
http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/23670

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this thesis, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. AUTHOR (year of submission) "Full thesis title", name of the School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.
The Politics of Killing:
A comparative study of Political
Genocide in Democratic
Kampuchea.

Andrew Richard Johnston
(204908)

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD. 2015.
Supervised by Dr. Stephen Heder and
Dr. Stephen Hopgood.
Department of Politics
SOAS, University of London.
Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

I have read and understood regulation 17.9 of the Regulations for students of the SOAS, University of London concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

Signed: ____________________________ Date: _________________
Abstract

This thesis focuses on the political violence that occurred between 1975 and 1979 in Cambodia under the auspices of Pol Pot and the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Attention will also be paid to the international criminal tribunal that is currently taking place in Cambodia, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

I intend to illustrate which members of society tend to be violent, and also the exceptions. I will also show which possible motives potentially underlie the desire(s) and rationale to commit acts of violence and also the various ways in which senior leaders attempt to control their subordinates against a backdrop of widespread violence. Finally, I will show how the legal framework that currently addresses such issues can be rethought in light of the empirical data that I use. My own data derives from 16 months of fieldwork in Cambodia, over 100 interviews (with both victims and perpetrators), and primary observations from 11 Cambodian prison sites. I have chosen to use varying prison sites to show the extent to which geography and hierarchy can alter the nature of the superior-subordinate command and order directives.

In order to truly understand how political violence of this nature unfolds, we need to look beyond what the courtrooms are telling us, and refocus our attention at all levels where violence takes place. As I shall show, a significant amount of violence is ad hoc and indiscriminate, often taking place without the knowledge (or permission) of the most-senior authorities. It is therefore not a fair reflection of reality to absolve lower-level actors of the responsibility they bear for killing by disproportionately piling the actions of the many upon the shoulders of the few. Ultimately I wish to show that whilst senior leaders are the most responsible, they are not entirely responsible.
**Acknowledgments**

The completion of this project required the help, support, encouragement, experience and knowledge of many. I hope to be able to list the names of all the people who helped me on my journey.

Firstly, I would like to thank the people of Cambodia, and more specifically those people who were kind enough to give me their time to conduct interviews and conversations. I can only begin to imagine how difficult it must be to recall such harrowing memories, and for your co-operation I am truly grateful. I hope to do your memories and stories the justice they deserve. I would especially like to thank Mr. Soy Sen, Mr. Him Huy, Mr. Ki Soun, Mr. Tuoch Vannak and Mrs. Seng Kunthea for your time, support, local expertise and kindness.

Secondly, I would like to thank Mr. Youk Chhang and his staff at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam). Without the access to the archives, the historical knowledge, networks and serenity of the office, this project would have been exponentially more difficult. On a personal level, I would like to thank Mr. Chhang for supporting me with my work from the first day that I stepped foot into the archives. I would also like to thank you for allocating me fantastic members of staff. Specifically, I would like to thank Mr. Peou Dara Vanthan, Dr. Kok-Thay Eng, Ms. Savina Sirik, Dr. Kamboly Dy, Mr. Terith Chy, Mr. Dany Long, Ms. Sovannndany Kim and Ms. Farina So. You have all been so kind to me and helped me immensely with my work.
Thirdly, I would like to thank the academics at SOAS who have provided me with continual support. I would especially like to thank Dr. Phil Clark, Dr. Matt Nelson, Professor Laleh Khalili, Professor Anne Booth and Dr. Justin Watkins. I would also like to thank the other academics who have helped me with my ideas, encouraged me and offered me valuable knowledge and experience. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Craig Etcheson, Mr. Paul Usherwood, Mrs. Barbara Usherwood, Professor David Chandler and Professor Henri Locard.

Fourthly, I would like to thank my close friends who helped to keep me sane throughout this entire experience. Specifically I would like to thank Mr. Neil Loughlin, Mr. Trevor Gilmore, Mr. Thomas Madden, Mr. William Tantam, Mr. Seth McCurry, Mr. Akira Sekino, Mrs. Kazumi Sekino, Mr. Takafumi Sekino, Miss. Yuka Sekino, Dr. Aidan Fullbrook, Dr. Kyle Mason, Ms. Yolanda Adamson, Ms. Ruth Knox, Mr. George Wright, Miss Selinta Clarke, Mr. Rutherford Hubbard, Ms. Gabrielle Hubler, Mr. Patrice Chauvel, Mr. Jacob Smyth, Mr. Hudson McFann, Mr. John Pike, Mr. Jonathan Julius Livingstone, Colonel Isaac Stoll, Mr. Alex Towniey, Mr. Nick Osborne, Mr. Gareth Lee, Mr. Chris Hampton, Miss Sam Winkworth, Mr. Alex Plank and Mr. Christopher Dearing.

And finally, my biggest thanks must go to the following five people, for without whom, the following pages would surely be blank. Firstly, I would like to thank my parents, Mr. Francis William Johnston and Mrs. Marjorie Joan Johnston. Without your love, support and constant encouragement I would have fallen at the first hurdle, I am truly grateful. Secondly, I must thank my initial primary supervisor and mentor, Dr. Stephen Heder. Your vast knowledge and support of
my project has provided me with the motivation that this journey certainly required. I am truly grateful. Thirdly I would like to thank my second primary supervisor, Dr. Stephen Hopgood. You have been an incredible guide through the most difficult phase of this process and have undoubtedly had an enormous influence over the final product. I would like to especially thank you for supervising this project so late on in the process and the help you have given me in completing it. I am truly grateful. Finally, I must thank my close friend and colleague Mr. Dalin Lorn. Without you, this project would have been impossible. You have been with me throughout every step of the fieldwork experience and it has been a real pleasure to work with you. I am truly grateful. It is to you, my brother, whom I wish to dedicate this thesis.
This doctoral thesis is dedicated to

Mr. Dalin Lorn.

""No, no, make no mistake, his death has indeed been
attributed to murder’

‘Who made the attribution?’

‘The king himself.’

‘The king! I thought him enough of a philosopher to realise that
there is no such thing as murder in politics. You know as well as I do,
my dear boy, that in politics there are no people, only ideas; no
feelings, only interests. In politics, you don’t kill a man, you remove
an obstacle, that’s all’”.1

---

Contents

1. Preface
   - Methodology Page 16.
   - Access to data Page 29.

2. Chapter 1 - Introduction and Literature review
   - Elements of the argument Page 37.

3. Chapter 2 - Superior control

4. Chapter 3 - Communist Party of Kampuchea staff (CPK), Command structures and History
   - The CPK command structure Page 104.
   - The CPK Prison structure Page 110.
   - The CPK communication structure Page 119.

5. Chapter 4 - Primary node; The Party Centre and S-21
   - S-21 staff Page 150.
   - Conclusion Page 157.

6. Chapter 5 - Secondary node; The Southwest zone, Ta Mok and Phnom Sanlong
   - The Southwest zone Page 158.
   - Ta Mok Page 179.
   - Southwest security centre system Page 184.
   - Southwest zonal level detention centre; Phnom Sanlong Page 189.
7. Chapter 6 - Tertiary node; The Southwest regions/sectors, Chrey O’Phnue,

Kampot and Phnom La-Ang  Page 208.

- The Southwest regions/sectors  Page 211.
- Regional/sector security centres  Page 214.
- Region 33 and region 35’s security centres  Page 223.
- Chrey O’Phnue  Page 223.
- Kampot  Page 227.
- Phnom La-Ang  Page 238.
- Conclusion  Page 244.

8. Chapter 7 - Quaternary node; The Southwest districts, Kraing Ta Chan,

Chhouk, Dang Tung, Kampong Trach, Wat Kampong Tralach  Page 248.

- Southwest districts  Page 254.
- District reeducation centres  Page 255.
- Southwest district reeducation centres  Page 258.
- Tram Kak (Kraing Ta Chan)  Page 266.
- Chhouk  Page 280.
- Dang Tung  Page 287.
- Kampong Trach  Page 292.
- Wat Kampong Tralach  Page 298.
- Conclusion  Page 303.

9. Chapter 8 - Quinary node; The Southwest sub-districts, Munty Da Mon

- Southwest sub-district security centres  Page 306.
- Munty Da Mon  Page 313.
- Conclusion

10. **Chapter 9 - Democratic Kampuchea's Oskar Schindler**

11. **Chapter 10 - Conclusion and a contemporary view of international justice**

**Diagrams**

1. Khmer Rouge security hierarchy
2. The zone structure of Democratic Kampuchea.
3. The region structure of the Southwest zone.
4. The district structure of region 13, Southwest zone.
5. The hierarchical structure of the prisons relevant to this thesis.

**Maps**

1. District zones of Democratic Kampuchea, 1975-1979
2. The geographical locations of the prisons relevant to this thesis.
3. The location of S-21.
5. Zonal structuring of Democratic Kampuchea.
7. Location of the Southwest zone.
8. Location of Phnom Sanlong.
10. Locations of the regional security centres.
11. Location of Southwest district reeducation centres.  Page 266.

12. Location of Munty Da Mon.  Page 317.

Tables


Bibliography

Page 380.
Preface

I will argue that, contrary to the popular narrative, in times of genocide, mass murder and extensive political violence, it is not solely the party heads, senior leaders and those who occupy the highest echelons of authority that bear all of the responsibility for the violence and killing that is perpetrated. I wish to argue that they are the most responsible, given that they usually create the environments whereby violence can occur, but that they are not wholly responsible. In using my own empirical data, ultimately this PhD will show that the Cambodian genocide needs to be observed and reassessed at all levels of society if we are to try and better understand why so many deaths occurred in such a short period of time.

In arguing this, I am naturally calling for greater attention to be paid to those actors and agents who go above and beyond their orders and commit excesses of violence. ‘Excesses’ refers to the acts committed that go beyond the bare minimum required for actors to ensure self-preservation (i.e. any excesses that transcend the notion of duress, coercion and the mantra of ‘kill or be killed’). Throughout this thesis, I shall demonstrate with empirical data and secondary source material that there were occasions in Cambodia, during the 1970s, where certain lower-level actors engaged and exacted violence of their own volition.

I believe that this piece of work is a contribution to the ‘bottom up’ debate that challenges the narrative that all violence committed in genocidal Cambodia, and other periods of widespread political violence, was mediated from a centralized body, and was adhered to by all operatives of violence. I will demonstrate that
there were times when orders were ignored and/or digressed from by certain individuals who were not just blindly following orders but were in fact pursuing their own personal motivations by using violence.

Specifically regarding the violence that occurred in Cambodia in the 1970s, this debate is at odds with certain institutions that both directly and indirectly portray the violence as being almost entirely centrally directed, with all lower level actors being coerced operatives who had no choice but to follow very strict orders. Whilst this is certainly true for many, it is not true for all. One such institution is the Extraordinary Court in the Chambers of Cambodia, ECCC. As an institution, the ECCC is following a judicial mandate that is tasked with cross-examining those ‘most responsible’ for the crimes committed in Cambodia by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), or more commonly, the ‘Khmer Rouge’.² And whilst this tribunal has ‘successfully’ convicted three men of crimes against humanity, it suffers, to a degree, from ‘knowledge production’.³

In apportioning almost its entire prosecutorial focus on a small clique of senior leaders, the ECCC follows a judicial protocol that paints a picture of the political violence that occurred in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979 that does not entirely reflect reality. A failure to develop the nuances of lower-level perpetrator activity beyond the notion of simply following orders fails to capture the fact that a significant degree of lower-level actors operated with varying

² Lit. ‘Red Khmers’. The name given to those followers of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK).
³ The process of extrapolating certain events and presenting them as fact or truth without fully presenting the context from which they were extrapolated.
degrees of agency and freedom. Therefore, the court will at best only bring to light and place emphasis upon a certain aspect of the events that unfolded during the Khmer Rouge period, and by whom and for what reasons. Specifically regarding this issue, Eve Zucker writes, ‘the International tribunal (ECCC) process exposes the events considered to be immoral and creates an official “memory”. This “memory” is then inscribed into history and transmitted to future generations, as in recently published textbooks now being distributed to classrooms throughout Cambodia’. Through the presentation of the empirical data and secondary source material that I have gathered, I will demonstrate that there is certainly more than one side to the Khmer Rouge story.

This study is also a reaction to the lack of literature surrounding lower-level behaviour in violent environments. Much literature, particularly the works on Cambodia, both contemporary and classical, seems to largely embrace the notion that violence is centrally-directed and enactors are simply following orders.

---

4 The prosecution has convicted three ‘most senior’ individuals through a judicial process of joint criminal enterprise (JCE); their convictions are a conclusion of all events that occurred during their tenure as senior leaders. Therefore, they are legally responsible for every crime that was committed under the auspices of the CPK. As a result, the prosecution has focused solely on the senior leaders’ ‘culpability’, but their convictions have partially arisen on the basis that many lower-level agents themselves committed crimes (as per JCE). The ECCC does not then expand or analyse the issue of addressing the varying levels of which agency or personal decision-making took place. This leaves the impression that there were no lower-level decisions made and that all lower-level crimes were pursuant with the will of the CPK and the senior leaders who have been convicted. As I shall demonstrate, this is simply not the case. The ECCC has not analysed the extent to which agency and choice making (at lower levels) was a feature of the Khmer Rouge story.


6 The literature on Cambodia is lacking to the extent that it could almost be presented as a counter case of lower-level agency, i.e. that Cambodia was a true
Such an overwhelmingly supported theory, whilst naturally very valid to the debate, skews our understanding of what is actually unraveling when periods of political violence ensue.\(^7\) It masks the intricacies of individual behaviour and the nuances of reality. Furthermore, events of this nature are not temporally static; they are dynamic and the dynamism of control, order and authority is bound to change enormously over any given period of time. What may be the case at the inception of political violence is very unlikely to be the case when it eventually burns out.

Moving to a term that has been used already in this paper, I wish to address the use of the term ‘genocide’. According to many, there is dispute over whether the Khmer Rouge experience was genocidal or not. Therefore, one caveat is offered; the Khmer Rouge experience will be referred to as ‘Political Genocide’. Coined in 1944 by Rafael Lemkin, the term ‘genocide’ is defined as ‘the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, caste, religious, or national group’.\(^8\) Objectively speaking, there were certainly instances of genocide during the Khmer Rouge-era. The Cham Muslims were

---

7 A point argued also by political scientist Stathis Kalyvas, ‘incomplete or biased information on recent war taints our interpretation (of the violence)’. Stathis Kalyvas. 2001. “New” and “Old” civil wars. A valid distinction? World Politics: 54. Page 100.

actively annihilated because of their religious beliefs. The Vietnamese and Thai people were also executed on the grounds of their ethnicity. But what the term ‘genocide’ fails to capture, is the active destruction of individuals based on their class or political associations. Urbanites were actively executed on the sole grounds that they were from the towns and cities. Members of the previous regime and Cambodians conceived of being from ‘noble stock’ were also actively removed from society.

Until now, to get around this problem, new definitions have been coined, for example ‘democide’ and ‘politicide’. However, the weight of these terms, especially in international law, is largely lost when compared with the term ‘genocide’. The original term is archaic and should be challenged in this day and age. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died because of the class group that they were considered to be from.

Methodology:

This thesis is the product of a variety of methodological approaches. Initially a year was taken to study the relevant literature that covers the politically violent history of Cambodia, Germany, Soviet Union, China and Rwanda. Additionally, literature was read on genocide theory, comparative studies, centre-periphery

---

9 According to Kampot museum co-ordinator and Professor of Linguistics at Phnom Penh University, Jean-Michel Filippi, ‘the Khmer Rouge killed about 125,000 Chams, which amounts to half of the Cambodian Cham population. Most scholars agree on these facts...(if) the Chams were targeted as a religious or ethnic group to create an ethnic uniformity (then), in such a case, Democratic Kampuchea (DK) could be accused of having implemented genocide’. Jean-Michel Filippi. 27th March 2012. *The Long Tragedy of Cham History*. Available from https://kampotmuseum.wordpress.com/category/english/ accessed on 1st March, 2015.
studies, principal-agent theory, war studies, complicity studies, paradigms of violence, cultural models of violence and political philosophy.

Cambodia was the site of empirical data collection. This decision was arrived at for a variety of reasons. An episode of widespread political violence and genocide recent enough was needed in order for there to be ample living subjects who had either first or second hand experience of such atrocities in order for sufficient interviews to be conducted. The Democratic Kampuchean experience of genocide ended in 1979, so it was anticipated that the average age of most living subjects would be between fifty and sixty years of age. Furthermore, Cambodia was an excellent test case for gathering empirical data as so many of the survivors remain there, and the vast majority of the living perpetrators have not been imprisoned. In addition to the live subjects whom I wished to meet, Cambodia has retained the majority of the paper archives that have been recovered from the regime, in a number of archive offices, most of which are situated in Phnom Penh.

