Vu Khac Khoan Narrator

Sarah Mason Interviewer

April 5, 1979

Sarah Mason -SM Vu Khac Khoan -VK

SM: I'm continuing the interview with Professor Vu Khac Khoan on April 5, 1979. I wonder whether we could begin by talking about the situation around the fall of Saigon in 1975. Your own decision to leave and also the decisions of other people or the possibilities for which people were . . .

VK: I try to remember, but it's very difficult to remember all the things.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because it's really confusing. A total confusion. And it seemed to me that I was in [unclear].

SM: Hmmm.

VK: Personally, two or three days, a week, you know, before my leaving Saigon we didn't intend to leave.

SM: Oh.

VK: It might be because of my living in an apartment. It belonged to the professor of the university. And there were many professors there. And we don't want to discuss about this. But at Saigon in the streets you hear from people who came from the [unclear]. For example, [unclear] and the way [unclear] talked, we know that the situation is dangerous. That's all. But really I think that most of them . . . I don't talk about people who planned to get out of Vietnam.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because of the knowing some American people who worked at the Embassy or the organizations of the American people who . . . they knew it before us and they planned to leave. But us who don't plan to leave, we don't discuss about this. And personally I have some baggage prepared for my books, for some clothes, it's because for the rockets.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes. I talked to my children to prepare, because I live in the top floor.

SM: Yes.

VK: And when there is alarm they must go to downstairs and to bring, you know . . .

SM: Yes. This was because of the bombing?

VK: Yes, bombing of rockets, you know.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: That's terrible. And I'm afraid that the building, you know, is bombed.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And all my documents, my books, you know, are burned.

SM: Right.

VK: And so I talked to my children to prepare for this. And when on the 27th, it was Sunday, of April, one of my students who is working at the Embassy of the Americans, he comes to my house and who gives me the manifest to get out of Vietnam, I was very surprised.

SM: I see. This meant you could go if you wanted to, is that right?

VK: Yes. I have a student who is working at the Embassy.

SM: I see.

VK: Because he's like me, and, you know, it's a Sunday. He comes to my house and to give me a manifest.

SM: I see.

VK: Because I have a brother-in-law who was, before the events, in America.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes, so that made it possible.

VK: Yes. And he and his family, you know, here he knew the situation . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: And he asked the authorization to the immigration service here.

SM: Ah.

VK: And to get us out of Vietnam.

SM: I see.

VK: Yes. I am not the only . . . the only case.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because there are, you know, many students, Vietnamese students who are there before, you know, 1975.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I think everybody does the same thing for their families.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: But in the last day before the fall of Saigon, there is confusion at the Embassy, I think. I never, you know, go to the Embassy but I... they talk about this confusion. So all the authorizations sent from America to Vietnam cannot go to the address to whom.

SM: Ah.

VK: There is nobody who cares about this.

SM: So they weren't delivered or . . .?

VK: They don't deliver. And it's, you know, a reason for many of the Vietnamese people who cannot get [unclear] America.

SM: Oh.

VK: I have a chance because of the presence of my student there.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: And I remember when he came to my house in the morning of Sunday. He is panicked.

SM: Oh.

VK: And he told me that you must leave Saigon because many, many people already get out.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. And it's very easy for me to prepare because I have nothing to prepare. I have just enough, some valuables, you know. Hand . . . hand bag.

SM: I see.

VK: And the manifest is not only for my family, it's all... there is my brother... another brother-in-law, too, and his wife. And I remember that at the night, at the evening of Sunday, I went to the house of my brother-in-law and because of the... you know, the... how do you say? Even after six in this day, they... people cannot, you know, go to the street, there is...

SM: Oh, martial law? No.

VK: Hmmm. You know, something like black . . .

SM: A blackout?

VK: Yes. Something . . . yes.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: Yes, nobody, you know, has authorization to get of there.

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Right.

VK: And because of this, I stay, you know, in my brother-in-law's house.

SM: Yes.

VK: It's near from my house, it's the same street.

SM: I see. So you stayed the night with him.

VK: Yes. And after morning, at the morning of the . . .

SM: It was a curfew?

VK: Not a . . . not . . . [chuckles]

SM: That's your [unclear] notice?

VK: Yes. Yes [unclear]. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

[Recording interruption]

VK: And I remember, you know, this night. There were something like, you know, more than ten rockets, you know. istory projectly

SM: Oh.

VK: The Communists shot, you know, into the town.

SM: I see.

VK: And very near the airport.

SM: Ah.

VK: And very near, you know, the house of my brother-in-law. But, you know . . .

SM: Were the Communists trying to prevent people from leaving? Or just to disrupt . . .?

VK: You know, just . . . I think that it's a psychological . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, psychological war

SM: Right.

they have, too, the new government [unclear] a [unclear] of [unclear] **VK:** And because they . . . I think.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And in the morning we leave Saigon for the airport. And I must wait at the airport from the morning to about five p.m.

SM: Oh. Hmmm.

VK: And to get on the plane.

SM: Was it a situation of confusion there at the airport?

VK: Not yet.

SM: Not yet.

VK: Not yet. Not yet, but, you know, all the people are, you know, like panicked.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. Especially in the airport, because, you know, people who get in the airport want to get out.

SM: Yes.

VK: And the [unclear] airport, you know, these people . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: And my plane is . . . I think that was the last one.

SM: [Gasps] Oh.

 $\boldsymbol{VK:}$ You know, to leave. The last one of, you know, the . . . before the last one.

SM: Oh, next to the last one?

VK: Yes, next. Yes. I think because when, you know, the plane leaves, there are, you know, some American soldiers who, you know, are in the . . . [unclear] you know.

SM: Oh.

VK: Arranged, you know.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: And at this moment I cannot understand them.

SM: Yes.

VK: They talk, you know, one to each other. But I just hear a word that is rocket.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. And at this moment I think that it's not a rocket, but you know, it rains, it . . . you 30 ciety 30 ciety know, the tonnerre.

SM: Thunder?

VK: Yes, the thunder.

SM: Oh.

VK: And when my plane leaves, it rains and it thunders.

SM: Oh.

VK: And after ten o'clock p.m. I was at the [unclear]. That island in Philippines.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes. And then I saw the news that, you know, the Vietnamese shoot a rocket just, you know, in the airport.

SM: Oh . . .

VK: Just.

SM: I see. You thought it was thunder but it was a rocket?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: Just a rocket, not thunder.

SM: I see.

VK: I stayed at [unclear] you know about two or three hours. And after we leave the [unclear] for the Wake.

SM: I see. Wake Island.

VK: Yes.

SM: So this was a group of you and your family, your brother-in-law and his family.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, and with about, you know . . . one plane like this, we were about more than a hundred.

SM: I see.

VK: I must, you know, sit like this.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

VK: Yes. And my [unclear] very . . . cries, cries, cries. And [unclear] include me when we leave there.

SM: Yes.

VK: And when we were landing at Wake it's about the afternoon. And they give us, you know, a house. We stay at Clark about eight days.

SM: Oh. It was a house right at the Clark Air Force Base?

