

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

MAPPING REPORT, 1999 KAMPONG CHHNANG PROVINCE

*By Dara Peou Vanthan
Translated by Putheara Lay*

In the morning of June 9, 1999, a mapping team comprises four people: Mr. Sin Khin acting to contact local authority and to interview witnesses, Mr. Ouch Sam Oeun utilizing GPS to identify genocide sites, Mr. Peou Dara making report, and Mr. Ros Sam Peou drawing location of genocide sites.

Our team traveled on National Route 5 from Phnom Penh toward its destination, Kampong Chhnang Province. After some 50 kilometers of drive by car from Phnom Penh, we took a small country road on the left-hand exiting to the Headquarters of Samaki Mean Chey, about 12 kilometers from the main route. On arrival at the Headquarters at 9:30 am, we met the District Governor, Chhuong Khoeun, 48, and his Deputy, Chan Voeun, 44, and then we had a long discussion with them about our mapping and genocide program.

The Governor told us that Samaki Meanchey was a new district, split up from Kampong Tra Lach in December 1985. What was most required of the split was first of all for the protection of people from harassment by the Khmer Rouge. Secondly, it was to prevent the Khmer Rouge from attacking the railroad, which is situated approximate to the district. These concerns and tensions, however, have been substantially scaled down following the integration of the last and huge wave of Khmer Rouge soldiers into the Government, coupled with the improved situation shortly before the general election in 1998.

The current district is composed of 9 sub-districts comprising 85 villages that have a total population of 60,489 constituting 31, 989 females and the population makes up 12,144 families. The Governor continued that most of the people in the district are farmers mainly dependent on rice cultivation, and the rest make their livings by making sugar out of palm juice and growing a variety of subsidiary crops like peanut, water melon, etc. During the discussion, we asked the Governor about his personal story during the Khmer Rouge period. He recalled that in the Pol Pot regime he had at first lived in Ampil Toek Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province, but was later transferred in 1977 to Prey Khmer Village, Chrey Bakk Sub-district, Rolea Pi-eat District of the same province, where he was supposed to work in a mobile work brigade in Region 31. He mentioned that the work of the mobile work brigade was carrying and moving bits of earth, digging canals and building dams. As for manslaughter by the Khmer Rouge, he said most of those in the mobile work brigade knew very little about that. He however said he used to see some two or three members of the mobile

Translated by Putheara LAY of the Documentation Center of Cambodia--1

Documentation Center of Cambodia

Searching for the Truth

ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បីការបដិសេធនៃយុទ្ធនិយម

DC-Cam • 66 Preah Sihanouk Blvd. • P.O.Box 1110 • Phnom Penh • Cambodia
Tel: (855-23) 211-875 • Fax: (855-23) 210-358 • dccam@online.com.kh • www.dccam.org

work brigade convicted in meetings that took place once in a while and then the convicted few were taken to be killed. The Khmer Rouge simply killed ordinary people of the collective. For instance, he obviously lost his both parents, three siblings, three nieces and nephews, who had lived in Ampil Toek collective and been executed by the Khmer Rouge in 1976.

In order for us to understand more clearly, the Governor invited Mr. Kim Porn, Deputy Chief of the District Agricultural Office to come and give us an interview because Porn was formerly a victim and had been through a lot of experience during the Khmer Rouge period.

Mr. Kim Porn is 48 years old, born in Kraing Sra-ma Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District (presently, Samaki Mean Chey District), Kampong Chhnang. In 1976, he had served as Chief of Sre Praing mobile work brigade in Kraing Sra-ma Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, District 12. But, he was later arrested and imprisoned within the period from April 1977 to October 1978. He was detained in a security prison of District 12, known as Prey Damrei Srot Prison, which was located in Damrei Srot Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, Samaki Mean Chey District, Kampong Chhnang Province. The cause of his imprisonment was that he had rescued 17-April people by having his people cook rice for the 17 people to eat. He stated that he had not been forced by the Khmer Rouge into a hard work or tortured as punishment. His fault was however a light one for which he was required by the Khmer Rouge to carry on shoulder baskets of pieces of earth. Porn mentioned that the prisoners in Prey Damrei Srot Prison were divided into two categories: First, those with light offense; and second, those with heavy offense. Those considered light offenders were the kind of prisoners who committed wrong-doings like, for instance, planting the wrong rice seeds as suggested by Angkar, letting cattle eat rice, etc. The prisoners of this category were not supposed to be confined in the prison, and instead left staying cuff-free outside of the prison. As for those viewed as heavy offenders were supposed to work very hard, and each time they went to work they had to move with their legs cuffed, which made the prison staff who saw them walk call them "Unit of Elephants". The staff called them like that because the heavy offenders walked in lines, leg-cuffed, to work; and the way they walked sounded like elephant feet, and the space between both legs was just the same size of an elephant foot. They had to work without having a rest. It was until the time when they had to return to the prison that they had some time to rest. With both legs still cuffed, they had to sleep in rows with their heads in opposite directions and one prisoner's legs bound propped against another's legs by a long iron bar linked firmly to the cuffs. Most of the heavy offenders were soldiers and spies of previous regimes Sihanouk and Lon Nol. The rest were all teachers and those persons with light offenses who were charged with additional offenses during their imprisonment by the prison guards therein.

