

Magazine of the Documentation Center of Cambodia

*Searching for*

# THE TRUTH

- ◆ Genocide: A Topic of Grave Importance for Our World
- ◆ Visiting Anlong Veng, the Last Stronghold of the KR

*"I write today to honour and to respect the lost lives and the unrealised memories of the victims not only of the Holocaust but the tens of millions of others. I seek here and elsewhere today to commemorate their loss and acknowledge their innocence."*

*-- Youk Chhang, Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia*

**Special**  
English Edition  
First Quarter 2016

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Special English Edition, First Quarter 2016

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# GENOCIDE: A TOPIC OF GRAVE IMPORTANCE FOR OUR WORLD

*Chhang Youk*

This month is the commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a topic of grave importance for our world. We must remember not to abandon it.

The genocide perpetrated against European Jews and other innocent ethnic groups by the world-class criminals who conceived and implemented the Third Reich introduced the world to a new model of extreme organisational efficiency in the science of systematically destroying human lives.

Although the annals of history are littered with horrific examples of genocidal and mass atrocity campaigns by one group of persons against others, the efficiency models designed and executed by the

Nazi regime shocked the collective conscience of human kind.

As has been the case in other genocidal and mass atrocity campaigns, the international community's track record of recognising, acknowledging and responding to the evil perpetuated by them remains a dismal one. In almost all instances, particularly in the past 100 years, our scorecard of timely and consequential intervention has been abysmally slow and ineffective.

The upshot of this collective paralysis on the part of the international community has resulted in much more significant violence, torture, suffering and loss of life than should have occurred. Indeed,



Photo from left: Director of Documentation Center of Cambodia, Youk Chhang, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, H.E. Hang Chuonaron, Julianne Sibiski and Sera Ing Artists discussing on Sleuk Rith Institute Initiative.

this ongoing failure to organise and implement a timely and effective response is being repeated as I speak in the deadly streets of Syria. There, the international community, not withstanding its immense resources, continues by default to enable mass atrocities by human beings against human beings.

Mindful of history's victims, in Cambodia, we have embarked with the assistance of our government and others on a historic mission not only to acknowledge what they have forfeited through no choice of their own. We recently initiated a project to establish a new Sleuk Rith Institute (SRI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, a bold and ambitious project to reconcile the destructive legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime's four-year reign of terror with Cambodia's centuries-long legacy of exquisite cultural heritage.

Focusing on the timeless values of justice, memory and healing, SRI will merge the functions of a museum of memory, a research centre and

graduate school focused on atrocity crimes and a Khmer Rouge document archive and research library with a media centre.

Working with experts at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and universities worldwide, we will develop a new graduate school curriculum. It will address, among other topics, strategies the international community might deploy to more promptly recognise the symptomatic indicators of brewing hotbeds of atrocity crimes, and interventions that short-circuit both their destructive impact and sustainability. I invite all of you to join us in that effort.

And I write today to honour and to respect the lost lives and the unrealised memories of the victims not only of the Holocaust but the tens of millions of others. I seek here and elsewhere today to commemorate their loss and acknowledge their innocence.

---

**Chhang Youk**



Guests coming to see drawing which is exhibited on the wall of the Sleuk Rith art gallery. The drawing painted by Julianne Sibiski and Sera Ing.

# CONFESSION OF SOEM SEAT OF THE ENERGY DEPARTMENT

EXTRACTED FROM CONFESSION D21263

*Chheng Veng*

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In his second confession, a staff member of the energy department, Soem Seat, confessed to activities in association with four other people, namely Phol, Kong, Phan and Som. This second confession was retyped by Pholy on 8 November 1976. Soem Seat's handwriting (which matches the original), as well as his thumbprints, attest to the veracity of the confession. The following is an extract.

## **1. Activities associated with Phol**

In 1972, Angkar assigned me to work in the commerce department, which was supervised by Chhem. At that time, Phol was transporting medicine for Trapeang Andeuk Hospital. Based on my personal observation, I felt that his conduct could be considered a revolutionary moral offense. For instance, whenever he came to procure medicine, he asked for alcohol, snacks and other items. He enthusiastically told a comrade of ours that "joining the revolution meant getting delicious food and living comfortably." He even said that he admired Vietnam because the country was able to satisfy their citizens' needs.

In 1974, Angkar appointed me to conduct commerce at Rong Veng in Kampong Trach. During that time, Phol asked me to buy him medicine and other personal items such as clothing, tea, and sugar, which were forbidden by the rules of Angkar. During that same year, a comrade of ours (name forgotten) told me that Phol and Ngoy had escaped from the hospital while I was at the medicine warehouse at Trapeang Andeuk.

## **2. Activities associated with Kong**

In 1972, Kong was a local party leader and manager of the hospital and commerce department. He often went to procure medicine from Trapeang Andeuk's commerce department. At that time, I was responsible for the inventory of equipment, while Chhem was responsible for distributing the medicine. According to my observation, Kong was very lighthearted and enjoyed drinking tea. Whenever he stopped by, we had to make bitter tea for him. I only visited his hospital on rare occasions, such as the annual training session. As I recall, he personally met with Prey Lavear medicine suppliers, since there were inadequate supplies at Trapeang Andeuk. Sometimes, he traveled to Kampong Trach or the southern part of Kampong Trach District to buy medicine.

One day in 1974, we met at the market and ate noodles together. He instructed me to buy as much medicine as possible because it was needed on the battlefield. I never spent much time with Kong and we hadn't met since the day of liberation. When I was working at the oil factory, he came to visit me but then met with Comrade Hok instead. Last month, I again saw him at energy headquarters. I greeted him normally and resumed my work; then I observed him talking with Comrade Hok. He may have been requesting a departure letter for the Chinese guests at Sihanoukville.

## **3. Activities associated with Phan**

During a training session in late 1973 or early 1974, I initially met Phan, who was in charge of Kampong Seila's commerce department. I noticed

him arriving for work with Hok, a member of Rong Veng's commerce committee. The relationship between Phan and me was simply a professional connection in which we shared our experiences regarding commerce, goods for import or export, and market prices.

After the day of liberation, Angkar appointed Phan to work in a state fishery, while I was assigned to work at an oil factory. I rarely saw him since he was always at sea aboard a fishing vessel. Once in a while, I noticed him riding a motorbike at Sihanoukville. In September, while I was working at energy headquarters, I noticed him eating rice with Comrade Chhon. I greeted him as usual. Later, I saw him driving a green 4x4 car to energy headquarters for another meeting with Comrade Chhon. I didn't greet him on that second occasion. I am not close to him, but we are acquainted.

#### **4. Activities associated with Som**

I met Som in a training session at the department zone in 1973 or 1974. Later in 1974, Angkar appointed him to oversee the Kep salt flats, and he often traveled back and forth to buy materials for his salt flat unit. After liberation, one of my comrades told me that Angkar had transferred him to work in the Baek Chan rice field because he had brought his family from Phnom Penh to join him without permission from Angkar.

After liberation day, I encountered Som in Kep at a zone committee training session. Then I ran into him again around April or May, while I was working at the oil tank building in front of the foreign market. I talked with him about his work assignment and he told me that he was working in the electronics department.

Truthfully, I would like to confess my mistakes regarding my opinions, my emotions and my moral offenses, all of which were contrary to the Communist Party of Kampuchea. I am very ashamed of the shortcomings in my revolutionary attitude which were caused by my carelessness.

Going forward, I would like to pledge the following to the Communist Party of Kampuchea:

I commit to follow the line of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and to respect and love the Party from the bottom of my heart.

I commit to refute all my past mistakes which were contrary to the Communist Party of Kampuchea.

I commit to rebuild myself following the political consciousness and structural lines of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, respectfully and truthfully.

In short, I would like to pledge before the Communist Party of Kampuchea that if I should one day betray the Party's line, I am willing to be punished by the Party. Additionally, I commit to remedy my mistakes by demolishing all types of private property, including materials, as well as to reform my attitude, consciousness and emotions. Furthermore, I commit to participate in collective property under the socialism of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.

Respectful Party, please forgive my careless mistakes. I firmly believe and solely respect the Communist Party of Kampuchea.

While I was traveling abroad, I witnessed the contentious viewpoints between the foreign Party in Hanoi and our Party within the country. After finishing my studies there, I obeyed our Party's line completely, although it was the first time I had learned such doctrine and I didn't fully understand the matter.

When I was a diplomatic secretary in Hanoi, I didn't understand anything. At that time, my main duty was to distribute published news from radio broadcasts to all of the embassies. The Party later assigned me as a Party assistant until I returned to Cambodia.

Note: Soem Seat's confession was retyped several times by the prison guard, but I could only find his second confession which consisted of seven pages.

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**Chheng Veng**

# DEVELOPING SOCIALISM BY STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE PROLETARIAN PRINCIPLES

*Chheng Veng*

## 1. Status of socialist revolution in our country

Addressing socialist revolution in our country requires a discussion of political conscience, structure and actual progress. Simply put, the condition of our socialist revolution is not repressed. The revolution is developing in a positive way and has a firm foundation, which undergoes continual strengthening.

### 1.1 Political consciousness

Regarding political consciousness in urban and rural areas:

♦ There are many different state entities in the urban areas. In short, the conscious struggle to demolish the old regime, including federalist-ownership, capitalism, imperialism and independent action has developed positively since 1976.

Consequently, within every entity there is a struggle between revolution and non-revolution, revolutionaries and enemies of the revolution, development and retrogression. What encourages us is that the socialist revolution continues to rid society of non-socialist elements.

♦ The development of our socialist revolution did not happen by chance. It is the result of our socialist revolutionary movement.

♦ Generally, every revolution is fraught with conflict, including individual conflict and internal conflict, among others. Our socialist revolution has experienced all of these situations. If we carry out our socialist strategies consistently on a daily, monthly and yearly basis, we will be able to solve all of these conflicts by educating our revolutionaries. In



Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres collecting rice for supporting collectives and soldiers at frontline.

contrast, if we have doubts about the socialist revolution and don't address the conflicts effectively, they will compound themselves and become difficult to solve.

For instance, during the democratic revolution, some people remarked about the power of American imperialism. As a small country, how could we challenge them? This non-revolutionary political stance caused our revolutionaries to hesitate to struggle with the American imperialists.

Another example is the claim of some in our cooperative who say that we have lost the happiness we enjoyed before the revolution. There are two aspects to this claim. Firstly, these individuals might not fully understand our revolution, so we need to educate them. Secondly, they are opposed to our socialist revolution. Some cadres also state that the cows were very healthy when they were privately-owned, but now they are emaciated. This point shows the misunderstanding of our cadres regarding our revolutionary concept.

◆ If our socialist revolution progresses well, the tasks of building socialism and protecting our country will also proceed perfectly and easily. Even though we are developing rapidly, we still need to strengthen and expand our revolutionary movement.

### **Why is a socialist revolution necessary?**

A socialist revolution was undertaken in order to build and protect the economic security of our citizens as efficiently as possible. Federalists and capitalists cannot achieve these goals through private ownership because that course of action increases conflict among our citizens. Our socialist revolution is not undertaken for the sake of revolution itself, but to ensure the development and protection of the country's economic security.

### **2. Structure and movement**

While the political conscience of the country is undergoing significant development, rural and urban organizational structure is also being transformed. The interesting points are:

◆ We have effectively organized the cooperative structure, so that our cooperative forces are very powerful in both rural and urban areas.

◆ Our cooperative forces are very effective.

For example, our cooperatives have expanded from 100 to 200 to 300 families and in some cases, up to 500 families. Our Party plan was to complete the establishment of village and commune cooperatives in 1976, and we have succeeded with that plan. In the commune cooperatives, there are 800 to 1,000 families.

◆ An additional point is that we divide our cooperative forces into units, namely Units 1, 2, 3 and 4. This indicates that we have a well-developed revolutionary movement. Only a well-structured socialist revolutionary movement can manage such a massive number of forces. If we practiced individualism, we wouldn't be able to match this achievement. Stating this does not imply that we have not encountered any obstacles. We have experienced some challenges, but have coped with them effectively.

For example, some areas lack water resources for cultivating crops. If our population lived individually, we wouldn't be able to solve this problem. Angkar assigns forces in every commune and district to cooperate in transporting rice seedlings to locations where a water resource is available so that they can be transplanted. Then Angkar assigns forces from one commune or district to help solve the water shortage in other communes or districts. We divide our production forces among a thousand hectares of rice fields in every district, region and zone.

This represents the initial step in allocating the massive number of production forces. What makes it possible to accomplish this is our highly-developed cooperative principle. We believe in our cooperative system, but we must ensure that the population believes in the movement. We will try our best to strengthen and expand the movement within our population. At present, 85 percent of them are very

active and believe in our movement. In fact, among 100 people, there are only one or two dissenters.

### **3. Conditions for building socialism**

Currently, our socialist-building process is effective and much improved compared to 1975 or 1976.

#### **3.1. Rural areas**

Angkar provides sufficient food nationwide. Only one or two zones still experience food shortages, and Angkar is gradually working on this problem.

♦ In many large regions, our forces are well-organized compared to last year. Moreover, our paddy and seedlings are growing well in the fields with sufficient water.

