.

I have rice field within zone 1. I want to sell, but cannot because of APSARA regulation.

Are there any new people in the village because of the golf course?
There are around 10 people renting in the village. The rest of the crew stay within the golf course area.
Deputy Village Chief, second time interview
2 April 2008

Last year when I came this was a quite sleepy village—but now lot of development? Because they build the golf course to the north and horse ranch—2 km long and 1 km wide. It is a Korean company.

Do you know about the big water bodies you are digging out as part of the golf course?
Yes the pralay (canal) is for decoration… with palm trees.

When did the construction of the golf course start?
Started around June 2007 at the start of the rain season.

When did they start acquiring the land?
First they buy in 1997.

Do the rice fields in that part belong to villagers from Lolei?
From Phum Lolei and Phum Trapeang Roun (in ampil commune).

How did this happen—the golf course starts within the zone 1?
In the bit that is within zone 1, they will make a garden.

What to the villagers feel about this development?
We are upset and happy. We are happy because of development. We are upset because when we sell the land at the time—it was very cheap—If we could sell the land now—maybe a bit more expensive—we feel a bit regret of selling cheap (baby crying loudly in the background along with Khmer songs on a radio)

One good thing—is this road. It was a bad road, but now become smoother and good. When they widen the road, they take some people land. Some people want some money from the company—but the company said if they want money, they won’t build a good road, so they have to say yes. So I told them to give a piece of land for a good road.

There are so many new houses that have come up within this one year. But how could you do it? Because you are within the APSARA zone—did you not have to get permission?
We all have a problem with APSARA. But we all build—because the people who build the house are only the original people who live here—like people who are born here.

But still you have not followed the rules… was there any problem?
There were some problems. APSARA tried to stop. They come to stop and said everyone in the village has to have permission. But we all just build.
(Almost all houses along Thnal Kahé are now new constructions. They all had problems with APSARA, but they have managed to build)
Is there any other new development nearby?
On the west of the golf course development—lot of people are buying land—like 1 hectare—5 hectare etc., right now they are only rice fields but I think it maybe for development. To the north of the golf course there is another 200 hectares of land which is proposed to become part of the golf course… but nothing happen now. The people who own such large area of land—like 100 and 200 hectare must be big official in the government—and they can have money to buy the land. In future, when they have plan they will come to build something.

All the land there belongs to the dealers (like property developer)… but there is still some pockets in between which are villagers’ farm land. Only 3 families have rice fields in the area. (Translator asked why the dealer land was not being used for farming… the chief said they do not allow, so that is wasted land).

Because they are afraid that, the people who use the rice field will not give it back to the owner.

Do you have any rice field?
Only some, not a lot.

Is it in the baray?
Yes it is in the baray. Around 5 hectares of my land was sold to the golf course. If I did not sell—the golf course people anyway need it, so they would just take it—so if people sell—they at least get 200$/hectare. So I had no choice—so I sold it

The people who have 5 hectares and other smaller holdings—are they people from this village?
Someone from Phnom Penh has acquired around 5 hectares to the west of the golf course. Right now the land is being used only for rice farming, but the village chief is sceptical that there may be some development.

(Some part of the golf course used to belong to the people from this village. At some point when refugees from Thai border came to live here—they were given that land by the government. But later the refugee land was sold to the university and commune office. The land has been sold in some cases a few times—after selling to university—they came back and sold it again—but now they have a problem—and they wrote in the newspaper that the land was sold by the village chief and commune chief—but I have nothing to do with that. The land was sold by villagers individually).

Do you realize that you are going to have water problems now that there is the golf course here?
I do not know about water tables, but I feel that the rice fields next to the golf course will be affected because of the huge embankments they have built which will keep the water inside.

The village chief said: The Khmer people cannot afford to do anything—because the palm tree cost 10$—and they just have to sell. Maybe after the golf course is finished, the villager cannot go in to have a look. They will not allow us.
PHUM STUNG INTERVIEWS

Stung-F54

Woman 54 years old—wife of village chief.
2 April 2008

Did your husband come to live with you here?
My parent’s house is somewhere to the northeast. I married my husband during Pol Pot. And after Pol Pot, I moved to live here.

How long has your husband been the village chief?
Since 2006

Did you have to move to another village during Pol Pot?
(the sound of hens and chicken clucking in the background)
We moved to Dou Nuang—somewhere near Kulen. I was young at that time.
At that time I was young, I was part of a group called Kong Chalat—a group that constantly moves (not staying in one place)

Can you describe the village boundaries?
Boundary of village:
East: up to the Baray embankment
North: up to Phum Ta Pok
West: up to Phum Lolei (road to Phnom Bok)

Is there a defined boundary like a road or something?
The boundary is east of the road to Phnom Bok. It is marked by a concrete pipe
South: Route 6

How big is your family?
Family: 7 children (3 boys, 4 girls)

Are any of the children married?
1 married and lives in another village—east of Roluos in Khum Chem. In Phum Don Noum.

What is your occupation?
We grow vegetables and we also farm rice.
Occupation: rice farming, vegetable like banana and betel nut. I sell the produce nearby, I cannot take it to the market, because my children are studying and cannot help me. Our rice fields are located to the east of the village.

Do you have any other plans—growing any other vegetables like sugar cane (prompted by the translator)?
My land has lot of termites so not good for agriculture.

Where are your rice fields?
In Phum Stung—east of Stung river. (dog barking in the background)

Is it near Kouk Don Aev?
Yes it is near Kouk Don Aev.

Is there any other kouk nearby?
There is a Kouk Chapou Teng

Do you have any dry season rice fields?
No

Does your husband also help in farming?
When he is not busy with his work—he will help

Can you tell us about the community rituals you do in this village?
3rd day of waxing moon of Meak month (jan—feb)—we make offering to neak-ta at Kouk Don Aev.

Is there any other neak-ta that you make offering?
Only at Kouk Don Aev.

How often do you make offering? Any other time of the year you make offering?
Meak is the main month when we make ritual for neak-ta.
Sometimes when someone in the village or some children is sick in the village—we also make offering.

Has your family made any special offering because someone in your family was ill?
No

Are there any kru or memot in this village?
Kru Seung, who lives on the other side of the bridge on Route 6

Which wat do you go to?
Wat Lolei.

How often do you go to?
All big ceremonies

Any other wat you go to?
Sometimes I go to Wat Dantheay

Have you visited the prasat at Lolei?
Yes

Do you know anything about the prasat?
It is a ruined temple.

Have you visited any other prasat—like Bakong?
When I just had one child, I have been there. But now I am busy with family so I have no time to go.
What about the temples in the Angkor area?
I have been to the region, but not to visit temples. I just go there to get something.
Only once I have been to Angkor for Choul Chnam. At that time I visited Srah Srang, Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom.

Does your husband go to prasat more than you?
No, we go together only during special occasions.

Do you know anything about Prasat Lolei?
Nothing except that it is a ruined temple.

Have you been to Prasat Bakong?
When I was young and when I wanted a child I have been to the prasat.

Have you had any problems doing their offering to neak-ta?
I do not do offering at the temple, so I have had no problems.
I have been to somewhere nearby in Angkor Thom to treat my leg.

Have you had any problems with APSARA restrictions?
No. If we build any new construction, we will have to get permission. We do not have any plans to make new construction. Since long time, the weatherboard wall is not fixed. I have not been able to fix it because we do not have any money

Do you know anything about the APSARA restrictions?
No, I do not know anything. We have no plans to build a house.
Stung-M51

Village chief of Phum Stung, Man 51 years old
2 April 2008

(The previous day, there was a ceremony in the village of Stung where I had met the village chief. I started the interview with some questions regarding the ceremony)

Can you explain the ritual that was happening in Stung yesterday?
It was Chah Maha Bang Skol (Cock crowing in the background). I do not know much about the ceremony, in terms of what it means. It is done for old people—for example when someone is very old, they buy the things for the ceremony when they have money—and the belief is that all the things they bought now will be available for them after they die.

Is there any such ceremony scheduled to happen in near future?
Today and tomorrow another ceremony—Chann daa is being organised in Phum Stung.

What does Chann Daa mean?
It is similar to the process that we saw yesterday. But it is much smaller. It is for long life for old people.

Is it being done by an individual family or is it done by a group?
It is being done by a family in this village. They only do it when someone in the family is very old like parents or grandparents. They do this ceremony and if somehow the person dies, then the person who dies gets the offering that was made. The person becomes a spirit.

Is there any ceremony where the whole village comes together to do it?
During Choul Chnam

Which day will you come together?
I do not know the exact day. But after the New Year finishes, we will gather together and fix a day for the ceremony.

Is there any other occasion apart from Choul Chnam?
Sometimes we also have chann phum—but it is very rare.

Have you ever done that during your time?
We made the offering at the old community hall—long time ago I have seen that. Now the community hall is old and broken and abandoned. Now we have built a new community hall.

When was the ceremony of chann phum?
About 5 years ago

Why don’t you do this now?
It is up to the old people. They decide to do the chann phum for good luck in the village. Then they gather the villagers and ask them to perform the ceremony.
So how many elders are here who decide? Who are the important people? Aum Loi is an important man—he is the oldest man above 60 years old.

Is there any achar in this village? Den Peuh—he is from this same village, but lives north of the river. He conducted the *Chah maha bang skol* yesterday.

Is it common to do these types of ceremonies? In that scale or do you do it in a less grand scale? There is a lot of variety of ceremony. The one we saw yesterday was the biggest ceremony ever. There is *chann daa, chay bouan*. The rituals and management of these ceremonies are also different.

Will the achar be at home or will he be very busy? He would be there at the ceremony that will happen today. (Dogs fighting in the background and the noise is very loud)

[The location of the ceremony was clarified so that it could be visited].

Have the villagers got their land registered in this village? Some of the villagers have registered the land to the village chief, commune chief and sometimes to district chief. It is not organised. It is unofficial. But I do not have my house or land registered. For my house, I have been living here since 1979.

Can you tell us about APSARA restrictions? Before we have big problems with APSARA restrictions about the house constructions. But it is always late—for example someone wants to apply for permission—they apply from village chief, commune chief and district chief—and finally they go to APSARA—but it is very delayed But now the process has become quicker and APSARA has relaxed the restrictions. APSARA also organised meetings in the village for two times.

Do you know about the zone boundary in the village? There was a marker somewhere near the bridge—to the south-east and to the east of Lolei.

Can the marker be seen? No, the marker has been removed by the villagers, because they complain about the APSARA restrictions.

Do you have a problem because the village is partly within the zone and partly outside the zone? A lot of problem for people living in the APSARA zone. They want to build house, or they want to buy and sell land—and it is very difficult. And also like one house is not allowed to increase to two or three houses in the same plot—these are the problems.

Do you know about the land that the APSARA acquired to remove families who wanted to move? I have heard about that, but I do not know much details.
Can you tell us about the big development on the road to Phnom Bok?
It is the provincial government offices.

Is there any other development coming up near here?
Nothing near here. The new road sponsored by the Thai government is near here. It is a road that is being established goes along Phnom Bok and Phum Ang Krau. New road sponsored by Thai is to the east of Lolei Baray’s east embankment.

Is there any development to the south of Roluos?
I do not know much.

In the wet season, which village to the south of Roluos does the water come up to?
In the wet season, water comes up to Kouk Srok, Kanchok—Trapeang Phong. (At this point the water is not very deep)

Does water come up to Phum Beng?
Yes, it does and sometimes the water destroys the rice fields.

Can I show the map to ask about some features?
Kouk Dong Gombat (it has been mapped before)

Kouk Chapou Teng—I know it was a temple, because I have seen bricks and it has a moat around it. It has a moat and brick around it—recently had a bull dozer

Do you know who owns it? Or who was responsible?
It belongs to someone from Lolei… and I do not know any further details.