Kim Porn went on to say that the prisoners comprised the old and the young including the children that came with their parents once arrested by the Khmer Rouge. Incredibly, not many inmates in Prey Damrei Srot were executed. Most of them, however, died from starvation, including several lying dead in the prison with both legs and many others dying from compulsory overwork. The surviving prisoners were ordered to take the dead bodies and cut each of them into two and then to bring those halves to be buried under pits where potatoes and coconut trees were planted.

Kim Porn, a lightly guilty prisoner at Prey Damrei Srot, added that those with light offense like him had to go to work at 6am, getting up at 5am at the ring of the wakeup bell beaten by the Khmer Rouge security staff. They were allowed a short break at noon for some gruel. After an hour and a half break, they resumed their work until 5pm when they were allowed to return to the confinement. If there was a full-moon night, the prisoners had to work at night. When the work of transplanting seedlings was finished, they had to work day and night. As Kim Porn stressed, the prison security guards were holding in their hands guns and long lashes each time while walking prisoners to work. They were a group of dozen with one half to take control of heavy-offense prisoners and the other to take control of light-offense prisoners. The security chief thereof was called Em who, according to Kim Porn, is dead. Another person named Ol [also in charge of the prison] now lives in Chres Village, Chres Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Suon, perpetrator-cum-interrogator, was killed in the vengeance of villagers following the liberation of Kampong Chhnang in 1979. Kim Porn cited names of his inmates in Prey Damrei, who are still alive today: Mat Maut is Governor of Kampong Tralach District; Ta On and Ta Sim are villagers in Peam Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Finally, he spoke to us with a smiling face that he would testify before the court if he would be needed in this respect. On that day we did not go to any genocide sites following our interview with him due to the fact that the sites are far-flung from the Office of Samaki Meanchey District. On the other hand, there was no road accessible to the sites directly from the District Office. We had to go by car to another road, which as people indicated to us by pointing finger and showed us the road on the map is that close to the fence of Wat Kolampavoan. Therefore, at about 2 p.m. we left the Office of Samaki Meanchey District for the provincial town of Kampong Chhnang to stay there overnight and get prepared to go down to genocide sites in Chumteav Chreng Village, Kraing Lvea Sub-district, Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province the following next day. As we had planned, we departed from the provincial town of Kampong Chhnang toward the entrance to Chumteav Chreng Village at around 6 a.m. plus on the tenth. After more than an hour drive, we got to the entrance to Chumteav Chreng Village, which was close to the fence of Wat Kolampavoan. For more details regarding how the road leads to left or right in order to get there, see attached here the report the indications and signs drawn by Ros Sam Peou.

Within the stretch between the entrance--close to the Wat--and the village, we met Deputy Governor Chan Voeun of Samaki Meanchey District who was awaiting us in his residence. Once meeting with us, he received us and took us to see the village chief and witnesses who knew genocide sites in the village. In his capacity as district Deputy Governor, Chan Voeun invited security forces and police in the village to accompany us to the genocide sites. On the way before reaching our destination, we traveled across the forest, two streams and several other zigzag roads. Of course, we really could not access the sites without the villagers guiding us the way, even if we had already been there. We got out of the car when arriving at the second stream and continued by walking for about 2 kilometers across a dense forest before getting to the site. That site was called Prey Trapeang Ampil, according to the security chief, witnesses and those who accompanied us. Then, we were going to see pits which as pointed out to show us by the witnesses were located in the dense forest and which were in the state of being hardly visible since they have become nearly flattened to the same level as the ground. As estimated by the witnesses, the site covered an area of about two hectares spotted with some 500 pits, with each containing roughly from 20 to 50 corpses.

