

Title of the documentary heritage item or collection

This should be the complete name of the documentary heritage as it is usually known. Include dates if they are usually part of the name.

Cambodian women in New Zealand oral history project, 1993

Section 1: Nominator Details

This section is for information about the source of the nomination and the authority under which it is made. A copy of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World programme's privacy policy is available on its [website](#).

1.1 Name of nominator (person or organisation)

Full name of the person(s) or organisation(s) making the nomination. *The nomination may be submitted jointly by more than one person or organisation*

Chris Szekely, Chief Librarian, Alexander Turnbull Library

1.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Explain the nominator's relationship to the documentary heritage. *For example, the nominator may be a responsible officer of the library or archive which owns it; or he/she may be a private individual with a research interest in it.*

The oral history project is held by the Alexander Turnbull Library. Chris Szekely is the Chief Librarian of ATL.

1.3 Contact person

Provide the name of the person who is responsible for the nomination process.

Linda Evans, Curator Oral History & Sound, Alexander Turnbull Library

1.4 Contact details

Provide sufficient details to allow easy communication with the contact person.

Email: linda.evans@dia.govt.nz

Phone: 04-462-3972

Section 2: Identity and Description of the Documentary Heritage

2.1 Title of inscription

If the nomination is successful, what do you want it to be titled (e.g. for certificates)? Please use a maximum of 6 words.

Cambodian women oral history project

2.2 Description of the documentary heritage

This should include a full description of what is included in the documentary heritage, its scope and its size. Include details of the type of documents e.g. letters, film, images etc.

Ten in-depth oral history interviews with Cambodian women who came to New Zealand as refugees after escaping from Cambodia during the period of civil war and genocide. The interviewees, all Khmer, were born between 1920 and the 1950s in different circumstances and regions of the country. They talk about their lives in Cambodia before the Pol Pot regime, living through the Vietnam War, the civil war, genocide and the refugee camps. The women arrived in New Zealand between 1980 and 1990 and describe the process of getting here and of adjusting to life in New Zealand. The interviews are recorded in Khmer, the women's first language, and have been transcribed and translated into English.

The collection consists of 47 C60 audio cassettes, 10 transcripts, 10 agreement forms in Khmer and images of the interviewees and the interview process.

2.3 Catalogue, registration or bibliographic details

This should include any bibliographic, registration, inventory, classification and/or call numbers that uniquely identify the documentary heritage.

OHColl-1185

Tiaki database entry on page 13

2.4 Visual documentation

Where available and appropriate, supply photographs or videos of the documentary heritage. Please provide images that can be used for the purposes of promoting of the World.

Photograph of group of interviewees on page 14 of this document. Photographer Vic Young.
Names and full citation can be supplied.
Other images may be available for promotional purposes.

2.5 Bibliography

This should be, where possible, a list of 3-6 published sources that have been produced using (i.e. drawing heavily on) the documentary heritage to attest to the item/collection's significance.

Young, Niborom. *I tried not to cry : the journeys of ten Cambodian women refugees / from oral histories told to Niborom Young*. Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, Steele Roberts Publishers, 2015. 355 pages.
ISBN9781927242759

Section 3: Assessment Against the Criteria

3.1 History/provenance

Provide a summary of the provenance of the documentary heritage. For example, how and when was the material acquired and integrated into the holdings of the institution?

Niborom Young describes the genesis of the oral history project in her book *I tried not to cry*. In 1992 she was working with a group of Cambodian women refugees and was aware of the approaching centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand. She and the group wanted their histories to be part of New Zealand women's history so initiated the project.

The oral history project was partly funded by a grant to Niborom Young from the Women's Suffrage Centennial Trust. She undertook training and worked with mentor Judith Fyfe to develop the project, including an oral history recording agreement in Khmer.

Niborom Young carried out all the interviews and donated the collection to the Turnbull Library in late 1993. The handover event was attended by most of the interviewees and by members of their families and community.

The transcriptions and translations were also undertaken by Niborom Young, with the support of the Alexander Turnbull Library and funding from the Friends of the Turnbull Library and other sources. The transcriptions were also donated to the Library.

3.2. Uniqueness of the documentary heritage

Give a brief explanation of why the documentary heritage is unique and irreplaceable.

These recordings with this group of women are unique and could not be reproduced. They were made at a particular point in time when the women had been in New Zealand between 2 and 12 years and their experiences were still fresh. Several have since died.

The recordings were made by a Cambodian who was trusted by the women, spoke their language and had detailed knowledge and experience of Cambodia, the effects of the genocide, the refugee camps and migration herself.

3.3 Assessment against the significance criteria

Provide an explanation of what criteria the documentary heritage meets and why it meets those criteria. The documentary heritage must meet at least one of the criteria in this section. An explanation of each criteria is given on the front page of this form.