VK: Yes. The house, you know, is like the quarters for the, you know, for the officers of the air force.

SM: Oh, yes. I see.

VK: Because, you know, there is a beach.

SM: Yes.

VK: And there, you know, sea [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And I enjoy, you know, the sea.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. [Chuckles]

SM: For eight days you stayed there?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And at about the seventh or the eighth, I don't remember, I leave Clark and Wake for Fort Jear] there's a camp, too.

J.M.: Yes. I see.

VK: And I stay at the camp, you know, about two months.

SM: Oh.

K: Before coming here.

M: Did you go to California at some point?

J.: No, no.

Oh. Chaffee.

VK: Directly, you know, from

SM: Directly to here.

VK: Yes, from Wake to Arkansas.

SM: Yes. And then . . .

VK: And directly from Arkansas to here.

SM: I see.

VK: [Chuckles] Yes.

SM: Somewhere I got the wrong idea that you had spent some time in California before coming here.

VK: No, no.

SM: But you came directly to Minnesota.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see. Well, I guess what I don't understand is how you happened to come to Minnesota. [Chuckles]

VK: [Laughing] Oh, yes.

SM: With this lovely climate [unclear].

red at the call VK: Yes. [Chuckles] No, the reason for this, when I lived at the camp, I formed a center for the Buddhists.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: At the camp?

VK: At the camp, yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: They give me a building.

SM: I see.

VK: You know, to do something like a pagoda or . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: We have a monk, too. Some monks.

SM: Oh. So some monks left, too.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And as I knew them, they were very happy to [unclear] me. And they worked, you know, together. And you do worship for Buddha and for people who . . . the Vietnamese.

SM: Yes.

VK: And in this moment I met a lady whose name I can't remember. Okay. This lady worked at the IRC. International Rescue Committee.

SM: Yes. IRC?

VK: IRC, yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I don't know why . . . we talk about other things. She speaks French. And I told her that I knew somebody in this organization.

SM: Oh. She was an American?

VK: American, yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because in 1954, there is a man who came from this organization from IRC, he came to Saigon.

SM: Ah.

VK: And to try to help, you know, the Vietnamese refugees from the North.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: Whose name is [Joseph] Buttinger.

SM: Buttinger?

VK: Yes.

SM: Is he a writer about Vietnam?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: I talked, you know, to him.

SM: I see.

VK: You know, I give him, you know, information to write a book, the little . . . you know.

SM: Oh, the little dragon [Joseph Buttinger wrote <u>The Smaller Dragon—A Political History of</u> Vietnam, published in 1958].

VK: He likes Diem too much.

SM: Buttinger did.

VK: Yes. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: But after . . . I think that after he became leftist. I think.

SM: Oh. But in 1954 he . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: I understand him because at this moment, you know, many people, you know, hope that, you know . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes, hope that Diem government is good.

SM: Yes.

VK: But when he leaves Vietnam, he told me that I must write to him. But I didn't, because I was too busy.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I talked like that, you know, to this lady.

SM: Yes.

VK: And this lady asked me if I want, you know, to contact Mr. Buttinger now.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Because Mr. Buttinger now he's, you know, a man that's very powerful.

SM: Oh.

VK: He's on the staff board. I think I told her that if he'd help me . . .

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And to get out of the camp and to find for me a job. Okay. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And he wrote a letter.

SM: Oh.

VK: To introduce me to a man who cares about, you know, the agency of the IRC in the camp.

SM: I see.

VK: He's a very, very nice man.

SM: Was Buttinger working for the IRC at this time?

VK: No, he's retired but, you know, he's very, you know . . .

SM: No. Oh, he retired. But . . .

VK: He became, you know, a millionaire.

SM: I see. [Chuckles]

VK: He got very [unclear].

SM: But he had long ago worked for the IRC.

VK: Yes. But, you know, he still is very influential.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: And with this letter of recommendation, I go to, you know, the agency.

SM: I see.

VK: And of course I was [chuckles] welcome.

SM: Yes.

VK: And the man who [unclear] friends.

SM: Yes.

VK: He talked with me, whose name is Mr. [Robert P.] DeVecchi.

SM: Vicky?

VK: Yes, D-E-V-E-C-C-H-I.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, DeVecchi.

SM: I see.

VK: Oh, he's very nice. We talked about Buttinger and who called Buttinger at New York for me.

SM: Oh.

VK: But, you know, unhappily that, you know, Buttinger was in Europe.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

VK: But his wife was living in the apartment.

SM: Oh.

VK: A week later, you know, I [unclear] again. I talked with Buttinger.

SM: Oh.

VK: And Buttinger asked me, "What do you want from me? What can I do for you?" He [unclear], you know, of other . . . not good.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And he's become old.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And Mr. DeVecchi told me that you must, you know, speak really loud.

SM: Oh, he didn't hear too well.

VK: Yes. And in fifteen minutes I... [chuckles] I speak, you know.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: Like, I... you know, to fight. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And I talked to Buttinger that, okay, now I think that it's better for me and for you to talk with Mr. Buttinger in [unclear].

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. Buttinger he's laughing with me, okay.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And Buttinger, you know, talked to DeVecchi that to make all that's necessary for me to leave the camp for . . . you know, right away.

SM: Oh, good.

VK: [Chuckles] And to get, you know, to New York, New Jersey. After one day or, you know, two days after.

SM: Oh, he told you to come to New Jersey?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: Come first. Two days after, you know, there is something that happened. First, I have a student here.

SM: Ah.

VK: And even, you know, two or three students here who were . . . who lived here, you know, before the fall of Saigon.

SM: Oh.

VK: Who knew, you know, that my family is in the camp.

SM: Yes.

VK: Who called me and invited me, you know, to come to Minnesota.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: And they told me that we need you here.

SM: Ah ha.

VK: I asked them for what?

SM: [Chuckles] What did they say?

VK: Well, they said, with your presence in [unclear] and oh, they'd like me . . . and they told me that you must be here to do something for the community of, you know, Vietnamese people here.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I told them that I was invited to New Jersey and New York. I don't know if I can go to Minnesota. I didn't think through the call at this moment.

SM: Yes.

VK: [Unclear].

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

VK: And they told me that it's not expensive to live here.

SM: Yes.

VK: But if you go to New York, you . . . first, it's very expensive. And second, you cannot live there because of the noise, because of the, you know, the streets are always busy, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: People. And I talked to them that, okay, I will see.

SM: Yes.

VK: And in this moment Mr. DeVecchi met me, you know, in the camp and invited me to coffee. And he said to me, really, I don't know if it's good for you to go to New York.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And he told me that even him, you know, each time he goes to New York, he is not . . . he gets always problems for transportation, for the taxi, for the elevator, for other things.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And you, who come, you know, from Vietnam . . .

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And so I told him that I was invited to Minnesota, too. And he's a very nice man, who, you know, he told me that, okay, now I . . . I will do something for you. I mean, I'll introduce you to another agency to get to Minnesota.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: In fact, once [unclear] the place, there's a [unclear], you can meet them through the camp and to go to [unclear].

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: And so I ended up in Minnesota. [Chuckles]

SM: I see. So you didn't go to New Jersey.

