

*STORY FROM THE GROUND*

**MEMORY SKETCH OF KRAING TA CHAN  
SECURITY CENTER**

**Peace Institute of Cambodia**

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: (855) 23 881 346

Email: [peaceinstitutecambodia@gmail.com](mailto:peaceinstitutecambodia@gmail.com)

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We would also like to thank Mr. Long Khet, Executive Director of Youth for Peace who led 11 youth volunteers doing research on the project "Memory Sketch of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center" from the beginning to the end.

## Preface

In 2016, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) was working on case 002/02, in which suspects Mr. Nuon Chea and Mr. Khieu Samphan were brought to trial in order to find justice for Cambodians who suffered at hands of the Khmer Rouge regime. Simultaneously, there were many non-governmental organizations cooperating with the ECCC to work with victim survivors to provide them chances to express their suffering and to engage them in mental healing by connecting them with youths from different backgrounds.

“The Story from the Ground: Memory Sketch of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center” is a project that the Peace Institute of Cambodia in cooperation with Youth for Peace and some youth volunteers have worked to document the history of Kraing Ta Chan. They have done this through interviews with victim survivors and with people who know some of the history of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center. The book is mainly about stories and general situations in a district security center during the Khmer Rouge, renowned as Kraing Ta Chan Security Center. This book also partly plays in answering what happened in Kraing Ta Chan and what the mistakes of those who had been killed were.

Furthermore, the Peace Institute of Cambodia and Youth for Peace initiated this documentation in the aim of encouraging youth in understanding the history of Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime, and providing victims with chances to share their life experiences with youth and other people. Their experiences are a good and essential lesson for people, especially next-generation youth to learn, remember, and prevent its return.

I fully hope that this book will contribute to reconciliation and mental healing for victims in Kraing Ta Chan, as well as other victims who went through this dark regime.

Lastly, we would like to express gratefulness to all the people who spent time providing interviews, youth volunteers, Peace Institute of Cambodia and Youth for Peace colleagues, the Victims Support Section, Lead Co-Lawyer Section of the ECCC, Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, Documentation Center of Cambodia, and donors for their support and contributions from the beginning till the publication.

Phnom Penh, December, 2017

Long Khet  
Founder and Executive Director

## Foreword

A brief background of what is within this research exposes the stories, conditions of victims who were considered as enemies of the communist revolution in Cambodia during the 1970s. At that time in the Southwest zone, there was a district security center which executed many people under its rule. This security center left us many painful stories of victims and shock to people who were evacuated from the area in 1975. Victim survivors from Kraing Ta Chan Security Center still remember their painful stories whenever they see the place. For them, it seems like it just happened.

During the interviews, they expressed their sorrow of the loss of beloved relatives and none of them knew what those people did wrong. Most of the interviewees remain fearful and do not dare to provide clear information to youth because of personal safety concerns.

This book is a documentation of stories that happened at Kraing Ta Chan Security Center since before becoming a liberated zone until present. The period under the control of the Khmer Rouge is a part that we must study in detail, in order to show readers who are younger generations to understand the Khmer Rouge regime. A documentation which emphasizes only on one site cannot explain the general situation of lives of people at that time, but it can play an integral part in promoting awareness to youth. Simultaneously, the “Story from the Ground: Memory Sketch of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center” is a part of the mental healing process and a reparation project before the ECCC in the case 002/02 for the victims effected by the Khmer Rouge regime. A part of true history is also unfolded.

## **Introduction**

When talking about the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), survivors usually recall memories of a life in a “prison without walls”. Every daily activity was under surveillance from Chhlop unit (militias). There was no freedom, lack of adequate nutrition, people were overworked, there were no personal rights, families were separated and loved ones could not spend time together. For people who were sent to security centers, only few survived to return to collectives or mobile units.

Nearly all the prisoners at every security center lived under great suffering. They suffered torture, malnutrition, and a lack of hygiene. Their feet were shackled which made it difficult to sleep and walk, and hard for them to live. When they discharged excrement, they collected it and put it into a large container. The prisons were full of horrible odors.

Until presently, victim survivors from the prisons and people who used to live in the villages, communes, collectives, and mobile units remained living in pain, fear, and sorrow left by the regime.

For more than 30 years, people who knew stories at Kraing Ta Chan, either former Khmer Rouge cadres or victims still have not dared to tell their stories to the public, to youth or their family members. They still hide their suffering, roles and stories under the reason that when they talk, it reminds them of their suffering, or provokes anger, sorrow and regret. The relationship between former Khmer Rouge cadres and victim survivors until now, has not yet improved. They even hold different perceptions in sharing their stories at Kraing Ta Chan. However, they still share a crucially common intention – they want all Cambodians, especially post-war generations to know the stories that happened during the Khmer Rouge in order to prevent the reoccurrence of this kind of brutal regime.

Currently, the crimes against humanity and the genocide that the Khmer Rouge committed are being processed by the ECCC to find justice for people who suffered under the regime. However, this special tribunal limited its procedure to condemn only senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those who are believed to be most responsible for grave violations of national and international law, alleged perpetrators committed crime against humanity and genocide between 17 April 1975 and 6 January 1979. This tribunal depends on criminal law of Cambodia, International human rights law and other conventions Cambodia has ratified<sup>1</sup>. Even though there is this tribunal, some people say that “Completed justice remains unperceivable for them yet.”<sup>2</sup>”

This book is a historical book of general people, resulting from their life experiences at a security center in Southwest zone, renowned as Kraing Ta Chan Security Center. The research and documentation aim to keep memories that Cambodians who went through the Khmer Rouge Regime for all Cambodian peoples, especially post-war generations to learn and help prevent the reoccurrence of this atrocity. Moreover, this book will rebuild memories of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center through artwork and intergenerational dialogues with victim survivors. This book will be a part of a reparation project for all victims, especially victims at the Kraing Ta Chan Security Center.

This book will illustrate history of the Kraing Ta Chan Security Center, the lives of Khmer Rouge cadres, conditions of prisoners, torture, execution and other stories after the regime.

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<sup>1</sup> YFP.(2011), Behind the Darkness: Taking Responsibility or Acting Under Orders?, Sunway Publishing, PP, P.vii.

<sup>2</sup> From people who follow up Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the interviews with victim survivors

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction of the history of the communist movement in Cambodia from the Khmer Issarak movement and the establishment of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party which was a part of communist movement in Indochina until the Khmer Rouge came to power. Chapter 2 shows the history of Kraing Ta Chan since before becoming a camp of the Khmer Rouge until present. This chapter also includes the development of Southwest zone. Chapter 3 discusses and shows in detail about situations in Kraing Ta Chan Security Center, including Khmer Rouge cadres, prisoners, means in communication between Khmer Rouge, torture, execution, etc. Chapter 4 shows the crimes people were accused of being guilty of that were sent to Kraing Ta Chan, based on prisoner reports which chief of collectives, village, and commune under the control of District 105 sent to district chief. Furthermore, we also show results of prisoners who were sent to the center. Chapter 5 shows other stories that happened after the Khmer Rouge cadres left when they were escaping from Vietnamese soldiers. The chapter also shows general aspect of corpse pits and treasure seeking there, as well as the belief that made people went to pray and take bones of their late relatives to their houses. Chapter 6 is the closing remarks which sums up and provides opinions on stories that happened at Kraing Ta Chan as well as in the Khmer Rouge regime as the whole.

## **Chapter 1: Brief Background of the Communist Movement in Cambodia**

Communist movements in Cambodia stemmed from the anti-French colony during the 1940s. The United Issarak Front movement was established in April 1950, led by members of Indochinese Communist Party created by Ho Chi Minh. In September 1951, this group successfully reestablished a political party called the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party led by communists. It was at this phase that some Cambodian students, who went to study in France, were influenced by French communist movement and brought the ideology back to their home country. Those students included Saloth Sar (later known as Pol Pot), Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Son Sen, Iang Sary, etc<sup>3</sup>. When they returned, they participated in the communist movement of Cambodia and later on they became leaders in Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979).

The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party was led by Son Ngoc Minh, general secretary, Sieu Heng, Tou Samouth, and Chan Samay in hierarchical order. After the end of the Indochina War I, the political path changed. By worrying about its security, some groups of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party fled to North Vietnam and some hid in the forest. However, they kept their contact to maintain the party's standing. Sieu Heng soon returned to Cambodia accompanied by Nuon Chea and other senior cadres for the formation of the temporary Central Committee. In the committee, Sieu Heng was the secretary and Tou Samouth was his deputy and they took charge of the organization's activities in urban areas, assisted by Saloth Sar and Nuon Chea. They hoped to defeat Sangkum Reastr Niyum Party (People's Socialist Community Party) in the 1955 election, but they completely lost in the election, badly contradicted to the calculation of

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<sup>3</sup> Dy Khamboly, 2007, History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), p. 6

Saloth Sar. In 1956, when Sieu Heng defected to the Samdech Sihanouk's government, the party was in unrest as some members were arrested by the authorities and some were killed.<sup>4</sup>

Resulting from a secret congress meeting from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1960, the party changed its name to the Workers' Party of Kampuchea. Tou Samouth became its secretary and Nuon Chea its deputy secretary. Pol Pot ranked number three at that time. After Tou Samouth mysteriously disappeared in 1962, the party became under the control of Pol Pot in 1963.<sup>5</sup> Samdech Sihanouk claimed that there were radicals within the party and released a list of people who attempted to overthrow him. The list included Saloth Sar and Ieng Sary, but they successfully escaped. Simultaneously, North Vietnam demanded the Cambodian communist insurgent groups to fight politically against the government of Sihanouk. The North Vietnamese said they could not use weapons until Yiek Nam claimed victory. There were only two options – stay quiet or be arrested.<sup>6</sup> There were many factors that weakened the Workers' Party of Kampuchea in Cambodian politics, but the party did not collapse.

In 1966, after Pol Pot visited some communist countries like North Vietnam, China and North Korea, he reorganized the party's congress and re-changed the party's name to the Communist Party of Cambodia because he wanted to lessen Vietnamese influence and strengthen relations with China. The party at that time consisted of Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Vorn Vet, Son Sen, etc. In 1967, there were also new members who were well-known in the communist movement in Cambodia, such as Ho Nim, Ho Yun, and Khieu

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<sup>4</sup> Dy Khamboly, 2007, *History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*, p.7

<sup>5</sup> Vong Sotheara and Nob Sokha, 2012, *Cambodian History*, p.236

<sup>6</sup> David Chandler, 2005, p.129-130

Samphan. The party also formed new strategies which were led by Saloth Sar as secretary.<sup>7</sup>

On 18 March 1970, there was an important event led by Marshal Lon Nol who successfully led a coup to dispose Prince Norodom Sihanouk as head of State, and he condemned the prince for committing treason while he was in Moscow, Soviet Union. Moreover, on 9 October 1970, the Khmer Republic was established in the aim of finding Democracy in Cambodia and rescuing the country from past unrest and French influence.<sup>8</sup>

Soon after, supporters of Samdech Sihanouk tried to protest against the Phnom Penh government of Lon Nol, but they were cracked down subsequently. The Communist Party of Cambodia (CPC) gathered either its internal and external forces to fight against the government of the Khmer Republic. In 1970, Saloth Sar was proud that he successfully established a true coalition with Vietnamese troops in the aim to eliminate Lon Nol's government from power. In reality, this coalition had already existed a long time ago. When Samdech Sihanouk was in hiding in China, Chou En Lai (First Premier of the People's Republic of China) suggested that he should fight against Lon Nol (Prime Minister of Cambodia) and the United States while Pham Van Dong (Prime Minister of North Vietnam) encouraged and promised to fight and take power back for him in 48 hours, without telling him that there was participation by Communist Party of Cambodia (CPC).<sup>9</sup>

On 23 March 1970, Sihanouk proclaimed the establishment of National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) and appealed to the

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<sup>7</sup> Vong Sotheara and Nob Sokha, 2012, *Cambodian History*, p.241

<sup>8</sup> Justin Corfield, 1994, *Khmer Stand Up*

<sup>9</sup> David Chandler, 2005, *Pol Pot: Brother Number One*, p.173-174

Cambodian people to run into the marquis (forests) to help overthrow Lon Nol. From Beijing, China, he also established a government in exile with the Khmer Rouge (CPC) on 3 May. It was at that time that the Khmer Rouge gained increasing popularity in the support against Lon Nol's forces.<sup>10</sup>

During that time, the Khmer Rouge started to establish re-education camps in zones, regions and districts to educate and spread its revolutionary ideology to people, especially to target youth to attend the revolutionary movements in the liberated zones. The Southwest zone became a liberated zone during 1971-72, led by former Khmer Issarak leaders such as Sangha Hoeun, Ta Mok, Chou Chet, Phuok Chhay, etc. Sangha Hoeun was the most popular among them, but later he was arrested and sent to a camp in a zone by Ta Mok's armed forces.<sup>11</sup> Ta Mok remained a secretary of the southwest zone through the support of Cho Chet and his junior colleagues. He also eliminated Cambodian people who received education from Hanoi from the zone. Moreover, the southwest zone led by Ta Mok became a model zone in finding and destroying enemies of Angkar. Particularly, the security center in district 105 (Tram Kak district) or Kraing Ta Chan Security Center (KTCSC) which Ta Mok was responsible for, was renowned for mass killing the enemies of Angkar. Furthermore, in the security center, the Khmer Rouge soldiers and top officials were loyal to Ta Mok.