♦ Based on reports, some areas have abundant water for cultivation and therefore enjoy a variety of food supplies, such as rice, corn, potatoes and so on. All workers assigned to farming are very active in the fields. Our paddy yields have increased significantly since last year.

#### **3.2 Will we achieve three tons of rice per hectare in 1976?**

We have not yet determined our paddy yield, but we are able to observe the ongoing effort. Based on our estimation, we will achieve about 80 to 100 percent of our plan. We expect to complete our plan successfully by 1976.

#### **3.3 Other industrial techniques**

♦ One of the main aspects of our socialist movement is technical management. Generally, we perform our technical tasks accurately in accordance with our Party line. We are now able to control our technical development and production independently, which is preferred. We are currently working on the invention of a new rice mill with improved capacity. In the past, we were dependent on foreign countries for electronics and machines, but now our young people are actively working to internally create all required equipment.

In short, we have organized every sector in our

industrial complex. We design and create everything independent of outside influence. Our plan is executed well in every sector, even though we are using traditional cooperative methods.

♦ All effort must flow from our primary strategy. If we don't adhere to our plan, we will suffer two mistakes:

1. Our development will be slowed.
2. We will make procedural mistakes.

Those of us with more than ten years of education still lack opportunity. If we travel abroad to pursue education, we will be forced to abandon our movement and cause conflict for the revolution. Therefore, we must continue to follow our Party line by learning and practicing concurrently.

We must adhere to our Party line in order to develop our technical skills. We need to accomplish all of our initiatives independently. We may make some mistakes during our experimentation, but we feel that is a positive experience. We cannot develop our country by depending upon other nations.

♦ We must share our experiences and our independent principles with our citizens. We must remain strong and take control of our country's fate. At the moment, the entire world is observing our actions.

All initiatives seem to be working well and we have been able to accelerate the implementation of our plan. However, some problems have occurred. Currently, we have a shortage of materials for production of goods as well as for our citizens to maintain their livelihoods.

#### **What does the future hold?**

In the future, we need to address the issue of Party leadership. We must reinforce our political position and continue to develop our country consistent with our socialist views. If our cadres clearly understand their responsibilities, our movement will proceed in an impressive way. For example, our revolutionary movement works most effectively wherever there are powerful committees

in place. In short, our next priority is to build leadership inside and outside the Party.

#### **4. Developing our socialist state based on the Party's plan by strengthening our proletarian cooperative principles**

For more than a year under the leadership of our Party during the first stage of our socialist revolution, our cadres, citizens and revolutionary soldiers completed their tasks and succeeded in protecting and building our country. However, in actual practice, we have experienced both strengths and weaknesses.

Going forward, we must develop our country into an advanced agricultural economy in ten to fifteen years and further to an industrial economy in fifteen to twenty years. We must establish a plan to carry out our socialist revolution for the long term.

Does Cambodia need a long-term economic plan? Is this the right time for the implementation of such a plan? Are we capable of achieving our plan?

All of these considerations rely upon a reasonable conviction in our plan and our strategy. If we do not have faith in our plan or work diligently to carry it out, we will never agree upon nor achieve our goals. A lack of agreement will result in conflict within our cooperatives accompanied by a loss of solidarity. We must believe in our plan and proceed to implement it immediately for the following reasons:

1. One of the primary reasons is that we must develop our country quickly in a great leap forward. Why do we have to facilitate a great leap forward? The enemy will destroy us strategically if we do not become stronger and stronger year by year. If our economy doesn't expand enough for our citizens' standard of living to improve over time, the enemy will target us and easily destroy us. Although we maintain a strong hatred toward our enemies, we cannot take action against them if we remain weak as a nation. We must develop our country as well as protect ourselves from our enemies.

In this context, we must devise a plan to

accelerate the development of our country, thereby strengthening ourselves as individuals in the process. We must expand and strengthen our economy as an independent nation.

2. Secondly, the implementation of our plan must enhance the ability of our citizens to earn a living. Accomplishing that objective will also benefit our political position. In contrast, if our citizens remain poverty-stricken, the enemy can more easily incite them to challenge our revolution, either intentionally or unintentionally.

3. Finally, we must continue to develop our economic, agricultural and industrial sectors. We need to earn more capital in order to improve the country's economy for the benefit of its citizens as they strive to earn a living. Once every sector develops and becomes prosperous, we will have influence globally.

All of these considerations suggest that we must implement our plan without delay. If we further develop our plan during 1977 with the intent of implementing it in 1978, it will be too late. Therefore, we must not delay; we must take action immediately even though we are still recovering from civil war.

Moreover, if we delay the restoration and development of our economy for two or three years, it will imply that we aren't independent enough to protect our own country, our Party or our revolution. We need to ensure that the revolutionary principles are clearly understood so that whatever obstacles we encounter can easily be overcome. We have to persevere with our plan whether the situation is favorable or unfavorable. We need to commit to our plan wholeheartedly regardless of the difficulties ahead. Ultimately, a firm political conscience and strong dedication will be essential if we are to achieve our plan.

#### **Are our goals attainable?**

We must proceed with the implementation of our plan, even though we are beginning at ground zero. We are confident of success as long as we

maintain an awareness of the plan's strengths and weaknesses as follows:

**Strengths:**

1. The socialist revolution will accelerate development because of the relationship between economics and politics. As our regime achieves political stability, our economy will grow at an increasing rate. However, if our politics were based on individualism, our economy would experience difficulties and stagnate. As an example: Can an individual build something alone? Of course not. In a socialist regime, we can achieve progress faster because we work together in solidarity. Political strategy drives the effort to accomplish everything through cooperative means of production.

Some people take the position that politics has no bearing on the construction of a factory. In fact, the two are strongly interrelated. As an example, a capitalist country does not have the ability to marshal the totality of its resources to achieve a common goal. Socialism is superior to capitalism and presents few obstacles to progress. If a capitalist country encounters one hundred obstacles, we will encounter only one or two.

The previous regime, which was based on private ownership, use of petrol, currency and so on, differs greatly from our movement. We use petrol only in the interest of protecting and developing our country; in the old regime, they used petrol for personal benefit. If a cooperative regime has one million riels at its disposal, it will invest the entire amount in the development of the country. On the other hand, in a capitalist economy, 500,000 riels will be allocated for salaries and the remaining 500,000 riels for the benefit of the country at large. This fact demonstrates that our cooperative regime has the means to develop our country more rapidly than would a capitalist regime. Moreover, the technical sector also has the potential to improve significantly under our regime.

2. Our Party line is both strategic and tactical.

Having an effective strategy has led to much success for us and our tactics have effectively advanced our movement.

3. Our population lives in cooperatives and the cooperative movement is becoming increasingly stronger day by day.

4. We have approximately 2,400,000 hectares of rice fields which can adequately support our population of 7 million citizens.

Despite the afore-mentioned strengths, we must also acknowledge some difficulties, including the following:

1. The country is recovering from civil war, however this is not an insurmountable problem.

2. Although we lack technical resources, we are working relentlessly to overcome this challenge.

3. We lack raw materials and are forced to purchase them from foreign countries.

All of these difficulties can be resolved in the short term. Taking into consideration both our strengths and weaknesses, is it possible to achieve our plan? Of course it is. We will achieve positive results in three to five years. Thus far, we have successfully addressed problems related to water, fertilizer and pesticides.

Within this context, we expect to achieve our plan in a timely and efficient manner, even though we may encounter difficulties along the way. Obstacles exist in all endeavors; that is the nature of life. However we maintain a positive view of our potential due to our socialist cooperative political views.

Although the existence of our enemies represents an additional obstacle, we continue to maintain a positive focus based on our clear political views and analysis. We must dedicate ourselves to solidarity based on our strong commitment to a cooperative society.

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**Chheng Veng**

## A HISTORY CLASSROOM AT FORMER KHMER ROUGE S-21 PRISON

The Khmer Rouge regime turned public schools and pagodas into prisons, stables and warehouses. Tuol Sleng prison, also known by its code name of "S-21," was created on the former grounds of Chao Ponhea Yat high school, originally constructed in 1962. The Khmer Rouge converted the school into the most secret of the country's 196 prisons.

Experts estimate that somewhere between 14,000 and 20,000 people were held at Tuol Sleng and executed. Only seven known prisoners survived after the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) held that at least 12,273 prisoners passed through Tuol Sleng in its trial judgment against former Tuol Sleng commander Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch. As the number of survivors has received less attention, most Western media repeated the figure of seven survivors and this



has been repeated for over 30 years. However, after several years of research, the Documentation Center of Cambodia estimates that at least 179 prisoners were released from Tuol Sleng from 1975 to 1978 and approximately 23 additional prisoners survived when the Vietnamese ousted the Khmer Rouge regime on January 7, 1979.

Today the four buildings in the compound of the prison form the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, which was opened to the public in 1980. People from all over the world visited the museum and currently, approximately 250 people

visit on an average day. Many Cambodian visitors travel to Tuol Sleng seeking information about their relatives who disappeared under the Khmer Rouge.

While the museum has been a success in generally raising awareness of the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, it still lacks a thorough educational dimension, which could make the experience of visiting more dynamic, educational and memorable. Since its conversion from a place of learning to a place of horror and degradation, Tuol Sleng has never reclaimed its original status. However, in the future, in order to reclaim the positive, educational heritage of Tuol Sleng and add an educational element to the museum, a classroom has been created to provide free lectures and discussions on the history of the Khmer Rouge regime and related issues, such as the ECCC. The classroom will also serve as a public platform for visitors and survivors to share information and preserve an important period of Cambodian history for future generations to learn from.

- ◆ **LECTURERS:** Staff members from the Documentation Center of Cambodia and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.
- ◆ **GUEST SPEAKERS:** National and International Scholars on Cambodia and S-21 Survivors
- ◆ **TOPICS COVERED:** Who were the Khmer Rouge? ◆ How did the Khmer Rouge gain power? ◆ The Khmer Rouge Hierarchy ◆ Khmer Rouge Domestic Policies ◆ The Khmer Rouge Security System ◆ Office S-21 (Tuol Sleng Prison) ◆ Khmer Rouge Foreign Policies ◆ The Fall of the Khmer Rouge ◆ The Verdicts of the ECCC.
- ◆ **SCHEDULE:** Monday 2pm-3pm ◆ Wednesday 9am-10am ◆ Friday 2pm-3pm.
- ◆ **VENUE:** Building A, top floor, 3rd room.

# PUBLIC INFORMATION ROOM

DC-Cam's Public Information Room (PIR) is open to students, researchers, government and non-government organizations, and interested members of the public who want to learn more about the history of Democratic Kampuchea and the developments of the coming Khmer Rouge tribunal.

DC-Cam is the largest repository of primary materials on Democratic Kampuchea (DK). The materials in its archives are consequently of the utmost historical interest and has served as important evidentiary materials in any accountability process relating to the DK regime. To disseminate the truth about the DK period and to promote lawful accountability and national reconciliation, it is imperative that materials be made available to historians, judicial officials, and other interested members of the public. Through the PIR, the public can read the documents and use them for research. The documents in our possession include biographies, confessions, party records, correspondence, and interview transcripts. We also have a database that can be used to find information on mass graves, prisons, and genocide memorial sites throughout Cambodia. The PIR offers three services:

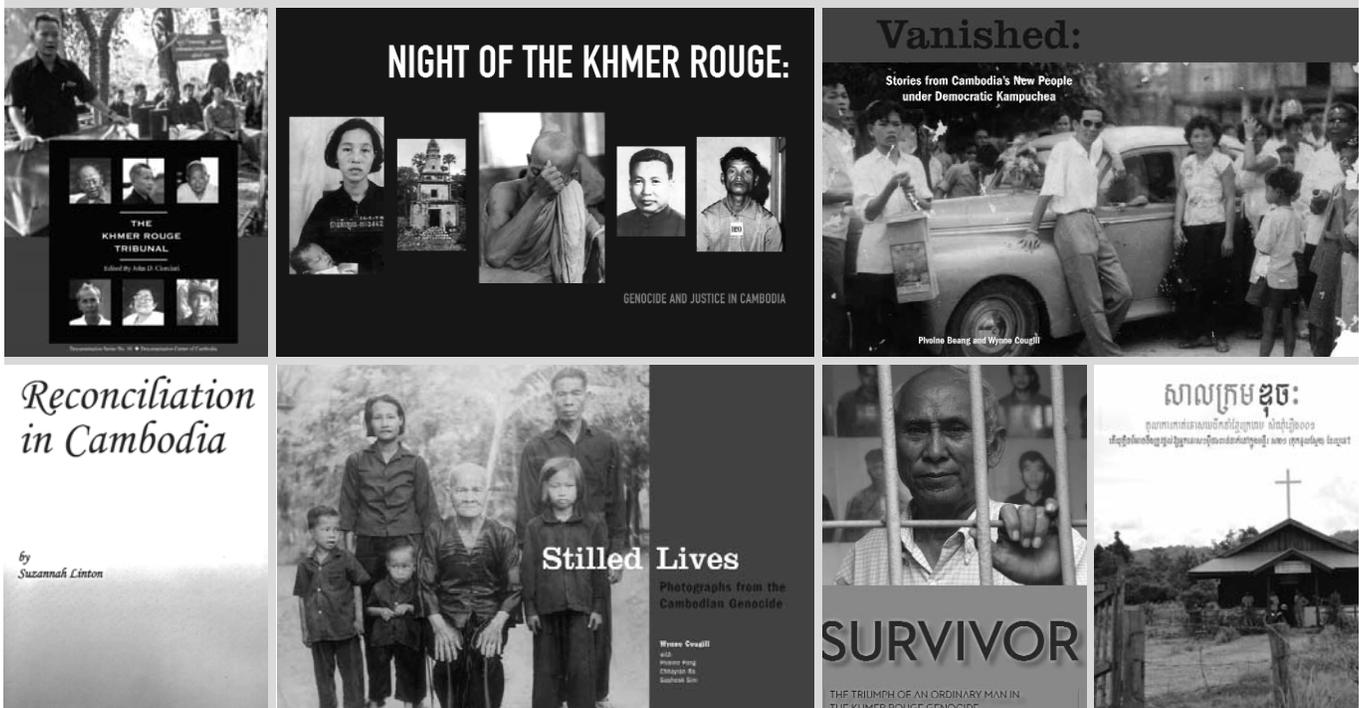
1. Library: Through our library, the public can read documents, books and magazines, listen to tapes, watch documentary films and view photographs held at DC-Cam, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, National Archives and other locations.

