



**DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA**  
**Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

**MAPPING PROJECT 1999:**

**MONDUL KIRI PROVINCE**

On December 15, 1999, the Documentation Center of Cambodia marshalled a mapping team composed of Mr. Sim Sorya, Mr. Vanthan Poeu Dara and Mr. Yin Nean. At 9:55 am on that day, the team left Pochentong Airport for Mondul Kiri Province. Because of bad weather, making it too risky for the plane to land in Mondul Kiri, our plane was rerouted to Ratanak Kiri Province. We finally landed on the gravel runway at Banlung airport at about 11 am that morning.

The team had been informed prior to departure that they could travel to Mondul Kiri by land from Ratanak Kiri. This was the first mapping trip to Mondul Kiri Province, one of the three provinces (Preah Vihear, Uddar Meanchey and Mondul Kiri itself) that DC-Cam mapping teams had yet to visit since launching the mapping project in 1995. The mapping team was instructed to take care not to separate the team, for example, one person doing interviews and the others visiting the genocide sites; anywhere they go, they must go together. This is because travelling in the northern part of the country without a local guide, team members could end up on an unknown path, or be misled. Although the Khmer Rouge do not pose any threat to our mapping teams in this area, robbery is unpredictable if one is traveling alone. The team was also instructed to gather as much information as possible pertaining to informants or possible witnesses who saw, knew about, or experienced acts of torture or extermination, or who could provide information about Khmer Rouge security offices, prisons, killing sites, and memorials or stupas holding the remains of victims. The team learned that the Khmer Rouge had controlled Mondul Kiri from 1970 and 1979.

On the day of our arrival in Ratanak Kiri Province, we could not travel to Mondul Kiri immediately because there was not enough time remaining before dark. Instead, we stayed at Leu Phnom Guesthouse (Mountain Top Guesthouse), only walking distance from the airport. There the team sat down to discuss plans for the next day (December 16). After everyone agreed, we had dinner and took a rest to prepare ourselves for the next day.

On December 16, our team rented two motor bikes and left Banlung provincial town of Ratanak Kiri, headed toward Chimeat village, Nang Khiloeck Sub-district, Koh Nhek District of Mondul Kiri Province. We went through Lum Phat District of Ratanak Kiri and eventually reached Tonle Sre Pork (the Sre Pork River). It took us almost two hours to reach the river. There we rented a boat to continue the trip toward our destination. It took another three hours by boat to reach Chimeat village.

When we arrived in Chimeat village, we were a bit disappointed to find that the villagers were not at home, so we could not ask them for information or conduct interviews with them. Whole families including parents and their children had gone away to their farm fields far from their houses, where they were busy harvesting rice and other crops. Nonetheless, we were lucky enough to meet the first person of this village, Mr. Chann Tauch, 52, at his house.

He currently resides in Chimeat village, Nang Khiloeck Sub-district, Koh Nhek District. He spent his entire lifetime living here through several regimes, including the Khmer Rouge regime.

He said that during the Khmer Rouge period, Koh Nhek was in Region 105, (which agrees with the Khmer Rouge map published by the Democratic Kampuchea Ministry of Education and Social Affairs in 1976). Koh Nhek district was called "R1 District." (What R1 represents is not known). He said that Phnom Kraol (or Kraol Mountain) was the biggest Khmer Rouge prison in Koh Nhek District during the Khmer Rouge period. After we had talked to him for a while, we asked his permission for a formal interview to delve into what happened at Phnom Kraol prison.

Mr. Chann Tauch explained that before the Khmer Rouge arrested him and sent him to Phnom Kraol prison, he was a messenger for Comrade Ra, Deputy Secretary of Koh Nhek District (R1 District). Ra was the revolutionary name for Kham Tan. He is a tribal person, though his specific minority group is not known. Mr. Chann Tauch added that he was a courier assigned to carry messages from Comrade Ra to Ta (Grandpa) Ham, the latter of whom was also known as Comrade Laing, Secretary of Region 105. Both Chann Tauch and Comrade Phan Khorn were arrested in December 1977, on accusations of being related to Kham Phoun, who was Chief of of Region 105's Economic Section.