The NUFK was lead by Samdech Sihanouk as the head of state. He used his forces in different zones to enact a strategy used by Mao Tse Tung (Leader of the Chinese Communist Revoltion) to block most of the main economic routes of the Khmer Republic. Through the

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Sola, *Kampuchea of Sihanouk: Hope, Disillusions and Bitterness*, Phnom Penh, Publisher

<sup>11</sup> Ben Kiernan (1992) *How Pol Pot Came to Power?*

Paris Agreements between North Vietnam and the United States, the Khmer Rouge requested Viet Cong to withdraw from Cambodia. In 1974, the Khmer Rouge occupied most of the country and had a date picked for when the Khmer Republic would fall. They also rehearsed the songs to broadcast via radio on 17 April 1975.<sup>12</sup>

The Liberation movement of NUFK gained absolute success and completely defeated the Khmer Republic's government forces on 17 April 1975. Chants could be heard like "Hurrah Peace, Hurrah King Father!" echoing through the whole city.<sup>13</sup> Cambodia was still under the control of CPC. More than 2 million people were forced to flee the city by the Khmer Rouge cadres in the aim to transform the country in a short period and they considered the city as a gathering place against the revolution. Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was officially established on 6 January 1976 under "Revolutionary Angkar".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Vong Sotheara and Nob Sokha, 2012, *Cambodian History*, p.230

<sup>13</sup> Nuon Sothimon, 2005, *American War on Cambodia: Lon Nol and Khmer Rouge*, p.173

<sup>14</sup> David Chandler, 2005, *Cambodian History*, p. 231-232

## Chapter 2: History of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center

During the civil war (1970-1975) between Lon Nol's government forces and the Khmer Rouge in some zones which Khmer Rouge liberated, there were establishments of re-education camps or security centers to educate and spread revolutionary ideology to youth in the areas they occupied. After the collapse of Lon Nol's Khmer Republic on 17 April 1975, Khmer Rouge reformed its administrative system by transforming their security centers. Some security centers were destroyed and some were changed from hidden to official security centers recognized by senior Khmer Rouge cadres.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there were more establishments of security centers and re-education camps.

Security Centers in the Khmer Rouge were organized into five different levels, including Chhlop (militia or spy) center in the commune, Education center in the district, Security Center in the region, Security Center in the zone, and Central Security Center or S-21 Security Center. The activities that occurred within those security centers included arrests, detentions, interrogations, writing reports of prisoners' confessions for the senior cadres to make decisions, and executions.<sup>16</sup> However, executions of prisoners were mostly done in the district level, whereas Chhlop in commune played a role in investigating people's background before the arrests.

Democratic Kampuchea's administration was geographically divided into central levels, zones (6 zones: North, Southwest, Northwest, East, West and Northeast), Regional level (32 regions), districts, communes and collectives. Most administrative levels consisted of security centers used for detaining prisoners who were found to be enemies of Angkar. The southwest zone (zone 405) which consisted of 4 zones and was controlled by Chhet Choeun called Ta Mok became a leading zone in destroying enemies. Most

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<sup>15</sup> Pheng Pong Rasy, 2006, No.76, p.25

<sup>16</sup> Ear Meng Try, 2006, No.77, p.28

security centers played a vital role in this and there was direct monitoring from secretaries of the zones. Security centers of Tram Kak district or Kraing Ta Chan Security Center (KTCSC) became a model security center in Southwest zone. The center had been established since 1972 and most of the cadres were relatives of or people who were close to Ta Mok, and the Tram Kak district was their hometown.

## **2.1. Kraing Ta Chan before the Khmer Rouge**

The Tram Kak district was liberated and occupied by the Khmer Rouge during late 1972. The Khmer Rouge established a branch building of CPC, reeducation camps, and security centers for revolutionary education by choosing Kraing Ta Chan hill which was a good strategic location to easily escape from American air forces' bombings.

According to Mr. Yen Soeun,<sup>17</sup> a villager living near Kraing Ta Chan, in the past, the place was covered by dense forests which not many people dared to enter. He also used to get lost in there. Looking at this beneficial condition, the Khmer Rouge chose the place for their re-education camp for revolutionary youth since it could protect them from air strikes. However, during 1972 or 1973, Kraing Ta Chan was transformed into a prison for who base people and Khmer Rouge cadres who broke the rules, such as revolutionary conducts, etc. The prisoners were just re-educated, but there were no executions. Not until 1974 did the executions start, especially on Lon Nol's military.

According to Mr. Mao Khorn<sup>18</sup> and Mr. Sak Unn, villagers living near Kraing Ta Chan before 1975, people who lived around the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview on 9 August 2015 at Kraing Ta Chan village, Kus commune, Tram Kak district, Takeo province; interviewed by Voeun Vandet

<sup>18</sup> Interview on 9 August 2015 at Kraing Ta Chan village, Kus commune, Tram Kak district, Takeo province; interviewed by Voeun Vandet

prison had not been evacuated yet while the construction of the prison was being established. Prisoners were increasingly sent there since 1973. They added that they used to witness the situation of prisoners from their houses. They said that prisoners who committed minor crimes were released to work in the labor camp near the prison. Their work included transplanting rice, harvesting, carrying land, making fertilizer, finding woody herb, etc. People living around the place had not been forced to eat in collective yet. They once were put in collective for a short period between late 1974 and the beginning of 1975, but those people protested. However, those people were sent to Kraing Ta Cha prison later on.

## **2.2. Kraing Ta Chan during the Khmer Rouge**

After the victory on Lon Nol's government on 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge transformed many places. They especially targeted public buildings such as schools, Buddhist temples, hospitals, governmental institutions, and turned big houses into bureaus and working offices. Kraing Ta Chan re-education camp was transformed to Kraing Ta Chan Security Center. In the past, this center was under the responsibility of Phy and a director of education named Ann. Phy was replaced by Angkar to be a chief of Construction 202 during 1974-1975. In 1977, Phy was again moved to be a chief of security guards at Treang district, and Ann was promoted to be a general manager at Kraing Ta Chan Security Center. Phy was a relative of Ta Mok, and Ann was close to Ta Mok.<sup>19</sup>

KTCSC was functional until the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge). It consisted of two prison buildings and a stock room, interrogation room, and killing sites at the south side of the prisons.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Pheng Pong Rasy, 2007, Truth Seeking Magazine, No.96, p.18

<sup>20</sup> Pheng Pong Rasy, 2007, Truth Seeking Magazine, No.96, p.18-20

According to some documents about Kraing Ta Chan, as well as storytelling from surrounding villagers; the prison used to release some prisoners or give opportunity for them to work in the center.

Family members of grandmother Hun Nhor were detained in Kraing Ta Chan for about 2 years, but prisoners who were charged with minor crimes such as being suspected of anti-revolution activities were released after a period of investigation showed no guilty. Under the observation of chief of prison (Ta Ann) and other cadres, grandmother Nhor was released to work in nearby labor camp at day time and brought back to the prison at night. In 1978, grandmother Nhor was allowed to work in kitchen but under regular surveillance. Her grandson named Bae was released to collect cow dung and finding woody herbs. Later, Bae was commanded by Ta Ann to unlock prisoners' shackles in the morning and lock in the evening. At that time even, Bae's mother was unlocked and locked by Bae nearly every day. In June 1978, the family of grandmother Nhor was released by a cadre named Ieb Duch since they were found innocent.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.3. Kraing Ta Chan after the Khmer Rouge**

Democratic Kampuchea ruled Cambodia for 3 years, 8 months and 20 days. This cruel regime was finally defeated on 7 January 1979 by the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea, in cooperation with Vietnamese troops. In security centers, the Khmer Rouge cadres abandoned their positions and left only some documents about communications among the Khmer Rouge cadres and confessions of prisoners. Only a few numbers of prisoners survived from security centers throughout the country.

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<sup>21</sup> Nhean Socheat, 2005, Truth Seeking Magazine, No. 70, p.25-27

However, at KTCSC after 7 January 1979, there was a collection of more than ten thousand pages of documents about prisoners, mostly their confessions during interrogations before being executed. Besides those documents, there were also some killing pits.

*“According to a witness who was a former commune chief in 1979, who joined in excavating corpse pits, a number of skulls and old clothes were found.”<sup>22</sup>*

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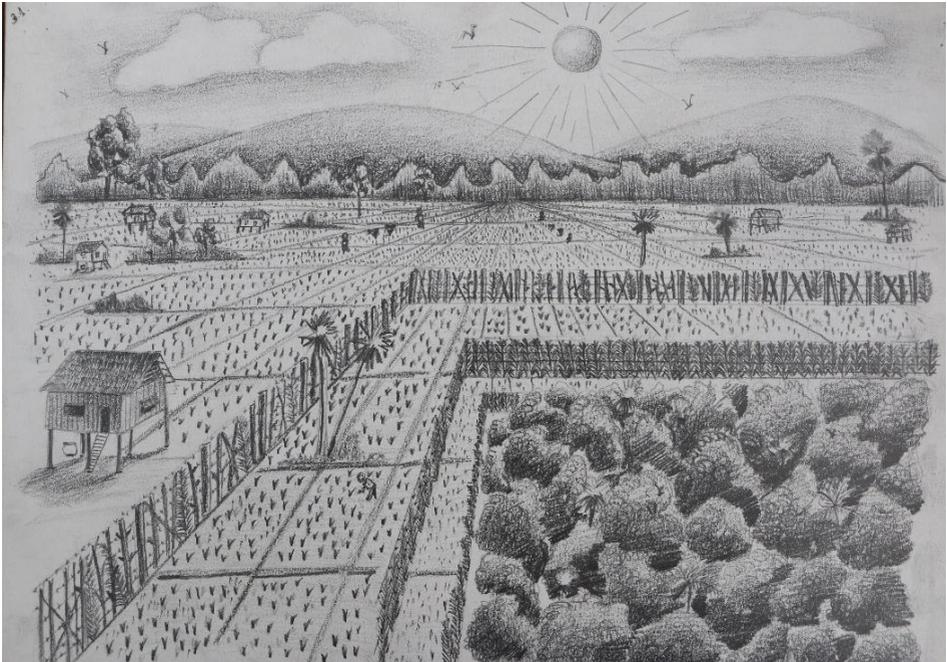
<sup>22</sup> ECCC, 2010, Resolution Warrant, p.171

## Chapter 3: Life at Kraing Ta Chan

There are two different landscapes between the interior and the exterior surroundings of KTCSC.

### 3.1. The landscape around Kraing Ta Chan

People living around KTC before 1975 were farmers that grew crops for their own household and they were not yet forced to work in collectives. People who went through the regime said that soon after the Khmer Rouge occupied the area, they were once forced to eat in the collective, but people protested the collective and it led to the killing of a cook. After that, they compromised to eat in private as before. After the victory on 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge began to force people to work in collectives and eat as cooperative. Most people in district 105 were ordered by district committees to flee to work in other districts or regions.



