

MAPPING PROJECT 1999:

KANDAL PROVINCE

On September 15, 1999, the Documentation Center of Cambodia assigned Mr. Sin Khin, Mr. Ouch Sam Oeun and a driver to conduct research in “Barong Sub-district, Lvea Em District, Kandal Province, aiming to document execution sites from the Khmer Rouge regime and seek witnesses to such activity in that area.

At 7 am, the team departed by car, and traveled along National Road #1 toward Lvea Em District. After arriving at the entrance of Wat Muny, we turned onto a small road on the left-hand side of the highway. A one-kilometer drive took us across the Mekong river, where we boarded a small motorboat towards our destination, Koh Barong. We had information that there are the Khmer Rouge execution sites on this island.

We parked the car at the dock and boarded another boat. We traveled along a twelve-kilometer waterway, crossing two main lakes called Boeng Bek Khlok and Boeng Veal Sam Nap, then headed through Prek Kmeng village in Prek Kmeng Sub-district and Tuol Trea village in Koh Roteah Sub-district.

At 9:30 am, after crossing a rather large lake -- six to seven kilometers long and ten meters deep -- we reached our destination, the former Khmer Rouge security prison and execution sites located at Wat Khnao Roka, Khnao Roka village, Barong Sub-district, Lvea Em District, Kandal Province.

The Barong Sub-district Office is located on Koh Barong. There, we met with six individuals: Mr. Ruos Sum, 55, Chief of Barong Sub-district; Mr. Sao Sean, Third Deputy of Barong Sub-district; Mr. Batt Tok, Chief of Khnao Roka village, Barong Sub-district; Mr. Chea Pros, Police Officer of Barong Sub-district Office; Yi Heng, a former base villager; and Mr. Aunt Pal Ran, a prisoner detained by the Khmer Rouge for three years, eight months and twenty days.

We showed our mission permit to the authorities and informed them that the aim of the Documentation Center of Cambodia is to document the history of Cambodia. The Sub-district Chief said that in Barong Sub-district, there are only two villages: Khnol Roka and Barong.

The sub-district has a population of 3,608, including 1,810 women, constituting 668 families. Most of the people here earn their living by doing dry season rice farming and fishing. In Khnol Roka village, there are 389 families. According to the local authorities, during the Pol Pot time, there were two main execution sites:

1. A security prison with execution sites located on the premises of Wat Khnol Roka, Knol Roka village, Barong Sub-district, and known as Koh Barong. The security office was located in front of the temple. The Eating Hall at the temple was used as prison. It is fourteen meters wide and thirty-two meters

long. One killing pit is located at the corner behind the temple. Many others are located north of the Wat.

2. A second major execution site can be found at Trapeang Ta Chap, 150 meters southwest of the Wat. We were informed that the chief of the prison was one Comrade Kheng. His Deputy was Em Saratt, who had disappeared for unknown reasons.

In the Khmer Rouge time, the District Office was in Toek Khleang Sub-district, Lvea Em District. The first district chiefs during the Khmer Rouge time were Comrade Yon and Comrade Thong; they were killed by the Southwest Khmer Rouge cadres in 1977, and replaced by Ta Pel, who held the position of district chief between 1977 and 1979.

Additional information

Mr. Ruos Sum told us that during the Khmer Rouge regime, he lived in Khnol Roka village. None of the prisoners detained in this Wat survived. They were detained and cuffed in the dark prison, and they were not allowed to go outside to perform their bodily functions; instead, they had to do it in their cells with their feet cuffed. He added that after 1979, he collected two sacks of shackles (some thirty-five to forty kilograms). He intended to take them and fashion them into rakes for his Solidarity Cultivation Group, but as he was returning to his group along the waterway, he looked into the sack and saw too much human flesh on the cuffs. So he decided to throw them into the water. Thus, this evidence was lost. The remaining cuffs were subsequently used to make rakes. He said that shortly after January 7, 1979, he saw some other incriminating objects such as iron bars and slot-shaped iron pieces, which had been used as part of the shackling system.

At this point in our interviews, the sub-district Chief summoned a person named Yi Heng. He had been here during the Pol Pot time and served as the Chief of a Mobile Cell. At that time he lived in Barong village, one kilometer from the execution sites. Since 1979, he has lived in Khnol Roka village, near the Wat.

Mr. Yi Heng told us that between 1976 and 1979, the Khmer Rouge committed many acts of killing. They collected people from various places around Lvea Em District and detained them in the security prison. The types of victims taken to the security prison were:

- April-17 People gathered from all the villages and cooperatives in Lvea Em District, including police, military police, spies, civil servants, teachers, students, ethnic Chinese, ethnic Chams, etc.

- Base People who had committed moral offenses, such as having sex illegally, and Khmer Rouge cadres such as chiefs of sub-districts, chiefs of cooperatives, who were alleged to have had committed serious moral offenses.