The trapeang to the east of the prasat Chapou Teng is called Trapeang Ta Moun.

Is there someone who owns the trapeang—or is it some people from the village?
It is a public trapeang—so anyone can use it.

Is there any kouk to the east of the baray?
To the west of the river there is no kouk (on the map there is)
To the east of the river there is only one kouk—called Kouk Svay Yun Maan

So this road is the boundary of the Stung village—and how far north does it go?
Near the bridge to the north east—up to Kouk Trach village. (point is mapped)
From the junction it is around 200-300 metres. The boundary is not very straight.

(He did not understand the map. Since the village chief found the map confusing, I asked him to just describe the boundary in terms of landmarks and signs)

Ta pok is the newer portion of the village. After 1979, that part was combined to Phum Stung.

Are there any other parts that are part of Stung.
Stung village has two names—Ta Pok village or phum thmei.—This house is part of Phum Stung
Stung-F32

Woman 32 years old
5 April 2008

The house was in Ta Pok (which is also part of Phum Stung, to the north).

Did your husband move to your house?
No, after marriage I came here because my husband has more land than my parents.

What do you do for a living?
I do not do much. My husband is a labourer. We don’t have any rice fields, earlier we had but not now. I used to grow vegetables before but not now, I cannot get a pump to pump water for my garden.

Do you know any neak-ta in the village?
Yeay Mao/Yeay Aev—in the forest

How big is your family?
I have 3 children.

Which wat do you visit regularly and when?
I go to the Lolei Wat during all festivals.

Do you visit the prasat?
No.

Do you know anything about the prasat?
No.

Have you visited any other temple?
I have been to Angkor Wat and Bayon (not inside). I have seen the bas-reliefs in Angkor Wat and I think it is beautiful.

Do you know that this is World Heritage?
No.

Have you had any problems with APSARA?
No problems. This house is my brother-in-law’s house.
Stung-F49

Woman, 49 years old
5 April 2008

Are you originally from this village?
I am an original inhabitant. I am not married. I live with my niece (my sister lives across the road)

What is your occupation?
We are rice farmers. Our rice fields are to the east of River Stung (at about less than a km from the house). I sell fruits and veggies in my house

Do you know any neak-ta in the village?
Don Aev

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
East to Phum Tbaeng
South to Route 6
West and North, I cannot describe

Do you visit the wat regularly?
I visit Wat Lolei only during festivals

Have you seen the prasat?
Yes, many times but I do not go very close, because it is in ruins

Have you visited any other prasat?
No, I only visited the wat

Do you know that this is a World Heritage site?
No
Stung-F59&group

5 April 2008
Group session
Woman, 59 years old
Woman (daughter of former), 23 years old
Man, 27 years old, visitor at the time of interview—from the same village. His house
is near the village chief’s house

What is your occupation?
Man: We are farmers. Our rice fields are located 2 kilometres to the east of river
Stung. There are 6 members in my family—3 boys and 3 girls

Can you describe your family?
Man: I am married with one child, married to a girl from this village

Can you tell me about neak-ta?
There is one by the name of Chas Rup, but we do not know where it was located

Is there any kouk nearby?
There are some kouk, but we do not know the name.

Any trapeang?
The trapeang nearby is called Trapeang Yeay Cheim

Can you describe the boundary of this village?
South to Route 6;
East to kouk trach;
West to Lolei

Have you had any problems with APSARA?
Yes, over the house construction.

Do you know about the celebration at Wat Lolei (Abisek preah)?
There is a big celebration, yes, we know about that.

Do you know anything about prasat boran?
We do not know anything about the old prasat

Do you know this is a World Heritage site?
No

59 year old woman, the owner of the house: I have visited some temples, but I am not
interested.

27 year old man: I have visited the old temples and I have seen the bas-relief. They
are well preserved.
PHUM OVLAOK INTERVIEWS

Ovlaok-M38

Village chief of Ovlaok
Second time interview
Interviewed at Prasat Preah Ko; where the village chief was working on the restoration of the temple.
19 March 2008

Is there a deputy village chief?
Deputy village chief (50–60 years old) lives to the west of Preah Ko temple. He is always away, because he goes to visit his children who live in a different district.

How many village chiefs does a village have?
Bakong commune has 6 villages. Each village has one chief, one deputy chief and one other member (usually a female).

How do you elect a village chief?
The villagers select the village chief from the 10 nominees named by the commune chief (commune chief selects people who can read and write). I won by 88 votes. I have been the chief for 2 years, earlier there used to be a fixed term, now the village chief can remain in the position for as long as the villagers want him to (as long as I am good). Some village chiefs when given gifts for poor people, they might not give it to poor people but to their relatives. If such things happen, the villagers can complain to the commune chief and ask him to step down. If the villagers want to change the village chief, they will complain to the commune chief and change the village chief.

Do people make offering to neak-ta at Preah Ko?
At the neak-ta under the tree near Preah Ko—offering was made by the Ovlaok villagers during the month of Méak (end January to February). Offerings made in front of the Preah Ko (Nandi) is usually by villagers from other provinces… they burn incense.

Do you offer any food like chicken?
The villagers offer chicken, but when they do the APSARA guards leave it for a little while and then remove it because it is not good for tourists. If any food like chicken is offered, APSARA removes it for reasons of keeping the place clean for the tourists.

Are the locals happy with this arrangement?
Yes, because before making any offering the villagers ask the APSARA guards for permission, and the APSARA guards ask them to remove the offering in a short time after they have finished. It will be removed to somewhere but not very far.

Have you made any offering?
When I was 32, my wife was seriously ill—I went and gave offering to Ta Di. The spirit is in a ruined shrine behind the main temple of Preah Ko. After Pol Pot, the statue was removed and the neak-ta is believed to be in the Chambok tree nearby.

(The village chief narrated an incident with a conservation team some years ago) About 7 years ago, when the restoration work started at Preah Ko temple, there were some Italian and German experts involved. Before the work started for building the scaffolding, the village chief asked the Italian and German team to organise offering for neak-ta Di… they did not believe and did not make any offering. The village chief organised an offering of pig head, coconut (opened) 5 cigarettes, 5 incense, 5 sla-malu (betel nut and betel nut leaf)—the auspicious numbers for Khmer are 5 and 7.

3 months later the Italian conservator got very sick. He then made an offering and became better, and he started giving offering of incense regularly (one day 5 times). The current restoration work is an initiative of APSARA. GACP/Italian team were involved only for the initial 1 year and 7 months and after was taken over by APSARA.

Is the restoration of Preah Ko nearly complete? Yes. But the building has been over-renovated, it looks very new (the villagers are not very happy with the look)… and now they are trying ways to make the bricks look aged/older. The tourists are criticising that it looks very new. So the villagers want to make it look old. It was APSARA idea… now they are planning to paint with something to make it look old.

Do you do any farming? I did before getting married. After marriage I moved to my wife’s place, who did not have rice farms. I moved to Kampot, my wife’s province, but then moved back to Ovlaok. I could not continue life in Kampot because I am not a fisherman. And so I asked my wife to come back to Siem Reap with me, and so I moved back to Ovlaok. I have some family farms which I have leased out to somebody from Chambok village. Now I live near my parents’ house (about 500 meters). My mother is alive but is very old.

Does your wife also work? My wife manages a shop in front of Preah Ko.

Can you describe your family? I have two children—one girl (class 8) and a boy (class 6). I have 8 siblings (including him)—5 boys/3 girls. They all are married and in the same village.

Can you describe the boundary of the village? (He drew a boundary of the village) To east up to Thnal Trang village West—Spean Kaek South—Chambok village North—Route 6

Why are there not many rice fields in Phum Ovloak?
Most of the village is only mound. Temple mound—kouk. Most of the village is prasat mounds. My rice fields used to be in Chambok village.

*Do you do farming now?*
I have now leased it out, the lease gets paid in rice.

*Is the lessee from Ovloak?*
No from Chambok.

*Do you know anything about prasat boran?*
Nowadays the people learn about the temples. They know that it is significant for them. It is their ancestral heritage and they are happy that they can earn some money from the temples through tourists, so they think it is very important.

*Has APSARA conducted any workshops/meetings?*
Yes, they have been to this place in 2 times… APSARA has been active only since the past 5 years.

*Are there any kru here?*
There are two kru in the village one for curing snake bite victims: Ta Leung
And another for sorcery—Peam Peuhm; Achar deum

*At the pchit phum has there been any offering?*
We make offering during New Year. During meak month in 2008, ritual offering was made. We invited monk to have breakfast with Khmer noodle and traditional Cambodian sweet

*Did the whole village participate?*
Yes all villagers are invited for the ritual, though it is organised by one family.

*Can you tell me the population of Ovloak?*
Village population: 1770; No of families: 340

*Are there any new families in this past year?*
5—6 new houses, but they are sons or daughters of people in the village…

*Any new comers to the village?*
8 new families have been settled here in the past one year. From Kampong Cham province. They have bought land in the village and moved here. Anyone can buy land. And villagers don’t mind the outsiders.

*Can you buy land?*
Yes they can buy. When someone wants to sell—they can buy.

*Are things good in the village?*
Life is a little better, business is good.

*Is business better because more tourists are coming?*
Not particularly.
Are there lots of Khmer tourists?
Not many.

Can you describe Khmer New Year?
During Khmer New Years lots of people come to Bakong. Everyone does offering in their house or the wat. All people come to Bakong during Khmer New Year. They decorate houses with lights.
Lots of people come to Bakong during New Year—around 24000.

Why is Bakong so significant for New Year?
It is more easily accessible as opposed to Angkor Wat.

What do you do during New Year?
They play with powder during New Year. Men throw powder on women.

Will there be any offering made during the month of April?
There are no specific dates, but offering would be made during April.

At Wat Bakong, the monks play music for everyone (for money).
Kru in Ovlaok. Man, 74 years old
His wife, 68 Years old

Is this part of Ovlaok?
Yes

Till where is the boundary of Phum Ovlaok along this road?
Up to the bridge near the orphanage run by the Japanese NGO

What do you do?
I am a kru for snake bite. Kru is from guru (Sanskrit) is a medicine man.

Are you an original inhabitant?
Yes.

Did you have to move to another place during the Khmer Rouge?
Just before Pol pot, I (with my family) had moved to Wat Kreal near the Kulen foothills.

When did you come back from there?
And during Pol Pot (in 1975) I was shifted to Svay Prei (near Kouk Krasan). I was moved before Pol Pot became powerful. Before Pol Pot controlled the country. At that time only in Siem Reap had the control of the government army, because it was a small spot. Outside Siem Reap, the countryside was in the control of Khmer Rouge. In 1979, I returned back to Ovlaok village.

When you came back were there any houses standing or did you have to rebuild?
No the houses were all gone; we had to rebuild the houses. All the houses in the village had been destroyed.

Did your wife also go with you during his shifting?
Yes she went with me.

Do you have any children?
I have two children (1 girl 26 and 1 boy 21).

What is your occupation?
No occupation. (But when probed) I have a rice farm. And I am also is a kru.

Do you get good income?
No the rice farm is very small (around 1 hectare) and the yield is very little. The land is dry and we don’t have enough water.

Do you have access to any trapeang or any other water body nearby from where you can collect water?
No, there is none.

What about a well? Don’t you have any well?
Yes, we do.

*But don’t you have enough water for farming from the well?*
No. we are very poor, we don’t have enough money to repair the wooden pillars in their house. The pillars are being attacked by termites.

*You are a kru, when do people come to see you? Do they come only for snake bites, or do they come if they have any other ailments as well?*
Some patients come for snake bites. Some come when they have malaria. When people are not completely cured when they are in the hospital, they come here as a last choice. I use herbal medicines to cure specific illnesses—in this case it is snake bites.

