

**REPORT ON CGP SURVEY VISIT TO SIEM REAP PROVINCE
21-24 October 1995**

Survey team: Helen Jarvis (moral support from Allen Myers)

21 October

Provincial Government:

The visit was combined with personal tourist travel and took place at the same time as the Prey Veng site visit, so we did not have the Geo-explorer to take reading. We decided that it would be useful, however, to make preliminary contact with provincial officials and visit easily accessible sites. We would not visit any distant sites, leaving them until a later visit with equipment.

We arrived unannounced at the Sala Khet at about 9.00 am on Saturday morning and, were told the Governor would be too busy to receive us and to return on Monday. This was a difficult time, as Monday itself was a public holiday for UN Days, and then the eclipse was to take place on Tuesday, so we knew that officials would be busy. However, when we explained our purpose and gave the letter, we were asked to wait and, several hours later, were received by the Governor of Siem Reap Province, Tuon Chhay.

He spoke warmly in support of our mission, and promised full support, although noting the pressing demands of that time. He said he could provide a police escort, but not a car, as they were even commandeering civilian cars to help with the number of official guests. He wrote a letter to the police detailing approval for an escort for us.

He did not know of any sites himself, pointing out that he had been on the border from 1974 to 1992, though he said that he had received reports, which he sent on to his friend, Nouth Narang, in France, and has not yet got them back. The Governor himself lost 2 children during the DK period. He knew it was "hell" in Cambodia, and both Father Pnchaud and Haing Ngor had told him that they put only a portion of the horror they witnessed or knew about in their books, as otherwise they feared the stories would not be believed.

Unfortunately, he had just concluded a meeting (while we were waiting) with the Directors of Culture and Cults and Religion, but he thought they would return in the afternoon, and so we agreed to return at 2.00pm. However, the meeting did not eventuate, with the help of Uch Van Thol, on the Governor's staff, I spent the best part of the afternoon being driven around to various offices, all of which were closed. I was told they would be at the Sala Khet for a meeting on Sunday morning but, regretfully, the same procedure was repeated, and we were not able to meet until the Tuesday.

However, we went ahead and rented a car and picked up the police escort (2 officers with no visible weapons) and set out to visit known sites in the Siem Reap town area.

22 October 1995

Siem Reap High School vicinity

The 1979 PRT documents identified a number of sites in this vicinity, and even had sketch maps, which we took along as our starting point. They were very useful, but much had changed since they were drawn, with new roads and buildings and old ones having disappeared.

1. Wat Athikaram (Wat Thmei)

171001

Tropeang She Village, Kuk Cho Sub-district, Siem Reap District

Around 2 kilometers along the road from Siem Reap town to Angkor, on the left past the derelict theatre. This site was identified on the map as "Chinese House Village" and the two surviving structures of concrete were apparently used for housing the Chinese workers who constructed the Siem Reap airport in the 1960's. The Wat is a new feature, and the Preah Vihear is still under construction. The monks live in the 3-storey barracks type building, and a memorial stupa, containing skulls and bones, has been constructed to honor the dead.

We were told there were two large graves (rondiw) and many wells (andong) containing bodies near the barracks. There are also trenches in this vicinity probably containing remains.

About 250meters to the South was an abandoned 2-storey concrete house with no roof. Around this house were at least 6 wells used as graves.

We interviewed Mr. Heung Deum, aged 66, born in Chan Sar, Siem Reap, who estimated that 8,000 people had been killed here. During the DK period he worked as a repairman at the Grand Hotel, used for accommodating officials. He saw truckloads of victims taken from the prison to this area.

A small stall holder said that a man frequently came by in the late afternoon to drink wine, and that he told how he had been included in a batch to be killed, but had survived. We asked to try and find him to interview and on our third visit to this site, were successful. His name was Prum Moy, aged 38, born in Sala Kongsang, Siem Reap 2. Only 4 days after the KR took power, they invited people to a "bon" at Angkor Wat. At that time he says he was 20 years of age (I know the figures do not reconcile). There he was identified as an enemy and, was one of 37 people brought by truck to this place at around 11.00am. They were taken to the wells that existed in this area from a previous village, and shot with guns (he made the point contrasting with other stories of people being hit to death). The killers were about 5meters away. He was hit with 5 shots and fell into the well with the others, but he did not die. He heard the trucks go away and at about 1pm he crawled out of the well and managed to get back to his house, not far away. His mother got 1 litre of alcohol to treat his wounds and took him into the jungle to hide for 3 months while recovering and then he returned to the village. He insisted that he had not been a soldier before – I think he said he was unemployed, and that he thinks people were picked out at random, not because of any particular reason to be identified as enemies.