VK: No, no. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, well, lucky for Minnesota. [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles]

SM: I see. Well, who were the two . . . or some of the students that called you? Are they still here in Minnesota?

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh. I wondered if two of those who performed at Macalester were at one time your students. One was [unclear] or . . .?

VK: Now, these two people, Vietnamese people?

SM: Yes.

VK: Nguyen Ngoc Bich and [unclear]?

SM: Yes.

VK: They . . . they were my students.

SM: They were your students.

VK: But they live, you know, in another [part of the] country.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: They live in Washington, D.C., and Washington State.

SM: They were never here in Minnesota then?

VK: No. [Unclear] first time, not for Bich.

SM: Yes.

VK: The men who [unclear].

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: [Unclear] all there, [unclear] all here.

SM: He was here?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes, in . . . at one time.

SM: Oh.

VK: At, you know, 1977.

SM: 1977.

VK: When I produced my play.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: And when Jim organized . . . you know, something for the . . . you know, for the . . . how to save our culture . . . I mean, the Vietnamese culture.

istory Project

SM: Oh. Was this a program or . . .?

VK: Yes, it's a program.

SM: Oh.

VK: And during this program, we have a play, too. [Vu Khac Khoan's play, *The Misunderstanding*]

SM: Oh. Was this a conference?

VK: Yes, conference. [The conference was entitled, How to Save our Culture: A Forum on the Vietnamese Refugee, held on December 3 & 4, 1977]

SM: Oh, in 1977.

VK: Let's see. I don't know . . . 1977 . . .

SM: Or maybe 1978?

VK: I think . . . I think that . . . 1977.

SM: Yes. I see.

VK: In December. December.

SM: Oh, in December.

VK: Yes. He organized this conference that [unclear] about three days at the International ilistory project Institute.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: And there are tapes made of that, right? Or . . .

VK: Yes, [unclear].

SM: Yes. And Jim [unclear] maybe has those.

VK: Yes, Jim still, you know, keeps some tapes about it.

SM: Yes, that might be pretty interesting to get ahold of

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: And it was to do with how you could save your Vietnamese culture?

VK: Yes.

SM: I see. And so Bich was her

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes

VK: Once.

SM: And [unclear]?

VK: Now [unclear] first time he came here [unclear] Macalester.

SM: I see. I was interested and I was reading another book about . . . it was called Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire. It was by a monk [Thich Nhat Hanh].

VK: Ah . . . What is the title?

SM: <u>Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire</u>. It's about the peace proposal of the Buddhists.

VK: Oh, yes. Yes.

SM: He mentioned a book written in 1938 about the civilization of Vietnam. And the name was spelled exactly like [unclear]. Was it his father or something?

VK: You know, I think . . . yes, there are two [unclear], yes.

SM: Oh, this was a different one.

VK: One [unclear] is in the North.

SM: Oh.

VK: And he's older than the . . .

story proje SM: Yes, this must have been an older person, because the book was written in 1938, or published in 1938.

VK: Yes. Yes, he's very, very old now.

SM: I see. He's not related to this young man then?

VK: No, not that I know of.

SM: I see. Just happen to be the same name.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see. I was wondering

VK: [Chuckles]

SM: But I thought maybe it was his father or something with the same name.

VK: [Chuckles] Oh, no. No, no. The father and the son, it's not . . .

SM: I see.

VK: It's rare that they take the same name. No.

SM: They don't take the same name. Yes. That's Western, I guess. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. I see. Well, are any of the other students still here?

VK: Yes.

SM: Okay.

VK: They are still here.

SM: Oh. Are they writers or intellectuals or . . .?

VK: No, they are . . . there is one who . . . who is working now for like a computer . . . like a programmer.

SM: Oh. Oh, yes.

VK: At [unclear] is the . . . I don't know. But who is at the organization of PAAC.

SM: Pak?

VK: P-A-A-C.

SM: Oh.

VK: PAAC. I know that.

SM: Hmmm. Is that a business?

VK: I don't know exactly what it means.

SM: I see.

VK: There is many . . . you know, American people there.

SM: I see.

VK: And, let's see . . .

SM: Is that an agency that's working with refugees?

VK: Ah . . . no.

SM: No.

VK: With, you know . . . [unclear] orphans, Vietnamese orphans.

SM: Oh, I see. Adoption or something?

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes, I think like that.

SM: I see.

SM: Oh, and they're bringing them here for heart surgery and so on.

VK: Yes.

SM: I see.

/K: But my student, he . . . I think that he rathematics. VK: But my student, he . . . I think that he [unclear] present the paper for the [unclear] for

SM: For mathematics, I see.

VK: And I know [unclear] Professor Nguyen Cao Dam.

SM: Nguyen?

VK: N-G-U-Y-E-N. Cao, C-A-O, Dam, D-A-M.

SM: Oh. Oh.

VK: The man who gave the talk, you know, who gave the talk at conference at the Historical Society.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes. He was my student [unclear].

SM: Oh, he's going to talk at the conference in the next week or two or . . .?

VK: Ah . . .

SM: Or he already talked?

VK: No, no. No, no.

SM: He's going to talk.

VK: He's going . . . will talk, yes.

SM: I see. And you're still going to talk, too?

VK: Yes.

SM: I see. So there will be two.

VK: Yes. There will be something like four.

SM: Four.

VK: Four people.

SM: Yes. Oh.

VK: Then the musicians, too.

oral History Project **SM:** I see. Oh, that should be . . . I'm really looking forward to that very much.

VK: [Chuckles] Yes [unclear].

SM: I see. So you're still in contact with these . . . the students that asked you to come here.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: Now that the [unclear] the professor at the University of Minnesota.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. And . . .

SM: He teaches at the University of Minnesota?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Ah.

VK: He is [unclear] of the political science.

SM: Oh. But is this the one who has the Ph.D. in mathematics?

VK: The other.

SM: Oh, the two.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. I see.

VK: The one who invited me to come here.

SM: Yes.

s. Altistory Project VK: Yes, will present the paper for the mathematics.

SM: I see.

VK: Yes.

. . a few different students here that . . . SM: Yes. Oh, I see. So there are quite a few

VK: [Chuckles] Yes. Yes.

SM: I see. I wondered if you could talk just a little bit about the various groups within the Vietnamese community here in Minnesota.

VK: Yes.

SM: Whether there are various religious groups.

VK: Yes.

SM: Are there any besides the Buddhist and the Catholics or . . .?

VK: Yes. [Pauses] You know, I... first, the Vietnamese people who come here ...

SM: Yes.

VK: All who come, you know, in every state of America. I think that they are not homogenous.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. They are various. They came from the army, they came from the . . . you know. They are fishermen, they are workers, they are teachers, they are . . . and so for the first time it's very difficult to [unclear].

SM: Sure.

VK: They have no common . . .

SM: No connections.

VK: . . . no points.

SM: Yes.

VK: But more and more they meet to, you know, to get together.

SM: Yes.

siety sie VK: And the first thing, you know, [unclear] in every state, need to organize a meeting about the Tet. You know, [unclear].

SM: Ah.

