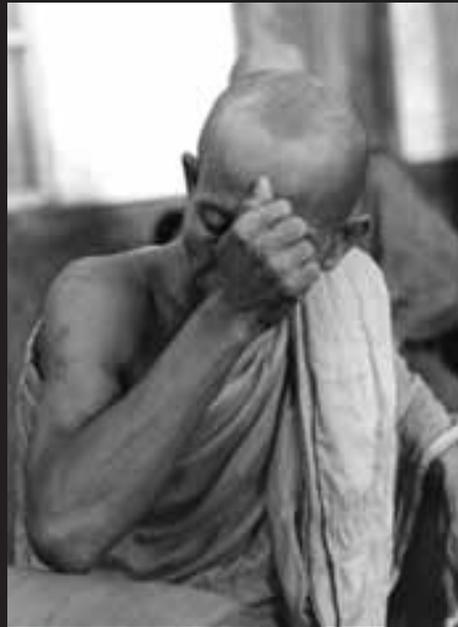


# NIGHT OF THE KHMER ROUGE:



GENOCIDE AND JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA



## **PAUL ROBESON GALLERY**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
350 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, 1st Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Ham Hong, date of arrest  
unknown



**NIGHT OF THE KHMER ROUGE:**  
GENOCIDE AND JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA



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Survivors of S-21 Prison standing in front of a Tuol Sleng building after Democratic Kampuchea. From left to right, Chum Mey, Ruy Nea Kong, Iem Chan, Heng Nath, Bou Meng, Phan Than Chan, Ing Pech.



# PREFACE

Pol Pot left the world on April 15, 1998. However, his demise does not bring closure to a history of horrors during which over a million lives were taken. Nor does his death mean a complete collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime.

Cambodia is a country in which a quarter of the population died during those three years, eight months, and twenty days in which the government of Democratic Kampuchea reigned. All Cambodians were affected; all Cambodians suffered. As Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia and as a survivor of the genocide, I know firsthand the tremendous pain of the surviving millions. I still remember clearly the day I was forced at gunpoint to leave my home and evacuate Phnom Penh. Within my family many died including my eldest sister, her husband and two of their children, leaving the surviving youngest daughter orphaned.

Through striking photographs and documentary films, this exhibition, *Night of the Khmer Rouge*, delves into the destruction and devastation that crippled Cambodia. Whether the photographs are of prisoners from Pol Pot's notorious prison, S-21, or those depicting widespread inhuman labor, they reveal a ghastly story that must be told. The story does not end with the death of Communist Party of Kampuchea leader Pol Pot, however. Although Pol Pot physically perished, the imprint of his radical ideology and spiritual monstrosity cannot be erased in Cambodia. This ideology enticed young Khmer Rouge cadres to kill "enemies" of Angkar on the grounds that "To dig up all the grass, you must dig up the roots," and "To keep you is no benefit, to destroy you is no loss." These slogans, along with many others, created a climate of fear, paranoia, and imminent death that was prevalent under Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979.

This ideology continues to have a deep impact on present-day Cambodia, undermining the rebuilding of the country, based on the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. This ideology remains in existence, deep inside

the minds of Cambodians. It is an invisible partner of the defecting Khmer Rouge leaders, some of whom are now in the government and the military functioning as decision-makers and setting down policies for Cambodian society. Along with thousands of other Khmer Rouge soldiers, these leaders are taking refuge under the umbrella of "national reconciliation and peace." The majority of them are trying to hide from their victims as well as from personal and legal accountability.

In the quest for justice for all Cambodians, all members of the respective three parties represented in the National Assembly and Senate of Cambodia have two obligations in addressing this state of affairs. First, they must agree to punish any Khmer Rouge leaders who are found guilty by an independent tribunal, operating according to international norms and standards. Second, they should provide sufficient social services in a timely manner to the families of the Khmer Rouge defectors, especially to women and children, in the form of social welfare, work assistance, and education.

Failure to address these issues in a satisfactory manner would be tantamount to ignoring basic human needs and indirectly allowing the Khmer Rouge defectors to live outside the rule of law in Cambodia. Moreover, failure to achieve both obligations not only means refusing to provide fair justice to the over one million victims put to death, it also signifies opening Pol Pot's coffin and allowing his corpse, in effect, to strut right out into broad daylight. This would be further encouragement for his ideology and would congratulate him on a continued victory. We must not allow Pol Pot this posthumous victory.

Youk Chhang, Director  
Documentation Center of Cambodia,  
Phnom Penh, January 2007

Khmer Rouge Dance Troop at  
Banteay Srey



# FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the spirit of Paul Robeson, a civil rights activist at home and human rights activist abroad—these were inseparable to him—the Paul Robeson Gallery is honored to partner with the Documentation Center of Cambodia in co-organizing the current exhibition, *Night of the Khmer Rouge: Genocide and Justice in Cambodia*. In exploring the violent history of Democratic Kampuchea and its aftermath, this exhibition offers not only an historical overview of a tragic period in the history of Cambodia. It also participates in the current moment, providing evidentiary support to Cambodians, who this year commence an international tribunal, bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to justice for the atrocities of their regime, dating from 1975 to 1979.

Significantly, the exhibition also delivers geopolitical perspective to Americans living in the United States today. Through the various administrations of both dominant parties, the U.S. government involved itself in struggle with and in support for the Khmer Rouge. We are therefore imbricated in its history. Furthermore, the lessons this history has to offer on genocidal regimes and the uses of torture continue, sadly, to be relevant; they can be taken neither abstractly nor academically.

In seeing this exhibition and publication to reality, special thanks are owed to Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation of Cambodia, and his staff for making available to us the Center's material, documentary, and financial resources, which enabled the production of both exhibition and publication. We thank him also for his catalog preface on juridical accountability. Rutgers-Newark professor Alexander Hinton provides the historical and conceptual overview of the exhibition; in their essay, Meng-Try Ea and Sorya Sim raise the frustrating difficulties of clearly distinguishing perpetrators from victims, in the case of young recruits to the Khmer Rouge; Wynne Cougill writes on the conflicting interests between religious and judicial handling of the remains of the dead; and, finally, I contribute a reflection on the ongoing uses of torture.

The organizers of *Night of the Khmer Rouge* are especially grateful to the

exhibition's funders. Generous support was provided by the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute, under its Documents and Confronting the Past Affinity Group Project. Paul Robeson Gallery's programs are funded in part by grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State and the Cultural Programming Committee, Rutgers-Newark. Documentation Center of Cambodia's operations benefit from funding support by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Swedish International Development Agency. The Gallery's arts education program, Art in Society, also benefits from a partnership with the Newark Public School's Office of Visual and Performing Art, William May, Director, and from the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, for assistance in publicizing the exhibition and its educational program, Dr. Paul Winkler, Executive Director.

Thanks are due as well to Curatorial Assistant Lisa Hasselbrook for organizing the film and documentary component to the exhibition and for her indispensable contributions to the management of the Gallery's operations. Arts Education Coordinator Grace Marquinhos, curatorial intern Vanessa Ramalho, graphic design intern Anna Witek and gallery assistant Amber Pennington continue to provide the assistance needed to make our programs a success. Irene O'Brien and Victoria Halfpenny in the Development Office are angels in our corner; and Crystal Grant remains the financial wizard behind the curtain, pulling the levers that transform the smoke and thunder of our ambitions into reality. We extend our debt of gratitude to them. Finally, we wish to thank Carla Capizzi for providing valuable assistance in promoting the exhibition; Copie Rodriguez, graphic designer, and Harry Fink of Digital C-Lab for assisting with the production of the exhibition; Tara Russo for installation expertise; and Yvonne Wong of Double Happiness Creations, Inc. for her sensitivity in designing a challenging catalog.

Jorge Daniel Veneciano, Ph.D.

Director, Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers-Newark, January 2007

Young Khmer Rouge soldiers



## GENOCIDE AND JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA

ALEXANDER HINTON RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, NEWARK

**O**n April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge, a group of Maoist-inspired revolutionaries headed by Pol Pot, victoriously entered Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, after seven years of civil war with the U.S.–backed Khmer Republic. If the “Night of the Khmer Rouge” was dramatically ushered in at this time, darkness had begun to fall earlier as Cambodia was massively destabilized by this pre-1975 violence and the shock waves of the U.S. conflict in Vietnam, which included the intensive carpet-bombing of parts of the Cambodian countryside (Becker 1998; Chandler 1991; Kiernan 1996).

After taking power, the Khmer Rouge implemented policies meant to create a society of pure revolutionaries who would enable Cambodia, newly renamed Democratic Kampuchea (DK), to catapult toward communist utopia. The results were catastrophic. Cambodians were forced to work long hours with minimal rations and few freedoms. In an attempt to forge a new society comprising “pure” revolutionaries, the Khmer Rouge sought to control what people said, did, and thought (Hinton 2005). Even thinking about the past became a crime—“memory sickness”—that could lead to execution.

In the end, between 1.7 to 2.2 million of Cambodia’s eight million inhabitants, roughly a quarter of the population, perished from disease, starvation, overwork, imprisonment, and execution by the time the Khmer Rouge were overthrown in January 1979. Backed by perhaps 150,000 Vietnamese troops, the small Cambodian force that took power, which included many former cadre who had fled DK purges, established the socialist People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). Several of these leaders, including Prime Minister Hun Sen, remain in power today, though they now preside over a democratically-elected, capitalist government, the Royal Government of Cambodia.

This exhibit, drawn almost exclusively from the photographic archive of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, explores the history of the DK violence and its aftermath. The selected photographs ask why such violence could happen, how people cope with mass death and suffering, and how genocide is remembered and memorialized. As the world waits for an international tribunal to begin trying the surviving Khmer Rouge leaders later this year, the photographs also help us to ask questions about the nature of

justice and responsibility, the distinction between “perpetrator” and “victim,” the construction of truth and memory, and why it took over thirty years for these leaders to be held accountable for genocide. This introductory essay, structured around the themes of the exhibition, provides a brief introduction to the genocide and its aftermath.

## I. LIFE IN DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

After taking power, the Khmer Rouge set out to immediately revamp Cambodian society. Their first step was to rusticate the cities so that the urbanites, suspect for their “regressive” class background, could be reformed through hard labor and contribute to the new agrarian economy focused primarily on massive increases in rice production.

To launch a “super great leap forward” into communism, the Khmer Rouge collectivized economic production and consumption, banned Buddhism and other forms of religious worship, abolished money and markets, undermined familial solidarity by instituting communal living and assigning family members to work in sexually-segregated units that were often separated from each other for long periods of time, and dramatically curtailed communication and freedom of speech and assembly. Internationally, the regime withdrew both because of geopolitical ostracism and because the Khmer Rouge, who exhorted the virtues of “self-reliance” and “independence-mastery” (see Locard 2000) sought to avoid foreign domination. The main exception to this isolation was China, which continued to supply the Khmer Rouge with advisors and aid.

In the photographs in the section of the exhibit on “Life in Democratic Kampuchea,” we see glimpses of the new regime and some of the changes it implemented: urbanites evacuating the cities, a cadre covered in now worthless money, the rare visit of a foreign delegation, cadre eating communally but with full plates that stood in contrast to the watery rice porridge the rest of the population was forced to survive on, the leaders and cadre who implemented the Party “line,” Chinese advisors teaching Khmer Rouge cadre martial arts, a compulsory mass Khmer Rouge wedding, the legions of people who were ordered to work day and night on massive agricultural projects that all too often failed.