*What do you do? Do you use traditional medicine?*
Yes I use herbal medicine using tree roots.

*Do you know about the neak-ta in the village, their names and locations?*
(He laughed at the question). I know only the neak-ta in the Bakong. The neak-ta in Bakong is Ta Chong, Ta Kwang and Yeay Mao. The neak-ta spirit moves or disappears when people don’t give any offering.

*Are they all in Bakong?*
Yes

*Is there any spirit in the place around the house?*
Maybe, I do not know. When people don’t give offerings the spirits disappear.

*What about other spirits in the village?*
There is two related to the land and the house. The one in the house is called jenek teay. The one with the land is called preah mechah phum. It can be referred to as land and water spirit or a village spirit. Dong ta is an ancestral deity (grandfather grandmother deity)—we give offering during Chum-ben. Most houses have dong ta.

*Do you know where the pchit phum in the village is?*
I do not know.

*But is it not the one near the community hall, do you know where the community hall is?*
I do not know about pchit phum and the location. I know where the community hall is and I do use the community hall.

*What do you do there?*
It is used during special occasions. During chaan (celebration) and official ceremony like Chum Ben, during the month of Meak.

*Can you tell us what ceremonies you celebrated last year?*
Lang Meak

*What did you do?*
We invite the monk to come and have food. We make Cambodian noodle as offering.
Do lots of family join together to do it or does one family do it?
Everyone from the village participate.

Do you cook individually and take it or do you cook it there?
Well it is up to the individual. Some people bring food from home, but most of the people cook at the community hall.

In a month, how many times do you go to the wat?
Every 8th day in the lunar cycle—4 times in a month.

When is the next occasion that you go to the wat?
The day after tomorrow is full moon. We get some Buddhist scripts, we get advice from monks, and it is only for old people.

When will you go, what time in the day?
At 4 AM.

So do you go pray and come back immediately or do you stay at the wat for some time?
Some people come back earlier, but some stay there all day.

Do all villagers go to the wat, or only old people?
Only old people go to the wat.

So what is the age group of the old people?
Anybody over 50 are considered old.

Which wat do you go to?
I go to Bakong Wat. Only I go to the wat, my wife does not go.

Why does your wife not go?
Wife: I am not ready for religious service. I am not calm enough for religious worship. I get angry sometimes and curse my children and that is not considered good in Buddhism.

Have you been to Prasat Bakong?
Yes.

Have you climbed up to the top?
Yes, but it was before—not now. I must have climbed 2 years ago. Now, I do not climb anymore because it is very tiring to climb up. Sometimes when someone asks me to give offering at the prasat, I go up.

When do you do such an offering in the prasat?
Every year—but once in a year during the month of meak. Some people give offering at the base of the temple, some climb up to the top.

In this month—April, will anyone give offering?
No. In the month of Meak they give offering
So what is the next big celebration?
There is no ceremony until the New Year.

What do you do during New Year?
During the New Year we offer a lot of fruits, coke, star lights (paper lanterns shaped like a star)… we will burn candle in the star light. We will give any fruit depending on our budget.

Have you visited the temples in Angkor and Angkor Wat?
I visited when I was young.

Where did you go?
Only to Angkor Wat.

Has your wife visited Angkor Wat?
Yes. (They were very amused and were laughing).

Have you visited Angkor Wat?
I visited Angkor Wat, West Baray and Bakheng when I was young.

What do you do?
I go there as a visitor—for a picnic.

Do you go to visit the temple or do you go for a picnic?
We go to visit the temple. We take a picnic and climb to the top of the temple.

So what do you know about the temple? Do you know anything about the sculptures, the temples?
No, we do not know anything. (They were thoroughly amused at this stage, and they were laughing very loudly)

Do you feel that the prasat belongs to the village?
Yes, we feel that it belongs to us.

Do you feel that the wat belongs to the village?
Yes. [The answer was spontaneous though not very strong].

Did you have to change the location of neak-ta due to APSARA?
No. (The clucking of chicken in the background)

Where do you make offering for neak-ta?
There have been no changes to any of the neak-ta in the village of Ovlaok. Neak-ta offering can be made anywhere. There is no specific location. A general location is usually understood and within that space offering can be made anywhere.

Has there been any problem with APSARA when you make offering?
Whenever we have made offering, there has been no problem with APSARA asking us to remove. But we don’t know what happens behind our backs.
(The translator at this stage had modified the question to get a suitable answer. He asked):
When you give offering to the neak-ta at the temple and APSARA authority stop you and prevent you from making offering, what do you feel? We feel upset if that happens.

They had given offering last year in Meak (2008), they gave offering at the community hall.

(When they have to make offering at the temple, someone from the village organises it as a community event collecting money from the villagers; but this year no one has organised this)

Do you understand why so many tourists come here? (They laughed a lot) We know that in these two years a lot of tourists come. The number of tourists has increased. The wife doesn’t know much because she doesn’t go the temple.

Do you know about Khmer tourists? Woman: It is very confusing because the Thai, Chinese people also sometimes look like Cambodians.

Do you know that this is a World Heritage site? No, we don’t know. (They did not know the meaning or significance of world heritage)

Have you had any problem with APSARA due to the restrictions? Woman: I do not have any problems with APSARA as yet.

Why is that so? Woman: There is a forest behind the house and I want to cut wood for replacing the rotted pillars, but I have not asked permission as yet.

Have you cut the wood? No not yet.

Will you ask for permission? I do not want to complicate matters, because if I go to APSARA, they will keep sending me from one department to another. I want to replace, but I don’t want to ask permission. (The woman sounded very agitated and concerned when she was explaining this. Though she wanted to replace, she did not dare do without permission)

Can you describe the boundary of the village? North to Lolei village East: Thnal trang village West: Phum OO South to Kouk Srok village

The man had a tattoo in the front of his body—half of his torso. It was for body protection—he followed his friend to do this when he was young.
Ovlaok-M74

Kru—Man, 74 years old

Are you an original inhabitant?
Yes

Can you say something about your family?
I married in the same village. I have 8 children (6 girls, 2 boys) of which 4 girls and 1 boy are married. They all live in the same village, one near Bakong, other two near Preah Ko, one near commune office.

Did you move anywhere during Pol Pot?
During Pol Pot, I moved to west of Siem reap, but before Pol Pot, during Lon Nol I moved to Sonekhum district—Phum Bai Kampleng.
Life was difficult during the time, because we had to live in fear of bomb and rifle all the time. All villagers were moved during Lon Nol time—they went to different villages, sometimes in the same region.

(During Lon Nol time, he moved of his own account to escape the Lon Nol army. After Lon Nol was defeated he came back to the village for 4 months. After that the Pol Pot army shifted him to west of Siem Reap). When I returned after the Pol Pot army was defeated, all the houses in Ovlaok and surrounding villages had been destroyed. I returned to the same location and built a different house.

What is your occupation?
I have a rice field 90m X 120m. It is small and not enough and I have given the land to my children. But they are not farming. I used to own a farm in Chambok, but now it is sold.
I work as part of the team that is restoring the Preah Ko temple. I am leading the restoration work (the village chief who is also working as part of the team is his nephew).
Of his children 2 have shops in the village and one sells vegetables in Siem Reap.
I am a kru in the village (word derived from ‘guru’ in Sanskrit meaning teacher—it is used to describe teachers, or medicine men in the villages) I treat people who have been affected by sorcery—known in Khmer as ‘peuh’ (peuh is a boil that can occur on any part of the body). Sometimes I help people who have been affected by neak-ta.

Are there any memot in the village?
Before in 1945—there was a memot in Ovlaok who died and after him there is no one else. The people from around the region go to a lady in Chambok who is a memot, when they have problems with any neak-ta. But she is more than 80 years old, and is not very able these days.

About 4 years ago, I helped some Australian travellers who had ‘peuh’ (a big boil, which is very hot)—apparently there are 12 different kinds, but I can only treat a few.

Can you name the neak-ta in the village?
1. Ta Chong
2. Ta Kwang
3. Yeay Mao—these three are in the environs of Bakong
4. Ta Di—in Preah Ko

Wherever there is a temple, a neak-ta spirit stays. But I cannot name them all.
Ta Di neak-ta can make a person go mad. My children have made offering to this neak-ta. I have never had the necessity to make an offering because I am a kru.

I want one of my children to follow me in being a kru, but none of my children are interested. It is a hereditary profession; I learnt to be a Kru from my father. Only certain families can be a kru.

Do you think there is a problem of these rituals disappearing?
The traditions will continue, because the people perform the rituals regularly. My children are not practising the rituals, and when queried in this angle he mentioned that yes, the future generation is not practising so there is a danger of the traditions disappearing.

I treat patients in my house. Villagers come to me from near and far. I have currently two patients, one from Phum Chambok and another from Banteay Mean Chey province. My house is referred to as the ‘kru khmai’—the Khmer hospital.

Do you know about rituals in pchit phum?
I am not entirely sure, but today there is a ritual being planned at Bakong (however this ritual got postponed…) it was a ritual asking for good luck for whole country.

Have you visited Angkor temples?
My children visited recently. I am now old and so I do not visit. I am too old to climb the temples. I have seen the sculptures but do not know any further information. I know that the temples are old around 6th—7th century… but no further knowledge about the old temples…

Do you know this is World Heritage?
I do not understand what the term ‘World Heritage’ means…

Are there any problems with APSARA?
Yes, related to new construction. My family faced some problems because we had not obtained permission. My grandchild’s house—they had to follow APSARA rules. My house was built before APSARA times.

Can you describe the boundary of Village?
North—Route 6
West—spean kaek Bridge
South—Phum Chambok
East—Thnal trang

Is Prasat Bakong part of Ovlaok?
Bakong is part of Ovlaok. I do not go to the wat very often, but my wife goes regularly. This morning he went to the wat.
APSARA guards in front of Bakong—a group of 6 people including 4 guards, one gardener, and one police—all from nearby villages
21 March 2008

Can you name the neak-ta in Bakong?
Ta Chong, Yeay Mao and Ta Kwang
Undong prei—in front of Bakong
Svay prei—in Thnal Trang
Prei Monti—neak-ta Dambong Daek

Do you make ritual offering every year?
The villagers do ritual offering each year. They give offering when someone is sick.
The offering is usually given during the Khmer month of Meak

Is it allowed to give offering inside the temple?
Chicken is normally not offered inside the Bakong temple, but in front of the Po tree in front of Bakong. The reason being, we want to keep the place clean for tourists.
The villagers give offering in front of the Po tree only.

What do you understand by World Heritage?
We do not know much, but we feel that we should protect our national heritage.

Have you visited the Angkorian temples?
Yes.

Do you know any details about the historical prasat?
No.

What do you do when you go to see the prasat?
We just go for picnic to visit the place to see the bas-reliefs.

Do you know why so many foreign tourists visit the site?
We feel that some of them come here to paint the bas-reliefs or to make sketches.

Is there any need to restrict people from doing anything in the Bakong?
No, there is no restriction; the villagers are free to practice what they want.
Sometimes, the guards remove the offering (food) and eat…

Have there been any problems with tourists?
No, there has been no problem with tourists.

The maximum numbers of tourists visit between October and December. The maximum number of Khmer visitors is during the festivals of Chum Ben (ancestor festival) and Choul Chnam (New Year)—around an average of 30000 people from all over Cambodia visit Bakong. A lot of police will be deputed here during that time including the district (provincial) police, heritage police and the army
Ovlaok-M25&group

Ovlaok 5: Monks at Bakong
21 March 2008

2 monks and one person who is a novice.

Do you know anything about the neak-ta in the village or in prasat Bakong?
Ta chong, Yeay Mao and Ta Kwang in the Bakong temple.

Do you have anything to do with the neak-ta?
No, we do not do anything with the neak-ta spirits. Only the villagers interact with the neak-ta.