VK: Because for the Tet, you know, they got . . . they've got a common . . . a common point to get together.

SM: Sure. Yes.

VK: And celebrate Tet together. And the second point is to . . . to create an association.

SM: Yes.

VK: To help each

SM: Each other?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And to maintain, you know, relationships between [unclear]. In Minnesota, no, not yet.

SM: Yes.

VK: And after that even in the Association, because when you talk about Association, you must associate.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: With somebody who is near you.

SM: Yes.

VK: Who is, you know, raised with some . . . something in common with you.

SM: Yes.

VK: So the Association in my opinion, has, you know . . . has not many things to do.

SM: Oh. This is the Vietnamese Association?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And the third step is to get them together into a [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Because, you know, even if you are capitalist or, you know, worker, if you are Buddhist, you need a pagoda, to go there and to make worship. So the first [unclear] Association here in Minnesota is the Vietnamese Buddhist Association.

SM: That's the first organization then?

VK: That's what I think.

SM: I see.

VK: I was invited at this moment to be chairman.

SM: Soon after you arrived here?

VK: Hmmm?

SM: Soon after you arrived you were asked?

VK: Ah, no.

SM: Oh.

VK: You know, after 1975, yes. About the end of 1975, I think.

SM: Yes.

VK: And these three men, like this, you know, until now.

SM: I see.

VK: We arrived to buy a small house at Saint Paul.

SM: Oh.

VK: We got to do a . . . a pagoda, something like a pagoda. Not a [unclear] real [unclear] of a pagoda, but . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: We named it pagoda.

SM: Yes.

VK: And we do worship there. And people, you know, used to come there.

SM: Yes.

VK: Generally, once [unclear]. But, you know, the other days, they used to come to make worship. After this Association, there are two others. Two other associations.

SM: Yes.

VK: Two other associations, you know, for the friendship of Vietnamese. I... I don't know the name... with this name, but the Vietnamese name is what is... Viet Kieu, like Vietnam.

SM: Is there something called the Vietnam League?

VK: Yes. Yes, Vietnam League. Yes.

SM: Is that the . . .

VK: Yes, Viet Kieu. Kieu, K-I-E-U.

SM: Oh.

VK: And the other is . . . I forget that now. [Unclear] L-I-E-N. Lien. [Unclear].

SM: Ah ha.

VK: There are two as I mentioned. And we have also the older, the other [unclear] of the Catholics.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Of the Lutheran. I think that . . .

SM: Lutheran?

VK: I think so. I think so.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: I know a lady whose name is [unclear] who still works for the Lutheran [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. The Lutheran seems to be very strong in bringing the Lutheran social service organizations here.

VK: Yes. But there is, you know, not many Vietnamese people who are Lutheran.

SM: Right. I wouldn't imagine that

VK: Yes. The . . . the most are Catholic. But the majority, the most of them are Buddhist.

SM: Yes. So the Buddhist pagoda would be the largest . . . the Buddhist Association would be the largest of these?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. Is there a . . .?

VK: I must see . . . I must say that the most, large . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: The most, you know, large, the larger people [unclear] is no association.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. They don't, you know, the . . .

SM: The largest number of the Vietnamese don't belong to . . .

VK: I think so [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Because I think it's, you know, [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: But very few. But, you know, the . . . the interesting people, you know, want to be Al History Pri associated with that Association.

SM: I see. Is there a Vietnamese Cultural Association?

VK: Ah, yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: And after, you know, this conference in 1977

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: They asked me to be the president of the organization. President for, you know, for the founding and the Association . . . Cultural Association for the Vietnamese of the United States.

SM: I see. Oh, of the United States.

VK: Yes. But we . . . we talk about, discuss about . . . and I told them that I [unclear].

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: To . . . to do the things like this, because of . . . you know, if you have a [unclear] like a committee.

SM: Yes.

VK: And suppose that the president is in Minnesota and the [unclear] is California . . .

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles] So it's [unclear]. Yes [unclear]. That's impossible to work.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: So I advised them, you know, to form in [unclear] a small Association.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And it depends from . . . your [unclear] you can, you know, organize the conference for all those things.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: [Unclear]. Once by two or three . . . and to discuss about general things, general problems.

SM: Yes.

VK: And to [unclear], you know, to the state. To do, you know, other things like [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: I want to imitate....

[Recording interruption]

SM: ...and we were talking about these conferences.

VK: Yes. Yes. And so, you know, we have a Vietnamese Cultural Association here.

SM: I see.

VK: I am the chairman and we have also, you know, three other men on the [unclear] board. Dr. [unclear] is the vice president.

SM: Yes.

VK: And another who was a colonel in Vietnam.

SM: He was what?

VK: A colonel.

SM: Oh, a colonel.

VK: In the military.

SM: Yes.

VK: A colonel in Vietnam, who is also vice president and general secretary.

SM: Oh.

VK: It just [unclear] position, I took [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

VK: And we plan to organize a conference.

SM: I see.

VK: And getting together about, you know, fifty people here, and to discuss about projects for this.

SM: I see. On that pagoda, are there other functions of the pagoda besides worship? Or is it . . .?

VK: That this . . . this a worship.

SM: Yes. Do people come there for any other . . .?

VK: Yes. We have . . . we plan to . . . to do other things than worship.

SM: Yes.

VK: Besides worship. Like, you know, sponsoring the Vietnamese refugees.

SM: I see. Oh, sure.

VK: Yes. Until now, we have sponsored three families here.

SM: Oh.

VK: The last one is a family of a doctor who is famous in Vietnam.

SM: Oh.

VK: And once arrived here, he live with . . . in this house. In my house, you know.

SM: Oh.

VK: During a week.

SM: I see.

VK: He's married. He's with his wife and four children.

SM: I see.

VK: Small children.

SM: Yes.

VK: And there is a doctor, American doctor who came here from Ohio, Mason city, to interview him. [Transcriber Note: There is a Mason, Ohio and a Mason City, Iowa – it is not clear which one he is referring to, so I put 'city' in small caps.]

SM: Oh.

VK: And he's now, you know, at Mason city [unclear].

SM: Oh, in Ohio.

VK: Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: Mason city.

SM: Mason city.

VK: Yes, Mason city.

SM: I see. So he didn't have trouble finding a position.

VK: No, no. [Chuckles] Yes, he's an anesthetist.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. He studied in America before, you know, 1975. Yes.

SM: Oh, I see. So that make it easier, I suppose, to become . . .

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Do you have to be relicensed or . . .?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: But he's still studying for, you know, one test.

SM: Oh.

VK: For June.

SM: Oh.

VK: But, you know, in the opinion of this, you know, this man who comes from Ohio, there is no problem for him.

SM: Oh, good. Yes. So he does have to pass some kind of test or . . .?

VK: I think that there are two tests to pass.

SM: Oh.

VK: For, you know, the Vietnamese doctors who come here.

SM: I see.

VK: And one test [unclear] in English.

SM: Oh.

VK: And another, you know, it's like the state board you must pass.

SM: Yes.

VK: This test to practice in a certain state.

SM: I see. Yes. Right.

