

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

REPORT ON CGP MAPPING TEAM VISIT TO KAMPONG CHAM PROVINCE 17-19 October 1995 20-23 February 1996

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Tuesday 17 October

We arrived at the Governor's Office at 11.15 am and a meeting was arranged with the Governor and his staff for 3.00pm that day. The meeting was held in the office of the Governor, Hun Neng, and was attended by his interpreter, photographer, and several officials, including the Director of the Department of Cult and Religion Nguon Van Ponlieu and his Deputy Director of the Department of Culture and the Arts, Keut Pat. Site visits were planned for the following two days, and when it became obvious that some very important sites in Krochmar District were only accessible by boat, we asked the Governor to help us arrange a fast boat for the following day. We were then joined by Y Sahak, the Chief of the Krochmar District, and it was decided that we visit two sites in his District on the following morning, and one site in Stung Trung District on the way back in the afternoon.

There was a video cameraman present recording while the meeting with the Governor was proceeding which we presumed was for the Governor's own records. While we thought that we made it clear that we did not want to be shown on television because of security considerations, unfortunately visuals of the meeting were later shown on both local and national television, with close-up shots of the team member's faces clearly visible.

Wednesday 18 October

We set off from Kampong Cham Port at 7.45am the following morning in a fast boat (necessary for security reasons) accompanied by the Deputy director of Dept. of Culture and the Arts, the Chief of Krochmar District, and four armed police. We arrived at the first site 40 kilometers away up the Mekong in less than an hour.

Srok Krochmar Sites:

Tria II

Khum Tria

030901

Tria II Village is one of a series of five Cham Villages in Krochmar District which were emptied and devastated during the Pol Pot time, with all of the Cham inhabitants being removed or killed. At Tria II we were shown the bones from two of five mass graves sticking out from the river bank. The other three mass graves which are located under a grove of lemon trees nearby have not been excavated. We were shown the houses in the village which were used as prisons, and as offices for the Khmer Rouge. One witness told us that the KR brought people by boat from up the river to kill there.

Tow Cham witnesses told us that all the bridges leading to this village were cut except one in order to isolate the area, and that none of the local people were allowed into the area. The KR played loud music from 6.00pm until 9.00pm to attempt to cover the cries of their victims. They were told that the victims were killed by hitting them on the back of the head with a hoe. The children were held by the leg and had their heads bashed against a tree to kill them.

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The two Cham witnesses, who worked as carpenters for the KR, were the only Cham left in the area during the Pol Pot time. The husbands were taken away from their wives and children, on the pretext of being given work, and they were then sent to live in other Cham communities.

The local Mosque and Muslim School in Tria Commune have now been re-established with assistance from the Malaysian Government.

Koh Phal

Khum Peus 1

030902

Koh Phal village can only be described as a killing factory for the Region during the Pol Pot time. We were shown 49 large mass grave (2m x 4m) near the village, only two of which have been excavated. Witnesses informed us that short term prisons were established in one of three large purpose built buildings, one of which remains, and that the others were used as KR barracks and storehouses. The prisoners were brought by boat from across the Mekong (Kratie?) and from "up the river", held overnight, and taken to the pits to be killed the next day. A fisherman from the area said he could hear the screams of the prisoners in the night as he was fishing, and that he saw the boats full of victims arriving every day. This witness worked as a fisherman there for only three months during the Dry Season of 1977. The number of killing at Koh Phal is estimated to be 5-10,000 victims, many of whom were Cham people.

Srok Strung Trung Sites:

Wat Stung Trung

Khum Prek Koh

031501

We were taken to an area behind the Wat, where we were shown the ruins of a wooden Memorial, with pieces of wood lying over the top of hundreds of skulls, and with bushes beginning to grow over the top of them, Nearby we were shown more than 20 mass graves, with piece of bone and clothing visible in the ground. The Chief of the District said that there were 7 more large pits about one kilometer away. The Wat buildings were probably used as the prison for this killing site, but the one witness who still lived nearby was not available to talk to us.

