

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## MAPPING PROJECT 1999:

### RATANAK KIRI PROVINCE

On December 5, 1999, the Documentation Center of Cambodia [DC-Cam] sent a mapping team composed of Mr. Sim Sorya, Mr. Tieng Sopheak Vichea, Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy and Sour Bunsou to Ratanak Kiri Province to conduct research on Khmer Rouge genocide sites in this province. This is the second time that a DC-Cam mapping team made a research trip to this province since we started the mapping project in September 1995. The team boarded a Royal Air Cambodge plane and arrived there in the late morning of the same day. We stayed at Leu Phnom (Mountain Top) Guest House, which is very close to the Banlung Airport.

On the afternoon of December 5, the same day of our arrival, we discussed among ourselves what we would do the following day. The next day, December 6, according to our usual procedure, we went to the provincial office, where we met with Mr. Natt Bunheng, Chief of the Provincial Office. We were warmly welcomed. He described to us the general situation in this province and showed us a book titled "1998-2000 Development Plan for Ratanak Kiri." On pages 19 and 20 of the book, it reads: "Ratanak Kiri is one of the northeastern provinces of Cambodia bordered on the east by Vietnam, the north by Laos, the south by Mondul Kiri and the west by Stung Treng. Two rivers run through the province -- the Se San River and the Sre Pork River. The two rivers meet in Stung Treng province."

This province comprises nine districts, forty-nine sub-districts and 240 villages. The total area of the province is 11,052 square kilometers, and the landscape is characterized by four different types of terrain -- mountainous areas, hilly areas, a plateau area and a low land area. The population of this province is 88,914. Seventy-five per cent of the population is hill tribe people from 8 ethnic groups, namely Tam Puon, Kroeng, Kachakk, Kavet, Chray, Preou, Phnorng, and Lun. Besides these ethnic groups, Khmer, Chinese, Cham, Vietnamese and Laotian groups also live in this province. Most people make their living by farming, hunting wild animals, fishing, harvesting wild crops and cutting trees.

Our team focused on research in two districts -- Banlung and Kon Mom.

### Banlung District, December 7, 1999

Banlung District is the provincial town, and the main hub of Ratanak Kiri. Most people simply call it Banlung town. We had been informed by Mr. Natt Bunheng of one Khmer Rouge prisoner who had survived the regime; we had his address. We decided to rush our trip in the early morning of December 7 to find the former Khmer Rouge prisoner's house in Village 3, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District, Ratanak Kiri Province. In fact, we had heard of this person before and had made two attempts the previous day to meet him. Finally we met him on this, our third attempt. This former Khmer Rouge prisoner is Mr. Bun Vantha, 59, previously an official of the provincial office in the period of the State of Cambodia (so this is why many know of him). He is now a retired citizen and he is physically ill. Mr. Vantha told us that illness was the reason why he decided to retire from his job.

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Mr. Vantha was born in Boeng Krum Sub-district, Lvea Em District, Kandal Province. Either in 1958 or 1959, his family was too poor to live in the district and so they decided to try their luck in business in Ratanak Kiri, later on residing there.

Mr. Vantha told us that during the Pol Pot regime, he spent some thirteen years (from 1966-1979) in a Khmer Rouge prison. The Khmer Rouge accused him of being an intellectual because they knew that he had sent a letter of complaint to the People's Representatives of Ratanak Kiri (headed by Khmer Rouge leader Mr. Nuon Chea) in 1963 to solve negative phenomena like lawlessness and persecution that had occurred in the province. According to Mr. Vantha, his letter never reached Nuon Chea. He said when he wrote that letter, he sent it via Comrade Tum, a Khmer Rouge cadre in charge of the Northeast Zone. Not long after that, in 1966, he was arrested and sent to the Khmer Rouge Security Office called Boeng Kanseng.

### **Security Office Boeng Kanseng or Boeng Kanseng Prison Thuoy Village or Village Number 6, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District**

The Khmer Rouge built this security office in 1962. Mr. Vantha said that prisoners there had been gathered from various places in Ratanak Kiri and sent to this security office. The security office no longer exists. People demolished it, took all usable equipment from it, and burned down the structure entirely in 1979. Mr. Vantha recalled that the prison looked like a military camp or a school with a bamboo wall and a thatched roof.