VK: And it's very hard to do.

SM: Both are very hard.

VK: Yes, both.

SM: Yes.

VK: English.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And English for a doctor, you know. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes.

VK: You must ask people, you know, about . . . you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: Their pains and other things.

SM: Yes. I suppose most Vietnamese doctors would have studied in French rather than English. Is that true?

VK: Ah . . . no.

SM: Not true.

VK: We have, you know, [unclear].

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: Before 1954, the medicine is, you know, taught by the French.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And after, when we get, you know, independence, and under Diem's regime, we have a school of medicine. But the teachers are, you know, influenced by the, you know, French [unclear].

SM: I see,

VK: Yes. And after . . .

SM: So that was in Vietnamese then?

VK: No, taught in French.

SM: Oh, taught in French.

VK: Taught in French. And the French [unclear], but the teachers, they get their Ph.D. in France.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: And they taught, you know . . .

SM: But they are Vietnamese doctors.

VK: Yes. Yes.

History Project **SM:** Yes. I see. So most of the medical education then was in French.

VK: Yes. But, you know, in about 1960, about . . . let's see, 1965.

SM: Yes.

VK: There is, you know . . . there was some change.

SM: I see.

VK: The [unclear] is rather American.

SM: Ah.

VK: Because the Americans, you know, give to the Vietnamese a building.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes, to do the, you know, the school of the medicine. Larger . . .

SM: I see.

VK: Yes. And more comfortable, you know.

SM: At the university? Yes.

VK: And with all the machines new, you know.

SM: Oh, I see. This was at the University of Saigon?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: In the university, you know, its faculty . . . the faculty of medicine, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: Like school, like department.

SM: Yes. Sure.

VK: We have a department of letters, the department of . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: And there is a [unclear] of each. Each school.

SM: Yes.

VK: And there is like a subtle conflict.

SM: Oh.

VK: You know, about this . . . these two directions.

SM: [Chuckles] I guess there would be. Yes.

VK: Yes. I accept certainly because one of my friends who was at this moment, the director, by director I mean the man who supervised all of the faculty.

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SM: Yes.

VK: This man decided to receive, you know, the gift from America. This man was killed.

SM: Oh. An assassination?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: Very . . . that's terrible, you know, the conflict.

SM: Oh, yes. Hmmm.

VK: And until this moment, you know, the doctor, the Vietnamese doctor, you know, learned . . learned, you know, American methods.

SM: Oh.

VK: And tried to teach in Vietnamese.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. They translated.

SM: I see. And so that was the first time it had been taught in Vietnamese?

VK: Yes, in this school.

SM: In that school.

VK: Yes. Because in the law school they . . . you know, they . . . they taught in Vietnamese.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, before the [unclear] for a long time. Before even . . . 1948.

SM: I see.

VK: That's the law school [unclear].

SM: Medicine was [unclear].

VK: Yes.

SM: Why is that, I wonder? Is it . . . anything to do with the scientific terms or . . .?

VK: [Unclear] the main reason. But, you know, it, in my opinion, is it comes from, you know, the influence. The influence, the French influence.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: The teacher who taught, you know, he wanted to talk in French because . . . they can't invite, you know, invite their friend, their French friend to come to . . . to [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. [Chuckles] Yes. I'm sure.

VK: So there's a problem for these doctors, Vietnamese doctors.

SM: Yes.

VK: I know one doctor here whose name is Dr. [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: NG.

SM: Oh.

VK: Y-E-N, why that means H-O-A-I and Duc, D-U-C.

SM: Yen?

VK: Who is a very good, you know, practitioner. But despite his living here about, you know, istory Projy more than . . . more than two years, almost three years, he fails.

SM: Oh.

VK: He just failed. And he's, you know, almost depressed now.

SM: Hmmm. Because of the language problem?

VK: Yes, because of that. He's old.

SM: He's old? Yes, well then it's harder.

VK: Not . . . not that young, but younger than me, but, you know . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Under fifty. And very difficult for people, you know, who get old to learn, you know, language.

SM: Yes, that's too bad. Can.. will he try again?

VK: Yes, I think so.

SM: But it's discouraging

VK: Yes. Oh, I... I did see him this [unclear – sounds like either term or time].

SM: Hmmm. So that's probably a situation with a number of doctors then.

VK: Yes.

SM: How many doctors . . . Vietnamese doctors would you estimate are in Minnesota?

VK: There are probably about . . . they talk about, you know, thirty.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Including the department [unclear] including the pharmacist. Pharmacists and doctors, about thirty.

SM: Yes. Oh, yes.

VK: Personally, I know one, two, three, four, five. Five doctors. Yes.

SM: Are there nurses, too, or dentists or . . .?

VK: Ah . . . there are dentists.

SM: Yes.

VK: But nurses, no. No.

SM: Not nurses. Hmmm. So many other Asian nurses are here, like Filipino and so on.

VK: Yes.

SM: But not Vietnamese nurses?

VK: No. No. No. There is some girl who came here before 1975, you know, to study nursing. And I know one.

SM: Yes.

VK: Who still, you know, follows this course of nursing.

SM: I see. Oh, she's still studying? Or . . .?

VK: Yes, she's still studying.

SM: I see. Is there any plan or thought about establishing a Vietnamese language school for children who are Vietnamese or . . .? I guess right now they're more worried about learning English. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes.

SM: But in time, there might be some concern about preserving the language with the small children.

VK: Hmmm, I'm not positive, one of our projects in the . . .

SM: I see. At the pagoda?

VK: You know, Vietnamese Cultural Association.

SM: Oh, in the Vietnamese Cultural . . .

VK: Yes. I... I discuss about this with my friends and it's very difficult, you know, to ... to make your children to learn even, to learn Vietnamese now.

SM: Yes.

VK: I must, you know, talk to their parents. And their parents are very busy about the job, about, you know . . .

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

VK: And wants at home. [Chuckles] They want to rest.

SM: Yes.

VK: To eat, to speak . . . But I advise them to talk in Vietnamese to their children.

SM: Yes. That's a good idea.

VK: Yes. There is no problem for my granddaughter.

SM: Yes. She knows both?

VK: Yes, because there is me and there is, you know, her grandma, who . . . who talks Vietnamese to her.

SM: Her grandmother.

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Does she write Vietnamese? Or she's too young maybe?

VK: Not yet.

SM: Yes.

VK: No . . . oh, you know, in Vietnam, for example, for my daughter and my son who read and write Vietnamese . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, after four or at five, you know.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: [Unclear]. But here it's difficult.

SM: Yes.

VK: And now, you know, she learned to spell in English.

SM: In English. She's [unclear].

VK: And you know that's very difficult to spell in English.

SM: Oh, yes. It makes no sense. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes. And if I teach her, you know, how to spell in Vietnamese, she gets lost.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, she gets lost.

SM: Maybe a little later.

VK: Yes. Because I . . .

SM: Yes, two different systems.

VK: Yes. I think [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: [Unclear]. You know [unclear] in Vietnamese, say la. In French, too, it's la.

SM: Yes.

VK: But in . . .

SM: In English it can be anything. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes, it can be anything. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes, it would be hard to learn both at once, I think.