**The Overall View of Kraing Ta Chan Site**

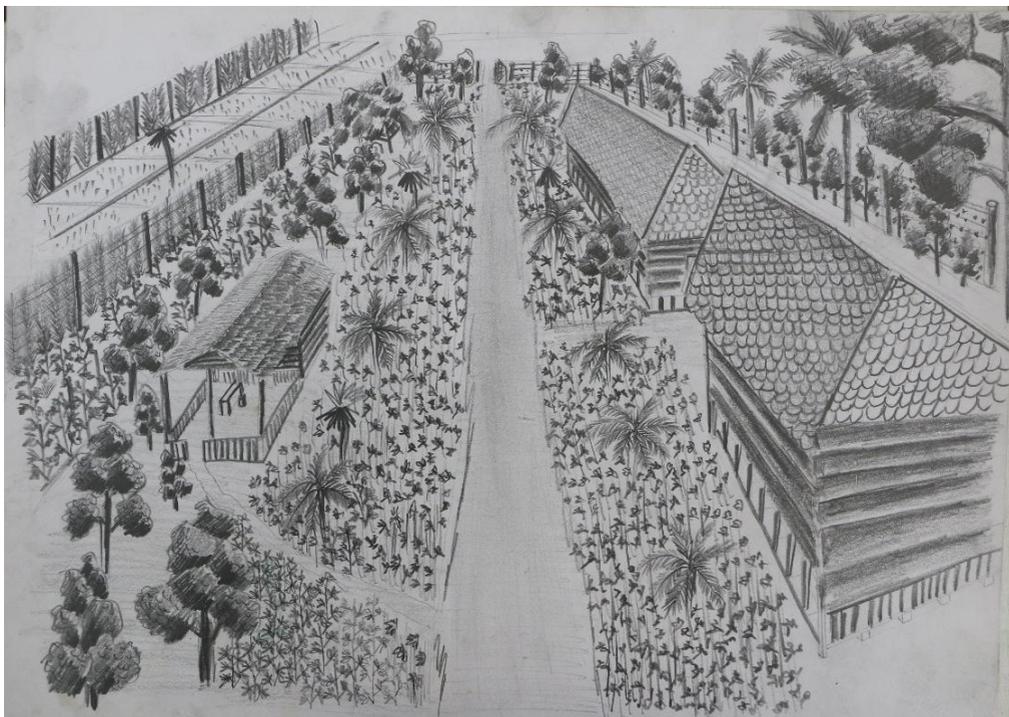
In the Khmer Rouge, people were restricted to wear black long-sleeved shirts and shoes made by rubber tires and to stay with families. People were under the control of regional cadres, and were assigned where they would work and when they would eat. The people were afraid for their lives and had no freedoms. They were unable to pick fruit and vegetables that grow around their houses because it was collective property and if they did so they would be punished. They were restricted to eat in the collective, only 2 times per-day. The food was a scoop of rice porridge and sometimes in rare case was added by a bowl of soup, which was equally self-divided to a group of 10. In the Khmer Rouge, besides growing rice they raised animals and grew vegetables, but the yield of rice gained was put as collective property.

People in district 105 and other nearby districts used to get clothes from KTCSC, but they did not know that those clothes were the prisoners' clothes that had been executed. Those clothes were washed and distributed to the collectives that requested them.

### **3.2. Situation in Kraing Ta Chan**

The surrounding areas of KTCSC covered approximately 1 square kilometer. The center was not open for the public. The core center was completely different from the exterior view. There were only a few people that could go in and out if they had an acceptable reason such as emergency, transporting food or materials, etc. There were about 20 workers in KTCSC, including old and young, kind and unkind. The eating area of the Khmer Rouge cadres was roofed with palm leaves and without walls. There were around 20 cadres sitting on a mat and eating together with abundance of food. KTCSC was surrounded by double-barbed-wire fences (triple at the South side). Barbed wires at the outside were combined with coconut leaves or palm leaves to avoid being seen by outsiders. Inside the center,

cassavas were planted in rows along the roads in the surrounding areas to block the view from one to another.



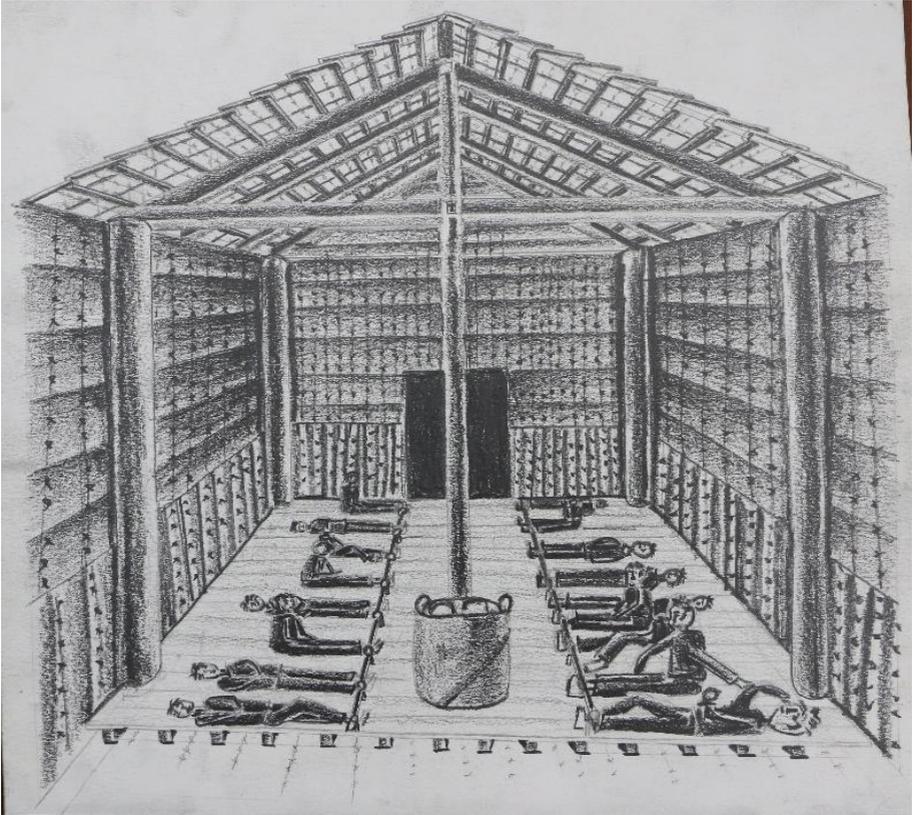
**The View of Pathway to Kraing Ta Chan Security Center  
(Seen from the West)**

Inside the center, the surrounding area was divided into many areas such as the eating area for cadres, and a cooking area. The kitchen was a cottage that's roof was made of 10 midribs of palm leaves. At the Southeast corner, there was an interrogation area and a torture house. At the North of interrogation house, there was a house for the Khmer Rouge cadres who worked there. At the West of interrogation house, there was an underground prison which its entrance was in the West and covered by a termites' mound. Near the mound, there was a tamarind tree in the north leaning over to the south. The depth of the prison was about 3 to 4 meters. In summer, it was dry, but in rainy season, there was water at the bottom. A pulley

system was used to torture prisoners. They tied one end of the rope to prisoner's waists and used the other end of the rope to send them up and down out of water pit. Some prisoners died of exhausted from this form of torture. They also died because of drowning in the water pit and getting diseases from the dirty water. This kind of torture or execution was applied only to prisoners charged with serious crimes or those who had high position in government of the previous regime or were Khmer Rouge cadres who committed crimes. There were three prison buildings for general prisoners, made by wood; they were around 4x3 square meters that could contain 70 to 100 prisoners. There were barbed wires on the top, on the walls and on the floor which were partly covered by wooden boards for prisoners to sit or sleep on. In the prison, there was a 30-liter oil container used for storage of prisoners' excrement and urine. At that time, prisoners discharged their waste matter on rice plates made by coconut shells, and passed it on to a container. The smell in the prison was terrible, and the clothes of the prisoners were full of bedbugs, which made them extremely itchy. The prisoners stretched their legs face to face in two rows and their legs were locked by steel shackles. From one shackle to another, there were up to 5 or 10 of prisoners, depending on the number of prisoners who were sent there. It should be noted that male and female prisoners were separated.

Near the prison, there was a Snay tree (kind of large tree with medicinal sprouts), 2 meters tall, used for hanging a speaker to play revolutionary songs to mitigate the sound of prisoners that were being tortured during interrogations and executions. Before taking prisoners for execution, the security guards opened the door and told the prisoners that they would be released back to the collective, but they must follow Angkar's plans and not to betray Angkar or revolutionary path. All the prisoners clapped their hands after a reading of a

revolutionary document, and then a name of prisoner would be called out for what they thought was release, but ended up being execution.



**The Prison and Prisoners at Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

Tools for torture and execution included a hoe that was about 1 meter long, pliers, Chinese swords, iron axle of a cart, bamboo base, etc. There was a row of around 10 prisoners whose arms were tied behind their back, connected by a rope from one to another, escorted by around two to three members of the Chhlop unit.

## **a. Structure (Security Regulations and Communication)**

### **1. Structure**

In KTCSC, there were from 10 to 20 workers, divided into groups based on type of work they would do. Those workers were under the control of a chief of the center named Ann (Known as Ta Ann). Under the chief was his deputy, security guards, transporting unit, interrogation unit, CPK soldiers, cooks, messenger, etc.

Security guards were in charge of maintaining order in security centers, patrolling prisoners in buildings, and escorting prisoners to and from the nearby labor camp.

The Transporting unit was responsible for taking prisoners from the entrance to the prisons, to the interrogation area, to the killing sites, and transporting materials to the collectives that requested them.

The interrogation unit made notes of prisoners' background, interrogated and tortured prisoners to search for connections to Angkar's enemies. In the interrogation, prisoners sometimes were directly interrogated by the chief of the center, Ta Ann. This unit consisted of a subordinate who was responsible for writing down prisoners' confessions and typing documents on a typewriter for their records and sending to senior cadres. Through an interview with Mr. Soy Sen, the typist is still alive presently.

There were two different groups of cooks, one was for the Khmer Rouge cadres who worked in the center, and the other was responsible for cooking rice porridge or rice for the prisoners (only few cooked rice for the prisoners). Mr. Soy Sen said that some people who worked in the kitchen were kind they secretly left rice near the walls for the prisoners to secretly steal to eat. He himself used to secretly take the rice too, and there was a cook

who frequently uttered “Take the rice and soup for the dogs and the cats, do not leave it to go spoiled”.

Messengers delivered letters or documents such as to cadres in regions, zones, and districts. Most messengers were young, and they delivered letters for the Khmer Rouge cadres in a particular position. Messengers at KTCSC used horses and bicycles for their transportation. There were two horses.

Militias were military forces in the local levels in charge of maintaining security in collectives, villages, communes, mobile units or security centers. In KTC, there were around 5 to 6 militias and these people lived in the center with other cadres or with chief of the center.

All cadres must be under the control and regular watch of the chief and his deputy, Ta Ann and Ta Chhen (Chhen was replaced to prison 205 during 1977). Through the chief’s order, cadres who had made mistakes during their duties were arrested and thrown in prison, tortured, and interrogated like anyone else. In KTCSC, there were some prisoners who were charged with minor crimes that were released to work outside the prison during the day time to fulfill the needs of the center such as finding vegetables, planting and harvesting rice, grinding rice, weaving palm leaves, etc.

### **b. Roles of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

In Democratic Kampuchea, there were some regulations in the form of rhetoric that was used to command or instruct people with in the Khmer Rouge cadres and all people. For example, “You must respect and follow orders of Angkar”, “Be honest with Angkar”, “Be economical”, “To live long was to keep secret long”, etc. Every security center in the Khmer Rouge always set different regulations or disciplines due to the level and context of each region. Mostly, there

were some regulations in the form of slogans to maintain order in the prisons and when the prisoners went to work in the labor camps. Particularly, in the security center S-21 or Toul Sleng prison, there were 10 rules for security guards, which was proof of the cruelty of the Khmer rouge. Each point of those regulations was violent and savage.<sup>23</sup>

On the one hand, KTCSC also had its own regulations or rules; unfortunately, those regulations were lost which was a great loss in evaluating the crimes that happened there. According to Keo Mao, a former prisoner in KTC, the prison pointed out a short regulation, “To stay is to live; To escape is to die” written on a board in the prison building in the east.<sup>24</sup> This phrase inspired fear to all prisoners so they did not try to leave or escape. They faced punishments and sometimes were condemned to death if they violated the rules. However, due to information from the interview, we can assume that regulations for the security guards left in S-21 influenced all subordinate centers, especially interrogation and torture units, etc.

### **3. Communication**

In political system of every country, there is always communication between leaders and implementers. In Democratic Kampuchea, the communication was through orders, telegrams, messengers, letters, and field visits to collectives. Chiefs in every region contacted each other through letters delivered by messengers who walked, bicycled, or rode horses. They also used oral presentation, radio phone, or radio. Each communication took about half day, a full day or a day and a half, depending on the places or transportation method used. KTCSC also communicated with cadres in other places, such as collectives, districts, regions, zones and its subordinate militias. The communication was mostly by messengers who took letters or written documents to target places by using horses and bicycles.