Having studied the literature of the topic in depth, it was also very apparent to me that the written works on the Khmer Rouge experience were not only sparse in number but also, for the most part, unsatisfactory. There is currently very little focus on lower-level perpetration for Cambodia, as the dominant narrative of higher-level responsibility persists in this sphere. Given the lack of literature, arguments that skew reality and purport cultural models of violence have been

10 1975-1979 CPK-controlled Cambodia (DK).
allowed to circulate largely unchallenged; some of these works will be dissected in the following literature review.

I spent a period of 16 months in Cambodia, in which time I conducted 86 formal interviews with Cambodian citizens, and a further 28 'informal' interviews. Interview subjects consisted of both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' (though this is not to suggest that these terms are mutually exclusive). A further six interviews were conducted with French, American and German citizens (both in reference to the Cambodia-specific experience and also genocide more broadly). In order to conduct these interviews, I travelled extensively around Cambodia, conducting interviews in approximately 25 locations. Individuals of particular importance to this study were interviewed several times over a period of months.

The interviews of Cambodian nationals were conducted in the Khmer language. A translator was required in order to help with language issues (although I do have a grounding in the Khmer language). This naturally brought some challenges with it, as the nuance of language is naturally very important. But the translations themselves were live (i.e., simultaneous), so both the translator and I could address any misunderstandings immediately before progressing through the rest of the interview(s). All of the interviews were also recorded, so translation issues could be rectified post-interview if required.

Interviews were conducted with various members of the ECCC tribunal, both prosecution and defense (all of which were conducted in English). Similarly,
Khmer Rouge historians and political scientists alike were also interviewed when possible (usually pre or post their own testimonials at the tribunal). Those worthy of particular mention are Dr. Stephen Heder, Professor David Chandler, Dr. Craig Etcheson, Mr. Youk Chhang, Professor Henri Locard, Dr. Michael Vickery, Mr. Michael Karnavas, Maitre Anta Guisse, Monsieur Patrice Chanuel and Father Francois Ponchaud.

In addition to the interviewing process, extensive secondary data was collected, mainly from DC-Cam. Data of this nature included archives, newspaper articles and other such publications. In total, approximately 500 separate archive entries and 125 newspaper articles were analysed. Furthermore, every transcript and legal document from case files 001 and 002 from the ECCC has been read (the sum total of about 450 legal documents and tribunal hearing transcripts/minutes).

In honing my research more specifically, I decided that Khmer Rouge-era prisons (and their sphere of influence) would act as the nuclei to test the accuracy of my argument. A large feature of my argument is the importance that geography and hierarchy from the primary centre plays when dealing with issues of decision-making. Therefore, prisons of varying distances from the ‘centre’ were used. In total, 11 prison sites were studied extensively.

The prisons that have been selected, with the exception of the Phnom Penh-based prison, are all located in the area of Cambodia that was known as the

---

11 Documentation Centre of Cambodia.
'Southwest Zone' during the Khmer Rouge-era. This particular area was chosen because, regarding this project, it possesses the most interesting facets of Khmer Rouge history. The Southwest zone inhabitants were generally considered by many to be the most zealous and loyal servants of all Cambodians.

Furthermore, the zone secretary, Ta Mok, was an individual who benefitted from a highly autonomous relationship from the centre. This relationship, and that of Ta Mok with his own troops and Southwest zone staff, is an excellent demonstration of how the top-down narrative of centralised dominance should be reassessed. For these reasons, the Southwest zone seemed an obvious choice. Additionally, from a practical point of view, because of this autonomous relationship, fewer cadres than average were themselves purged during the period of the regime resulting in a higher than average rate of living subjects.

The area of interest on the map below is as follows; (The most southerly block on the Vietnamese border that is denoted by an 'SW' is the Khmer Rouge-era Southwest zone. Phnom Penh can be seen in the enveloped region '15'. This project was researched over a very widespread area of the Southwest zone).  

The decision to choose the Southwest Zone will be discussed at greater length throughout this thesis.

Limitations:

One limitation of any project that is primarily conducted in another language is translation. Linguistic experts have translated huge amounts of archived documents at DC-Cam, and my own work/interviews were translated by an English/Khmer language expert, but the possibility for mistranslations to occur remains. I have checked over my interviews several times in order to ensure that mistranslations were kept to a minimal level.

Moving to a slightly more complicated limitation, when people are interviewed, and especially interviewed on topics as complex and difficult as political violence, there is always the possibility for misinformation to be relayed and
recorded. The offering of misinformation may be the intentional or unintentional wish of the interviewee. For this particular thesis, the main body of questioning related to events that occurred 35 years ago, so naturally the recollection of historical events can make an already complex issue even more complex. Furthermore, most of the subjects are now relatively elderly, and a series of domestic and international institutions have gone someway to create a fixed truth and national memory. Additionally, specifically for perpetrators, there are certain motivations that some may have in order to portray themselves in a particular way, especially in an environment of contemporary court proceedings that still focuses on the events that they themselves may have been directly or indirectly involved in.

This issue has been pertinent to the study of Khmer Rouge-era Cambodia since the early 1980s. Khmer Rouge historian, Michael Vickery, has documented extensively what he refers to as the 'Standard Total View' (STV). Ever since reporters, researchers, historians etc. have been studying the events that occurred during the Democratic Kampuchean era, there have been certain narratives that have dominated the general theme and memory of the events in question. The general narrative is in keeping with the top-down, centralised terror paradigm which claims that Pol Pot\(^\text{13}\) and a small clique unleashed two main waves of terror between 1975-1979; initially against the Lon Nol\(^\text{14}\) associates and the *ancien régime*, and then secondly upon internal enemies. Those who partook in the violence, apart from those at the very top, were merely

\(^{13}\) Party Secretary of the CPK.
\(^{14}\) President of the Khmer Republic who was ousted from government by the Khmer Rouge forces in 1975.
following orders. Vickery's major objection to this STV is its static, all-encompassing nature that there is one narrative, and one narrative only. He writes, 'the basic STV holds that the policies outlined (of basic human rights removal) were invariant as to time or place; the scenario was true everywhere, all the time'.\(^{15}\)

Whilst there is undoubtedly a degree of truth in the STV, one standardized view of a set of events that are extremely complex is naturally problematic. One explanation as to why the STV became so dominant in post Democratic Kampuchean society was the prevalence of news stories and interviews that were conducted on the Cambodian-Thai border in refugee camps. Many of these refugees were from the old 'higher-classes' (it would have required a certain degree of social mobility for many just to have made it to these camps) so their stories and histories would have come from similar viewpoints. The interviews highlighted that the refugees predominantly experienced a class-based phenomena in which the evacuated urban people were overwhelmingly targeted by the agricultural proletariat. For these people, this was the Khmer Rouge experience; ignorant, poor peasants having their revenge for perceived economic and social inequality. According to Stephen Heder, 'none of them had even heard of Pol Pot at that time'.\(^{16}\) On the face of things, therefore, they were providing evidence for a bottom-up, lower-level violence approach. However, the presentation and interpretation of this data by the media, and more importantly,

---


\(^{16}\) Heder himself conducted hundreds of interviews in the post-conflict refugee camps. Author’s interview with Heder, 30\(^{th}\) December 2014. London.
by the PRK,\textsuperscript{17} meant that their stories and accounts were used to fuel the top-
down narrative, i.e. that these angry peasants were simply following orders from
a totalitarian state and that it was the CPK who were orchestrating all of the
exacted violence.

Furthermore, historian Roel Burgler notes that the rush to publish and report
their stories would have introduced a lackadaisical element to the degree of
'truth' being written about. Given this rapidity, he writes 'quite a number of the
"facts" in these atrocity stories about what was happening in Democratic
Kampuchea turned out to be false or distorted'.\textsuperscript{18} Burgler goes on to clarify that
many of the 'facts' came from a limited spectrum of resources which ultimately
perpetuates the myth that the Khmer Rouge story was less multi-faceted than it
in fact was/is, stating 'rarely were poor peasants asked about their experiences
under Pol Pot'.\textsuperscript{19} The lack of interviews from a wider social selection would
Certainly allow the STV to permeate our understanding of events unchallenged.

In addition, Burgler alludes to the fact that the STV of victims was partly a result
of the fact that immediate post-Democratic Kampuchean interviews were not of
a satisfactory standard when compared with those taken at a later stage, noting
'rarely were in depth interviews done and this information checked and
analysed. Where interviewers took the time...a marked difference between an

\textsuperscript{17} People's Republic of Kampuchea. The post Khmer Rouge salvation front tasked
with rebuilding the nation.

\textsuperscript{18} Roel. A. Burgler. 1990. \textit{The eyes of the pineapple: Revolutionary intellectuals and
terror in Democratic Kampuchea}. Saarbrucken: Nijmeegs Instituut voor

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
informant’s initial story and details that emerged later on during the interviews often became apparent, as (Michael) Vickery has clearly shown.20 One might assume that once a ‘clearer truth’ is unearthed, as extensive satisfactory interviewing usually does, then the STV might be challenged or rebalanced. However, as many institutions have agendas of their own in wishing to fuel the dominant narrative, it is left unchecked in its primitive state and fed as ‘fact’ or ‘memory’ to contemporary society. With specific regard to the reporters who worked in the refugee camps in the early 1980s, Burgler states ‘one problem in this respect is the great reluctance shown by the media to correct false or distorted information when this was brought to their attention’.21

What we observe therefore, as argued by Burgler, is a combination of rushed, incomplete and unsatisfactory interviews, which have not been revisited by certain sects of the media22 when ‘more accurate’ information has become available to them. This in turn has led to the creation of a truth that doesn’t fully represent the events that occurred throughout the entire nation during the Democratic Kampuchean era. Currently, the STV would suggest that, to some

21 Ibid.
22 French sociologist Serge Thion is particularly damning of the post-conflict media coverage of the events that occurred during the Democratic Kampuchean era and himself acknowledges that the media, at best, only focused on the events that fitted within its ideological mandate, stating ‘everything that has been said and written about Cambodia for almost four years now is an inextricable mixture of truth and lies. The press as a whole played its usual role, that of a huge ideological machine. This is clear from the very small amount of space it gave to accounts by those who had actually been there, which were less rare than one might think. A political assessment of this period should be re-undertaken...for them (the west, officials, ideological institutions etc.) inevitably, truth is always simple, and simply always on their side’. Serge Thion. 1993, Watching Cambodia: Ten paths to enter the Cambodian tangle. Bangkok: White Lotus. Page 76.
extent, events in Democratic Kampuchea were monolithic and unresponsive to changes in time. However, as I shall demonstrate, there were huge geographical variants and personality politics that influenced an entire array of different outcomes for different people. Furthermore, as I shall also demonstrate, over the period of 1975-1979, events changed considerably, that is, there was a spatial and temporal variation that the STV does not capture.

The prevalence of the STV in itself should not be problematic as it is a key contribution to the discussion of events. However, given its salience with the information production from institutions such as the ECCC and the PRK, it has become a national memory for many. Given that I wish to challenge this

---

23 My work differs from Vickery, however, as not only am I including my own data, gathered from a different source base, I am also challenging his peasant jacquerie narrative where appropriate.

24 As early as 1979, a number of Khmer Rouge survivors themselves contradicted the monolithic narrative that the media purported on the events that occurred in Democratic Kampuchea, i.e. that there was a ‘one size fits all’ model. For example, survivor Pin Yathay, who was himself a refugee on the Thai border in 1977, and already publishing his memoirs (from Paris) in 1979 acknowledged that ‘during the first three months of 1977, as life assumed a certain regularity, that I came to a better understanding of the Khmer Rouge system and ideology, I knew that the system varied with place and time’, Pin Yathay. 1987. Stay alive, my son. London: Bloomsbury. Page 168. Anthropologist on Cambodian culture, Fabienne Luco, supports this observation with her own extensive work on the Democratic Kampuchean era; she writes ‘Living conditions varied from one area to the next...The local authorities seemed to enforce the rules in a very personal fashion. People’s testimonies mention particularly harsh regions and some more flexible areas: ...I was a Khmer Rouge soldier...I used to travel a lot...I noticed there were differences from one place to the next...In some villages people ate rice, in others they ate rice soup and in others yet, they ate water lily soup. It all depended on the personality of the local chiefs (former commune chief of Nokor Thom, Siem Reap province).’ Fabienne Luco. 2002. *Between a tiger and a crocodile*. Phnom Penh: UNESCO. Page 67. Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001595/159544e.pdf, (accessed on 04/01/13).

25 Anthropologist Anne Guillon, writing in 2007, highlights that the progression at different times and different rates of institutions such as the ECCC produces a
dominance, I have also recognized the challenges that are involved in deconstructing the STV of my own interview subjects. Fortunately, the areas in which I chose to conduct the majority of my interviews were extremely remote (that is to say, they are not in close proximity to the institutions that are producing national memories and standardized truths). Furthermore, the interview subjects were comprised of both former new and old people, who themselves came from a range of classes, social backgrounds and professions.

In addition, over 80 of the interviews that I conducted were performed with individuals who had never given an interview before. Whilst those interviewees in Phnom Penh, it could be argued, are seasoned interview givers, the victims and perpetrators in the remotest areas of the countryside, remain a relatively unused resource. I am persuaded by the sincerity and honesty of the interviews

memory that is correspondingly different. Specifically focusing on the 'memory' created by international tribunals such as the ECCC, compared with Cambodian domestic judicial processes, she writes, 'the social memory and meaning of the massive destruction has evolved at different times and in different groups and does not necessarily follow the political agreements decided by international diplomacy. In this regard, the massive destruction carried out by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia from 1975-1979 is not yet a piece of past history, since the 'Khmer Rouge tribunal' (ECCC) was only set up in recent years, while other forms of social memory, such as the commemoration by the Cambodian state...have developed'. Anne Guillou. 2007. An alternative memory of the Khmer Rouge genocide: the dead of the mass graves and the land guardian spirits. South East Asia Research. Volume 20. Number 2. Page 208.

26 'New people' refers to those former dwellers of urban areas, evacuated to rural areas after the succesful capture of Phnom Penh by the CPK’s forces. Likewise, 'Old (or base) people' refers to those members of DK society who already dwelled in rural areas.
that I have chosen to include in this thesis as so many of my interviewee subjects were physically moved whilst giving their interviews.\textsuperscript{27}

My own methodological approach was to spend many hours with interviewee subjects, getting to know them and also their families. Some interviewees were incredibly open from the beginning and many told me that they had found it much easier to tell their deepest secrets to me, as I was a relative stranger and an alien in their society. Many interviewees remarked that they had not wished to burden their families with their harrowing memories but found it cathartic to finally share them with someone. When an interviewee subject broke down in tears, or stopped to gather their thoughts, I took great care to ensure that they took the time that they needed, and in every instance, I reminded and reassured them that they did not have to continue if they did not want to, but everyone persevered with stoic courage. As a researcher, I have gone to great lengths to ensure that the information that I was gathering was adding substance and merit to my chosen study whilst simultaneously allowing interviewee subjects to share with me what they considered to be the areas and issues of great importance.\textsuperscript{28}

For the interviewee subjects who had been perpetrators during the regime, it naturally took more time for them to feel at ease with speaking openly and frankly with me. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many began their interviews sticking

\textsuperscript{27} It was very common for interviewees to burst into tears during an interview, ask for a moment to gather their thoughts, and also to ask family members to leave the premises.

\textsuperscript{28} Unlike the ECCC, for example, I was not simply looking for link evidence. Rather than searching for specific answers to specific questions (in order to convict someone in a court of law), I entered each interview with no bias, and looked to develop upon each answer that I was given by each interviewee.
fairly staunchly to the STV narrative, that they just followed orders. However, after extensive discussions, most perpetrators acknowledged and recalled occasions when this simply had not been the case. It was not uncommon for these interviewees to make sure that family members were not in earshot of what they were saying.

Access to data:
The majority of data that I have used, both primary and secondary, comes from a spectrum of sources, some of which are easier for the reader to access than others. The books, journals, magazines and website source material can be located with relative ease. Regarding the extensive archival material that I have used, the reader would need to contact DC-Cam directly in order to read their documents. To locate a document, the reader should follow this procedure; go to www.d.dccam.org, and then click on 'the Documentation Centre of Cambodia'. Select ‘databases’ and then ‘list of document’. The reader then has access to the entire catalogue of DC-Cam archives. To see the original, one should contact DC-Cam directly. Likewise, for the mapping projects and gravesite studies, after selecting ‘the documentation centre of Cambodia’, select ‘projects’.