VK: Yes, but I . . . I wait. I wait, you know.

SM: But she's . . .

VK: Maybe this summer I [unclear] for her.

SM: Yes. Yes. She's in Kindergarten or first grade or . . .?

VK: Ah . . . not first grade.

SM: Yes. Kindergarten.

VK: Yes.

(all History Project)
Silical Society **SM:** Oh, yes. So she's just learning a little bit of spelling.

VK: Yes.

SM: But she speaks okay?

VK: Oh, she speaks . . . yes.

SM: That's . . .

VK: But now I remark that sometimes she is finding, you know, words.

SM: Yes.

VK: For her spelling, you know, [unclear]

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Already. [Chuckles

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: You mean she's searching or . . .?

VK: Yes. Like this.

SM: [Chuckles] I see.

VK: And she asked her grandma what word to use for this.

SM: Oh, in Vietnamese.

VK: In Vietnamese.

SM: [Unclear]. Oh.

VK: But no problem in English. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, so already English is more easy.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because, you know . . .

SM: Every day she's talking that with her friends.

orypriolecy VK: Yes, she does. And I remarked that if you have two children, you know . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: [Unclear] you know, in the same age, it's not very difficult to, you know, to teach them Vietnamese.

SM: Oh.

VK: Because when they get together, they speak English.

SM: I see. So already Vietnamese children are speaking English more easily than Vietnamese.

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes.

SM: In just a few years.

VK: And that is a problem. Oh, many problems. But one problem like this. Once I was . . . well, at . . . you know, my friend's house.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I hear two children speaking English and using slang!

SM: [Chuckles] It doesn't take long.

VK: Bad slang.

SM: Oh, yes. That's a very prevalent problem in the schools.

VK: They . . . they don't realize that's, you know, bad slang.

SM: Yes.

VK: And even, you know, their parents. They don't realize because of the neighborhood.

SM: Yes. That can be a problem.

VK: Yes.

SM: I think Bich talked about that.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Or maybe it was on a different panel. No, I think it was at a different panel, of the last day of that conference.

VK: Yes.

SM: A man was talking about that. Yes.

VK: Oh, that's some terrible . . . but, you know, that's a big question for us, because . . .

SM: Is it a big problem for teenagers? Especially, I think you mentioned . . . or somebody told me that there are some problems now with Vietnamese for . . . I think it was Vietnamese . . . teenagers.

VK: Yes.

SM: Which would be a very difficult age in any case, but from changing . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: And the whole war situation and . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: Is that a problem that the Vietnamese community is worried about or . . .?

VK: Yes. They worry about it. They worry about it, but, you know, they don't have time to . . . to, you know, to find out for the . . .

SM: Yes. They're so busy surviving.

VK: The [unclear]. I think that . . . that can be one of the important projects for us to do.

SM: Yes.

VK: And about the Vietnamese in Vietnamese history, Vietnamese [unclear] for the older, for the . . . [unclear] them.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: We plan to ask to the staff of the university to institute some course.

SM: Yes. Oh, that's a good idea.

VK: Like, you know, like . . . a, you know, extension course.

SM: Sure. That's a good idea.

VK: And, yes, to talk about it, you know, Vietnamese stories, Vietnamese assimilation.

SM: Yes.

VK: And then the Vietnamese students can choose this, you know, course like an elective.

SM: Sure. Right.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: That would be fine for them.

SM: Yes. That would be very good.

VK: Yes. They can, you know, and they . . . they can, you know, study, you know, technic . . . mathematics or engineering.

SM: Yes.

VK: But take some course like this, you know.

SM: Sure.

VK: Elective [unclear] for them.

SM: Right. There's no course offered now on Vietnamese history?

VK: Not yet. Not yet. Not yet.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: And we have something . . . we are something like . . . like three . . . almost three hundred Vietnamese students now.

SM: Oh. And these are permanent residents in the United States then?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Goodness, that's quite a few.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

K: And I know the count, you know that VK: And I know the count, you know, the number of the students who get out of high school.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And who came for . . . came to the U.

SM: Sure. There are more and more every year.

VK: Yes, more and more.

SM: But even in their Asian history, they have no Vietnamese history course?

VK: No. No.

SM: It seems really strange.

VK: There is a department of Asian culture.

SM: Yes.

VK: When I taught there, taught French there, I, you know, more than one time I talked to a professor of, you know, Asian culture.

SM: Yes.

VK: But they told me that there is no . . . no course of Vietnamese here.

SM: Hmmm. They have Chinese history but . . .

VK: Chinese and Japanese.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. But not, you know, they don't . . .

SM: Maybe no one to teach it?

VK: No idea.

SM: But they could easily find someone like yourself.

VK: Yes. I... I intend, you know, to present the project for this.

SM: I think that would be very good.

VK: Yes.

SM: It seems to me there would be a lot of interest among American students because of the war in Vietnam.

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VK: Yes. Yes. Because of the war in Vietnam, you know, I counted at least something like more than . . . more than a million Americans who are involved with, you know, the war in Vietnam.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: At first there are something like half a million who were soldiers, who are, you know, *fonctionnnaires* [bureaucrats], who was in Vietnam, and their families.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. At least there are . . . one million.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, who knows about Vietnam, who want to know then about Vietnam.

SM: Right. In the 1960s I was teaching in a community college in Illinois.

VK: Yes.

SM: And it was a kind of a survey of Asian civilizations.

VK: Yes.

iam. **SM:** But most of the people who signed up for it were Vietnam veterans.

VK: Yes.

SM: They were very interested. And we had a section on Vietnam.

VK: Yes.

SM: In an elementary way, but it was something. [Chuckles]

VK: Oh, yes.

SM: But as soon as the war ended, that interest seemed to drop off.

VK: Mmmm.

SM: And I didn't know why exactly, bu

VK: You have been in Illinois?

SM: Yes, near Chicago.

VK: Near Chicago, yes. I know a professor, a Vietnamese professor there.

SM: Oh.

VK: Mr. [unclear].

SM: [Unclear]?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: He just, you know . . . [unclear].

[Recording interruption]

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. Could you talk a little bit about these other religious sects?

VK: Now the Catholic . . . you don't need them to talk about.

SM: No, you already mentioned them, too.

VK: Buddhist and [unclear] and Vietnam [unclear]. You know, Vietnam . . . because, you know, there are many, many political parties.

SM: Oh.

VK: You know, not only Vietnam [unclear].

SM: Are they represented in a lot of numbers here or . . .?

VK: Oh, the numbers . . . I cannot, you know, remember the numbers. But I remember the name of the [unclear].

SM: I see.

VK: The parties . . .

SM: Are they organized here or are there just some that have come who used to take part in that?

VK: Ah . . . they organized in Vietnam.

SM: Yes. Right.

VK: And especially against the French.

SM: Oh, most of them were . . .

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: But we have . . .

SM: That's the Vietnam [unclear].

VK: We started about . . . say . . . 1927.

SM: 1927.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Before that . . . before that we have the party who is Vietnam . . . Thanh Nien, T-H-A-N-H and then N-I-E-N.