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<sup>23</sup> Dy Khamboly, 2007, History of Democratic Kampuchea, DC-Cam, p.61

<sup>24</sup> Pheng Pong Rasy, 2007, Truth Seeking Magazine, DC-Cam, No.96, p.19



## **Communication at Kraing Ta Chan**

### **4. Roles of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

KTCSC was a center that the Khmer Rouge used to detain prisoners, torture, interrogate and kill. In 1968, this area had been renowned for its dense forest and wild animals. Most people who entered this forest were likely to get lost. In 1971, this area was transformed to a secret meeting place of CPC in the Tram Kak district. During 1972, this place was taken by the Khmer Rouge to establish a re-education camp for spreading revolutionary ideology. During the half of 1973, the place became one of the Khmer Rouge's security centers for detaining prisoners who did not attend revolution or anti-communist revolution. According to people who lived in the area before the evacuations of the Khmer Rouge, they did not know the area was used as a prison during the Khmer Rouge. They did not know because outsiders were forbidden from the area. Since that time, KTC became a prison and the Khmer Rouge expanded the area by

constructing new wooden prison buildings and the previous re-education camp was demolished. In Democratic Kampuchea, KTCSC was under the control of district 105. Moreover, the center was a place for interrogation, torture, execution, and for Khmer Rouge cadres to stay.



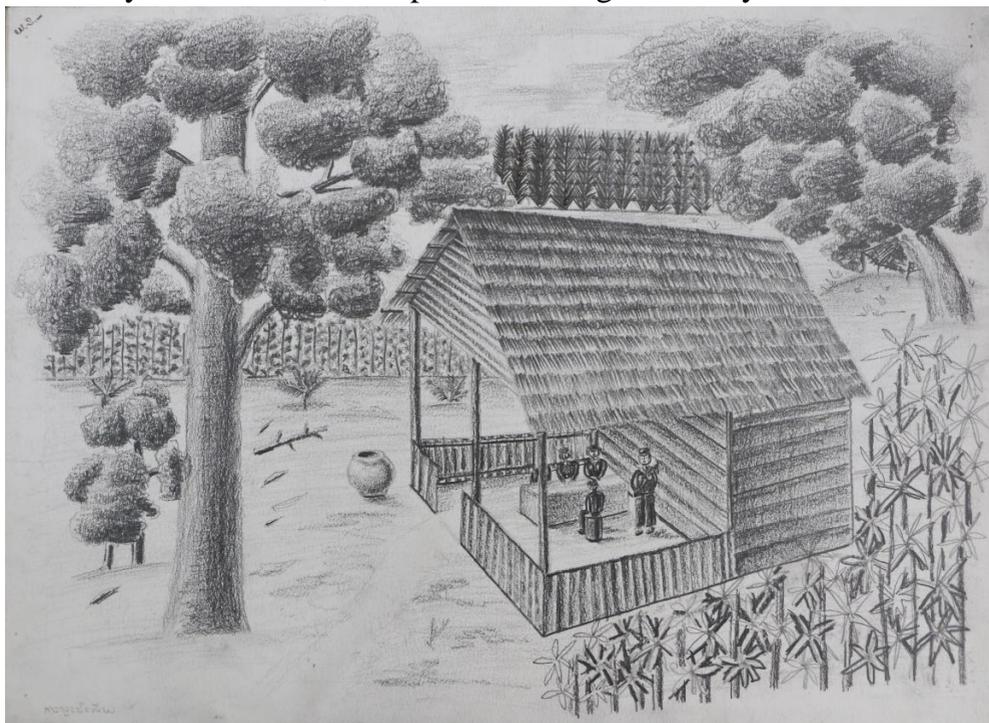
### **Bringing Prisoners to Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

There were many victim survivors who were former prisoners, former workers, and relatives of the prisoners that described about the conditions of prisoners, interrogation methods, execution, and living conditions of Khmer Rouge cadres, etc. Through an interview with Om Yao, the prisoners were former government officers, people who worked to destroy collectives and were accused of dishonesty with Angkar. The interrogation was usually paired with torture to force the prisoners to confess. He himself was strongly tortured until he agreed

to reveal his real background that he was educated and a medical student in the previous regime.

### **C. Work and life of the Khmer Rouge Cadres**

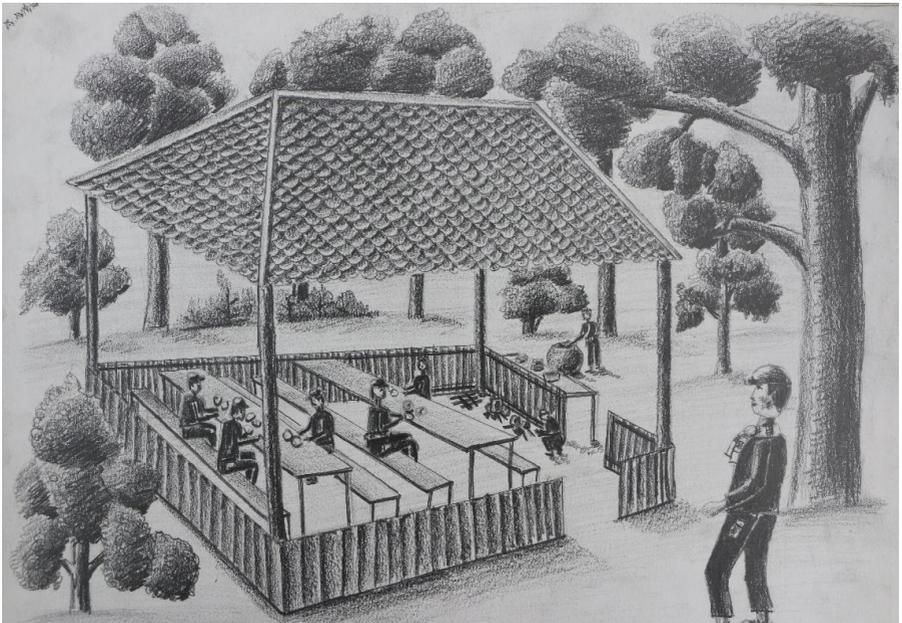
In KTCSC, there were about 10 to 20 Khmer Rouge cadres and there were also 3 to 5 Khmer Rouge soldiers. Some cadres were young, and some were old; it depended on nomination from senior levels. They lived differently from normal people and prisoners. According to documents related to KTC, the role of cadres was to receive people who were under control of district 105 and other connecting districts, and to identify enemies and new people (17 April people). Moreover, they inspected prisoners while they were working in nearby labor camps (only security guards). They must be loyal to Angkar. More importantly, they must interrogate prisoners who were lazy in their work, and spoke ill to Angkar. If they were not satisfied



**Interrogation**

with the answers, they could torture the prisoners inside or outside the prisons. Some prisoners were tortured to death.

Life of cadres was full of convenience. They had access to more food, alcohol, and enough clothes, etc. Opposite from prisoners and people in collectives, cadres in the center could switch their shift duty with each other between patrolling day and night. More importantly, there was a house for the Khmer Rouge cadres next to the prisons and opposite to the kitchen for the prisoners. This enabled them to easily watch and ensure there was no argument between prisoners during food distribution, and to ensure equality that no one betrayed Angkar, or the collective and was seeking self-interest. An important task for the Khmer Rouge Cadres was to order prisoners with minor crimes like Mr. Soy Sen and Ta Chin, to take the clothes off executed prisoners and bury them under a coconut tree which would be planted later.



**Eating Hall for Cadres at Kraing Ta Chan**

The lifestyle of KTC's cadres was comfortable because the collectives or regions provided them with everything they wanted. For example, they were given the best clothes, received haircuts, and when they were either hungry or thirsty they were provided with something to eat or drink.

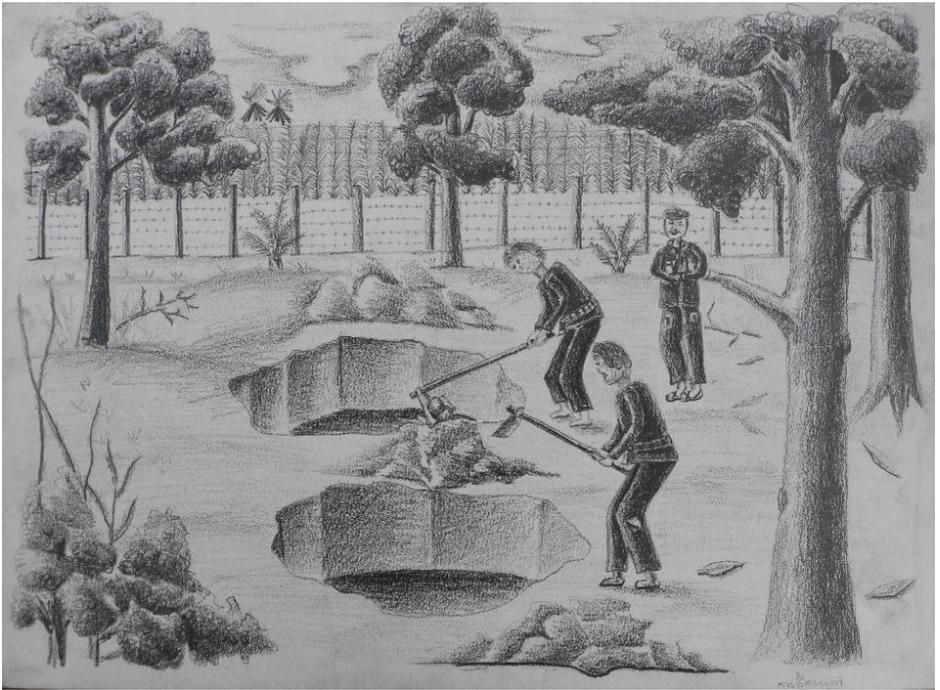
## **D. Conditions of Prisoners**

### **1. Type of Prisoners**

The prisoners in KTCSC were separated between male and female, minor and serious crimes. The prisoners were divided into two, minor and serious, depending on the results of their interrogation, how much the confessions satisfied Angkar, accusation by Angkar, and Chhlops' inspections or findings.

**Minor level:** these prisoners were the people who were ordered to grow rice, tend cattle, grow potatoes or other crops, and to perform other activities in the center (between the first and second fences). They were under surveillance of security guards. Some prisoners were forced to work even though their hands and legs were shackled. They looked skinny, and wore only trousers (for male prisoners). After working full days, those prisoners were walked back to the prison, and sometimes they had to put shackles on themselves before the prison guard locked their shackles. Some prisoners, such as comrade Soy Sen and Chin, received trust from the chief of prison, Ta Ann. These prisoners were ordered by the chief to work hard, but they gained more freedom than others. Their duties included taking out corpses from the prisons to bury, climbing sugar palm trees to take sugar palm juice for the chief, tending cattle, buffalos, horses, washing the clothes that had been taken off from the prisoners who were just killed, and planting coconut trees on the graves, etc. Even though they were trusted by Angkar (chief of the prison), those prisoners must enter the prison and wear shackles just like others. The trust by Angkar was the result of their skills and courage, such as climbing sugar palm tree

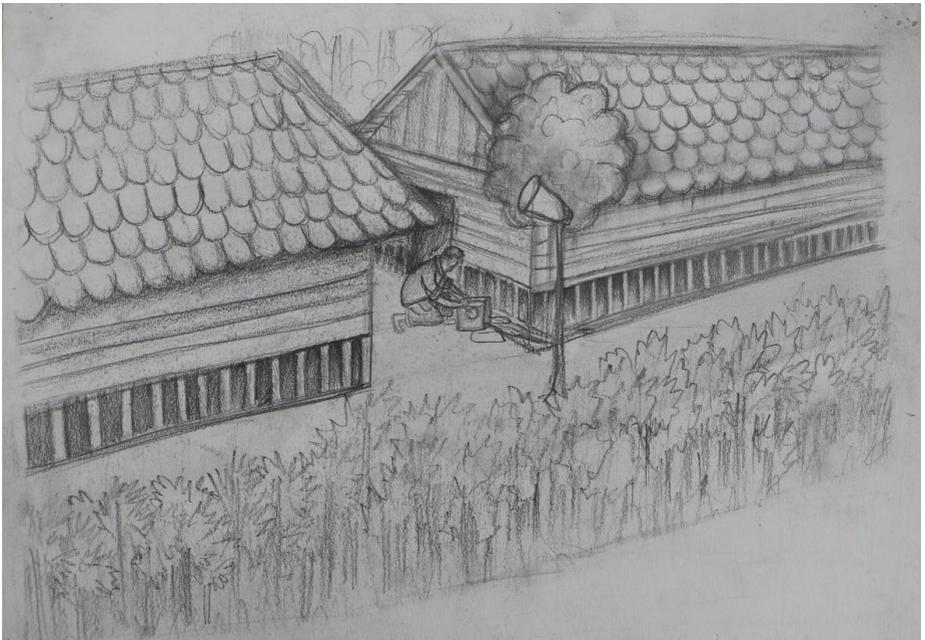
(Comrade Sen said, Ta Ann really liked drinking sour sugar palm juice). In addition to climbing palm trees, those comrades performed many other tasks, such as burying corpses, digging pits, planting coconut trees, spinning magneto of speaker, tending cattle, buffalos or horses. Some prisoners were ordered to help in kitchens for prisoners and cadres.