Thursday 19 October

A meeting had been arranged for 7.30am on Thursday with the Chief of the Dept. of Cult and Religion, Nguon Van Ponlieu at his office, and there we made final arrangements for our second day of site visits.

Srok Kampong Siem Sites:

Wat No Kor

Khum Ampil

030601

This Wat is situated on High way 7 from Kampong Cham to Phnom Penh near Kampong Cham, and is built within the grounds of an ancient Angkor temple. At this Wat are two memorials used to store some of the bones that have been brought from the massive killing fields at Wat Phnom Proh, a few more kilometers out along the same highway. One of the memorials is used simply as a storage for bones, and the other is a stupa used for ceremonial purposes. Both Memorials together contain the bones of more than 1,000 victims.

Four kilometers further out on Highway 7 we came to Wat Phnom Proh, a beautiful and isolated Wat visible from the highway on a hill next to its companion Wat Phnom Srey. This Wat was used as a prison by the KR, and on the Northern side between the two Wats are 47 large burial pits, and many more small pits. This was probably a Zone, if not only a Regional prison, with more than 10,000 killings taking place here. Many of the pits have been opened and vandalized, and the bones scattered. The bones were initially stored in what was previously a kitchen for the monks, but because of interference with the bones by visitors, most have now been moved to the memorials at Wat No Kor. One witness pointed out a tree near the pits here young children were killed by having their brains bashed out against the tree. He said that he had seen blood and hair still stuck to the tree after liberation.

One witness here, Vang So Phany, saw her mother killed by lethal injection in the hospital near Wat Phnom Proh while she herself was in the hospital. She escaped from the hospital with her small brother, and was arrested by KR Security. She herself was saved from death through the kindness of one of the KR guards, the controller of the dead, who did her for three days in the space above the roof of the Wat, and then arranged for her to escape to the countryside in a truck driven by Ang Kim Eng, who is now her husband.

Her young brother, two sisters, as well as her father and mother were all killed at this time. She told of the suicide of the sympathetic guard, Mr. Cheung, who threw himself under the tracks of an advancing Vietnamese tank at the liberation after he had been arrested with his hands tied behind his back.

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Tuesday 20 February 1996

On the team's return to Kampong Cham for our "dry season offensive" in that province, we first made contact with Mr. Nguyen Van Ponlieu, Director of the Department of Cult and Religion. He then sent a message to the DHQ of Kang Meas District to alert that office that we would arrive there that afternoon for site inspections. We were accompanied on our visits by Mr. Nen Si Nat, Office Manager of that Department.

After driving 30 kilometers West from Kampong Cham on Hwy. 7, we turned South and drove for 15 kilometers to the Mekong River where Kang Meas district HQ is located. There we met the Deputy Chief of the District, Mr. Om Van Thar, who presented us with a typed and sealed list of all the genocide sites in the district that had been prepared that morning. We then chose the two largest and most important sites to visit that afternoon.

Srok Kang Meas Sites:**Wat O Trau Kuon****Khum Peam Chi Kong****030701/02/ 03**

This Wat and the nearby school were used as the main district prison 1974-78. The first victims imprisoned and killed there were Lon Nol soldiers, and then New People who had been brought to Kang Meas District from Phnom Penh. The victims were brought by boat and by ox cart, and were executed at the mass graves close to the Wat. The certified document

obtained from the DHQ gave the number of mass graves at this site as 467, and estimated the number of victims executed there as 32,690. These graves were partially excavated in 1982, and the bones placed in a memorial near the Wat.

Wat Nikroath

Khum Peam Chi Kong

030704/5

This Wat was used as a prison from 1975, and New People were asked by the KR to come to the Wat to collect food, and then imprisoned and killed. This was a Regional Prison for Dambon 41, and was used 1975-76, when the Regional Prison was moved to Wat O Trau Kuon. Monks at the Wat reported that they had found names written in blood on the walls of the Wat, which have now been painted over, except for one name on a column (Kum Ny No3). The District records give the number of mass graves at this site as 186, and estimate the number of victims killed as 11,160.