He recalled the day of his arrest for us. Comrade Kam and Comrade Sot were the Chief and Vice Chief respectively of a work site, and they were also the right-hand men of the Region 105 Security Chief (Comrade Leng and his deputy, Comrade Phea). That day, Comrades Kam and Sot showed up and told both Phan Khorn and Chann Tauch to attend a meeting at 2 pm. Chann Tauch suspected the motives behind this meeting, because usually he went to meetings by himself. This time, however, when the car took him from his home to the meeting, he found about eighty-eight people waiting at the meeting site. Young children, teenagers and old people were already there. Part of the reason for his suspicion that this was something other than an ordinary meeting was that they had used a certain phrase, "going to a meeting," which in the past had been associated with arrest and detention. This meant that eighty-eight other people had been arrested along with Phan Khorn and Chann Tauch. Mr. Chann Tauch said that a feud between Kham Phoun and Laing (or Ham) was the initial reason for his arrest. This feud is a tangled tale, indeed.

### **The Ham/Kham Phoun Conflict**

Ham and Kham Phoun were the top two leaders of Region 105 in Democratic Kampuchea's Northeast Zone.<sup>1</sup> Kham Phoun had killed Ham with an iron bar and then shot himself dead with his pistol while they were both in Phnom Penh in 1977.<sup>2</sup> Soldiers loyal to Ham then

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<sup>1</sup> Ham alias Laing, an ethnic Lao/Jarai, was the Secretary of Region 105 in charge of the military until 1977. Kham Phoun, an ethnic Lao, was the uncle of Ham's wife. (Interview with Bun Leng Chay, Sen Monorom, Mondul Kiri, December 26, 1999; Interview with Chan Tauch, Koh Nhek, December 16-17, 1999.) Kham Phoun was Deputy Secretary of Region 105 before 1970, Secretary since 1970 in charge of economy, and (Interview with Men Savet, Kok Nhek, December 17, 1999; Interview with Keo Kham Bo.) also Chairman of the Mondul Kiri congress. (Interview with Chan Tauch, Koh Nhek, December 16-17, 1999.) Ham was the brother-in-law of Phan Khorn. (Interview with Phan Kham, Koh Nhek, Mondul Kiri, December 17, 1999; interview with Chan Tauch, Koh Nhek, December 16-17, 1999.)

<sup>2</sup> There are varying versions of this killing; the iron weapon was from a car (Interview with Bun Leng Hay, Sen Monorom, Mondul Kiri, December 26, 1999; Interview with Men Savet, Koh Nhek, Mondul Kiri, December 28, 1999; Interview with Neou Khoeun, Koh Nhek,

killed Kham, Chief of Keo Sema District and the only son of Kham Phoun, on the grounds that he did not arrest or gun down Nhun, the Chief of Kham Phoun's Office who, with his staff members, had escaped to Vietnam in June 1977.<sup>3</sup> Nhun did so to escape a Khmer Rouge purge of its own cadres who were formerly related to Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> Nhun was a Viet Cong soldier before 1970. He was recruited into the Khmer Rouge by Kasy, a former Chief of Keo Sema district, who himself had been killed because he had studied in Hanoi.<sup>5</sup>

Nhun's escape attempt came under attack by Zone 105 soldiers at the crossroads to Kratie Province and Keo Sema District, in Mondul Kiri Province. Half of Nhun's group was killed. Those who survived the attack and are living today include Mr. Lam, who is Deputy Commissioner of the Mondul Kiri Provincial Police. Mr. Lam had made his way through to Xong Be Province, Vietnam, where he stayed until 1979 when he returned to Cambodia. Another survivor of the attack had previously been Commissioner of Kratie Province, but was killed in 1982 or 1983 when his car was attacked by the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Chann Tauch stressed that all the people related to the top two Khmer Rouge leaders -- Ham and Kham Phoun -- were arrested wholesale and sent to Phnom Kraol prison. Mr. Chann Tauch himself was imprisoned there for about two months in 1977.

Phnom Kraol prison was previously an office of Region 105. It had served as a place to receive Khmer Rouge cadres, where they were sent to conduct "political studies" and where they stayed during their studies. This office was made of stone on the ground floor, with a wooden top floor. The top floor was for housing for Khmer Rouge cadres, and the ground floor was used for political studies or indoctrination of Khmer Rouge cadres. What is left there now is some concrete debris and half of some concrete steps.

In 1977, possibly in November, this office was transformed into the security office of Region 105. It then came to be called Phnom Kraol Security Office (known to ordinary people as Kuk Phnom Kraol or Phnom Kraol prison). According to Mr. Chann Tauch, the prisoners were divided into two groups. High ranking Khmer Rouge prisoners like Phan Khorn were placed on the wooden top floor; while ordinary people were held on the ground floor.