**The Prisoners' Duty**



**Security Guard Watched Prisoner's Lunch**



**Spinning Dynamo (Hand Powered Electric Generator) for Power for the Revolutionary Song**

**Serious level:** For the prisoners who committed serious crimes, Khmer Rouge cadres did not lessen the torture. Those prisoners were rarely permitted to work outside. Some prisoners were detained in the underground prison for torture, and some were starved to death. The prisoners who committed serious crimes had no chance to survive; they were only waiting for their death.

## 2. Interrogation

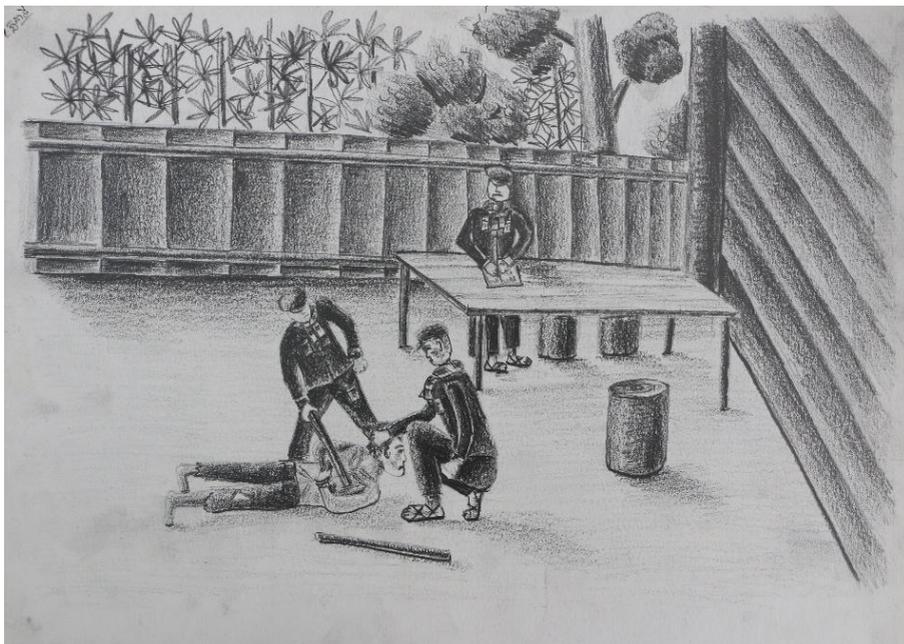
All prisoners who were sent to KTCSC were interrogated, even if they had a relationship with cadres who worked in the center. If they were found guilty, they would be arrested and sent to the center for interrogation and to discover their acts of betrayal. Even though some prisoners confessed that their crimes were done alone (just wanted to escape to Vietnam) or people who gathered to organize plans to destroy mobile units or collectives, those people would be investigated for their connections. Next, their connections would be arrested and killed.

In the reports of prisoners' confessions, we cannot assume 100% of confessed crimes were really made by them. It might have resulted by force or harsh torture, so they just confessed to whatever to help them get set free. In KTCSC, there were two methods of interrogation, cold and hot.

**Cold method:** This method was used in the beginning to convince prisoners to willingly confess. The interrogators used tricks and consolation to make prisoners confess on their own. This method was rarely used in interrogation.

**Hot method:** this method was used to force prisoners to confess to what the interrogators wanted or the accusations that was written in the report. The methods of torture they used were beatings by stick,

hanging prisoners upside down with their heads submerged in water, using poison insects to bite, beatings by whip, choking prisoners with plastic bags over their heads, using pliers to pull noses or ears, sprinkling liquid acid on prisoners, and strangling, etc. Most prisoners experienced interrogation with the hot method.



## Interrogation

According to survivors from the prisons, during interrogation they first asked simple questions, if they did not answer or confess to what the interrogators wanted, then they used torture to get the answers they wanted. According to Mr. Keo Chandara (Ta Yao), a victim survivor who was detained in the prison for 29 days and a former medical student in the old regime, during interrogation, they asked prisoners one-by-one questions. When the prisoners' answers did not match with what the guards wanted, they would be tortured

using the hot method. For female prisoners, they used pliers and poisonous insect to mutilate and to bite their breasts, and sometimes the female prisoners were raped.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Yao and other survivors have described this as a common occurrence. According to a report on genocide of Pol Pot in Tram Kak district (D00032), torture in KTCSC was similar to the torture in S-21 or Toul Sleng prison. This torture was to get answers they wanted from prisoners.



**Underground Prison**

According to Mann Seng, another survivor from KTCSC, who was arrested under an accusation of refuting revolution in the anniversary conference of the Party, at that time, he claimed that “They ordered us to attend the conference; they gave us right to refute the Party to get improvement in the future.” However, later he was arrested and sent to the center. When he arrived

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<sup>25</sup> Interview on 9 August 2015 at 3:45 PM, interviewed by Voeun Vandet, Song Pheaktra, Sok Kimly, Hin Chetra

there, they interrogated him about his acts of betrayal, but he refused to answer what the interrogators wanted, so they knocked him out three times.<sup>26</sup>

### **3. Prisoner at Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

The Khmer Rouge wanted their revolution and all the people of Cambodia to be pure. All people had to be clean in terms of their mentality and background. Poor peasants were thought to be the purest revolutionaries. The Khmer Rouge distrusted everyone else. KTCSC received a lot of prisoners who were new people or 17 April people, who were labeled as internal enemies, and many base people as officials of the Lon Nol government, cadres who were found guilty and people who had relationship with Khmer Kampuchea Krom or



### **Type of accused charges at Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

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<sup>26</sup> D00013, Interview with Comrade Mann Seng, victim in Kraing Ta Chan prison in Tram Kak

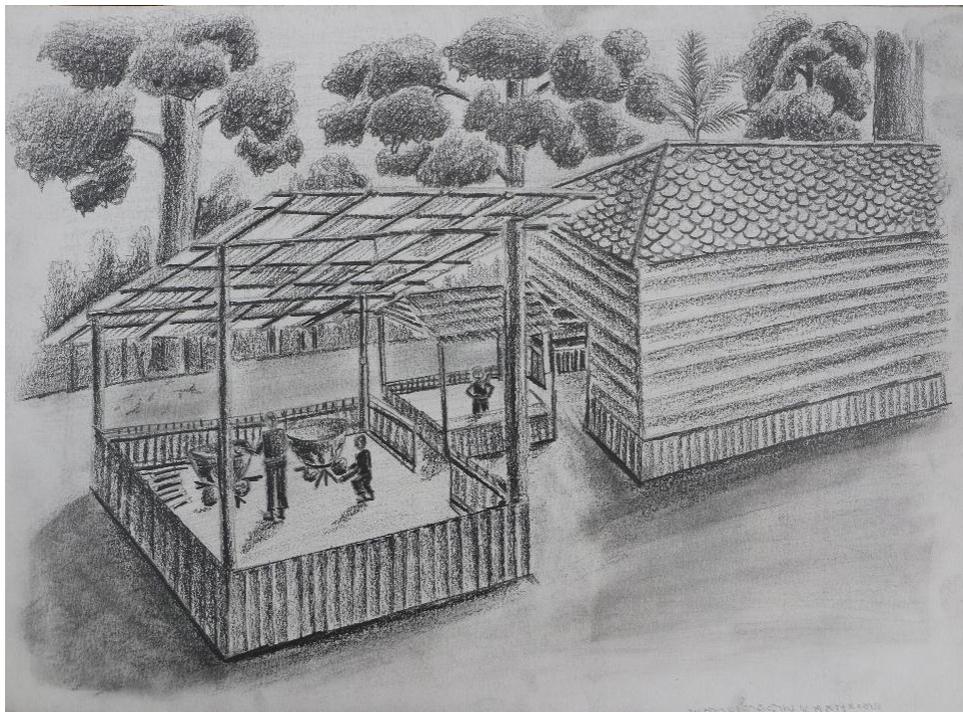
Vietnam. Most of family members and relatives of officials of the Khmer Republic government were killed. Those people were considered as capitalists, imperialists, and feudalists. Besides these people, people who stole vegetables or fruits around their houses or in collectives were accused of betraying the collective, and they were warned or arrested. Moreover, committing moral offence led to being arrested or even killed.

#### **4. Food for prisoners**

People who were accused of minor infractions or detained in subordinate security centers were generally in malnutrition and whenever they got sick, they received no medicine but other forms of cruel treatments instead. Even though lots of people died because of the bad conditions of the prison, there was a small amount of people escaped from the torture and execution. Food provided to the prisoners in KTC was differently distributed due to their crimes. The prisoners in the underground prison were not provided any food. The prisoners who worked around the center were provided 2 bowls of food per day, eating with their hands and legs shackled. The food for the prisoners who worked outside the prisons was more than that of those who were in the prisons.

Those survivors from the prisons similarly said that all those prisoners, no matter what levels they were, had lived in suffering they got only watery rice porridge, ate only 2 times per day, and 1 bowl per time, but most of the times, they got only half. When someone who accidentally spilled their food over; they had to be careful because no one could share their food because they could be caught and beaten. They could only share when the food distributors were not there. All the prisoners walked because they were locked in row. When they put shackles on and someone did not put their legs in the right place, their

legs would be pierced by an iron bar when the prison guards locked the shackles.

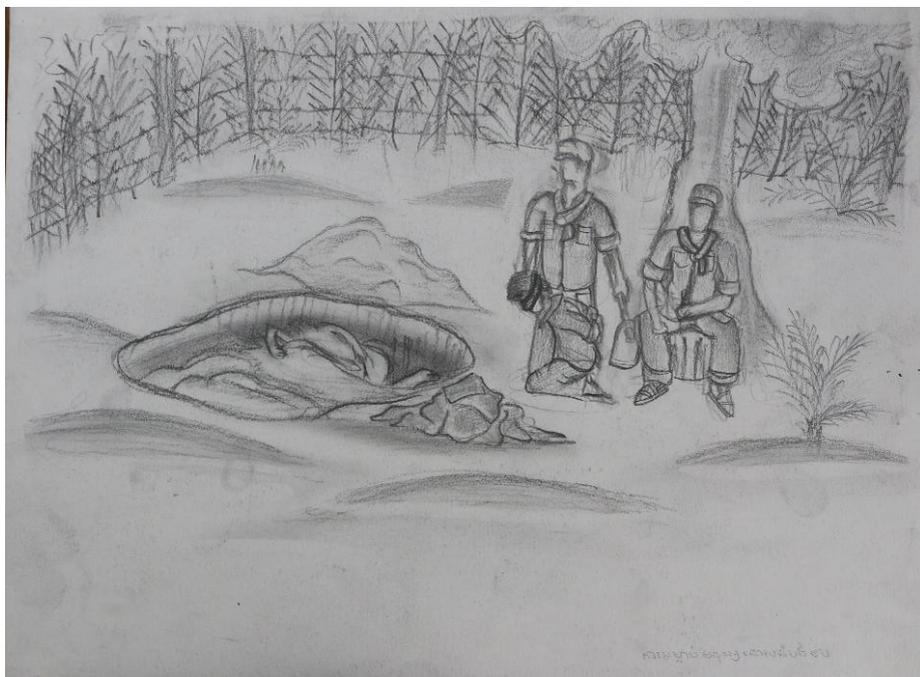


**Kitchen in Kraing Ta Chan Security Center**

## **5. Killing prisoners at Kraing Ta Chan**

Prisoners who were detained at the prison, nearly no one could survive. In the security center, they dug holes 3 meters deep. After interrogating the prisoners, if those prisoners confessed to what they wanted, they released or reduced the level of crime they were charged with. If not, they took them to be executed and dumped in the hole. If the prisoners were women with babies, the women were killed first and then the babies would be buried alive or killed by being thrown

against trees and finally be buried with their mothers. Prisoners who were about to be killed had their eyes covered and then their necks broken by rifles, axle of a cart or a hoe. When the prisoners fell over they used swords to cut their throats. When they performed executions, they used equipment such as hoes, spears of flagpole, swords, tree bases, and sticks, etc.