Cambodians working on an irrigation project. During Democratic Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge ordered its citizens to work, often day and night, on such massive projects. All too often, the projects ended in failure, in part because the Khmer Rouge targeted intellectuals, including engineers, for elimination

(Dam "January 1st", Chinit River, Kompong Thom Province, 1976. Photographed by a Chinese photographer)

## II. THE KILLING FIELDS AND PRISON SYSTEM

During the civil war, the Khmer Rouge established a rudimentary prison system and conducted periodic purges of suspected subversives and traitors. Both of these practices converged and expanded greatly during Democratic Kampuchea.

After taking power, the Khmer Rouge immediately arrested or executed tens of thousands of former government officials, police, civil servants, and soldiers, who had been their enemies and whose loyalties were suspect. This first wave of killings was followed by a second that began in early-to-mid 1976 when the Khmer Rouge leadership felt threatened by dissension and possible revolt within its own ranks, sentiments that were heightened when they learned that people were starving to death in the countryside (Becker 1998; Kiernan 1996). Instead of examining their problematic economic program, the Party Center blamed the problems on “hidden enemies burrowing from within.”

By this time, the Khmer Rouge had established an elaborate prison system that extended down to the commune level (see Meng-Try Ea 2004). Throughout the country, people whose backgrounds or actions were suspect began to be arrested. Sometimes they were killed immediately; in other cases they were jailed in prisons where they were interrogated and often died. Hundreds of thousands of people perished in this network of death that ensnared members of the general populace and reached deep into the ranks of the Khmer Rouge themselves.

Many of these cadre who came under suspicion, especially the high-ranking ones, were eventually sent to Tuol Sleng prison, located in Phnom Penh and known by the code name “S-21,” which became the Party Center’s central prison (Chandler 1999). Perhaps 15,000 people passed through the gates of S-21. Some, including young children, were executed fairly quickly; others were interrogated and tortured into making “confessions,” sometimes for months, before being killed.

Among the photographs in the section on “Tuol Sleng Prison,” we see the faces of the condemned, whose mug shots were taken upon their arrival at S-21. Many were blindfolded, sometimes still chained to other prisoners, until the moment their picture was taken. The Khmer Rouge meticulously documented their activities at Tuol Sleng and much of this documentation, ranging from I.D. photographs to written confessions, was preserved at the “Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes” that was established at S-21 by the PRK regime. Other photographs in the “Tuol Sleng Prison” section are from the museum: two montages of



Arrangement of Skulls,  
Choeung Ek killing fields

the prisoner mug shots, a display of instruments of torture, small brick cells with shackles, and paintings by two of the only survivors of Tuol Sleng depicting the tortures the Khmer Rouge are said to have used to produce confessions.

The photographs also complicate the distinction between victims and perpetrator since many of the people incarcerated at S-21 were themselves Khmer Rouge and quite possibly implicated in murder (Meng-Try Ea and Sorya Sim 2001). Even more ironically, numerous cadre who worked at S-21, including interrogators, were arrested and imprisoned at Tuol Sleng. The photographs are jarring and evoke an immediate response but, placed in proper context, they also invite further exploration and raise important questions about perpetration and responsibility, particularly in light of the tribunal that is about to begin in Cambodia.

### III: SOCIAL MEMORY

After the Khmer Rouge were overthrown, Cambodians once again began crisscrossing the country in search of loved ones and lost homes. Then they began to rebuild their lives under another socialist government, albeit one that enacted more moderate policies and began to make the transition to capitalism in the late 1980s (Gottesman 2003).

The memory of the genocidal past reverberated on their lives in a number of ways. Individually, each person and family had to cope with the loss of family members, animosity toward former Khmer Rouge who might continue to live nearby, and the psychological legacy of having lived through a time of massive suffering, terror, death, and trauma. Local communities had to deal with such traumas while promoting reconciliation and rebuilding Buddhism and village life.

Politically, the PRK government differentiated itself from its socialist predecessor and asserted its legitimacy by emphasizing how it had liberated the country from the genocidal Khmer Rouge, who had regrouped on the border with the assistance of foreign powers and threatened to return. To this end, the PRK regime set out to preserve “evidence” of the Khmer Rouge crimes and to frequently remind the populace about what had taken place through the use of school texts, literature, the media, movies, the Tuol Sleng museum, commemorations like the annual “day of hate,” exhumations and display of the bones of the dead, and memorials.

Internationally, Cambodia came to be identified with “the killing fields,” symbolized perhaps most



Unidentified prisoner, date of arrest unknown, bound and chained to blindfolded prisoner

forcefully by a huge map of Cambodia, made out of the skulls of the dead with waterways painted blood red, which was displayed in the last room of the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes until 2002 (Cougill 2005). The genocide has become both a signifier of Cambodia and a commodity as Cambodia has become a part of the global “dark tourism” circuit (see Lennon and Foley 2000).

This focus on the genocidal past contrasts sharply with the promotion of reconciliation after the 1993 UN-sponsored election in Cambodia, when the Royal Government of Cambodia removed virtually all mention of the genocidal past from the school texts and welcomed the defection of Khmer Rouge troops, including high-ranking officials. Today, as Cambodia prepares for a tribunal, it is dealing with the twisting paths of social memory in the past, one that has resulted in a situation in which some young Cambodian children don’t know or even believe that the genocide ever took place.

The photographs in the section on “Social Memory” evince both the destruction and suffering that Cambodians endured (photographs of mass graves, debris cluttering a Phnom Penh street, broken statuary, a senior monk weeping) and the ways in which this past was politicized as it was remembered (the erection of memorials, the construction of the “map of skulls” at the Tuol Sleng museum, monks blessing the remains of the dead at an exhumation, and a woman weeping, most likely at one of the PRK commemorations, beside a memorial of skulls). The photographs help us to reconsider truth and social memory, lodged at the nexus of the private memories and emotions of individuals, the social and cultural worlds in which they cope and grieve, and the larger political dynamics that attempt to reshape the past to legitimate the present.

#### IV. JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Why has it taken over thirty years to bring the former leaders of the Khmer Rouge to justice? One of the initial reasons was geopolitics. Because the PRK was supported by Vietnam, an unlikely scenario developed in which China (the main backer of the Khmer Rouge), Thailand (fearful of the Vietnamese troops massed near its borders), and the United States (embroiled in the Cold War and still stung by defeat in Vietnam) and its allies conspired not just to isolate the PRK regime, but to help the Khmer Rouge, who had been routed, regroup and rearm (Etcheson 2005; Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004). Remarkably, in 1979 the UN General Assembly voted to give this genocidal regime Cambodia’s seat at the UN.

In Cambodia, the PRK took steps to hold some of the Khmer Rouge accountable. On the local level, some



Unidentified woman, likely speaking at a People's Republic of Kampuchea commemoration event

former Khmer Rouge were imprisoned or reeducated for a short period of time. The government also tried and convicted Pol Pot and Ieng Sary in *absentia* of genocide in a one week “People’s Revolutionary Tribunal” that, while symbolically powerful and including some valuable evidence, failed to meet international standards of justice. For the next decade, the PRK called for an international tribunal, a call that went unheeded as the international community glossed over the “unfortunate events of the past” in supporting the Khmer Rouge.

After the 1993 UN-sponsored election in Cambodia, which the Khmer Rouge ended up boycotting in favor of continued armed struggle, the United States and other members of the international community began to call for a tribunal. Due to a successful defection campaign, the Royal Government of Cambodia demurred in favor of reconciliation. In the late 1990s, a large number of high-ranking Khmer Rouge, including Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Ke Pauk, and Nuon Chea, were allowed to defect to the government. Two others, the general Ta Mok and Duch, the former head of S-21, were captured and placed under arrest.

After years of negotiation, in 2003 the Cambodian government and the UN finally signed an agreement to establish the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), which will be a “mixed tribunal” comprising Cambodian and international legal personnel (Ciorciari 2006). Due to political realities, the ECCC has been given limited temporal and personal jurisdiction: it will only try crimes committed during DK and prosecute those Khmer Rouge who were “senior leaders” and criminally “most responsible.” Because of further delays, the ECCC only began operation in July 2006. The first trial is expected to begin in the summer of 2007.

The photographs in the section on “Justice and Responsibility” depict some of the key moments in this long road to justice: the 1979 PRK tribunal, the signing of the 2003 agreement establishing the ECCC, and the site of the ECCC itself. Other pictures, such as the pictures of Khmer Rouge leaders and mid-ranking officials “then and now,” raise important questions about justice and responsibility. Who, Cambodians are asking, should be held accountable for the violence that took place during DK? Why have the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge been allowed to live freely for so long? And, will they, like Pol Pot (who died in April 1998) and Ta Mok (July 2006), die before they face justice or will they be tried for genocide and crimes against humanity?



Khmer Rouge leaders on train. First two seats in left row are "Brothers Number One and Two," Pol Pot and Nuon Chea; First two seats on right side, Vorn Vet, Deputy Prime Minister for Economy, and Ta Mok, Zone Secretary and Chief of the General Staff, Armed Forces.

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Three of these pictures depict Khmer Rouge cadre prior to Democratic Kampuchea. There is a looseness to the pictures that contrasts with many of the photographs from the Khmer Rouge period. The last photo depicts a Khmer Rouge cadre covered in money, which was eliminated, along with markets and private property, during Democratic Kampuchea.

Young Khmer Rouge cadre



# VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS? THE TESTIMONY OF YOUNG COMRADES AT S-21

MENG-TRY EA AND SORYA SIM

**W**ere the young comrades working at Tuol Sleng Prison (S-21) perpetrators or victims? How were they perpetrators, and how were they victims? This essay, a condensed version of lengthier treatment, argues that the S-21 young comrades must be seen as victims of the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime, in contrast with the traditional view that they were simply perpetrators.

These comrades worked in the most secret and systematic execution center of the regime, and oversaw the execution of some 20,000 people. This essay posits that innocent boys from Region 31 were transformed into young revolutionaries, and finally became S-21 young comrades. Child cadres in Region 31 (Kampong Chhnang province) joined the KR revolution under the command of the mighty village and district chiefs. They were not told where they were going or what they would be doing. They were indoctrinated to hate their parents and to love the KR revolution boundlessly. They were robbed of their childhood.

Child cadres from Region 31 became slaves to a revolution they could not escape. They endured horrible conditions, and many of them did not survive the experience. Those who did survive bear physical and psychological scars from which they will never recover. In each of these ways, the young comrades of S-21 fell victim to the KR revolution.

## INTRODUCTION

The infamous KR S-21 prison was located in the southern part of the capital of the Phnom Penh, in Tuol Svay Prey subdistrict. S-21 stands for “Security Office 21.” A former school known as Tuol Svay Prey, it was converted by the KR for use as the headquarters of their secret police organization, the Santebal. It functioned mainly as an interrogation and torture facility.

The prison was used to uncover suspected enemies of the party from throughout the country, as well as those from foreign countries. Several annexes of the main S-21 facility at Tuol Sleng were also part of the headquarters complex, including a training school in Ta Khmau called S-21 (*kor*), a colonial-era prison in Dang Kor District, which was called Office 24 or S-21 (*kh*) and was used as a prison farm and reeducation center, a place called Boeung

Tompon, about five kilometers south of Phnom Penh, used to raise animals, and a large execution site eighteen kilometers west of Phnom Penh known as Cheung Ek, or S-21 (K).

Established in May 1976, S-21 employed a total of 1,685 cadres in four categories: Internal Forces, a staff of 141; Officers, 148; Interrogators, 54; Capable Workforce, 1,377.

The prison workers were carefully selected and had to have good “revolutionary” biographies and a firm political background. The KR recruited workers for this crucial state institution from all around the country, and for the most part, they were children.