When do villagers come to the wat?
7th day in the lunar cycle when some come and stay overnight and start praying on the 8th and go home after.

Is it only old people or do young people also come for the prayers?
Mostly only old people come for these regular monthly prayers. But, during Chum Ben—old and young people come.

Festivals listed when people visit the wat: Chum Ben, Kan ben, Visaat Bochea, Meak Bochea and Choul Chnam.

Have you visited the old prasat?
Yes, we have.

Do you know anything about the old prasat?
No we don’t know anything related to its history, sculpture, kings associated or the gods associated; but we do not know much about the prasat. If you want to find out, you should talk to someone who will know.

Have you visited any old prasat in the Angkor area?
Yes, we have.

Have you visited most of them?
We have visited many prasat in the Angkor area.

What do you think about these prasat?
They are beautiful and wonderful.

Do you go regularly there or anytime?
We go anytime we get the opportunity.

(At this point the monks wanted to know more about my work in detail. The translator explained my research and that I had permission from APSARA to conduct interviews in the villages)

Do you know that this is a World Heritage site?
Yes, we know.

What more do you know—what does the term World Heritage mean to you? It means we have to conserve the heritage, it means heritage conservation.

Do you think that Wat Bakong belongs to Ovloak village or not? It is for everyone not just the people of the Ovlaok village.

What about the prasat—who does it belong to? It belongs only to the Khmer people.

What do you think about why so many foreign tourists come here? No answer. Someone came along and they started talking to that person.

Are there any problems with APSARA—restrictions? There are restrictions with regards to new construction.

So, have you had any problems regarding new constructions recently? Do you want to build now? We had problems a long time ago.

What about ritual offerings made by individual families at the neak-ta? We do not know…

When people come to do offering, do you make offering near the steps—at the gateway to the library? They make offering near the tree near the library.

Can we locate the exact location where the offering is made? They make offering at the step, and then people meet near the tree near the library—where they play music.

Is there any other location in the prasat Bakong area that you can make offering? No, only the places mentioned earlier.
Ovlaok-F36&18

Woman 36 years old (mother) and her daughter 18 years old
24 March 2008

Are you originally from this village?
We are original in the village

[Daughter runs a shop; her husband is a photographer (M 29). They have one child. They live with parents in the same house].

Are there any outsiders in the village?
There are some outsiders in the village now.

Can you describe the boundary of Ovloak?
North up to Route 6
West—up to Spean Kaek village
East—up to Kouk Ko (Thnal Trang)
South—up to Thnal Trang

Which wat do you go to?
Wat we use regularly is Wat Bakong. We visit only during the big festivals. We have visited prasat in Angkor: Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and Bayon. We have been there as a visitor. We have visited Prasat Bakong, but do not know any further details regarding its historicity or significance.

Do you know this is a World Heritage site?
No, we do not know that this is a World Heritage site.

Can you tell about the location of neak-ta?
Ta Chong, Ta Kwang and Yeay Mao.

Have you made any offering recently?
We gave offering in the previous year at the temple and at the community hall.

Have you had any problems with APSARA?
Yes, we have had problems because of the shop and the house construction. She was the daughter of kru interviewed (Ovlaok-M74)
Ovlaok-M75

Head Monk at Bakong, explained about my research.
Male 75 years old.
10 April 2008

How many years have you been here as a head monk?
Since 1987.

Which village are you from?
I am originally from Phum Ovlaok.

So you have lived here all your life? At what age did you become a monk?
I became a monk at 53.

(Some people came to give offering, and he started chanting the ritual chants—what monks do when someone gives offering. The people knelt down in a sign of respect and in a position to receive blessings from the head monk)

(Once he had finished and accepted the offering that people made, interviewing was resumed)

What is significant about Wat Bakong?
Significance of Wat Bakong—what is special?
There are a lot of monk masters from this wat who have lived for a very long time.

(More people come to give offering and the head monk resumes the prayer chanting and accepts the offering)

Lot of monk masters are very powerful here. One monk master lived to a hundred (Ta seurn).
In explaining the significance of Wat Bakong, the monk master went on to explain that: Buddhism is a state religion. So all the people give respect to the religion. Buddhism is very useful. For example, in the wat the people can come for advice, because every advice comes from Buddha even if he die long time ago, people still accept his idea and his good advice to people is to make a living in ‘right’ by doing good things…

He also talked about the time he went to India… he went to where Buddha comes from.

Did you go to Bodh Gaya?
He did not understand. But when explained that this was the place where Buddha got enlightenment, he understood and said that he went to that place and in Khmer it is referred to as Put gaye.

Did you go to Sanchi? Did you visit the big stupa?
I cannot remember the names of the places.
I went to a lot of places that Buddha had been. I went to where Buddha was born. I was visiting the friendly country of India. I have been to Sarnath. I went to all the places part of Buddha’s life.

At what times in the year—which celebration is very significant to the Khmer people in Wat Bakong.

Choul prah vassa
Chaan prah vassa
Bon choum ben
Bon Kathen ne thean
Bon Choul Chnam

Especially for New Year, lots of people come—especially on the second day. It is very crowded and it is difficult to find a space to walk. People everywhere… and people from everywhere come here. During New Year nearly 1000s of people come to Bakong. They come on the second day of the New Year celebrations.

Why do so many people come?
It is a traditional practice carried out by people since a long time ago. A long time ago when I was very young and now I am 75. Wat has always been crowded during the New Year. It is nothing special, and I do not know why so many people come here. But it has been a tradition since a very long time.

But why do people come to Bakong and not any other wat?
Maybe because of the old prasat—the presence of the old temple may be a reason.

But there are old temples everywhere—so why Bakong?
Two places are significant to Khmers. One is here at Bakong and one at Angkor. But Angkor has become a place for tourists—and mainly foreign tourists and it is not so good for Khmer people—maybe they just close the temple there—so the Khmer people just drive here. (This does not make sense because there is no restriction as such on local Khmers visiting the temples. It is possible however that there was such a restriction in the past and people remember it)

(When mentioned that local Khmers also visit Angkor, he mentioned that the numbers have dropped compared to previous years. In his knowledge, there was some restriction to local Khmers visiting Angkor in order to encourage the foreign tourists)

Are the prasat (old temples) significant to the monks in any way?
There is nothing useful from this temple. For a monk, it doesn’t make any sense and we cannot make a living because the temples belong to government, they sell tickets for entry. The tourists only buy tickets from the government and the monks cannot sell tickets and we don’t get any income. And the monks don’t get any revenue. During Pol Pot time all the monks were evacuated and later it became government property.

Why are most modern wat located next to a prasat site?
Before the government was not very strict as it is now. So any place that is a kouk or with a temple—that people think that is a sacred place, so the monk just go and stay there.
In his experience, in the beginning there were only 5 Buddhist temples in Siem Reap. One at Angkor, one at Siem Reap—Wat Ritch Bo, one at Bakong, Wat Pratchiyat (in Jikraine district near Phum Svay), Wat Athviya—located to the south of Siem Reap.

So what is significant about these 5 wat?
They are next to a temple.

But even Lolei is next to the prasat?
Lolei Wat is recent compared to these 5 wat.

How many years ago was this?
It was a very long time ago.

(This was a long time ago before he was born. He just knows about it because I have been told about it. And there is a book and his education taught him this)

But I want to know why particularly that kouk? Why cannot you establish the wat on any kouk?
Before there were less people, now the population has increased and that’s why there are so many wat

But that does not answer the question about the kouk significance? When I explained again, the question was again put forward to the monk.
I do not know much, but the first wat could be at Angkor. And when that wat was successful, then people just follow the same practice of locating new wat next to a prasat.

Why do monks establish wat on the kouk next to a prasat and not on any other kouk?
Before there were less people and it was easy to choose such a location, but now the population has increased and it is difficult to choose such a place.

What do you think about all the old prasat? What is your opinion?
Long time ago, people give respect to Brahma—respect to Shiva Linga during the Angkorian period—it is same like India (from his visit to India).
When asked about his opinion on the old temples—he mentioned that visiting Buddhist temples is significant for people.

What do you think about the large numbers of foreign tourists visiting the old temples?
They want to see the old temples. They want to see how wonderful the old temple is—compared to the concrete house that fall off easily in 100 years something like that—he said not just foreign tourists, the local tourists also want to see the temples. It means that they want to see the old construction from stone.

Do you know that this is a World Heritage site?
I know that it is a world heritage site. The government give request to the world organization to get money—for the monk money for maintaining and cleaning the surrounds of the temples—and some tourists admire that the monks are doing a good job.
Has APSARA authority come here and organized any meeting?
Yes they come for meeting. I am like one of the APSARA member. Everything here is under the APSARA authority. But this wat was built a long time before APSARA come (established)—this wat and the vihear were built a long time ago. The vihear is being restored by APSARA and the French.

Did you talk about the rules when APSARA came?
Yes they did. Tomorrow (11 April), if you would like to come you can come. There is a ceremony of 100 monk bowls being organized here at the wat. It is like offering the monks alms.

Is it to do with Choul Chnam Thmei or is it just a ritual?
It could be part of the New Year. He tried to organize this earlier, but it has to be organized with 8 villages around the temple. I am the head of the committee.

(A another person came with offering and the monk starts chanting)

A committee exists amongst the village to monitor the activities of the wat. The committee is with the villages. The representatives from each village are achar. If he wants to do something in the wat, he will tell the achar and the achar will tell the committee who will tell the villagers. (A way of transmitting information to the villagers). And the head monk is the head of that committee of 8 villages which include Spean Kaek, Phum Oo, Kouk Srok, Chambok, Thnal Trang, Momeang, Kanchok and Ovlaok.
The committee at Bakong comprises of villagers from any of the 8 villages. The committee is for collecting money and doing good for the wat—and also to keep an eye on the monks. The head monk passes information onto the villagers through the committee members

When the villagers want to send information, they can also use the committee. This is a committee to manage ceremonies and to co-ordinate activities with the Wat. It is more like a committee of villagers that is nominated to monitor any wat.

Has APSARA also approached the monks to talk about environment conservation—like not cutting down trees?
Yes, they have. For a monk like him, the monk they always plant trees—we don’t cut down trees. We also just don’t plant but we also put a fence to protect it from people and animals damaging it.

Do you also advice people not to cut trees?
Yes, I used to advice people not to cut trees. Some people just want to chop branches. He wants to protect it because it can give shade to the tourists who come here.

(A another person comes in with offering and the monk resumes chanting and he accepts the offering)

Which day of the Choul Chnam is very significant? Because you earlier mentioned that the second day more people come?
The second day. There are 3 days. The 1st and last day is not as significant as the 2nd day. The 1st day is the last day of the previous year. The monk further elaborated on the New Year: the first day people install flag in their house and burn candles and have lots of lights in each houses and at the wat in Bakong. The second day is the most significant

**What do you do on the three days?**

The first day they install the flag (Cambodian or Buddhism flag) in front of each house and they burn the candle.

For the New Year they take 3 days so that people who are working can have 3 day holiday. For the villagers they take a 7 day break. The monks go around the villages to give people blessing and good luck for New Year. And a new god will come to protect them. The old god will go for meditation and the new god will come to protect them. This is a tradition that gets repeated every year.

On the evening of the 13th April—there will be a lot of lighting—the shape could be in the shape of a star. Some people use oil lamps and some people use electricity. The whole temple gets lit up and all the houses have lights.

In some of the ceremonies—like Chah maha bang skol—it is neak-ta but also combined with Buddhism… what does he think about the animistic practices being integrated into Buddhism.

He said that it has nothing to do with neak-ta. It is all Buddhism. When the Buddha goes around the village for new clothes—the ceremony that people with old parents do—they do this as an offering for their parents and to wish them good luck and long life—the structure we saw is a symbol of a Buddhist temple. Before the Buddha goes around the village to collect the clothes from the dead body—but now they do the same custom with live people—and it is done as an offering.