### **Killing at Kraing Ta Chan**

In the prisons, the prisoners called out by name to be killed shortly and sometimes entire families would be called. The children were taken after their parents were killed and were told that their parents wanted to see them. Those children followed the guards who took their parents out and forever disappeared. A former worker in KTCSC said that after interrogation, the prisoners were sent back to the prisons and about one week later (sometimes only 3 days later),

they would be taken to be killed. Before the execution, they were told that “Before going back home, you must show respect to Angkar, receive new regulations from Angkar, but before visiting Angkar, you must have your hands tied and your eyes covered, because you do not need to know who Angkar is.” Next, they were walked to be killed in the pits near cassava farms.



**Bring the prisoner to kills**

## Chapter 4: Mistakes and Results

In Democratic Kampuchea, the Party Center, to protect and improve its socialism, they adopted policies and some new measures that gave independent decision making to every security center in destroying enemies that attempted to overthrow their red revolution. Independent decision making was implemented effectively and actively by all levels and nearly all parts of the country.

Enemies of Angkar in the Khmer Rouge were categorized into two, external and internal. External enemies included the CIA, KGB and Vietnamese. Internal enemies were divided into three groups, including officials of the Khmer Republic government, Khmer Rouge armed forces that were accused of betraying the revolution or the desires of the Khmer Rouge, and lastly people who supported Lon Nol's government.<sup>27</sup> Internal enemies concerned the Party Center much more than anything else since they thought that these groups were spies and convinced people in rural areas to fight against the revolution. The suspicion of internal enemies led to mass killings in every security center across the country. There were enemy-clearance plans, especially at KTCSC, a model security center in destroying enemies of Angkar.

Comrade Nuon Chea, deputy secretary, motivated his youth by saying "Participation of revolutionary youth in eliminating enemies means participation in protecting the country and building socialism."<sup>28</sup>

At this point, the Khmer Rouge had an idea to transform Cambodian society into a socialist government and considered people

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<sup>27</sup> Ear Mengtry, 2007, Truth Seeking Magazine, DC-Cam, p.26-27

<sup>28</sup> Ear Mengtry, 2006, Truth Seeking Magazine

who were dishonest with the revolution as enemies, and need to be eliminated

Particularly, in the elimination process in the southwest zone, the number of death in KTC was like the famous S-21 security center. At KTC, there were government regulations to discover people who betrayed Angkar. General people, not only base people, new people or whatever background they belonged to, if they were arrested and sent to the center, they were considered as enemies, even though those people were bare-armed, handcuffed, newly-delivered women, or even newly-born babies.

At KTC, prisoners were sent under the orders of senior level officials (Angkar), based on reports from lower cadres who sent to Angkar, to brother comrades, to the party or to re-education camp in Tram Kak district. These reports came from background summaries in villages, communes and districts. Background identification aimed to discover those who used to be part of the old armed forces, police or government officials in previous regime. Prisoners who were sent by Chhlop to KTC, nearly all of them, were killed after interrogation. According to Pheng Pong Rasy (2007, p.18-21), lists of prisoners in Tram Kak showed that the prisoners that were killed there, more than 50% of them were police, army, or government officials of Khmer Republic. In a list of proposing who to be killed around 500 prisoners were to be executed and 252 were army and police. On 9 August 1977, another killing proposal list included about 40 prisoners and around 30 were officials of Lon Nol's government. On 25 May 1978, a killing proposal of 26 prisoners included 18 police officers and army. There were more documents about the numbers of prisoners there.

According to the reports of prisoners' confessions from 1975 to 1979, the prisoners were categorized into former officials of the

Khmer Republic government, former Khmer Rouge cadres, people who had relations with Vietnam and Khmer Kampuchea Krom, people who were dishonest with Angkar, and others.

#### **4.1. Senior Socialist Officials**

Since the Khmer Rouge came to power, this group seemed vindictive with those who used to work in the previous government, especially police and army in all levels. However, there were some exceptions for teachers, medical workers, and workers from other sectors. Reports from Cheang Tong commune on 11 September 1977 stated that Ok Sam was a former soldier with insignia and a driver of the governor of Kampong Chhnan province. Nhem Nu was a former soldier (unknown rank). These two were accused of being lazy in agricultural work since they always had excuses.

In a report from Ta Phem commune, chhlop chief reported that former soldiers in 1972, such as Inh Nob, Inh Lon, Inh Phoeun, Soth, Nget Sorn, and Inh Lin were soldiers in different ranks.<sup>29</sup> According to the interrogation, they had known each other for a long time since 1971 or 1972. At the same year in 1977<sup>30</sup>, according to reports from Kpob Trabek commune, youth who were Khmer Republic soldiers were sent to Tram Kak security center, such as Prak Khon, 22 years old, a youth from district 109 and a soldier with insignia, responsible for artillery in the army. However, those people were all sent to KTCSC for interrogation, and they were killed because of their background.

According to report from Kus commune, Ou Ny, a Khmer Kampuchea Krom and a former soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup>, Piv Nen, a police of

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<sup>29</sup> Report from Ta Phem commune; reported by Khith in 1977

<sup>30</sup> Report from Kpob Trabek on 13 October 1977

the 2<sup>nd</sup>, were also sent to the center.<sup>31</sup> On 16 May 1977, Soeun (chief of chhlop) requested Angkar to decide on Kim Seng, 27 years old, a soldier of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, who was so lazy in work, and full of pretention. According to the report on 17 September 1977 to Tram Kak district, Chab Siphou, pilot soldier, Kim Lou, a soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup>, Ouch Ngoun, a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ou Sang, a teacher in the previous regime, were lazy and did not pay attention to their work. Moreover, on 28 August 1977, there was a proposal for decision making from Angkar on prisoners, such as Sang Cheka, a spy of Lon Nol government and an elder brother of Sang Noem, a lieutenant colonel, and a younger brother named Sang Chek, a spy of CIA in Lon Nol's government. Moreover, those above, besides their military backgrounds in Lon Nol's government, they were accused of being dishonest with Angkar, destroying collectives, laziness in work, and speaking ill of Angkar, etc. Thus, the decision was up to Angkar. In Trapeang Sra Ngae, there were 17 April people who were soldiers, such as Ul Suon, a BDCIA of America, and his brother was a former soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup>.

According to reports, prisoner Kiet Neng, 36 years old, a government official at Ministry of land in Phnom Penh since 1962, after 17 April, his group was sent to Sre Kruo village, Cheang Tong commune. Moreover, the confession indicated that he organized a plan to escape and he convinced others to join him in Vietnam, since he had connections that were successfully escaped. Moreover, Neng said that he was a close friend of Son Ngoc Thanh during 1970, if he could escape successfully; he would be given any position that he wished. In the confession, it also showed that Neng had other two or three colleagues, such as Thorn (former soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Inh (former soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup>).

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<sup>31</sup> Kus, reported on 4/5/1977 by Soeun

According to Mr. Chhay Lieng Sear, 43 years old and his wife, Khov Saikeang (they had five children, but three lived with their grandmother and 2 lived with them) confessed that he became a police officer in 1957. In 1970, he was replaced to be a soldier and was sent to study technical skills in South Vietnam for 2 months. After he returned he was constantly promoted until becoming a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> who worked at the Ministry of Disabled Soldiers in Phnom Penh.

Sieng Ra, 22 years old, entered army in 1971. In 1972, he was beaten until his shoulder was broken. He confessed that he used to be a deputy commander of platoon 29 in Kampong Chhnang. He was arrested due to his connections in Vietnam. His name was mentioned by the prisoners who were previously arrested, such as Thann (responsible for the region), Yim (commander of regiment) and Mey (deputy commander of regiment) who initiated the anti-revolution and attempted to escape to Vietnam.

Vai Thoeun, 25 years old, born in Ang Ta Chan village, Leay Bo commune, Tram Kak district, a soldier at Kambol soldier camp, confessed that he had a meeting with his companions (Touch, Rorn, and Sath) to organize plans to escape to Vietnam. He said that living here was harder than dying, so if he escaped, he might be blessed to reach Vietnam successfully. Soon later, his companions were arrested by Angkar, but Thoeun escaped from the collective. He then met Chorn, but Chorn warned him not to talk much since Chorn was in trouble for having a relationship with a girl living nearby. Finally, those mentioned above, including the girl, were killed by Angkar.

#### **4.2. Vietnamese and Khmer Krom**

The Khmer Rouge considered people who had relationships with Vietnam as spies who worked to destroy the regime. They said they provided information to Cambodia's enemies like Vietnam who used to be considered a brother, but later became an enemy due to border

issues. Moreover, during the Khmer Rouge, a lot of people tried to escape to Vietnam, which was a main factor that made the Khmer Rouge take actions find them and kill them.

According to documents left in KTCSC, Ly Luom, 31 years old and his wife, Ly Ok, born in Nga Pa village, Nga Pa commune, Hing Va district, Kleang province, Kampuchea Krom, he moved to live in Cambodia since the old regime. He became a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and after 17 April, Angkar sent him to district 109 and Ang Tasom. He confessed that he and other two colleagues, Chao Khom and Chao Nhor, attempted to gather others to fight against the revolution. They said that “the Cambodian revolution was hard to live during – we worked days and nights and received no money. On the contrary, while we were living in Vietnam, we happily spent money and we used money to buy whatever they wanted.”

Yen Ting called Long and his wife, Ngeab Long, lived in Sleng village, Kouk Prich commune, Kirivong district, Takeo province. He was Vietnamese and a tailor in the Olympic market. After 17 April, he was sent to district 109 and later to Nheng Nhorng commune. He confessed that he used to say he was so lazy in work. He said “I would no longer do that work because I was not provided enough food, even though I worked so hard. The trains were full of rice, but were being transported to pay debts to China. We would only have sufficient food, if there was an invasion from Vietnam. Whenever I heard gun fired, I was happy because I thought that the Vietnamese would arrive soon.”

Mr. Thach Soeung, 32 years old, a Khmer Kampuchea Krom, came to Cambodia in 1970. He was a soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup>. After 17 April, he escaped to live in district 105, but he was arrested later. Through a summary of his confession, he planned to return back to Vietnam. He

hoped that when he reached Vietnam, he would collect armed forces and organize a plan to fight back since he had connections in Vietnam to help him at any time.

Kim Inh, 32 years old, and his wife, Huo, born in Bot Chek village, Sambuor district, Preah Trapeang province, Kampuchea Krom. He was arrested with a connection named Veal Thorn, 48 years old. They confessed that they were the connections of Pann Leang Cheav and Kiet Neng, betrayers who escaped to Vietnam before persuading others to escape. The last part of the summary showed that they were all former soldiers.

Ieng Seab, 16 years old, his father, Ieng Phon and his mother, Nuon Ngong, with 5 brothers and/or sisters, born in district 109. In 1972, he went to Vietnam (Moet Chrouk province) as a log cutter. After returning to Cambodia, he worked to dig canal. In 1977, he and a few female comrades planned to go back to Vietnam since his father used to be in charge of looking after of Cambodian people who escaped to Vietnam. He added that “Living here was very difficult, I dug canals and dams every day; whenever I got sick, I was not medically and regularly treated, day by day, I would die.”

### **4.3. Who talk bad about Angkar**

This type of prisoners was outnumbered at that time. They were old people, 17 April people, officials of Khmer Republic government, Khmer Rouge cadres, and even people who used to fight with revolution. If they were not being careful with their speeches, and got caught by the chhlop unit, of course, they would become betrayers against Angkar. Whatever speech was considered bad, unethical, or immoral, was portrayed as dishonest with Angkar or revolution.

The confession report of Meas Chhin, 46 years old, born in Chi Khmol village, Tnout Ta Nong commune, district 106, showed that one day, there was a ceremony in the village, Chhin talked with his comrades that “the current ceremonies were not as happy as before because there was no theaters or movies, and the sound of the speaker was very low. Cambodian people were not capable of inventing anything, even in repairing old things; unlike the Americans, their products were always good.” Soon after the talk, those words were caught by the chhlop unit and were reported to Angkar and finally they were sent to KTCSC by collective.

