

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

BANTEAY MEANCHEY PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Visited Date	Site Type	Est. Victim	Witness	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Phnom Srok	District Security Office/ 20 August 1998	Prison 1mass grave	100 up	Chhum Ruom ឈុំ រួម	R 082003A/ 010301	N 13°44'3203"	E 103°20'0767"
Phnom Srok	La-ang Trapeang Thma/ 20 August 1998	A few pits	1000 up	Tatt Chhoeun តាត់ លឿន	R 082004A/ 010302	N13°47'0222"	E 103°18'1852"
Phnom Srok	Prey Kok Trach/ 20 August 1998	no pit (corps scattered around)	100 up	Chhum Ruom ឈុំ រួម	R 082005A/ 010303	N 13°44'4597"	E 103°19'4307"
Phnom Srok	Wat Kandal/ 20 August 1998	Memorial	N/A	Chhum Ruom ឈុំ រួម	R 082005B/ 010304	N 13°44'3815"	E 103°20'7537"
Serey Sophorn	Wat Sopheak Mongkol/ 19 August 1998 (Duplicate with 1997)	Memorial	N/A	Sien Nhien ស៊ីន ញ៉ែន	R 081903A/ 010602	N 13°35'1011"	E 102°57'4281"
Serey Sophorn	Chamkar Khnao/ 19 August 1998 (Duplicate with 1997)	Prison 1mass grave (40mx4m) and 4 pits	5,000 up	Saom Lang សោម ឡាង	R 081905A/ 010601	N 13°35'2846"	E 104°56'2582"

August 19, 1998

At 6: 45 a.m., the mapping team left Battambang town for Banteay Meanchey province. We found it very difficult to travel via many roads that we were worried that it would take us very long time to get there. We spent 2 and half hours to get there. At 9:10 a.m, we arrived at Banteay Meanchey provincial office, where we met Third Deputy Provincial Governor, Mr. Ung Mon. He issued an official permit for our team to visit and research on certain locations in certain districts of the province.

Documentation Center of Cambodia

Searching for the Truth

ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បីការបង្កើនចំណេះដឹងយុត្តិធម៌

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

Provincial Geographical Features

Banteay Meanchey Province shares a common 264km-long borderline with Thailand on the north and the west, and is bordered by Battambang and Siem Reap Provinces on the east and the south.

According to the district office's report, the province covers 7,865 square meters including 2,245.5 square meters of paddy field, 4,584.5 square meters of forest, 905 square meters of small streams and lakes, and 130 square meters of residential areas. It has a population of 577,733 in which 289,423 is female. It consists of 9 districts including 1) Serey Sophorn, 2) Mongkol Borei, 3) O Chrov, 4) Preah Net Preah, 5) Phnom Srok, 6) Svay Chek, 7) Thma Puok, 8) Banteay Ampil and 10) Malai¹. It is composed of 65 sub-districts acknowledged by the Government Decree and 3 newly created sub-districts. There are 569 villages with other 84 newly created. After the meeting we left the provincial office to visit certain districts.

August 19, 1998

Serey Sophorn district (also known as Sisophon)

At that time, the district governor was not around; so we had to return to the District Information Department. At 10:18 a.m., we met Mr. Pall Sam Oeun, Chief of the Department, and his two colleagues, Mr. Uk Soeun, Chief of District Radio and TV Section, and Mr. Sisomit, Administration Chief. During the meeting with them, Mr. Pall Samoeun informed us about Serey Sophorn district, saying "there was a large execution site in surrounding areas of Chamkar Khnao [jack fruit tree field], north of Wat Kiri Chum". Wat Chamkar Khnao and Svay Mountain are located in O Ambel village, O Ambel sub-district, Serey Sophorn district. He continued to tell us that the killing pits remain visible, which could be used as physical evidence. A few days after the Vietnamese invasion (January 7, 1979), local villagers excavated the victims' bodies out of the pits looking for gold and other jewelry, which after their excavation left the remains scattered around the killing pits. Mr. Uk Soeun also stated that there were approximately hundreds of victims buried in each deep killing pit. So he estimated the number of victims killed at about 4,000 to 5,000. Mr. Sisomit added that most of the victims' remains had been brought to keep in a memorial at Wat Sopheak Mongkol located in O Ambel village, O Ambel sub-district, Serey Sophorn district. After the meeting the district officials agreed to be witnesses to the execution sites.