Another former Khmer Rouge prisoner at this security office -- who we interviewed at his home in village 6, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District on December 26, 1999 -- told us that this security office also functioned as a prison. It was about one hundred meters long and fifty meters wide. He said that in 1979, he moved from his home village, Ta Veng village, Ta Veng Sub-district, Ta Veng District to village 6, and consequently he lived very close to this facility. He saw the remains of the prison structure, iron sheets used to make knives and cuffs, and a building that had housed Khmer Rouge cadre.

### **Happenings in Boeng Kanseng Security Office**

Mr. Vantha and his wife were imprisoned in this facility. His work outside the prison compound involved weeding cassava trees, sawing and carrying logs, and planting jack fruit, coconut trees and so on. The Khmer Rouge security cadres walked prisoners to the work site. Every morning at 7 am, Comrade Se, Chief of the prison in charge of political affairs, and Chhang, his deputy in charge of military affairs, held a meeting. Comrade Chhang opened the meetings, and prisoners who came late were treated with serious torture such as being struck with a rifle butt. Both cadres assigned work to the prisoners. Two meetings were held each day. A second meeting was called in the afternoon at 4:30 pm. The two meetings were intended to indoctrinate prisoners with the political line of the party, assign tasks, lay out plans, and raise consciousness, etc.

Food rations were the same for all prisoners, even though they received different work assignments. Mr. Vantha said that every day he was given a small bowl of porridge and cassava leaf or banana trunk soup. The Khmer Rouge permitted the prisoners to eat very little in 1975. By 1977, prisoners were given even less to eat -- one can of rice for each ten people per meal, and the work regime became harder. Mr. Vantha said that he was walked to work at 7:30 (?), and then marched back from work to the prison before 4:30 pm. Every night, all prisoners had to sleep with their legs shackled to a long wooden bar (50-60 meters) with an iron chain. Some prisoners had no comfort in their sleeping every night. For instance, he himself sat every night (he expressed how difficult it was for him then). The

Khmer Rouge told prisoners to take off their clothes before shackling them. No pillows or blankets were provided. Every night, some prisoners were taken away. One night during a full moon, he watched through holes in the bamboo wall as the Khmer Rouge told around 30 to 50 prisoners to line up and get onto a truck. He saw this every night when the moon was bright enough. He believes those prisoners were being taken to be killed. He said this was the Khmer Rouge's plan. Sick prisoners who could not work were tied up and taken to be killed. When asked how many prisoners he estimated had been held at the prison, Mr. Vantha said, "Over two thousand, mixed types of people."

### **Killing Site of Boeng Kanseng**

Two mass graves were located in Village 3, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District, Ratanak Kiri Province. Mr. Vantha asserted that these two graves were B-52 craters from bombardments by "the Americans" in 1962. The Khmer Rouge used these two craters as mass graves for their victims. "Each of the craters is thirty meters in diameter and ten meters deep," he said. "About 600 victims were in these two craters." He continued, explaining that there were many small pits near the large mass graves, at every jack fruit tree. Each of these smaller pits, he estimated, contained two to five victims. In total, he estimated there were more than 2,000 victims who had been buried at this location.

When asked if there are more prisoners who had survived incarceration in the prison, he said he knew of the following names:

Mr. Mao Phat, presently Chief of Police in Ratanak Kiri;  
Mr. Phan Thol, presently Chief of the Tax Office in Ratanak Kiri;  
Mr. Khy Hun, presently Vice Chief of the Agriculture Office in Ratanak Kiri; and  
Mr. Khoem Phoeu, presently a citizen in Village 1, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District, Ratanak Kiri.

Mr. Vantha accompanied us to the mass grave site, where we took GPS readings and photographs.

