

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

REPORT ON CGP SURVEY VISIT TO TAKEO PROVINCE 28-30 September 1995 (including some information on Kampot and Kandal sites)

Survey team : Charles Bowers, Youk Chhang and Helen Jarvis

28 September

Provincial Government :

We were received by the Governor of Takeo, Sou Phirin, and by Nin Saphon, Member of the National Assembly, who had taken our letter to the Governor. We were given a warm reception, with the CGP objectives were welcomed and appreciated. Several other officials were brought into the meeting, including Ting Sokhay, Permanent Member of the Provincial Committee and Chief of the Takeo Commercial Office, who was assigned to travel with us through the province.

On arrival we were given a what appeared to be a new document summarizing " The Crimes of the Genocidal Regime ", listing the number of people killed throughout Cambodia (3,314,768) and in Takeo alone 150,249, with details of their occupations, and listing 7 genocide sites :

Krang Ta Chan (Srok Tram Kok)	10,000 victims
Centre 204	3,000
(listed in Srok Tram Kok, but apparently across Kampot border)	
Krang Cheh (Srok Koh Andet)	4,000
Khum Sanlong (Srok Treang)	4,000
Wat Kakoh (Srok Bati)	4,000
Phum Rusey (Srok Prey Kabah)	4,500
Phum Ong Kdei (Srok Somraong)	" many thousands "

We requested more documents, even (or especially) if they were " old ", which they had thought we would not want. There were several indications that others may be available, but nothing definite was forthcoming.

It was suggested that we go to Tram Kok (to the West of Takeo town) on the first day, and then to Treang (South) the next day, visiting Prey Kabas and Bati (in the Northeastern part of the province) on the third day on our way back to Phnom Penh.

We were also assigned a security detail for the first visit to the Northwest of the province, bordering Kampot and Kompong Speu. This consisted of two uniformed police (with pistols and radio) riding the Governor's large " protocol " motorcycle in front of our landcruiser, in which we had the Takeo Deputy Commander of Police, Mr. Ting Sokhay and a fully armed policeman in the back (AK-47 and five extra magazines of ammunition).

Center #204, Trapeang Kdei Village, Kampot

We set off in fairly conspicuous convoy towards Ang Ta Som (district capital of Tram Kok), where directions were sought (!), and we then headed West on Route 33, through Ang Rokar into Kampot along a very poor road, running beside Phnum Damrey Romiel, the birth place of Ta Mok. The Khmer Rouge have been active in

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

those hills, and we were told they have come down and stolen the road repairing equipment. We were also shown a " Pol Pot dike " along the way. When we reached Trapeang Andeik it was then 3pm and we were told it was a further one hour by motorbike to reach Center #204. We decided it would be unwise to be on such an isolated road as evening fell, and so not to go on. However, some men in the police station said they had been to the #204 prison during the DK period, and they were willing to be interviewed, so that compensated somewhat for not being able to reach the site.

Wat Krang Tachan, Trapeang Lean Village, Kuh Sub-district, Tram Kok District

We went back through Ang Ta Som and then headed South on Route 3 before turning West before Kuh to reach Krang Tachan. The 21 mass graves and memorial are located about 500 meters from the road. We took a GPS reading, photos and interviewed a woman who was there during the DK period. The prison has since been dismantled by villagers re-using the building materials. Some pits are still visible, with clothes and bones in the soil, and a fairly dilapidated memorial exists, but skulls have been lost – some eaten by cows and some removed, as souvenirs or for placing in a family stupa, "by visitors from Phnom Penh ".

Ta Mok's House

We were offered accommodation at the huge house built for Mok during the DK period, in the style of the Chinese institutional building. We decided it was too isolated and, without electricity, would be an inhospitable place to stay.

29 September Treang District

We headed South on Route 2 (only 3 kilometers of which is still sealed) to the Treang District Office where we were joined by the Deputy District Head (Mr. Sean?).

Phnum Sanlong, Sras Trakuon Village, Sanlong Sub-district, Treang District

We headed further South before turning West to Phnum Sanlong. Here again we met some women who had been there during the DK period and were willing to tell us what they knew. The mass graves are being covered by dense undergrowth and no buildings remain intact from the former prison. Some skulls have been relocated at Prey Pha Ao.

30 September Prey Kabah District

Ting Sokhay had previously been District Head during the early 1980's, and he was keen to show off the 37 building he had constructed, as well as to introduce us to officials in " his " district. This is also the district of Youk Chhang's mother's family, and so we had exceptionally good information for this district from two sources.

Reusei Village, Prey Levea Sub-district, Prey Kabah District

We went to a small mango grove, known as Tuol Svay, where "new" people, including members of Youk Chhang's family, were executed in the second quarter of 1975, before the rest were deported to Battambang. Small graves are said to exist around this area from 1975, but also from 1977 when base people were also executed. A house was supposedly used as a prison, and remains of a concrete structure (said to be the communal kitchen) still exist alongside the house.

Wat Por Meas Andeth, Ta Khon Village, Ban Kam Sub-District, Prey Kabah District

A substantial masonry stupa was built in 1993 to house skulls from Reusei Village and from Kampong Chak Village. Information about the construction team is written on the wall, but nothing about the specific contents.