The inmates at Phnom Kraol prison were not forced to work hard. They did light work such as beating Krachao (an industrial crop) or peeling Krachao for weaving. They had rice, and pumpkin stew was often served with meals.

At nighttime, high-ranking Khmer Rouge prisoners were loaded onto trucks and driven to the west (on a road leading to Kratie province). However, he does not know whether the Khmer Rouge were taking them to a killing site, or simply relocating them to another place. In his mind, the fate of those prisoners is still in question, but what he is sure of is that he has never seen any of them return to their home village ever since. He suspects that the Khmer Rouge killed them all. Chann Tauch does not know how many prisoners there were altogether. Mr. Chann Tauch said that the Khmer Rouge released him because he was thought to be unrelated

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Mondul Kiri, December 28, 1999) or it was part of a door [*dek chamroek thvea*]. Ham arrested and brought Kham Phoun to Phnom Penh, but when Ham took a nap, Kham Phoun hit him with an iron bar and then shot him dead. Kham Phoun then shot himself dead at the same time. (Interview with Men Savet, Koh Nhek, Mondul Kiri, December 17, 1999.)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Bun Leng Chay, Sen Monorom, Mondul Kiri, December 26, 1999;

Interview with Chan Tauch, Koh Nhek, December 16-17, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Bun Leng Chay, Sen Monorom, Mondul Kiri, December 26, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Bun Leng Chay, Sen Monorom, Mondul Kiri, December 26, 1999.

to Kham Phoun or Ham or Phan Khorn, and was seen as an ordinary person. Mr. Chann Tauch does not know the location of any mass graves associated with Phnom Kraol.

He also told us that he had heard there is another Khmer Rouge security office near a dam, though he does not recall the name of that dam; the security office was known as Munti Ta Leng or Ta Leng Office. We did not map that location on this trip. This office was named after Comrade Leng, who headed the office. Mr. Tauch did not know the name of the village where this office was located. He said that this security office had a reputation as a notorious chamber for long imprisonment and certain death.

Our team decided to end the interview with Mr. Chann Tauch at this point so that we would have time to meet with other people who might be able to provide us with more information about Phnom Kraol prison.

On December 18, 1999, we located an informant named Men Savet. Mr. Savet currently lives in Chimeat village, Nang Khiloeck Sub-district, Koh Nhek District. He is 59 years of age, and was born in Banak village, Nam Nao Sub-district, Keng Kang District, Sovann Province, Laos. His birth name is Net Tha and he moved with his family from Laos to Mondul Kiri when he was ten years old. Mr. Savet has been living here ever since. Presently he is chief of Nang Khiloeck Sub-district. Mr. Savet was also imprisoned at Phnom Kraol Prison during the Khmer Rouge regime for two years, from 1977 to 1979.

Mr. Savet said that before his arrest, he served the Khmer Rouge as a cadre in charge of the Region 105 logistics office from 1970-1975. He was arrested in 1977 and sent to Phnom Kraol prison. (He did not tell us what he did between 1975 and his arrest in 1977.) What he told us about the prison, however, was very similar to what Mr. Chann Tauch had told us.

Mr. Savet added details to Mr. Chann Tauch's account. Mr. Savet said that on the top floor, prisoners were cuffed to shackles made out of wood (five centimeters thick), but those held on the ground floor had their legs tied to each adjacent prisoner with some kind of string, and also had their arms tied behind them. The Khmer Rouge allowed prisoners to take baths only once every seven to ten days. Prisoners were walked in shackles to the bathing place. They were unshackled for a few minutes during bathing and then they were walked back to the prison again in shackles.

Mr. Savet recalled that his bother-in-law, Orn Sa, was transported in a truck at night along with other prisoners in the direction of Kratie Province, though he did not remember the date. (Orn Sa is a Laotian name, but he changed it to Sopheap when he married a Cambodian woman.) Mr. Savet said that his bother-in-law is still alive and lives in Kampong Cham. He remembered that Phnom Kraol prison had ten rooms on the top floor and was spacious, designed not for sleeping but for political training or studies. On the top floor, there was a corridor dividing five rooms on one side and five rooms on the other side.

He said he also did not know about the killing sites, because he was in the prison from 1977 to 1979. When asked who actually controlled the prison, Mr. Savet said that Ham and Kham Phoun had been the chiefs, but that after these two died in 1977, another chief came. The new chief was named Nou Sarun alias Nou Bai. He said he heard from a Khmer Rouge defector, Thuoy Deng, that Nou Sarun alias Nou Bai now lives in Anlong Veng, the former Khmer Rouge stronghold near the Thai border.