First Witness:

Our first witness is Bin Met, male, 59, a former chief of Chumteav Chreng during 1970-75. During the Pol Pot regime and at present he lives in Chumteav Chreng Village, Kraing Lvea Sub-district, Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Presently he is Chief of the Committee of laypersons of Wat Kraing Lvea. Bin Met said that the site was called Prey Trapeang Ampil whose surrounding was considered a mix region because the region was used to hold all sorts of victims of the Khmer Rouge gathered from everywhere like Oddong battle, Kampong Chhnang battle and many other places. The people to be killed were accused of serving enemies. Not only the old but also the young who do not know what is right and what is wrong are taken to be killed because they came along with their parents whom the Khmer Rouge took to be killed. The Khmer Rouge used the phrase, "Angkar lets you brothers go to learn," as a method to take people into executions. According to Bin Met, once merely hearing that the phrase, "Angkar lets [people] go to learn", everyone vied for it. Bin Met said that he saw the Khmer Rouge returned to the village from taking people to learn, carrying hoes, old clothes, sleeping mats and nets. Concerning orders to take people to learn, Bin Met asserted that Ta [Uncle] Sarin was the one who gave orders, and that he was the most powerful in the region as he was the Region Security Chief along with Nai, his Deputy Ta Laing and his Secretary Kuon. Ta Sarin's wife's name was Tom. Every time they took people to kill, the Khmer Rouge drank vine or fomented palm juice until they got drunk. Bin Met said the Khmer Rouge gathered women from everywhere and confined them in their place. Before they took any woman to be killed, they raped her to their full satisfaction. Up to now, none of the women held there have survived [the Khmer Rouge regime]. Ta Bin Met had three siblings and five cousins killed in the Pol Pot regime. He mentioned to us at the end of our meeting another witness named Ta Til who lives in the same village as him. During our trek into Prey Trapeang Ampil, we were accompanied by District Deputy Governor Chan Vooun, Witnesses Bin Vet, Chumteav Chreng Village Chief Uong Cham, and Kraing Lvea Sub-district Security Chief Svay Theng. The village chief Uong Cham was the only one who knew the way better.

Back to Chumteav Chreng Village, we went to interview Ta Til as indicated by Ta Bin Met. Fortunately, we met and interviewed Ta Til as we had planned. Our interview is as follows:

Second witness:

The second witness is Kim Til, 69, born in Chumteav Chreng Village, Kraing Lvea Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Presently, he lives in the same village, but District's name has been changed from Kampong Tralach to Samaki Meanchey as mentioned above regarding the formation of new districts.

During the Pol Pot' period, Ta Kim Til was Chief of 5- to 6-strong unit responsible for cultivating the rice field. However, he had no rights to impose any task for his unit to fulfill. All his unit tasks were imposed to do by the Khmer Rouge. As for a matter of killings, he said he saw with his own eyes when the Khmer Rouge arrested people and led them to kill. People were brought from everywhere. He used to see people with their hands tied behind their back being walked to a killing place across his village toward the forest north of the village. In fact, the forest north of the village referred to by Ta Kim Til is a place where our mapping team just came from. It was Prey Trapeang Ampil, located south of Chumteav Chreng Village, about five kilometers from his house.

Ta Kim Til told us that of the village cadre were Ta Vong and Ta Kei who appointed him Chief of the Village Unit. He did not tell us much about what happened in the village during that time. He mostly said he did not know about that. Thus, we ended our interviewing him and carried on to seek another witness Nam whose name was referred to us by the District Deputy Governor.

Third witness:

Yeay Nam's full name is Kol Nam, 64, born in Kraing Lvea Village, Kraing Lvea Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province. Presently, she lives in the same village, though the district's name is changed to Samaki Meanchey. She stated that her husband was arrested and taken away by the Khmer Rouge in 1973 who even seized her rice field, cattle and ox-cart. Then, she was brought by the Khmer Rouge to live in Chumteav Chreng for nine months. Later on during 1975-79, she was transferred to live in Kraing Lvea Village, Kraing Lvea Sub-district, imposed upon with a work to go with and cook rice for the village mobile work brigades that were supposed to build up dams. She said people in the village were provided with a rice ration only for two months, that is, in harvest season. Besides, they had to eat cruel ration in which a group of two or three people sometimes had to eat one can of rice, which depends upon how many [kilograms] of rice they said they had or lacked. As a matter of fact, people in her village grew rice yielding a good harvest. But, the Khmer Rouge did not provide sufficient rice for the people to eat, raising such a plausible excuse that the rice yield was to be traded for materials such as hoe and cloth. Villagers were brought to kill, accused of being enemies, according to Yeay Nam, though she did not know for sure where the execution sites were. Her unit comprised all women yet led by [some] men whose names she failed to remember. Instead, she still remembered the names of the persons who generally oversaw the village such as Ta Sarin as informed by Ta Bin Met. Having met and interviewed all the witnesses introduced to us, we returned to the provincial town of Kampong Chhnang where we were to stay and be prepared to conduct our mapping research in other locations in Damrei Srot Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district of the same district the next day.

As in our plan, we set out at 6 a.m. of the twelfth from the town to the Samaki Meanchey District Office Chief Kao Hun's house located near School 5. Upon arrival, we saw him waiting for us right in front of his house. Then, he traveled with us until we arrived at Trach market where he took us to meet Chief of Svay Chruk Sub-district so that he could tell the Chief of Svay Chruk District to take us further to an execution site and a prison named Prey Damrei Sar. That execution site was the same one as referred to us on June 9, 1999 by Kim Porn. As for the access road to the site and the prison, we did not indicate it in this report. However, the drawing of the road is attached at the end of the report. Upon arriving at Uk Yun's house, we met the Sub-district Chief [Name?] who was waiting for us along the road to we had to take to go to the Prey Damrei Srot. And then, together our team [and the Chief?] drove as far as Wat Chrak Sangke where we stopped our car. Then, then the Chief of the Office of Samaki Meanchey District went to invite Chrak Sangke Village Chief Kruoch Kruy to lead us to the prison at Prey Damrei Srot. Taking south on foot about 2500 meters from Wat Chrak Sangke to the forest behind the Wat, we arrived at the Prey Damrei Srot prison, which was formerly run by the Khmer Rouge. Before reaching that prison, we had to walk in a dense forest, taking difficult paths and turnings nearly completely surrounded by young trees, which made it hard for us to remember. We could not make it to the place, I believe, if without the villagers thereof and the village chief guiding us and keeping us accompanied. When we

reached the place, our witness named Ok Tuon, Chief of Svay Chuk Sub-district, pointed out his finger to show us the location of the building the Khmer Rouge persons in charge of the entire region dwelled in formerly. The building, 4 meters wide and over 8 meters long, roof-tiled, now falls into pieces of tile. Then, we were off to see the location of the prison, about 50 meters from that of the building. The prison itself no longer exists. What has remained of the prison was nothing other than a flat ground covered by grass and remarked by a big tree. Only the people who used to see the prison can tell it. Taking that opportunity, we interviewed Svay Chuk Sub-district Chief Ok Tuon. The following is the essence of our interview with him.

Witness Ok Tuon:

Ok Tuon is 61 years old, and now lives in Svay Chuk Sub-district, Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province. He became Chief of the sub-district since 1979. He was born in Taing Krang Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District--which is now renamed Samaki Mean Chey. During the period from 1975 to 1979 under the Khmer Rouge regime, he was an ordinary person living in Taing Krang Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, Kampong Tralach Leu District (called District 12 in that time), Region 32. He told us that he did know of the prison at Prey Damrei Srot when he often ride the ox-cart, forced to transport cattle shit to dump down near the prison. The prison, about 7 meters wide and 21 meters long, made of wood, thatch-roofed, with no wall, had a capacity to hold hundreds of prisoners [at one time]. All the prisoners with both of their legs shackled were fixed to two iron bars in two alternating sides and had to sleep with their heads in opposite directions. According to his account as he further added that most of the prisoners considered light offenders were Lon Nol's soldiers. They with their legs shackled had to walk to the work site in the same manner as a frog jumped. Some prisoners died as a result of forced labor. As for another kind of prisoners viewed by the Khmer Rouge as heavy offenders accused of White Khmer [Free Khmer] enemies were those people who did not like the Khmer Rouge regime and wanted to make resistance movement against it. The heavy offense prisoners were so confined in the prison, with their both legs cuffed steadfast, that were not allow to go out to work anywhere. They lived their whole lives in the prison until their deaths with their legs left shackled. When arrested, the prisoners, accused of having such heavy offences, were caught along with all their family members--none of the relatives of the accused were spared. Ok Tuon stated that a majority of the prisoners died from starvation, overwork, diseases, lack of medical treatment and life-long leg-shackled imprisonment rather than executions alone. The then surviving inmates were ordered to take away the dead bodies of any life-long leg-shackled fellow inmates and place them in the pits on which coconut trees were to be planted. A pit sometimes contained two whole corpses, sometimes one whole corpse or a corpse cut into two parts. The account of Svay Chuk Sub-district Chief Ok Tuon attested to the same statement as made by Chrak Sngke Village Chief Krauch Krui that the bodies of the prisoners were taken to bury under the soil where to grow coconut trees. Both Tuon and Krui showed us, pointing to the grassland where trail of the pit of coconut tree was still visible, though it was almost covered by soil and the coconut tree itself plucked off. The grassland covered with more than 200 coconut trees that are all gone now. The cause of the disappearance of the trees was that: Villagers in the region came to pull them out and took them to plant at their houses. As the Sub-district Chief himself told us, he also took three of the trees to grow near his house where they have still survived since then. The second cause was that the Khmer Rouge persons who survived after the fall of their regime in 1979 came to cut the buds of the coconuts for food. The plot of land that was used to plant the coconut trees

