

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

RATANAK KIRI PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Date	# of grave	Est. Victim	Witness	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Banlung	Tuol O Kanseng ¹ / 8 August 1998	20-30 pits	300	Rea Reay រ៉ា រ៉ាយ	R 080801A/ 160201	N 13 ⁰ 45' 1791"	E 106 ⁰ 58' 4261"
Banlung	O Kanseng Prison/ 8 August 1998	Prison	N/A	Rea Reay រ៉ា រ៉ាយ	R 080801C/ 160202	N 13 ⁰ 45''0994"	E 106 ⁰ 58' 3465"

Overview

At 1:00 p.m. on August 7, 1998, our mapping team stood hair on end, when the Royal Air Cambodge landed on the wed red fields of Banlung, Ratanak Kiri. The rain still showering, we rushed to Leu Phnom Guest House where Youk stayed before. On the way, we were talking about how brave the Royal Air Cambodge pilot was by landing in such a steamy sky. In 1997, a Royale Air Cambodge airplane slit when landing and washed away several houses near the airport. The beauty of an untouched mountainous Ratanak Kiri and tribal community was the rare motivation. The rain and the mud were unable to stop us, although one kilometer of the highlanders' standard was exactly 10 kilometer. The team includes Mr. Sorya Sim, Mr. Vanthan Poeu Dara, Mr. Youk Chhang, Mr. Phat Kosal, Ms. Kalyanee Mam, and Ms. Norng Lina.

Direction

The owner of the Guest House was kind enough to tell us the where about of Mr. Bou Chin, sub-district chief of Krachanh, Banlung district. Without the villagers only occasionally seen along the road, gracefully pointing to the direction of the home of Mr. Bou Chin, we would not have found him. If you come from the Banlung airport to Banlung town, turn left at the first crossroad. Go ahead about seven kilometers, you will see a guarding cottage on the left-hand side of another crossroad. The tip here is to ask people every three kilometers along the way.

Ratanak Kiri is one of the Northeast provinces². It borders with Laos to the North, Vietnam to the east, Mondul Kiri province to the South, and Stung Streng to the West. The Se San and Sre Pauk rivers flow westward from Vietnam, passing Ratanak Kiri. In Stung Streng, both rivers meet and then join the Sekong river to flow into the mighty Mekong. In between the Se San and Sre Pauk rivers, Route # 19 also runs east-west forming the proud landmarks of traditional transport of the area. Perhaps it is the alluvial soils brought in by these rivers combining with the basalt characteristic of an old volcanic effect that makes Ratanak Kiri abundant in evergreen forest covering small mountain ranges. The soil is also rich for vegetation and 3-5 year cycle cultivation.

¹ Prisoners at O Kanseng prison were killed at Tuol O Kanseng.

² In the Khmer Rouge time, it was in the Northeast Zone (108), where Pol Pot hospital stationed by the revolution.

Witness

Mr. Bou Chin, 50, lives in Village 1, Krachanh sub-district, Banlung district. Before 1986, he was the chief of village 1 and since 1986 he has been the sub-district chief of Krachanh. He has three sons and three daughters. He was separated from his parents, brothers, and sisters since the day of the Coup d' etat of March 1970 when Ratanak Kiri was divided into two zones. The area west of the Rubber Plantation or "west of route 19" was occupied by the Khmer Rouge while the rest was still held by Lon Nol government. He lived in village 1 and worked as a militiaman since 1970. His job was to guard the village, escaping the air attacks from the Lon Nol military supported by the US air strikes. He said there were parachuting and bombing. Because he worked in this capacity his family survived. However, he was initially "forced to be" the militiaman, otherwise he would have been killed. Many other people beside him suffered the same policy.

Genocide Site

The Khmer Rouge killing strategy here was to form no particular mass graves. According to Mr. Bou Chin, "They killed people spot by spot, in the forest where any passage was banned". The main killing site was Kaun Sek Mountain in Lbang sub-district, Lumphat district, Mondul Kiri province. The killing spread here and there around the mountain. It was intended to be untraceable. He estimated at 300 victims at Kaun Sek, Ratanak Kiri. Other sites of similar killing magnitudes are K3 at O Cheng in Sek village, Ta Eng sub-district, Kaun Mum district; K5 at Trapeang Chres sub-district, Kaun Mum district; Cheay Kao Sou (the periphery of rubber plantation area) in Touk Chas village, Krachanh sub-district, Banlung district. The targets were those literate, teachers, soldiers, and Lon Nol officials.

Victim

Mr. Bou Chin reported to us brief stories of his villagers that were killed. A man named Tup was killed because he stole yam. Mr. Sieng Huon was killed. He was accused of being pro-Vietnamese. Other men who were killed were Nhil, Chin, and Chhorn . A woman named Lim. Mr. Ly and Dik (young man). Mr. Bou also told that Mr. Pek Thin was accused of being a CIA agent and was killed in O Sap village, Trapeang Chres sub-district, Kaun Mum district between 1972-1973.