This paper examines a group of children under 18 years old who were recruited from Kampong Chhnang province, some ninety kilometers north of Phnom Penh. The guards, interrogators and other staff at the infamous KR S-21 prison, are almost always depicted as heinous perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide. But it is rarely recalled that many, perhaps most, of these KR cadres were in fact children. They were deprived of their innocence and thrust into a world that none of them could have imagined, and few would have chosen. Therefore this essay argues that these “child soldiers” of the KR revolution must be viewed not just as perpetrators, but also as victims of the KR revolution.

The longer version of this study examines the views of psychologists regarding children, their malleability, and the damage that can be inflicted upon them by trauma at a tender age. It also examines the work of scholars whose studies reveal that the KR purposely selected children to be the vanguard of their revolution because they are so easily shaped. Last it shows how many of these children fell victim to the KR. This shorter version treats these matters in brief.

School-aged children in KR Region 31, like children everywhere, wanted only to play with toys and chase one another in the fields. But they were manipulated and forced to join the KR revolutionary armed forces. They were assigned to village militias and became district cadres. After gaining some experience, these youthful village and district cadres were assigned by their village and district chiefs to leave their homes and their parents to work for the “Party Center.”

These child cadres were deceived by their local leaders and sent to nearby villages for study. Some, unwilling to leave their families, were forced to go. They were told to pack and leave in the middle of the night. These child cadres had no idea where they were going or what they would be doing. They left their home villages filled with suspicion and fear. After leaving their homes, the child cadres were sent to a



Female Khmer Rouge cadre



military training school at Ta Khmau. There they were trained in military arts, and required to work very hard, day and night. The child cadres were indoctrinated to love the KR and hate their own parents. They were indoctrinated according to KR ideology, which emphasized love of work and love for the KR organization. They were being turned into revolutionaries, and being prepared to serve as prison guards, interrogators, prison support staff or whatever other work the party specified.

For these reasons, such children must be viewed not just as perpetrators, but also as victims of the KR revolution. Also supporting this view is the research of child psychologists. A significant amount of scientific research has been carried out on the psychology of survivors of genocidal trauma, including some work on survivors of the Cambodian genocide. But very little research has been done on the psychology of the perpetrators of genocide. As trauma expert Dr. Judith Herman notes, “Little is known about the mind of the perpetrator.”

To paraphrase Craig Etcheson, psychiatric studies of Cambodian genocide survivors have shown that symptoms of serious psychological problems—such as recurring nightmares, trouble concentrating or sleeping, and signs of clinical depression—can endure for years after the traumatic experience has ended. Recent studies suggest that a significant proportion of the Cambodian population still suffers from these problems, often diagnosed as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

To date, there are no studies that might confirm whether these effects appear in KR child cadres who were involved in torture. Although the present study is the first research treatment to focus exclusively on KR child cadres, much previous work has been done on the problem of child soldiers around the world. Some of these studies will shed light on child cadres of the KR. A report prepared for the United Nations on child soldiers found that “Some commanders have even noted the desirability of child soldiers because they are ‘more obedient, do not question orders and are easier to manipulate than adult soldiers.’” The report notes that “The lure of ideology is particularly strong in early adolescence, when young people are developing personal identities and searching for a sense of social meaning. As the case of Rwanda shows, however, the ideological indoctrination of youth can have disastrous consequences.” Quoting psychiatrist Richard Mollica discussing Rwanda, David Chandler pointed out that “Young people are very idealistic and the powers prey on them.” Joanna Barbara has also studied children who have been recruited into armies. Barbara notes, “Cambodian young people who had lived through the Pol Pot regime between the ages of 6 and 12 had



Khmer Rouge practicing martial arts with Chinese advisors, probably in Ta Khmao.

suffered catastrophically traumatic events. Their depression declined over time, but posttraumatic stress disorder was diagnosed at high rates.” She points out that “The children whose moral development has been most destructively affected are those who have been trained to kill. When fighting is over and the children have to return to society, it is very difficult to place them in schools or families.”

The mental health consequences of exposure to constant torture and killing, one would imagine, are severe for both victims and perpetrators. Mental health professionals have found that such trauma induced psychological difficulties are particularly difficult to treat in Cambodian patients. Moreover, these ill effects may be particularly severe when the victims are children. We are then left to consider how common it was for the KR to use children in situations that were likely to produce trauma. Historians and other scholars studying the KR have written extensively about the use and abuse of children to serving the revolution. Henri Locard summarized the KR approach to the use of children by quoting KR leader Pol Pot: “To establish a new society we need new people.”

Craig Etcheson explained why the KR preferred to use children as the basis for their revolution: “Indeed, the party did favor the young, finding in them a very useful tool. With marginally integrated cognitive belief systems and immature development of normative values, the young are ideal instruments of revolution. Mature persons, more set in their ways and more resistant to the internalization of the new revolutionary values, are more problematic.”

Cambodian children could be trained to carry out KR orders, no matter how brutal and cruel. Even Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, himself once a young KR cadre, understood the consequences of this process. In an essay titled “The Origin of the KR Regime,” Hun Sen argues that those who served in the KR revolutionary process were both brutal executioners and victims of the terrorist regime.

Thus, as mental health professionals and other specialists on children have argued, children are innocent and therefore malleable; hence, they are easily trained. The KR knew this, and used it in their attempt to build a new society. Historians have documented this fact. These observations lead toward the conclusion that cadre children were also victims of the revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Meng-Try Ea and Sorya Sim, “Victims and Perpetrators? The Testimony of Young Comrades at S-21,” Search for the Truth, No. 13 (Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2001); see also Victims and Perpetrators? Testimony of Young Khmer Rouge Comrades (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2001).



Female Khmer Rouge cadre



Pagoda in ruins after  
Democratic Kampuchea



## REMAINS OF THE DEAD: BUDDHIST TRADITION, EVIDENCE AND MEMORY

WYNNE COUGILL

**W**hen Vietnamese-led forces invaded Cambodia in late December 1978 and toppled the Khmer Rouge, they discovered ample evidence of the mass death brought about by Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea regime. The death toll during the nearly four years that the Khmer Rouge held power was relatively small compared to those of many modern genocides (an estimated 1.7 million people perished from execution or as the result of starvation, disease, or forced labor), but no other genocide has approached Cambodia's in terms of the percentage of the population who died. The Khmer Rouge were responsible for the loss of about a quarter of the country's people.

In the wake of the devastation the Khmer Rouge visited on Cambodia, there was little public outcry over the disposition of the bones found in the mass graves that dotted the country, most of which were left untouched and exposed to the elements. Nearly all Cambodia's infrastructure had been destroyed during the regime (schools, banks, post offices, and telecommunications were shut down, and religious structures were converted into prisons) and most of its educated people had died, leaving survivors more concerned with the struggle to live than attending to the dead.

After seven years of negotiations, in October 2004, the Royal Cambodian Government and the United Nations ratified an agreement on the prosecution of crimes committed during Democratic Kampuchea and amendments to the law that establishes Extraordinary Chambers for a tribunal of the regime's senior leaders. In addition to their historical importance, the bones in Cambodia's mass graves will provide physical evidence of mass murders at the trials. But more recently, a debate has surfaced over their treatment and preservation.

### EARLY EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THE BONES

The Vietnamese-installed government of Cambodia (the People's Republic of Kampuchea, PRK) sought to preserve the skeletal remains in Cambodia, at first to prove that their ideological and political enemy China had been behind the mass murders in Cambodia. Later, they viewed the bones as evidence of genocide and thus a justification for the PRK's control of the country. (At this time, the United Nations and several Western

governments still recognized the Khmer Rouge as the country's legitimate government.) Two important sites in the Phnom Penh area were the focus of their attention, and have become symbolic of the horrors of Democratic Kampuchea today.

The first is Tuol Sleng, a former Phnom Penh high school that served as a secret, state-level prison during Democratic Kampuchea (it was known to the Khmer Rouge by its code name S-21). According to documents found in and around the prison, at least 14,000 enemies of the state were detained here, and when the Vietnamese entered Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, they found only seven survivors. At Tuol Sleng (which was made into a national museum in 1980 using the massive documentation that survived at the site), the PRK created a 12 meter-square map containing 300 exhumed skulls, with Cambodia's many rivers painted in blood red. They remained on public display until 2002, when the map was dismantled. Today, the skulls from the map are housed in a wooden case enclosed by glass.

The second is the "killing field" of Choeung Ek, which was discovered about a year after the invasion. Most of Tuol Sleng's inmates, in addition to many other Cambodians—at least 20,000 people—were executed at this site, which is about 15 km from the prison. Victims were usually forced to kneel at the edge of the mass graves while guards clubbed them on the back of the neck or head with a hoe or spade. Large-scale excavations took place at Choeung Ek in 1980: about 89 mass graves were disinterred out of the approximately 130 in the vicinity. The bones of nearly 9,000 individuals were removed from the site with the assistance of Vietnamese forensic specialists. The remains were treated with chemical preservatives and placed in a wooden memorial pavilion with open walls. To the dismay of many, PRK officials also "arranged" bones in a decorative manner for photographs.

In the decade immediately following the toppling of the Khmer Rouge, many national and local-level memorials were constructed throughout Cambodia. A new memorial was built at Choeung Ek in June 1988. Its 62 meter tall concrete *stupa* contains a sealed glass display housing about 8,000 skulls. Vietnamese General Mai Lam, the archivist of Tuol Sleng Museum and designer of the skull map, characterized the preservation of human remains as "very important for the Cambodian people—it's the proof."<sup>1</sup>

## BUDDHISM AND THE PRESERVATION OF REMAINS

About 95% of Cambodians practice Hinayana Buddhism, which does not prescribe cremation. But



Vietnamese experts and the skulls of Khmer Rouge victims, 1979

Construction of the Map of  
Skulls, Tuol Sleng Museum of  
Genocidal Crimes





Map of Skulls, Tuol Sleng  
Museum of Genocidal Crimes

cremating the dead has been a tradition in Cambodia and other Buddhist societies in Asia for centuries. Many Cambodians believe that cremation and other rituals for the dead help ease the deceased's transition to rebirth. After cremation, Cambodians store their family members' ashes in a *stupa* so their souls can be liberated for reincarnation.

Overlaying this tradition is the syncretistic practice of Buddhism in Cambodia, which combines elements of Hinduism and animism. Among the many spirits present in the animistic world are those of the dead. The spirits of people who died unnatural deaths are considered to be the most malevolent of these; because their spirits cannot rest, they haunt the living and cause them misfortune.

In the case of especially inauspicious deaths, such as by violence or accident, it is widely believed that the dead person's spirit or ghost remains in the place where he or she died, and does not move on to rebirth. One researcher has noted that "many Cambodians consider Choeng Ek a highly dangerous place and refuse to visit the Memorial. In addition, to have uncremated remains on *display* is considered by some to be a great offence, and tantamount to a second violence being done to the victims."<sup>2</sup>

## THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE REMAINS

Most Cambodians—the general population, the religious community, and the government—seem to support the preservation of skulls and other human remains of Democratic Kampuchea. (This support is reinforced by an underlying belief in Buddhist tradition that people can cremate only the remains of their family members. Because virtually no individuals in the country's killing fields have been identified from their remains, cremation could pose some obstacles in Cambodia.)