1. Memorial at Wat Sopheak Mongkol 010602 M (already mapped in 1997)

At 11:20 a.m., we rushed our way to Wat Sopheak Mongkol to visit the memorial, where the remains of a large number of victims in the Khmer Rouge regime are stored. At the same time, we also interviewed Mr. Sien Nhien, 69, Assistant to Chief of the Wat ComMitee, for more detailed information.

¹ Malai was the Northern Khmer Rouge stronghold and the area is currently under control of the Royal Government of Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge mass defections in 1997. Comrade Ieng Sary, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, is living there.

Victims

Mr. Sien Nhien indicated that a large number of mixed types of people had been killed in Chamkar Khnao. Most of the victims were recognized as long-time Vietnamese settlers. Some other immigrants including Chinese, Laotian, and Muslim ethnic residents were also executed. He estimated the number of victims at about 4,000 to 4,500. He said he was the one who led the local villagers to bring the remains to the Wat. The execution took place between 1976 to the end of 1978. In the Khmer Rouge regime, he lived in Samrong sub-district, Serey Sophorn district. After the Vietnamese invasion (January 7, 1979), he returned to O Ambel sub-district. In the end of the interview, Mr. Sien Nhien, monk at present, agreed to be a witness to the Khmer Rouge genocide crimes against the local people in O Ambel village, O Ambel sub-district, Serey Sophorn district.

2. Chamkar Khnao 010601 B/P (*Already mapped in 1997*)

We left Wat Sopheak Mongkol for Chamkar Khnao. First we visited Wat Kiri Chum or Chamkar Khnao, about 3 kilometers from Wat Sopheak Mongkol. Then we met the Wat ComMitee's Chief, Mr. Saom Lang, 63, who had seen local villagers digging out victims' bodies to look for jewelry. He informed us that the killing pits excavated by using tractors. The biggest pit was about 200 meters long and 5 meters wide and 1 meter deep. There were also 4 other pits, each with 4 square meters each side. Mr. Lang said in the Khmer Rouge time he lived in Mong district, Battambang province; and after the Vietnamese invasion, he returned to O Ambel village, O Ambel sub-district, Serey Sophorn district, Banteay Meanchey province. He estimated the number of victims at about thousands because in each pit more than 500 victims are believed to be buried. Chamkar Khnao is *perhaps* the Khmer Rouge regional security office. It was located just 200 meters north of Svay Mountain.

Summarized information

Burial site:

In Chamkar Khnao (**010601 B**), there are five killing pits.

- The biggest one is about 200 meters long and 5 meters wide. In this pit more than 500 victims are believed to be killed. (Four other pits were 4 meters square meters each side.)
- The estimated number of victims is about 4,000 to 5,000.
- After the Vietnamese invasion, the new-arrived villagers excavated the victims' remains looking for jewellery.
- The victims were mixed people including ethnic minorities.

Security office: (**010601 P**)

- Located in Wat Kiri Chum, Chamkar Khnao, 100 meters east of Svay mountain.
- Victims including Vietnamese, Chinese, Muslim, and Khmer).
- Used for keeping prisoners, not for killing.

Memorial:

- Located in Wat Sopheak Mongkol (**010602 M**), O Ambel village, O Ambel sub-district, Serey Sophorn district.
- All remains had been collected from Chamkar Khnao execution site.
- The memorial site has an area of 2.50 square meters.

Witnesses

There are five main witnesses:

- 1- Mr. Pall Sam Oeun, Chief of District Information Department.
- 2- Mr. UK Soeun, Chief of District Radio and TV Section.
- 3- Mr. Sisomit, Administration Chief of Serey Sophorn districts.
- 4- Mr. Sien Nhien, 69, Assistant to the Chief of Wat Sopheak Mongkol. He was the one who showed us the memorial site and used to bring the remains from Chamkar Khnao.
- 5- Mr. Saom Lang, 63, Chief of the Wat Committee of Wat Kiri Chum, Chamkar Khnao. He was the one who showed us the killing, pits in Chamkar Khnao.