was about one square kilometer, according to the witnesses. Not only coconut trees but also potatoes were planted on the ground with human fertilizers. The witnesses told us the names of the persons in charge of Prey Damrei Srot prison. They were Ul, Chief of the prison, and Ul's immediate subordinates Suon Em and Soeun. Among them, only two are alive presently: Em lives in Tbeng Khpuos Village, Tbeng Khpuos Sub-district, Samaki Meanchey District, and Ul lives in Chres Village, Chres Sub-district, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province. According to Ok Tuon, Em was the most brutal perpetrator in Prei Damrei Srot prison. However, Ok Tuon seemed to have been afraid to tell us about Em's occupation in the prison because he feared that Em would come and make harm to him. He suggested us not to tell Em that he told us about him if we were to interview him and would make it. After our interview with Em, we photographed the location of Damrei Srot prison, identified the location by using Global Positioning System, and took pictures of the witnesses. Then, we got out of the forest, going to the compound of Wat Chrak Sangke. On our back, when we got to Trapeang Mtes Village, a witness named Uk Yun, 60, male, currently living in Trapeang Mtes Village, Svay Chuk Sub-district, Samaki Meanchey District, indicated to us there was another execution site in the village. So, we went all along with him to examine the site.

Witness Uk Yun:

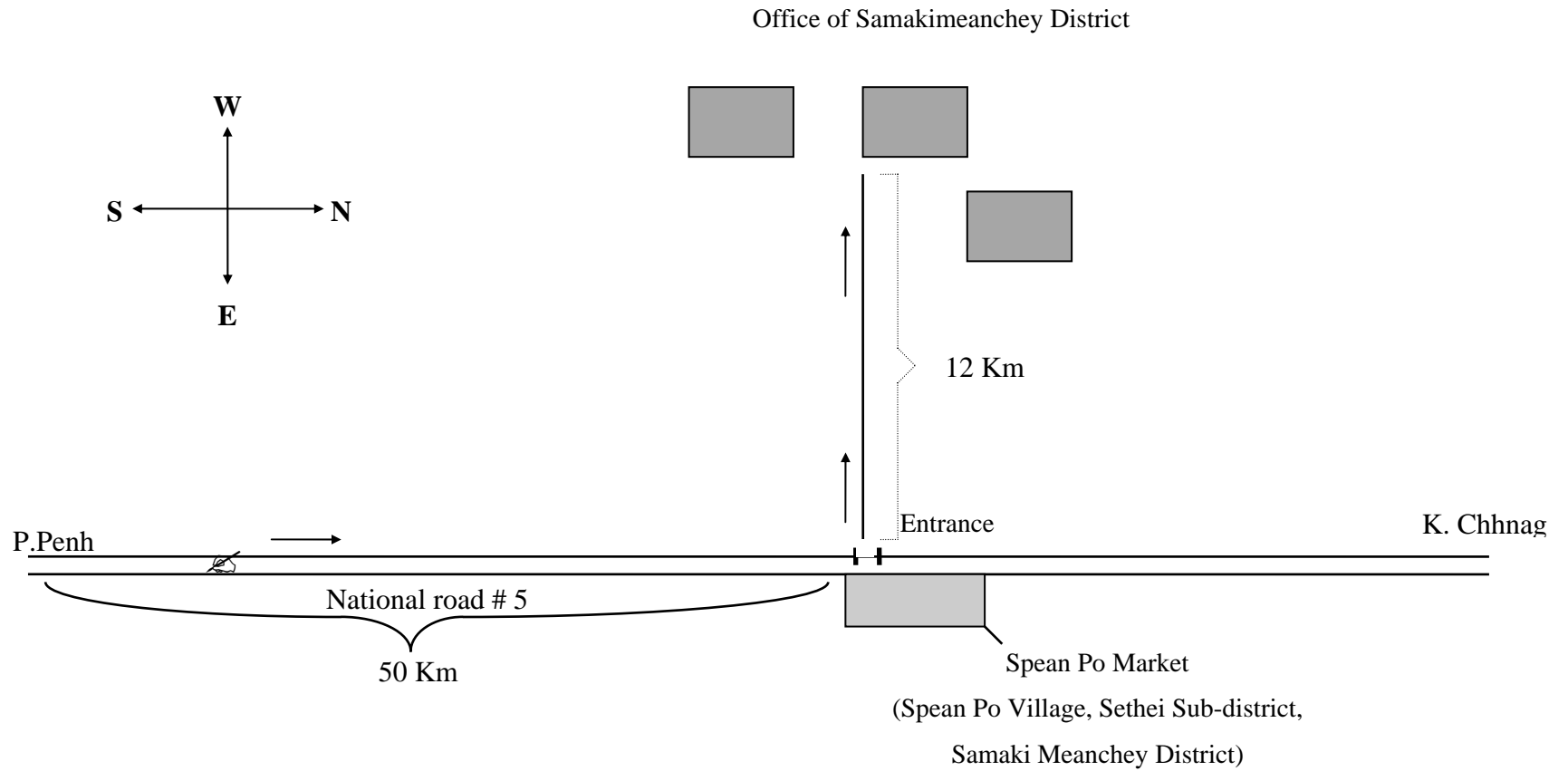
According to Uk Yun, the site we went to visit in Trapeang Mtes Village is called Prey Ta Kuch, located north of the village, about 150 meters from the main street. He told us that not only he but everybody in the village also knew about that site. Concerning its history, he recalled, telling us that the location of the site was used by the Khmer Rouge as a place for execution, in 1975. The site contained around 10 pits, each was 5 square meters and 1 meter deep. At the very first time, the Khmer Rouge brought people from everywhere into the village. Then, they took all the people in groups or in families to be killed at the execution site. Before having them all killed, the Khmer Rouge undressed them and took their clothes back to the village. As the witnesses told