

Goodbye, Snay Pol.

Since my two brothers were sent to further their studies in Phnom Penh, sending children to study in the capital has become our family's tradition. It was now my turn. My eldest brother was in charge of finding an appropriate high school in the capital. He was always taking care of our school problems. He had helped my second brother, Sinoeun, to be enrolled in one of the best high schools in the capital, Lycée Preah Yukanthor. For me, he found a place in his high school named "Sangkum Reastr Niyum High School," the "Popular Community High School." Finally, I moved to Phnom Penh in 1964 after one year of studies in the junior high school.

I left my native village at the age of 14, with only a simple idea of furthering my studies, as I never thought that one day our family would have to move out, too. While living in Phnom Penh, I kept visiting Snay Pol often until 1970, when the war between Lon Nol and Sihanouk-Khmer Rouge took place. Afterwards, I had to wait 22 years to return to my birthplace. What I witnessed in the village

during my childhood always remained in my mind. During these 22 years, like other villages in Cambodia, my village had suffered from wars, revolutions, separation, massacres, invasions by foreign troops, collectivism, totalitarianism, and political uncertainty. What was happening to my village could apply to many other villages as well because of the similarity in cultural, socio-economic, and political environments throughout the country. I always think of my native village as a source of inspiration for life, for freedom, for our traditional values, for human dignity, and for progress.