**What about the ritual we saw in Lolei Wat—Rum doh ceremony—the achar making image of ravana—that is from Hinduism right? So what about that sort of aspects coming into Buddhism?**

It is from Brahmanism Hinduism. Some wat is strong with Hinduism like Lolei is very strong with Brahmanical rituals but Bakong is strong about Buddhism. So they do not integrate Hindu practices. But these have existed since very long times ago… Another person who was present—who is an achar intercepted—he used to officiate the ceremony of wedding and top-knot cutting ceremony. A 29 year old man used to be an achar. He now has another job. So resuming to the question, they answered that the top-knot ceremony comes from Hinduism.

It is from Hinduism and the tradition has been carried on for a very long time. So people have been practicing that… but now people are trying to forget it… not forget but the practices are getting neglected… All these rituals are connected to Brahmanism… He mentioned that it is not just top-knot ceremony, but many other ceremonies are also from Hinduism… like chon lup—girl attaining puberty—girl goes hiding.

They wanted to know if a similar custom existed in India. I said yes, but a different ritual.
The ceremony has become very rare around this part but in East Cambodia near Ratanagiri, the ceremony is quite common. That ceremony can be very long like 3 months, 2 months, 10 days etc depending on the kind of money they have.

*Have you had any problem with APSARA restrictions regarding new constructions?* Yes, the APSARA just want to keep stability—like one house in a location in an old style APSARA want to keep it forever. So they do not allow us to build another *vihear* or other structure on that space—where there has been no construction. APSARA also does not allow us to build new construction. If APSARA allowed, we would build new construction.
PHUM THNAL TRANG INTERVIEWS

ThnalTrang-F66
22 March 2008

Woman constructing her house: second time interview—the house construction was stopped in 2006 by the intervention of the APSARA’s security and cooperation department. The officials had caused considerable distress to the owner. But later in 2006 the construction of the house had carried on without permission and it had been completed before the second visit in 2008.
Woman, 66 years old

*Was there anymore problem with APSARA or did they allow you to finish the house?*
There were serious problems. They asked me to postpone, the village chief. The village chief asked me to postpone for one month. And we go to ask permission from APSARA—they delayed till 40 days—but there is no permission paper—so we just ask the worker—who says to do it…and when they come back to see—it is finished and APSARA don’t say anything

When asked about the construction of the house: she mentioned that she waited sometime, but started constructing soon after… when the APSARA staff came, the house was nearly completed.
They said that they will bulldoze my house, but I stayed defiant. I said that they could bulldoze my house, but they should also bulldoze all the unauthorized new constructions within zone 1, if they wanted to destroy my house.

*Can you describe your family?*
I have 9 children—6 girls, 3 boys of which most are married. They all live around here in the same village—nearby

*Can you describe the boundary?*
Boundary of village: East up to Roluos Lech village
South—to Phum Chambok
West—to Phum Ovlaok
North—Phum Lolei

*Do you think Wat Bakong is part of this village or is it part of Ovloak?*
It is part of Phum Ovlaok

*Which wat you go to?*
Bakong, sometimes we go to the wat at Roluos Kaet. The wat we go regularly is Wat Bakong.

*Do you have a pchit phum? (symbolic centre of the village where rituals for village welfare take place)*
She did not understand the term. Could be near the community hall.

Today is full moon—lots of old ladies will gather to pray and drink tea at the community hall.
Do you know how many people live in this village?
Around 200 families.

[Found details about village chief’s house and the location].

Have you been to any prasat in Angkor?
Yes I have– but I do not know the names or any details.
[Her son who was also present mentioned that people who live around Angkor but do not know anything about Angkor].

Did you do any special ritual before house construction? And when do you do the ritual before you finish the construction or after?
Before - we do when they we do the concrete of the house—before we stand the main column of the house—the main column is very important for the Khmer house—before that we got the achar to do the ritual to get the blessing

We go to Wat Bakong, but not to the Prasat. I go every 8th day in the lunar cycle. The rituals for the neak-ta will continue—my children will continue the practice.

Do you know if anyone in this village will make offering for neak-ta?
Only in meak—only special rituals for family can happen other times.
I gave offering in meak—at the community hall when everyone in the village does.

Is there any particular neak-ta that you will give offering to?
I give to chong Yeay Mao—the neak-ta looks after the villagers here—this area everyone gives to chong Yeay Mao. This neak-ta is very strong—before I go travelling I go to give offering of incense stick in front of po tree in front of Bakong—to ask so that I may not get lost—and I never get lost—before I went to Phnom Penh the first time, I did this and I never got lost.

Was there been any problems from APSARA afterwards?
After the house construction, I have had no problems.

[Took a picture of the group right now and the house].

Have you ever been to the Prasat Bakong?
Yes,

Do you go to the wat or to the prasat?
I go to the wat every 8th day.

Do you think that these traditions will disappear someday—or will your children follow?
It will keep going.

Do your children follow?
Yes

Did the army people come after that [from DOC]? What happened?
After the house is finished they never came. They just threatened to bring the bull dozer to destroy the house. A lot of army people around 22 in all came when the house was nearly finished. They were not happy that I hadn’t complied with the regulation and they wanted to bull-doze the construction. But I defied them saying that they should bull-doze every house in the zone 1 that has been constructed without following APSARA rules…

We have two rice fields—dry season near the lake and wet season rice field near the Ovlaok community hall. The dry season rice field is very far off. She thanks APSARA because now no one can buy or sell land and so her land is safe.
ThnalTrang-M74

Male, 74 years old. An original inhabitant from Thnal Trang.
22 March 2008

Did you move anywhere during Khmer Rouge?
I moved to Dom Dek during Lon Nol period. In 1976 at the start of Khmer Rouge, I returned to this village (Thnal Trang). At that time there were more than 100 families here. Some people here were killed, from 1976 onwards there were many murders by the Khmer Rouge.

Were you living here?
Yes, I was staying in this same house all through. I just had to fix the house that was destroyed. After fixing I could live in the same house.

Can you describe the extent of the village?
Village boundary: East up to Roluos road
South up to Phum Thnal Kandal
On the west up to the beginning of the moat near the bridge of Bakong moat, and North up to Route 6

The part of Thnal Trang along the axis of Bakong is called Kouk Ko (maybe named by Pol Pot)—when they imprisoned people on 17 April—they are normal people who did not support Khmer Rouge.

He mentioned the 17 April incident (day Khmer Rouge came to power): the people from Lon Nol’s side take like prisoners called dop-bprum-bpee (bpeul) mesa (17 April) they were all killed, and they were all from the city.

What do you do for a living?
I have some rice field which I have given to my children. My children have sold some of the rice fields to the company. They still have some, but not enough. Some of my children work as building/construction workers.

How many children do you have?
Family: 1 boy and 7 girls.

What sort of ceremonies do you have in the village?
The major ceremonies in the village include New Year, Meak Bochea (month before Buddha dies), Pisa Bochea (when Buddha dies)—in the Khmer month of pisa Meak Bochea—3 months before Buddha dies, he gets sick.

Do you go to the wat?
During chum Ben and other celebrations, we take offering from home. I go to the wat 4 days in the month during the main days of the lunar cycle. I go to Bakong regularly; sometimes I go to Wat Lolei and Wat Roluos.

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
Yes, I went during the New Year, but I have not been there in some years now.
Have you visited the prasat in Bakong?
Yes.

Do you know anything about the old prasat?
Bakong was built by King Jayavarman II in 802.

What can you say about the neak-ta in the village?
(The vehicles on the road were quite loud).
The people from this village during Meak bochea join another village Thnal Kandal to make offering to Ta Jak-rai. We go to the village Thnal Kandal to worship Jakrai in the Meak month.

Can you give the location of Ta Jak-rai?
Somewhere in the south of Thnal Kandal village and north of Phum Momeang—there used to be an old statue here—but someone just cut that - (now it has been removed)—it is more than 1 km away from here.

Was it an old prasat?
No it is just a community hall.

He started to tell the story of neak-ta history:
Neak-ta history appears when Khmer were fighting against Thai—the Khmers were not strong enough. The Khmer army commander is Khleung Meung—when Khleung Meung realized that they could not defeat the Thai, he decided to commit suicide to collect a ghost army. The Khmer leader Ta Meung understood that his army was not very strong. He committed suicide by jumping on a spear stuck in the ground thus killing himself. He then collected a ghost army which fought the Thais at night, and the living army fought in the day time and they won the battle. The Khmer people want to say thank you to Meung, so every Meak month, they will sacrifice some cow or buffalo to give as offering—in every village.

Do they continue this practice now?
Maybe not now, because it is too expensive to kill a buffalo—so they just make the Khmer noodle offering. As a result Ta Meung is hailed a hero and the people worship him as neak-ta. They worship during the Meak month.

Have you had any problems with APSARA- is there any restriction?
To build house only by the model
APSARA restrictions—we can build houses, but have to ask for APSARA permission and it is a very long process.

Recently APSARA organized a meeting to tell about restrictions. The other restrictions are:
- cannot buy and sell land in the APSARA zone
- no digging up of the rice field for sra
- cannot construct concrete houses—not make deep foundation

Recently someone on this road (in Thnal Trang village) had built a concrete house in Thnal Trang and APSARA has restricted the construction. The people were poor before, but then they sold their rice fields land—they got lot of money—he decided to
build concrete house—though APSARA tried to stop—they have continued to build—during day and night—though APSARA took their building material they have bought new material and have almost finished construction now. But the people have sold their land and complete construction in the last year (2007).
Man, 44 years old

He is from Phum Chambok, came here after marriage. He has 2 boys and 2 girls. He is a rice farmer, and also makes rice wine and rears pigs. His rice fields are located in Phum Chambok (located on map).

Are the rice farms near the lake?
The rice fields are in Thnal Trang—the rice fields are in Phum Chambok—but they refer to it as Phum Thnal Trang—because it belongs to villager from Thnal Trang.

Can you tell me about neak-ta?
I do not have much idea (he laughed out loud). I do not know any neak-ta—I know that people come to make offering during meak.

When do you go to the wat?
I go to the wat during some special festive occasions, I go to Wat Bakong.

Have you been to Angkor Wat?
I have been to Angkor Wat a few times, but not very often. And I have seen the old prasat in Bakong.

What do you think about these old prasat?
(He laughed)... lot of people come to visit.

Do you want to visit all the other old prasat?
I have seen them, so I don’t want to see them again.

Do you know that this is a world heritage site?
Yes.

What does it mean to you?
I do not know much—it is a tourist area. (The sound of hen and chicken clucking in the background).

Are you aware of the APSARA restrictions?
I have not had any problems so far.

During Khmer Rouge, did you have to relocate anywhere?
We went to Dam Dek. I was quite young so I do not remember much.

Do you know anything about the ancient features?
I know some old trapeang—Trapeang Phong—lot of trapeang in Chambok (I am more familiar with that village because that is where I am from).
Group session with the owner of the new house being constructed, his wife and neighbours.

Man, 46 years old
His wife, 51 years old
Neighbour woman, 65 years old
Neighbour man, 49 years old
Male cousin, 51 years old

The owner had a very interesting tattoo that covered a large section of his upper torso, shoulders and back. The villagers believe that during Pol Pot, the tattoo protected them. When asked if it was painful—he mentioned that it was very painful. The wife said that the pain is Thik, thik… meaning short sharp shots of pain…

When you were constructing the house did you have problems with APSARA? Yes. We had a lot of trouble with APSARA.

When did you start construction? The construction was started in 2007

Now is it finished or not? It is not yet finished; because we have no more money.

Did APSARA come again? No, because we have postponed construction.