The Cambodian Government has long supported the preservation of the bones as evidence. Prime Minister Hun Sen, for example, issued instructions for the remains in late 2001:

In order to preserve the remains as evidence of these historic crimes and as the basis for remembrance and education by the Cambodian people as a whole, especially future generations, of the painful and terrible history brought about by the Democratic Kampuchea regime...the government issues the following directives:



Construction of Memorial  
after Democratic Kampuchea,  
possibly in Kompong Chhnang

1. All local authorities at the province and municipal level shall cooperate with relevant expert institutions in their areas to examine, restore and maintain all existing memorials, and to examine and research other remaining grave sites, so that all such places may be transformed into memorials<sup>3</sup>

Neither has there been an outcry from the Buddhist clergy. In fact, many monks seem to welcome the preservation of remains *in situ*. Penh Samarn, the patriarch monk at Kroch Seuch pagoda, initiated the construction of a memorial for the remains from Sa-ang prison in Cambodia's Kandal province in late 1999. He told staff from the Documentation Center of Cambodia:

One reason I got the idea to construct this memorial is that one member of my family was killed at Sa-ang Prison. Another reason is that I observed the remains in a sad state, just sitting there exposed to the sun, wind, and rain. The remains have decayed and have even been eaten by cows. That inspired me to think that if the remains continued to lie in the state they were in, they would certainly vanish and no evidence would be left for younger generations to see. In addition, if Buddhist followers wanted to come to light incense and pay homage to commemorate the souls of the dead, there was not a place for them to do so. So this idea of building a memorial for the remains came to my mind.

But the loss of the remains is what I have worried about the most. Because if people say "many died there," but there are no remains there, how can we believe? So preserving the remains is the most important reason. I am not conceited. Many people have contributed their money. I did not build this on my own. I do not want to lose the evidence, so that people from various places can come to pray and pay homage to the dead. And I will request the district governor that this memorial for the remains should exist forever. And I am thinking of having monks stay there and for people to come and pay homage because some souls of the dead have made their parents or children dream of them, and told them that they are wandering around and have not reincarnated in another world. I want to have monks meditating there so that the souls of the dead will rest in peace. In Buddhism, when someone dies and their mind is still with this world, then their souls wander around. The



Mass Grave, site unknown

remains are a legacy for the younger generation so that they may know how vicious the Khmer Rouge regime was, because the young did not experience the regime. I experienced this regime. Some lived through this regime as children but they still do not believe; how can those who did not live through believe? What can they base belief on?

[Speaking of the possibility that authorities would require that the bones be moved] I would not dare to oppose them at all. I could only request that they do not burn them, but give them to me. Please do not touch the remains because I have a stupa for them already. If they do not want that, I can bring them to my pagoda here. But if they still insist that the remains be burnt, I dare not oppose them. In my opinion, if they do not want us to keep the remains there, I would like to keep them in my pagoda so that people can come and hold religious ceremonies for their dead relatives.<sup>4</sup>

Instead, opposition has come mainly from former King Norodom Sihanouk and some members of Cambodia's royalist party, FUNCINPEC. On February 23, 2001, Sihanouk wrote to Hun Sen asking that the skulls be removed from the map at Tuol Sleng and "cremated in the Buddhist way" so their souls could find rest.<sup>5</sup> Hun Sen later indicated his willingness to hold a national referendum on the issue after any trials of former Khmer Rouge.

Sihanouk also posted a letter on his website in February 2004, decrying the way the bones of Khmer Rouge victims have been left out and exposed around the country. He wrote that those killed by the Khmer Rouge will "never have peace and serenity" and that their remains should be cremated in nationwide religious ceremonies.<sup>6</sup>

On April 17, 2004, Sihanouk marked the 29th anniversary of Phnom Penh's fall to the Khmer Rouge by calling for the cremation of victims of the killing fields. "We are Buddhists whose belief and customs since ancient times have always been to cremate the corpses and then bring the remains to be placed in the stupa at the pagoda."<sup>7</sup>

#### AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE CONTROVERSY

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) has made a number of efforts to reconcile the views



Spiritual Dedication for the souls of those who died during Democratic Kampuchea

of the king and respect for Buddhist beliefs with the needs for public education and forensic evidence from the genocide. For example, in 2002, it replaced the skull map with a satellite map of Cambodia identifying the locations of prisons and mass graves from Democratic Kampuchea. The King subsequently wrote to DC-Cam, “I would like to express my profound gratitude and warm appreciation of your unique state-of-the-art initiative in zooming the map of Cambodia with genocide sites to replace the existing skull map being displayed at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.”<sup>8</sup>

In 2003, the Center provided a large number of skulls from Choeung Ek and other parts of Cambodia to a team of North American forensics specialists.<sup>9</sup> The experts chose ten skulls for analysis. In February 2004, DC-Cam mounted an exhibition of the skulls at Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Entitled “The Bones Cannot Find Peace until the Truth they Hold in Themselves has been Revealed,” the exhibit sought to demonstrate the value of forensics in documenting the Khmer Rouge’s crimes against humanity and to educate the public about the types of information that can be scientifically gathered from victims’ remains.

Originally, DC-Cam wished to display the skulls for public viewing. However, out of respect for King Sihanouk and other Cambodians who are uncomfortable with the idea of boxing human remains, the Center looked for another solution. It thus housed the skulls in a separate room at Tuol Sleng, which is open only to officials (e.g., prosecutors at the Khmer Rouge tribunal). Their final disposition will be determined once the tribunal is over.

The skulls rest on identical pedestals built from slightly overlapping wooden slats. Spaces have been left between the slats so that air can reach the skulls, thus allowing the spirits to come and go as they wish. To protect the skulls, the Center placed them in clear, five-sided Plexiglas cases secured with soft silicone caulk. The cases can be removed by cutting the caulk with a razor blade, allowing the skulls to be cleaned or moved. For the exhibition itself, the Center chose to photograph the skulls, which were accompanied by text explaining the type of trauma to each skull.

King Sihanouk has proposed building a *stupa* at the old royal capital of Udong to house the ashes from the cremated skeletons. Once the Khmer Rouge tribunal is over, it may finally be possible to lay the victims to rest more than a quarter of a century after the genocide.



Cranium of a man, 25 to 45 years old. Gunshot wound of entrance in the left frontal convexity with the bullet passing into the brain from right to left and downward on a 45-degree angle (as indicated by the "keyhole" effect). Catalogue No. TSL13, 2A50700; photograph from the DC-Cam Tuol Sleng Forensics Exhibition.

Photo by Heng Sinith

<sup>1</sup> Hughes, R., “Memory and sovereignty in post-1979 Cambodia: Choeung Ek and local genocide memorials,” in S. Cook (ed.) *New perspectives on genocide: Cambodia and Rwanda* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2004): 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76. A few caveats are in order regarding these observations. First, Cambodian Buddhists do not bury their dead, and thus do not visit grave sites as such (those of Chinese descent do bury their dead and honor them by grave visits, however). Thus, most Cambodians view Choeung Ek as a *stupa*, not as a memorial. Second, the offense taken is a natural human reaction: the bones may be those of one’s relatives, which makes many people reluctant to visit the memorial. Last, some Cambodians do view Choeung Ek as a dangerous place because of the ghosts present, not because they fear physical violence by robbers, etc. Those who have visited this site do so to share their sorrow; thus, Choeung Ek can be viewed as a place of healing for survivors.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia (2001). Circular on preservation of remains of the genocide (1975-1978), and preparation of Anlong Veng to become a region for historical tourism. Phnom Penh, 14 December, copy held at the Documentation Center of Cambodia, 1 page.

<sup>4</sup> Phat, Kosal, “Necessity of Preserving Physical Evidence” (2004), [www.dccam.org/Archives/Physical/Importance.htm](http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Physical/Importance.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Original letter in the possession of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

<sup>6</sup> <http://openhere.com/current/414456498.stm>

<sup>7</sup> *The Cambodia Daily*. April 19, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Bail, Molly and Lor Chandara, “Skull map at museum may be removed,” *The Cambodia Daily*, October 17, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> DC-Cam uses global satellite position mapping combined with fieldwork to document mass graves nationwide. To date, it has identified over 385 genocide sites containing more than 19,000 mass graves (these are defined as any pit containing 4 or more bodies, although some graves hold over 1,000 skeletons) dating from the Khmer Rouge regime. In addition, the Center has documented 196 prisons from Democratic Kampuchea and 81 genocide memorials.



Mass grave, site unknown



Prisoner in block of single cells  
at S-21



## TUOL SLENG, ABU GHRAIB, AND THE DISCOURSE OF TORTURE

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*No exceptional circumstances whatever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture. —The United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1987—Ratified by the United States*

**T**orture is not peculiar to Cambodia. My cousin Marylen Viola was tortured and executed in Argentina’s “Dirty War,” orchestrated by a military junta against students, trade-unionists, dissidents, and the general population—30,000 of whom were “disappeared” between the 1970s and early 1980s—a regime coeval with the Khmer Rouge. Marylen’s husband was imprisoned for almost ten years, without a charge. Only the fall of the junta after the Malvinas war released him. Two other cousins, one of them a journalism student, were abducted and interrogated, using torture tactics, and released. They immediately fled to Mexico, then the United States, where such a crime against its own citizens cannot happen, not with state authorization—not, that is, until now. So the matter of state-sanctioned torture hits home.

### THE HALLMARK OF TOTALITARIANISM

State-authorized torture is the hallmark of a totalitarian regime, according to many writers on torture<sup>1</sup>—regardless of a state’s claim to legitimacy through the use of rhetorical appeals to democracy or egalitarian communism. The Khmer Rouge’s Democratic Kampuchea, in this sense, was no more communist (*rouge*) than it was democratic. These terms functioned as verbal masks to obscure what became a deeply paranoid form of totalitarianism, one that spiraled out of control into auto-genocide. State torture is the signpost of state paranoia.

Democratic Kampuchea’s strictly hierarchical structure of political power began at the top with its own form of Big Brother—literally, “Brother Number One”: Pol Pot—and moved in pyramidal steps of descending authority down to the foundation, the powerless peasants. Intellectuals, the middle class, urban workers, and even the industrial means of

production—socialism’s purported historical motors toward communism—were all effectively destroyed by the Khmer Rouge, leaving in their wake a veritable slave economy, based on peasant, forced-labor “worker cooperatives.” Egalitarianism in Democratic Kampuchea never extended beyond the equally shared sense of terror felt by all Cambodians, including the Party’s cadre and even its leaders, below the top rungs. All were subject to purges.

Social philosopher Michel de Certeau has written that torture is a process by which a tyrannical power recovers what it has destroyed and lacks: authority and legitimacy.<sup>2</sup> The knowledge of this lack, we may add, is what drives a tyrannical power’s constitutive paranoia—its trademark purges. In an ad absurdum cycle of self-destruction, the Khmer Rouge further destroyed through coercion that which it could not win freely: the hearts and minds of its own people. It lost this trust by working people literally to death and by prying open their minds through systematic interrogation and torture.

The Khmer Rouge reference to Brother Number One is not the only element that reminds us of George Orwell, who describes the self-legitimizing methods of totalitarian states in his Stalin-inspired novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. State paranoia calls for the policing of thought. It is the job of interrogators, the Thought Police, to uncover and punish *thoughtcrime*, which includes the mere thought of challenging the ruling authority. All state dissidents, as such, become de facto criminals in the eyes of agencies responsible for policing critical, not just dissident, thought. This was the case in Democratic Kampuchea. We might also bear in mind the dangers of this paradigm as we debate contemporary practices in the United States, such as the illegal surveillance of U.S. citizens: listening to their private conversations, reading their mail, examining their financial transactions, and detaining them—without a warrant or even secret judicial overview.

## THE CONFESSION

A secret prison system in Democratic Kampuchea was designed to ferret out and eliminate political opposition. The state also manufactured that opposition when it incarcerated workers and leaders, scapegoating them for its own economic failures and accusing them of treason and economic sabotage. In their forced confessions, prisoners were always made to implicate their associates, identifying a “string of traitors” in lists sometimes over a hundred names long and giving the impression of vast conspiracies at work.