Som Khon, 22 years old, her father, Som Nath (Killed by Angkar), her mother, Slat Chhon, born in Prey Chheu Teal village, Ang Tasom commune. Before 17 April, she lived in Phnom Penh. After 17 April, she returned back to her hometown. She confessed that “I used to hear my father say that Cambodia had not been out of war yet because the United States still had power; it would not stay quiet...nowadays Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan were fighting against each other and the UN wanted Sihanouk to be head of state, so if Sihanouk became head of state, our country would have an open market, money, private property, hospitals, and schools like previous times...” According to the report of her confession, soon after, Khon’s father was killed by Angkar. Later on, Khon attempted to escape five times because she was worried that Angkar would kill her like her father, but at the end, she was arrested by Angkar in Ang Tasom and sent to KTC when she attempted to go to Chhouk district.

Eang Bunthorn, 17 years old, his father, Tieng Pel and his mother, Leang Eng, born in Toul Kork, Phnom Penh. After 17 April he lived in Sre No Noug commune. He confessed that he had an argument about the revolution and one day he threw a plate of rice and a plate of soup away and said that “I did not want to live within the

revolution and collective form anymore; if anyone wanted to kill me, please do.”

Kong Phin, 50 years old, his wife, Prak Vong, born in Ta Leu village, Ang Tasom commune, Tramkak district, Takeo province, a soldier at Chhroy Changva, Phnom Penh. After 17 April, he returned to his hometown and he used to say that “if revolution turned upside down, I would fight them unconditionally.” Later, while he was looking at his child eating only a plate of sour soup with salt and chilies, he said that “in the previous regime, I ate rice with several types of delicious soups and even with elites, but now my children ate like that, if the revolution turned upside down, I would kill them all without any mercy.”

Vietnamese were targeted by Angkar for execution. Thus, it was difficult to distinguish between them and former government officials because in the reports of confession they always indicated their backgrounds as former government officials and those who attempted to escape to Vietnam. However, a factor that could distinguish was that the prisoners who were former police, soldiers or those who attempted to go to Vietnam; it mostly stated that at the end of the reports.

#### **4.4. Who Destroy the Cooperative**

According to the reports of confession, prisoners who were accused of having intention to destroy collectives were existed the most among all the cases. All people were vulnerable to face the accusation, even young, old, male, or female. If something irregular happened, they would be arrested under the accuse of betraying Angkar or destroying collective properties.

According to a summary of prisoners' confession (D00201, p.7) in December 1977, district 109 sent three new people to district 105, and one among them was a child whose father was a second lieutenant. The child stole sugar palm juice, broke the bamboo container, and stripped off rice to eat nearly every day. Moreover, the child used to go to study in the United States.<sup>32</sup>

Nheb Mao, 52 years old, his wife Chin Sab, born in Thngann village, Prey Romchong commune, Kirivong district, Takeo province. After 17 April, he was sent to Cheang Tong commune. He confessed that he committed banditry frequently. He stole sugar palm juice, and cut down tightrope, and on the ground, he wrote that "From today on, I must kill them all, do whatever to make collectives poor and I will return to the private life." He also claimed that that was only his own opinion, not from the teaching from others. He was reported that he was a soldier with insignia in Chaom Chao.

Chhak Chhit, 59 years old, his wife Kiev Ngin, born in Viney village, Sre No Nong commune, Tram Kak district. He was a former soldier since the French colonization. After 17 April, he returned to his hometown. He stole chickens from collectives to cook with his family at home.

Tho An, 30 years old, single, his father Youk Tho and his mother Ing Voet Chhun, born in Sangkat 1, Phnom Penh. He graduated with a degree in pharmacy. After 17 April, he went to Chheu Teal Thmey village, Ta Phem commune. On 15 August 1977, he went to a party at Tiv's house and to find something delicious. A Tiv had fried chicken, sugar porridge, sugar palm juice. They said that "Angkar recently arrested soldiers; I felt so concerned."

According to reports from Khpob Trabek commune<sup>33</sup>, Prak Khon, 22 years old, a youth from district 109 who moved to live in

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<sup>32</sup> D00201, p.7

<sup>33</sup> Kpob Trabek on 13 October 1977

Khlob Trabek, He always had an argument with Angkar. He said that “hard work would be paid meal to meal; no work still be paid with meal; so we do not need to work”. Moreover, Khon also destroyed collectives, such as creaking plates, throwing away soup, stealing potatoes, and stealing this and that without consciousness. He was reported to Angkar to send to the party since there was no way to educate him more.

In summary, according to sample documents about the mistakes of prisoners in KTCSC, people who lived under the control of Tram Kak (district 105) had high risk in getting caught under surveillance from the chhlop units, and being likely to face death. They faced death because the Khmer Rouge hated people whose loyalties were to capitalism, monarchy, socialism. Moreover, they were accused of laziness in work, ill speaking, meeting, having dinner, etc. Some people were labeled as having connections with those who were interrogated in the prisons before being killed. Some were requested by Angkar to be killed without providing any specific reasons. They had no right to protest. Some might be arrested because they were portrayed to have participated in betrayal activities like this and that, as revenge from others. Even male or female, young or old, if they knew or saw that they used to have bad ideas about Angkar or that they were thought to be capitalists, they must prepare themselves for the arrest under the words “requested comrades to study, requested to re-educate, requested to erect.”

#### **4.5. Results of the confessions**

Nearly all prisoners who were sent to the security centers went through an interrogation phase to confess their mistakes and betrayal networks. After the interrogation, nearly all prisoners were killed, under accusations of being enemies of Angkar. Khmer Rouge cadres believed that all the confessions indicated daily activities of all enemies.

Results of the confessions stemmed from interrogation on what the interrogators wanted through questions and commands. Through summary reports of confessions at KTCSC, the confessions stemmed from three important questions. First, leading questions were about personal background, parents, relatives and hometown, etc. Second, closed-ended questions were used to ask prisoners to describe their betrayal activities and focused on discovering connections. The questions were also used to identify the appearances of those connections to arrest them afterward and to demolish the enemies of the revolution. Lastly, open-ended questions were asked about general activities of prisoners' daily lives in collectives, and find the truth about their crimes.

The results of confessions using the above questions showed that the questions were repeated until the proper answers were given, such as occupations in the previous regime, what crimes you committed to betray Angkar, who were your connections and why did you betray Angkar.

Final destiny of the prisoners after interrogation was mostly being taken for killing. Only few could survive.

## **Chapter 5: Events at Kraing Ta Chan after the Khmer Rouge**

Cambodian people who were evacuated during 1975 repatriated to their hometowns. Many people in KTC who were moved to other areas also returned to their home with their families and relatives. Some met their families, but some did not since some people had died during the Khmer Rouge regime. Some people disappeared, and some left Cambodia through Thailand for the other countries like France, Canada, the United States, and so on.

After repatriation, most people did not know that KTC was a security center in the Khmer Rouge which was used for mass killing. Soon after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, people who survived the regime collected woods for house construction, collected rice, chickens, ducks, pigs, and other materials left from the Khmer Rouge for household uses. Thus, nearly all of the evidence of the history of the site faded.

During 1981, the government of the People Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) ordered its party members to mobilize local peoples to dig pits in security centers and killing sites in the aim to show people the presence of the killings. In 1982, there was a big excavation, which involved many institutions in the goal of discovering corpses, and bones. Many bones were found, but there were many other hidden bones and thousand pages of documents which were unreachable.

Later, there was a construction of a stupa for the victims. Furthermore, under the cooperation between Youth for Peace and the Peace Institute of Cambodia with support from other institutions, people who live in other countries, and local people, there was an establishment of a Community Peace Learning Center (CPLC) which consists of a study room and a museum, monks' eating hall, and a weaving house for community, etc. Presently, the former KTCSC site has become a study place for youth, and a remembrance site for everyone.



### **Digging the Buried after Khmer Rouge**

The stories at KTC remain unforgettable in the feelings of victim survivors. Every year, they always go there to celebrate religious ceremonies. When they see the site, which is full of their bitter memories, they feel like it just happened. For what they went through, victim survivors have similar opinions on which they call the “Tragedy at KTCSC.” Simultaneously, there is another opinion that

“Those people only followed their supervisors, if they did not obey, they would be killed by their supervisors as well.” This opinion does not refer to the Khmer Rouge cadres as the whole, since some still had good hearts while others over-implemented the orders.



**Digging the Buried after Khmer Rouge**

## Chapter 6: Closing Remarks

The mass killings of millions of people in Cambodia have until this day have remained with no one taking responsibility for the heinous crimes that were committed. The process of finding justice for victims by bringing the Khmer Rouge top leaders and those who were most responsible on trial has not fulfilled the satisfaction of victims yet. To take part in psychological reparation for victims, we must encourage them to share their stories to younger generations and document their histories or the places they lived.

A Khmer Rouge slogan says that “To dig up the grass, one must also dig up the roots”. The slogan reflects the implementation of mass killing in nearly all parts of the country during Khmer Rouge regime. Security centers at all levels were the most strictly implemented unit. When they received prisoners, the security centers’ role was to use all their means of force to have the prisoners to admit their connections to Khmer Rouge enemies, so they could destroy them afterward. Many people who were considered as enemies were sent to the prisons and tortured. Because of the harsh torture, most prisoners confessed to whatever they could think of. For example, they would confess to whatever they could think of and then the names in the confession were sent to the collective chiefs and Chhlop units for investigation to make arrests, as well as to security centers sequentially. There were numbers of innocent people who were sent to the center without committing a crime and because of the torture, many more people were framed. This reminded us of a security guards’ regulation at S-21 prison, saying that “You must answer according to my questions – Do not turn them away”. These words had much influence on security centers at lower levels. They must answer according to their questions, even though they did not commit any mistakes or have hidden connections; they must admit the mistakes and reveal hidden

betrayers. Another phrase, “if you do not want to be slapped, you must answer according to my questions”.

Story from the ground: Memory Sketch of Kraing Ta Chan Security Center tried to share untold stories that happened at Kraing Ta Chan security center to promote understanding for the postwar generations, and memories of the victims. Simultaneously, the book is a part of the project in fulfilling the history of people of killing sites or Kraing Ta Chan security center, which today is included as a part of the reparation case 002/02 by Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). This book is a documentation and a description of victim survivors and those who lost their lives at that time. It was created through interviews with the survivors, former workers at the security center and exposed the conditions of those who were sent there. Moreover, it is an activity that helps survivors reduce their sorrow, psychological illness and other pressures.

## Appendixes

### Khmer Rouge Chronology

- 1925** Emergence of Communist movement in Vietnam
- 1940** “Indochina Communist Party” is established by Ho Chi Minh, aimed to oppose French colony. This movement gathers communist movements from three countries in Indochina, including Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos PDR.
- 1950** Communists in Cambodia gather in Kampot province and establish the United Issarak Front (Khmer Issarak) led by Son Ngoc Minh (Acha Mean). This group cooperates with Vietnam to fight against the French colonizer.
- 1951** Establishment of Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Party which consists of secret central committees, such as Son Ngoc Minh, Sieu Heng, Tou Samouth, and Chan Samay.
- 1954** Geneva Conventions in August, which forbids weaponry movement on Cambodia’s territory. French troops withdraw from Indochina. Khmer Issarak movement is not permitted to attend this conference.
- 1960** 30 September, the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Party organizes a secret congress and changes the party’s name to Workers’ Party of Kampuchea. Tou Samouth becomes its secretary and Nuon Chea its deputy secretary. Pol Pot ranks number three at that time.
- 1962** Tou Samouth mysteriously disappears.
- 1963** The Workers’ Party of Kampuchea organizes a congress in February. Pol Pot becomes secretary general; Son Sen and Ta Mok become members of the Central Committee.
- 1965** Pol Pot pays visits to Vietnam, China and North Korea.
- 1966** Prince Norodom Sihanouk permits North Vietnamese forces to use Cambodian territory to provide supplies in the fight against the US and the South Vietnamese government. Pol Pot

changes the party from Workers' Party of Kampuchea to Communist Party of Cambodia.