2. Educational Center: DC-Cam shows documentary films and offers lectures on Khmer Rouge history, the Khmer Rouge tribunal, and other related subjects.

3. Tribunal Response Team: Our document and legal advisors have provided research assistance to the tribunal's legal experts from both Cambodia and the United Nations, as well as to the public.

Khmer Rouge documentary films are shown everyday upon request.

The PIR is located at House 66, Preah Sihanouk Blvd, east of the Independence Monument. It is open to the public from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or if you want to arrange a group event, please contact our staff, Soday Un, at [truthsodavy.u@dccam.org](mailto:truthsodavy.u@dccam.org) or at 023 211 875. Thank you.



# IF WE SURVIVE, WE WILL RETURN TO OUR HOMELAND

*Som Bunthorn*

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Vanna was recalling her story during the Khmer Rouge regime at Kandal Teacher Training Center

Following is the story of Sot Vanna, a 62-year-old woman, who has worked at the Provincial Teacher Training College in Kandal Province for over 32 years. Each day she cleans the school's classrooms and campus, waters the plants and performs any other assigned tasks. I met her by chance while she was sitting in a garden waiting to prepare food for one hundred participants of a training course on "The History of Democratic of Kampuchea from 1975-1979." She was a quiet person and no one seemed interested in chatting with her. However when I sat down to talk with her, she recounted her life story.

Vanna was born in Champei Commune, Bati District, Takeo Province. During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era, her father, Doung Sot, was a lecturer at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, while her mother was a housewife. When she was young, her family of nine moved to the Boeung Trabek area of Phnom Penh. Later, she lived with her sister, whose husband was a policeman, near Pochentong in order to take care of their children. Eventually, she returned to live with her father, who registered her in a private school.

In 1974, when she was 15 years old, her parents arranged for her to marry a soldier stationed

at the Sileb barracks. In 1975, Khmer Rouge forces evicted her family from their house. The family traveled for three days, but were unable to cross Kbal Thnal Bridge, so they turned back to return to their house. At that time, her family tended a lot of livestock, but, as Buddhists, they never killed them. Now, in desperation, Vanna's older siblings pleaded with their parents to kill the livestock for food. After they finished their meal, the Khmer Rouge expelled them for a second time. Vanna and her husband didn't bring any valuables with them on the trip, aside from some medicine.

Vanna and her family crossed Monivong Bridge and stayed at Kien Svay for a few months before continuing on to their native village at Champei Commune, Bati District, Takeo Province. Upon their arrival, they stayed in her grandmother's village. Their family was large, so Vanna's father gathered wood to build a temporary house for them. During that time, their family didn't suffer much hardship because their local relatives were base people. In addition, one of Vanna's uncles, Touy, was the cooperative chief. Vanna was even able to barter with the base people, exchanging her medicine for rice.

Later, the Khmer Rouge separated Vanna and her husband from their parents because her husband had served in the Lon Nol army. They sent them to a pagoda around three kilometers from the village, along with other Lon Nol soldiers who had been identified by the Khmer Rouge cadres. There, Vanna and her husband were forced to work in the fields under the control of Bav, a friend of Vanna's who used to live in Phnom Penh. Bav had returned to her village and joined the revolution before the

liberation day in 1975. While Vanna was working for Bav, her uncle often visited and urged Bav to look after his niece.

Sometime in 1976, the Khmer Rouge listed the names of new people (17 April people) in order to evacuate them to another province. Vanna and her husband intended to register their names, but her uncle dissuaded them and told them to continue working hard instead. (Most likely, her uncle knew that the evacuees were destined to be executed.)

A few days later, Vanna's husband devised a plan to escape the village. "If we are going to die here, we should try to escape. If any of us ultimately survive, we should return to the village because it is our homeland," said Vanna's husband. With this plan, they secretly hid themselves in the trunk of a Khmer Rouge car which was headed to Pursat Province, where they met their aunt and sister-in-law. Three days later, Vanna and her relatives took a train to Battambang Province. Upon arriving at Mong Russey, Vanna became separated from her aunt and sister-in-law. The Khmer Rouge assigned Vanna and her husband to live in the Se Commune cooperative. During their first month there, Vanna and her

husband received sufficient food rations, as there were fish, oranges and many other fruits available for them to eat.

Vanna encountered her cousin, Phon (and his son), while he was searching for his wife, who had become separated from the family. They all lived together in Vanna's house. The family was allotted rice from Angkar according to the number of family members. Later, Angkar assigned the villagers to work and eat collectively in a dining hall. Whenever there wasn't enough food for everyone, the cooperative chief told them to forage for food. However, no one could find any food to eat, since the sources of fish and fruit had been depleted.

In addition to his work as a member of the dike-building brigade, Vanna's husband always carried water for the household. One day he accidentally broke his arm, and the Khmer Rouge sent him to Mong Russey Hospital for treatment. After leaving the hospital, he could no longer work in his brigade. Angkar reassigned Vanna to work in the rice-grinding brigade; as a result, she would always pilfer some rice for her husband. Her starving husband ate food without considering its effect on his health, and that



Teacher Training Center at Kandal province where Vann worked and accomodated her three children.

exacerbated his medical condition. Vanna urged her husband to seek treatment at Battambang Hospital, but he refused because he didn't want to leave her. After Vanna's continual persuasion, he agreed to go to the hospital, but has never been seen since.

One night, three militiamen arrested Vanna and her cousin, accusing them of capitalist behavior after her cousin traded his necklace for rice from base people. The militiamen tied their hands behind their backs and escorted them to a rice field about 200 meters from their house. One of the militiamen brutally beat Vanna's cousin but they didn't harm her. After torturing her cousin and giving them both a warning, the militiamen released them and assigned her cousin to hard labor, which resulted in injury to his legs.

Vanna secretly gave two cans of rice to her cousin, because she couldn't bear to see his son and him starve. At night, her cousin cooked all the rice and shared it with his son. When Vanna tried to wake him up for work the next morning, she realized that he had passed away during the night. She covered his naked body with a krama and kept his cigarette lighter, an item of value for bartering. She then reported his passing. At three o'clock that afternoon, a militiaman buried her cousin's corpse and transferred his son to the children's unit.

After having lost her husband and cousin, Angkar assigned Vanna to live with a Cham family in the fishing unit. Some people considered her to be Cham because she lived with that family for a long time. Later, Angkar transferred her to a grinding unit, because she didn't know how to fish at all. Whenever she cooked, she always added extra rice so people would have better nutrition. When she was finished cooking, she packed the leftover rice in a container and distributed it to people who were ill or housebound. One day, Vanna took rice to Yat, whose husband and children had died like so many others. When she called to Yat, she received no response. Vanna went up the stairs to enter Yat's house and

noticed her dead body lying on a wooden plank. In addition to Yat, other sick people also died due to insufficient food and medicine.

After Vanna worked in the chef unit for a while, Angkar assigned her to harvest hay near a mountain, which was 60 kilometers away from the village. Merun was the unit chief there. Angkar had built a long hall for the female unit, and the workers had to harvest hay and store it in the hall. After a large amount had been collected, the unit chief transferred the hay to the village. During that time, she could tolerate her working conditions because her food ration was adequate. Moreover, the flavor of the food was enhanced with monosodium glutamate and sweetened with brown sugar. After completing their tasks, Vanna and her fellow workers always went searching for vegetables to satisfy their appetites. Smerng, a Khmer Rouge militiaman, always gave Vanna bees to cook as well.

One day, as she was walking to the hay harvesting area, she noticed a corpse and became very frightened. The Khmer Rouge had killed the victim and didn't bury the body properly. There were times when Vanna heard the pitiful and sorrowful screams of victims. During the rainy season, Vanna endured hardship because she was forced to sleep on the floor unprotected from snakes and other animals.

Vanna stayed in her unit until 1979, when Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia. After a while, she relocated and began selling Khmer noodles at Toul Sleng to support her brother's education. In 1981, she remarried and eventually had three children.

In 1997, Vanna applied to work on the staff of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. She has lived in the Provincial Teacher Training College in Kandal Province ever since.

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**Som Bunthorn**

# CONFUSION NEARLY LEADS TO DEATH

*Som Bunthorn*

Ouch Nget, 92 years old, lives at Ounaloam Pagoda in the city of Phnom Penh. Her hometown is Samrong Village in Samrong District, Takeo Province. In 1941, she married the vice-chief of the district in Bat Roka Commune, Samrong District, Takeo Province. Her family had acquired a lot of wealth since they owned many paddy farms and her grandfather, Kong, was a tax collector who had worked in the Royal Palace during the reign of King Suramarith.

Every year her family harvested a significant amount of paddy rice, but they had to set aside some for the payment of taxes. To reduce their tax obligation, her family buried some of the rice in order to hide it from the tax collector who came to record the data.

Her husband worked as a vice-chief until the



Ouch Nget giving her interview to magazine staff, Som Bunthorn, at Ounaloam pagoda.

late 1960s. Sometime later, the Khmer Rouge tried to arrest him because a jealous coworker reported damaging information about his background. He managed to escape arrest by hiding in a pile of hay. After that incident, Nget, her husband and four children fled to Phnom Penh where they were assisted by relatives and friends. Back in their native village, the Khmer Rouge burned their three wooden houses to the ground.

In the city, Nget rented a place at a market beside a hospital, while her husband earned a living as a domestic worker. Her three sons worked in a bakery, a chicken farm and a pharmacy, respectively. During that time, her family was receiving aid from an organization which assisted war victims. After saving some money, Nget bought three houses. She kept one for her family and rented the other two for extra income.

In 1975, after the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh, Nget and her family returned to their hometown in Bat Roka Commune, Samrong District, Takeo Province. During their journey, the Khmer Rouge confiscated the family's valuables, including a motorbike. When they arrived in their home village, Khmer Rouge cadres ordered them to live in Tapon Village.

Her family, including eight children, was evacuated by train to Svay Sisophon and further to Tuek Chour Commune, Preah Netr Preah District, Banteay Meanchey Province. Angkar assigned Nget and her husband to work on a farm, while seven of her children were ordered to join a dike-building unit. Only her youngest child remained with her at that time.

Later, Angkar selected her husband to work as

a carpenter, while she continued to work on the farm. Whenever she was transplanting paddy rice, she always cried and ran to high ground because she was afraid of leeches. Vong, the chief of the mobile brigade, noticed this and consequently assigned Nget to work in the textile unit instead. However, she first had to take a test.

Nget took the textile test with three other workers, namely, Kong, Yon and Hom. The test required them to weave cotton scarves. Nget had never woven anything before, but she was observant and tried to follow the technique of the other weavers. Eventually, she passed the test and Angkar gave her three cans of rice as a reward.

After that, she worked in the textile unit in Tuek Chour Commune and received half a can of rice per day. Nget traded with the base people, exchanging gold for rice, because the ration provided by Angkar wasn't enough to feed her family. One day, a thief stole rice from Angkar's rice mill. Choy, the militia

chief, accused her of the theft because he found a lot of rice in her house. Although she protested, Choy tied her hands behind her back and escorted her to the commune office. Her husband didn't dare to intervene; all he could do was cry hopelessly.

When Vong, the mobile brigade chief, heard the news, he met with Choy and told him to investigate the matter more carefully. Vong insisted that the rice in Nget's house was given to her by Angkar. Ultimately, the militiaman released Nget.

In 1979, Nget's family returned to Phnom Penh. Later, she and her husband decided to live in Ounalom Pagoda. All of her children got married and found work in the government sector.

Nget remarked that her family is very fortunate because all of them survived. However, she will never forget the hardship, starvation and frightening events which occurred during the Khmer Rouge regime.

