



DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

MAPPING PROJECT 1999:

PREY VENG PROVINCE

On September 21, 1999, the Documentation Center of Cambodia sent a team of three members -- Mr. Sin Khin, Mr. Ouch Sam Oeun and Mr. Chiv Sok -- to carry out research and map Khmer Rouge execution sites in Prey Veng Province's Mesang District. Mr. Sin Khin was responsible for contacts with the local authorities and interviews with witnesses; Mr. Ouch Sam Oeun was responsible for operating the Global Positioning System unit; and Mr. Chiv Sok served as driver.

At 7 am, the team set out from Phnom Penh City along National Road #1, crossing the Mekong River by ferry at Neak Loeung town. Upon arrival at Kampong Soeng market, the team took a road to the east towards their destination, Mesang District. At the 110-kilometer mark from Phnom Penh, the team took another small road, quite a bad one, at that. At 11:30 am, they arrived at the Mesang District Office. Local district officials were not at the office. So, the team decided to visit execution sites that had already been identified on previous mapping trips.

Wat Chy Chuch

Mr. Chea Savoeun, age 33, currently lives in Chy Chuch village. He told the team that during the Pol Pot regime, the Wat had been used as Mesang District headquarters, and that areas behind the temple were used as a political school. He said that after 1979, villagers removed all the buildings.

Mr. Sokh Ding is the chief of Chy Chuch village and also a layman. In the Khmer Rouge time, he lived in this village. He told the team that the Khmer Rouge district office had been moved many times during the Pol Pot regime. In 1977, the office was moved to Wat Mesang. Between 1977 and 1979, the district was administered by Mr. Sam Hean, District Chief, and Nhar, his deputy.

Mr. Savoeun and Mr. Ding continued, telling the team that at this execution site, there had been only four or five Khmer Rouge security guards. Surrounding the site were clusters of small houses in which Khmer Rouge cadres lived. They told the team that the Khmer Rouge security office and prison for Mesang District was located north of Tuol Cheung Chap. A Documentation Center team had already visited that location on a previous mapping trip.

The team asked these witnesses if they knew of any other Khmer Rouge execution sites in the area, and they said there were two other sites. The first is the Tuol Yeay Ev execution site, located in rice paddy fields at approximately the three and a half kilometers mark between

Chy Chuch Sub-district and Svay Chrum Sub-district. At this location, there is presently nothing to observe, as the fields have been in continuous cultivation for many years since.

Another site is at Tuol Kok Veang, also known as Wat Chan Russei. It is approximately twelve kilometers from the district office. The Khmer Rouge used this Wat as a detention center to hold April-17 People [“New People”] who were mostly were Vietnamese, Muslims, civil servants, teachers, students, etc. The victims were kept at the detention center only for a short time before being taken to be killed in areas surrounding the temple.

The team was unable to find a suitable road for access to the two mentioned sites. All the roads leading to the sites were in very bad condition, and the team decided that there could be problems should the rains commence while they were out there. It was also getting late in the day.

So, the team decided that they would not visit the small remote sites, but instead visit an execution site in Veang village, also known known as Sar village. At 12:30 pm, they met the chief of Veang village, a man named Yean Run, age 48. In the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes, he lived and served as a teacher in Samraong village, Chy Chuch Sub-district.

Information from the Village Chief

The chief informed the team that in the Northwest part of Veang village, there were real execution sites at Tuol Pum Sar. He recalled seeing with his own eyes graves with newly dug bits of soil, but without any bones remaining. At that time, he said, there were three killing pits, holding a small number of victims. He had no idea where the victims had come from, but simply witnessed the dead bodies after their execution. He reckoned that the victims might have been from someplace far from this location.

Each pit is two meters long, two meters wide and one meter deep. They are shallow mass grave pits. The bones came to the surface as villagers were working their rice fields. The estimated number of victims killed here is approximately thirty to forty-five.

At 12:55 pm, we met Mr. Neou Sam At, who the village chief assigned to accompany us to the execution sites at Tuol Poum Sar, one and a half kilometers from Veang village. Mr. Neou Sam At is 53 years old. During the Khmer Rouge regime, he served as a Khmer Rouge soldier, and saw combat against Vietnamese troops in the Eastern Zone. Somewhat later, the Khmer Rouge sent him to be executed in Kampong Chhnang Province, along with more than ten thousand soldiers of Chann Chak Krei from the Eastern Zone. All these soldiers were kept in the Ra Rameas Kleang Ambel railway station, and then, according to Mr. At, they were slaughtered in 1978 during the reign of Sao Phim, Secretary of the Eastern Zone. (Editor’s note: In fact, most of these Eastern Zone mass executions occurred after the death of Sao Phim.)

Mr. Neou Sam At has lived in Veang village, Chy Chuch Sub-district since 1979. He claimed that Tuol Poum Sar was a real killing site. In 1979, he saw pieces of cloth, bones, nylon ropes, and rubber sheets left from when people had excavated the mass grave pits searching for gold, or working the land for rice cultivation. He said, “There was still a smell of human corpses.” He added that previously the site had been surrounded by forest, but since then it had been cleared for rice farming.

Types of victims

Mr. Sam At and the village chief estimated that the number of victims was approximately thirty to forty-five. They speculated that those victims were Khmer Rouge commanders who were subjugated while trying to escape from Southwestern Zone Khmer Rouge forces attacking Romeas Hek District in the Eastern Zone (Svay Rieng Province). The forces of the Mesang District Khmer Rouge Chief executed them all. One bit of evidence for this hypothesis is the fact that at the execution site, there were rubber sheets, nylon ropes, hammocks, etc. Thus it is unlikely that these were ordinary people, and more likely they were Khmer Rouge cadres of some sort.

Mr. Noeu Sam At showed us another pit nearby, which was apparently dug in preparation for the bodies of people who were supposed to be slaughtered in days to come. Fortunately, the National Liberation Front Armed Forces drove their way inward from the Vietnamese border in January 1979 to liberate all people in the country, including those detained and about to be executed at this site.

The team concluded the interview with Mr. At, and took photos of him for the records. The visit ended at 1:30 pm on September 20, 1999. We then lunched together at the Mesang market. After the lunch, we set off from the district at 2 pm, arriving safely in Phnom Penh at 6 pm.

Conclusion

We may conclude that this trip to Mesang District was useful because it supplements our previous report about the genocide sites in this district. However, the results are not really satisfactory, because the team had limited time, faced the rainy season and poor road conditions, and was unable to locate first-hand eyewitnesses to the events which had taken place in Mesang District. Two additional sites in this district remain to be surveyed, and this should be done in the dry season due to road conditions.

PREY VENG PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Visited Date	Site Type	Est. Victim	Witness	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Mesang	Tuol Sa Village/ 21 September 99	Burial 4 pits	30-40	Noeu Sam-Ang	R 092105A/ 140505	N 11 ⁰ 20'0050"	E 105 ⁰ 32'3985"