

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

## Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) MAPPING THE KILLING FIELDS OF CAMBODIA, 1997: khet KOH KONG [I-9-koh kong/a-cb-kk]

Location	Site Name/ Date	# of graves	Est. of Victim	Witness	File # / ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
srok Smach Mean Chey	wat Choatak Nhean/ 18 may 1997				R 051808A/ 90401	N 11°36'5315"	E 103°00'1222"

Koh Kong is a province which shares borders with khet Pursat on the north, khet Kampot on the south, khet Kampong Speu on the east, and Thailand on the west. In Pol Pot's time, khet Koh Kong was in Region 37, Western zone.

Srok Smach Meanchey is one of the 9 districts which constitute the entire Koh Kong province. In this srok Smach Meanchey, there is a temple named Choata Nhean where we went for a visit with the purpose of getting information about the genocidal crime of Pol Pot's clique and of seeing if there are prisons, burial sites or memorials deposited with the remains of victims killed under Pol Pot's regime. But, all of the people we asked, including monks, laymen in the temple and even some people living nearby, did not know much about what happened during Pol Pot's time because most of them settled in this province afterwards.

According to a monk named Chhay Sieng, age 57, who now lives in Wat Choata Nhean, in Sihanouk and Lon Nol times, there were less people in the province. Most of them were newcomers, including Thai people who came for business purposes. Many were staying just temporarily. Many others were Khmer people coming from various other provinces such as khet Takeo, khet Kampot and eastern provinces of Cambodia.

"During 1970-75," he added, "there were not many people permanently staying there because of the presence of Communist Thai and Khmer Rouge. At that time, the spread of malaria also caused a problem to people coming to stay there, and Koh Kong was not favorable for people to make their livings. The main cause was that there were attacks by Lon Nol's soldiers who were based there."

Inside the temple compound, there is a piece of stone with cement scripts describing the history of the temple. The temple Choata Nhean is located in phum Beung Khun Chhang, khum Smach Mean Chey, srok Smach Mean Chey, khet Koh Kong. "It was named after Chuon Nat Choata Nhean Noa, supreme monk.

Documentation Center of Cambodia

Searching for the Truth

ស្វែងរកការពិត ដើម្បីការបង្ហាញនិងយុត្តិធម៌

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

In 1961 (2505 AD), General Lon Nol of the Khmer Republic led air, land and water-way armies to build 3 residences for monks and a school building. In 1963 (2507 AD), when he became the commander-in-chief of the Khmer Republic, he constructed a Buddhist religious building temple. In the period Khmer and Siam were enemies, he came to help solve economic problems in Koh Kong in 1968 (2512 AD) after he became the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defense. Following the event of 18 March, he became a marshal in 1970 (2514 AD).

Ever since then, people were mostly in favor of him and voted overwhelmingly for him to be the President of the Khmer Republic in 1972 (2516 AD). That was what brought the temple into existence as a result of the building by Lon Nol with his national armed forces. The temple was designed by Mr. Chhean Chamreun, chief constructor, with help from Mr. Thuo Nun, Mr. Koy Saroeun, and Mr. Ou Kimseng. It was built on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973. "Beneath this stone is a memorial for depositing all remains of Khmer Republic people," according to the inscriptions on the stone.

In addition, we interviewed Lim Chin, chief of monks in Wat Choata Nhean, who came from Lower Kampuchea. He told us that after 1979 the temple was used as a military base and a hospital by Vietnamese soldiers. He also said that all the monks and laymen and laywomen in the temple were mostly from other regions, such as Kampot province, Takeo province, etc.

Just across a road about 50 meters north of the temple, we met with an old man named Kvek Hean, age 56, now living in phum Beung Kun Chhang, khum Smach Mean Chey, srok Smach Mean Chey. In Lon Nol's regime, he was Lon Nol's soldier in Battalion 22, Company Kavong, under the commander Hut Demondero. In early 1975, he escaped from the war to live in Khalong Yai, khum Phan Sim Khun, srok Trat, Thailand, by crossing the mountain Khavong. Later, he returned to live in Koh Kong in 1981.

He described to us that in previous times not many people lived there because a group of Communist Thai came to occupy the area. Under Pol Pot's regime, Hean said, the area remained largely uninhabited because they were all evacuated to other regions. He also said that at that time many of Lon Nol's soldiers were taken to be killed at Koh Manos, after Pol Pot defeated Lon Nol in 1975.

In 1981, when he came back from Thailand to live in Wat Choata Nhean, he saw some blood stains on the floor and the wall behind the Buddhist statue inside the Buddhist religious building. But he could not know whose blood it was; he just knew that after 1979 Vietnamese soldiers used this temple as their base and hospital.

There is no one who would testify about the blood stains.

Beside these clues, we have other information from the monk Chhay Sieng telling that there are a great number of remains of victims killed under Pol Pot regime deposited in a memorial in Wat Koh Kapik, in srok Mondul Seyma. But many of them are now missing due to lack of care, and others were taken by Americans, according to Chhay Sieng. However, according to Koh Kong's Renakse documents in 25 July 1983 by Min Khin, there was a death toll of 19,949 people, of whom 2,600 were seen in the forest and in the pits. Furthermore, 5,670 people in Koh Kong filed petitions suing against Pol Pot's clique.