Time: The project provides first hand accounts of momentous events of the twentieth century in world history from people who are now New Zealanders and have brought this history with them - the effects of the Vietnam War, in which New Zealand participated, on Cambodia and the civil war and genocide that followed.

The project also provides in-depth accounts from 10 women who arrived in New Zealand with over 5000 other Cambodian refugees who came between 1977 and 1994, the largest refugee group since World War II during a significant time in the development of New Zealand's refugee and migrant policies.

People: The women's individual accounts of their experiences and observations, and the meanings they draw from them, give many insights into aspects of daily life and survival during times of peace and war, as well as confronting forced migration and settlement in a new country after leaving so much behind. As often happens in interviews, the women express sadness, anger and confusion along with moments of happiness and even humour.

Subject and Theme: The interviews are particularly historically significant for the New Zealand register as an innovative contribution to the documentation of three major subject areas and the intersection of those three areas; the experiences and observations of women, the history of Cambodians in New Zealand, and the experiences of refugees coming to New Zealand. All these topics are under-represented in

historical collections and are of vital contemporary interest and concern. The Cambodian women oral history project is an original and significant example of the use of oral history to document themes and combinations of themes that are not easily documented in other ways.

Form and Style: The project is an outstanding example of the use of oral history methodology, in the ethical, technical and interviewing standards applied. There was ongoing consultation with the interviewees as it progressed. Such carefully conducted interviews show the immediacy and impact orality can have in conveying complexity and subtlety.

The project is unusual for a project with refugees or migrants to New Zealand in that the interviews are in the first language of the interviewees, providing them with the opportunity to express themselves as freely as they wished within their own cultural frameworks. It also gives a valuable record of the language as spoken by the first generation to come to New Zealand.

Community significance:

In addition to its historical significance for New Zealand society in general, the oral history project has had widespread support from the Wellington Cambodian community. Demonstrating this, there have been three large community events held at the National Library to mark particular milestones which were well-attended and appreciated – an event for the handover of the oral history project recordings in 1993, a later event to present all living interviewees or their families with copies of their recordings, and an evening talk about the recording and translation of the interviews by Niborom Young organised by the Friends of the Turnbull Library. Members of the community supported these events and expressed great appreciation that such significant recordings about their histories in Cambodia and New Zealand had been created and translated.

3. 4 Testimony of at least two independent experts

The committee requires testimony from at least two independent people or organisations who can give an informed opinion about the significance and provenance of the documentary heritage.

The informed opinion should focus on the criteria for inscription provided above and on the front page of this form. Please provide up to one page from each expert in support of your submission.

Expert One

Name	Megan Hutching
Qualification(s)	MA (Hons); Oral historian, Ministry for Culture & Heritage, 1991-2016; independent historian, 2016 - present. I have written and edited numerous publications using oral history interviews as source material.
Contact number	
Email	

Paragraph in support	<p>It gives me great pleasure to support this nomination.</p> <p>Niborom Young has recorded a unique series of interviews with former Cambodian refugees who came to live in Aotearoa New Zealand as a result of the Pol Pot terror regime in Cambodia. As a primary source that documents an historical event which has had an impact on New Zealand history, they cannot be surpassed. The interviews uncover each person’s experiences of and reflections on their lives under the Pol Pot regime, and also document their arrival in and life as a refugee in New Zealand, adapting to their new country.</p> <p>It is appropriate to nominate this collection, which uncovers the voices and experiences of women, in the year that New Zealand is celebrating the 125th anniversary of women’s suffrage, especially as this project received a Suffrage Centenary grant in 1993.</p> <p>The content is gripping – both emotionally and for the information it contains. The interviews allow researchers to hear what happened to these people, and also how they attempt to understand and make sense of their experiences. Young had determined the topics which she wanted to cover in each interview, but was a sensitive interviewer who allowed her interviewees to tell their stories in ways which made sense to them, thus ensuring that insights and information of great significance were recorded.</p> <p>Originally recorded in Khmer, all the interviews have been translated into English, making them more accessible to researchers in New Zealand. It is a project which not only recorded extraordinary testimony, but also followed good standards of technical practice. Young carefully followed the National Oral History Association of New Zealand’s Code of Ethical and Technical Practice, and used high quality recording equipment for the interviews. As a result, they are of very good archival technical standard.</p>
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Expert Two