Regarding the correspondence that I have had by email with sources, I can share this information upon request, and the same applies for my own audio interviews and transcripts. The interviews that I have been fortunate to receive from other scholars must be sought with their approval and would need to be contacted directly. Regarding ECCC documents, the reader will notice that I have cited the day, date, case file and relevant speaker (if required) in the footnotes. In
the bibliography, these dates have been catalogued chronologically (both case file 001 and 002) with the relevant website hyperlink if the reader themselves wished to visit the relevant case file transcript.

Regarding the numerical data that I use, the vast majority of figures are those compiled and published by DC-Cam. Most numerical data in this thesis regards death tolls. Numerical data is inherently problematic in terms of reliability so the figures presented are academic estimates.

The range of estimated death tolls is extremely large, and currently, Cambodia lacks a universally accepted ‘iconic’ number that is associated with total deaths. At the largest extreme, Jonathan Kent estimates that ‘4 million’\(^{29}\) perished during the era of Democratic Kampuchea. Conversely, Michael Vickery estimates the figure to be ‘740,800’\(^{30}\). Between this spectrum, the following estimates are attributed to these respective sources, PRK 3.314 million\(^{31}\), Craig Etcheson 2.25 million\(^{32}\), Marek Sliwinski 1.843-1.871 million\(^{33}\), Stephen Heder 1.7 million\(^{34}\), Benjamin Kiernan 1.67 million\(^{35}\), Philip Short 1.42 million\(^{36}\), Karl Jackson 1.3


million,\textsuperscript{37} Banister and Johnson 1.05 million,\textsuperscript{38} Finnish enquiry commission 1 million,\textsuperscript{39} CIA 900,000\textsuperscript{40} and French Foreign Ministry 800,000.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, the range is clearly very wide and is indicative of the difficulties associated with numeracy of this nature. Definitions of ‘direct deaths’ associated with the regime, for example, are also hotly contested.

The figures quoted above are the derivations of grave exhumation figures, population statistics and extensive interviews with survivors. Grave exhumations surrounding prison sites, it could be argued, infer that the cadavers are the result of violence and killing, however they may well have been those of people who had died of disease or old age. As a result, the figure of total death as a result of violence has also been hotly contested by academics since the late 1970s, and this is largely because of the point made above, that ‘the main quantitative uncertainty and controversy surrounding the estimation of these (death toll) figures centres on the number of executions perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge, as opposed to ‘excess’\textsuperscript{42} mortality’.\textsuperscript{43} In keeping with the data regarding total deaths, excessive death estimations also demonstrate a wide

\textsuperscript{42} Deaths that have arisen from direct violent conduct.
range when we look at the figures presented by various sources. The Finnish
enquiry commission estimates that between 6-800,000 of the total deaths were
‘excessive’. Ablin and Hood estimates a figure of 500,000, Sliwinski estimates
310,000 and Banister and Johnson estimate that 275,000 deaths were the result
of excessive force.44 To illustrate the wide range of excessive deaths, put cruelly,
the Finnish enquiry committee would suggest that between 60-80 per cent of
total deaths were ‘excessive’. Whilst, conversely, Banister and Johnson’s
estimations suggest that the figure for excessive deaths is in the region of 27.5
per cent of total deaths. This, once again, demonstrates that the statistical range
associated with the figures of deaths that occurred in Democratic Kampuchea are
very wide.

Finally, before moving to the main body of the thesis, it is important to note that I
collected the entirety of my empirical source material before the conclusion of
the ECCC’s case file 002 which ultimately saw Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan45
convicted and served with life imprisonment for crimes against humanity. This is
particularly important when one considers that now former perpetrators can
state that, to a degree, their potential crimes are absolved as their superiors have
been apportioned with the lion’s share of the atrocities committed between
1975-1979. If I was to reexamine and interview again some of the perpetrators
who spoke with me, it could well be the case that they would simply attest to the
fact that the court has spoken and their verdict represents the reality of the

44 Heuveline. 1998. Page 59. Heuveline does note, regarding these figures, that
‘none of these authors, however, provides support for their claim’. Ibid.
45 The former Deputy Party Secretary of the CPK and President of the State
Presidium of Democratic Kampuchea, respectively.
events in its entirety. The ECCC is creating a memory by conducting these cases. By building a fence around certain individuals and labeling them as ‘most responsible’ or ‘most senior’, it creates a history that future generations will be taught.\textsuperscript{46} For this reason, I feel as though my work is particularly valuable as no researcher will ever be able to gather empirical data prior to the case file 002 conviction ever again.

\textsuperscript{46} Zucker argues that the ECCC has a motivation not only to ‘create truth and memory’ but also to make sure that the historical events of Democratic Kampuchea fit within a judicial model that appeases international law, stating ‘the elucidation of “the truth” and the framing of official memory aim...at settling it (historical record) within the moral code of international human rights law’. Zucker. 2013. Page 177.
Chapter 1 - Introduction and Literature review

In periods of political violence, environments are created where the laws of ‘ordinary’ society are largely altered and transformed. One is able to commit acts of violence with a degree of impunity if the violence is justifiable or even considered to be the ‘right thing to do’ within the limitations of the new laws. Given this impunity, focus will be paid to how lower-level actors choose to use their new power, authority and the positions that grant them a greater freedom to manoeuvre. This thesis will also focus upon the relationships that are forged and broken between lower-level actors in the periphery and the authorities in the centre.

The presentation of my data supports an argument on a battlefield that is increasingly dominated by the standard total view of events that supposedly occurred in Democratic Kampuchea. Furthermore, this thesis is a reaction to the promotion of this standard total view that avalanches as it is increasingly supported by the knowledge production of certain institutions ranging from small, domestic institutions to powerful international judicial proceedings, all of which have a vested interest in advancing one side of a very complex story. I wish to offer my own empirical data to the ‘other side of the story’ and also revisit those scholars and historians whose arguments are being visited less and less frequently by the contemporary analysis of these events.

---

47 ‘Ordinary’ society in this context does not refer to any specific society, it simply refers to a society within which judicial law and order has been fixed, and only legitimate violence is tolerated. If a member of that society were to break those laws then they would be legally reprimanded. Conversely, a violent society is a society that may treat illegitimate violence with relative impunity.

48 Namely the ECCC and the CPP (Cambodian People’s Party; contemporary government).
A failure to look at both the bottom as well as the top provides nothing but a straw man argument, as the conclusions that one would draw if attention were only focused at the top, or centre, creates a fallacy. As I shall demonstrate, whilst some lower-level actors did follow their orders strictly, a significant degree of lower-level actors also had their own personal motivations for wishing to commit acts of violence; motivations such as perceived revenge or score-settling due to political, social or economic imbalances, or the motivation of promotion and self-improvement (opportunism, if you will).

In light of what I wish to argue, demonstrate and ultimately show, I will further argue that lower-level 'digressions' from centralised directives are increasingly pronounced and observed with geographic and hierarchical changes. I will demonstrate that the greater distance one is from a decision-making centre, the more autonomy, freedom and agency is afforded to the enforcers of such decisions. Geographically, it is the notion that the more physical space there is between a centralised decision-making centre and a site of action, the more autonomy is likely to be available to a lower-level actor. Fundamentally,

49 Khmer Rouge historian, Stephen Heder, has himself challenged the danger of the top-down dominance narrative that pervades 'international justice', writing (with specific reference to the Nuremberg crimes against humanity and genocide tribunal) 'in short, the historical and legal model is a top-down conspiracy to commit genocide and other crimes against humanity. As a legal strategy, it targets first of all the 'big fish', who are presented to be overwhelmingly responsible for most, if not all, of these crimes committed while they were in power'. Stephen Heder. 2005. 'Reassessing the Role of Senior Leaders and Local Officials in Democratic Kampuchea Crimes: Cambodian Accountability in Comparative Perspective' in Jaya Ramji and Beth van Schaak, Bringing the Khmer Rouge to Justice: Prosecuting the Mass Violence before the Cambodian Courts. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press. Page 378.
'distance' is only an issue if it correlates to an alteration of communication or transportation of centralised orders as infrastructural requirements also alter. As we shall observe, these alterations can lead to the facilitation of agency. Distance is therefore, the proximity to or from a major communication node, whether it is a main road or a telephone.\textsuperscript{50}

Hierarchically, it is the notion that a higher-level actor has less autonomy than a lower-level actor because they must stay more closely linked by communication and deference to the centralised decision-making centre. The principle theoretical implication of this argument is, therefore, that with an increase of latitude of freedom, a lower-level actor expands their own opportunity to make their own decisions (although there are obviously exceptions).

Finally, this thesis will conclude its attention upon the events that have been observed in Cambodia post Democratic Kampuchea, looking specifically at the impact that the ECCC has had on contemporary 'ordinary society'. As I shall demonstrate, the current international ruling on the events that occurred under the Communist Party of Kampuchea has focused its attention on the top senior leaders (and with good reason) but has failed to at least demonstrate to the public that by convicting these individuals, it does not necessarily mean that the lower level actors of violence associated with personal motivations are by proxy any less guilty of committing acts that were not required. I shall present a variety of data that supports the argument that their crimes should be readdressed in

\textsuperscript{50} If my argument is to be applicable to more modern and future instances of widespread political violence, devices such as the mobile telephone or Internet naturally transcend more traditional methods of communications.
order to show society at large that it is not only those convicted by the ECCC that bear some responsibility and/or culpability for what occurred during the era of Democratic Kampuchea.51

Elements of the argument:

In order to assess the primary argument, this thesis will focus its attention upon three sub-arguments outlined in the following sections. In periods of political violence, who inflicts violence and kills?

1. Who is it in our society who is violent and kills?
2. Why do these people inflict violence and kill?
3. Between the central superior(s) and the peripheral subordinate(s), how much command and control is actually maintained?

Since the term ‘genocide’ was coined after WW2, there have been many debates about its meaning, what constitutes genocide, what common denominators are

---

51 This thesis is certainly not the first case that challenges the impact of the ECCC; Stephen Heder also recognizes that the court may in fact be sending the wrong message to Cambodian society, and the wider international community. He writes, in retaliation to the top-down theory that Khmer Rouge historian, Benjamin Kiernan, purports, 'Kiernan’s view) is charaterised by top-down domination, in which most-if not all-of the mass killing committed were the intended, premeditated results of central planning... (this approach) may shield guilty subordinates from scrutiny for their genocidal crimes... local communist party cadre may kill indiscriminately... even if they are not ordered to do so by their superiors'. Heder. 2005. Page 378-9. Heder is therefore demonstrating that the Khmer Rouge atrocities need to be analysed by more than just the dominant narrative that encapsulates current international justice if we are to truly understand the intricacies and nuances of the violence. Heder has conducted several hundreds of interviews relating to the Khmer Rouge.
prevailed in cases of genocide and what drives and sustains genocide. The academic debates have been experienced in two distinct waves.

The first waves of explanations were generally focused on deconstructing lower level social cleavages i.e. analyzing from the ‘bottom-up’ which motives of tension, frustration and anger etc. have existed in society that could possibly explain nationwide violence and genocide. Relating to this, Straus writes, ‘a mainstay of first-generation genocide scholarship is that deep social divisions, including cultures of prejudice and entrenched practices of discriminating are structural causes of genocide’. Early scholars such as Leo Kuper, Helen Fein, Israel Charny and Ervin Staub agreed that it is social divisions and fractures that underlie the reasons for genocide. This debate is essentially at the foundation of a bottom-up approach; widespread cultural grievances provide the motivations for lower level eruptions of mass violence.

Whilst this early view is valid, and as we shall discover in my own literature review and empirical data, a very important milestone in beginning to understand the required ingredients for violence on this scale, the early arguments can only take us so far if we wish to truly understand why genocide occurs and what sustains it as there are examples of deeply plural societies that live in relative harmony and almost entirely homogeneous societies that are

53 Ibid. Page 480.
extremely volatile. Additionally, Straus argues that perhaps the greatest limitation to the study of genocide is the issue of ‘conceptualisation’.\textsuperscript{55} He states that genocide is empirically ambiguous, the term’s meaning differing from scholar to scholar (curtailing the extent to which thorough comparisons can be made between case studies). Straus states, ‘no two authors...share the same definition of the term...it is unclear what the universe of genocide causes is or should be’.\textsuperscript{56}

In light of these limitations of the literature on genocide, there has been a second wave of theorists who supported a different explanation. The research conducted by Benjamin Valentino demonstrates that society at large (and its social issues) can be immaterial if decisions made by a small group of leaders are coupled with a passive society of bystanders. Valentino states, ‘society at large plays a smaller role in mass killing than is commonly assumed. Mass killing is rarely a popular enterprise in which neighbor turns against neighbor. On the contrary, the impetus for mass killing usually originates from a relatively small group of powerful political or military leaders, not from the desires of the broader society’.\textsuperscript{57} Valentino goes on to be extremely clear that, at least in his view, the former bottom-up theory is simply unsatisfactory, stating ‘these killings (of genocide) were not driven by “bottom-up” public discontent or a popular desire to blame others, but rather by powerful political and military

\textsuperscript{55} Straus. 2007. Page 478.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. Pages 478-9.
interests working from the top-down.\textsuperscript{59} His argument is, therefore, a top-down explanation of state organized violence.

In recent years, it has been this second wave of genocide studies that has dominated the arguments and explanations of why genocide occurs. My own work shall demonstrate that simply blaming the senior leaders of any regime is unsatisfactory as there are often very clear examples of widespread participation resulting from longstanding issues of lower level grievances and anger. However, I will incorporate elements of the second wave of genocide studies to illustrate that there are instances whereby anyone can commit acts of genocide, and that the state is certainly a crucial determinant in propelling widespread violence.

I will demonstrate throughout this thesis whether people during the DK era were simply following orders or not, whether there was agency or not, and if there was agency, what quasi-internalist explanations (cultural, regional, social and psychological) shed the most illuminating light in challenging the top-down STV dominant narrative.

1. Who kills/commits acts of violence?

During periods of widespread, mass-participatory violence, there are invariably many individuals who enact violence upon others. This section will focus on who these people are, and whether or not their inclusion in the cohort of violence is simply a logistical matter of selection, or whether or not they are in fact human beings who are drawn to violence. Whilst I am eager not to fall into the trap of

assuming and/or suggesting that such violence is temporally monolithic, there are broadly two clear distinctions between those who commit violence; those who are internally driven to commit acts of violence and those who are externally driven to commit acts of violence. Internally driven violence suggests that those who commit violence are either violent by nature, or at the time when violence is committed, have personal reasons for doing so; the violence comes from within. Conversely, externally driven violence refers to a violent body that coerces 'ordinary' (otherwise non-violent) people to commit acts of violence on their behalf. This is generally achieved by blind deference and order following.

The table below provides the lists of theorists and authors whom we shall assess that develop either the externally driven argument or internally driven argument (and on occasion, both simultaneously i.e. a plurality of both reasons). The opposing theorists occupying the same horizontal line has no theoretical bearing on the varying arguments that they make.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External - ‘Ordinary men’</th>
<th>Internal - ‘Self-selecting/predisposed actors of violence’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theorist</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zimbardo</em></td>
<td>Gearshift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browning</td>
<td>Brutalisation/Peer pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Expectation of violent environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breitman</td>
<td>Personal responsibility absolution/gear shift.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst this chart would present the major schools of thought as a seemingly straightforward dichotomy, the reality is naturally not so straightforward. In fact, the separation into categories is used primarily as an organizational tool to compare and contrast theories and ideas as to who and why (as the two issues are synonymous) violence is committed. Whilst internal versus external groupings are satisfactory in broad terms, it is important that we visit the subgenres of each theory. In this way, the subgenres will in fact form a spectrum of events, spanning from natural born killers to sheep-like robots who simply follow orders with blind duress. Additionally, whilst each theorist can largely be placed into either an externally or internally driven school of thought, there are naturally crossovers where one theory can be applicable to both schools. Similarly, as I shall argue, to understand the evolution of violence in these
situations generally requires the application of multiple theories at once, and this invariably calls on both internally and externally driven reasons.