In his book *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, Alex Hinton recounts the



top: Unknown prisoner in communal cell at S-21



bottom: Prisoners chained in communal cell; photo of painting by Vann Nath

interrogation experience of Vann Nath, a painter whose illustrations of torture at Tuol Sleng appear in this exhibition: “One of the men [an interrogator] asked Nath to recount his life history and then began interrogating him about why he had been arrested. When Nath claimed he didn’t know, the interrogator responded: “No, Angkar [the Organization] is not stupid and doesn’t arrest people who are innocent. Now think hard, comrade. What did you do wrong?... Do you remember [what you did] or not? Who are the despicable people who joined you in having traitorous thoughts?”<sup>3</sup>

Extracting a confession from the prisoner, including a list of co-conspirators’ names, was the core function of interrogations. Executing prisoners in mass graves, which came to be known as “the killing fields,” was the final step in the process. Confessions began, as it did for Nath, with the telling of one’s life story, which would then be scrutinized for “traitorous thoughts” and actions. An interrogator’s manual found at S-21, code name for the prison at Tuol Sleng, explains the process: “They must write confessions in their own voice, clearly, using their own sentences, their own ideas. We should avoid telling them what to write. When they have finished telling their story or writing it down, only then can we raise their weak points, press them to explain why they did things, why they are lying, concealing, abbreviating things.”<sup>4</sup> This meant going back and forth for days, sometimes weeks, between confessions produced and further interrogation required for the finer, weak points of a prisoner’s story. “Beat until he tells everything, beat him to get at the deep things,” wrote Brother Duch, chief of S-21.<sup>5</sup>

Some interrogators kept records of their activities. For instance, one interrogator wrote of his prisoner: “I tortured him some more, concentrating on hidden stories. If he was hiding small stories, he must be hiding large ones as well.” An interrogator’s notebook from 1976 spells out a two-pronged approach in which “doing politics” and using torture are integral to the interrogations: “The enemy can’t escape from torture; the only difference is whether they receive a little or a lot. While we consider torture to be a necessary measure, we must do politics [with them] so they will confess to us, [but] it’s only when we have forced them via politics to confess that torture can be used. Only when we put maximum political pressure on them, forcing them by using politics to confess, will torture become effective.”<sup>6</sup> “Doing politics” meant pressuring the prisoner with insults and questions and insisting that the Party already knew of the crimes alleged. David Chandler, a historian of S-21, points out, “the borderline between ‘pressure’ and ‘torture’ [is] not defined.... Long before torture was applied, interrogations were routinely accompanied by kicks and punches.”<sup>7</sup>



Bou Meng  
Extracting a Confession  
July 8, 2004  
Acrylic on canvas

## WHY TORTURE SEEMED TO WORK

1. *At first, lift his information.*
2. *Next, assemble many points to pressure him so he cannot raise his head.*
3. *Proselytize and squeeze him politically.*
4. *Question him hard and curse him.*
5. *Torture him.*
6. *Examine and analyze his confession to use in interrogating him again.*
7. *Examine and analyze his confession to prepare a report.*
8. *Watch over him closely. Don't allow him to die. Don't let them hear one another.*
9. *Maintain secrecy.*

—S-21 Interrogation Handbook

The contents of this exhibition are political as well as historical, and the lessons we draw from them cannot be circumscribed by academic discipline. They spill over, as valuable lessons do, into the current arena of world affairs. Many nations today secretly sanction the use of torture. We must assume that they do so because they believe it works. The reason for interrogation rule number 9, above, “Maintain secrecy,” is self-evident: knowledge of the atrocities committed at S-21 would reveal the inhumanity of the Khmer Rouge prison system. We must ask ourselves and our public servants, therefore: What can be the reason for operating a secret prison system today, especially offshore, avoiding the national laws that would oversee it—as the current U.S. administration maintains in Europe?

At Tuol Sleng torture was understood as an instrument with which to “do politics” and to punish counterrevolutionary offenses. What also became clear to some of the staff at the prison was that torture manufactured the offenses interrogators documented. The prisoners themselves attested to this fact, admitting in their testimonials that they would rather confess to whatever charge was raised than to go on being tortured. Other prisoner testimonies recount such fantastic crimes or affiliations to the CIA or the KGB that they must have been concocted simply to end the torture, and with the prisoners’ knowledge that they were signing their own death warrants.



Interrogation Room at S-21. A handful of prisoners were found dead and chained to their beds when the liberation army arrived.

The documents left behind at Tuol Sleng reveal three general reasons why torture seemed to work as an effective evidence-gathering instrument: one, we all commit thoughtcrime; two, our thoughts may always be construed as criminal; and three, we will always manufacture thoughtcrime to stop the torture. Because they come from the unconscious, we all have thoughts we cannot control. We can only manage thoughts, more or less, at the level of consciousness, a management we call *reason*, providing systems of order for the thoughts and desires that well up, unbidden. The latter may be categorized as healthy or seditious in a taxonomic system designed to discriminate and label offending thoughts. The obvious problem with this cynical attitude toward thought itself—that we may sin in our hearts—is that our thoughts can be judged to run the gamut of moral values, i.e., that thoughts can always be construed as good or bad, and that we can always be found guilty of having been visited by an ill thought, even about the things we love.

The point here is that in theory torture will always succeed in finding *or* creating that which it seeks. It has but to beat or fashion an ill thought out of its victim—like a metal smith pounding the “softened” raw material into the shape desired. Torture therefore is an effective instrument in the manufacture of the crime itself (production of seditious statements), as well as the criminal evidence (records of seditious statements)—neither of which need bear a causal relationship to an anterior criminal act. The effectiveness of this productivity in turn justifies the instrumental practice of torture. Torture is therefore self-sustaining, self-feeding, and self-justifying. The irony, lost on the states that practice it, is that torture produces the crime they would eradicate—opposition to the state.

### THE DISCOURSE OF TORTURE

The discourse of torture is the discourse of culpability. It provides the state with a handle to the human soul—a redundant figure I use for its self-valorizing force. In the incompleteness of self, as it is revealed in the faulty attempts to articulate a life history, the space of culpability is laid bare. The production of discourse, and not simply speech, may be taken as a *sine qua non* of humanity—a useful anthropological trope for proposing a universalism of political equality. In the form of a confession, however, discourse also seems to provide the competing evidence of inhumanity: the articulation of crimethought—that which lowers the ontological value of the entity, the suspect, by betraying the sanctity of pure human thought. If discourse raises the status of the speaker by providing a link to the soul—as a consistency of utterances emanating from



A prisoner, possibly  
Vietnamese, who committed  
suicide.



the psyche or soul—then the extraction of a special discourse, a confession of betrayal, can be taken as the process by which the soul itself is expurgated, leaving the carnal body open to carnal disposal. This was the practice in the prison system of Democratic Kampuchea, in which confessions began with the life story of an individual and ended in slaughter.

To enter the discourse on torture is to barter within a linguistic economy of terms that function as internal points of discussion. This should be straightforward enough, concerning any discourse: one learns to speak a language by learning its terms and how they circulate in a field of discussion. Less obvious, however, is one's concomitant entry into the *logic* of a discourse—in this case, the logic of torture. One has to enter into the *reason* of torture—its mindset, if you will—which is the price of admission to its language game. In doing so, one cedes logical ground without contest. One agrees, wittingly or not, to the terms, not just the terminology, of torture. Many intellectuals, on different sides of the recent revival of debates over the use of torture, step into this discursive arena without questioning the house rules. They proceed to debate the conditions under which torture might be permissible without examining the ticket they bought at the door—the assumptions they purchased, internalized, and then regurgitate 'in debate.'

Legal theorist Charles Fried, for example, concocts a hypothetical situation in which “killing an innocent person may save a whole nation.”<sup>8</sup> The absurdity of such a situation does not seem to ruffle the thinking of legal commentators such as Sanford Levinson, who find “force” in Fried's hypothetical, utilitarian imperative. This occasion, however, of alternate-world conjecture finds precedence only in magical thinking, such as that said of the Aztecs, for whom the regular sacrifice of innocents to the gods was necessary to the wellbeing and survival of the state. Claude Levi Strauss called this kind of intellect “la pensée sauvage.” In contemporary popular culture we find this form of thrill-thinking in entertainment: in action and comic cinema, combined, for instance, in the imaginary global threats of Austin Powers' Dr. Evil. These fantasy situations, however, find no place in the history or present of actual threats—which threaten us in reality, not in conjecture.

Bomb-threat scenarios, like the one proposed by legal theorist Alan Dershowitz—in which a bomber might be tortured to ascertain the bomb's location (a blatantly false analogy for torturing *suspects*)—are designed to crack the moral stronghold of deontological positions against torture. If you can find a reason, any reason, to sanction torture, then you have crossed over to the other side, the side of utilitarians like Jeremy Bentham, for whom the ends justify the means. For deontologists (anti-utilitarians) such as Immanuel

Kant, on the other hand, to cross that line is to accept the non-moral view that human value can be reduced to the good it produces, that human beings may be used as means rather than ends in themselves. To enter into the discourse or even the debate on permissible, state-authorized torture is to enter its ironic illogic—to entertain the racist logic that some people are less than human and may be treated “like dogs.”

### THE DOGS OF TUOL SLENG AND ABU GHRAIB

Torture serves multiple functions, chief among them, for political purposes, is to prepare the subject for a confession—a baring of the soul, as we saw with S-21, but not solely for the purpose of revealing a human story of faults and expunging the very soul that confession conjures. This exorcism is also designed to expose the unprotected animal beneath, the animal at the base of human constitution. That animal is by definition, to the torturer, lower than the human and, in the simplified logic of state-authorized torture, worthy of subhuman disposal—worthy of the treatment of animals. “The first step in any imprisonment and even more starkly in judicial torture is to dehumanize the prisoner,” writes Chandler. “Because they were labeled ‘enemies’ the prisoners had lost their right to be treated as Cambodians or as human beings” (121).

In Tuol Sleng prisoners were made to pay homage to representations of dogs, thus substantiating their own subhuman status and rationalizing their own abuse—never mind the indefensible distinctions between animals and humans. “‘Paying homage’ was one of a series of degradations designed to force prisoners to recognize their animal status,” observes Chandler. “Their foreign masters were depicted as animals, and only animals would pay homage to them. Once the patron-dogs’ identities and the prisoners’ loyalty to them had been displayed, the prisoner was divested of revolutionary and human status, and the interrogation could proceed...to unearth ‘treacherous activities,’ ‘plans,’ and ‘strings of traitors.’ The prisoners by that point had become debased, unhealthy, document-producing creatures tottering on all fours toward their deaths” (134).

Photographs taken by post-liberation Abu Ghraib prison guards depict prisoners wearing dog collars and being dragged along the floor on leashes. Detainees were stripped naked, rendering them less than civilized, and were made to confront the fury of enraged dogs, also on collars. The symbol of one naked leashed animal facing another provides a basic equation for dehumanization. (Photographs of precisely these practices are available at *The Washington Post* photoarchive online.) These are not “rogue,” isolated instances of prisoner abuse, as claimed by the current administration; they are common and shared practices among prison

facilities. For instance, General Geoffrey Miller of Guantánamo was sent to Abu Ghraib specifically to replicate his interrogation techniques: “According to former Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who had original responsibility for the prison, Miller ordered her to treat all detainees ‘like dogs.’”<sup>9</sup>

## WATERBOARDING

Waterboarding is a torture technique dating back to the 16th century. In simulating the experience of drowning, it is designed to trigger a gag reflex and an uncontrollable and involuntary physical desperation. Current CIA practitioners of waterboarding, testing the technique on themselves, lasted only 14 seconds, on average, before surrendering.