Documents

We had lunch in Prey Kabah District town, and were joined by some local officials. After lunch the former Head of the District Information Office, Sann Sok, showed us an exercise book he had prepared from research carried out in 1982. This gives an extremely detailed picture for Prey Kabah District, listing a total of 27,663 deaths by 83 specific locations in 13 Sub-districts. We were able to take a copy of this, and to have Sann Sok sign a statement that he carried out the research, visiting each sub-district and to authenticate each page with a signature. We neglected, however, to think of asking more incisive questions as to *how* the figures were arrived at. We shall try to follow this up.

Trapeang Sva Village, Trea Sub-District, Kandal Stoeung District, Kandal Province

We stopped to take a GPS reading at this site, previously visited by CGP staff (Youk Chhang and Craig Etcheson) together with Henri Locard and several journalists. There was some discussion as to whether the one remaining building of the old Rural Development Training College was itself a prison (this seems to be the case) or whether the fragile orange bricks were installed to make a memorial later by the PRK. As has been reported, there are substantial mass graves here, but these were inaccessible due to flooding, and the enormous number of skulls are on what might have been a stage at the end of a long hall. Again, their numbers are diminishing, eaten by cows. There is no habitation nearby and no security, so it is likely that now the site's whereabouts has been publicised widely, that souvenir hunters may add to this loss from the many day-trippers who visit Tonle Bati, near to Phnom Penh.

Krang Cheh (possibly in Tralanh Sub-District of Treang District OR in Koh Andet District)

It would have been possible to try and reach Krang Cheh, by crossing to the East side of Route 2 and maybe into another district, but the road was said to be even worse, and the site accessible at this time of year only by boat, and we wanted to see Prey Pha Ao and to look for documents back in Takeo town in the afternoon, so we left out this site.

Prey Pha Ao, Phum Pha Ao, Khum Ro Neam, Srok Treang

A small masonry memorial has been built to house skulls from Phnum Sanlong and Wat Choeung Chap in amore accessible location. Again, they seem to be disappearing, especially eaten by cows.

Wat Choeung Chap

A short distance from Prey Pha Ao is a functioning Wat with sad physical remains. The old stupa and main Vihea was blown up, we were told by Pol Pot mines, while the former pagoda school building was used as a prison. The masonry building has been dismantled, with only the corners and the floor, with shackles embedded in cement, still remaining. We were told that bodies were buried under nearby coconut palms, resulting in "salty" coconuts--we were subsequently offered some by the monks, but we found them difficult to drink after hearing that story. Mass graves are said to exist some 1 kilometer away, but have now been built over by village houses.

Documents

With amazing persistence and charm, YC managed to talk our way into the office of Thomakar (Ministry of Cults and Religions, which has taken over some functions and materials of Renakse, the former Cambodia National Salvation Front), although we had been told the office was locked and the key holder had gone to Phnom Penh. The archives are in a sorry state, piled together on top of several cabinets, in paper folders tied up with plastic string. There is no apparent order between or within files. YC was able to glance through most and to find several useful documents (though none seemed vital), especially on the Cham Minority in Takeo. We were able to borrow ten documents and to make photocopies.

The "Krang Ta chan" documents Ben Kiernan obtained in 1980 have supposedly never been returned to Takeo. In August this year he managed to located a set he had previously copied for Tuol Sleng, and so we took this set back to Takeo, presenting them to Ting Sokhay to be transmitted to the Governor. Nin Saphon maintains that these were from various prisons, not just KTC. After several attempts, we unfortunately failed to meet Iv Sarik, Deputy Director of the Provincial Education Department, who says he was the man who gave the documents to Ben, but he knows we have returned copies now.

Conclusions

Clearly there are huge numbers of genocide sites in the area we visited, and there is every reason to believe (from the documents we are finding, and from Henri Locard's reports of the prison system) that this pattern is repeated throughout the country, with at least one major genocide site (prison and mass graves) in every District, with a high probability of sites in every Sub-district if not every Village.

It is impractical to assume we can physically visit them all, but it is imperative that attempts are made to visit each province, and as many districts as possible within the CGP time period, as evidence, both material and documentary, is disappearing fast. We are currently trying to strike a balance between doing intensive surveys of several

provinces, and making more information gathering visits to all. It is likely that the researchers and also other DC-CAM staff and consultants may take on some of this activity. (Sambo Mannara has recently visited Battambang -- specifically Phum Sampeu and Anlong Lakhaon and Anlong Pkar Sla -- and his report is in preparation. Helen Jarvis plans to visit Siem Reap and Battambang Town later this month, and Youk Chhang will probably visit some other provinces to supplement Charles Bower's work).

It is key to gain assistance from local officials, and particularly people who have had experience the area in the early 1980's, both for information on the location of the sites and for possible surviving documentary reports.

Our mission was strongly supported by everybody we spoke to -- at province, district and local level -- and everyone seemed willing to provide information, even from "base people" of their own presence at the sites during the DK period.

This report is intended for internal CGP use, though may well be the basis for a future publication. It is supported by the GPS report sheets, the reports of interviews, and photographs.

The combination of the GPS readings GIS attribute data, photographs and more discursive impressions and reports from documents and interviews on the spot, will make the mapping component a valuable contribution to CGP, and an essential underpinning both to the CGP research component and to any future legal action.