VK: I think that that means, you know, the young, the young people.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes. Vietnam Thanh Nien.

SM: Was that the student one or . . .?

VK: Ah . . . no, not only students.

SM: No, just . . .

VK: You know, all the young people.

VK: You know, all the young people, you know

SM: Young people, yes.

VK: The Vietnam Thanh Nien. Let's see. And Ai Quoc Dang. A-I, the same . . . the same party.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes. A-I and Q-U-O-C, Dang.

SM: Dang.

VK: Right. Yes. That means, you know, young people who love . . . who love the country.

SM: Oh.

VK: Party of young people who love the country, in seven . . . in 1925.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And before that there was a movement, the movement against the French and for the monarch . . . monarchy. For the monarchy.

SM: Oh.

VK: That means the Phong Trao Can Vuong, P-H-O-N-G and T-R-A-O and C-A-N and V-U-O-N-G, movement.

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VK: No, not sure.

SM: You say that's the same as this party?

VK: No, not the same.

SM: No. Okay.

VK: Yes.

SM: Okay. It's a different party.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I'm not sure about, you know, no . . .

SM: I'll put a little question mark here . . .

VK: All this . . . I'm not sure about the name.

SM: Okay. Okay.

VK: I can get information for you, but not now yet.

SM: Oh, that would be . . . yes. Yes.

VK: And let's see. After . . . this is before. Before, yes.

SM: Oh, this is before . . .

i eti VK: Yes, before with . . . from the beginning of the century and until . . . until, you know, almost 1925.

SM: Yes.

VK: 1925, yes.

SM: So that's a real early one.

VK: Yes. It's [unclear] it's against the French, when the French came, you know, the first movement against . . . I mean, organized.

SM: Oh.

VK: And after 1927 they have the party Communist.

SM: Yes.

VK: And this movement is called Dang Duong. D-A-N-G, Duong, D-U-O-N-G.

SM: Oh.

VK: That means Indochina.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes [unclear].

SM: That's pronounced Duong.

VK: Duong. Duong, yes. You must make a difference between [unclear], D is, you know, the D.

SM: Oh. I see.

VK: And 'Z'.

SM: Oh. Thank you for that little tip.

VK: [Chuckles] Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: Dang Duong.

SM: So how would you pronounce this then? Z?

VK: Duong Duong. And this Dang, D.

SM: Oh. Dang. Oh.

ght. VK: With, you know . . . like this, you know, right.

SM: So that would have a little thing.

VK: [Unclear]. You don't have [unclear] for this.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Don't . . .

SM: But this is a Z sound.

VK: Yes, dan, that means people. Yes.

SM: I see. That means people.

VK: Now, I mean, you know, that means the party.

SM: Oh yes, [unclear].

VK: Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: And Dang Duong [unclear]. C-O-N-G, Dang. D...

SM: With [unclear]?

VK: Yes. A-N-G.

SM: That means party.

VK: The [unclear]. Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: Let's see. In 19 . . . after, you know, the economic treaties, 1920. 1930.
SM: 1930?
VK: Yes. After meeting, you know, in the palace.
SM: Yes. Then the two parties came together, is that right?

VK: Ah . . . you mean two . . . two party?

SM: Ah, the Indochinese party and the Vietnamese?

VK: No, no. No, in . . .

SM: Oh, excuse me.

VK: It's the same. Dang Duong, you know. You know.

SM: Oh, I see. This goes on.

VK: The Communist Party of Indochina.

SM: Oh, I see. Okay. This means party here.

VK: Yes, the Communist Party of Indochina. The Indochina Communist Party.

SM: Does this mean Communist, *cong*?

VK: No.

SM: No.

VK: Dang Duong, that means, you know, Indochina [unclear].

SM: Okay.

VK: [Unclear]. Excuse me.

SM: Yes. Oh. I see.

[Sounds of pages turning]

VK: Hmmm.

SM: And does that mean Communist?

VK: Yes, that means Communist, Cong san.

SM: I see. So there should be a *san* up here, too.

rether VK: Cong san, you know, actually, that means, you know, get together

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: In San, that means all your [unclear] on you, you know

SM: Oh.

VK: Your own.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: The [unclear] you know, how [unclear].

SM: I see. And cong means together.

VK: Get together. Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: Be together. Communist.

SM: It helps to know what these words mean. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes. [Chuckles]

SM: I see. So Cong san together means Communist.

VK: Yes, Cong San. San.

SM: And *dang* is . . . *dang* is party.

VK: Yes. Because [unclear] of the, you know, the Communists.

SM: Yes. Right. So that started in 1930 then.

VK: 1930, yes.

SM: Okay.

VK: And . . . yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. And after that, you know, there were many, many . . . at about, you know, at about . . . during the war.

SM: World War II?

VK: Yes, World War II, we have the party to . . . who wanted to imitate, you know, the Japanese and Germans.

SM: Oh.

VK: [Chuckles]

SM: A fascist party?

VK: Yes, something like that.

SM: Oh.

VK: I mean, Dai Viet, D-A-I, yes. V-I-E-T.

SM: Viet means what?

VK: Viet, that means Vietnam.

SM: Vietnam, okay.

VK: Viet, like it means big, you know, great.

SM: Ah, yes.

VK: You know.

SM: And Dai for this party?

VK: *Dai*, that means big.

SM: Oh, big.

VK: Yes. Yes, big.

SM: I see. Oh, Big Vietnam.

Asion, you kno VK: Big, Dai, yes. It, you know, underlies something like extension, you know.

SM: Oh.

VK: Developing imperialist, you know. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes.

VK: Dai Viet Quoc Xa. Q-U-O-C, and X...

SM: A?

VK: X-A.

SM: Oh, X.

VK: X, yes. X-A.

SM: Yes. I see. How do you pronounce X in Vietnam?

VK: "Ich"

SM: "Ichs".

VK: Yes.

SM: I mean, when you say this word, how do you . . .?

VK: The word Xa [pronounces it 'sa'].

SM: Xa. Oh, it's like an S.

VK: Yes. Xa.

SM: Xa.

VK: Because you have A, it ends by A, it's [unclear].

SM: I see. Yes.

Joy Hitler.

SM: The National Socialists.

VK: Socialists, yes. National Socialists, yes.

SM: Right.

K: You know.

: I see.

And the other older partiet, another partiet, another partiet, another partiet.

SM: Oh.

VK: Dai Viet. Quoc . . . quoc, the same thing.

SM: Quoc?

VK: Quoc, yes. Dan. Dan.

SM: D with a . . .

VK: Quoc Dan, yes. D-A-N. D-A-N.

SM: Dan.

VK: Dan, like this.

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

VK: Quoc Dan Dai Viet. Quoc Dan Dang. [Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang is the Vietnamese for istory proje Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam.]

SM: I see.

VK: Yes.

SM: And what kind of politics?

VK: Yes, politics. Yes, that's . . .

SM: I mean what did they represent? To the left, to the right, or

VK: Ah . . . you know, rather rightist.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Only . . .

SM: Well, this . . . was this the same as [unclear]? No.

VK: Not the same.