When they came to stop, did they come as the group—did they come with the commune officials? The APSARA people came with the army police to stop the construction. The village chief and commune officials did not come with the group.

What is your occupation? I am a farmer, sometimes I grow vegetables and I am a palm tree climber.

Where are the rice fields? My rice farm is around the house—in Thnal Trang to the east and some near the Tonle Sap near the 1978 Pol Pot dam (dry season rice field).

Can you describe the village boundary? East till Don Teav village West—Ovlaok South—Chambok North—Route 6

Do you know anything about the neak-ta in the village? Yes. They were very surprised with the question because outsiders usually do not ask about neak-ta.
Neak-ta nuan—located near Kouk Ko
Tram Kwang—nearby the house—there is no specified location.
Ta Mreah Preh
Neak-ta Trapeang Svay—located

Do you know about trapeang and other old features?
Trapeang Kou Thet nearby (mapped) and Trapeang Svay near Kouk Ko (near the old lady constructing house).

A map was presented so that they could clarify the locations of the neak-ta and their house. The villagers poured over the map and were studying it with interest. [Took some pictures of the group and the owner with their permission]. The man had worked with the army before.

(The villagers were interested in my background, my religious and Indian background. I had to explain some customs of Indians. The knowledge of India is through the Indian films screened on the Khmer television and most villagers speak about the films.)

Have you visited old prasat in Angkor?
Yes, but only Angkor Wat. We don’t know anything about the temple. I just go there because I want to see the temple.

Have you now got permission from APSARA to complete the house?
Yes we can finish the house now.
Thnal Trang-M56

31 March 2008
Thnal Trang village chief.
An original inhabitant.

Did you move anywhere during Pol Pot time?
Before Pol Pot period—during Lon Nol time I moved to Phum Kbaun in Soneghum district. When Pol Pot attacked the village Phum Kbaun I moved to Bothom village in the same district. When Pol Pot continued to attack the area, I moved to chup cheam in the same district. And in 1975 during Pol Pot I came back to this village. The Pol Pot moved him to west of Siem Reap to Phum Stung thmei (formerly it was commune krau baay real, now changed) the district of Srok kouk pua near the lake in Puok district). In 1975, during Pol Pot they shifted people to this part of Thnal Trang and named it Kouk Ko.

[At this point some villagers came with documents and the village chief attended to them. They had come to get his verification for verifying that they own their property. This was a temporary form of land ownership documentation so that they could borrow money from land owners].

Has anyone registered land in the village?
No. APSARA was hoping to soon commence the process of registering land ownership details. There is a temporary form of documentation used to claim ownership to land. It is just an estimate of house plot and rice fields for the purpose of taxation (one block for one basket).

Can you describe your family?
I have 7 children (3 boys and 4 girls). I have relatives near here, but I grew in a different part of Thnal Trang. This house belongs to my father. [It is a nice wooden construction, one of the few traditional houses remaining in the village, but he would like to change it to a concrete house because the wood is affected by insects].

All his children are married and live separately—2 live away from this village in Siem Reap and elsewhere and all the other children live in Thnal Trang. His youngest daughter lives with him.

Occupation: We are farmers growing rice. We also grow vegetables behind the house which are sold through a dealer who comes to pick up the vegetables. I also own some dry season rice fields—7 kms from here near the Pol Pot dam (to the south)

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
Boundary of village: north up to Phum Lolei
East—up to Phum Roluos Lech
South—up to Donteav and chambok (Khum Roluos)
West—up to Ovlaok

What are the ceremonies here?
The villagers here are Buddhist and they celebrate Buddhism related rituals and ceremonies. In the month of Meak (lang meak) we cook Khmer noodle and invite
monk—we also have rice mound thanking for the good harvest and saying ‘sorry’ to the animals for their suffering during the cultivation period. These ceremonies happen in the community hall. *(Sala Chothean).*

*Chlong Kanthmey Chaitr*—(chithirai)—we cook rice at home and take to community hall and invite monks and pray. I don’t know the exact meaning of the ritual.

*Can you tell about neak-ta?*

*Neak-ta: Ta Mreh Preh*—this *neak-ta* is located in Phum Chambok, and earlier people used to give a lot of respect this *neak-ta*, but now the name has been changed to *neak-ta svay kmah*—which refers to 2 mango trees in Phum Chambok. Earlier there was a statue, but was removed. There is no *neak-ta* in Thnal Trang.

*What about neak-ta in prasat Bakong?*

I do not remember.

*Have you made any offering to neak-ta?*

My family has never made any offering to *neak-ta*. When the Tonle Sap water rises the people make offering so that they don’t get any diseases and they make the offering at the boundary of Thnal Trang on the south (boundary located on the map)—on the other side of Phum Dontheav.

*Have you visited the old prasat in Bakong and elsewhere?*

I do not know much about the old temples, but from APSARA I know that the people should not cut trees and damage the environment around the temples and the people should protect the temples.

*Do you go to the wat?*

During the official ceremonies. Sometimes in between we cook food and take it for the monks as offering. We go regularly to Wat Bakong. During *Chum Ben* we go to Wat Lolei.

*Do you know this is World Heritage?*

Yes, I know this from APSARA, but I don’t know any further details. But I know this is a significant site because many tourists come here to visit.

*Do you know anything about the archaeological features?*

Undong in front of Bakong and *kouk* chas. The old lady constructing a house—that *prasat* site is called *kouk* toul sambo saka.

*Are there any issues due to APSARA restrictions?*

There are no problems. APSARA has organised awareness generating meetings—once at the school and once in the community hall. More than 100 people gathered, but not all villagers. So not everyone knows about APSARA rules. There are 236 families in the village.
31 March 2008
Group session of 5 women 48 years old, 25, 26, 25 and 21 years old.

Are you originally from this village?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant
I was married to someone in Spean Kaek, but was divorced because I was always sick. I had a baby which died in pregnancy. After divorce, I returned to my parents’ house and I am now living with my father and step mother and 3 siblings (1 boy, 2 girls).

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
Boundary of village:
East to Roluos
South to Phum Chambok around 100 metres from here
North to Route 6
West to Phum Ovlaok.

What is your occupation?
Rice farming, and I am also a kru [a Kru is normally a medicine person, but she is in effect a medium or a ‘memot’, but they call her a kru here].

How did you become a Kru?
I had always been sick since I was little, but a month ago in February 2008, the ‘kru’ spirit came into my body and I became a ‘kru’. The spirit comes almost every day, but definitely every 8th day in the moon cycle. I have become quite popular since and people come from as far as Siem Reap. The spirit I get is called ‘Gomapyth’ which is 6 years old.

What are the community celebrations in the village?
Community celebrations in the village happen during Méak. A celebration to mark end of chaitr—chlong kanhuit chaitr. For Chum-ben, we go to Wat Bakong, and also for Khmer New Year.

Do you go to Angkor Wat?
The kru will go to Angkor Wat or wherever the spirit inside her wants her to go.

When did you last visit Angkor Wat?
I went two days ago.

Have you been to prasat Bakong?
Yes, we have.

Do you know if this is a world heritage site?
No, we do not know.

Do you know about any old features/archaeological?
Trapeang Phong, prasat srang-ai
Do you know about APSARA restrictions?
Yes, not to build a big house.

Will you be able to remarry?
I might re-marry if the spirit allows me after some years.

Do you know anything about any old prasat?
No, we do not know anything.

Do you know why so many tourists come here?
We do not know why.

[The family owns rice fields near Phnom Krom, which has been leased out].
ThnalTrang-M47

31 March 2008
Member of village chief committee (2nd deputy)
Man, 47 years old
The house with a CPP sign.

Can you describe your family?
8 members in his family—6 children, 2 married (one lives away and another with him)

What is your occupation?
I am a rice farmer. The rice fields are around my house. I had a dry season rice field which I have sold along with the other villagers. I sold it to a company (lots of villagers have sold to some company from Phnom Penh). Large amounts of land are being acquired by some company all the way from Siem Reap to Roluos.

Do you know what the land is being acquired for?
We do not know. There is a golf course development to the north of Lolei, and the provincial offices to the north of Lolei.

Are you happy selling your land?
All the villagers regret the sale of their rice fields. If we had waited we might have got better price for their land.

Could you resist selling the land?
We were all forced to sell because otherwise the land would just be acquired when all the land around was acquired. And then we would not have access to our land once all the land around had been acquired by the buyer.

Do you know any neak-ta?
Neak-ta—Mreh Preh (name of a herb) in Phum Chambok. Villagers from Thnal Trang make offering mostly to the neak-ta in Bakong.

Neak-ta is not considered very important. They make offering only when someone gets affected.

Neak-ta in Chambok—under a Cheuteul tree.
ThnalTrang-M52

6 April 2008
Man, 52 years old

I am a representative of law—in Bakong district I am the head of legal issues - I am originally from Thnal Trang.

Did you have move somewhere during Pol Pot?
I moved to Sonekhum district. And in 1979 I returned because of the village army—I became a soldier after.

What do you do for living?
We have some fruit trees around the house—[a very large and prosperous property] Some children live with me and some in Phnom Penh (6 in all).

Can you describe the boundary of village?
South—to Chambok/ Momeang
West to Ovlaok
North to Route 6 and Lolei
East to Roluos Lech

Can you say something about neak-ta?
Neak-ta Chong
Yeay Mao—both in Bakong
District office—there is neak-ta kong and
Yeay Mao—no definite location

Have you give any offering to neak-ta?
Yes, I have given offering for neak-ta.

Do you know that this is World Heritage?
Yes—I believe the temples are invaluable as designated by UNESCO.

What do you know about any archaeological features in the region?
Trapeang to west is trapeang praspet
Prasat Srang-ai—a temple in ruins to the east of Preah ko—has Trapeang Srang-ai nearby.

Any problems with APSARA?
Yes—people cannot do what they want and people cannot use what they want. They cannot cut trees because it might affect the temple.
Land in APSARA zone has become very cheap because they cannot sell the land to outsiders (they can sell only to people within the APSARA zone).

The people living inside the zone feel jealous of the people living outside.
ThnalTrang-F55

6 April 2008
Woman, 55 years old

Is this part of Thnal Trang village?
We call this part Thnal Thmei.

Are you an original inhabitant?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant.

Does your family live nearby?
One sister lives across the house.

What about your family?
My husband died 5 years ago and I live with my children—5 girls, of which 2 are married.

Did you have to move in the past during Pol Pot?
I moved to preah proh site in Jikraine district. They sent me to near the Pol Pot dam. They had to get soil for making a dam.

Was it near the lake?
Yes.

What do you do for a living?
I do not have any rice fields. I do not do anything now because I am old. My children look after me.

Do you go to the wat regularly?
Yes, I am a nun and I go to the wat regularly.

My 2 sons-in-law are labourers and do not have any rice field

Do you have any fruit trees or do you grow vegetables?
We grow fruit trees like coconut, mango and papaya and soursop.

Can you tell the location of neak-ta in the village?
Ta Kwang
Ta Meung
Ta Chong
Yeay Mao
Ta Di
Neak-ta: Ta kwang in Bakong, To chong in Bakong—under the Po tree and Yeay Mao—Bakong
Neak-ta kra nguoung—trapeang to the east
Ta Di—all around the temple of Preah Ko—it is like the authority

Is there any structure for Yeay Mao in Bakong...?
There is a small structure under the po tree in front of Bakong. According to her and the villagers, all the spirits are in this structure.

*Has she or her family given any offering to neak-ta?*
Yes

*When did you make the offering?*
I gave a month ago. I make offering only when I ask for something (I made an offering at the *wat*)—I make the offering only when I have a problem with the *neak-ta*, and when my problem was solved I made an offering of pig head, chicken etc., I made offering at the *wat* in front of the Po tree.