- 1968** Start of the Khmer Rouge insurgency.
- 1969** US bombing campaign is extended to the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" on Cambodian territory.
- 1970** Sihanouk is overthrown by General Lon Nol with US support while in Moscow at that time. Sihanouk flees to China. People reject the new government and join forces with the Khmer Rouge to help bring Sihanouk back to power. The National Union of Kampuchea is established with the support of China, North Vietnam and the Communist Party of Cambodia. Sihanouk appeals people to enter maquis to fight for him.
- 1972** District 105 establishes reeducation camp and security center in Kraing Ta Chan
- 1973** From January to August, the US who supported the Kmer Republic, dropped approximately a half a million bombs to defeat the Khmer Rouge forces. About 300 thousand people died. These deaths made people angry with the Khmer Republic government and take part in the Khmer Rouge revolution more and more. 85% of Cambodia is under control of Khmer Rouge.
- 1973** District 105 changes the role of Kraing Ta Chan from reeducation camp and security center to prison or district security center.
- 1974** Kraing Ta Chan security center starts to receive more and more prisoners, mostly those who are former Lon Nol government officers.
- 1975** On, 17 April, the end of 5-year civil war and the victory of Khmer Rouge over the Khmer Republic. This is the year that is considered as "Cambodia Year Zero": a couple hours after the occupation in Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge evacuate

- people in the urban areas to rural areas to start farming. All people wear black and work hard with little food provided.
- 1976** Cambodia enters a new regime. The Khmer Rouge declare Democratic Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan as head of state. Prince Sihanouk is deposed and forbidden from travelling abroad and meeting diplomats. He and his royal families are under house arrest in the Royal Palace until the Khmer Rouge collapse.
- 1977** Pol Pot as the prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea publicly declares Communist Party of Cambodia's priorities and roles. Border tensions and Khmer Rouge incursions into Vietnamese territory begin.
- 1978** In December, Anti-Khmer Rouge Cambodians establish the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation. A radio broadcast in Hanoi appeals people to fight against Khmer Rouge. Vorn Veth and Nhim Ruos are killed and Suo Phim is assassinated. Kraing Ta Chan Security Center escapes from the Khmer Rouge control.
- 1979** Defected Cambodian and Vietnamese forces take over Phnom Penh on 7 January and later in other areas. There is an establishment of temporary government led by Heng Samrin. The Khmer Rouge flee to the Thai border area and gather thousands of people to continue their struggle.
- 1982** The Khmer Rouge, the Royalist FUNCINPEC under Prince Sihanouk and the Republican Khmer People's National Liberation Front under Son Sann join forces and form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea that retains the Cambodian seat at the United Nations (UN). At Kraing Ta Chan Security Center, there is an excavation of graves of people who were killed in Khmer Rouge.
- 1989** The State of Cambodia with Hun Sen as head of state is proclaimed; Vietnamese troops withdraw.

- 1991** 23 October, The Paris peace talks results in the “Agreements on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict” signed by all four parties, including the State of Cambodia and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC and the Republican Khmer People’s National Liberation Front). The agreements are intervened by the UN under its peacekeeping mission.
- 1992** The UN Security Council establishes the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to implement the Paris Peace Accords and maintain peace in Cambodia.
- 1993** UNTAC holds elections which result in a coalition government of Prince Norodom Ranariddh, leader of the royalist party FUNCINPEC, and Hun Sen of the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP).
- 1996** Ieng Sary and numerous other Khmer Rouge forces defect to the communist collection of sates government and gain capital punishment pardon from Sihanouk.
- 1997** Ta Mok places Pol Pot under house arrest in Anlong Veng. The Coalition government starts negotiating the establishment of an international tribunal to judge the former Khmer Rouge with the United Nations.
- 1998** Pol Pot dies under house arrest. The remaining Khmer Rouge, among them, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, defect to the government at the end of the year.
- 1999** Ta Mok and Kaing Guek Eav called Duch are arrested. The Khmer Rouge struggle comes to an end. Ta Mok’s forces defect to the government.
- 2004** The National Assembly approves the establishment of a hybrid tribunal, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

- 2006** Former Southwest zone's secretary, Chhit Choeun called Ta Mok dies due to health reasons.
- 2007** Some former top Khmer Rouge leaders are arrested and charged with crimes against humanity, genocide, homicide and grave breaches of Geneva Conventions of 1949: Nuon Chea (former Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea), Khieu Samphan (former Head of State), Ieng Thirith (former Minister of Social Affairs), and Ieng Sary (former Minister of Foreign Affairs).
- 2009** Start of case 001: Duch, former chief of the Khmer Rouge detention center S-21, goes on trial and apologizes publicly for his past crimes.
- 2010** Duch is convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to 35 years in prison, he appeals.
- 2013** Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith die due to health reasons.

## Glossary

- Angkar:** Refers to inner circles of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. Officially, it was not to be used to refer to an individual, although the general population did so.
- Chhlop:** Local militia (spies) in the collectives in charges of surveillance of the civilian population.
- CIA:** Central Intelligence Agency is an independent US Government agency responsible for providing national security intelligence.
- Collective:** “People’s commune” or “State farms” where people lived collectively and performed agricultural works.
- Cook:** A person who worked in the kitchen. The cook was trusted by the Khmer Rouge cadres, but was under surveillance.
- Deliveryman:** A person who oversaw bringing prisoners at the entrance to the prisons, from the prisons to interrogation rooms and to killing sites, and delivered materials to collectives.
- Democratic Kampuchea:** Official name of communist state between 1975 and 1979.
- Interrogator:** A person who made notes of prisoners’ background, interrogated and tortured prisoners to search for connections to the enemy.
- Khmer Rouge:** A French word for Khmer Kraham or “Red Khmer” first used by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the mid-1960s to refer to the Khmer Communists and members of other Khmer left-wing organizations. The term is understood differently depending on the time period and historical view. The Documentation Center of Cambodia refers to the Khmer Rouge as those who worked to form and/or lead Democratic Kampuchea.

- KGB:** National security agency of the Soviet Union from 1954 until 1991, and its premier internal security, intelligence, and secret police organization during that time.
- Liberated Region:** Refers to Cambodian territory in the provinces occupied by the Khmer Rouge before 17 April, 1975.
- Maquis:** Word used during the Civil War after King Sihanouk was overthrown by Lon Nol. He called for people to go to Maquis Jungle in order to fight against Lon Nol.
- Messenger:** A person who delivered messages for Khmer Rouge cadres.
- Militia:** A military force in local levels, in charge of maintaining security in villages, communes, collectives, or security centers.
- Mobile Unit:** Adult and youth units of most healthy and fit workers set up by the regime to fulfill the need for mobile rural labor.
- Moral Offence or Sexual Offence:** Accusation of people who had sexual contact outside of a married relationship during the Khmer Rouge regime.
- New People:** Anyone who was from an urban area or was educated or part of “bourgeois” class was forced to migrate to the countryside and were called New People, or 17 April people.
- Old/base People:** People who had lived in rural areas controlled by CPK prior to April 17, 1975.
- Re-education camp:** Place where people were detained and assigned to work in order to investigate people before being released, sent to security office, or killed.
- Sangkum Reastr Niyum:** A working –class socialist political party founded by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in 1955, which he continued to lead until the coup on 18 March, 1970.
- Security Guard:** A person who was in charge of maintaining order in security centers, patrolling prisoners in buildings, and escorting prisoners to and from the outside work.

**Special Zone:** Zone located in the west of Phnom Penh in Kandal and Kampong Speu Province between National Road No.4 and No.5.

**Southwest Zone:** Consisted of Takeo and Kampot Provinces, two districts of Kampong Speu (Kong Pisey and Samrong Tong), and five districts of Kandal (Kandal Stung, Sa-ang, Koh Thom, Kean Svay and Leuk Dek). Southwest Zone (Zone 405) was controlled by Ta Mok.<sup>34</sup>

**Struggle:** Directly translated from Khmer word of Tasou which meant to fight during the Khmer Rouge.

**Ta Mok:** Secretary of the Southwest Zone and was appointed second deputy secretary of CPK in November, 1978 and a senior figure in the leadership of the Khmer Rouge. He was also known as “Brother Number Five”.

### **Song of Democratic Kampuchea 17<sup>th</sup> April Great Victory**

The bright red blood was spilled over the towns and over the plains of Kampuchea, our motherland, the blood of our good workers and farmers and of our revolutionary combatants, of both men and women. Their blood produced a great anger and the courage to contend with heroism. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, under the revolutionary banner, their blood freed us from a state of slavery.

Hurrah for the glorious 17<sup>th</sup> of April! That wonderful victory had greater significance than the Angkor period! We are uniting to construct a Kampuchea with a new and better society, democratic, egalitarian and just. We follow the road to a firmly-based Independence. We absolutely guarantee to defend our motherland, our fine territory, our magnificent revolution!

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<sup>34</sup> Dy Khamboly, 2011, A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), p.29

Hurrah for the new Kampuchea, a splendid, democratic land of plenty!  
We guarantee to raise aloft and wave the red banner of the revolution.  
We shall make our motherland prosperous beyond all others,  
magnificent, wonderful!<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Dy Khamboly, 2011, A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979, p.24, Phnom Penh

## Brief Backgrounds of Victim Survivors



**Mr. Keo Chandara:** He participated in the revolution in the name of medical worker in 1970 and he claimed that he used to be a medical student in Sangkom Reastr Niyum. He added that he was detained and sent to Kraing Ta Chan security center in 1975. However,

29 days later, Ta Mok took him out of the prison. He wondered why he was arrested and he was also tortured in Kraing Ta Chan.



**Mr. Pich Chim:** He participated in the revolution in 1975 in district 105 and he was a former deputy provincial chief in Takeo province. He was in charge of managing security in Kraing Ta Chan. He provided testimony on distinguishing between good and

bad people and gave testimonies about executions. He was an investigator who searched for well -educated people while he was working in Kraing Ta Chan.



**Mr. Soy Sen:** He is a member of the civil party. He said that he was detained and sent to Kraing Ta Chan in 1974. He was assigned to tend cattle, and do agricultural work, etc. Besides these tasks he was assigned to dig graves and bury bodies.



**Mrs. Om Vannak:** She said that she lived in Takeo province during 1975, but she was evacuated a few times in 1976 and she was forced to work in a child unit. In the unit, she was overworked and was malnourished.

**Mrs. Tanai:** She is 57 years old. She said that before 1975, she got married and her husband was a medical worker during the Khmer Rouge. She was evacuated from Ang Snuol (Kandal province) to Tram Kak (Takeo province). After that her husband was killed in Kraing Ta Chan.

## Quotes of youth volunteers

**Mr. Voeun Vandet:** I really enjoyed participating in doing the research for this project and felt shocked while I was listening to victims' stories, including their hardships during the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, I also gained knowledge and experience about doing research, interview, writing skills, facilitation skills, the way to live and communicate with communities, etc.

**Ms. Tann Nisai:** For me, working on this project has personally made me develop because my research abilities and gain new skills, including interviewing, writing skills, and adaptation in team work and with communities. Though the research, I understand more about the Khmer Rouge regime, especially Kraing Ta Chan killing site. I hope that in the future there will be this kind of research project conducted in other crime sites in Cambodia.

**Ms. Yun Vatey:** After the researching about Kraing Ta Chan in the Khmer Rouge, I gained new experiences because I gained new knowledge and experiences with people during interviews. It is unforgettable because it was real practice. I hope that I will be able to join this kind of project next time.

**Mr. Keav Mengkorng:** I think that creating documentation about the stories in Kraing Ta Chan indicates the efforts and contribution of the physiological healing of survivors in the Khmer Rouge, and it educates postwar generations and has them take learn about the experiences, and prevents the reoccurrence of this dark regime.

**Mr. Koem Nith:** I was really happy in participating in this history research documentation. Sharing true stories of victim survivors in Kraing Ta Chan during the Khmer Rouge will become essential document for next generations. If you are not a part of the solution, you will become a part of the problem.

**Ms. Khun Raty:** It is for the best that we document this history for Cambodia's next generations. If we do not document this, those stories will be lost through time. I hope that young generations know this story and participate to prevent this cruel regime from reoccurring in Cambodia.

## **Comments**

This book shall initiate further discussion about some events that happened in Kraing Ta Chan during the Khmer Rouge regime since there is some information that remains in disagreement between victim survivors who were detained there. If you have any thoughts or comments in response to the information in this book, please send it to our address below. We are very grateful for your contribution. Please also indicate if we are allowed to quote your statements in the future publications or if you want to stay anonymous.

## **Peace Institute of Cambodia**

No 3, Street 578, Sangkat Boeung kak 2,  
Khan Toul Kork, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia  
Email: [peaceinstitutecambodia@gmail.com](mailto:peaceinstitutecambodia@gmail.com)  
Tel: (+855) 23 881 346

## **Production Team**

### **Texts and Photos:**

**Mr. Voeun Vandet**

**Mr. Keav Mengkorng**

**Mr. Phal Sokunrana**

**Mr. Koem Nith**

**Mr. Koem Vanda**

**Ms. Tann Nisai**

**Ms. Yun Vatey**

**Mr. Roeung Channa**

**Mr. Sar Meyyum**

**Mr. Khun Raty**

**Ms. Soeurng Vicharika**

### **Editing:**

**Mr. Voeun Vandet**

**Ms. Cheng Marady**

### **Book's Cover Design:**

**Mr. Voeun Vandet**

**Mr. Koem Vanda**

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