SM: Not exactly, but similar.

VK: Not exactly the same, but, yes. They are . . . they are, you know, pro-Chinese.

SM: Oh.

VK: But not Chinese . . . the Chinese of Chiang Kai-Shek.

SM: Ah, I see. The Nationalists.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes, or the Kuomintang.

VK: Yes. The Kuomintang is the same thing. Quoc Dan Dang is the Kuomintang, yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. That is the same . . .

VK: Yes, Kuomintang, yes.

SM: Oh, this is a similar party then.

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And so, you know, Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang, Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, you know, they are rather . . . you know, pro-*Chinois*, pro-Chinese. Yes.

SM: I see. Chinese national . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: Was this connected in any way with the Kuomintang or not really, I guess?

VK: Mmmm . . . no, there is something. There is something.

SM: Weren't there some training at the [unclear] Academy or . . .?

VK: Yes, at [unclear]. At [unclear] at the, you know . . .

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: I think so, because, you know, the leader comes from there.

SM: And Ho Chi Minh was there.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes, in Canton sometimes.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. I see. Well, was this fascist group very large?

VK: No, not large, you know.

SM: No.

VK: I hate it. I hate them. Yes. Then it was . . .

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles] I was a student.

SM: [Chuckles] I can imagine.

VK: I hate them. Yes.

rested.
apanese? **SM:** Were any students in that or . . .?

VK: Mmmm . . . some.

SM: Some students.

VK: But they are, you know . . .

SM: Not very many then?

VK: No. No, not very interested.

SM: Was that fostered by Japanese?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes. The Japanese, you know, stayed at Vietnam.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: From . . . from 1940. 1940, they came to Vietnam.

SM: Until 1945, it was.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Until the rendition.

SM: Yes.

VK: Surrender.

SM: Yes, I see.

VK: And at this time we . . . yes, we were students and yes, against the two, French and Japanese.

cre principle de la constant de la c SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well . . . oh. Well, the French and the Japanese were both there during the war, right?

VK: Yes, you know . . . [Sighs]

SM: Who was . . .? [Chuckles] Who was the boss?

VK: The boss? The boss?

SM: The Japanese, I guess.

VK: The boss was the French, too.

SM: Oh.

VK: But when the Japanese came, you know, after . . . a battle, they . . . they win. The Japanese win.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And became the supervisor.

SM: Oh, just in 1945.

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Oh, now just, you know, forty. 1940.

SM: 1943? Oh.

VK: No, no. 1940.

SM: 1940.

VK: Yes, from 1940, they came to Vietnam from . . . at 1940.

SM: Oh, okay. Yes.

VK: And the . . . you know, the French surrendered. The French surrendered.

SM: Cylinder?

VK: Yes. They . . . they cannot, you know, win.

SM: Oh, surrendered, yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, at Dim and Fu and . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. Right. No . . .

VK: No, no. Not Dim and Fu.

SM: No, that was much later.

3. Oral History Project VK: No, the [unclear]. Let's see. When World War II begins . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: The Germans came to Paris and at . . . let's see. After 1940, the French had a government of [Marshal Philippe] Pétain, you know, yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Right.

VK: And Pétain, he is [unclear] the German against the [unclear].

SM: Right.

VK: So Vietnam was in this moment a colony.

SM: Yes.

VK: And is, you know . . .

SM: Did it remain under Pétain [unclear]?

VK: Yes, and . . . and then the Japanese are with, you know, the Germans. And so the French at Vietnam, it's easy for them to say, "We are with you, not against you."

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

VK: But, you know, the Japanese came and they . . . they are the supreme, you know, the highest boss.

SM: Yes.

VK: After them came the French.

SM: Oh. But the Japanese official was at the top?

VK: Yes.

SM: Okay. And then they used the French functionaries to run everything.

VK: Yes, like . . . you know, like [unclear].

SM: Ah ha. Well, that saved them a lot of expense, I suppose. They didn't have to bring Japanese to run the country, bureaucrats? They just used . . .?

VK: Ah . . . no, they are only, you know, military.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: But they came and they ate our rice.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: But they don't, you know, told us to give them rice, they told the French we need how many rice, and the French told them, took from us, you know.

SM: I see. So the French collected the rice.

VK: Yes, the French Vichy.

SM: Oh. I see.

VK: You know, that's very hard for us in this moment, [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. Did they even send rice to Japan?

VK: Yes, yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: Rice, yes.

SM: Oh, so that made it very in short supply in Vietnam?

VK: Mmmm. They . . . you mean . . .? What do you mean?

SM: I mean, was there then a shortage of rice for the Vietnamese?

VK: Oh, very short. We have a . . . let's see, in 1945, we have . . . we've missed rice, we have no rice.

SM: Oh.

VK: And there is about one million [unclear].

SM: Oh.

VK: Hungry.

SM: Oh.

VK: And it's because of this, you know, that the Communists [unclear]. Because then it is easy for them to say that Capitalist and [unclear] are then . . . you know, are not good [unclear]. And it takes [unclear].

SM: Hmmm. I see. So then in 1945 the Japanese made a coup.

VK: Surrender. Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: Then rendition of Japanese.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And then came at this moment when Vietnam was divided into two parties already.

SM: Oh.

VK: The South is controlled by English.

SM: Oh.

VK: The North was controlled by Chinese.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: But Chinese, not Chiang Kai-Shek. The . . . at the South, the English men gave the Story authorization to the French to return.

SM: Oh. They gave them.

VK: Yes.

SM: Mmmm.

VK: They came to the South, they opened, you know, the prison

SM: Oh.

VK: You know, to . . . before, you know, the . . . there are French.

SM: I see.

VK: Who are, you know. . you know, in the camp.

SM: I see.

VK: And the English then opened the camp for the French to redirect, you know, French, and to give back to the French all the power of the South. For the North, it was more complicated because we have in this moment a government [unclear] of which, you know, the leader, the president is Ho Chi Minh.

SM: I see. Yes. Maybe we should just talk a little bit about these other sects.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: I'm afraid I'm taking so much of your day. [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles] Yes, okay. About Cao Dai and Hoa Hao.

SM: Right.

VK: It is usually considered like two, you know, religious groups. But if you . . .

SM: Two religious what?

VK: Groups.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes. But if you do a deep analysis about this, you find that the reason of their foundation is political.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: I see.

Storylety **VK:** Because of some reason, first, these two groups are founded on the first day of the century.

SM: Oh.

VK: Early.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: So it's really very recent

SM: Yes.

VK: And the leaders of these two religious groups are all [unclear] patriotiste [sic].

SM: Oh, yes. Patriots.

VK: Yes. National, yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: They found these groups. They found these groups in order to get together the more people they can. And to . . . to be against the French. To be against the French.

SM: I see.

VK: Yes.

SM: So they were basically anti-French organizations?

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. I see. But they . . . were they representing a particular religion like any relation to Buddhist or Taoist or . . .?

VK: They are religious, but, you know, for the leaders.

SM: Oh.

VK: For the, you know, for the people, the large people, they don't . . . I think that they don't speak about politics.

VK: But for the leaders they have connections, you know, with the....