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**Som Bunthorn**



Women in textile factory in Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)

# JOINING THE KHMER ROUGE OUT OF ANGER

*Som Bunthorn*

Chan Vichet experienced oppression and the confiscation of his rice, which led him to join the Khmer Rouge as a way of seeking revenge for the mistreatment of his family. Vichet, 62 years old, was born in Chhuk District, Kampot Province. His father's name was Chan Chorn and his mother's name was Deab Ton.

In 1970, due to the overthrow of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk and the mobilization of students against the coup, Vichet was forced to drop out of school in Grade 2 (old system). He returned to his home village instead of joining the revolution.

At that time, Vichet's parents produced the most rice in the village. The Khmer Rouge began

collecting rice from Vichet's house. On the first and second occasions, Vichet's parents didn't argue with the rice collectors. However, the third time, Vichet's father went to the rice warehouse and beat them while Vichet guarded the entrance.

Upon hearing about this incident, Kot, a district cadre, ordered Vichet and his father to meet with him. The village chief had told Vichet's father that if any Khmer Rouge cadres came to arrest him, he would signal him by chasing the cattle. District cadres came to the village and planned to kill Vichet's father. Knowing this, Vichet's father poisoned himself to avoid arrest.

Since Vichet couldn't escape from the Khmer



Chan Vichet giving his interview about his experience in the Khmer Rouge regime to DC-Cam staff

Rouge, he decided to kill his pig and present it to the soldiers as a gesture to Angkar that he wanted to join their military. Later, after he was issued a gun, he planned avenge what had happened to his family by shooting all the soldiers who had stolen the rice. However, when he arrived at the front line, the soldiers did not permit him to join their army.

In 1973, Vichet stayed with Khmer Rouge soldiers at Sleng Pagoda, and Angkar appointed Aoeun to research Vichet's background. Later, Lon Nol's army routed the Khmer Rouge soldiers on the battlefield. Then the military commander issued Vichet a gun and ordered him to shoot at two tanks in the Lon Nol army.

After the skirmish, a messenger escorted Vichet to the military office, where he recounted the frightening incident on the battlefield. After listening to Vichet's story, Angkar issued him a bag of clothing and accepted him as a soldier. Ever since then, Vichet's anger at the Khmer Rouge cadres in his hometown subsided.

Vichet joined the youth army, in which Ren was the division commander and Bet was the unit leader. From December 1974 until the liberation day in 1975, while the Khmer Rouge were organizing their troops at Tram Khnar in advance of the march on Phnom Penh, Angkar appointed Vichet as a messenger in Platoon 310, which was commanded by Phea.

In addition to his work, Vichet was required to write announcements and reports due to his beautiful handwriting.

Angkar stationed Vichet's Platoon 310 in Ang Snuol District, Kandal Province. Angkar assigned other units to repair the railroad in Takeo. Later, Vichet joined Phea when he was reassigned to Division 11. Vichet always remained in Phea's division because he used to write love letters for Phea when they were both stationed at Toul Kei.

In 1976, Angkar transferred Vichet's unit to the front line at the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in

Kampong Ampil Commune, Koh Ondeth District, Takeo Province. In addition to protecting the border, Vichet had to assist villagers with farming. In 1977, Vietnam attacked Takeo Province and scattered the Khmer Rouge military. In reaction, Angkar conscripted workers from Phnom Penh to help resist the Vietnamese until they retreated.

Later, Ta Mok established a new hierarchy and reassigned Vichet to Division 340 in Svay Rieng, where Aieng Phan was the regiment chief and Chan was the deputy chief. Phea, on the other hand, was assigned to a division at the border in Takeo. Vichet's regiment in Svay Rieng Province battled the Vietnamese in Prasot District for two months in 1979, during which time Vichet suffered an injury.

Vichet and thirty other soldiers then fled by train to the forest in Battambang Province. Later, Angkar convened a meeting of the soldiers at Komreang District and ordered Vichet to release the soldiers. Moreover, Angkar ordered Vichet to submit to reeducation. Vichet refused all these directives and led his soldiers to a station in Ou Chrov District, Banteay Meanchey Province.

Angkar then ordered Bei, a Khmer Rouge commander, to attack Vichet. As a result, Vichet led his soldiers to join the Vietnamese. He returned to his hometown for a while and then he and his family moved to Ou Chrov District in Banteay Meanchey Province.

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### **Som Bunthorn**

*Please send letters or articles to  
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# A PLACE WHICH PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN

*Veng Seanghai*

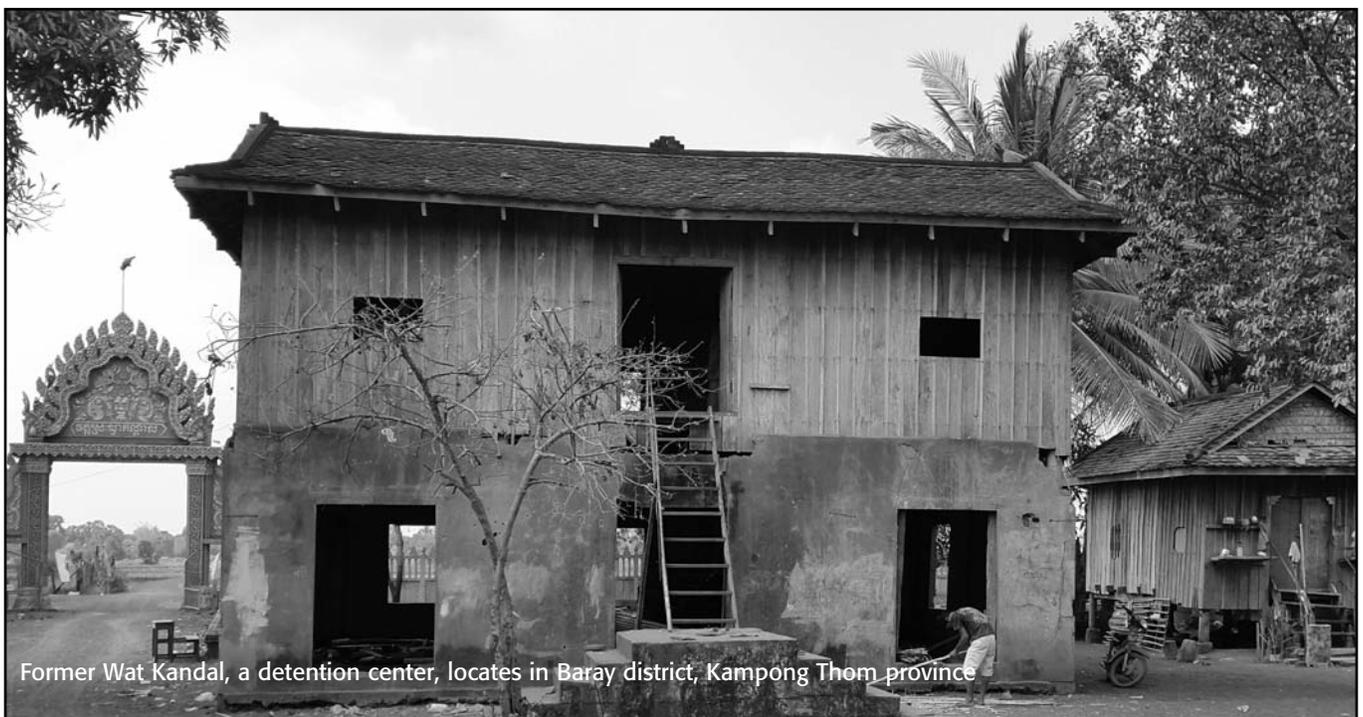
During the years 1975-1979, the country of Cambodia suffered devastation and became destitute due to the mass evacuation of its population. Pol Pot considered all Cambodians to be enemies who needed to be smashed. He established security centers throughout the country and subjected the masses to reeducation, which resulted in the deaths of nearly two million innocent people. Those who survived continue to suffer a disproportionate degree of mental illness. After the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, security centers filled with skeletons and skulls were discovered all over the country. Some of those former torture centers have become neglected and abandoned.

In a remote area of Trapang Veng Village, Baray District, Kampong Thom Province, about one kilometer from National Road 6, there is a former Khmer Rouge security center known as Kandal Pagoda or Lvea Kandal Pagoda. This area was a

detention center where prisoners from nearby villages were tortured. Unlike other former security centers such as S-21 or Choeung Ek, it is not maintained by the government or an NGO. According to an informal report, about 10,000 individuals died in this security center. No effort has ever been made to study this site or preserve its history.

After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, the campus of the security center and the surrounding rice fields were found to be littered with bones, skulls and torture equipment. Some of the important evidence, such as shackles and skeletons, was destroyed.

Piles of bones have been abandoned and scattered in the rice fields, exposed to the scorching sun and drenching rain for years. All those dead souls might be hot, tired and wondering why no one cares about them. During their lifetime, they were tortured, starved and abused; now that they are gone, their



Former Wat Kandal, a detention center, locates in Baray district, Kampong Thom province

bones have been neglected. This represents an absolute injustice. The final hope of these individuals is for a ritual ceremony in which their bones and skulls are respectfully laid to rest in a stupa.

In the 1990s, Lao Leou, a victim of the Khmer Rouge regime, personally financed the building of a stupa for victims whose bones had been abandoned. However, he was able to gather only a small portion of the bones because many of them had been scavenged by dogs. In addition, over time most of the bones had deteriorated due to exposure to the elements. Nevertheless, I join other young people in visiting the stupa to pray for those dead souls.

The stupa, sheltered by large shade trees, is located in front of a dry pond surrounded by litter and fragile leaves. With a broken window and a stain on the wall, the stupa patiently awaits the notice of passersby who might tend to its care. Today, when any Buddhist ceremony takes place at the pagoda, villagers always bring some food as an offering and pray for those victims.

There is also an old ramshackle building on the campus of the pagoda which was a place of torture during the Khmer Rouge regime. Only the elderly villagers know about this detention room and they

rarely recount their stories of this place to the young generation. Not only do people neglect this building, but they use it for storing old equipment and trash. Actually, someone attempted to destroy the building for personal reasons, but the Supreme Monk protected it because he felt it was important historical evidence.

"No one conducts any research about this historical building, which was a detention center just like the Toul Sleng Genocide Museum," remarked El Somethea, a village teacher, with sadness and concern. He has requested assistance from the government or from a non-governmental organization to preserve this area. If no action is taken, the history will be forgotten and our young generation may not learn about the Khmer Rouge regime. Moreover, the souls of those dead people might not rest in peace.

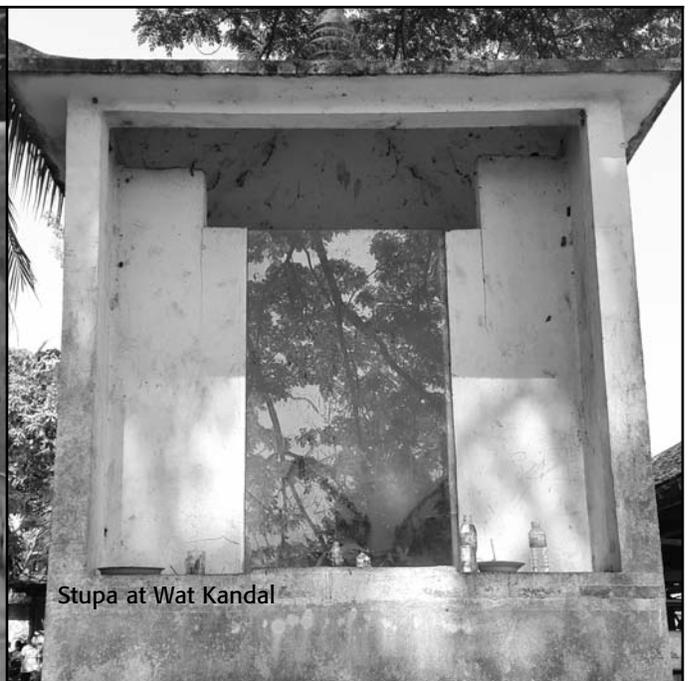
All of the victims resting here will receive justice only if this place is designated as an historic site and its history shared with the rest of the country. Even though every aspect of modern Cambodia is changing through relentless development, the country cannot change its own dark history.

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### Veng Seanghai



The views of former detention center at Wat Kandal



Stupa at Wat Kandal

# KHMER ROUGE EXHIBITION AT WAT THMEY SIEM REAP

*Vanthan Peou Dara*

The Documentation Center of Cambodia has expanded its outreach activities related to the bitter history of the Khmer Rouge through a variety of means, including photo displays and exhibitions.

Wat Thmey (Wat Tep Pothivong) near downtown Siem Reap is one of the sites where an exhibition was installed. In early January 2016, I spent three hours observing the activities of tourists who visited Wat Thmey. An English-speaking tour guide whom I knew as Borith, aged 36, told me that European tourists spend a great deal of time visiting the exhibition and reading all the information posted in the exhibits. Borith said that European tourists are usually familiar with Cambodian history before they visit the country. He added that tourists often inquire

about the number of people who were killed during the Khmer Rouge regime and about the perpetrators of the crimes. The guide added that he learned about Khmer Rouge history from the exhibition display and that's the information he shares with the tourists.