2. Siem Reap High School Buildings

171002

According to Heung Deum, these were used for the Santesok Office. He identified the head of Santesok as "Nyani". Officials from the Office of Cults and Religion said that they knew of Lon Nol forces (288?) killed at the High School, and that they knew one survivor who could be interviewed, but I did not have enough time on this occasion.

3. Graves near Kilometer 3 Village

171003

With guidance from the map we found a dirt road running to Kilometer 3 Village. Some 50 meters from the road the remains of old houses and possible graves were identified, but no structures remain. However, the map shows the site to be 150 meters up the dirt road, so there might be a second site, or the one we found may not be a grave site at all. Another possibility is that the dirt road marked on the map may be the rather newer road that is closer to the school.

We here interviewed one witness, Ms. Po Yeum, age 39, a farmer now living in Teang Village, Slor Kram Sub-district, Siem Reap. During the DK period she passed along the road to Angkor in a truck and saw bodies heaped up all along the road – flies were everywhere and the smell was so bad they had to cover their noses with kromas. Since 1993 she and her husband moved close to town from Phnom Kulen as his legs were blown off by a mine and they wanted to be near the hospital. They have since lived around Kilometer 3 and have seen many deposits of skulls and bones.

4. Siem Reap Jail

171004

Documentary and anecdotal evidence suggest that this jail was used as such during the DK period. We spoke to the Warden, but he is new to the place and said that no current staff had any knowledge of events there under the Khmer Rouge.

5. Wat Dhamma Yout

171005

Sala Konsaeng Village, Sray Dong Phum Sub-district, Siem Reap

PRT evidence referred to damage at this Wat, close by the Siem Reap jail. We met the Chao Athikar, Put Pon, who said he was the only monk from this Wat to return after the DK period, during which he was taken to the Kralanh District and forced to disrobe. He showed us physical evidence of damage to the Wat, and stated that the Kot had been used for interrogation and the Preah Vihear for torture and execution. Many remains have been found in the grounds, and a dilapidated wooden box house some of them. Ceremonies were held on the Day of Hatred up until 1990.

A young monk said we should go out to Tek Vil Village, near the Western Baray, to meet two people who had escaped from execution.

6. Kork Doung Village, Tek Vil Sub-district, Puork District

We looked for Chhoeun, a carpenter, or Tek, a teacher, whose names were given by a monk at Wat Dhamma Yout. Unfortunately neither were home, but we managed to tape an interview with Chhoeun's wife. She related how he had been a soldier in the Lon Nol period, and was taken away by the KR to be executed. In extraordinary circumstances he and 2 others were taken to the forest by 2 KR soldiers. One went off

to dig the graves and the prisoners managed to overpower the other and shoot him, and to escape.

7. Phum Lepeu

We were informed that there is a mass grave at this place, but we did not go there.

24 October 1995

8. Office of Culture, Siem Reap

I had a meeting with Mr. Thun Nol, Director of the Culture Office, who informed me that his office had no documents at all relating to the genocide.

Presiding over the eclipse ceremonies was Mr. Tuy Huy, and the Governor introduced me to him and we made an arrangement to meet that afternoon. Also present at the meeting was Mr. Van Bunna, head of the Religion Section of the Office. They recounted the sorry tale of missing and mislaid documents. Huy had worked on the 1983 research committee, and said that 2 copies of the *Nyat* were prepared -- one sent to Phnom Penh and one retained in the province. There was a book published in Phnom Penh listing details for each district (? -- perhaps the summary booklet we have). The province copy was held in the Renakse office, then in the Royal Hotel. The office was moved to the Sala Khet, and then back to the Royal Hotel before the elections. The Renakse Director, Leng Khat, would have known about the documents, but he died in 1992. Huy and Bunna believed that the documents may have been thrown away. They had absolutely no documentary evidence at all, and wanted copies of the overall summary figures I had, and maps and testimony from the PRT.

They told me about mass graves in Kralanh, Phnom Truong Bat, and at L'o Village in Siem Reap Sub-district. Also about Lon Nol soldiers executed at a ceremony at Wa Thmey and at Tram Neak Village, Siem Reap Sub-district. Another memorial is said to be at Wat Ksech, Tropeang Sub-district, Prasat Bakhong District.

Huy said that the KR Regional Heads in Siem Reap were teachers called Sot and Sien, and that both were killed by Angkar, and all their followers were taken away in trucks, presumably to be killed. Ta Mok then took over.

Bunna saw his father, also a teacher, killed in O Village, Khwau Sub-district in Svay Leu (now Chi Kreng) District. The Village Head was called Phen.

CONCLUSION

Although the security situation may not allow an exhaustive survey of Siem Reap Province for some time yet, a return visit could be made to get the GPS locations for the sites already visited, and to visit other sites in secure areas. With advance notice, the Governor would be able to provide transport and a police escort.

A follow-up letter (see attached) to the Governor asks for the missing documents to be pursued, and these may well be found.

Helen Jarvis

4 November 1995