Mr. Yi Heng continued, explaining that those who had committed minor offenses would be released and required to perform forced labor in Khnol Roka village. Every morning, the people were queued up. If any one failed to appear on time, she or he would receive no food ration, since the gruel used as food was kept at the work site, whether it was a dam construction project, or a rice field. If any one failed to achieve their work quotas, she or he would be killed. Those who were too sick to work would receive no food ration, and were simply killed. As a result, sick people worked anyway, suffering their pain and worsening their health. Those who collapsed at a work site would be killed then and there. There was another branch of the security office and prison in Wat Svay Andet [already documented by DC-Cam], where those who had committed serious offenses were detained.

Mr. Yi Heng confessed that he had no idea where the execution sites were located, nor how many victims were killed.

We asked our witnesses how the victims detained in this prison were treated under the Khmer Rouge regime. To answer this question, the sub-district chief summoned a woman named Pal Ran, 40, who was the wife of a former soldier in the Lon Lon regime. She had been detained for more than three years in that prison, accused of planning to throw grenades at Khmer Rouge cadres.

She was our first eyewitness, because she saw the actual events in the prison where she had been detained. After January 7, 1979, she returned to her home village -- Khnol Roka, Barong Sub-district. She told us she had learned that this was a real security prison located at Wat Roka. Between a dozen and twenty high-ranking chiefs and their deputies, both women and men, were in charge of administering the facility.

The names of the Khmer Rouge officials who she could remember are:

Mrs. Sa Khan;
Comrade Prey, perpetrator who is the elder brother of Sa Khan;
The Contemptible Phal, perpetrator who lived in Prey Chruok, Khsach Kandal District;
The Contemptible At, sub-district authority in Prek Rey, Lvea Em; and
The Contemptible Sun, who had his arm amputated.

Mrs. Pal Ran said the prison was full of prisoners, male and female, young and old. Children of parents who were accused and detained by the Khmer Rouge were also kept here; they had no other choice. The victims ate their gruel with their legs cuffed. They were not permitted to bathe. Some died from prolonged illnesses. Between early 1977 and late 1978, the killing reached its peak. Three to seven people were killed in each round, the victims knowing their turn had come when they heard their names spelled out.

During the slaughter, she peeked through the wall of the prison. She still remembers seeing a person carrying corpses on his shoulder. His name is Comrade Paeng, and he now lives in Prek Chrey village, Prek Russei Sub-district, Lvea Em District. Comrade Paeng was also a prisoner, but was required to carry corpses. He took the dead people and dropped them into Trapeang Ta Chann Lake. That small lake is twenty meters long by twenty meters wide, and two meters deep, surrounded by forest. Paeng alone was responsible for taking the victims away. She estimated the total number of victims killed at more than 2,000.

She went on to say that most of the victims were April-17 People, including a colonel with three beautiful daughters named Srei Mao, Srei Mom and Theary. The three women were killed at the same time as her brother. She said she had great pity for them. Ms. Pal Ran remembered the Khmer Rouge cadres as being very cruel. Sometimes, while the prisoners were sleeping on the bamboo floor, the Khmer Rouge bayoneted them from below, injuring some in the back or in the feet, causing very painful wounds. If any one dared to insult them, calling them "contemptible Aunt, Uncle, or Bitch" she or he would be killed immediately. All prisoners were required to address the cadres as "brother" at all times.

Knowing that Ms. Pal Ran was a Khmer Rouge victim and an important witness, we asked her whether she knew of any execution sites, or if she could estimate the number of victims killed. She said prisoners were always being killed, but the most extreme wave of executions occurred between the end of 1976 and 1978, with three to seven people killed each day.

She described one main mass grave site, a pit at Trapeang Dei Ta Chap, 150 meters from the prison, southwest of Wat Roka. Two more pits were at the corner of a house in the village, whose owner we were unable to determine, and another one was located north of the Wat, in front of the sub-district office, where sixteen victims were killed. The Trapeang Ta Chap pit was slightly filled in with soil, because the Khmer Rouge thought that it might not hold all the corpses they had killed.

Based on the recollections of this witness, we estimated that the number of victims ranged from 2,190 to 2,920. None of the remains in these pits have yet been excavated.

Conclusion

We concluded that our visit to the prison and execution sites in Wat Khnol Roka, Khnol Roka village, Barong Sub-district (Koh Barong) was successful. We gained concrete information and interviewed an eyewitness to a prison and execution sites far distant from the provincial town, where means of transportation are rarely available and the roads are in very bad condition.

4. KANDAL PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Visited Date	Site Type	Est. Victim	Witness	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Lvea Em	Wat Khnao Char/ 15 September 99	Prison 1 mass grave	200-250	Yi Heng <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	R 091502A/ 080606	N 11 ⁰ 36'4578"	E 105 ⁰ 03'4334"
Lvea Em	Khnao Roka/ 15 September 99	Burial	2000- 3000	Pal Ran <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	R091503A/ 080607	N 11 ⁰ 36'4704"	E 105 ⁰ 03'4394"
Lvea Em	Trapeang Chap/ 15 September 99	Burial One lake	Over 2000	Pal Ran <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	R091504A/ 080608	N11 ⁰ 36'4132"	E 105 ⁰ 03'4164"