The spectrum of 'internal versus external' subgenres will be presented as follows:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Most external</strong></td>
<td>Blind order following</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Coercion/duress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Compulsion to obey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Loss of personal responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Culturally engendered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Social dehumanization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Wartime brutalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Social normalization of violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Most plural</strong></td>
<td>Social grievances being a combination of social norms whilst exhibiting varying degrees of personal liberty/agency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Violent cohorts consisting of elements that are simultaneously external and internal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Personal grievances that transcend widespread social stereotypes/widespread grievances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. Most internal</strong></td>
<td>Cold-blooded natural born killer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Externally-driven

Initially, I will focus on the literature and social experiments that posit themselves in support of the externally driven violence debate. The experiments performed by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo, and analytical work carried out by Christopher Browning, would suggest that it is ‘ordinary’ members of society who are all potential operatives, capable of carrying out acts of violence under certain conditions.

In his experiments conducted at Yale University, Milgram was able to demonstrate that when ordered to, the most ‘ordinary of people’ (clerks, electricians, factory workers etc.) can put their ‘ordinary behaviour’ to one side, and become violent. The experiment itself was relatively simple; involving a ‘teacher’ and a ‘learner’, separated in two rooms. The learner set about answering standardized questions. When a wrong answer was given, the teacher was instructed to administer an electric shock ranging between ‘15 volts and 450 volts’\(^59\) as the learner was connected to an electrical node. Each time a wrong answer was given, the teacher was instructed to increase the voltage by 15. In actuality, the learner was an actor who merely simulated being shocked, but the teacher was unaware of this. The intention of the experiment was to illustrate, ‘at what point will the subject refuse to obey the experimenter?’\(^60\) In the first experiment alone, 65 per cent\(^61\) of the teachers achieved the maximum shock of

---


\(^{60}\) Ibid. Page 4.

450 volts. Milgram states that 'at 285 volts (the learner's) response can only be
described as an agonizing scream'.

According to Milgram, 'behaviour that is unthinkable in an individual who is
acting on his or her own may be executed without hesitation when carried out
under orders'. It is the process of receiving orders and our compulsion to obey
them that facilitates human beings from all walks of life to do 'unthinkable'
things, stating 'obedience is coloured by a co-operative mood'. This is mainly
due to the fact that when we receive an order we may choose to believe that we
are no longer responsible for our behavior as we become actors honouring the
will of a superior, 'the most common adjustment of thought in the obedient
subject is for him to see himself as not responsible for his own actions'.

Perhaps this is the most crucial point made by Milgram, it is not that we lose our
moral conscientiousness, rather we shift our focus from being personally
responsible to being simply a cog in a machine, 'the disappearance of a sense of
responsibility is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to
authority...it would not be true to say that he loses his moral sense. Instead, it
acquires a radically different focus. He does not respond with a moral sentiment
to the actions he performs. Rather, his moral concern now shifts to a

authors/title/behind-the-shock-machine/, accessed on 22/4/14), she stated that
having researched Milgram’s experiment for four years, she discovered that not
only did a lot of the candidates eventually refuse to participate, but also 'the
results that we've been led to believe, that 65 per cent of people obeyed until the
end (is wrong), I actually found when examining the research in more detail, that
actually the opposite was the case...he (Milgram) simplified and suppressed
results to try and explain the holocaust'.

63 Ibid. Page xi.
64 Ibid. Page xii-xiii.
65 Ibid. Page 7-8.
consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him’.  

A similar conclusion has been drawn by Philip Zimbardo, having performed the Stanford Prison experiment with ‘ordinary’ people, playing the roles of prisoners and prison guards in the context of a real prison. ‘Average’ men were divided into two groups, guards and prisoners. Guards were told to strip search and harass prisoners, which began the degradation procedure, though the guards were given no specific training how to do this; ‘the guards made up their own rules’. By the fifth day of the role-play, the ‘guards’ had fully-embodied their roles and were actively inflicting violence upon the prisoners. The guards ranged from sadists to apathetic bystanders. The experiment had to be stopped early as guards and prisoners alike began suffering from emotional breakdowns.

The Stanford experiment demonstrated that it is not that human beings become instantaneously lacking in morals, rather they see themselves as fulfilling a role, following someone else’s script. Zimbardo, during his experiment, discovered that these people quickly adopted the roles that they were tasked with, and authoritarian rule quickly commenced. Zimbardo, as a result of his work, has gone on to suggest that humans are capable of a varying degree of morality at any one time. He states that we are better off imagining that our brains function more like a set of gears rather than an on/off switch. The use of gears

---

demonstrates the transcendental dynamic nature of our behaviour, i.e. it is susceptible to change.

Whilst it is easy to gear ourselves in ‘normal society’ to acting in a moral way, it becomes very hazy when ‘normal society’ is removed and pressure is placed upon some individuals to shift gears; he writes ‘we can assume that most people, most of the time, are moral creatures. But imagine that this morality is like a gearshift that at times gets pushed into neutral. When that happens, morality is disengaged...it is then the nature of the circumstances that determines outcomes, not the driver’s skills or intentions’\(^68\). Zimbardo’s conclusions therefore reveal a dichotomous dynamic; changes of environment and individual behaviour. Whilst it is the changing environment that facilitates the opportunity for one to change gears (and may even promote/force it) it is still the individual that ultimately chooses how to behave in light of this shift. Like Milgram, Zimbardo’s experiment demonstrates that this potential exists in all of us.

Similarly, Christopher Browning’s work entitled ‘ordinary men’ assesses the degree to which ordinary people can kill. With regards to these men, Browning’s terminology of ‘ordinary’ refers to those people who are not trained militia or individuals that have a predilection for violence (as we might expect to find in times of violence). Rather his work focuses upon a lay-police battalion that becomes engendered to violence once the environment around them changes.

---

The battalion that is the focus of Browning's work was used by the Nazis, to carry out the task of massacring the Nazi unwanted, namely Jews in Eastern Europe. The battalion was both geographically and hierarchically very much a peripheral cohort but overseen by a centralised actor, a 'Major Trapp' (though he cannot be described as a true senior leader because 'he had never been taken into the SS or even given an equivalent SS rank...Trapp was clearly not considered SS material').

According to Browning, the battalion was comprised of 'less than 500 men', but through an institutionalised execution process, committed the murder of 'at least 83,000 Jews'. Throughout the process, the members of the battalion were repeatedly told (by higher authorities) that they did not have to partake in the killing if they wished not to. Of the 500 policemen, less than 15 of the men embraced the offer (mirroring the macro sense also, there is no known reprimand of any soldier or cadre for refusing to execute a Jew in the entirety of the Nazi final solution; 'never in the history of the holocaust was a German, SS man or otherwise, killed, sent to a concentration camp, jailed or punished in any serious way for refusing to kill Jews').

Explaining this seemingly strange phenomenon of 'ordinary men' killing Jews in their droves, Browning states that they merely reflected German society at large,

---

70 Ibid. Page 142.
71 Ibid.
'(they,) like the rest of German society, were immersed in deluge of racist and anti-Semitic propaganda'.\textsuperscript{73} Whilst it is true that anti-Semitism was rife throughout much of Europe during that period, this notion of racial and religious hate alone still doesn’t explain how a band of men carried out the murder of these Jews when they had the option not to. This battalion represents a Milgram and Zimbardo type of ordinary; whilst they may have disliked the Jews, their dislike of the Jews would not have been greater than anyone else’s, it is simply because they were chosen for this task that they stand out as ‘killers’. If the entirety of German society were similarly drafted into such a group, under the same circumstances, then who is to say how many more of these ‘ordinary people’ would have been the enactors of mass murder?

In order for these murders to occur, Browning argues that a process of dehumanisation had to take place, to consider the victims to be less than human. This process, according to Browning, makes it possible for ordinary men to become hardened killers. In addition to dehumanisation, Browning states, ‘wartime brutalisation, racism, segmentation and routinisation of the task, special selection of the perpetrators, careerism, obedience to orders, deference to authority, ideological indoctrination, and conformity’\textsuperscript{74} are also key tenets in process of ‘creating killers’, and the severity and efficiency of the killing machines that are created by this process ‘are applicable in varying degrees’\textsuperscript{75}

Much like Milgram’s theory regarding one’s ability to follow orders above

\textsuperscript{73} Browning. 2001. Page 159.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
listening to one's own moral consciousness and Zimbardo's theory of the shift of moral consciousness, Browning's ordinary men went through a similar process.

Accustomed to following rules and orders (as policemen) and having worked together for many years, operating within an already bonded group, Browning notes the strength of peer pressure in the battalion. Very few policemen wished to break the conformity of the group once the killing began, so they remained fixed as one killing machine. He states 'to break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly non-conformist behaviour, was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot'.\textsuperscript{76} Again, the pertinence of Milgram and Zimbardo's conclusions are applicable; Milgram notes 'relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority'.\textsuperscript{77} Before the war, these men were not the exactors of massacres, or even militia, they were ordinary policeman, and yet, through a gearshift of mentality brought about by a change in society, they were quickly transformed into murderous machines. Milgram, Zimbardo and Browning therefore argue in unison that those who kill in periods of political violence are essentially 'ordinary' people.

Nazi historian, Wolfgang Sofsky, argues that the actors of violence in the Nazi prison system more widely acted very much like the police battalion that Browning describes. The cohesion of the group was often strong enough to ensure conformity. Furthermore, Sofsky draws in Milgram's theory of personal responsibility refutability to explain how 'ordinary Germans' could run these

\textsuperscript{76} Browning 2001. Page 184.
camps (with apparent zeal), stating, ‘the compulsion to conform to the group and
the constraints of camaraderie...exoneration from responsibility by means of
obedience...(and) the atmosphere of violence’.78

The process of brutalisation, being dynamic, led to a shift in the psychology of
the guards. Their ‘natural’ state altered to fit the needs of the society around
them; ‘all these factors helped give rise to a habitus among the members of the
camp SS that constituted a mortal danger to the prisoners’.79 Sofsky is therefore
demonstrating that essentially ordinary people can shift their moral focus if they
are bound to a group that is cohesive and influential. As Milgram argued, few
individuals bear the necessary tools to break from the group, and this is partly
the result of a strong cohesion to conform to the group. An individual’s moral
compass on its own, it would seem for the majority, is not strong enough to
prevent the killing process.

With specific reference to genocidal crime, Alex Alvarez argues that those
operatives who perform acts of violence are not inherently evil monsters that
exist in our society rather ‘the reality of genocide is that it is typically planned
and implemented by “normal” people’.80 Alvarez argues that these normal people
are used by the state to carry out their orders, and over a period of time, they
themselves become normalized by their new environments. So rather than this
being the behaviour of personal volition, the perpetrators ‘kill because it is

79 Ibid.
80 Alex Alvarez. 2001. Governments, citizens, and genocide: a comparative and
expected of the role that they inhabit, not because of any personal desires, qualities or characteristics they may possess'.81 Naturally, Alvarez’s argument resonates very strongly with the argument that Browning, Milgram and Zimbardo make.

In other words, Alvarez states that a subordinate merely performs a function that is of use to the state, rather than actively engaging against his or her moral conscience. This lack of responsibility is embraced by the individual as part of the normalization process that occurs during periods of political violence, ‘perpetrators allow themselves to believe that their actions have been both legitimized and forced on them by persons in authority’.82 We could interpret this to mean however, that there may be a degree to which some individuals actively pursue a sense of lack of responsibility to fulfill their desires to commit acts of violence. Alvarez notes, ‘genocide is about the choices people make’,83 but to a degree, the choices that individuals can make has been largely engendered by the society that envelops them.

Another advocate of the externally driven ‘ordinary man’ theory is Nazi historian, Richard Breitman. Breitman’s definition of an ordinary man is someone who ‘is not a pathological killer’.84 Breitman argues, as Alvarez does, that periods of political violence cannot simply be explained by the unleashing of sadistic murderers upon a vulnerable society, rather Breitman states that those

82 Ibid. Page 117. Stanley Milgram also classically argues this statement.
83 Ibid. Page 151.
actors of violence are the most ordinary of people, 'the twentieth century cannot escape from its monstrosities by uncovering a mark of Cain or a Mephistophelean pact with the devil'. Simply put, it us – the majority of the ordinary population – from whom the violent cohort is drawn.

Demonstrating how the Nazi superior(s) were able to conduct a Milgram and Zimbardo style process of personal responsibility absolution for their staff, Breitman writes 'Himmler tried to ease the burden on the executioners, telling them that they bore no responsibility for their deeds: he and the Führer were responsible; they were merely carrying out orders, as good soldiers must'.

It is unknown whether or not the subordinates genuinely allowed themselves to believe that they bore no responsibility whatsoever for their actions, but the fervor and gusto with which so many killed under Nazi supervision would

---

85 The spirit of the devil to whom Faust sold his soul.  
87 (Ibid, Page 213 / Heinrich Himmler made several speeches of this kind, assuring individuals that their murderous behavior was in fact for the greater German good. For example, in October 1943, he made a speech to the SS regarding the mass executions of the Jews, specifically Jewish children, ‘It is one of those things which is easy to say, “The Jewish race is to be exterminated”. “That’s clear, it’s part of our program, elimination of the Jews, extermination, right, we’ll do it”... “We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people, to destroy this people which wanted to destroy us. Altogether, however, we can say that we have fulfilled this most difficult duty for the love of our people” (October 4th, 1943. Audio speech available at: http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-posing.htm, accessed on 5/5/14). One can argue that such speeches are an example of Himmler’s acknowledgement of Nazi agents’ potential revulsion to the duties that they had been tasked with. The fact that they continued to perform their tasks would suggest that they successfully suppressed these revulsions (for example, of killing children), but given that these tasks were referred to as, ‘duties’ and that Himmler himself acknowledged how difficult it was to carry them out, one can certainly infer that Himmler knew that the tasks were essentially immoral. If they had not been, the issue of overcoming such unsavory tasks would not have pinned on the fundamental notion that it was a national duty.
certainly suggest that they did not consider the consequences of their actions.
However, it is almost certain that Himmler publicly chose to be the absolver of
others’ sins in the full knowledge that it would sufficiently oil the violence
machine, allowing him to get the results that he wanted from his subordinates.

**Plural explanations:**

Former trainer of Yugoslavian militia, Patrice Chanol, argues that there are
examples where the state will actually look for individuals who they know will
become useful operatives in times of political violence. He stated (with specific
reference to the Yugoslavian army), ‘when the armies were made, the
constructors were looking for soldiers who had a “fighting spirit”’\(^88\) rather than
people with discipline...it was a decision being made by those who were in
charge in the highest levels’.\(^89\) Therefore, clearly there are occasions when
certain individuals are selected from society to exact violence on behalf of the
centre.

Within the chosen fighting spirit cohort, Chanol described the human makeup
of such groups, ‘of course some (individuals) might misunderstand exactly their
limit; there will always be natural born killers. You will find every type of person
in those groups. Fortunately enough, I would say that ‘normal people’ are the
vast majority of the armed cohort. Luckily you won’t just have a bunch of killers

\(^88\) Chanol qualified his own use of the meaning ‘fighting spirit’; ‘Fighting spirit
describes those people who are ready to go and fight without any knowledge of
the situation, but they want to do something. They are people who want to
support the battle’. Author’s interview with Patrice Chanol. 7th August 2013.
Phnom Penh.

\(^89\) Ibid.
and murderers, but you always find them in there. There will always be those who have very, very, bad behaviour’. Chanuel’s description of a plural cohort of actors seems to be a very plausible one. Investigative research of political violence generally highlights the fact that within most cohorts of violent perpetrators exists those driven by external and internal reasons for violence.91

**Internally driven**

We shall now explore the scholars who advocate ‘internally’ driven theories; perpetrators of violence being those members of society with a greater predilection to violence than others. Internally speaking, there are both biological and cultural factors that may influence one’s behavior (i.e. one is born with the predilection to violence or one is sculpted towards a propensity to be violent by the society that surrounds us/them).

In reaction to Browning, Daniel Goldhagen’s ‘Hitler’s willing executioners’ focuses on the very same police battalion that is the mainstay of Browning’s work. However, Goldhagen goes against Browning’s conclusions. Rather than embracing Browning’s idea that essentially all human beings can be transformed into killers under the ‘right’ circumstances, Goldhagen argues that these policemen were predetermined to become the executors of the Nazi will against

---

90 Author’s interview with Patrice Chanuel, 7th August 2013. Phnom Penh/Joshua Oppenheimer’s ‘The Act of Killing’ (2012) demonstrates that this phenomenon is not restricted to the former Yugoslavia.