us, executions were committed only four or five times in that approximately 300 to 500 people were taken to kill at the site by the village security forces. Obviously, we did see with our own eyes small bits of the victims' bones and remains, and pieces of their clothes on the rim of several pits, when we there at the site. After we completed our mission, identifying locations, interviewing witnesses, and photographing them, we returned to Phnom Penh, taking along with us success and pride when in the past we could never make it to visit those sites and the prison, all located in Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province.

Conclusion:

We may conclude that our three-day visit to the sites and prison in Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province was a fairly great success to our team. In that, we obviously have visited three execution sites: 1) Prey Trapeang Ampil in Chumteav Chreng Village; 2) Prey Danrei Srot in Chrak Sangke Village; and 3) Prey Ta Kuch in Trapeang Mtes Village. We have also collected good information from the witnesses who had lived near the three sites that we have visited and who had also been confined in the prison. Furthermore, both the local authorities and the witnesses whom we met and interviewed were all very helpful to and cooperative with us, providing us means in one way or another to facilitate our work until its completion. However, we are not so happy since the information in our report is not yet sufficient because we failed to visit a place called Chrolong Ta Put--which was a [big] execution site in 1975. Our

failure to visit that place was due to the fact that we did not have much time left and the rain was about to pour down at that time. We also failed to see and interview Em who, as witnesses informed us, had been a perpetrator at Prey Damrei Srot prison. That was because the District Office Chief Kao Hun told us that we had to inform the Chief of the Sub-district where the person named Em lives in advance so that he could arrange for some means for us to meet and interview Em since Em hardly allows anyone to see him and inquire him about story during the Khmer Rouge regime. We think that it would be ideal if could find some other ways to meet and interview Em in the future.