What caught my eye at the Wat Thmey exhibition was a visit of Korean tourists. During my time there, approximately thirty groups of Korean tourists visited the exhibition, which is free of charge; each group consisted of fifteen to thirty individuals. Borith told me that one of the sites that the Korean tourists were scheduled to visit was Wat Thmey. I noticed that almost this entire Korean group, who were accompanied by a native Korean-speaking guide, visited the exhibition on the history of the



Tour guide presenting the Khmer Rouge history on account of Documentation Center of Cambodia guide, at Wat Thmey to her guests.

Khmer Rouge. The exhibition provides insightful narratives about Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge. Though the guide was speaking Korean, I could recognize some words such as Cambodian, Khmer Rouge, Nuon Chea, and Ieng Sary.

I was curious to know why Korean tourists are interested in Cambodian history. I looked around for a Cambodian who could translate from Korean to Khmer. Assisted by a Korean-speaking Cambodian guide, I had a conversation with a 59-year-old Korean tourist named Son Hye Reun after she viewed the exhibition. She said that she was interested in learning about Cambodian history because "it is similar to the history of Korea in terms of sorrow, execution and the separation of families." She added, "Like Koreans, when the country had problems, [they]

sought help from the United States."

She was referring to Lon Nol's Khmer Republic government, which sought American support in their opposition to the Khmer Rouge. When I asked her what she thought about Cambodia's problems, she responded, "I hope Cambodia will be able to resolve its problems without outside intervention so that it can develop into a country like modern Korea."

Another group visiting the exhibition was a Korean family consisting of a father, a mother and two children, who hired a tuk tuk driver to bring them to Wat Thmey. They got off the tuk tuk and visited the exhibition without a tour guide. Then they visited the memorial filled with skulls and bones. I became curious about them. I learned from the tuk tuk driver that the Korean family could speak English, so I walked over to them and asked permission from the father to ask some questions. His name was Seung Wook Kang, and he told me that he brought his wife and children to see this site because he had watched a movie called "The Killing Fields." His children did not believe the story actually happened, but the father wanted his children to learn about what happened in Cambodia so that they would be sympathetic toward others who experienced tragedy.

Lastly, I noticed some students laughing near a cafe inside the Wat Thmey compound. These students sell coffee every day for a company called Sowat. I wanted to know the perceptions of those students as they observed tourists visiting Wat Thmey. Twenty-year-old Korn Sophea, who is in Grade 12, said, "When the tourists return home, they will be able to share information about Cambodia with the world."

**Vanthan Peou Dara**



Tourist looking the exhibition of the Khmer Rouge history at Wat Thmey which is exhibited by Documentation Center of Cambodia.

# RAISING STUDENTS' AWARENESS REGARDING THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA THROUGH PUBLIC FORUMS

*Som Bunthorn*

The history of Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge) from 1975 to 1979 was incorporated into the school curriculum immediately after the regime collapsed in 1979. However, that history program, which focused primarily on political propaganda, was not disseminated widely. In the 1980s, the history instruction was withdrawn from the curriculum as the Cambodian government tried to resolve internal political conflicts, including with the Khmer Rouge. It is believed that nearly two million innocent people were victims of the Khmer Rouge regime.

About two decades later in 2011, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport developed a curriculum to formally teach the history of Democratic Kampuchea to students in general education throughout the country.

In January 2016, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Sleuk Rith Institute of the Documentation Center of Cambodia prepared an educational forum entitled "The Importance of Studying the History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" which was presented to one hundred Grade 12 students at Chea Sim Boeung



Grade 12 students at Chea Sim Boeung Kengkang high school attending the Public Education of Khmer Rouge history which was prepared by Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Keng Kang High School. The Documentation Center of Cambodia has archived and published extensive material covering all aspects of the history of Democratic Kampuchea, and this forum was part of their outreach to the educational community.

Chea Sim Boeung Keng Kang High School was built during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period and later abandoned during the Khmer Rouge regime. After 1979, the government selected this high school as a foreign language training center for individuals traveling abroad. In 1992, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport formally allowed students to attend this school for general education.

The educational forum held in January 2016 presented students with knowledge about the genocide in Cambodia and provided them with a chance to express their thoughts about the Khmer

Rouge regime. Moreover, the forum enabled students to think critically about the impact of the regime on Cambodian society. The presenters encouraged students to discuss the subject with their family and friends.

According to Mr. Pheng Pong Rasy, coordinator of the forum, this educational program will help students add to their knowledge of the history of Democratic Kampuchea through documents and stories of relatives or parents, rather than through the school curriculum alone.

Mr. Ngov Chon Hak, principal of Chea Sim Boeung Keng Kang High School, remarked that few students are aware of the history of the Khmer Rouge regime or the experiences of their parents during that time. He said this forum would pique their curiosity and hopefully encourage them to further research the history. Moreover, the history of Democratic Kampuchea is one of the subjects that appear on the Grade 12 national examination.

"This forum helps me to understand the history of the Khmer Rouge more thoroughly and also gives me a chance to discuss the subject with my friends," said Kim Sreynith, a Grade 12 student at Chea Sim Boeung Keng Kang High School.

Deb Chansopheak, a 12th-grade student, felt that this forum provided him with clear historical knowledge which supplemented what he had studied in school. In addition, he plans to share what he has learned with the young generation.

The educational forum "The Importance of Learning the History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" is very essential for students. It provides critical knowledge, not only to the students, but to society as a whole.

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**Som Bunthorn**



Students answering the pre-survey questions which is related to the understanding of the Khmer Rouge history before the start of the Khmer Rouge lesson.

# CHAO LAUNH, A FORMER MOBILE BRIGADE MEMBER AT KOH THOM

*Ry Lakhena*

Chhao Launh was one of seven siblings born into a peasant's family at Kien Svay District, Kandal Province. Due to poverty, he quit school in Grade 11 to help his parents with the farming.

After the overthrow of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk four years later in 1970, war broke out between Lon Nol and the Khmer Rouge movement. As the Khmer Rouge stepped up their propaganda and continued to build their army, the area was

bombarded by Lon Nol's government, which resulted in the destruction of many homes and cattle. To escape the bombardment, some of the villagers fled to safety in other locations.

After victory day on 17 April 1975, Angkar tried to arrest Launh's family because one of his older brothers had been a colonel in the Lon Nol army. Launh's family fled to Koh Thom District, while his brother's family fled to Kampong Thom. When Launh arrived at Koh Thom, Angkar did not separate the 17 April people from base people since his family were the only outsiders living there. For the first half year, Angkar provided rice to every family. Later, Angkar ordered the villagers to eat in the cooperative.

Launh was assigned to work in Koh Thom's mobile brigade. He recounted that working conditions were very harsh. He had to get up at 4:00 in the morning and work from 4:30 a.m. until the lunch break at 11:00 a.m. He returned to work at 1:00 and continued until 5:00 in evening. He was served only porridge mixed with corn in return for his hard work. However, once in a while, the workers were served Khmer noodles.

Launh's mobile brigade worked at the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. At that time, Angkar assigned Launh to a special brigade consisting of 25 members (10 males, 10 females and 5 farmers who were base people). This special brigade had to



Chhao Launh giving his interview to DC-Cam staff at his home at Kien Svay district, Kandal province.

harvest at least one hectare of paddy per day. If they could not reach their quota by the end of the workday, they had to work overtime into the night. Every day, the unit chief and cooperative chief came to monitor his group and withdraw some of its members. Once a month, Angkar held a meeting at which they exhorted everyone to achieve their work quota.

Launh missed his family, so one day he decided to sneak away and visit them. While he was traveling along the road, Angkar arrested him and sent him to the Preaek Klok Security Center where he saw many other prisoners, including teachers and soldiers. The security guards didn't torture him; they only reeducated him. During his stay there, he never personally witnessed any torture, but he used to hear people screaming and moaning in suffering. A security guard asked why he had been sent there and

he responded that he had wanted to visit his family. The next day, the guard asked the same questions and he answered the same as before. Then the guard contacted his unit chief to take him back.

It was then that he met Song, the commune chief of Kampong Kong, whose son, Veng, was his friend. Song told him not to run away again. He told him that if he dared to run away one more time, Angkar would send him to the main security center at Koh Thom. After that warning, he didn't dare to run away again.

When the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, he returned to his hometown. In 1987, he married Chorn Savern and they had seven children (3 daughters and 4 sons).

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Ry Lakhena

## [www.cambodiatribunal.org](http://www.cambodiatribunal.org)

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# A FORMER LON NOL MARINE: WAR CAUSED ME TO DESIRE SOLITUDE

*Seang Chenda*

Having spent his entire life on the battlefield, sixty-one-year-old Keo Dara now wants to live quietly. Because of the war, he was forced to live apart from his wife, Sok Sivorn, fighting battles until the Khmer Rouge achieved victory.

Dara was the youngest son among eight siblings. He finished his education at Grade 5 at Povom School, Toul Kork. After the overthrow of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, he left school and

became a marine in the military of Democratic Kampuchea. He was transferred to Company 3, which was commanded by Vong Sarandy. After being stationed at Chroy Changva for a week, he was transferred to military training at Ream. After that, he fought against the Viet Cong at Prey Nob and the battlefield at the Veal Renh petrol factory under the command of Na Ream Ly. Two years later in 1972, he was transferred to work on the military staff in Phnom Penh.

During his two-year stay in Phnom Penh, he attended military school. After finishing his course, he served as a guard at Chroy Changva. In late 1973, his superiors transferred him, along with other seventy-seven other members, to attend training aboard a ship in southern Vietnam for five months.

When he and his fellow trainees returned from Vietnam, they each commanded a boat and headed in different directions. He steered his ship to guard the area in front of the Royal Palace. Sometimes, his commander ordered him to guard merchant ships as well. He claimed that in 1973, there was a big battle between Democratic Kampuchea and the Khmer Republic, and he had to guide his boat through water battles along the river at Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham and Neak Leung until the day of liberation on 17 April 1975.

During the war years, Lon Nol



Keo Dara giving his interview to Documentation Center of Cambodia staff at a pagoda in Phnom Penh.

soldiers and other groups of people crossed the river traveling from eastern Cambodia to Phnom Penh. During that time, many people swam up to his boat begging for help and he agreed to assist them since he found their situation very pitiful. Unfortunately, Khmer Rouge soldiers had hidden themselves among those swimmers. Some of those soldiers held him at gunpoint and confiscated boats for the transport of their own forces. The Khmer Rouge told him that they would not kill him or any other captains because they only wanted peace. Dara couldn't do anything but accommodate the orders of the Khmer Rouge and transport their soldiers from the east side of the river to the west side at Kien Svay.

On 13-14 April in 1975, Dara and three of his fellow soldiers removed their military uniforms and fled from Kien Svay to their homes. At 9:00 a.m. on 17 April 1975, he witnessed Khmer Rouge forces entering Phnom Penh; many citizens were waving white flags to welcome the soldiers as liberators. He joined the crowd but returned home as soon as the situation became tense.

Dara went to the home of his commander, Vong Sarady, and discovered that he had already been killed by the Khmer Rouge. Dara and his wife left the city at 1:00 p.m., headed for Kaoh Thum District. He encountered the former singer, Meas Samorn. Dara claimed that Samorn was a well-known singer whom he had known for many years. The Khmer Rouge eventually killed Samorn and his family at Koh Thmei Security Center.

One night in late 1976, the Khmer Rouge evacuated Dara and his family from Kaoh Thum to Battambang Province. There he was assigned to work on a farm in Region 4. Angkar was still seeking out former Lon Nol soldiers and civil servants in order to execute them. Dara was convinced he was going to be killed because the Khmer Rouge knew about his background. Fortunately, they didn't kill him because he was a hardworking man. He claimed that when cadres from the Southeast Zone took over his

area, many people were killed. Dara worked at Battambang until he fled to a camp on the Cambodian-Thai border in 1979, after Vietnamese troops invaded the country. Later, he and his family stayed in a barracks under the control of Kong Salas (who died due to disease).

Because the soldiers in Dara's barracks didn't get along with other soldiers in the forest nearby, his barracks was destroyed. He sought the help of local villagers to look after his wife, who had just given birth, while he fled to another area for safety. In 1983, he and seventy other soldiers confessed to Vietnamese authorities. In 1997, Dara finally tried to reunite with his wife and child, but sadly, his wife had married another man. Currently, he lives in a pagoda in Phnom Penh where the surrounding area provides him with peace and solitude.

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### Seang Chenda

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF GENOCIDE EDUCATION

- ◆ *Your questions empower and give meaning to those who have suffered. Asking your parents and grand-parents about the Khmer Rouge will further the conciliation of the Cambodian nation.*
- ◆ *Teaching children about the Khmer Rouge regime means teaching students the difference between good and evil and how to forgive. Broken societies must know their past in order to rebuild for their future.*
- ◆ *Teaching children about the history of the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as stimulating discussion between children and their parents and grandparents about what happened, are important to preventing genocide both in Cambodia and the world at-large.*

# LIFE ON THE MOUNTAIN FOR THIRTEEN YEARS

*Sok Kimsey*

Cambodians have suffered many hardships through decades of war, especially during the Khmer Rouge era when millions of citizens were killed. During my three days visiting Anlong Veng, I met with a victim of the Khmer Rouge regime and she recounted the personal story of her difficulties.