August 20, 1998**II. Phnom Srok district**

On Thursday 20, August 1998, at 7:50 a.m, our team left Serey Sophorn district for Phnom Srok district. The distance between the two districts is about 51 Kilometers. Because of the rainy season and the disrepair of the road, we got stuck after travelling 32 Kilometers away. Fortunately there was a tractor we could hire to pull our car. After our car had been towed, we continued our trip on this horrible road. When we were boarding the car, we dared not open our eyes. At first we were about to turn back, but with our self-encouragement, we could overcome the obstacle. Then we arrived at an intersection in Prey Moan village, Rohal sub-district (intersection to Siem Reap and the other to Phnom Srok district) where we took a rest for a while. After going ahead for about 15 kilometers, we arrived at Phnom Srok district office.² At 9:30 a.m., we met the District Governor, Mr. Kong Loeur. In the Khmer Rouge time, he lived in Preah Net Preah district. Now he lives in Srah Chik village, Srah Chik sub-district, Phnom Srok district. And we also met the District Deputy Governor, Mr. Chhum Ruom, who lives in the same village as the district governor does. But in the Khmer Rouge time, he lived in Serey Sophorn district.

Geographical Features of Phnom Srok district:

² Note that the path from Prey Moan village to the district office is not so much difficult to travel as the one from Serey Sophorn to Prey Moan.

The district is bordered on:

- the east by Kra Lanh district and Banteay Meanchey province,
- the west by Serey Sophorn district,
- the north by Thma Puok and Banteay Ampil districts,
- the south by Preah Net Preah district.

It is divided into 5 sub-districts: (1) Srah Chik, (2) Poy Char, (3) Spean Sreng, (4) Nam Tao, and (5) Punley. It consists of 50 villages. According to the district report, It has an area of 74,365 hectares including 17,920 hectares of paddy fields, mountainous areas, residential areas, lakes and forestland.

According to the same district report, the population in the district is 45,076 including 22, 671 women totaling 8,673 families. 21,827 people are eligible to vote. 80 percent of the population are farmers. The rest earn their livings by fishing and raising silk worms. The governor informed us that the current district office was used as the security office in the Khmer Rouge time, and the victims were mixed people taken from various places in the district. He continued that the prisoners were made to gather in Wat Chrey Oudam to search for educated people, intellectuals, civil servants, etc. The Khmer Rouge told the victims that “after being registered, you will be sent home.” Instead the prisoners were forced to board truck and then sent to be kill in the areas around Spean Tbeng (Tbeng bridge) located in Prey village, Rohal sub-district, Preah Neat Preah district between 1975 and 1976. The Deputy Governor also stated that a people representative, Mr. Chou Phot, was also in prison and later sent to and was shot dead near Tror Meang tree located in Srah Chik village, Srah Chik sub-district. The District Governor and his Deputy indicated that in Phnom Srok district there are three main execution sites: 1) Prey Kok Trach, 2) Kok Ta Mol, and 3) Ang Trapeang Thma.

1. Prey Kok Trach 010303 B

Prey Kok Trach is located in Kok Trach sub-district, 1,500 meters from Phnom Srok district office. There is a palm tree standing as a mark of the massacre site under the Khmer Rouge regime. We interviewed many villagers in Poy Snuol village, Poy Char sub-district including Granny Than. She informed us that a large number of victims taken from various villages of Poy Char sub-district were executed there. However she is not sure how many, and just said “*many victims*”. She also agreed to be a witness to the case. When we asked if there is any killing pit left, Mr. Chhum Ruom deputy governor, said there was not, because the perpetrators just killed victims and they did not care about burying the bodies, and just left the bodies here and there.

2. Kok Ta Mol (*not yet mapped*)

Kok Ta Mol site is located in Srah Chik sub-district, 2 Kilometers from Phnom Srok district office. It was because the time was not available that we decided not to visit that location. And we got no information on the site, because the district governor Mr. Kong Loeur and his deputy were not sure about the killing information. We hope to visit this site in the future.