Wednesday 21 February 1996

Early next morning we caught the ferry across the Mekong River from Kampong Cham town to Tonle Bat, the port on the Eastern side of the river in Kbong Thmum District, accompanied by Mr. Nen Si Nat and one policeman from the Provincial HQ.

Srok Tbong Khmum Sites:

Chomkar Svay

Khum Vihear Luong

031601/2

This prison and burial site is located just North of Suong where the prison has an interrogation pit still there. The prison consisted of two wood and palm leaf buildings, and there are two deep wells and 15 mass graves that were used as execution and burial sites nearby. The victims were Lon Nol soldiers and New People from 1976-77, and Sou Phem soldiers in 1978 after his death. A witness, Pean Soeum, who saw killings here said that the victims were brought to the prison by ox-cart, and after their clothes were removed, they were blindfolded and killed by being hit on the back of the neck with an ax, or stabbed with a bayonet.

Wat Vihear Tuntum

Khum Suong

031603

The memorial in this Wat contains the bones excavated from the Chomkar Svay and Chomkar Menoah burial sites. Here we interviewed witness Wa Phar, who saw Sou Phem's body after it had been brought back to Suong on a tank in 1978. He said that the body was displayed in an open box in the market packed in ice, and was then taken on the road to Phnom Penh. He said that the people were sad to see his body, and were afraid. We were also shown Sou Phem's house and HQ buildings in Suong.

Sala Suong

Khum Suong

031604

The secondary school at Suong was used as a prison from 1975-77, and we interviewed a witness, Loy Sok, who had been a prisoner there, and was later released. The overall impression gained from interviews in Suong seemed to confirm the impression that Sou

Phem did protect the people in this region from the rigidity and cruelty experienced elsewhere, and that the number of killings seemed to be smaller there until his death.

Chomkar Menoah

Khum Suong

031605

This burial site consists of two wells on the edge of the rubber plantation 5 kilometers North of Suong. Witnesses saw hundreds of minority Lon Nol soldiers (Mountainard carriers) being taken to this site by horse cart in 1976, where they were executed and their bodies thrown into deep wells which still exist. The traditional baskets and knives of these carriers were stored in a house nearby, where they were found after liberation.

Kabalchroey

Khum Chiro2

031606

This large execution and burial site is located near the bridge joining the causeway to Hwy. 7, ten kilometers from the Tonle Bat ferry crossing, which then runs to Suong and the Eastern Districts of Kampong Cham. The site is in Wasteland behind the former "Japanese Factory" which was used as a storehouse by the KR, and which is now in ruins. This site is important because of the size of the pits, and the type of victims skilled here, as seen from the witness testimony which follows. The site was in operation from 1975 to 1978, and the victims were initially Lon Nol soldiers and New People from Tbong Khmum District, and finally in 1978 the families of Sou Phem's soldiers. In 1978 a tractor was kept permanently at the site, which was used to dig the mass graves, and to fill them in after the killings. The graves, which were partially excavated in 1982, were 4m x 10m x 2m deep, or others 5m square x 2m deep, with the larger pits containing more than 100 victims in each.

Witness Men Nguyon, Base Person, who is now chief of Chiro 2 Commune, witnessed the killings when he came there to look after the cows. In 1978 he saw two trucks arrive at the site, with 40-50 people in each truck, mostly women and children. They were killed by being hit on the back of the neck with a stick, and then stuck in the stomach with a bayonet. He said that the KR used the bayonet also if any of the victims tried to fight back, and that the small children were killed by being thrown up into the air and then hit with a stick into the pit, or caught on the end of a bayonet. He said that the KR had searched for all the relatives of the Pol Pot officers who had betrayed Angkar (Sou Phem military), and that they brought the whole families to be killed.

Witness Siem Seun (Ms) who lives in the same Commune said that six members of her family had been taken away to this site to be killed. She said that the KR had called her family to the Wat, and that evening they were loaded onto a truck with KR soldiers (many who were handicapped) and driven towards the site. They were never seen again.