### **Koh Nhek Security Office**

On December 26, 1999, we met with Mr. Bun Leng Chay, Deputy Chief of the Provincial Information Office. He now lives in Doh Kramom village, Sokh Dom Sub-district, Sen Monorom District. Mr. Leng Chay told us that in 1977, the Khmer Rouge arrested him and detained him at the Koh Nhek security office, which is in the same place as the present Koh Nhek security office. He was accused of being associated with a network of traitors. He added that at that time, it was a huge place, but that the Khmer Rouge did not build huge houses there. Instead, they built many small huts which could hold as many as 200 or 300 prisoners. All prisoners there were shackled 24 hours a day.

The place where the Khmer Rouge killed prisoners was about four kilometers from the Koh Nhek District Office, on the road leading to Kratie province. It is called Trapeang Toeun. Trapeang Toeun site is in Prey village, Sre Sangkum Sub-district, Koh Nhek District. He did not suggest how many mass graves were there, but said that one mass grave he saw could hold about 200 bodies.

On December 29, 1999, we proceeded to Phom Kraol prison to see if there might be any physical evidence left and to take GPS readings. Because of uncertain security along the way to the site, we contacted Police Inspector Chakk Phoeun and asked him to accompany us. Upon arrival, we took photographs and GPS readings. That same day, we met a peasant named Sall Ra who agreed to accompany our team to Trapeang Toeun. Since he appeared to know a lot about Trapeang Toeun and Phnom Kraol prison, we asked his permission for an interview.

Mr. Sall Ra is 50 years old. He is of the Phnornng ethnic minority, and currently lives in Village 7, Chhneang Sub-district, Koh Nhek District. Sall Ra was born in Chhneang village, Chhneang Sub-district, Snuol District, Kratie Province. He explained that the biggest prison in Koh Nhek District was the Phnom Kraol prison. This prison detained many people, including both innocent people and Khmer Rouge soldiers.

He knew something our previous two informants -- Chann Tauch and Men Savet -- did not know: the important fact that Trapeang Toeun was the site where prisoners from Phnom Kraol prison were taken to be killed.

### **Office K-11**

Sall Ra said that in December 1974, he was detained in Office K-11, a Khmer Rouge security office, located in the compound of Phnom Kraol prison. He was arrested on the accusation that his brother had fled to Vietnam. According to him, Comrade Kam headed Office K-11. Prisoners at this office were shackled like those in Phnom Kraol prison. But the wooden shackles used in Office K-11 were seven or eight meters long with holes designed to accommodate locks. Each wooden shackle could hold up to fifty prisoners.

Prisoners at Office K-11 were all required to work and were not released during their work; they were walked in line to the work site. They were forced to work without rest, and eat at the work place. Each prisoner was allowed to have only one ladle of rice per day. Sall Ra stressed that both Office K-11 and Phnom Kraol prison were just detention centers, not killing centers. Trapeang Toeun is in fact where prisoners from these two places were taken to be executed. Similar to the account from Long Hay, Mr. Sall Ra said that there was a big pit about fifteen meters long and four meters wide (though he did not know the depth). Our team then proceed to this location, taking photos and GPS readings at Trapeang Toeun.

Sall Ra said that several survivors who had been imprisoned with him are:

Mr. Phang  
Mr. Pon  
Mr. Taek  
Mr. Put  
Mr. Min

## **Conclusion**

Our team's great success is that we have found important Khmer Rouge security offices, prisons and killing sites in Koh Nhek District. According to the last two informants, Sall Ra and Bun Leng Chay, Phnom Kroal prison, Office K-11, and Koh Nhek Security Office were all detention centers and Trapeang Toeun was the killing site, where prisoners were executed wholesale. Interviews with knowledgeable informants revealed how the Khmer Rouge ran these facilities and executed people. Further trips to Mondul Kiri will be made in the future to concentrate on the four other districts, Pich Roda, Keo Sema, Sen Monorom, and O Reang.

## 6. MONDUL KIRI PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Visited Date	Site Type	Est. Victim	Informant	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Koh Nhek	Trapeang Toeun/ 29 December 99	<i>Burial site</i> 4 pits	hundreds	<i>Sall Ra</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	R 122902A/ 110201	N 13°03'3456"	E 106°58'4117"
Koh Nhek	Phnom Kraol Prison/ 29 December 99	<i>Prison</i>	N/A	<i>Chak Phoeun</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	R122904A/ 110202	N 13°05'0470"	E 107°01'1575"