Chham Long, 60 years old, was born in Soutr Nikom District, Siem Reap Province. She is the

second daughter among five siblings (one male and four females). She has eight children of her own, (two sons and six daughters). In 1971, during the Lon Nol regime, the Khmer Rouge evacuated her to Anlong Veng District, Oddar Meanchey Province, where she still lives.

After she was evacuated to Anlong Veng, she endured life-threatening aerial bombardment by the United States military. Every day, whenever she heard the sound of an approaching plane, she ran and hid in a bunker.

During the three years, eight months and twenty days of the Khmer Rouge regime, Long was forced to join a group of laborers on a farm for seven hours each day—from 7:00 to 11:00 in the morning and from 2:00 to 5:00 in the evening. She pointed out that her working conditions were better than some people in other areas who were forced to work more than 10 hours per day in addition to overtime at night. Her daily tasks included digging soil, harvesting paddy, planting potatoes and corn, clearing the forest and so on. During this time she was famished and consumed by fear, being served only porridge twice per day. As a result, she stole potatoes to alleviate her hunger. She never enjoyed happiness during those years; she always dreamed of reuniting with her parents and other



Chham Long and her husband at home in Trapeang Brey village, Toek Chhum commune, Anlong Veng district, Oddar Meanchey province.

relatives as soon as the regime ended.

In 1979, after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, she hoped to experience a better life and reunite with her family. Nonetheless, she had to continue living at Anlong Veng, the site of constant skirmishes between Khmer Rouge forces and the army of the government in Phnom Penh. Because of the continual danger, she and some other residents fled to the top of the Dangrek mountain range along the Thai border. There she was confronted with many hardships because there wasn't enough drinking water for all the refugees. She lived on the mountain for thirteen years under very difficult circumstances. Each year before the harvest season, there was nothing to eat. Moreover, she had to live in a tent instead of a wooden house. Whenever soldiers were fighting nearby, she had to flee her house and all her farm crops, with no clear destination in mind. In the new location, she had to replant paddy rice and vegetables to feed her family. She lived with the

constant fear of having to escape the war until 1993. When the situation finally improved, she relocated to the foothills of the mountain, hoping for better living conditions. However, hostilities continued and she was forced to flee to the top of the mountain once again.

Eventually, by the end of 1993, the war came to an end and she moved to Teuk Chom Village, where she still lives today. Because her family was forced to continually relocate, her children did not receive a proper education like many other people.

Nowadays, she earns a living by working on a farm. She urges the government and Cambodian citizens as a whole not to allow such a regime to come to power again. She wants to live in peace because she has experienced enough war for her lifetime.

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**Sok Kimsey**



The stream on Dangrek mountain. During the civil war, the Khmer Rouge soldiers and people used the water for daily use and growing plants.

# THE LIFE OF SAK RONA DURING THE KHMER ROUGE REGIME

*Sok Vannak*

Ouk Sak Rona, 57 years old, was born in Yok Bat Village, Kbal Kaoh Commune, Chbar Ampov District, Phnom Penh. Her father's name was Aouk Lonh; her mother's name was Meas Than; and she has three siblings. During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime, her family was very wealthy and she and her siblings were able to attend school. Sak Roza studied

at Yok Bat Primary School and then continued on to Preak Eang High School through Grade 5 (old system). After the coup d'état, both teachers and students stopped attending school and returned to their home villages. There was a rumor that Khmer Rouge forces had entered her village and some of the young people had joined their movement.

In 1973, the Khmer Rouge relocated villagers in areas controlled by Lon Nol, including Sak Rona, to S'ang District. The villagers were assigned to farm paddy rice for two years until 1975, when the Khmer Rouge captured the city and ordered them to return to their hometowns. After Sak Rona arrived back at her home village, she witnessed an incident at a pagoda there.

The Khmer Rouge forced twelve monks to defrock because the regime's rules didn't permit any religious practices. Everyone had to work; there were no exceptions. Khmer Rouge soldiers guarded the pagoda and prevented people from entering or offering any food to the monks. First, they tried to persuade the supreme monk, Koy Teth, to leave the pagoda by telling him to go to Koah Thum District, where they said there was an abundance of food. However, the supreme monk remarked that he became a monk for religious reasons, not to be given



Ouk Sak Rona giving her interview to Documentation Center of Cambodia staff at a pagoda in Phnom Penh.

food. This comment infuriated the Khmer Rouge so much that two or three days later, some Khmer Rouge soldiers stuffed him in a sack and beat him to death with a metal rod. They then buried his corpse in a Buddhist building. Everyone nearby the pagoda witnessed the entire event, but didn't dare to intervene. Another twelve monks who refused to defrock were taken away by truck and never seen again.

During 1975, the Khmer Rouge convened a meeting of all villagers except young children. In that meeting, Angkar announced that everyone would now be working and eating together in a cooperative; there would be one class of people, with no distinction between poor and rich. Everyone was required to submit to Angkar an accurate inventory of their possessions, farm land, and cattle. The Khmer Rouge divided the farming tasks according to age. Male and female youths were assigned to work in remote mobile brigades, while adults were assigned tasks nearby the cooperative. The elderly were obligated to look after young children aged one to four years.

Sak Rona, who was an adult, was initially ordered to build a dike and canal at Kien Svay Krao Pagoda. Later, Angkar assigned her and hundreds of other females to work in a district mobile brigade at Sre Ampil Village, Kien Svay District. The workers in that brigade were forbidden by Angkar from visiting their homes. Homesick women who secretly visited their families suffered reeducation or torture when they later returned to work. Angkar also transported some of the workers to Champuh Ka-ek Security Center, which was under the control of Yeay Bo, a district cadre from the Southwest Zone.

In 1977, the Khmer Rouge transferred Sak Rona and thousands of other male and female youths to a mobile brigade at Angkor Chey Pagoda, Kien Svay District. Angkar constructed two halls far apart from each other to house male and female youths separately. Furthermore, Angkar forbade

them from meeting with one another. If male and female youths met for any reason, they would be accused of a moral offense and killed. Workers at Angkor Chey Pagoda endured hard labor without adequate food rations. Some girls became thinner and thinner day by day until they looked like ghosts. Without sufficient food to eat, Sak Roza fell ill and was unable to work in the mobile brigade, so Angkar transferred her to a job tending cattle.

One day, after her health had improved, she decided to visit her parents at home. However, she was unable to see them because they were at their worksite. As she was returning to her brigade, she encountered some Khmer Rouge soldiers, who took her back to her brigade and told her unit chief that she had visited home without permission.

Sak Rona told her unit chief that she hadn't escaped to go home, but instead had been trying to gather wood to build a fire for the cattle. The unit chief believed her because she was in charge of the cattle. If the unit chief believed that she had run away, he might have tied her up and let the mosquitos bite her mercilessly.

In 1979, when Vietnamese troops invaded our country, the Khmer Rouge cadres fled in all directions. Along the road, Sak Rona noticed the dead bodies of many young cadres who had been shot by Vietnamese soldiers because they wouldn't surrender their weapons. She traveled for three days to reach her home village and reunite with her parents. In 1982, she volunteered as a teacher at a primary school. In 1989, her parents arranged a marriage for her and she later had two children. Eventually, she and her husband divorced because they couldn't find happiness together. She is no longer a teacher, but earns a living by selling some merchandise. She likes to visit the pagoda whenever she has free time.

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**Sok Vannak**

# I WAS NOT AFRAID OF THE KHMER ROUGE

*Hout Bunkong*

When Cambodians recall the Khmer Rouge, they describe it as an brutal regime marked by hardship and suffering. However, the experience of Pich Ron, who lived through this dark era of Cambodian history, was different than most other victims. She never endured any suffering or torture. Moreover, she was even permitted to marry the person she loved.

Pich Ron, 58 years old, was born in Chum Kiri District, Kampot Province. She currently lives in Anlong Veng District, Oddar Meanchey Province. She is one of five siblings (two brothers and three sisters). Her oldest brother died in 1968, while her second brother died in 1997. One of her sisters lives in Phnom Penh and the other lives in Pich Nil.

In 1974, Khmer Rouge cadres were recruiting

young volunteers to join the resistance against the Lon Nol regime. Ron was 17 years old at the time, and she and her sister volunteered as tailors in a military unit in Kampot Province. After Khmer Rouge victory over Lon Nol forces, she moved from the Kampot tailor unit to one in Takeo, where she remained until 1978.

Ron claimed that she enjoyed freedom at that time and was permitted to visit her family at her home village. Her family's unit provided her with food and accommodation as well. In 1978, when the hostilities between Khmer Rouge forces and Vietnamese troops became increasingly serious, Angkar evacuated her to a unit at the tailor market in Battambang.

By 1980, Khmer Rouge forces had been



Pich Ron giving an interview about her experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime to Documentation Center of Cambodia staff, Hout Bunkong, at her house which locates in Toek Chhum commune, Anlong Veng district, Oddar Meanchey province.

overtaken by Vietnamese troops, so Ron's unit chief relocated her to Unit 808 in Oddar Meanchey Province. Ron initially set out from Battambang by truck, however eventually she and the other evacuees had to abandon the truck because it was taking fire from the Vietnamese soldiers. They then had to proceed on foot through the forest. She was reassigned to a female unit which transported rice, bullets and various weapons to the front line. Sometimes she didn't have enough to eat.

During 1980, the Khmer Rouge opened a new crossing on the Cambodian-Thai border at the foot of Mountain 1001, where they recruited female tailors to make clothing for the troops. In the same year, the Khmer Rouge opened another border crossing at the foot of Mountain 1003. Ron was reassigned to work as a tailor in that area.

In 1984, she married her sweetheart, Tao No. Her marriage was not a forced marriage; moreover, it was celebrated in traditional Khmer style. She had four children whose names are No Choeu, No Chen, No Vuthy and No Lina.

In 1990, Ron left the Dangrek Mountains to live in Anlong Veng District, where she and other villagers were provided with rice and canned fish every 10 to

15 days by Ta Mok. Later, she began to earn an independent living by farming; she requested some pigs and cows from Ta Mok. After the animals matured, she sold them to Ta Mok and saved the proceeds to buy some supplies and food at the Thai border. However, during the dry season, she always had to retreat to the mountaintop to escape the battles between the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese troops. In 1996, during skirmishes between Khmer Rouge forces and the Phnom Penh government, her husband stepped on a landmine and was killed. Her family experienced peace only after the Khmer Rouge joined the government.

"Life during the Khmer Rouge regime and after the integration of the government isn't different. For example, during the Khmer Rouge regime, I worked for clothing and food. In this regime, I work for money to earn a living. I was not afraid of the Khmer Rouge. If you are a hard-working person, you will survive any regime in any location," said Ron.

Her impression of the Khmer Rouge regime seems to be very different from other victims who experienced the same era.

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**Hout Bunkong**

## LOST A COUSIN DURING THE KHMER ROUGE REGIME

My name is Kai-Duc Luong. I lost my cousin whose name is Luo Yi Hui nicknamed Niu Niu - born in 1966 in Phnom Penh. She was around 12 or 13 in 1978-1979. Her father is my mother's 2nd oldest brother.

In 1978, the Khmer Rouge killed Niu's father named Luo Xiu Bing at a worksite because he stole a chicken to feed his family and was executed in one of the forced labor camps. His wife Luo Bi Yun committed suicide after she had learned about her husband's fate. Before she committed suicide, she gave her daughter to her sister's care, based on accounts from friends who traveled with them. 1978 Based on those same accounts, Niu Niu was carrying a bag with some gold that her parents had left behind after her death.

In 1978-1979 her aunt took that bag from her & she left her behind on her own at the border.

If anyone has the information or knows her, please contact me at #66, Preah Sihanouk Blvd., Phnom Penh or contact at. Tel: 023 211 875.

# A FORTUNATE SURVIVOR

*Saing Thong*

Touch Chhel, 63 years old, lives in Anlong Veng District, Oddar Meanchey Province. His hometown is in Cheung Roas Commune, Odong District, Kampong Speu Province. He is the youngest child among five siblings (two females, three males). Because he is disabled and suffers from mental illness, he stays home and looks after his grandchildren. His wife, Chang Long, 60 years old, is the village chief. The couple has eight children (five daughters and three sons).

During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era, Chhel lived with his beloved parents and family. At that time, living conditions were very good because there wasn't any crime, corruption or drug trafficking in society. Moreover, citizens had the right to express themselves fully and to choose how to earn a living.

In 1970, Chhel left his family to join the revolution. He endured hardship as a member of the

military, but volunteered for the sake of the nation. He fought against the American army and the South Vietnamese forces of Thieu Ky. Unfortunately, in 1973 he suffered a severe gunshot wound to his back and temple and wasn't expected to survive. After the Khmer Rouge victory, his unit sent him to the Russian Hospital in Phnom Penh, but he didn't receive proper treatment there. After he returned to his unit at Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chhnang Province, he had to travel back and forth to the city now and then for health checkups at the hospital.

