



DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

MAPPING PROJECT 1999:

TAKEO PROVINCE

On September 13, 1999, the Documentation Center of Cambodia assigned three people to carry out a mass grave mapping expedition in Takeo Province. Mr. Phat Kosal, Mr. Sin Khin, and Mr. Ouch Samoeun traveled to Char Sub-district in Prey Kabass District to study genocide sites and to search for witnesses as well as other evidence of the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime.

At 7 am, the team departed from Phnom Penh, taking National Road #2 toward Takeo Province. Some five kilometers past Sam Raong Yaong Market, they took a small route east toward the Prey Kabass District Office. They arrived at the office at 9:00 am. It is located about fifteen kilometers from the main road.

Unfortunately, the District Governor had just convened a meeting at the Prey Kabass District Office, aiming to distribute instructions from the Takeo Provincial Governor. Some one hundred and fifty sub-district and village chiefs had gathered to participate in this meeting. Consequently, the team was unable to make contacts with the District Governor or other district officials.

Therefore, the team elected to proceed to Char Sub-district, relying on the information previously obtained from His Excellency Heng Bo, an Undersecretary of State in the Cabinet of the Council of Ministers of the Royal Government.

Char Sub-district, Prey Kabass District

At 9:30 am, the team took a small road north of the district office to Char Sub-district, which is located six kilometers east of the office. There the team met four officials:

- Mr. Aok Diny, Chief of the Char Sub-district Office;
- Mr. Khoem Traun, Deputy Chief of the Char Sub-district Office;
- Mr. Suong Sarim, Police Officer of the Char Sub-district Office; and
- Mr. Svay Sim, Deputy Chief of Char village.

The team began by informing these officials about the aims of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. They then asked the four officials for information about execution sites in Char Sub-district. The officials mentioned six different locations, two of which had previously been mapped by Documentation Center teams:

- Tuol Banh Angkunh, four kilometers from the sub-district office, in Ang Svay Chek village, Char Sub-district;
- Tuol Kap Seah, not yet mapped;
- Tuol Sanloek, not yet mapped;
- Daem Sleng, not yet mapped;

- Tuol Ta Puong, not yet mapped;
- A Khmer Rouge security office in Sla village, Char Sub-district, now belonging to Neak Krou Meng Ly [also known as Phteah Neak Krou Meng Ly].

After hearing about these six Khmer Rouge execution sites, the team inquired about accessible routes to the sites. The main Khmer Rouge execution site, where many victims had been killed, is Tuol Banh Angkunh. Teams had previously managed to access this site by car.

The four locations that have not yet been mapped -- Tuol Kap Seah, Tuol Sanloek, Daem Sleng, and Tuol Ta Puong -- are situated in Po Char village, Sre Po Sub-district, about four to four and a half kilometers from Char Sub-district. The paths leading to these four locations are all surrounded by rice fields and water, and would not support the team's vehicle. Walking from the sub-district office to any of these four locations would involve an eight or nine kilometer round-trip. As it was already 10 am, the team decided not to undertake the long hike to the sites. Instead, they took the opportunity to interview two witnesses, Mr. Svay Sim, Deputy Chief of Char village, and Mr. Khoem Traunh, Deputy Chief of Char Sub-district Office, Prey Kabass District, Takeo Province.

Information gained from the witnesses:

Mr. Svay Sim, 57 years old, lived in this same place during the Lon Nol and Pol Pot regimes. He told the team that among these six locations, the one where the most people had been killed was Tuol Banh Angkunh. There, entire families of five to six people, young and old, males and females, had been killed.

Tuol Banh Angkunh is located in Ang Svay Chek village, Char Sub-district, Prey Kabass District, Takeo Province. Tuol Banh Angkunh is a large killing site, situated in a vast rice field, a good distance from the nearest villages. Getting there requires a walk of more than one kilometer, following a path through Svay Chek village in the general direction of National Road #2.