Name	Rae Julian
Qualification(s)	<p>BA, Dip Ed, Dip Tchg, QSO</p> <p>I lived in Cambodia from 1992-1997, firstly as a District Election Supervisor for the UN mission to Cambodia (UNTAC), then as Volunteer Service Abroad’s field representative for Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos (based in Cambodia). During those years I got to understand the impact of the Khmer Rouge years on the people through working with former refugees and those who had remained, both of whom had survived years of trauma. I lived in Cambodia compounds and spoke Khmer to some extent.</p>
Paragraph in support	<p>I have known Niborom since 1992, both in Wellington and in Cambodia. Her personal story is closely akin to those Cambodian women whose stories she collected and translated for the oral archive. This is a unique collection as it is the only record of the Khmer Rouge years told by Cambodian women to an interviewer who could understand what the women had endured, how they had survived extreme adversity, multiple deaths and indescribable cruelty. It is unlikely that the women would have spoken so freely to someone who did not speak Khmer or had not also suffered the consequences of the Khmer Rouge years. I consider the documentation to be of vital cultural importance. Aotearoa New Zealand is a multicultural society. Cambodians play a significant role in contributing to our diversity. In order to embrace the many aspects of our society we should understand what each cultural group brings and how their experience can enrich the development of those of us with different life journeys.</p>

Expert Three

Name	Neary Khun
Qualification(s)	Cambodian community member, daughter of interviewee
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>I Tried Not To Cry, how true those words are when I think of my mother and other Cambodian women of her age. Sadly, my mother is no longer with us and I was very young when Niborom asked my mother if she was willing to be one of ten Cambodian ladies to take part in an oral history project. After recording sessions in our home, the completed tapes, along with those of the other ladies were deposited in New Zealand's National Library. Later, Niborom transcribed the tapes to English and used them as the foundation for a book.</p> <p>Like most Cambodian women who survived the 'Killing Fields' of Pol Pot's Cambodia, my mother seldom spoke of the loss she had suffered and the terrible things she had seen. She certainly tried not to cry and silently carried her sadness and memories. This project is a time capsule that will help future generations to understand why and how we made the journey to New Zealand. My mother's story could be shared by many, for all of her generation lost almost everything. From these collected stories, not just my family, but all who listen to the interviews or read the transcripts, will learn more of the sad, recent history of Cambodia and the culture of our beloved country.</p>

The above experts have given their written permission to provide this information to the Memory of the World Committee and they have agreed that the provided information can be published without email and contact details and that they can be contacted by the Register Subcommittee if required. x Yes No

Section 4: Legal Information**4.1 Owner (name and contact details)**

Provide the name and full contact details of the owner or owners, whether an institution or an individual.

<p>Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa PO Box 12349 Wellington New Zealand Phone (04) 474 3000 www.natlib.govt.nz</p>
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4.2 Custodian (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Provide the name and full contact details of the custodian, whether an institution or an individual. Sometimes the custodian of the documentary heritage may not be the same as the owner. It is essential to establish both before a nomination can be added to the Register.

<p>Alexander Turnbull Library National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga O Aotearoa</p>

4.3 Legal status

State whether the documentary heritage is owned privately, or by a public institution, or by a commercial corporation. Details of legal and administrative powers for the preservation of the documentary heritage should be the name of the Act, or other instrument of administrative power, that gives the owner and/or the custodian the legal power to preserve the documentary heritage.

The collection is owned by Alexander Turnbull Library and administered and preserved according to the National Library of New Zealand (Te Puna Matauranga O Aotearoa) Act 2003

4.4 Accessibility

Provide a brief description of how the documentary heritage may be accessed. All access procedures and restrictions should be clearly stated.

There are three levels of access:

- access to verify the significance, integrity and security of the material. This is the minimum condition for inscription
- access for reproduction, which is strongly encouraged
- public access in physical, digital, or other form

The collection is described on the Library's Tiaki database. It is made available for access and use according to agreements with the donor and the interviewees.

Analogue listening copies of the recordings and paper copies of the translated transcripts are available for access in the Library's secure Katherine Mansfield Reading Room. As outlined in Section 6 the recordings will be digitised for preservation this year and will then be available in the Reading Room in digital form.

Reproduction requires permission of the donor and may require the permission of individual interviewees.

4.5 Copyright Status

For documentary heritage items that are subject to copyright, details should be provided on the relevant copyright legislation and copyright owner(s). Any other factors affecting the legal status of the documentary heritage should be noted. For example, is any institution required by law to preserve the documentary heritage in this nomination?

All the material in this collection is still in copyright. Copyright in the recordings and accompanying documentation is held either by Niborom Young or by individual interviewees or a combination of both. Copyright in photographs varies

Section 5: Stakeholders

The nominating institution is accountable for consultation with all relevant stakeholders before submitting the nomination.

5.1 Owner

The owner(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted: Yes No

5.2 Custodian

The custodian(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted: Yes No

5.3 Significant Stakeholders

Stakeholders with a significant interest in the content of the documentary heritage e.g. iwi, family members, have been consulted, if relevant: Yes No

Section 6: Care and Preservation and Risk Assessment

Identify any risks to the survival of the nominated documentary heritage. We understand if you have not done a formal risk assessment.

Note: a successful inscription may assist you to obtain funds to preserve and care for the nominated documentary heritage.