The technique was also practiced at S-21. Ung Pech, one of the seven survivors of Tuol Sleng describes its uses, among others he witnessed at the prison: “Sometimes they would take an electrical wire and shock [prisoners], knocking them speechless or unconscious. They would stuff fish water into the prisoner’s ears or take [pliers] and pull off the nails of the fingers and toes and then pour alcohol on them. The sound of their pain would become even louder, sometimes suddenly stopping. They tied the legs of still other prisoners and hung them by the legs, upside down. They would then pour water into the prisoners’ noses in order to get them to answer their questions. There was another method in which they would take a cloth and put it over a prisoner’s face and pour water until they choked on it. Other times they would take a prisoner’s head and pound it on a cement table; sometimes the prisoner would fall unconscious for hours.”<sup>10</sup> Rendering a prisoner speechless or unconscious is another way of exercising control over the prisoner’s soul.

Another Tuol Sleng survivor, Im Chan, recalls: “The murderers beat me from morning until 11:00 p.m. My arms and legs were tied to the bed. They covered my face with a piece of cloth on which they poured water to suffocate me.” In another statement, he notes: “They would put a plastic bag over my head so that I could not breathe and fell unconscious. My torturers put a cloth over my face and then poured water onto it until the water went into my lungs and I started drowning. They stapled an electric wire attached to a light socket to my leg and gave me shocks. Every time they would bring me around and ask me if I was a traitor and I would say I wasn’t.”<sup>11</sup> The use of plastic bags over a prisoner’s head, and electrical wiring attached to the body, recalls the infamous photographs from Abu Ghraib.

In November 2005 ABC News leaked testimony on the CIA’s use and definition of waterboarding: “The



Bou Meng  
Water Boarding Torture  
July 13, 2004  
Acrylic on canvas

prisoner is bound to an inclined board, feet raised and head slightly below the feet. Cellophane is wrapped over the prisoner's face and water is poured over him. Unavoidably, the gag reflex kicks in and a terrifying fear of drowning leads to almost instant pleas to bring the treatment to a halt."<sup>12</sup>

In debate with Charles Krauthammer over the use of torture, Andrew Sullivan describes it as using the “involuntary, self-protective, self-defining resources of human beings against the integrity of the human being himself. It takes what is most involuntary in a person and uses it to break that person's will. It takes what is animal in us and deploys it against what makes us human. As an American commander wrote in an August 2003 e-mail about his instructions to torture prisoners at Abu Ghraib, ‘The gloves are coming off gentlemen regarding these detainees, Col. Boltz has made it clear that we want these individuals broken.’”<sup>13</sup>

## TORTURE TODAY

If we are to learn from the crimes of Tuol Sleng and Democratic Kampuchea something greater than a history lesson—if we are to make history live—we must concern ourselves with human rights in the present, with justice and accountability in contemporary Cambodia as well as at home in the United States. To that end, it is necessary to hear the new discourse of torture. A sergeant from the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division, serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, gave the following testimony to Human Rights Watch. He explains two general approaches to preparing a detainee for interrogation at the Army's Mercury Base, near Falluja, in Iraq: “smoking a PUC” and “fucking a PUC.” PUC is pronounced as “puck” and stands for “person under control.”

To “fuck a PUC” means to beat him up. We would give them blows to the head, chest, legs, and stomach, pull them down, kick dirt on them. This happened every day. To “smoke” someone is to put them in stress positions until they get muscle fatigue and pass out. That happened every day. Some days we would just get bored so we would have everyone sit in a corner and then make them get in a pyramid. This was before Abu Ghraib but just like that. We did that for amusement...

At the same time we should have been held to a higher standard. I know that now. It was wrong. There are a set of standards. But you gotta understand, this was the norm. Everyone would just sweep it under the rug. What you allowed to happen happened. Trends were accepted. Leadership

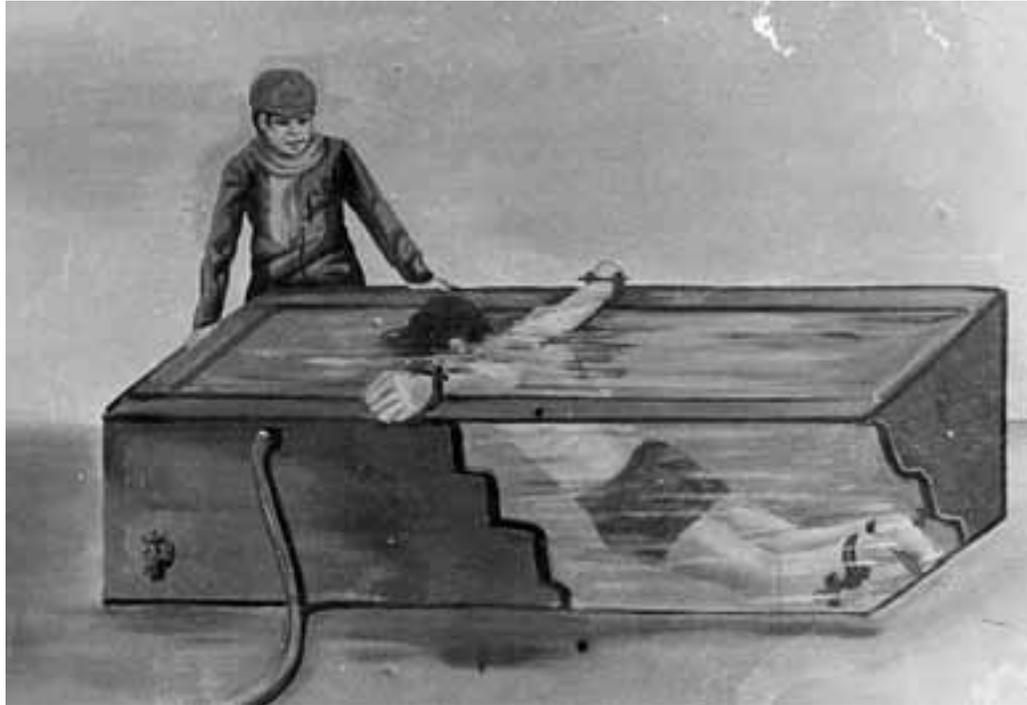


Depiction of dousing in water torture; photo of painting by Vann Nath, Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes

failed to provide clear guidance so we just developed it. They wanted intel [intelligence]. As long as no PUCs came up dead it happened. We heard rumors of PUCs dying so we were careful. We kept it to broken arms and legs and shit...

On their off day people would show up all the time. Everyone in camp knew if you wanted to work out your frustration you show up at the PUC tent, in a way it was sport. The cooks were all US soldiers. One day a sergeant shows up and tells a PUC to grab a pole. He told him to bend over and broke the guy's leg with a mini Louisville Slugger that was a metal bat. He was the fucking cook. He shouldn't be in with no PUCs.... People would just volunteer just to get their frustrations out. We had guys from all over the base just come to guard PUCs so they could fuck them up.... The interrogator [a sergeant] worked in the [intelligence] office. He was former Special Forces. He would come into the PUC tent and request a guy by number. Everyone was tagged. He would say, "Give me #22." And we would bring him out. He would smoke the guy and fuck him, he would always say to us, "You didn't see anything, right?" And we would always say, "No, Sergeant." One day a soldier came to the PUC tent to get his aggravation out and filled his hands with dirt and hit a PUC in the face. He fucked him. That was the communications guy. One night a guy came and broke chem [chemical] lights open and beat the PUCs with it [sic]. That made them glow in the dark which was real funny but it burned their eyes and their skin was irritated real bad....

[The Intelligence office] would tell the lieutenant that he had to smoke the prisoners and that is what we were told to do. No sleep, water, and just crackers. That's it. The point of doing all this was to get them ready for interrogation. [The intelligence officer] said he wanted the PUCs so fatigued, so smoked, so demoralized that they want to cooperate. But half of these guys got released because they didn't do nothing. We sent them back to Fallujah. But if he's a good guy, you know, now he's a bad guy because of the way we treated him. After Abu Ghraib things toned down, we still did it but we were careful. It is still going on now the same way, I am sure. Maybe not as blatant but it is how we do things.<sup>14</sup>



Depiction of immersion in water torture; picture of painting by Vann Nath, Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes

The sergeant's conclusion, that if the released detainee was a good guy, "now he's a bad guy," confirms two lessons from Tuol Sleng: that state-authorized torture manufactures its crime and its criminals, where it cannot find them, and that it creates its opposition and hence escalates the self-justifying, spiraling paranoia—now you cannot trust even the good guys. Who's left?

What is striking to Chandler about the imposition of torture at S-21, "is not its brutality...but its use within a graduated, supposedly rational process" (113). Simply put, torture is rationalized as a way of doing business with the "enemy." It becomes normalized as a proper show of force not only to the enemy, but also to those in whose name it serves to protect—and at the same time threaten. What is striking to me, however, is not the coolness of the rational process—part of every technologization—but the clear resonance of specific torture tactics with practices being condoned today. According to Chandler, "Officials at S-21 believed that when they tortured prisoners they were responding to the country's needs and to the fears of those who led it." Was this not the rational process at work at Abu Ghraib under Saddam Hussein? And is not the same rational process at work today in the logic of the U.S. State Department? The answer lies in the rule of law, articulated in The United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified into U.S. law, and quoted, in part, above.

1 See, for example, David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Sanford Levinson, ed., *Torture: A Collection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

2 Michel de Certeau, "Corps torturés, parole capturées," quoted in *Voices from S-21*: 195.

3 Alex Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 174-75.

4 Chandler, 108; further page references to this text are given in parentheses.

5 Peter Maguire, *Facing Death in Cambodia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 58.

6 Chandler, 195, 135.

7 Chandler, 82.

8 Charles Fried, *Right and Wrong* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978): 10; quoted in *Torture: A Collection*: 31.

9 Andrew Sullivan, "The Abolition of Torture," in *Torture: A Collection*: 323.

10 Hinton, 179.

11 Quoted in Peter Maguire, *Facing Death in Cambodia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 65; and Hinton, 179-180.

12 Sullivan, 319.

13 Sullivan, 318.

14 "Torture in Iraq," A Report by Human Rights Watch, *The New York Review of Books*, November 3, 2005. Full transcripts of the report can be found at the Human Rights Watch web site: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/us0905>.



Water torture device  
displayed in the Tuol Sleng  
Museum of Genocidal Crimes



# PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

# LIFE IN DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA



The evacuation of the cities,  
April 1975

Phnom Penh Street, still covered in debris, in July 1979





Toppled Idols. Among their many social transformations, the Khmer Rouge banned Buddhism, which constituted a competing socio-moral force and supposedly contributed to class oppression by siphoning money from the poor. During Democratic Kampuchea, monks were disrobed and sometimes killed, and, as this photo illustrates, pagodas and religious statuary were often destroyed. Some pagodas were even turned into prisons or torture centers.

Khmer Rouge cadre harvesting rice. The Khmer Rouge revolution was premised on the notion that the country could rapidly advance by dramatically increasing rice production, as illustrated by such Democratic Kampuchean slogans as, "He who has rice, has everything!" and "Three tons of rice per hectare!" Unfortunately, the Party's unrealistic rice quotas were often not met and local cadre made up the deficit by using rice that should have been saved for local consumption. As a result, people became malnourished or began to starve.