LOCATION OF SAMAKI MEANCHEY DISTRICT

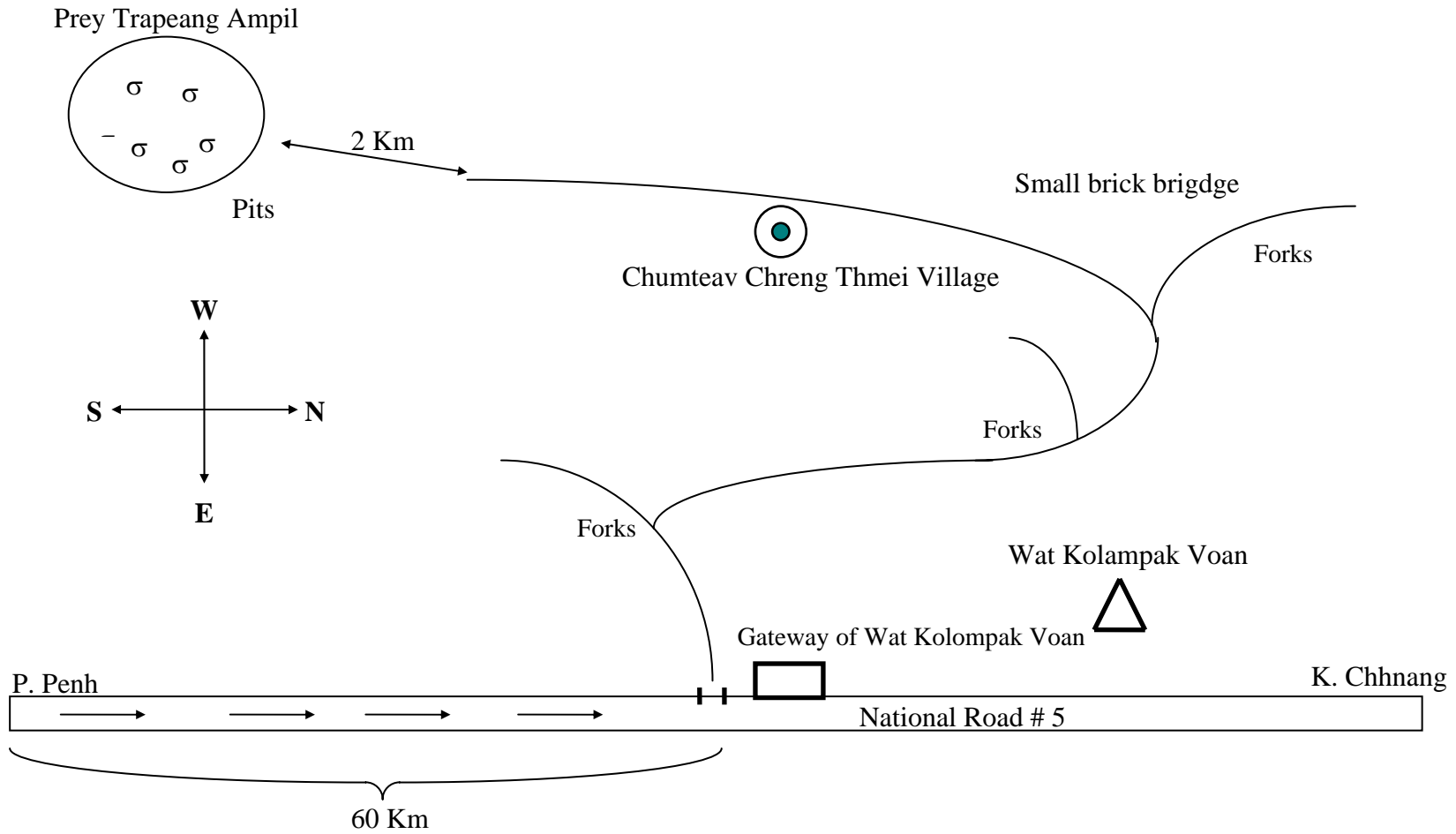


8 Distance from the Entrance to the office of Samaki Meanchey District

around 12km

8 Distance from Phnom Penh to Spean Po Market around 50km

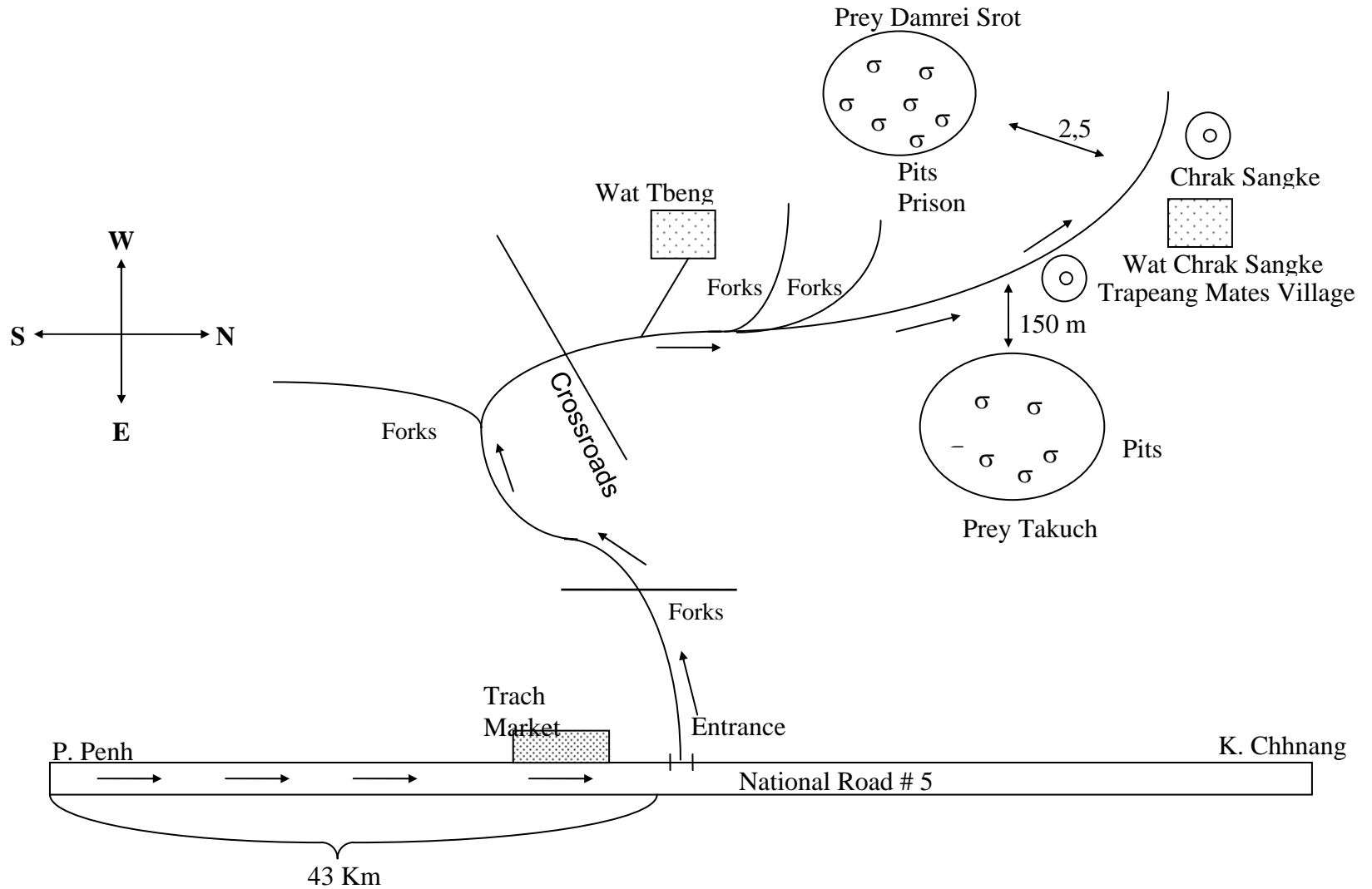
LOCATION OF PITS AT PREY TRAPEANG AMPIL



* Distance from the Entrance to the location of pits at Prey Trapeang Ampil over 17km

* Distance from Chumteav Chreng Thmei Village to the location of pits at Prey Trapeang Ampil : around 2km (in the woods)

LOCATION OF PREY DAMREI SROT



* Distance from the entrance to the location of pits at Prey Damrei Srot around over 19km

* Distance from the entrance to the location of pits at Prey Ta Kuch around 1950m