If your nomination is successful we may request additional information on the care and preservation of the inscribed documentary heritage.

The physical collection items are housed in the Library's climate-controlled storage area in appropriate enclosures and cabinets.

The original recordings are on audio cassettes and therefore susceptible to deterioration because of the inherent vice of the media. The recordings are scheduled for digital preservation in the Oral History & Sound preservation plan for this financial year. The tapes will be copied by Audiovisual Conservation staff to international standards and the files will be preserved in the National Digital Heritage Archive. The digital files of the transcripts will also be preserved in the NDHA.

Section 7: Summary

Provide a brief summary describing the documentary heritage and how it meets the criteria for inscription on the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Keep your summary to no more than 300 words as, if successful, it will be used on the website (www.unesco.org/nz) to describe why the documentary heritage has been inscribed on the New Zealand Register and given UNESCO recognition.

Ten in-depth oral history interviews with Cambodian women who came to New Zealand as refugees after escaping from Cambodia during the period of civil war and genocide. The interviewees, all Khmer, were born between 1920 and the 1950s in different circumstances and regions of the country. They talk about their lives before the Pol Pot regime, living through the Vietnam War, the civil war, genocide and the refugee camps. The women arrived in New Zealand between 1980 and 1990 and describe the process of getting here and settling in. The interviews are recorded in Khmer and have been transcribed and translated into English.

The interviews are historically significant for the New Zealand register as an innovative contribution to the documentation of three major subject areas and the intersection of those three areas; the experiences and observations of women, the history of Cambodians in New Zealand, and the experiences of refugees coming to New Zealand. All these topics are under-represented in historical collections and are of vital contemporary interest and concern. The Cambodian women oral history project is an original and significant example of the use of oral history to document themes and combinations of themes that are not easily documented in other ways.

The project is an outstanding example of the use of oral history methodology. Carefully conducted interviews show the immediacy and impact of orality in conveying complexity and subtlety. The interviews are in the first language of the interviewees, providing them with the opportunity to express themselves as freely as they wished within their own cultural frameworks, as well as recording the language as spoken by the first generation to come to New Zealand.

Members of the Cambodian community in Wellington have demonstrated their support for the oral history project at events to mark project milestones, expressing appreciation for such significant recordings about their histories in Cambodia and New Zealand.

Section 8: Promotion of documentary heritage

Inscription to a UNESCO Memory of the World register provides an opportunity to promote the importance of documentary heritage.

Give a brief overview of how your institution will use the opportunity of a successful nomination to promote the Memory of the World programme and the importance of documentary heritage. You may wish to consult with communications staff in your organisation to provide an answer to this question.

The collection will be identified as inscribed on the MOW register. This will appear as part of the metadata in the catalogue records. The inscription will be promoted in both internal and external publications and through various media channels including social media, and potential external communications. The certificate of inscription will be displayed in the Library.

Section 9: Permission to use visual documentation

The Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Committee will also work with you and your communications staff to obtain publicity for the programme and for the successful inscriptions.

Do you give permission for the Committee to use the visual documentation you have provided for Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World publicity purposes (e.g. for brochures/website)?

Yes

No

I would like to be consulted first

Section 10: Declaration of Authority

I am authorised to nominate the above documentary heritage to the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Name: Linda Evans, Curator Oral History & Sound

Date: 31 August 2018

Title: Cambodian women in New Zealand oral history project
Reference Number: OHColl-1185

Origination:

	Name	Role
	Young, Niborom, 1947-	Interviewer

Date(s): 1993

Extent:

	Quantity	Type	Details
	47	tape(s)	
	10	Interview(s)	

Language(s): Central Khmer

Level: Collection

Repository: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Access and Use

Access Statement: Partly restricted material

Access Conditions: Access to the collection is unrestricted but individual interviews may be restricted

Use Conditions: Public use requires the written permission of the donor

Details

Scope and Contents: Interviews with 10 Cambodian women immigrants to New Zealand, which cover their experiences before, during and after the civil war that ended with the Khmer Rouge taking power in Cambodia in April 1975. (The years 1975 to 1979 are known as the Cambodian Genocide). The interviewees talk about their experiences in refugee camps and as residents in NZ.

The interviewees are: Saingtha Sichun, Phalla Chok, Sokhom You, Thol Sao, Ngoc Chou Tran, Pet Soun, Hieng Long, Nom Khat, Chhay San, Yang Yin.

Arrangement: Original recordings: OHC-025195 - OHC-025241

Custodial History: Donor/Lender/Vendor - Niborom Young

Other Descriptive Data: Interviewer(s) - Niborom Young

Other Finding Aid: Abstract Available - Transcripts and translations by Niborom Young

Indexing Terms

Subjects: Refugees - Cambodia
Cambodians - New Zealand
Women refugees - New Zealand
Refugee camps

Types of Material: Oral histories