Cambodians transporting dirt on an irrigation project during Democratic Kampuchea

Khmer Rouge leaders and members of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Facing forward from the left, Pol Pot (CPK Secretary-General and Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea), Nuon Chea ("Brother Number Two" and Deputy Secretary of the CPK Central Committee), Ieng Sary (Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs), Son Sen (Deputy Prime Minister for Defense), and Vorn Vet (Deputy Prime Minister for Economy).





left: Mam Nay, also known as Chan and leader of the interrogator's unit at S-21, at the head of the line of cadre.

right: Two female Khmer Rouge cadre

top: Khmer Rouge cadre with Chinese advisors



bottom: Khmer Rouge Wedding. During Democratic Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge often decided who would marry and held mass weddings for couples. Many of the couples rarely saw each other in a world in which one's primary loyalties were supposed to be toward the Party.





top: S-21 prison chief Duch (standing to the left) and Khmer Rouge cadre eating communally



bottom: Communal Eating in Dining Hall

Khmer Rouge prison guards





Young Khmer Rouge cadre



Unidentified Khmer Rouge cadre





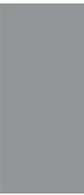
Unidentified Khmer Rouge cadre



## **THE KILLING FIELDS AND TUOL SLENG PRISON**



Sum Chreach, date of arrest  
unknown



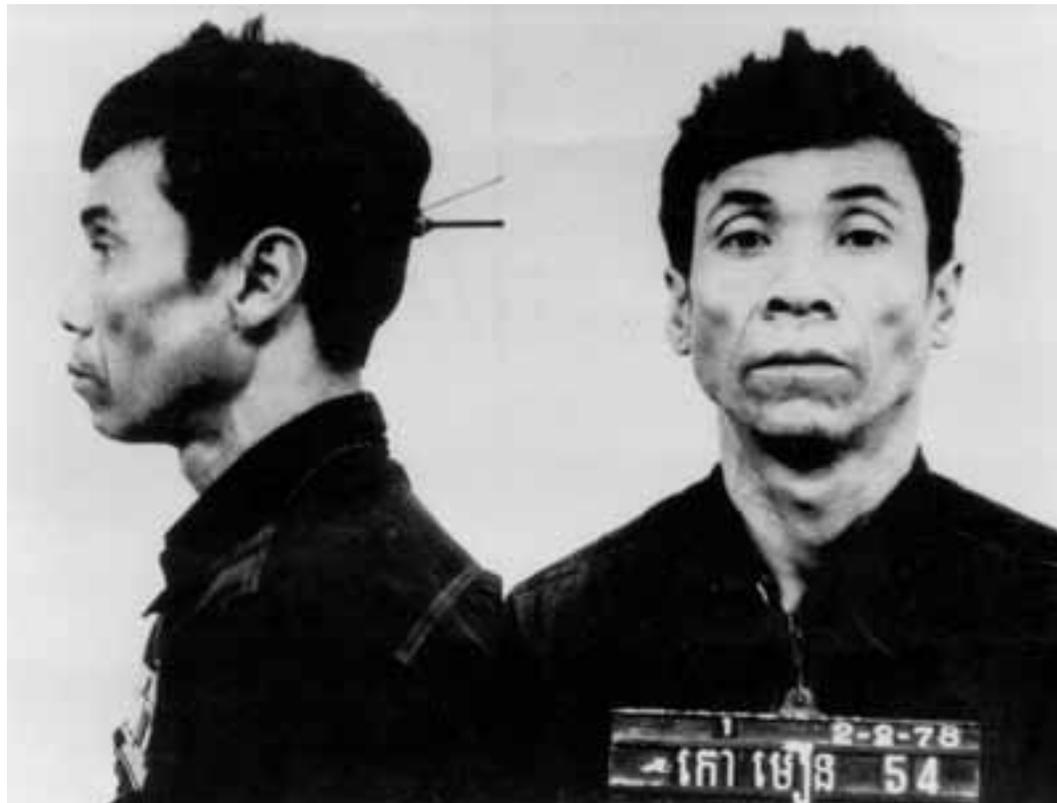
Vinh Yang Fa, a young Vietnamese soldier, incarcerated on May 6, 1978





Nam Chhoeun, arrested  
January 29, 1978

Koa Moeun, arrested February 2, 1978





Ung Nget, arrested February  
10, 1978

Unidentified prisoners, S-21





left: Mum Ngorn, arrested June 28, 1978. The marks on her forehead are from “cupping,” a traditional Cambodian healing practice that is used to correct humoral balance in the body when a person has a headache or feels dizzy. In this context, Mar Ngorn’s “cupping” is likely a somatic manifestation of the fear and stress she was experiencing prior to her arrest.

right: Chan Kim Srun, arrested on May 14, 1978, holding her infant

Mam Mot, arrested February 22, 1978





Unidentified prisoners, S-21

Unidentified prisoner, Tuol  
Sleng prison (S-21)





Srok Srey, arrested December  
10, 1978

Unidentified Prisoners, Tuol  
Sleng Prison





Unidentified Prisoners, Tuol  
Sleng Prison

Min Rin, Khmer Rouge soldier,  
Division 310, chained to  
companion; date of arrest  
unknown





left: Block of Individual Cells, Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes



right: Interior of Individual Cell, Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes

Exterior View of Building in  
the Tuol Sleng Compound

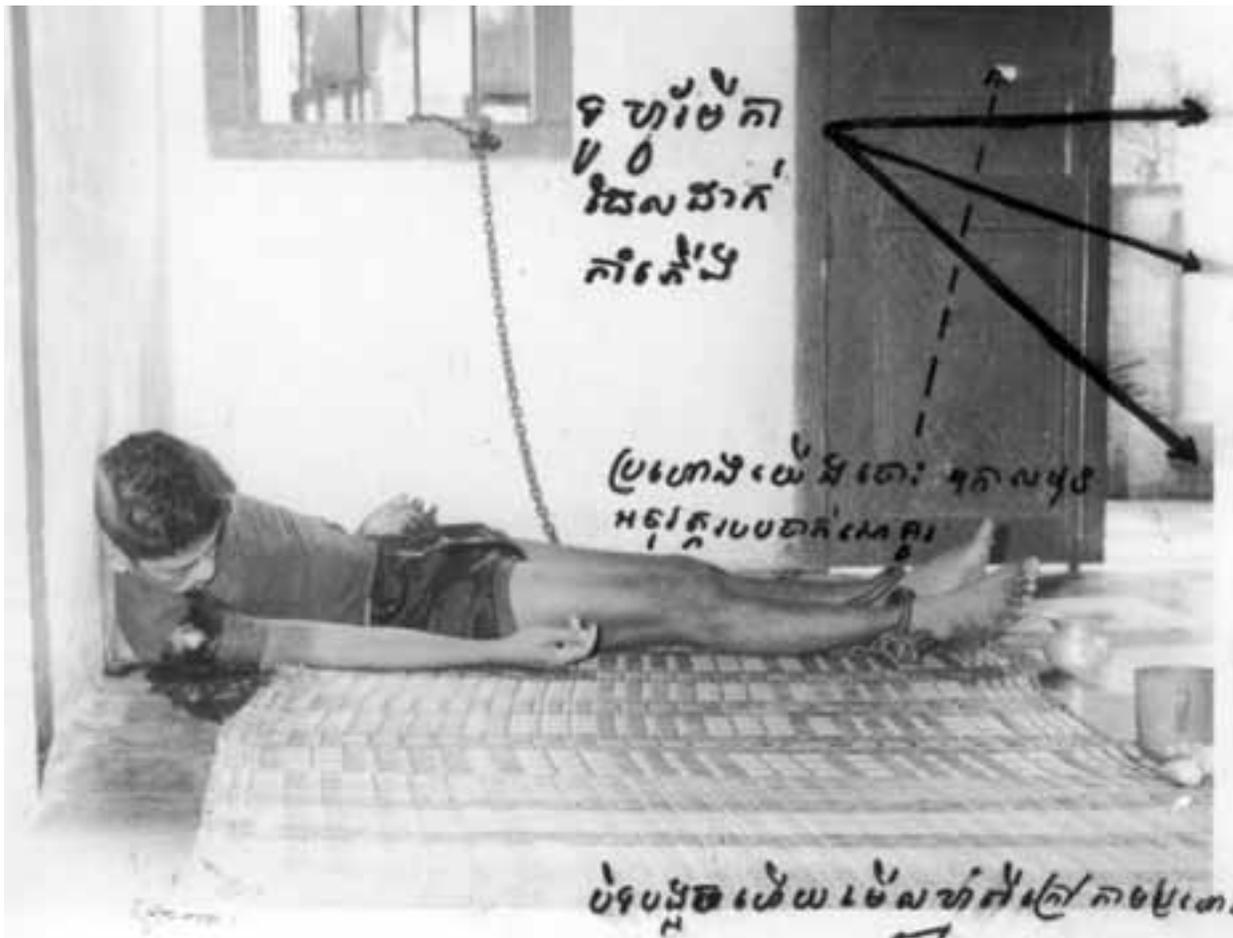




Montage of Prisoner Photos and Shackles, Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes

The chair upon which prisoners often sat when their photos were taken at S-21

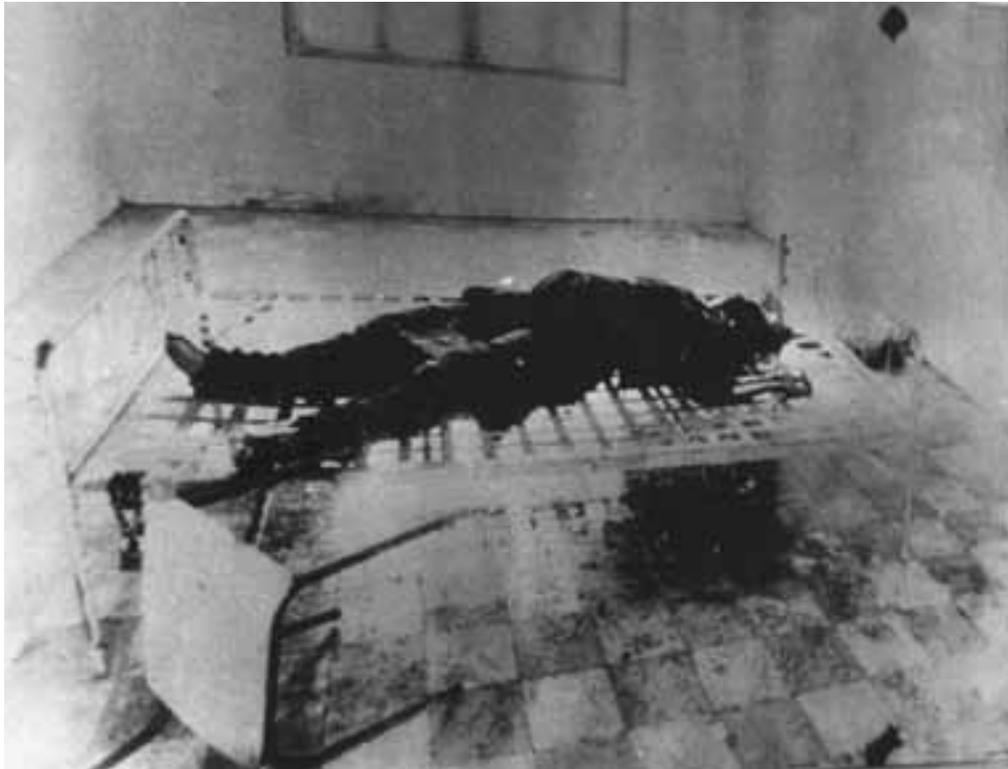




Prisoner who stole a gun and committed suicide.

Corpse found in interrogation cell upon liberation in January 1979





Corpse found in interrogation cell upon liberation in January 1979

Bones of the Dead





Mass grave, Choeung Ek killing field, about a dozen kilometers from Phnom Penh, where many prisoners from S-21 were executed. During the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the grounds were turned into a memorial site that, like the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes, is now a frequent stop for tourists.