*Can you describe the boundary of Thnal Trang?*
You go up to Roluos and turn right—that is the boundary.
To the west up to Bakong
To the east up to Roluos
North up to Route 6.

*Have you visited Bakong?*
Yes many times.

*Have you visited prasat Bakong?*
4 times—during New Year lots of people come—there is a concert and lots of things happen like music, theatre and people go to see.

*Which *wat* do you go to?*
Wat Bakong—I go every 8th day.

*Do you know anything about old archaeological features? Like road, pond, mound etc?*
The road in front of the house is an old road.

*Have you visited prasat in Angkor?*
Yes we have visited.

*What do you think about the old temples?*
I think they are beautiful and better quality than the modern temple.

*Do you know if this is a World Heritage site?*
No. I only know about the temples from old temples that it is very nice.

*What do you think about—why so many tourists come here?*
They come because these are ancient temples which are unique. They come to see the *baray*, temples and old structures.

*Do you have any problem with APSARA?*
YES!

I am very upset with APSARA. Long time ago, there was no APSARA. Just recently APSARA try to come here and they are very strict. The people cannot do what they
want. We have to ask for permission. But when the people ask for permission they never give. I have a lot of questions for APSARA, but they never answer. My question is about when and why APSARA come here? I am very upset and angry with APSARA because they are a recent body—they are very strict and people cannot do what they want—and when we ask for permission they do not give permission—they never give and they do not answer her questions.

[APSARA has provisions for complaints and problems—they have a mail box and also a phone number. They have also given information at the commune offices. They have also organised meetings. If she had attended she would have got some answers, but she was not aware of the meetings]

[Some villagers in Thnal Trang were wearing t-shirts given by APSARA, when they had organised the village meeting—but she was not aware of the meeting].

I want to give my daughter a piece of land nearby and I want my daughter to live nearby (so that my daughter can look after me when I am ill or old)—but APSARA is not allowing this to happen (APSARA is not allowing any new construction)—because of all these restrictions I am very unhappy. I am also very unhappy about the Run Ta ek proposal.

[When mentioned that APSARA has plans and if she was aware, she was very angry and upset].

[The interview highlighted the unhappiness amongst some of the villagers with the authority of APSARA. The lady was very animated in her conversation. She sounded very loud and unhappy and was angry with the authorities. The translator was getting uncomfortable sensing the lady’s anger].
PHUM BENG INTERVIEWS

Beng-F48

Kouk Srok deputy chief, Woman, 48 years old
24 March 2008

Are there many women who are deputy chief? Is it common for women to be village chief?
It is unusual. There is only one woman who is deputy chief.
[I congratulated her on her position].

What village is this?
Phum Kouk Srok is the whole area. But this portion around the trapeang is referred to as Phum Beng. The village around the trapeang is referred to as Phum Beng, but is part of the larger village of Kouk Srok.

Do you know if this is also called Trapeang Totung-Thngai?
Yes, we know.

Have you changed the name from Trapeang Totung-Thngai?
This trapeang is not Trapeang Totung-Thngai. This has always been called as beng. The trapeang to the east of the temple is referred to as the Trapeang Totung Thngai.

Are you originally from here?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant.

Do you have family here?
My husband died 15 years ago—I have 2 children, one married and lives next door.

During Pol Pot did the villagers move you elsewhere?
The villagers from here moved during (1970s) Lon Nol period. I was studying in Siem Reap, and the villagers moved to Svay leu district near Kulen. All people were separated. During Pol Pot (1975), I moved to Jikraine district (east of Siem Reap).

Can you describe the boundary of the village?
The boundary of Kouk Srok:
North—up to Phum Ovlaok
West—Commune Kandaek
South—Tonle Sap
East—Phum Chambok

During wet season, does this village get flooded?
In wet season when water rises in Tonle Sap, it comes till this village. In 2000, the water level was 2’ due to the flooding in Tonle Sap.

How big is Phum Beng?
Just around the trapeang. 1 square kilometer.

**Was it a separate village before or has it always been part of Kouk Srok?**
The Phum Beng was separate before, but now 4 villages including Anlong Chrei, Beng, Kouk Srok and Dong Thnal have been combined together to form Kouk Srok. It was combined during Vietnamese occupation (1979)—during the new govt—when they started giving people rice fields.

**Do villagers here have land registration?**
Land registration—some people have done and some not.

**What is your occupation?**
Occupation: apart from being a deputy village chief, I am undergoing training to be an adult education teacher. I was a primary school teacher before. I have just finished a course, but will start another course in April. I will teach adults in the community learning centre, a Japanese NGO.

[There was a problem mentioned by DMA2 deputy director, regarding the construction of these community learning centres—they wanted to make big structures and APSARA had to convince them to comply with regulations]
I will train people to be clean.

[At this time, her grandchild starts crying loudly and she had to console the kid]

**And when will you start teaching and where will you start teaching?**
I will teach at the community learning centre—2 rooms.

**Do you do any farming?**
I do not do much farming. I have very little rice fields—I gave to my children, but some have been sold already.

**Where are your rice fields?**
They are dry season rice fields near the lake. The veggie garden behind the house, is also a source of income.

**Is it profitable? Where do you sell the herbs?**
Someone from Siem Reap will collect. They will order the amount of herbs and I will prepare. I am currently growing mint; dealers come and collect the produce to take to Siem Reap.

**Do you have a direct contract with a hotel or do you take it to the market in Siem Reap?**
Someone in the village is a dealer who takes the produce to Siem Reap.

**Is it because of this that the villagers grow the herbs?**
Yes, all houses in Beng do this.

**Do you ask the villagers to grow specific plants or can you grow anything?**
There is no specific recommendation. They grow whatever they wish to sell.

(The lady got a call)
(But now lots of farm land has been sold. Lots of concrete walls—land has been lying fallow … The concrete wall is everywhere)  
(The lady returned from her call)

*Do you know how old the trapeang is?*  
The trapeang in the centre of the village must be very old. It existed before I was born.

*Are there any APSARA restrictions on the use of trapeang?*  
APSARA has restrictions in the use of trapeang. We cannot dig.

*Is that a good restriction?*  
I want to make the trapeang deeper. Remove the water weeds, take the soil inside to fill up the banks—for embankment—to have boating facility for tourists. I think that it is a good idea.

*Can you use the water from the trapeang?*  
We can use the water, which we collect in buckets. We cannot use electric shock to kill the fish—restriction by APSARA.

*How many families live in Phum Beng?*  
There are 56 families in Phum Beng.

*Does each village part of Kouk Srok, have a deputy chief?*  
I am the deputy village chief for the whole Kouk Srok. The village has one chief, one deputy and one member.

*So, will you be responsible for the entire Kouk Srok, when the village chief is absent?*  
Yes

*Which wat do you go to?*  
Wat Bakong

*How often do you go to?*  
Only for the main festivals like Chum-ben, New Year, ceremony of rainy season, choul vassa (enter), chan (exit) vassa, water festival and moon festival…

*Do you do any ceremony in the village?*  
In meak month we do ceremony for the village in the community hall. A new one is being constructed in the site of the old one at the entry into the village. The villages of Kouk Srok, Dong Thnol and Beng use this community hall. Anlong Chrei has access to another community hall.

*Do you do any offering for neak-ta in this village?*  
Depends, only when someone is sick. When we do something wrong to neak-ta—

*Is there any neak-ta in the village?*  
Neak-ta in this village—Ta Peuh near the bridge  
Prei neak-ta to south west of trapeang—an Angkorian stone: People give offering to this sometimes.
There is a neak-ta in Prasat Trapeang Totung Thngai and also a Bang Bat (another spirit).

_Have you and her family visited any prasat sites here or anywhere?_  
We have visited all the temples in Angkor—Preah Ko, Sras Srang, Banteay Srei

_Do you know that it is World Heritage?_  
Yes I know that.

_Do you know the significance and what it means?_  
I do understand it is World Heritage, which is a good thing for Cambodia, because foreigners know and come to visit and that brings revenue into the country and for us. It is a good thing for Cambodia, and to let the world know this and allow the people to come and visit our country.

_Are there any tourism related activities here?_  
There are no tourism related businesses in this village.

_Do tourists come here?_  
Yes to visit prasat Totung-Thngai. Some tourists come here and students training to be tour guides also visit the village. The students are local university students training to be tour guides.

_Do you know anything about the sculpture in the temples—why and for what?_  
For depicting the Khmer activity in the past—or for the story, legendary the narrative. It is a gift for the Khmer generation of the present and future as an inheritance.

_Are there any problems due to APSARA restrictions?_  
Not any problem. But, no new constructions are allowed without permission which is outside the existing house. We have to wait for 4 months for permission.

_Has anyone applied for permission and have had problems?_  
No one has had problems so far.

_Has anyone constructed new in Phum Beng?_  
There are 2 new constructions in Beng, 1 not complete.

_If I show the map, can you show me the boundary of the village?_  
A boundary roughly marked on the hardcopy map.  
Prei Monti is part of Phum Chambok  
Trapeang Phong is part of Phum Kouk Srok.  
To the south towards the Tonle Sap—some parts belong to Kouk Srok, some parts belong to Ovlaok depending on which villager own the property.

_Any zone 1 marker here?_  
No. One boundary marker in Anlong Chrei village, and one on the way to the village.

_Do you know that this village is within the zone 1?_  
Yes, almost every village, with temple is within APSARA zone.
Any Kru or memot here?
Anlong Chrei—Ta Preng and Kru Kang are medicine men.
There is one memot in Beng but people don’t believe in that person.

09 April 2008
Visited the deputy chief for a second time to find out about the preparations for the New Year.

Can you tell me about any special preparations for Choul Chnam Thmei? What you do by yourself and the village?
Yes. The commune chief has asked every house to put a Cambodian flag for New Year.

What are the preparations?
Sla Teuh baisei—is baisei with betel nut leaf, with banana stalk and incense.

Is this preparation by just you or others in the village as well?
Each family does this independently
Preparations for the New Year include:
- Sla teuh baisei—baisei with betelnut leaf, candle, and incense on banana stalk. Last year I had made the baisei, but this year I will buy baisei which will not be the traditional one but a modern one made of paper.
- lots of fruits—all available varieties depending on their budget.
- coke (traditionally they offered homemade juice, but nowadays any drink from the shops are used) some people offer coconut.

Will you go to Bakong?
Yes.

When will you go?
From the second day we will go to Bakong and play a game of throwing colours and water at each other (this according to the villagers is an influence from Thailand) a lot of other different games will also be played—sometimes this game is played three days after New Year.

Will everyone play the game?
Yes, a lot of different Khmer games will be played.

Why does this happen only in Bakong?
I do not know, but it is traditional. It has been happening since I was young—people always come there, maybe because it is a big space.

Can you tell us about the work you were doing with APSARA—what training you got—what you are doing?
- Saving money
- animal feed
- agriculture

How did the program start? Did APSARA come and start meetings?
The come here to do meeting—and people volunteer—more people from this village join the meeting because we are also good at agriculture—like vegetable garden.

*When did it start?*
Last month—March 2008.

*Is there anything new that the department is teaching you?*
They teach us techniques and in the use of organic fertilizer.

*Have you seen any examples—or have you seen it being made?*
They just tell us how to make rope—how to make fertilizer.

*Have you seen this somewhere?*
We grow vegetables in group (like a collective) for her village—sometimes I am the intermediary in selling vegetables.

**APSARA has a place where you do the testing, have the villagers visited that place?**
Yes, we went to the APSARA station in Prey Vieng province recently.

*What did you see?*
We as a community got tips on saving money
- pig killing
- animal feel
- agriculture—for agriculture their suggestions are not as good as what we already do
(She did not appreciate anything in particular—from the APSARA’s project)

*Why are you joining the APSARA program? Is there anything beneficial for you? What are your reasons?*
We joined because we want to know—is it real development—I want to find out.