The Khmer Rouge operated the hidden camp in 1970-75 during the escape from the US/Lon Nol bombing. The people had no choice. The camp had 1,500 people living self-sufficiently, with vegetation, farming, crabs snails, fishing, etc. The location was at Chruoh O Kantrol in Ta Eng sub-district, Kaun Mum district. This was called Camp 501.

The rain and the mud were unable to prevent our team but the witness, Mr. Bou Chin said in the sunshine it would be safer for him to come with us to work on the GPS at Kaun Sek site and the periphery of the rubber plantation. Information obtained from him, however, allowed us to follow up to a site behind the provincial hospital of Ratanak Kiri. The site was called the Prison of O Kanseng (Latitude N13'45"1791, Longitude E 106'58"4262) and the mass grave of O Kanseng (Latitude N13'45"0994, Longitude E 106'58"3465). The prison and grave were about one kilometer behind the hospital. When Dara and I (Sorya) reached the hospital, we went on half a kilometer and turned left at the forks. We seemed to be traveling down mountain. Yes, it was a mountain. At the foot of the mountain, we found an expected house in the front. There, we viewed the vast low land where people were farming. That is why it is called O Kanseng. The man in the picture attached was the witness. He agreed to come along to show us the site he had just told.

Witness

Mr. Rea Reay, 36, has two sons and two daughters. Normally, he lives at his other home in village 6, Labansiek sub-district, Banlung district. Since 1977, Reay was a platoon commander stationed along the border of Ratanak Kiri and Vietnam. He fought against the Khmer Rouge and the Front Unifie pour la Lutte des Races Opprimees (United Struggle Front for the Oppressed Races). Since 1985, he was a major of intervention police of Ratanak Kiri province.

The prison and the graves were in Thuoy village, Labansiek sub-district, Banlung district. This is where we took the picture of the witness. It is also the farmhouse of Reay. The prison and the graves are in the background of our picture. They were to the left-hand side when we arrived.

Tuol O Kanseng Prison 160202 P

The prison is located at the foot of the hills in the attached pictures. It was a square wooden building of about 50 meters by each side. We saw no piece of the building. However, Reay pointed to jackfruit and coconut trees, which were planted by the prisoners. In 1980, Reay saw barbed wire, shackles, and iron bar (Dek Chunteah Lan). The prison was disassembled in 1984 and rebuilt as Phnom Svay Prison of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The prison is still open. It is in Phnom Svay village, Labansiek sub-district, Banlung district. Next to the prison was a home of security officers. Now there is a farmhouse.

Mass graves of Tuol O Kanseng 160201 B

Reay estimated that there were about 20 graves with a total of 300 victims. He said in 1980 when he came to live in Thuoy village, he saw skulls and bones. As you may see in the picture, Reay told us that where the grass grows longer are the mass graves because victims had already become fertilizers. We saw the graves full of tall grass and yet fully filled up through erosion. The victims killed here were no different from those at other places, Reay said. According to Mr. Bou Chin and his wife, the victims were pulled from trucks and killed in line. Most of them were Jarai tribe from "the 107 group". A pregnant woman was killed and her baby came out alive. Comrade Kham Vieng was the mastermind of this Tuol O Kanseng. He died two years ago.

Tuol O Kanseng has become the historic field to host the annual rally of 20 May to express anger against the Khmer Rouge. The rally was organized by the People's Republic of Kampuchea; and so by the current government of Cambodia.

Recommendation

The trip to Ratana Kiri should be planned for dry season to avoid the mud and the rain. If we plan a trip in the rainy season, we should plan for a one-week or a longer trip. On the next trip should operate the GPS at Kaun Sek, the periphery of rubber plantation we could not reach in this trip.

We should find Mr. Mom Nha who currently lives in Banlung provincial town. He was the driver of Comrade Kham Vieng. He may provide us more important information.

Mr. Bou Chin and the owner of the guesthouse told us that there might be a KR prison behind the house formerly belonged to General Bou Thong, who he is with the current governments, explained. The next trip will have to clarify the relationship between this prison, O Kanseng prison, and Banlung prison as indicated by Ms. Sara Colm in her report, *"The Highland Minorities and the Khmer Rouge in Northern Cambodia, 1968-1979."* When we were leaving for the airport, the owner of the guess house finally told us that a man name Keo was reportedly the prisoner of Tuol O Kanseng. Keo should be the best witness because he was very there and was all activities. On Ratanak Kiri trip, we have had no security problem. Precaution should prevail in regard to any trip to Lumphat. Not long ago, there was a KR attack that killed two foreigners on the road to Lumphat.

We can't wait to thank Ms. Sara Colm, whose research information on "The Highland Minorities and the Khmer Rouge in the Northeastern Cambodia" has guided us throughout the trip to Ratanak Kiri and Stung Streng. Also, the owner of the Leu Phnom Guest House sent us to Mr. Bou Chin. From Mr. Bou Chin, we went to ask a man whose house was in the compound of the Provincial Hospital. Then we met Mr. Rea Reay, who became the star witness of the trip.