91 A point argued by Stathis Kalyvas, ‘Wars are worlds of complex struggles rather than as simple binary conflicts between organisations crystallising popular support and collective grievances along well-defined cleavages...popular support was shaped, won, and lost during the war, often by means of coercion and violence and along lines of kinship and locality; it was not purely consensual, immutable, fixed, and primarily ideological’. Kalyvas. 2006. Page 113.
the Jews given the deep-rooted strength of their anti-Semitism. Goldhagen argues that the nature of the battalion’s anti-Semitism was in itself intrinsically ‘eliminationist’. It is a religious model of violence that is specific to the Germans, that Goldhagen states were incarnated in the ‘early nineteenth-century’. Goldhagen is arguing therefore that social malaise and frustration towards the Jews were very much reasons to kill (therefore eliminating the power that a superior may have wielded).

‘Obedience’, ‘forced coercion’, ‘pursuit of self-interests’ and ‘blurred macro-view’ (the tenets which Browning himself argued the case for), on their own, states Goldhagen, cannot possibly explain the outcome of the actions of the police battalion because they carried out their duties with zeal. Instead, Goldhagen states that Germans believed that Jews should be punished. According

---

93 Ibid.
94 Khmer Rouge historian Alexander Hinton argues that Goldhagen’s conclusions are in themselves largely a reaction to the bias that had been paid to the top-down dominance regarding the crimes committed by the Nazis. He states, ‘[Goldhagen] argued that previous analysis of the Holocaust had ignored the complexity of perpetrator motivation. Goldhagen contended that the historical and ideological development of a single German cultural model – “eliminationist anti-Semitism” – was ultimately responsible for an extreme loss of life during the Holocaust. When given the opportunity by the Nazi state, ordinary Germans, inspired by a genocidal ideology that played upon preexisting and highly motivating anti-Semitic values and beliefs, willingly and enthusiastically participated in the “extermination” of millions of dehumanized Jews’. Alexander Hinton. 2005. *Why did they kill?: Cambodia in the shadow of genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Page 24. Whilst Hinton, and to an extent, Goldhagen, have fallen into the trap of considering only one major rationale behind the killings and/or the killers themselves, what Hinton does demonstrate is that through Goldhagen’s analysis, there is certainly a salient and lucid argument behind the notion that a lot of the violence orchestrated by the lower-level perpetrators was done of their own volition and that it was not entirely the centre that demanded all of the experienced violence.
to Goldhagen, rather than being an 'ordinary' cohort of men, the battalion were inherently capable of performing their murderous tasks, and did so with enthusiasm. They did not need the directives and propaganda from the centralised Nazi state to satisfy their desire to murder Jews in cold blood. Goldhagen thus intimates that the policemen of the battalion were certainly morally and empirically responsible for their behaviour.

However, the religious and cultural model of violence that Goldhagen suggests is limited in its explanation as to why the 'ordinary men' did what they did, as anti-Semitism was certainly not confined to the German state. Furthermore, according to William Brustein in 'Roots of Hate', 'the Nazi Party's anti-Semitism lacked originality and shared strong similarities with...parties throughout interwar Europe'.⁹⁶ There was nothing unique about Nazi anti-Semitism, and so widespread was anti-Semitism in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe (especially Eastern Europe) that if Goldhagen's argument was true, one might expect to find most of Europe executing Jews. Whilst many Europeans actively helped the Nazis persecute the Jewish populations, no other nation produced killing squads on the scale that the Germans did.

Recounting the same anecdote of the men's ability to refuse to kill if they so wished, Major Trapp, according to Goldhagen, would round up the battalion and stand them in a line, and deliver a speech along with centralised directives. He would then offer the men the opportunity to step down if they felt uneasy with

---

his orders. According to Goldhagen, 'it did not require much courage\textsuperscript{97} to step forward' (in order to show ones desire not to partake).\textsuperscript{98} This statement is therefore in direct contradiction with Browning's notion of peer pressure being an extremely powerful tool in preventing the refusal to kill.

Even after the emotional realisation once the killing process had begun, the men did not opt out of their task. Goldhagen states that 'it makes it unequivocal that those who slaughtered Jews, including Jewish children, did so voluntarily'.\textsuperscript{99} Goldhagen's conclusion of the same events is a far cry from Browning's theory of institutionalised brutalisation and dehumanization (of 'enemies') as a necessary pre-determinant in turning 'ordinary men' into killers. Perhaps their differing conclusion of the same events is led purely by their understanding of human beings in general; Browning may believe that man is essentially good and therefore must be pressurised to perform heinous tasks, whereas Goldhagen believes that we are capable of such acts within our own rights, we just need the platform of impunity and the right social warring foundations.

Nazi historian, Michael Mann, similarly argues that there are members of society who are more likely to be violent than others. Specifically referring to the Nazis, he notes 'perpetrators came disproportionately from "core Nazi constituencies". The more committed Nazis were of higher rank and longer experience-bringing

\textsuperscript{97} How Goldhagen knows this is unknown to the author.
\textsuperscript{98} Goldhagen. 2009. Page 214.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. Page 221.
the pressures of hierarchy and comradeship to bear on newer recruits'. Mann states that their predisposition to commit acts of violence was predicated upon a stronger than average urge to 'commit to the nation'. Dissimilar to Browning's ordinary men, 'many of the older perpetrators had engaged in political killings long before they became Nazis'. One could argue therefore, that their presence and instrumentality in the Nazi killing machine was almost expected. Similarly, in Cambodia, the most zealous cadres were considered to be those from the Southwest zone. This area had been a CPK stronghold, where violence was rife, long before the CPK came to power in 1975. Regarding this, Michael Vickery writes, 'the revolutionary transformation of the Southwest began as early as 1971'. These fierce cadres, as we shall observe, became the very definition of 'zealous'.

Arguing that peasants conducted the majority of the Cambodian violence, Vickery states that it may have been an intentional policy of the party (the CPK) to allow the peasants to kill as they wished. He notes, 'what seems most likely to have happened is that the central DK authorities at first gave local cadres complete discretion'. Vickery does state, however, that whilst a lot of the killing was perpetrated by the peasant classes, that does not absolve the centre for allowing such actions to happen, 'it is not a sufficient excuse to say that most

---

100 Michael Mann. 2000. *We Are the Perpetrators of Genocide* "Ordinary Men" or "Real Nazis"? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. *Volume 14 (3).* Page 331.

101 Ibid.  Page 333.

102 Ibid. Page 353.


of them may have been on local initiative...for the regime may have been responsible for the conditions permitting that type of local initiative to flourish'.

Khmer Rouge cadres personnel

Finally, whilst much more will be made of this in later sections, I wish to temporarily draw attention to the remaining generalisations that can be made about the age, gender, and social class from which many of the perpetrators of the violence experienced in Democratic Kampuchea belonged to. Former US Foreign Service officer Kenneth Quinn, argues that the members of society who were violent were more often than not, young, from poor backgrounds, and drafted by external forces. However, Quinn also suggests that, to a degree, despite being externally coerced into violence, there were apparent exhibitions of internally-driven reasons for why certain individuals may have gravitated towards violence, stating 'the answer seems to be that the Khmer Rouge turned to the youngest members of the poorest levels of Cambodian society to recruit cadres who would willingly destroy the old society because they resented it and had little stake in it...those who were so envious of persons with more wealth

---

106 Hinton, with specific reference to Cambodia, warns of the danger of over generalizing who it is in our society who commits violence, stating '(the dominant narrative) portrays perpetrators as generic automats who, after being imprinted with a violent ideology and trained in "harsh and brutal methods", willingly commit genocidal atrocities. From this perspective, perpetrators are uniformly motivated by external forces or narrow self-interest...such an account is unable to provide a complete understanding'. Hinton. 2005, Page 23.
107 Quinn himself was stationed in Vietnam from 1968, and much of his analysis focused on the Southwest zone. His observations of Khmer Rouge era Cambodia were written during his stationing in Southern Vietnam during the period in which the violence was committed.
that they would willingly strike them down.\textsuperscript{108} Quinn is therefore supporting a pluralistic explanation by suggesting that whilst the environment of genocidal Cambodia may have created external pressure, within that paradigm, there were those who naturally had an inclination towards violence for their own personal reasons (most likely driven by class-based motivations).\textsuperscript{109}

Khmer Rouge victim and survivor, Sokreaksa Himm, in keeping with Quinn, Vickery and Chauvel's observations, argues that the majority of the perpetrators in Cambodia were peasants, many of whom were actually sought out by the centre. He notes, "They (Community Party of Kampuchea seniors) never chose educated people for this work (orchestrating violence): they selected the poorest of the peasantry, mostly illiterate...some of the most brutal and vindictive...were teenage boys – young and easily brainwashed into enjoying the power they had over us".\textsuperscript{110} Himm is therefore clearly an advocate of the pluralistic theory with regards to Khmer Rouge personnel as both external and internal forces were working together to facilitate violence.

As I shall demonstrate with my empirical data, certainly with regards to Cambodia, a pluralistic approach of both external and internal motivations


\textsuperscript{109} Class-based explanations are in themselves pluralistic; classes are external classifiers but as I shall demonstrate, even within a specific class, there were those who chose to act very violently and those that did not, even though, from an external perspective they had the same external pressures and grievances placed upon them.

seems to be the most plausible explanatory tool as to ‘Who?’ (and therefore ‘Why?’) commits violence.

2. In periods of legitimized political violence, why do some people choose to inflict violence and/or kill?

There are many reasons why people choose to inflict violence or even kill, and whilst I do not wish to conduct a Freudian psychoanalysis of what drives us to behave in the ways that we do, I shall demonstrate that there are common traits and precursors that permeate periods of widespread violence that go a great distance to explain why certain people may choose to commit certain acts of violence.

In the previous section, I largely grouped the literature and theorists into two distinct cohorts (internal and external), acknowledging that on a macro scale, a combination of both sets of motivations is probably the most plausible explanation as to who commits acts of violence. I now develop this point. Violence committed in violent societies for externally driven reasons can generally be grouped, at the point of manifestation, into ‘obligatory’ violence and similarly, violence committed for internally driven reasons can be grouped into ‘discretionary’ violence at the point of manifestation. This section shall now

---

111 These terms have in fact been used by Stephen Heder, specifically for the killing types associated with Democratic Kampuchea (whilst I shall use them for violence more widely). Heder argues that ‘some (killings) were centrally premeditated and planned (killings of obligation)...other killings (that were discretionary) were committed by regional and local authorities, not acting as part of such a tight chain of command’. Heder. 2005. Page 382. Heder is therefore arguing that there were two separate dynamics that fueled a variety of killing in Democratic Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge and local level people. One set
address the key literature that analyses, supports and challenges these motivations and classifications relating to the question of 'why?'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Staub</em></td>
<td>Personal gain theory (a derivative of social malaise\textsuperscript{112} and score settling).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Applebaum</em></td>
<td>Personal gain theory in order to avoid the grey zone between perpetrator and victim/public demonstrations of relative authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Valentino</em></td>
<td>Pre-existing concepts of social malaise/power rebalancing by the former victims (overseen directly and indirectly by actors and bystanders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brustein (on Weiss)</em></td>
<td>Individuals' apathy given former of killings followed strict order following, whereby the perpetrator was simply doing as he or she was told. The second set of killings were orchestrated as a means of lower level discretion; i.e. they chose not only to kill or not to kill, but also who to kill. The centre merely provided them with an environment in which violence could be committed and go largely unpunished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Source</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedlander/Vickery</td>
<td>Economic imbalances (social malaise)/jealousy/revenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnavas</td>
<td>Revenge killing/class-consciousness/peasant revolts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgler/Hilberg</td>
<td>Zealous actors/excessive violence/Sadistic, frustrated individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neitzel and Welzer</td>
<td>Socialised killing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandler</td>
<td>Young, impressionable individuals seeking social conformation/obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilly</td>
<td>Opportunism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofsky</td>
<td>Peer pressure/approval, enthusiasm, and revenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>Indiscriminate fanatic minority in by standing majority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicks</td>
<td>Fear/obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browning/Sereny</td>
<td>Promotion-peer pressure/self-constructed superior expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locard</td>
<td>Blind obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thion</td>
<td>Lower level 'productiveness'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mann</strong></td>
<td>Mixture of discretionary and obligatory motives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hinton</strong></td>
<td>Cultural models of feud/grudge/disproportionate revenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zucker</strong></td>
<td>Cultural revenge/gaining face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martin</strong></td>
<td>Cultural violence associated with the loss of face. Predilection for extremism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becker</strong></td>
<td>Cultural folktales explaining violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I shall also present a broad spectrum of subgenres that demonstrate and highlight both the external and internal extremes of violence motivation in relation to the question of ‘why?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1. Most external/Obligatory</strong></th>
<th>Obligation/obedience to orders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Fear,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Opportunism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Most plural</strong></td>
<td>Religious/cultural/class social hatreds fueled by social stereotypes.¹¹³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹¹³ This is the beginning of the pluralistic explanations as the categorisations of identity (culture, class etc.) are external apportioned, and to an extent, stereotypes are purported by society in general, however, the extent to which this motivates violence still depends largely on the individual. There are those
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Brutalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Dehumanisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Personal anger and malaise irrespective of social stereotypes/norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Personal motivations that actually go against social expectations, fueled by personal injustices (general malaise etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Personal goal theory in extreme forms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Externally-driven/Obligatory:**

Focusing on the literature that supports the externally driven, obligatory violence argument, Nazi historian, Henry Dicks, states that many lower level cadres in Nazi Germany committed acts of violence mainly through fear and order following, 'obedience, keeping the Fuhrer's will, loyalty...and fear of authorities'. Dicks states that the SS had every opportunity to resist their ascribed murderous tasks but persevered and did so with apparent gusto. But whereas one could argue that the SS were sadistic psychopaths with cruel intentions, Dicks argues that the SS were not mind-less killers and acted purely out of loyalty and fear, 'none of these SS men would have been likely to become

---

who don’t commit enough acts of violence, and there are those that commit too much violence.

"common murderers" in normal conditions. Therefore, their behavior was driven by external reasons.

Much like Browning's ordinary men, Dicks' killers became numb to the brutalisation of the Jews and the violence they inflicted, '(the) SS underwent a 'conditioning process, which in this context we can term brutalisation'. Dicks also uses the example of Stanley Milgram to demonstrate that an incredibly dangerous and volatile outcome occurs after a prolonged period of legitimised brutalisation is coupled with relative impunity and an enhanced sense of loyalty, 'Milgram's experiment has neatly exposed the "all too human" propensity to conformity and obedience to group authority'. Like Browning's findings, group mentality and social pressure seem to be the main motivations behind the murderous activity of the SS and ordinary men.

Another theory as to why some actors commit acts of violence is the presence of societal expectations, whether it is an obligation to a higher authority or general coercive duress (thus links to Browning's peer pressure). Khmer Rouge historian, Henri Lecard, argues that the subordinates of Democratic Kampuchea were subjected to such an environment, writing, 'blind obedience was expected on the part of cadres who acted as links with the people. Thus, the most inane orders were slavishly followed, whatever the result'. Lecard's theory therefore removes the cadres' personal motives for wishing to commit acts of violence; all

---

116 Ibid. Page 254.
117 Ibid. Page 263.
violence, according to Locard, is the result of a higher order and therefore a subordinate actor is simply an individual who has no ulterior, internally driven motive.

**Plural explanations:**

As we shall now observe, the vast majority of the theorists and historians that I analyse fall into this cross-category to varying degrees. This is largely the result of being unable to separate man entirely from society, class, religion and culture. We are products of the world that envelops us. What the pluralistic approach allows us to do is to assess the degree to which certain actors have a greater propensity to be violent for internally-driven reasons, in an environment that has created these cleavages. Class-hatred, for example, is both internal and external. If we exist in a class, it is because of external classifications that are largely out of our control, and there may be differences between classes that anger and frustrate us leading to incidences of violence. However, within these class differences, there are those of us who choose to be more or less violent. This approach aims to illustrate the sliding scale that comprises the spectrum between internal and external motivations. Furthermore, as many of following theorists will demonstrate, an approach that assesses a mixture of motives and rationales also allows for changes in time, i.e. the motivations for violence at the onset may be very different indeed when the violence comes to an end.

According to Michael Mann, internally and externally driven factors can co-exist simultaneously. Mann stresses that most subordinate cadres will be susceptible to a variety of reasons as to why they commit acts of violence. For example, he
states that the ‘ordinary’ people of Germany during the Nazi regime did not behave in unison. He evolves the view noting that the theory has the potential to be dynamic, and so, of those perpetrators that kill sadistically and those that kill under duress, there is also a grey area whereby perpetrators are susceptible to ‘mixed motives’.119

As a revolutionary party’s influence expands, naturally more ‘normal’ people become encapsulated in the regime and thus perpetrator motivation changes as the personnel majority changes respectively. Concerning the Nazis, Mann notes that the superior(s) would have been fervent Nazis and the lower level actor(s) would have largely been increasingly ideologically uneducated civilians. Agency was available to those members of society who sympathised with the Nazis but for those who didn’t, society placed enough pressure on them to also commit acts of violence. Given how Mann’s theory fits into Milgram and Zimbardo’s theory of a dynamic process of engendering human behavior through a series of external pressures, ultimately leading to moral conversion, there is a great plausibility in Mann’s analysis of such events.