# SOCIAL MEMORY



The remains of victims at a genocide memorial site located in Svay Pha-Em pagoda, Svay Rieng Province, around 1983. In the early 1980s, the People's Republic of Kampuchea ordered the exhumation of mass graves throughout the country in order to create such memorial sites that would both commemorate the victims and serve as evidence of Khmer Rouge atrocities. These memorials were often constructed in public places or on or near pagodas, which the Khmer Rouge had often turned into torture and execution centers during Democratic Kampuchea. In the village of Svay Pha-Em alone, 14 mass graves containing at least 168 bodies were discovered. To date, the Documentation Center of Cambodia has found almost 20,000 mass graves, many of which are marked by 81 memorial sites located throughout Cambodia.

The return to homes, 1979





Members of People's  
Revolutionary Tribunal  
Delegation in empty  
streets of Phnom Penh,  
1979

left: People's Revolutionary Tribunal, held in August 1979

right: Audience at People's Revolutionary Tribunal, August 1979

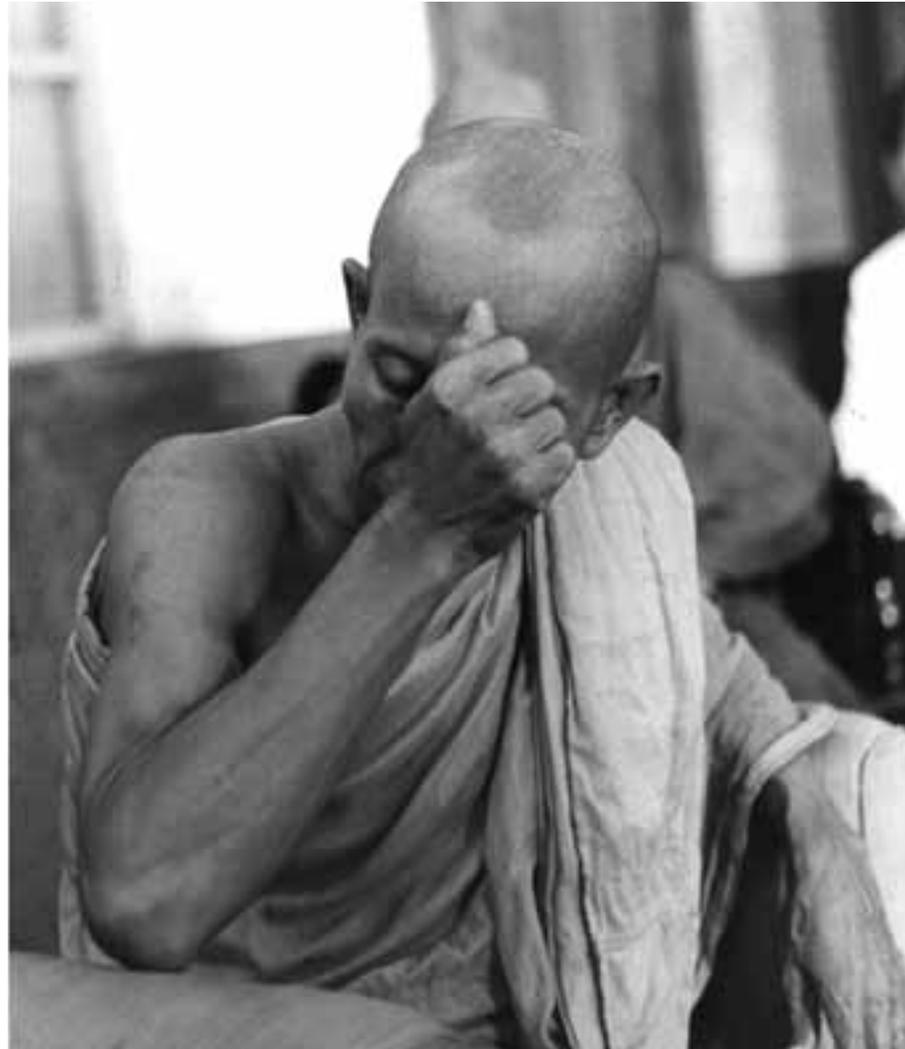




Hun Sen, the young People's Republic of Kampuchea Foreign Minister who became Prime Minister in 1985, a position he has effectively held ever since.

Kampuchea-Vietnam  
Friendship Monument,  
Phnom Penh, construct-  
ed during the People's  
Republic of Kampuchea  
regime





Great Supreme Patriarch Tep Vong, who was a high-ranking official in the People's Republic of Kampuchea regime and is now Cambodia's highest ranking monk.

Khieu Samphan, President of the Democratic Kampuchea State Presidium and Central Committee member, and Ieng Sary, Democratic Kampuchea Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs. Photo by J. Kofmann.





Khieu Samphan, President of the Democratic Kampuchea State Presidium and Central Committee member addressing Khmer Rouge troops along the Thai border in the early 1980s, with Ieng Sary, Democratic Kampuchea Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, sitting at the far right. During the 1980s, the United States, China, and Thailand joined together to enable the Khmer Rouge, who had been routed the Vietnamese-backed army, to regroup and rearm. Photo by J. Kofmann.

# JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY



Pol Pot seated with  
unidentified guest

left: Pol Pot, also known as “Brother Number One” and Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, the leader of the Khmer Rouge. He died on April 15, 1998, a prisoner of his own movement but unrepentant about the past. In a 1997 interview, he said to reporter Nate Thayer, “Look at me now. Am I a savage person? My conscience is clear.”



right Ieng Sary, former Democratic Kampuchea Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, in Pailin in 1996, Photo by Youk Chhang





Ieng Sary (front center), who served as the Democratic Kampuchea Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vorn Vet (front left), the Democratic Kampuchea Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy, who was executed in November 1978. They ranked 3rd and 5th, respectively, in the Democratic Kampuchea Standing Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea Central Committee. In exchange for his defection in 1996, Ieng Sary was pardoned by the King for his 1979 People's Revolutionary Tribunal conviction. He now lives in a large villa in Phnom Penh.

left: Duch, the former head of S-21, who is now in prison awaiting trial

right: Mok, the notorious Khmer Rouge general, Zone Secretary, and member of the Central and Standing Committees. When he died, under arrest but untried, on July 21, 2006, Youk Chhang, the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia from whose collection the photographs in this exhibit are taken, told Time Magazine, "To move on as a nation and people, we Cambodians needed him to appear before the U.N. tribunal that will examine the Khmer Rouge's crimes. By dying, he has cheated us. By dying, he haunts us still."





left: Nuon Chea, also known as 'Brother Number Two' and Deputy Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Kampuchea Central Committee, during Democratic Kampuchea

right: Nuon Chea, Pol Pot's right-hand man, in 2006. Nuon Chea has repeatedly refused to accept responsibility for the events that took place during Democratic Kampuchea and he will likely be indicted by the Khmer Rouge tribunal. Most recently, in a December 16, 2006 interview published by the Phnom Penh Post, Nuon Chea not just denied knowing about the existence of S-21 but that the Khmer Rouge had carried out a campaign of mass murder. He explained, "[Executions] may have happened in particular cases, but it was not us who killed our people. Our enemies killed them...they were foreign intelligence representatives who were hidden in our cooperatives...We [just] wanted a clean, illuminating and peaceful regime." Photo by Meng-Try Ea.

Him Huy, then and now. During Democratic Kampuchea, Huy was the Deputy of a Battalion of Security Guards at S-21; now, he is a farmer. In a 2002 interview with the Documentation Center of Cambodia, the 48-year-old Huy said, "To tell the truth, I didn't want to work there....I didn't feel good about watching the people die one after another and the prisoners' miserable lives....People still brand me as a S-21 worker. I shouldn't have been one, but Duch and Ho forced me to serve at that prison. I was ordered to do this; if I had refused, they would have killed me. If I am summoned to court, I won't hesitate to provide testimony about what I did in the prison and the reasons I did it."

Photo by Heng Sinith





Sous Thy, then and now. During Democratic Kampuchea, Thy headed a documentation unit at S-21; now, he is a rice farmer. In 2002, he said during an interview with the Documentation Center of Cambodia: "In 1976, I worked in the documentation unit of S-21. I thought they assigned me to this job because Ho [Duch's deputy] knew I had been a clerk of Huy Sre [chief of a nearby prison farm] and had experience in writing. In 1983, I was imprisoned in T-3 prison for three years. I feel it is very unjust to be imprisoned while the Khmer Rouge leaders are free. The murderous regime was created by them and they must be prosecuted for this. This is for justice. I am not trying to defend myself. When I heard that the Khmer Rouge leaders said they were not aware of the existence of Tuol Sleng prison, I laughed in disbelief. This prison was huge, not a simple project, and its founders had to hold top positions in the revolution. Moreover, prisoners were brought in from all over the country. No one dared to arrest people in regions and bases. Only a fool would believe them. These leaders are definitely lying to us."

Photo by Heng Sinith

Hans Correll, UN legal chief, and Sok An, Chairman of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge Tribunal Taskforce, at the June 6, 2003 signing agreement to establish the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia

Photo by Heng Sinith





Court Venue of the  
Extraordinary Chambers in the  
Courts of Cambodia

Photo by Dacil Q. Keo

## CONTRIBUTORS

Youk Chhang is the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. Prior to the establishment of the Center in 1995, Mr. Chhang managed and led political, human rights, and democracy training programs in Cambodia on democratic institutions for the International Republican Institute. He was also associated with the Electoral Component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in Cambodia. Mr. Chhang worked on crime prevention for the City of Dallas, Texas from 1989-1992. He has dedicated his work to his mother and the memory all the mothers of Cambodia.

Wynne Cougill is a freelance writer and editor who has worked with the Documentation Center of Cambodia since 2000, both in the United States and Cambodia. She is the author of three books, including *Stilled Lives: Photographs from the Cambodian Genocide* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2004), several articles, and has edited over 20 books in a variety of fields.

Meng-Try Ea is a member of the research staff at Documentation Center of Cambodia. He began his career monitoring human rights abuses with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1993, and served as an election observer/interpreter with the Asia Foundation's Joint International Observer Group in 1997-1998. Mr. Ea is the author of *The Chain of Terror* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2005) and co-author of *Victims and Perpetrators? Testimony of Young Khmer Rouge Comrades* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2001). He holds bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and a master's degree in Peace and Reconciliation Studies from Coventry University, England. Mr. Ea is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Global Affairs at the Division of Global Affairs, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey.

Alex Hinton is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Global Affairs at Rutgers University, Newark. He is the author of *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (University of California Press, 2005) and three edited collections, *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* (University of California Press, 2002), *Genocide: an Anthropological Reader* (Blackwell, 2002), and *Biocultural Approaches to the Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). He is currently working on several other book projects, including a co-edited volume on genocide entitled *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation* and a book on the politics of memory and justice in the aftermath of the Cambodian genocide. He serves on the Advisory Council of the International Association of Genocide Scholars and is an Academic Advisor to the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Sorya Sim earned a B.Ed in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the Royal University of Phnom Penh in 1994 and an M.A. in International Relations from Yale University in 1997. He is co-author of *Victims and Perpetrators? Testimony of Young Khmer Rouge Comrades* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2001).

Jorge Daniel Veneciano is Director of the Paul Robeson Gallery at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. He has been organizing exhibitions and publishing arts criticism and scholarship for journals and museum catalogs since 1991. Veneciano is a former curator of exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem in New York. Previously, he was exhibition and education curator for the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department in California. Veneciano holds a Ph.D., from Columbia University and an M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California. His current book project theorizes cultural democracy as an ethico-aesthetic and literary formation in American modernism (Duke University Press, forthcoming).