Thursday 22 February 1996

On Thursday morning we headed West along Hwy. 7 to Cheung Prey District HQ accompanied by Mr. Nen Si Nat, from the office of Cult and Religion, where we met the Chief of the District with some of his staff. After choosing the sites to be visited, we headed off with Mr. Chek Koun from the office of Cult and Religion, and Mr. Ouch Im of the office of Culture and the Arts.

Srok Cheung Prey Sites:

Wat Skun**Khum So Tep****030301/2**

An elaborate new stupa has been built at this Wat as a memorial to those killed at the nearby killing fields, paid for by the relatives. The bones, only femurs, are stacked in a neat block approx. 2m x 2m x 2m, representing many thousands of victims.

About 500 meters West of the Wat is a large killing site with many mass graves which has now been turned into an orchard for growing cashew nut trees. The pits are 2 meter square, and we counted more than 400 pits. Many pits have been excavated, and they contained 15-20 bodies in each pit, giving a total of more than 5,000 victims killed at this site. Bones and pieces of clothing are still visible in the ground around the pits.

Cheth Cheun, base person from that village, witnessed the killing at this site on several occasions in 1977 when he came to cut bamboo to use for climbing sugar palm trees. He said that the victims, who were New People, men, women, and children, were brought by truck to a Santesok house next to the house of the chief of the District, where they were made to undress except for their underpants. There was a "hill" of clothing near this house. They were killed by hitting on the back of the neck with a metal axle until the bar bent. Children were swung around by the feet and their heads bashed against a tree. The victims were then stabbed in the abdomen with a bayonet before being pushed into the pit, according to the witness, in order to stop the body swelling up with gas, and thus to allow more bodies to be buried in each grave.

Dei Taprang**Khum So Tep****030303**

This burial site is close to Hwy. 7, about 50 kilometers West of Kampong Cham provincial town, and is situated in the waste ground behind the school in Bana Village. We counted more than 100 small pits, with pieces of clothing and bones scattered around them. Executions took place at this site 1977-78, with an estimated 2,000 victims killed there.

Law Thuong**Khum Knao Dambong****030304/05**

This major prison and burial site is located near Hwy. 7 approximately half way between Phnom Penh and Kampong Cham provincial town. The prison was purpose built of wood and palm, and was established in 1974, well before the fall of Phnom Penh to the KR in April 1975, to deal with Lon Nol military. There was one major prison, and several Santesok buildings, surrounded by a high bamboo fence. Witness Chek Chuon, who was then a carpenter working in the area, was called to the prison by Santesok in 1976 to do some work for them, when he saw into the prison through a hole in the fence. He said that there were two long rows of victims facing each other, one for men, and the other for women, and that they were sitting on the ground with shackles around their thighs secured by a long metal bar locked at each end.

About 500 meters South of the prison are two burial sites with a total of more than 400 mass graves. These graves have never been excavated, except by grave robbers, and many bones and scraps of cloth are scattered around these sites.

Documents:

We were given a certified copy of a list of Genocide Sites in Kang Meas District that had been prepared by that District Office in 1992. We asked the District Chiefs in Tbong Khmum and Cheung Prey Districts to prepare similar lists to send to the Chief of Cult and Religion at the Provincial Office for us to collect later, and they agreed to do this.

Conclusion:

Our 1995 visit to Kampong Cham Province was very successful because of two aspects, one being the direct evidence that we saw of the mass killings of Cham people in Krochmar District, and the evidence of the presence of mass killing sites and prisons at Wat Phnom Proh and Wat Stung Trung.

The 1996 site visits placed an entirely new dimension on the size of the killing sites along the River in Kampong Cham. A pattern of very large killing and burial sites along the Mekong and along Hwy. 7 emerged, with ease mass transportation being the deciding factor. It is seems that many more large sites will be discovered along the Mekong River in Kampong Cham, Prey Veng and Kandal before we finished our work.

At a total of 12 burial sites visited to date in Kampong Cham Province we have found a total of 1,740 mass grave with an estimated 96,850 victims killed at these sites.

Charles Bowers

23.10.95

update with additional sites

26.02.96