### **O Kanhchoeung Dot or Security Office Camp Number 800**

On December 10, 1999, we met Mr. Kong Chan, a villager in Village 2, La Bansiek Sub-district, Banlung District. He told us that Mr. Cham Yit, helped by another man whose name is unknown, went to dig up the graves at a Khmer Rouge security office called Security Office Camp Number 800 or O Kanhchoeung Dot, searching for gold or jewelry. He pointed out to us that this was a secret security office of the Khmer Rouge. Mr. Chan said that two large mass graves were located near the security office -- each grave is forty meters square and three meters deep. Mr. Cham Yit told Mr. Chan that when he saw many human bones, he stopped digging. Mr. Yit's companion (as mentioned above, his name is unknown) told Yit that he knew these graves existed because he had been a Khmer Rouge cadre at the security office under the command of Comrade Kham Vieng between 1975 and 1976. This unidentified informant said only about one hundred and fifty people had been put in this prison and then killed during his time there. But he did not know what had happened after his two years there because he was transferred from that security prison. [There is reason for our team to suspect that he might have involved in the killing during those years, but we will have to track down this lead at another time.]

We would note that Kham Vieng, who the informant claimed was in charge of this security office, was at that time the deputy secretary of Region 108 of the Northeast Zone. After we

obtained the above information, we went searching for Mr. Cham Yit, but despite our efforts, we could not locate him; we were told that he was away on business, and had been far from home for some months.

### **Kon Mom District**

On December 23, 1999, our team continued to search for Mr. Cham Yit. He lives in Village 3, about forty kilometers from Ratanak Kiri. There was a path leading to this village, but it was so riddled with potholes and so slippery in many places that our trip to this village ended up being very difficult and time-consuming. There we met the Governor of Kon Mom District, a man named Kim Huor, who briefed us about security situation and life of the hill tribe people in his district.

Kon Mom District comprises seven sub-districts and twenty-three villages. The population of this district totals 9,362 at present -- 5,269 Khmer, 3,149 ethnic Kroeng, 559 people of Lao descent, and 402 ethnic Tum Puon.

### **Samraong Pen Canal Sre Angkrang village, Sre Angkrang Sub-district**

At this point, we met with Mr. Phat Sovann, age 72. He lives in Sre Angkrang village, Sre Angkrang Sub-district, Kon Mom District. When he returned to this village in January 1979, he saw human bodies in a canal, about 400 meters west of his house. This canal is called Samroang Pen Canal. He also saw human bones in front of his house. Mr. Savann also informed us of another canal called Kbal Along Ptel Canal, where he also knew that the Khmer Rouge had killed people. These two canals are arms of Sre Pork River -- each is about three meters wide and three meters deep. Mr. Savann said in sadness that forty members of his family were killed by the Khmer Rouge. But he did not know where the victims came from nor how many were killed in these two particular places. Then he accompanied us to Samraong Pen Canal to see what remained there. We located no physical evidence at this site. The GPS readings for this location show it at N 13 28' 0330" and E 106 38' 5465".

As the time was running short and darkness was approaching -- we wished to avoid travel after dark on the path through a thick forest -- we rushed back to Banlung town after we had taken the GPS readings.

### **Conclusion**

We recommend that future mapping trips to Ratanak Kiri be made during the dry season. More research needs to be done and longer missions should be allowed. It is relatively safe in Ratanak Kiri Province, and we felt secure from the possibility of robbery, unlike in some other places. We had warm cooperation from the provincial authorities. We have achieved good results.

## 9. RATANAK KIRI PROVINCE

<b>District</b>	<b>Site Name/ Visited Date</b>	<b>Site Type</b>	<b>Est. Victim</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>File #/ID Code</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
Kon Mum	Pralay Samraong Pen/ 23 December 99	Burial site 1 pit	40 up	Phat Sovann	R 122307A/ 160401	N 13 <sup>0</sup> 28'0330"	E 106 <sup>0</sup> 38'5465"
Banlung	Village 3 / 26 December 99	Burial site 1 mass grave 10 small pits	1000 up	Bun Vantha	R 122604/ 160203	N13 <sup>0</sup> 44'2477"	E 106 <sup>0</sup> 58'5288"