3. La-ang Trapeang Thma 010302 B

La-ang Trapeang Thma site is located in Trapeang Thma Kandal village, Poy Char sub-district of Phnom Srok district, about 5 to 9 kilometers from district office. After the interview with Phnom Srok Deputy Governor, Mr. Chhum Ruom, we visited that location right away. It was very difficult to get there because of bad road. But we managed to get there. Mr. Chhum Ruom really appreciated our team. But before reaching that location, our car got stuck for nearly one hour. So we had to spend some time walking about 300 meters to the execution site, which is the biggest one in the district. The killing sites are located near a water basin. Mr. Chhum Ruom told us that the basin (*often literally called by the villagers as Boeng meaning Lake*) of 10 kilometers in length and 7 kilometers in width was dug in between early 1975-1976. It could contain 7 million cubic meters of water in reserve for supplying dry season rice in two districts: 1) Preah Net Preah and 2) Phnom Srok. He added that the villagers in Thma Puok, Serey Sophorn, and Preah Neat Preah districts, especially all villagers in Region 5 were forcibly gathered to dig the basin. Most of them were Khmer youth and Phnom Penh evacuees. He estimated the number of victims at about 2,000. Some of them were killed, but some others died of starvation. At the same time, Mr. Tann Minh, a villager in Poy Snuol, Poy Char sub-district, also said there were some small killing pits in the surrounding area of the lake. He estimated the same number of victims killed at the site as the Deputy Governor did. Moreover, an estimate by another villager named Tann Minh confirmed the same figure. And they all agreed to be witnesses to the massacre site, in Trapeang Thma.

4- Wat Kandal 010304 M

At 12:45 p.m., after a short while of interviewing Mr. Chhum Ruom, we moved to Wat Kandal located in Srah Chhouk village, Srah Chik sub-district in order to visit a memorial site which preserves many victims' remains collected from various execution sites of Phnom Srok district. Wat Kandal is about 500 meters from the district office.

Summarized information

In Phnom Srok district there are 3 main execution sites, 1 security office, and 1 memorial.

1- Prey Kok Trach execution site

- It is about 1,500 meters from the district office.
- It has a palm tree as a mark.
- It is known as a mass killing site.
- According to the villagers looking on our work at the site, the number of victims, though not exactly, can be estimated at a few thousands.
- There were many types of victims including ordinary people, soldiers deluded into greeting King Sihanouk.
- There is no killing pit.

2- Kok Ta Mol execution site

- It is about 2 kilometers from the district office.
- We failed to visit the location because time was not available and the road was not accessible. We hope to visit this site in the future.

3- La-Ang Trapeang Thma

- About 5 to 9 kilometers from the district office.
- Dug and built between early 1975 to late 1976 for farming.
- Most of victims killed were youth and Phnom Penh evacuees.
- An estimated number of victims is a few thousands, according to the same villagers.
- Some were killed by torture, others died of starvation.
- There are few killing pits, but covered by water.

4- Region Security office 010301 P/B

This site is located on the area of Phnom Srok district office. Mixed victims were executed at this site. There are 4 witnesses:

1. Mr. Chhum Ruom, Deputy Governor, the one who informed and accompanied us to the locations.
2. Mr. Tatt Chhoeun, a villager in Poy Snuol, Poy Char sub-district, the one who witnessed the execution and torture of people at La-ang Trapeang Thma.
3. Mr. Tann Minh, a villager who informed us that he had seen some killing pits in La-ang Trapeang Thma.
4. Granny Than, a villager who witnessed the execution in Prey Kok Trach.

According to the four witnesses, there is one mass grave in which a few hundreds of victims were killed. But they do not know the exact number. We took photos of the witnesses and the site.

Conclusion

Even though we had a short time to research on execution sites, burial sites, and security offices, we got unexpected and satisfactory result. Moreover, we had built very good relationship with the provincial officials of all level and some other witnesses in order to seek justice for Cambodia. We shall return to this province in 1999 for additional information on genocide sites where we were not able to visit.

Sin Khin's Personal Comment

It is because of rainy season that we find it very impossible to travel or visit certain locations. However, we have tried our best to overcome major obstacles to visit and research on many execution sites in various areas of Banteay Meanchey and Battambang provinces.