It is the ‘individualistic agency’ of perpetrators, rather than ‘strong respect for authority’120 and obedience, according to Ervin Staub, that are the main motivators for committing acts of violence. Staub refers to this as ‘personal goal theory’. This theory states that actors will stray from their orders for personal gain. Staub notes that for perpetrators, there are entire arrays of reasons why

they might wish to be violent or kill. These reasons surpass the desire of self-preservation alone; for example, it could be from a long-standing sense of injustice. The order giver, or centre, may not experience the same injustice as lower level actors might, but as it is these individuals who comprise the majority of perpetrators, the rationale behind inflicting violence may well be a reflection of such actors' desires. According to Staub, improving one's social position is the key to the question of 'why do they kill?'

Historian of the Soviet Union, Anne Applebaum, has also projected personal goal theory upon the gulags. She states that despite the prison system being a centralised initiative, the centre did not properly police it. In failing to sufficiently monitor the day-to-day running of the gulag system, it was the guards who worked the prisons that ultimately made decisions, at their discretion. She states that there were cases of extreme cruelty and extreme kindness but explicitly states that 'nowhere was cruelty actually required',¹²¹ rather it became an institutionalised norm. It is clear that Moscow was sending directives to the periphery but their implementation was left to the secret police and the Gulag guards. Applebaum infers that personal goal theory was the main motivation for gulag guards to inflict violence upon their prisoners.

Moving to another issue that transcends both internally and externally driven reasons to varying degrees is the process of social mobility change that violence can facilitate. In ‘ordinary’ society, if a perpetrator wishes to improve his or her position, he or she usually has to demonstrate that they are more productive

than their peers. Browning states that ‘everywhere (in ordinary society) people seek career advancement’, and a violent society is no different. During political violence, ‘productivity’ can often be directly correlated to ‘violence’. If one wishes to be promoted, one has to be more productive, and therefore more violent.

Promotion is often cited as a reason why perpetrators wish to go above and beyond their superior’s orders. Former Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camp Kommandant, Franz Stangl, for example, during his trial in 1970 was referred to as the ‘best camp Kommandant in Poland’. He is remembered as being entirely meticulous and dedicated to his tasks, which resulted in him being

---

123 Eve Zucker develops this theory even further in periods of violence given that perpetrators and lower level agents are often not particularly educated. She argues that perpetrators will wield their power, partly in the hope of a promotion, but also for the intrinsic sake of having power itself. She states (specifically to Cambodia), ‘some individuals wanted to have great power and therefore committed wicked deeds…during that time, killing a person was doing a good job…the culpable party was ambitious but also uneducated and committed bad acts to gain status’. Zucker. 2013. Page 102. Zucker is clearly stating therefore that many used their power to kill as, at least by some, this was considered to be being productive and in keeping with centralised policies. However, as I have found in my own investigations, Zucker notes that this explanation may only be partly correct (as many were violent for purely personal and private reasons), stating ‘it is not clear whether such an explanation was actually believed at the time or whether it is a post hoc explanatory device that may afford some level of healing from the past’. Ibid.
124 Hannah Arendt’s ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem’ (1963), demonstrates that Stangl was certainly not alone in his desire to be promoted in the Nazi machine. She states that, Eichmann also pursued Nazis orders with zeal to be promoted. Despite being an anti-Semite, Eichmann was not ordering the execution of Jews for any reason other than complying with the environment in which he existed; ‘whatever he (Hitler) did he (Eichmann) did, as far as one can see, as a law abiding citizen. He (Eichmann) did his duty…he (Eichmann) not only obeyed orders, he also obeyed the law’. Arendt. 1963. Page 135.
promoted on every posting to which he was assigned. Beginning with his work at the Nazi euthanasia programme, T4, instead of performing his tasks to a bare minimum, of his own volition he reorganized the entire facility to be ‘more productive’. He was promoted to manage ‘operation Reinhardt’, and was the chief Kommandant of both Sobibor and Treblinka, over seeing the deaths of 900,000 people. According to Robert Wistrich, ‘(Stangl) took pride and pleasure in his ‘work’, running the death camp like clockwork’. After his arrest, Stangl admitted that he was ambitious for himself and for his work.

Committing excesses could be perceived as an actor wishing to be recognized in the eyes of his or her superior as being ‘more productive’. Looking at my own work on Cambodia, one interviewee stated, ‘I think the Khmer Rouge had some freedom to do what they wanted to do...cadres did their own thing (to us) in order to get a promotion’. As Browning stated, the desire to be promoted exists in us all, and that for many does not change even after the transition from ordinary society to violent society has been undertaken.

The literature on Cambodia similarly draws parallels with my own investigative findings regarding productiveness, as Serge Thion’s work demonstrates. He writes, ‘local cadres, mostly uneducated peasants, or half-educated teachers, had

---

126 The inception of the extermination camps under the Nazi organization.
130 Author’s interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17th November 2012. Da Mon village, Takeo Province.
risen to power because they had been good petty military leaders...it is impossible to estimate the number of those killings (as a result of their 'productiveness') – which did not derive from central orders but...in need of asserting an undue authority'.\textsuperscript{131} Thion is therefore an advocate of the notion that, such killings were committed by individuals who were acting both in an externally-driven environment, given that they operated within a system that might reward the act of violence, but they themselves were internally-driven to see how far they could be rewarded by committing more acts of violence than was actually required.\textsuperscript{132}

Looking specifically at ethnic genocides and mass killings (notably China, Rwanda and Cambodia), Benjamin Valentino argues that such is the power of social malaise that it in itself can fuel widespread political violence. He states that, given the balance of society, malaise is generally felt more in the lower echelons of society and so those most likely to act purely from feelings of a sense of social injustice will be the most peripheral perpetrators of violence. Valentino argues that malaise can reach a level where lower level actors don’t actually need direction from a centralised order giver. Consequently, he states that a centre faces few obstacles in enlisting zealous cadres, and even fewer obstacles from the larger society in question who may challenge their right to commit acts of violence, 'levels of hatred, discrimination, or ideological commitment common to many societies are sufficient to recruit the relatively small number of active

\textsuperscript{131} Thion. 1993. Page 166.
\textsuperscript{132} Thion does explicitly note that cadres' behavior was not uniform throughout Cambodia, 'performances were to be extremely unequal, to say the least'. Ibid. Page 104.
supporters needed to carry out mass killing and to encourage the passivity of the rest of society.\textsuperscript{133} The direct complicity of a minority coupled with the indirect complicity of the majority (as bystanders) based on feelings of malaise, is sufficient to exact political violence on entire groups of people.

Looking at the Nazi case study, writing specifically on the works of historian John Weiss, William Brustein draws similarities between Valentino's theory and that of Weiss. He writes, 'for Weiss, that Germans were hardly ignorant of the Nazi plan to destroy the Jews and did little to obstruct the plan makes it plainly clear that Jew hatred had embedded itself solidly within German political culture'.\textsuperscript{134} Anti-Semitism was clearly reason enough for many in German society to turn a blind eye to Nazi treatment of the Jews. 'Bystanding' can be considered, to an extent, as indirect complicity.

Malaise is deep-rooted in many societies, and is often cited as a reason why people inflict violence upon others; social, racial, religious, political and economic malaise.\textsuperscript{135} Zimbardo, in 'The Lucifer effect' describes how feelings of malaise can manifest themselves into full-blown violence. He states that, in Rwanda, 'a racial distinction had arbitrarily been created by Belgian and German colonialists...to distinguish between people...they forced all Rwandans to carry identification cards that declared them to be in either the majority Hutu or the

\textsuperscript{134} Brustein. 2003. Page 40-41. Also argued by Goldhagen.
\textsuperscript{135} However, as previously discussed, the word in itself is purely tautological; it is what it encompasses that is important.
minority Tutsi, with the benefits of higher education and administrative posts going to the Tutsi. (It) Became another source of...desire for revenge'.

Similarly, in Nazi Germany, the Jews were considered to be sources of economic imbalance. They caused much resentment in Germany, especially during the recession-hit years, and this resentment ultimately contributed to the platform for Nazi support. In the post World War I-era, it was a common conception that Jews were in fact profiteering from Germany's ailing economy as many large German corporations were bought and run at below cost levels by Jewish entrepreneurs, 'According to extreme nationalist Germans, these corporations were becoming instruments of Jewish speculation and exploitation of the nation in its time of peril: "The war profiteers were first of all essentially Jews...they acquired a dominant influence in the 'war corporations'...which gave them the occasion to enrich themselves at the expense of the German people"'. These varying aspects of malaise can essentially be boiled down to one major issue, jealousy. The Jewish identity was a sticking point for this jealousy, and generated much hatred towards them. They, like so many other minority groups, were scapegoated, and when the Nazis finally came to power, it was an opportunity for certain individuals to 'have their revenge'. This is a clear illustration of external and internal drivers at work.

In Cambodia, whilst religious groups like the Cham Muslims and Buddhists were targeted for acts of violence (as religion was banned by the CPK) and ethnic groups like the Sino-Khmers, Vietnamese and Thais were scapegoated out of society, it was in fact the urban bourgeoisie, the 'new people' (those who were evacuated from the towns and cities and resettled into the countryside) who were most heavily targeted by operatives of violence. They were despised for being considered to be the bearers of the nation's wealth. According to Michael Vickery, the peasants despised new people, 'by 1975, there was huge widespread hatred of the city in the countryside that the Khmer Rouge leaders didn't really need to do anything other than going along with it...Pol Pot couldn't have stopped them (the peasant soldiers) even if he'd wanted to'\(^\text{138}\)

Social malaise, according to Vickery, was a key feature of the violence, '(there) was a huge degree of social malaise and they [the peasant soldiers] went above and beyond what they needed to do. They were never ordered, there were no documents ever found telling them to massacre people...In fact the premises laid down in central committee meetings, convened by Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea etc. in their policies were that everyone should have enough food, everyone should have a place to live, people should not be worked to death, which was what they wanted.'\(^\text{139}\) However, it seems that orders were sent down verbally from one level to the next and these orders were interpreted at the lower-level in a manner of what those people were familiar with, and in some cases in the

\(^{138}\) Author’s interview with Michael Vickery, 13\(^{th}\) April 2013. Phnom Penh.

\(^{139}\) Heder echoes Vickery’s statement by noting "They (the cadres) were not under instruction to kill new people, but they had the power to kill as they saw fit...a lot of people were killed for no reason (other than being new)". Heder. 2005. Pages 393–4.
lower-level, for one reason or another, there were no particular deep-rooted feelings of hatred, so people didn’t suffer too much’.\footnote{Author’s interview with Michael Vickery. 13\textsuperscript{th} April 2013. Phnom Penh.}

Anger, frustration, score settling and revenge, according to Vickery, were the motives that were particularly pertinent to Democratic Kampuchea, all derived from an intense feeling of social malaise. Vickery’s stated motives as we shall discover in my own empirical data, were common themes that ran through violence perpetration.

Having spent years of intensive wading through documents and cross-examinations of Khmer Rouge-related individuals and issues, Michael Karnavas\footnote{Ieng Sary’s former defense lawyer. Karnavas, despite having an interest in ‘agreeing’ with this thesis, was chosen as an appropriate source of information given his extensive knowledge of Khmer Rouge history. Furthermore, Sary had already died when this interview took place.}, develops Vickery’s theory of malaise further and notes that it was the basis for a large degree of revenge killings. Karnavas stated, ‘the country peasants really, really hated the city people. You know, because they had it rough...these peasants now had the opportunity to get even. There wasn’t some policy that was sent from the top to do this...there was no policy to go out there and kill all these people. The people in the countryside were ripe for revenge’.\footnote{Author’s interview with Michael Karnavas. 26\textsuperscript{th} April 2013. Phnom Penh.} Clearly, social malaise, for many, was fuel enough to wish to exact revenge upon the urban classes. There was no centralised policy to pursue this line of action, so its prevalence would suggest that the party lacked control over significant numbers of peasants.
In fact, according to Burgler, not only was social malaise a determinant of violence amongst many of the rural peasants, it was such a driver and motivator for some that they actually derived pleasure from such acts. He states that the majority of these peasants were those who were furthest from the CPK centre, noting 'especially the more peripheral, isolated peasants...there was some malicious pleasure (from the base people) at seeing pretentious city folk brought down to their level. Long suppressed resentment, even hatred of the 'urban' thus manifested itself'.

Having a score to settle was clearly an important factor behind why so many chose to commit acts of violence. This particular instance can clearly be seen as a form of discretionary violence given that there were no orders from the centre to do this. Pol Pot himself recognized, as early as 1976, that this lower level hatred had become a problem for the revolution stating, 'the problem...stems from attitudes held by many cadres toward "new people" evacuated to rural areas from the cities in 1975'.

---

144 Burgler does stress, however, that the feelings of score settling were not applicable to everyone and were not uniform throughout the nation, stating 'heavy-handedness and terror were not everywhere used to the same degree. (However) The early killings had certainly been partly inspired by revenge'. Ibid. Page 90.
145 I will not dwell on the plight of the 'new people' here because I will make much of them in subsequent chapters, but I wish to draw the parallel here between them as a source of jealousy and revenge, much like the Jews of Germany and the Tutsis of Rwanda were.
The misfortune of these minorities brings us to the next facet of why people may choose to inflict violence; genuine zeal for a particular cause. With specific reference to Nazi zealots, Hilberg writes, ‘some of these men displayed eagerness, others “excess”’. One can argue, that the existence of central directives is almost irrelevant when a perpetrator’s passion to be violent is great enough to transcend their orders; all they need is the license to do it. Issues such as economic and social malaise, as we have already mentioned, are often reasons cited as the root-causes of such zealous behavior.

Looking at what makes a ‘zealot’, Sonke Neitzel and Harald Welzer in ‘Soldaten’ assess what factors make human beings behave in such ways during political violence. They argue that we never make unbiased decisions, ‘instead, (we) perceive everything through specific filters’. Much like the work of Milgram, Zimbardo and Browning, Neitzel and Welzer explore the minds of seemingly ‘ordinary Germans’ in order to try and understand why, not only do they kill, but why they do it with such zealous enthusiasm.

They argue that humans do not operate with conditioned reflexes; rather they make split-second decisions based on past events and their interpretation of contemporary events, stating ‘whatever human beings do, they could always have done differently’. In response to the question of ‘why do they kill?’ the

---

149 Ibid. Page 8.
issue of 'why?' may be arguably redundant in their approach, rather, why did they not kill? Neitzel and Welzer are advocates of a Zimbardo-style gearshift paradigm change that allows one's morals to be set to neutral, and rather than prevent themselves from killing, they choose to kill based on an impulsive decision that may be grounded in prior events. The longer a dehumanization and brutalization environment occurs for, the more accustomed an actor may become to selecting the 'violent' mode. Neitzel and Welzer argue that this accustomisation process makes the 'impulsive' selection of violence incrementally easier with every occasion in which it is selected.

In order to understand humans, and our behaviour in periods of political violence, they argue that we must first understand the environmental paradigm in which our forebears were making decisions. They argue that whilst a paradigm might be fixed in identical situations, two human beings may draw two entirely different interpretations and conclusions from the world that surrounds them, and hence, will function in two entirely different ways as, 'human beings always enjoy a certain freedom of interpretation and action'. If we are to agree that certain cohorts of people consistently have 'certain freedoms' then it must be assumed that the centre may be all-powerful but never truly in control of all perpetrators, or vice versa, a lower-level cohort of militants or ideologues may be internally driving political violence but the centre may also be acting in self-interests irrespective of what is going on below them. Furthermore, perpetrators acting differently from one another may point to the presence of additional forces at work such as directives emanating from other sources (perhaps higher-

---

level actors). It may also imply that the centre has strength over some but not others. Their theory is an excellent illustration of the transient nature of internally and externally driven violence.