In 1975, Phnom Penh was in chaos because Angkar had ordered everyone to leave the city. Chhel was evacuated to Samlout District in Battambang Province. After living there for two or three months, he moved to Malai District and Kamrieng District. At that time, he wasn't interested in relocating to another country (the United States) because he didn't want to be separated from his parents and relatives. He encountered many difficulties throughout his life due to unstable circumstances and inadequate nutrition. He still needs to visit the doctor occasionally due to his physical and mental condition.

Later, Chhel moved to Aranh (Thailand), where Angkar was preparing to relocate him to the United States. However, he didn't want to leave his parents and relatives, so he left Aranh in 1980 for the Anlong Veng area. There was a strong presence of Vietnamese troops in Anlong Veng, prompting him to move to the Dangrek Mountains, where he stayed until 1990. He met his wife and married her in 1980. Unlike marriage ceremonies during the Khmer Rouge years, their wedding was celebrated in the traditional Khmer style. In 1991, he and his family,



Touch Chhel

including four children, traveled to the Anlong Veng area and claimed a plot of land on which to build a house and earn a living. However, he and his family had to flee the area occasionally to escape military hostilities, since the country remained unstable.

Chhel claimed that under the leadership of Ta Mok in Anlong Veng, life was pleasant and there was plenty of food. Ta Mok educated everyone to love the forests and wildlife in the area and urged everyone to grow crops for their personal use. Ta Mok always said, "Our foot rests on the ground, so we should understand our land and how to farm it. We shouldn't remain idle and expect to receive food."

"Before the Khmer Rouge joined the Phnom Penh government, my family had sufficient food and lived together happily, but I still wanted Ta Mok to

join the government because I didn't want to endure war and chaos for the rest of my life," said Chhel.

After the government integration, Chhel and all the other villagers were elated because they no longer had to worry about their safety and they could travel from one area to another with less difficulty.

As a result of the war, Chhel suffered a disability and isn't able to do anything besides look after his grandchildren. Sometimes, Chhel feels disappointed in himself because he should have been the breadwinner in his family. Instead, he considers himself a burden to his wife and children. However, he is fortunate to have survived the war years and to be able to enjoy spending time with his family.

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Saing Thong

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# AU KANSENG SECURITY CENTER

*Chan Pronh*

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On 2-3 March 2016, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia heard testimony from witnesses Phan Thol and Moeung Chandy about Au Kanseng Security Center, a site at which Khmer Rouge crimes occurred. The couple, who were both prisoners there, recounted details about the living conditions, including torture and execution, at Au Kanseng Security Center.

Phan Thol, 66 years old, was born in Svay Rieng District, Svay Rieng Province. Currently he lives in Labansiek Commune, Banlung District, Ratanakiri Province. Moeung Chandy, on the other hand, was born in 1954 at Bati District, Takeo Province. She lives in Kandal Stueng District, Kandal Province. They were married in 1972. In 1962, Thol was working at the rubber plantation in Ratanakiri Province. After the overthrow of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk in 1970, Thol relocated and worked on a farm at Trapeang Chres until the collapse of the Lon Nol regime. During the Khmer Rouge regime, Angkar transferred Phan Thol and Moeung Chandy to work on a rubber plantation in Ratanakiri Province under the supervision of Tum, the unit chief. Thol was in charge of maintaining the rubber trees, while his wife was a rubber plantation worker. Angkar arrested both of them and sent them to Au Kanseng Security Center on 16 June 1977.

Chandy recalled that it was about 2:00 in the afternoon when someone told both of them to attend a meeting. They quickly walked to a truck, which was parked about 50 meters away from their worksite. In the truck were two other families as well as Khmer Rouge soldiers. They arrived at Au Kanseng Security Center at 6:00 p.m.; the Khmer Rouge soldiers then shackled them and locked them in a detention room. The Khmer Rouge arrested Chandy,

who was pregnant at the time, because they thought she had ties to the Vietnamese. Thol was accused of practicing feudalistic methods to treat the rubber trees.

## **General Conditions at Au Kanseng Security Center**

Au Kanseng Security Center was called a “re-education school” and was part of Division 801 under the control of So Saroeun, alias 05. The center was located in Village 6, Labansiek District, Banlung Commune, Ratanakiri Province. Each detention room was approximately 12 by 15 meters and constructed of wood. The walls were bamboo, which allowed prisoners to see each other. There was also an isolated, enclosed room which was used for interrogation. This security center was surrounded by bamboo fences with sharpened points to prevent prisoners from escaping. Some vegetables and fruit, such as potatoes, corn and jackfruit, were grown near the center as well.

According to Thol, Chhom Se, Chhang and Tim were directly responsible for this security center. Bun Vantha, a former Au Kanseng prisoner, stated in her interview with DC-Cam in 1999 that Chhom Se was in charge of political matters, while Chhang was in charge of the military. Based on an interview with Chen Kimthong conducted by DC-Cam on 22 November 2013, the first chief of Au Kanseng Security Center was Chheng. Chhom Se replaced him after he relocated to Unit 920. Tim, who used to be Chheng’s driver, was then also appointed as a staff member of Au Kanseng Security Center.

Chen Kimthong was a former Khmer Rouge cadre who had a close relationship with the chief of Unit 801, So Sareoun, alias 05. Before 1977, Kimthong was the chief of radio communications for

Unit 801. Around April 1977, Angkar assigned Kimthong to Au Kanseng Security Center and appointed her as a deputy to the chief, Chhom Se. Upon her arrival at the center, she witnessed Chheng interviewing ten soldiers in a parking lot at Phnom Svay. One week later, when Chhom Se arrived there, Chheng moved to Unit 920.

### **Arrests**

One month after the arrest of Thol and Chandy, the Khmer Rouge sent many prisoners, including Jarai minorities, rubber plantation workers and soldiers, to Au Kanseng Security Center. Prison guards tied them with rope in a single line and walked them to the center. According to Chen Kimthong, Division 801's soldiers were also sent there, after the arrest of Lay, Sarim, Son Ty (alias Tanh), and Som. The arrests of rubber plantation workers were made by Tum, the unit chief. Kimthong said that about 100 ethnic minorities, including Cham, Khmer Krom and Jarai, who had struggled to liberate themselves from Vietnamese oppression, were also arrested and sent to this security center. Kimthong personally told Son Sen about this matter. There is no corroboration of the comment in Phan Thol's testimony that this group of people included Jarai minorities.

### **Prisoner Interviews**

Thol testified that the prison guards brought prisoners to the enclosed interview room individually. Some prisoners were cruelly tortured because they didn't give responses that the prison guards wanted to hear. One prisoner from Bor Keo screamed so much during her interview that she passed out. The next day she disappeared. Based on Chandy's testimony, the prison guards tortured only male prisoners. Chen Kimthong personally reported all confessions to So Sareoun, the chief of Unit 801, since she used to work in that unit. Chhom Se rarely prepared the reports because he couldn't describe the facts in detail.

### **Detention of prisoners**

According to Phan Thol, prisoners had their legs shackled and had to sleep side by side on a bamboo bed or on the floor. Females and children were detained in a locked room. None of the prisoners were allowed to leave the detention room. They had to defecate in a bamboo cylinder in their own room. Some prisoners died in the detention room with the shackles still locked on their legs.

### **Execution of prisoners**

After being interviewed, some prisoners were accused of being CIA or KGB agents or not obeying the rules and were thus executed. Strict rules forbid anyone from running away or eating extra food. Thol recalled that two prisoners had been killed because they stole some food to eat. In addition, one of the prison guards, Nhok, sliced open a female prisoner's abdomen on the accusation that she had committed a moral offense.

Chandy also testified that Ouy, a prison guard, was very cruel. She witnessed Ouy kill a female prisoner by hitting her with a hoe. Regarding the Jarai minorities, Chandy recounted that after one week of interrogation, prison guards told them to return to their home villages. The prison guards tied them up in a line and escorted them out of the center. After that, they were never seen again. Chandy firmly believes that those prisoners were killed on a jackfruit farm near the security center because their personal belongings were later found there. Thol corroborated this story.

Chen Kimthong stated that all minorities were killed. She witnessed Chhom Se beat minorities with a wooden club. Prison guards shot some prisoners during the Vietnamese invasion. Upon learning that Vietnamese troops had invaded Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge cadres evacuated Au Kanseang, along with the prisoners. They killed those who were ill and couldn't walk properly. The Khmer Rouge evacuated Phan Thol to the Se San River and released him there.

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### **Chan Pronh**

# INTERVIEW WITH SUPREME MONK

*Sleuk Rith Institute*



Left: Samdech Preah Maha Aryavong, Sao Chanthol, at Langka pagoda

## **1. May I ask your impression of the prosecution proceedings against the Khmer Rouge leaders?**

This court was established in accordance with national and international law. Regardless of the outcome, the proceedings represent a priceless opportunity for Cambodian people to find justice. My personal view is that these court proceedings have historical value and are very important for our citizens as well as people around the globe.

## **2. Based on the principle of Karma in Buddhism, do you think the creation of this court is appropriate?**

According to the karmic view of Buddhism, those who commit good deeds will be rewarded with peace and those who commit bad deeds will suffer. Simply put, there are causes and effects. Then why does the court have to prosecute the Khmer Rouge leaders? The court was established because those leaders caused tragedy and wholly destroyed our country, resulting in the deaths of millions. In other words, the reason for this court is genocide, which represents the cause in accordance with the principle of cause and effect in Buddhism.

## **3. Should there be reconciliation between Khmer Rouge cadres and Cambodians?**

In short, there must be reconciliation in our country because it is the means of bringing peace to

every individual. Reconciliation is the only principle which permits people to live peacefully with one another in society. Moreover, it also prevents revenge between individuals.

## **4. Do you think that any punishment imposed on former Khmer Rouge leaders now is a result of their past actions?**

As I stated previously, the doer of any action will necessarily receive their karma based on that action. In essence, what former Khmer Rouge leaders are experiencing now was caused by their activities in the past.

## **5. What is the karma of the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979?**

The principle of cause and effect in Buddhism is very deep and complicated. The average person would not be able to understand it at all. However, if one tries to learn and expand one's knowledge, one will eventually understand the concept. It is very difficult for me to determine the karma of the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. The victims' karma might result from a previous life, which no one can know or understand. Unlike the victims, the past activities (genocide) of the Khmer Rouge leaders are apparent and can be understood clearly. This is the reason for their prosecution. I would like to repeat once again that cause and effect exists in all actions. In some cases, we can ascertain both causes and effects; however in other cases, we might observe only the effects. We might not understand the causes at all since our knowledge in Buddhism is limited.

## **6. Did Khmer Rouge leaders intend to commit these crimes?**

According to philosophy, no one is able to see into another person's heart. Therefore, I cannot offer a precise answer to this question. However, the

principle of crime is a different consideration.

**7. Do you believe that rancor can be pacified by avoiding revenge?**

Buddha claimed that rancor can be pacified by not taking revenge, which is a main foundation for the prevention of punishment caused by hatred. Actually, rancor can be pacified by not taking any revenge. As a Buddhist, one must have a reasonable understanding of this principle. It is very difficult to understand the past, present and future of one individual. More importantly, it is very difficult to understand that rancor and the pacification of rancor reside in the heart.

**8. Do you feel that studying the history of the Khmer Rouge regime brings suffering to the Cambodian people?**

Clearly, studying the history of the Khmer Rouge years causes pain in the hearts of Cambodians because it triggers all the painful memories and tragedies which occurred during the regime. However, it also provides them with valuable life lessons which they can pass on to the next generation so that this kind of tragedy never recurs. Moreover, those with a high intellect will be able to understand life from a dharmic perspective. Suffering is the primary means to cure suffering, so learning about sadness and painful history is a way to ease the pain in peoples' hearts.

**9. Many survivors of this regime still live in suffering, so how can Buddhism cure their pain?**

Buddhism instructs people to understand pain based on the Four Noble Truths as follows:

- ◆ Dukkha: (suffering) happens to all life on earth
- ◆ Samudaya: origination of suffering
- ◆ Nirodha: prevention of suffering
- ◆ Megga: means of elimination from suffering

Besides these four noble truths, Buddhist doctrine also instructs followers to understand uncertainty (change is normal), anatta (non-self, there is no unchanging, permanent soul in living

beings) and many other Buddhist dharmic concepts. If victims of the Khmer Rouge learn and practice Buddhist dharma with determination, they will gain a clear perspective and their pain will subside. Buddhism can only help individuals who seek its help. Simply put, the victims have to learn and practice dharma on their own in order to live peacefully and rid themselves of their pain.

**10. What initiatives can the government and the community of monks undertake to cure mental illness among Cambodians?**

The government has contributed to the healing of mental illness in Cambodia through its efforts to prosecute former Khmer Rouge leaders in court. Moreover, the government also educates people and promotes their livelihoods, which provides them with knowledge and improved living conditions. In this way, people can reduce their pain and anger by enjoying an improved standard of living. Monks, on the other hand, play a vital role in healing mental illness within the population. Monks are responsible for educating people about life and the meaning of all things. This means that monks are obligated to educate people to accept the truth of life and to try to achieve peace.