*Will you start work for the project after the New Year?*
Could be—after visiting the province—nothing has happened so far—so maybe after New Year something might happen.

*How many families from this village have joined?*
25 families

*What is the group called?*
It is called Kouk Srok organic agriculture—*Khasikam Banko Bankan Pal Prahchee Tamma Cheata Plhum kouk srok*—roughly translated it is ‘agriculture that uses natural fertilizers in kouk srok village’.

*You also have another program of fast growing trees from this department. Will you use that also for firewood?*
Yes, we have brought some 200 saplings to plant in this village. We will plant some good timber trees and also some fast growing trees like acacia and angkea bos (Khmer name)—has long flower, good smell and is a fast growing so for firewood

*Are you also going to cultivate the quick yielding rice?*
Not this village—but in Anlong Chrei village they are going to do that.

So what other villages in this khum are part of this?
The other villages which have started this program include Phum Kanchok, Kouk Srok and Chambok
Beng-F78

24 March 2008
Woman, 78 years old

Are you originally from this village?
I am an original inhabitant of this village, I live with my entire family.

What do you call this village?
Phum Beng.

Can you describe your family?
I have 5 children (2 died)—they all live in this village.

What is your occupation?
Farming; during non farming seasons, we go to find job in Siem Reap

Do you have sons?
2 boys and one girl.

How far are the rice fields?
Just near the entry to Phum Beng—a small piece of land.

Do you also grow vegetables?
We also grow herbs and vegetables to sell in Siem Reap.

Do you sell directly or would somebody come to collect?
We sell through a dealer.

Which wat do you go to?
I go to Wat Bakong depending on how well I am, since it is quite a distance to walk to.

Is it the closest wat?
Yes.

How often do you go?
It depends on how well I am and how often someone can give me a lift. I go if I can arrange for someone to take me to the wat. Fortunately if the community hall is completed, I will just pray here. The construction for a community hall has just begun; once it is complete I will just stay there to do her prayers.

Do you do any ceremony in the village for the good of the village? Where do you do it?
We do offering in the month of meak at the location of the community hall. We just make the offering.

Is there any neak-ta location here? And has your family made any offering?
We have done in the past, and depending on the situation they make offerings. I do not make offering because I am too old.
Do you do anything in the prasat?
The people do not make any offering to the temple.

Why is that so?
The spirit never makes anyone sick in the village and for this reason no one gives any offering.

Is there a spirit in prasat Totung Thngai?
There was a spirit there, but the villagers do not make offering because they have not been affected by the neak-ta.

Have you visited any old prasat sites?
Yes I have.

Which temples did you visit?
I have visited the temples in Angkor. One of my grandchild works with APSARA (cleaning toilets) near Bakheng mountain temple.

Have you had any problems with APSARA restrictions?
No.

You haven’t constructed anything?
APSARA gave model for the bridge to be built in Phum Beng. We were not allowed to put a pipe, but had to leave an opening in the middle for the water flow.

Is there any restriction to have a sra here?
No, we do not have restrictions.

Do you use the water from the trapeang?
Yes. We use the water in the trapeang for the veggie garden. We are allowed to fish in the trapeang, but we cannot use electric tools to kill fish. We can use traditional fish traps for catching fish.

Can you describe the boundary of the phum?
The boundary of Phum Beng is just around the trapeang, the houses which surround the trapeang are part of this village. The Phum Beng is part of the village of Kouk Srok. The whole area is part of Kouk Srok.

When you were younger, was this place called Phum Beng?
Yes.

Was it ever called Trapeang Totung-Thngai?
No. The trapeang near the prasat Totung Thngai is called Trapeang Totung Thngai.

Most of villagers in Phum Beng are related to each other.
Beng-F43

9 April 2008

Are you originally from this village?
Yes, I am an original inhabitant, I was born here. My husband came from another village (now deceased).

What is your occupation?
I have a shop in the village. I also do farming—growing vegetables and herbs and fruits like papaya, water melon.

Can you describe Phum Beng?
Phum Beng is the village around the trapeang. I do not know the number of families in the village.

Are there any outsiders here?
Not many outsiders here—new people, who come to live here, come because they have married someone in the village. Some people also move away after marriage.

What are the rituals in the village?
1. Lang Meak—we make Cambodian noodle and go to the community hall—invite monks from Wat Bakong for food—and an offering of the noodle is made for neak-ta—it is left near the bridge
2. Ka Chlong Kan Chaitr—end of Chaitr month

Can you tell me the location of neak-ta in the village?
- Neaug Peuh—near the community hall, there is no exact spot for the neak-ta
- Neak-ta peh srok—near the school in Kouk Srok
- Neak-ta kouk Bam Puong—in Phum Oo
- Prasat Totung Thngai—not sure if there is a neak-ta

Do the villagers visit the prasat?
No, they just walk past—do not go for a visit—it is just ruins.

Which wat you go to and When?
We go to Wat Bakong during ceremony—8th day of waxing moon—will go to wat on 11th April for the bowl ceremony for monks.

Have you visited any prasat/old temples in Angkor?
I have been to Angkor Wat during New Year. I do not go there other times because I do not have free time. I do not have any opinion on old temples.

Do you know that it is World Heritage?
No (because I cannot read and write)

What do you think about so many tourists visiting Angkor?
Maybe because they want to see old temples

Are there any restrictions imposed by APSARA?
No cutting trees, no dumping of rubbish in the *trapeang*, no new constructions—but if we give bribe, we will get permission to build.

*Some people in the village work with DDD or follow their advice with regards to growing veggie garden, composting etc., do you know anything about that?*  
My niece who lives next door is part of the farmer cooperative—an initiative by the DDD.
Beng-F20

9 April 2008

I am the earlier interviewee shopkeeper’s niece. I am part of the farmer cooperative—second head for the program initiated by APSARA. The main head is the deputy village chief.

My role is to undergo training—for killing pig for meat by sharing money, selling things to a shop—training for planting—training to keep chicken—my role then is to find volunteers in the village to grow veggie garden. Around 30 people have registered for the group from Phum Kouk Srok, most of who are from this part—Phum Beng.

The meetings are organised by APSARA

*Have you visited any prasat?*
I have visited all prasat in Angkor. I visit regularly—sometimes in the evenings and sometimes on Sundays…
Are you originally from this village?
Yes, I am originally from this village.

Can you describe your family?
I have 7 children.

What is your occupation?
My occupation is to make cement water pots—large in capacity. We also do some rice farming nearby the village and grow vegetables and herbs around the house.

Do you know about the APSARA (DDD) program?
My children are part of the DDD program.

Do you know about neak-ta in the village?
There is one in Koup Srok which was known as Ta macha srok.

How often do you visit Wat Bakong?
I visit Bakong every 8th day.

Have you visited the prasat in Bakong?
I do not know much about the prasat.

Do you know that it is World Heritage?
Yes I know, but I do not know what it means. Or I do not have an opinion on that.

Are there any APSARA restrictions?
I do not have any problems with that.
Beng-F58

9 April 2008

*Are you originally from this village?*
Yes, I am an original inhabitant

*Did you move anywhere during Pol Pot?*
I went to Yeang Thes village in Sonekhum district and then moved again to another village in Beng Melea commune, returned to this village in 1978.

*Can you describe your family?*
I have 7 children of which some are married and live with their wife. I live with my 3 younger children.

*What is your occupation?*
We own some rice fields near here—grow some vegetables and herbs and have some fruit trees. We grow some herbs—dealers from Siem Reap collect the produce from here.

*Do you know about neak-ta in the village?*
Neak-ta in the village—Trapeang Phong—a temple nearby there is a neak-ta—Ta Chong

*Is there a neak-ta in the prasat Totung Thngai?*
Yes, there is, but no one gives any offering.

*How often do you visit Wat Bakong?*
I go regularly to Wat Bakong on the 8th day.

For New Year, I will go regularly from the 10th of April.

*Have you visited the prasat in Bakong?*
I visited when I was young, but now I only go to the wat.

*Any other prasat that you have visited?*
Only when I was young. I visited Angkor Wat in 2007—I did not go in however. And I have never been inside Angkor Thom

*Are there any APSARA restrictions?*
I have no problems. My house has been constructed according to the rules. [It is a good construction].
Glossary

Abisek rite to honour a new Buddha statue
Achar one who officiates rituals, an intermediary between secular and spiritual world
Ampil tamarind
Angkor from Sanskrit, meaning city (nagara)
Arak protector spirit—can be sometimes malicious
Asot Khmer month from mid-September to mid-October
Baay three
Bai cooked rice
Baisei ritual offering made with banana trunk and other ritual objects
Bangbat animistic spirit dwelling around a pond or river, near a cliff or cave within mountain forests
Banteay fortress
Baray water reservoir
Beng large water body
Bhukman land suitable for a dwelling
Bon Festival, religious rite (from Sanskrit punya)
Boran ancient
Borei city
Bprum five
Buon four
Chambak Irvingia malayana a favourite abode of neak-ta and prei
Chas old
Chen exit
Cheung north
Daem original, first
Devaraja god-king
Doung coconut
Ghattan/kathen Buddhist rite to offer new robes, other religious paraphernalia and personal items to monks after the end of the rainy season (Chen vossa)
Jhamkaar rice cultivation by ‘slash and burn’
Khadak Khmer month from mid-November to mid-December
Khassan moat
Khamoch ghost
Khum commune
Ko cow
Kouk/kok dry land
Kru from Sanskrit guru meaning teacher
Lang to rise-as in the ceremony for neak-ta—lang neak-ta
Lok/loak ta venerable term to address monks
Malu betel leaf
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Meak</em></td>
<td>Khmer month from mid-January to mid-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meba</em></td>
<td>living or dead close relative. Literally meaning ‘mother-father’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Memot</em></td>
<td>spirit medium</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Naga</em></td>
<td>Sanskrit/Pali term to refer to a mythological serpent</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Neak</em></td>
<td>person</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Neak-ta</em></td>
<td>guardian spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Phnom</em></td>
<td>hill</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Photorbot</em></td>
<td>Khmer month from mid-August to mid-September</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Phum</em></td>
<td>from Sanskrit <em>Bhumi</em>, meaning village</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pralay</em></td>
<td>water channel</td>
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<td><em>Prasat</em></td>
<td>from Sanskrit, refers to mainly Angkorian temple</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Preah</em></td>
<td>sacred</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Prei</em></td>
<td>malevolent spirit resulting from an unfortunate death such as suicide, drowning, accident, or the death of a virgin or pregnant woman</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Prey</em></td>
<td>forest</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Prom</em></td>
<td>Brahma</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Psar</em></td>
<td>market</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Reamker</em></td>
<td>Khmer version of Ramayana</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rup</em></td>
<td>from Sanskrit, means form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sasana</em></td>
<td>religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sima</em></td>
<td>sacred boundary to demarcate ritual spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sla</em></td>
<td>areca nut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sngout</em></td>
<td>dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sra/srah</em></td>
<td>artificial pond</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Srae</em></td>
<td>rice field</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Srok</em></td>
<td>district, country</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ta</em></td>
<td>grandfather, elderly man</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Tbong</em></td>
<td>south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Thmei</em></td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Thnal</em></td>
<td>road/ embankment</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Thngai Sel</em></td>
<td>holy day/ auspicious day</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Thom</em></td>
<td>large</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Tonle Sap</em></td>
<td>great lake</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Trapeang</em></td>
<td>pond</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Trot</em></td>
<td>Exorcism, dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Undong</em></td>
<td>well (for water)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Vihear</em></td>
<td>Buddhist vihara or temple hall</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Vossa</em></td>
<td>rainy season</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Wat</em></td>
<td>temple, monastery</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Yeak</em></td>
<td>Demon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yeay</em></td>
<td>Grandmother, Elderly woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>