As previously discussed, in Cambodia, many of the perpetrators were young children (some as young as eight years old); impressionable, uneducated, malleable, susceptible to peer pressure, and most importantly, alienated having lacked any kind of social fabric—they did not feel a part of anything. The Khmer Rouge armed them and gave them a purpose.\footnote{Survivor Sokreaksa Himm echoes this statement from his own experiences, noting 'it is hard to imagine what could have made ordinary men so cruel, but one young soldier arrested after the war explained how they became so violent. His family had been killed when he was about nine years old, and the Khmer Rouge soldiers looked after him...he became addicted to killing'. Himm. 2003. Page 41.} In the Phnom Penh-based prison, S-21, prison guards usually came from this social cohort. David Chandler writes, 'Adolescents have earned a reputation in many countries for their malleability, idealism, their hunger for approval, and their aptitude for violence.'\footnote{David Chandler. 2000. \textit{Voices from S-21. Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison}. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. Page 33.}

Psychiatrist Richard Mollica, states of those people that took part in the Rwandan genocide, 'most of the people who commit most of the atrocities in these situations are young males. Young males are really the most dangerous people on the planet, because they respond to authority and they want approval. They are given the rewards for getting into the hierarchical system, and they're
given to believe they're building heaven on earth...Young people are very idealistic and the powers prey on them'.

The use of young people in times of political violence highlights another motivation for violence, 'opportunistm'. Charles Tilly, using the case study of genocide-era Rwanda, argues that when a centre is unable to control their lower level cadres, opportunism can occur. He states, 'free-wheeling militia units, local residents, and bandits' use periods of political violence to loot property and use violence to rebalance social injustices. Furthermore, Tilly illustrates that the degree to which opportunism occurs can serve as a barometer of the extent to which lower level cadres pursue discretionary violence rather than purely following obligatory orders. According to Tilly, these opportunists will operate within the confines of what the state allows, and thus a violent 'top' will facilitate the greatest degree of agency, opportunism and discretion to the 'bottom'.

According to Tilly, it is the government that acts as a constraining or permitting mechanism of collective violence. As a result, it is the 'Government's capacity' to control the resources and activities of the population over which it governs. Tilly argues that given this direct relationship, cadres will mirror the centre. For

---

155 Stathis Kalyvas argues this point, stating that whilst there may be genuine support for a political figurehead during periods of political violence, a lot of violence that is orchestrated in such times is the result of 'local cleavages and intracommunity dynamics...it is the convergence between local motives and supralocal imperatives that endows civil war'. Stathis Kalyvas. 2006. The Logic of Violence in Civil War. Page 387.
example, if the state is strong and controlling, cadres will be tightly controlled
and act in accordance with the centre, but if the government is passive or lacking
control, then cadres will also be passive and lacking in control. Violent,
opportunistic cadres are therefore those who operate in a weak or violent state
as they simply mirror the discretion of the government.

Nazi concentration camps (specifically in Auschwitz) according to Wolfgang
Sofsky, offered lower level cadres the opportunity to be publically recognized.
They also facilitated individuals the opportunity to demonstrate their
enthusiasm and zeal for their occupation. Sofsky argues that this was enabled
partly by the Nazi party’s inability to stop it from happening having pursued a
policy of partial decentralization, stating ‘(in Auschwitz) decentralization means
that decisions no longer connect at one dominant node’.\(^{157}\)

Arguing that camp dynamics serve as a microcosm for the regime entire, Sofsky
states, ‘the template valid for the Nazi regime and the SS as a whole also
determined the power structures of the camp SS. It consisted of groups and
cliques that enjoyed considerable freedom’.\(^{158}\) He states that it was the
negligence of the Nazi party that failed to curb the over-enthusiasm of their
operatives in the concentration camps like Auschwitz, and also the Nazi militia
machine, ‘the SS had a high degree of local, on-the-spot indifference’.\(^{159}\) The
lower level cadres, in such an environment, were free to interpret the law as they
pleased i.e. with discretion. Sofsky goes on to argue that violence gave

\(^{158}\) Ibid. Page 105.
\(^{159}\) Ibid.
perpetrators an enormous sense of power and liberated them from previous experiences of helplessness and inferiority that they may have experienced in their ‘previous lives’, stating, ‘in the beginning, vengeance raged: the lust for revenge of a regime...bent on suppressing any who had stood in its way’.\textsuperscript{160}

Regarding the violence that was committed in Cambodia, Kenneth Quinn, supports the argument of Valentino, arguing that much of it was indiscriminate and was committed by certain groups with the complicit by-standing of much of the general population. He argues, the Cambodian experience ‘shows that a revolution can be accomplished by a small group of dedicated cadres’.\textsuperscript{161} Quinn noted, when posed with the issue of trying to quantify the final death toll, ‘no matter what figure is accepted as the best estimate, the available evidence overwhelmingly suggests that significant numbers of people have died from the indiscriminate killing(s)’.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{Internally driven/discretionary:}

There are also those who inflict violence because they are genuinely sadistic and brutal. These people exist in all societies but in periods of political violence, their true nature is given the opportunity to express itself. Of these people, in Nazi Germany, Hilberg writes, ‘there were men who deliberately brutalized their

\textsuperscript{160} Sofsky. 1993. Page 5.


victims, or tortured them, or derived excitement or amusement from their fate.

This kind of behavior was not particularly welcomed (in Nazi Germany) but
neither was it strictly prosecuted'.\textsuperscript{163} These actors pursued their sadistic will,
and the Nazi party provides the platform for them to do so.

Those who are brutal are often considered to be frustrated. Many of the sadists
and brutes have spent a significant period of their lives as social pariahs, outcasts
of a kind,\textsuperscript{164} and their empowerment as actors allows their frustration to be
vented. Hilberg notes, 'most often, brutalization was an expression of
impatience'.\textsuperscript{165} Sadism and brutalization of victims does help us to understand
why so often, in periods of violence, we observe killing for sport or long-drawn-out
painful deaths. If perpetrators were being forced to kill, they would simply
pull a trigger and be finished. Instead we observe acts such as 'small children
being thrown out of windows, or tossed like sacks...dashed against walls, or
hurled live onto pyres'.\textsuperscript{166} These kinds of executions clearly go beyond the basic
requirements of murder. To reinforce this statement let us remember that
sadism and killing for sport was 'was not particularly welcomed'.

\textsuperscript{163} Hilberg, 1992. Page 53-54.
\textsuperscript{164} US researchers from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
and the New York State Psychiatric Institute followed 540 children for 20 years
from 1975. They, and their mothers were interviewed in 1983, 1985 to 1986 and
in 1991 to 1993. They were then sent a questionnaire in 1999 on recent life
changes, work history, aggressive behaviour and relationship history, including
any violent relationships-the research found that the children who had
witnessed domestic violence were much more likely to go on and become violent
from: \url{http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/4011.php}, accessed on
22/4/14.
\textsuperscript{165} Hilberg, 1992. Page 54.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
Cambodia-specific theories:

As this thesis mainly focuses on the events that occurred in Democratic Kampuchea, it is relevant to highlight the Cambodia-specific theories that circulate which are geared towards explaining why certain people commit acts of violence. According to Hinton, Cambodian society is bound to a cultural model of disproportionate revenge, a feud culture if you will. He argues that Khmer people, more than others, pursue revenge and exact it several fold in excess to the original crime in which they were themselves the victim. Hinton states that this cultural model is instilled in children from a young age as they are taught to display practices of honour and shame. Hinton dissect the concept of disproportionate revenge, claiming that in Cambodia ‘one of the most chronic sources of violence...is grudge’.167

In times of genocide, Hinton argues that certain groups will channel and manipulate cultural modes of behaviour in an attempt to achieve the results that they so desire, stating ‘those who articulate genocide ideologies often use these highly salient cultural models to motivate individuals to commit violent atrocities’.168 Referring to the CPK, Hinton stresses that the party heads manipulated this model of disproportionate revenge to generate local fervour, ‘Khmer Rouge ideology encouraged the poor to take revenge upon the rich for past abuses’.169 It is clear therefore that Hinton is arguing that those who killed

---


169 Ibid. Page 143.
did so to right cultural wrongs, motivated by deeply entrenched external social norms.

However, Hinton’s theory has obvious drawbacks and limitations. Like all theories that lend themselves to analysing cultural specificities, it is naturally problematic to assume and attempt to predict that one nation will act in a way that is different from any other nation just because of a supposed culture, that all are supposed to adopt. ‘Culture’ is not a tangible entity that one can quantify; it is interpretative and transcends nationalities. To suggest that Khmer people are more murderous because they may or may not have a different relationship with the notion of grudge is very unsatisfactory. As Milgram and Zimbardo have both demonstrated, the same results can be drawn from a very different ‘culture’.

Looking specifically at the work of Hinton, Eve Zucker notes that whilst his work has limitations, it is applicable to a varying degree, ‘I would agree that for a few individuals, revenge may be a motivating factor in the perpetration of genocide, and for those individuals Hinton’s argument is plausible’.170 Zucker argues that a more ‘plausible’ explanation is the Khmer predilection for ‘gaining face’.171 She argues that it is in fact ‘face’ that is the most important cultural aspect when analyzing questions of why? She is also, therefore, a supporter of an externally driven motivation that has its roots in social expectations and pressures.

---

171 Ibid. Page 103.
The idea of gaining (and also losing) face is a cultural model that Marie Martin also puts forward when specifically looking at the violence in Cambodia as an explanation behind the question of ‘why?’ She writes, 'Khmer savoir-vivre is to avoid loss of face. This trait is widespread in Southeast Asia to varying degrees, but nothing – neither knowledge nor the coming of the modern world – attenuates it in Cambodia.'

Martin is therefore suggesting that Khmer people are, by their very nationality, less likely to want to lose face than their Southeast Asian counterparts; on which grounds she makes these strong claims (note her use of clear language) is unknown but her argument is a weak one when we consider the other nations of the world that have experienced similar levels of political violence. Her argument is particularly tenuous as she fails to concretely support her claims; rather she states 'to avoid loss of face means to persist in one's errors. Khmers do this with a great deal of elegance...an impassive face implies an immense self-restraint, the counterpart of which – explosion – may be through race.' Her conclusions are patronizing, racist and ultimately unhelpful in our understanding of why many Cambodians inflicted violence on others.

Marie develops her theory even further by stating that Cambodians (supposedly more than other nationalities) also have a heightened predilection for extreme behavior once society around them changes. She writes, 'Khmers easily become extremists once they forget social constraints. Further, once they assume power – when they can do whatever they wish – they do not try to get along with others: they purge or physically eliminate anyone who gets in their way...'

---

Cambodia) to match one’s neighbor, one must have everything he or she has. Here is the origin of the envious side of the Khmer character.\textsuperscript{174} Firstly, I challenge Martin’s conclusions on the grounds that she views this instance of violence in complete isolation without paying mention to examples like Nazi Germany, or genocide-era Rwanda and without also asserting that in some way Germans or Rwandans are particularly extremist. Secondly, her findings are based on nothing but the desire to simplify an extremely difficult question, and thirdly, it would appear as though this over-simplification is the extrapolation of an anomaly. I myself have lived alongside Khmer people for 16 months and categorically reject her claims. If someone was to read her works then they would be left with the feeling that given Khmer culture, regular intervals of political violence to this extent are to be expected given their desire (more than other nationalities and cultures) to be brutal and envious. Work like this further highlights the need to readdress the weaknesses and gaps in the literature that focuses on Cambodia.

As we have already observed, Martin is not alone in her cultural models of violence explanation(s). Elizabeth Becker also supports a model of violence that lends itself to a culture that is in some way inherently ‘Khmer’. Regarding gruesome Khmer folktales, she writes ‘Obviously a culture that produces such stories is not as single-mindedly gentle as its reputation. These folk tales are one clue to the nearly incomprehensible violence unleashed in Cambodia...a violence that has been a strain of the national character since at least the days of the

\textsuperscript{174} Martin. 1994. Page 15
Angkor era'. 175 Becker is therefore suggesting that folklore in Cambodia is one path to understanding contemporary violence of extraordinary levels. Interestingly, she does not make the same connection between the Holocaust and the brothers Grimm.

Khmer Rouge historian, David Chandler, argues that Cambodians have the capacity to display traits of complicity. The particular facet of complicity that Chandler refers to is that of the guards who worked at S-21 prison. He argues that there is something inherently obedient to superior order in Cambodian culture, which was apparent and lent itself to the efficient running of S-21 and lack of opposition to its function, ‘the destruction of enemies at S-21 was made easier because of the deference and respect that were traditionally due in Cambodia to those in power from those below them...this culture...had deep roots in Cambodian social practice’. 176 But this does tend to overlook the complicit behaviour of the guards who worked for Stangl at Treblinka, for example, and S-21 was never as effective at killing as Treblinka, so does that make Germans more complicit as people than Khmers? Milgram and Zimbardo’s experiments would suggest that a cultural model of this nature is simply wrong on the grounds that it is observed too much in isolation.

Embracing cultural models to explain specific behaviour can, at best, only explain part of the reasons why some societies have such high levels of violence and why

175 Elizabeth Becker. 1986. ‘When the war was over’. New York: Simon and Schuster. Page 83.
others do not. With regards to the weakness of this theoretical approach, Vickery stated, ‘Cambodia certainly is a violent society, but so is Thailand. All of the bad things that westerners can point to here in Cambodia, Thailand has it in spades’. Given that Thailand has not experienced a period of all-encompassing political violence like Cambodia has, one can only assume that any model of cultural violence that can be attributed to Khmer society can only go so far in explaining why Cambodia saw so much bloodshed. These arguments have been able to persist in the sphere of theoretical debate largely because there is a significant lack of literature that challenges the externally driven, top down narrative, which gives culturally specific, internally driven, debates a platform to survive. My own empirical research will demonstrate that Cambodia-specific debates are not required in order to challenge the top-down theory.

\[177\] Author’s interview with Michael Vickery, 13th April 2013, Phnom Penh.
Chapter 2 - Superior control methods.

This chapter will focus specifically on control mechanisms and the differing relationships forged between superior authorities and subordinate actors.

3. How do superiors ensure control over their subordinates?

For an in-depth analysis of the events that occur during periods of political violence, it is key to assess the extent to which subordinates can actually operate freely (if they choose to). As we shall discover, there are instances where subordinates are entirely free to commit acts of violence as they please, and whilst this may be indirectly beneficial to a superior, the literature and my own empirical data will demonstrate that it is rarely a required necessity. However, as we shall also observe, it is difficult to know how much of the exacted behavior is that of autonomous freewill or coerced actors blindly following orders.

In 1933, after thirty SA men arrived into a German town and savagely beat eighteen Jewish males in their synagogue, the very same thirty men were reminded in their church, by a Lutheran vicar, that ""Only authorities are allowed to punish...what happened yesterday in this town was unjust"".178 Whilst it may well have been in a superior’s interests to have these Jewish men beaten, this anecdote highlights clearly the point that I wish to make clear; despite what we observe, it is very difficult to know when a perpetrator is in fact straying from his or her superior’s orders.

Superiors can control their subordinates in a variety of ways, for example, incentives, threats, punishments, education and transferal of zealots. In periods of political violence, incentives may come in the form of promotions or financial remunerations. However, as I shall demonstrate, the easiest way to control subordinates who are pursuing their own interests is with violence itself. Upon the rare occasion that a subordinate refuses to inflict violence or kill, there are examples of subordinates being pressured with death itself for either themselves or their loved ones. A former-perpetrator of the Rwandan genocide stated, "Anyone who hesitated to kill because of feelings of sadness absolutely had to watch his mouth, to say nothing about the reason for his reticence, for fear of being accused of complicity".\(^{179}\)

Similarly, the fear and threat of violent punishment, or even death, awaits some subordinates who are considered to be underactive or lacking zeal in their duties. With specific reference to those guards and cadres who worked at S-21, Chandler notes, 'If they refused to work or worked too slowly, the guards and interrogators at S-21, unlike their Nazi counterparts, might become victims overnight'.\(^{180}\) Chandler's illustration demonstrates that firstly, the Khmer Rouge used the fear of death to motivate their staff, and secondly, that such policies are not universal in all politically violent situations. These are chosen tactics, calculated and used in order to control subordinates. As Hilberg's work has

\(^{179}\) Zimbardo. 2007. Page 15 / There are cases, most notably of the Nazis, where cadres did not face the 'kill or be killed' (or even punished) dilemma. Therefore, those cadres who commit acts of violence with no such threats are committing acts of violence more 'willingly', whether it is through zealousness or loyalty (possibly from peer pressure).

already shown us, those actors of the Nazis who ever delivered, were 'not welcomed'.