**11. Do you feel that the issue of mental health is recognized and accepted in Cambodia?**

Generally, physical and mental health are closely related, like light and a flash. Any instance of light will create a flash. Therefore, one can assess the mental health of an individual through their actions. The mental health of our citizens has improved over time as they have benefitted from social and economic development within the country. If one observes the smiles of Cambodians at any tourism site or during holiday celebrations, one can notice that they are very healthy, even though they cannot erase all their memories of suffering.

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**Sleuk Rith Institute**

# IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-1979)

*Pheng Pong-Rasy*

For over 21 years, the Documentation Center of Cambodia has been working diligently to collect evidence related to the Khmer Rouge regime, which was ruled by Pol Pot. The organization's mission has resulted in the largest historical archive in the history of our country.

One reason for our success is the critical collaboration of our citizens, civil authorities at every level, and related ministries and departments nationwide. Moreover, our staff members who have committed themselves to this project are very specialized in their fields. The majority of DC-Cam employees have earned their master's or PhD degrees from distinguished universities around the globe. They apply that professional knowledge to their tasks at DC-Cam, an organization which is transforming its identity into the Sleuk Reth Institute (SRI). SRI is a place where scholars will be able to research many topics in addition to the history of

Democratic Kampuchea.

We (staff members and director) are working together in solidarity to achieve our long-term plan. Like a family living under one roof, we work together, have fun together, eat together and travel together. Our common goal is to achieve peace, reconciliation and human dignity for our country. This year, as in previous years, DC-Cam has continued to execute its mission effectively with the full support of our citizens, authorities, students and teachers across the country. Although DC-Cam has recently been focused on education of the history of Democratic Kampuchea, the organization continues to collect and archive information related to the Khmer Rouge regime. Education and remembrance remain the goals of DC-Cam, today and into the future.

Through the important study of history, Phnom Penh students born after the Khmer Rouge years will improve their knowledge of that regime. In addition,



Grade 12 students of Champou Voan high school attending the Khmer Rouge history classroom forum prepared by Documentation Center of Cambodia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

they will learn strategies for building peace and reconciliation with the hope of preventing future genocide in our country. The students will take to heart all the incidents about which they learn. Moreover, this knowledge will serve as a life lesson, enabling them to think critically about the causes of this tragedy.

As an actual example, after our genocide team presented their program at three high schools—Chea Sim Boeung Keng Kang, Toul Svay Prey and Toul Tom Pong—100 percent of the students stated that they firmly believe the Khmer Rouge regime existed from 1975–1979. In addition, they learned about the serious crimes which occurred during that time. Through stories related by their parents, grandparents and other family members, as well as magazines and related documents, over 90 percent of students were aware of this regime before they studied it in school. Additionally, based on surveys, 70 percent of students felt impacted emotionally upon learning this history. The students commented that they felt great sympathy for the victims who suffered during the regime. Most of them believe that studying the history of the Khmer Rouge is essential for developing a full understanding of the regime and thus for preventing it from recurring in our country.

Actually, the presentation about the history of the Khmer Rouge and its importance is not only shared with high school students, but with DC-Cam employees as well. Since 2009, DC-Cam staff have been invited to join the teacher training developed by DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. DC-Cam encourages its staff to share their important historical knowledge with others.

Twenty-two DC-Cam staff members who attended a presentation on 5 February 2016 were surveyed afterward. The survey results indicated that 73 percent of DC-Cam staff have extensive historical knowledge, while another 9 percent are qualified to teach others about Khmer Rouge history. However, 14 percent ranked low on their knowledge of Khmer

Rouge history. Two questions on the survey indicated that 100 percent of DC-Cam staff believe in the existence of the Khmer Rouge regime and the importance of learning history.

In order to teach other people about this history and to share strategies for the prevention of genocide, DC-Cam staff must understand the primary reason for studying history. All twenty-two staff members were asked a key question: "Does the study of Khmer Rouge history help to promote peace and reconciliation and to prevent genocide in our country?" One hundred percent of our staff agreed with this point, but only 95 percent of them feel that learning the history will help to heal mental illness among the victims.

A recent presentation outlined eight principles which cause genocide and how to intervene at the first stage. The main stages are: emergency stage, genocide stage and post-genocide stage. The emergency stage refers to the onset of genocide and it is critical to take action at this step. Therefore, the study of Khmer Rouge history must focus upon:

1. Determining the causes of the Khmer Rouge movement, class division, comparison of people to animals or plants, as well as the plan for execution of citizens.
2. Determining why crimes were committed which adversely affected the economic, political and cultural development of the country.
3. Thinking critically regarding the violation of human rights, inhumane treatment of victims and responsibilities of survivors.
4. Preventing the recurrence of genocide and contributing to the country's development, peace-building and reconciliation.
5. Analyzing incidents of genocide around the globe by comparing and contrasting our genocide with those which have occurred in other countries.

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**Peng Pong-Rasy**

# VISITING ANLONG VENG, THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF THE KHMER ROUGE

*Som Bunthorn*

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Many people consider the area of Anlong Veng frightening and unpleasant because of its atrocious history. This area was a stronghold of Khmer Rouge forces under the leadership of Ta Mok. After the former Khmer Rouge soldiers joined the current government in 1998, Anlong Veng, which is located along the Sisaket frontier, became an attractive destination for Cambodians from other areas to earn a living because of its abundance of natural resources, such as forests and mines. The large number of people who relocated to this area did so despite knowledge of its history and conflict.

However, mismanagement and overinvestment have resulted in the depletion of many of the area's resources, with a detrimental impact on its development. In order to protect this historical area and its resources, the Anlong Veng Peace Center, in collaboration with provincial authorities and the Ministry of Tourism, launched an educational program at Anlong Veng from 15 to 18 February 2016. This conference educated students about genocidal conflict, reconciliation and peace in Cambodia by bringing them together in Anlong Veng, the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge. Participants at this meeting learned to think critically, to express themselves openly, and to communicate effectively. Attendees also had the opportunity to interview former Khmer Rouge cadres and victims.

According to Mr. Ly Sokkheang, director of the Anlong Veng Peace Center, this program will equip students with a clear understanding of the Anlong Veng area and provide them with an opportunity to share their knowledge of its history, including the Khmer Rouge, with other students. There were

twelve participants from many universities nationwide, including the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Royal University of Fine Arts, Battambang University and Anlong Veng High School.

"I only learned a little information about the Khmer Rouge from my parents, who were former Khmer Rouge cadres at Siem Reap. After participating in this program, I have had the chance to learn more about the perspectives of the Khmer Rouge leaders, which led to war and hindered the country's development," said Chern Phailin, a 12th-grade student from Anlong Veng High School. "This conference will educate me about Anlong Veng's historical significance, the struggle of the Khmer Rouge, the residents' livelihoods, as well as the forest resources," remarked Nheam Boramey, who attends the same high school.

According to Tu Lon, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, this kind of program is very important for our students because it enables them to increase their knowledge of the history of Anlong Veng. The program can serve as a life lesson and hopefully help to prevent such a cruel regime from recurring in our country.

This conference provided an opportunity for students to have a frank discussion with Khmer Rouge cadres as well as their victims, a dialogue which should contribute to reconciliation and peace in our country. The Peace Center is also attracting an increasing number of tourists to Anlong Veng, a factor which should promote economic stability for communities in the area.

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**Som Bunthorn**

# THE LIFE OF MEAS PHAL

*Teav Sarakmonin*

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Meas Phal, who is in his late seventies, carries a small scale with him wherever he goes. After a short walk, he stops to relax at Ounalom Pagoda, near the Royal Palace. Phal earns a living by allowing passers-by to use his measuring scale in exchange for a small amount of money. I approached him for a chat. Dressed in a khaki shirt and black trousers, Phal told me that he is a farmer who lives in Prey Veng Province with his wife. They have six children, two of whom are construction workers in Phnom Penh. The rest are farmers in Prey Veng. Phal mentioned that his children were not able to complete school because his family was poor.

Phal appears healthy for his advanced age. During the rainy season, he lives with his family in Prey Veng and farms the land. When the dry season begins, he travels to Phnom Penh with his scale to earn a little extra income to help support his family. Walking back and forth between the Royal Palace and the night market, a distance of about one kilometer, he manages to earn ten thousand to twenty thousand riels (\$2.50 to \$5.00) each day. In Phnom Penh, he rests at Ounalom Pagoda because he doesn't have a proper place to live in the city. He stays with the cyclo (tricycle) drivers, who gather near the National Museum at night. Although two of his children are employed as construction workers in Phnom Penh, he rarely sees them and does not know where they live. When asked if his life has been full of challenges, Phal responded that although he has to work very hard to make a living, his current life is not as difficult as life was during the Khmer Rouge regime. Phal proceeded to tell me about his life during that time.

## **Phal and his family**

Phal was born into a peasant family in Svay

Antor District, Prey Veng Province, as one of eight siblings. Due to the poverty his family experienced, he dropped out of school in eighth-grade in order to help his parents with the farming. He later married in 1969. Phal said that communist Khmer Rouge soldiers entered his home village in 1970, shortly after the coup which ousted Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk from power. The communists forced people to work in brigades. After the Khmer Rouge took over the entire country in April 1975, they assigned Phal as the village chief as well as the chief of Trapeang Ith cooperative, but Phal refused. As a result, the Khmer Rouge cadres became angry with Phal and intended to kill him. When asked why he refused the assignment, Phal said the village chief was supposed to be sent away, which meant he would be killed.

## **Evacuation from Prey Veng to Pursat**

At the end of 1976, Phal and his family, along with other villagers, were evacuated to Pursat. On the day of the evacuation, Phal and the other evacuees walked from their village to the town of Neak Leung, where a truck was waiting to transport them to Chbar Ampov. There each evacuee was given a blue krama (checkered scarf) and a meal. Then all the evacuees were transported to the train station, where they boarded the train for Pursat. Phal remarked that everyone was happy to be leaving because they had been told by Khmer Rouge cadres that "the new location was very rich in resources," and so they expected to be well-fed there. They were led to believe that "the soil was fertile; sugar cane covered hundreds of hectares of land and grew as round as a person's wrist; potatoes were so enormous that only a machine could dig them up; and of course, there was enough rice." Traveling from Phnom Penh to

Pursat took an entire day and night and each train carriage contained thirty to forty people.

### **O Kriet Village**

The train arrived at Pursat in the afternoon, after which the Khmer Rouge cadres led the evacuees to O Kriet Village, Bakan District, where they were to reside. Upon arriving in the village, Phal and his fellow evacuees realized that this new location was not as described by the cadres. Phal expected to die there, because the new place appeared inadequate to support all the residents. On the first day, all the evacuees were provided with enough food. That night, a meeting was convened in order to give the newcomers their work assignments in the fields. Phal was assigned to a plowing team in a mobile unit which consisted of ten members. His wife was assigned to work in the rice transplanting unit.

### **Insurgency and the purge of the Eastern Zone cadres**

Months after arriving at O Kriet, Phal heard about the insurgency committed by the secretary of the Eastern Zone, So Phim. This insurgency sparked some chaos in the village. According to Phal, some villagers prepared rice and livestock and packed clothing in preparation to flee, but they were told by the Khmer Rouge cadres that "anyone who wanted to leave had to register and there would be no need to bring luggage." The next evening, those who had registered, along with their family members, were taken away to be killed. Some villagers managed to escape and flee to other villages.

### **Sad memory**

Phal said that lots of people were killed at O Kriet Village. He remembered a moment when he witnessed a baby suckling at the breast of its dead mother and no one took notice. He added that he witnessed lots of corpses which were not properly buried. All of those people became victims of the Khmer Rouge because they were accused of being associated with the Vietnamese or being slow in

their work.

### **Moving to Prey Khlot**

Around October 1978, Phal and his family were transferred to work at Prey Khlot Village. Upon arriving there, Phal had to build a house for his family. Phal recalled that the Khlot villagers resented newcomers, including those who had been relocated from the Eastern Zone. At this village, there was only one well and the newcomers were not allowed to use it. Therefore, Phal and the others were forced to walk a long distance to gather water from ponds and other sources. He added that the food ration was meager; there was very little rice available and the portions were smaller than they had been in O Kriet. He was assigned to work in a rice-carrying unit, while his wife was assigned to the roof-making unit.

### **Death of his child**

A few months after moving to Khlot Village, one of Phal's children contracted measles. Because of improper treatment and the scarcity of medicine, his child died very soon after being diagnosed, leaving Phal and his family in great sorrow.

### **Arrival of Vietnamese soldiers**

At the end of 1978 or in early 1979, Vietnamese soldiers launched a major attack. Upon learning this, all of the Khmer Rouge cadres fled, along with the villagers. Phal and his family returned to their home village in order to search for their relatives.

### **Reunion of relatives**

En route to his home village, Phal asked everyone he knew about the fate of his relatives. He and his family made several stops before reaching their home. To protect themselves at night, they stayed near the camps of Vietnamese soldiers so the Khmer Rouge cadres could not force them back into the forest. Phal and his family finally arrived in Phnom Penh; they then rode on a Vietnamese truck to Neak Leung, from which they traveled home on foot.

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### **Teav Sarakmonin**



Photo by Phat Piset

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