At this site, the mass grave pits are approximately two meters wide, three to four meters in length, and one and a half meters deep. There are so many pits that the witness could not count them all. Unfortunately, all the documents which may have been generated by the Khmer Rouge executioners at Tuol Banh Angkunh have disappeared. The witness estimated that there were one hundred to two hundred victims at this site. These victims were executed between 1976 and 1977. The victims were all brought here from Tonle Bati District, known in the Pol Pot time as District 52. Prey Kabass District was then known as District 55.

Witness Svay Sim went on to say that victims sent here were not killed immediately. First, the Khmer Rouge settled the victims among the villages of Char Sub-district. Over time, Khmer Rouge cadres extracted personal histories from each individual, and then divided them into categories, identifying those who had connections to previous regimes, and those who were accused of wrong-doing. The victims were not soldiers, but rather civil servants, teachers and students, as well as "Old People." Batches of such victims were taken away by ox-cart, deluded with the explanation that they were being moved to new land. The most extreme wave of executions was carried out in 1977.

Second location:

Svay Sim stated that in the four locations yet to be mapped by the Documentation Center -- Tuol Kap Seah, Tuol Sanloek, Tuol Ta Puong, and Daem Sleng -- there were not many very many victims. All evidence of the killing, such as mass grave pits, had long since been erased, filled in by local people to make space for cultivating crops. Five to six related family members would be brought at a time to one of those locations to be killed. The total number of mass grave pits is unknown. The total number of victims killed in the four locations was estimated to be between thirty and sixty-five. The witness said that the killing took place between 1976 and 1977.

A second witness, Khoem Traunh, 56 years old, provided additional information. He agreed that the information provided by the first witness conformed with what he had seen while living in that same place. The second witness hinted that one perpetrator named Paok had died, and that another one named Hai is still alive. It was suggested that Hai is a village militiaman in Ampil Khang Kaet village. The witness further suggested that the team might want to speak with Ta [Grandfather] Chhaim -- the village chief during the Pol Pot time. For more information on the actual number of victims killed at these sites, the witness recommended that the team meet with Ta Kim, the Sre Po village chief, who has held that position since 1979. The team could also meet with Mr. San Sok, an official of the Department of Propaganda, Culture and Arts. He is a former Chief of Char Sub-district, and had initiated the excavation of the mass graves, and the relocation of the skulls and bones of the victims to Prey Kabass District Office during the 1980s.

Because of time limits and the large gathering of local officials at the District Office, the team could not meet all people mentioned by the witnesses.

At 10:30 am, the team started out for Tuol Banh Angkunh, four and a half kilometers from the sub-district office, accompanied by Mr. Suong Sarim, a police officer assigned to the Char Sub-district Office. The team traveled in the direction of National Route 2 toward the site, eventually leaving their vehicle on Kraing Yov Thmei Road. Around noon, they traversed the final five hundred meters on foot, finally reaching the mass grave site. There they examined a killing pit on the edge of a hill, flanked by two palm trees and a Banyan tree. Between the palm trees was the pit indicated by Mr. Suong Sarim. Mr. Sarim found this killing pit while he was tending cows after the liberation in 1979. Even though this pit had already been filled in with soil, the team still made the assumption that this was the actual execution site mentioned by previous witnesses. The team took photographs to document the location.

They finished their work at 12:45 pm. Because it was beginning to look like it might rain, the team made haste, taking a short cut to National Road 2. Had the rain come while the team was at the site, there would have been difficulties due to the slippery roads.

Conclusion

The team concluded that given the limited time for this trip, the visit did achieve a modest success. However, little concrete information was obtained, because the witnesses lacked specific knowledge due to the fact that none of them were eyewitnesses, neither victims nor perpetrators. Moreover, no documents were available. The only clear information obtained was a result of leads from His Excellency Heng Bo, who had been a villager there during the Khmer Rouge regime. Local officials, including the District Governor, had recently been replaced, and consequently, the team's options for obtaining documents and detailed local information were limited.

11. TAKEO PROVINCE

District	Site Name/ Visited Date	Site Type	Est. Victim	Witness	File #/ID Code	Latitude	Longitude
Prey Kabass	Po Chrey/ 13 September 99	Burial 1 mass grave	100-200	Svay Sim	R 091305A/ 210602	N 11 ⁰ 13'2060"	E 104 ⁰ 55'3672"