For many perpetrators, violence is not a day-to-day norm. Like Browning's ordinary men and Zimbardo's moral shift theory, many actors of political violence need to be engendered before performing acts of violence. This is another form of control. The chairman of S-21, Duch, famously said to his subordinates in February 1976, 'You must rid yourselves of the view that beating the prisoners is cruel...You must beat them for national reasons, class reasons and international reasons'. It was naturally considered that such reluctance needed to be 'overcome' and that was enforced by the threat of imprisoning the reluctant subordinate.

However, certainly in S-21, there was a balance to be struck between shirking one's duties and being too zealous. David Hawk states 'there are the (S-21) confessions of the interrogators who were themselves arrested for torturing too little and others arrested for torturing too much'. The control mechanism of the Khmer Rouge centre was therefore to ensure that the correct amount of necessary torture was inflicted. Failure resulted in certain death for the subordinate. That leads us to our next issue, how can a superior control a variety of subordinates at once, pursuing a series of personal motives?

---

In order to ensure that a plethora of cadres, all with their own personal agendas, follow their superior’s wishes, there are several mechanisms of control that superiors choose to follow. Firstly, the CPK issued a national publication, the ‘Revolutionary flag’. It included central policy and the regime’s desired work protocols. Much more will be made of this publication in later chapters. Additionally, interrogation manuals were printed for some prisons. One recovered S-21 interrogator’s manual reads as follows, ‘if “Angkar” (the organisation) instructs not to beat, absolutely do not beat. If the party orders us to beat, then we beat with mastery’.\textsuperscript{183} Clearly, subordinates were supposed to follow the orders of the superior, in this example, being referred to as ‘Angkar’.\textsuperscript{184} However, the mechanism of using publications and manuals is not a particularly strong form of control—it is easy to say that one has read the manual etc., but to actually endorse its message would require further policing.

Another policy, which violent governments/organisations often pursue, is the employment of particularly zealous cadres in positions where they can oversee the work of potentially ‘susceptible’ subordinates. Looking at the concentration camps, prisons, reeducation centres and execution camps, such places are invariably littered with particularly zealous staff who have been transferred to such places to ensure that subordinates do not stray. Duch, at S-21, has been described by his former subordinates as ‘scary’ and ‘intimidating’. Former S-21


\textsuperscript{184} The common meaning(s) of Angkar will be explained at the end of this chapter.
guard, Him Huy, described Duch in the ECCC as being ‘very firm and meticulous...he would apply a very strict rule’. Duch clearly displayed many of the ‘qualities’ that Franz Stangl had (and we shall observe at a later stage that Duch was also promoted).

Him Huy stated, ‘we were driven by fear. We feared being accused of betraying “Angkar” and we wanted to keep our own lives so we just followed our orders’. Employing a zealous member of staff was clearly effective in S-21. Furthermore, in Democratic Kampuchea, certain troops (notably Division 703 and the Southwest troops) considered to be particularly zealous, were moved to areas of the nation where the regime seemed to be failing. The transfers of the Southwest troops around Cambodia will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

The CPK pursued a policy of sending high-ranking party members to take political education lessons all around the country. Famously, like the Nazi rallies; the CPK superiors would stage party exhibitions in large stadiums. According to the ECCC’s closing order, ‘official communication took place in meetings and at gatherings at each administrative level as well as at larger rallies in Phnom

---

186 Author’s interview with former-S-21 guard, Him Huy. 27th July 2012. Phnom Penh. Him Huy has appeared in court and is one of the few former perpetrators to have publicly admitted his crimes.
Penh'. This method of information dissemination was to keep the subordinates 'on message'.

Much like the issues addressed with publications and magazines, the political education mechanism is essentially weak because it is an opportunity for subordinates to hear their superior's wishes, but it does not guarantee its endorsement. Communication between the superior(s) and subordinate(s) in general in Democratic Kampuchea can be categorized into the following methods, 'telegrams, field telephones, fixed-line telephones, messages carried by couriers, documents carried by couriers, face-to-face meetings, group meetings, large scale meetings, national radio and party publications'. Methods of communication are obviously vital in order for superiors to relay their wishes to subordinates but they infer no follow up monitoring or assurances that the policies are endorsed. As I shall demonstrate, a failure to monitor subordinates’ behavior after the initial message has been relayed accounted for a large amount of political violence in Cambodia.

With regards to the USSR, John Getty argues that issues of communication were in fact the main reasons behind the prevalence of lost centralised control.

According to Getty, poor transport and communication meant that despite


Stalin’s strict directives from Moscow, most local cadres in the periphery acted in self-interest.\textsuperscript{189} Similarly, Paul Hagenloh states that the USSR’s chain of command was incredibly poor under the rule of Stalin and thus despite directives being sent from the centre, the peripheral camps and socialist institutions were largely left to their own devices.

Within the Nazi concentration camps, Sofsky argues that orders from the centre became increasingly ignored as camp guards were granted an enormous degree of autonomy. Sofsky also states that Auschwitz met with the approval of Hitler but those who ran the camp were left to control the inmates with a high degree of independent initiative and ‘made decisions not bound by any rules’. Sofsky argues that the camp structure was a ‘multi-linear hierarchical system with a functional division of labour’,\textsuperscript{190} which was essentially decentralized, leading to ‘each section (of the camp) jealously guarding its own turf...grey areas that could not be completely monitored by the commandant and his staff’.\textsuperscript{191}

It was the mid-level authorities, Sofsky argues, not the primary centre that wielded control and command over the Nazi prisons, ‘The centre of real power lay with department III, the “protective custody camps”...The camp leader functioned as the standing representative of the commandant; directly under him were the rapport leader...The rapport leaders presided at the daily roll

\textsuperscript{189} With regards to my argument, we can therefore observe that geographical distancing affected the command and control strength in Soviet Russia.
\textsuperscript{190} Sofsky. 1993. Page 106.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid. Page 108.
calls...and prepared the reports on punishment and on the amount of rations'.\footnote{192}

Clearly there was a hierarchical disjuncture in the prisons, making it difficult for the central government to give directives to the site of exaction. This disjuncture led to the following phenomenon, 'each insignificant little blockfuhrer had more power at his disposal than the head of a civilian administration or the commander of an entire army regiment...the guards in the camp had every possible freedom-nearly total license'.\footnote{193}

As a direct result of the decentralization process that Auschwitz endured, the freedom afforded to subordinates meant that control was essentially lost, despite the clear command procedures that were supposed to be followed. Sofsky argues that 'the commandant's office, though set up as the local central authority, could not monitor all the spheres of camp activity as the camp grew; it was unable to reconcile structurally engendered conflicts and divergent interests...Formally it was functionally structured. Actually, however, it was constantly involved with a host of improvisations, corrections and rivalries'.\footnote{194} As I shall demonstrate with my empirical data from Democratic Kampuchea, the Nazi concentration camps were not alone in such conditions occurring.

A further feature of superior control is the issue of plurality. Rather than assume that all centralised orders are disseminated from one body, the more plausible reality of many episodes of political violence is the fact that there are often occasions where different factions of the centre will give a variety of orders that

\footnote{193} Ibid. Page 116.  
\footnote{194} Ibid. Page 108.
are often contradictory, yielding varying results. This issue can be observed in several examples of political violence, but perhaps the best example is that of the Nazis. Unlike Cambodia, Rwanda, and to an extent, the former USSR, the Nazis occupied entire nations, even if only temporarily. The Nazi framework spread over many countries, and thus required a hugely multi-linear command structure; this naturally led to a number of region-specific superiors. One such superior was the 'Imperial Commissioner' (Reichskommissar) for the Baltic States.\textsuperscript{195} Hinrich Lohse. During his tenure, Lohse did not want ad hoc killing to occur. In 1941, he wrote a letter to Himmler, stating 'I have forbidden the wild execution of Jews in Libau\textsuperscript{196} because they were not justifiable in the manner in which they were carried out'.\textsuperscript{197} Lohse’s subordinates duly followed his orders and stopped killing Jews of their own volition.

However, Lohse’s letter was responded to, by Himmler, changing his orders and reminding him that all Jews in the Ostland were to be exterminated, in any manner that it required; 'tell Lohse it is my order, which also reflects the Fuhrers wish'.\textsuperscript{198} As a result, all 7,000 of Libau’s Jews were subsequently executed on the sand dunes only a few kilometres outside of the city. This example demonstrates the different courses that subordinates take when different superiors pursue their own interpretations and discretions of their authority.

\textsuperscript{195} Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; the former Nazi Ostland
\textsuperscript{196} 'Liepaja', a city in western Latvia.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
This issue is of extreme importance if we are to truly understand what happened in Democratic Kampuchea. One example of CPK superior plurality that I wish to raise is the issue of the term 'Angkar'. This word has already been mentioned in this chapter and was translated as 'the organisation', but in reality it meant much more than that. 'Angkar' is perhaps the closest thing to have existed in Khmer Rouge terminology that we can refer to as a 'superior', but as we shall discover, it could mean an entire variety of things simultaneously. As I shall demonstrate the term offered individuals the opportunity to turn themselves into a superior, and provided the authority to those individuals to control subordinates as they wished. It is a word that has a completely confused meaning with many interpretations, and it is also a term that functions as a tool to remove personal responsibility for one's actions.

The Khmer Rouge originally intended the term to mean 'organisation' but in reality it could mean 'Pol Pot' (the head of the Khmer Rouge party), 'any party member', 'Cambodia', 'socialism', 'zone leader', 'regional leader', 'commune chief', 'village chief', 'immediate superior', 'disjunctured superior', or simply, a phantom. Having invested a great deal of energy into the studying of this phenomenon, perhaps the best definition of this term that I can conclude upon is simply 'not I'. It was a term that individuals used to remove personal responsibility for what they were doing or perhaps for what they wanted to do by stating that their behaviour was the will of the superior (whoever that may be).
Khmer Rouge expert, Craig Etcheson, described ‘Angkar’ as the following in the ECCC’s case file 001; whilst it was coined to mean organisation, ‘at different times to different people within the Communist Party of Kampuchea, this term seems to be understood in different ways. For some it referred to the entire organisation of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. For others it could be used to refer to individuals...For still others it referred to the top leadership of the Communist Party, perhaps including the Standing Committee...In other usages Angkar appears to refer only to Pol Pot and Nuon Chea’. Clearly, there was no systematic definition. It is a confused, unclear term, over-used in order to remove and abdicate responsibility and probably guilt.


200 Henri Locard highlights the difference between official party rhetoric and reality and also echoes the confusion of the term and its convenient usage as a means to absolve oneself of personal responsibility. Referring specifically to a document signed by Pol Pot and Son Sen in July 1977, Locard states the following, “The word “Angkar” and “Party” are to be used for organisations only, not individuals”, however, there is little evidence at the grassroots that the directive was ever implemented. Was the order, signed by both Son Sen and Pol Pot, just one ploy for these top brass to pass on responsibility for criminal activities to their underlings? At the time of arrests, local cadres always claimed this was done in the name of “Angkar”. If they could no longer use the generic name as an umbrella, it would mean the party washed its hands of responsibility for the worst abuse of human rights’. Locard. 2004. Page 100-1.
Chapter 3 - Communist Party of Kampuchea Staff and Command structures

This study will now focus its attention specifically upon the political violence that was experienced in the last century in Cambodia. The key members of the CPK and the command structures of the CPK will be outlined in this chapter. Of the higher-ranking CPK members, it is those individuals who were tasked with issues of security and political education who are of most interest to us. The following diagram represents the security structure of the party: 201

---

CPK command structure:

With regards to how the security network functioned in Democratic Kampuchea, perhaps the most telling facet of the diagram above is not the personnel members specifically themselves, rather the relationships that they had with one another. The structure is entirely vertically linked. A member of staff interacted with his superior or his subordinate, not those members of staff that shared the same hierarchical position; there was no lateral horizontal communication between staff. According to Duch, during case file 001, the structure was so strict that 'no one dared to communicate outside the organization because the Central Committee was the one who set this strict procedure in order to counter any tactics used by the enemy'.

Despite the linear, vertical chain of organization and command, it must be stressed that this does not imply that Pol Pot is individually, entirely responsible for every decision that left Phnom Penh during the Democratic Kampuchean period. The Standing committee, Central committee and regional heads all contributed to giving orders. Even as high up as the Standing Committee, Pot did not make policies alone. As Ben Kiernan and Steve Heder write, 'few of the

---


203 Highest echelon of the CPK

policies of Democratic Kampuchea period can be attributed to Pol Pot alone. His
close colleagues Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Khieu Samphan, Mok and Ke Pauk...all bear
nearly equal responsibility for past and present CPK policies and actions. The
collective nature of the leadership must be emphasized, even though the
“collective” included only a dozen or so leaders’.\footnote{205} The implication of this
statement with regards to the command structure would suggest that multiple
superiors existed simultaneously in the CPK. As we shall observe, this plurality
was a key factor behind one of the reasons why subordinates acted in very
different ways from one another.

In order to facilitate a command structure that was theoretically vertically rigid,
the party decided to divide the country into sections. Each section became a
‘node’ of control, ‘they [the CPK] instituted a regimented political hierarchy that
broke the country into sections and various subsections [called zones]...the
zones were subdivided into districts. Districts were composed of several
communes or sub-districts’.\footnote{206} At each divide, the CPK appointed a minimum of
one leader through whom they would delegate responsibility and orders
vertically so that their orders would eventually reach the lowest, most peripheral
level, ‘from this strict dividing of Cambodia into hierarchical areas, the CPK was
able to implement its criminal policies by disseminating orders down through

\footnote{206} ECCC. 31st March 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 2. Co-prosecutor, Chea Leang,
the hierarchy. Invariably, at each node, the CPK installed a detention centre, security office or prison where perceived enemies were detained, often tortured and then killed.

Graphically, the CPK divided the country up as follows:

![Diagram showing the CPK's zone divisions]

The CPK theoretically controlled each of the seven zones; the Northwest, North, Northeast, West, Southwest and East Zone. The seventh zone was the ‘Central zone’, which was created after 1977. Each zone had a secretary general who reported directly to the centre. These zone secretary-generals also governed over their respective districts and regions directly, and the subsequent

---


208 Author’s drawing of zonal Democratic Kampuchea.
communes and sub-districts through the medium of the commune chiefs. According to Etcheson, it was expected of these zones that they sent a report to the centre, 'at least once a week'.

No two zones were the same. As historian Andrew Mertha notes, below the CPK leadership, such was the degree of lower level discretion and autonomy, each zone displayed wholly unique characteristics, he writes, 'below the apex of the CPK of power, much of DK's national and local authority relations can be described somewhat awkwardly as “fluid but never quite jelling” or, more succinctly, as “parochial totalitarianism”, in which authority from the top was absolute, lower levels were governed by a web of authority relations that were constantly influx...in practice, this parochialism afforded DK officials a medium of latitude to bring in their own interpretations'. Mertha is therefore stating that underneath the most centralised decision making body, there were regional powerhouses that were working, at least in part, on their own.

Highlighting that the CPK structure allowed for a great deal of lower level decision making to occur in a structure that afforded wide latitudes and varying degrees of autonomy from theory into practice, Mertha states 'DK ministerial units were largely conduits through which to translate CPK ideological dictates into concrete, tangible policy outputs but the network of officials that staffed

---


them favoured an inward-looking management style in which behavior was intuitive and somewhat flexible rather than overly rigid and formal. He is clearly a supporter of the notion of lower level discretion rather than pure obligation.

As previously stated, I wish to use Ta Mok (the Southwest zone secretary) and the Southwest zone as a case study to demonstrate the extent to which the top-down narrative can only partially illustrate the complexities surrounding the violence that erupted in Democratic Kampuchea, thus the remainder of this thesis will focus on the Southwest zone. My decision to look primarily at the Southwest zone is multi-faceted but ultimately, whilst recognizing that zones differed greatly from one another, the Southwest zone offers the greatest opportunity to assess and analyse practical divergences from theoretical rhetoric and personality politics. In Chapter 6, I will fully demonstrate and explain the importance of the Southwest zone to this particular study.

Below is a graphical representation of the district/regions of the Southwest zone (each zone was denoted solely with a number).

---

212 Author’s drawing of the Southwest zone’s regional structure.
The Southwest zone was constituted of four district/regions; 13, 25, 33 and 35.

Finally, each district/zone was divided into sub-districts. Each sub-district was governed over by a commune chief. The diagram below is the structuring of the Southwest zone's region 13. It is at this final divide where the CPK employed the most peripheral of their 'direct staff'.

[Diagram of the sub-district structure of region 13, Southwest zone.

213 Author’s drawing of the sub-district structure of region 13, Southwest zone.
Beyond this level, each commune was made up of a multitude of villages and hamlets (usually between 6 and 10 in number). The villages were clustered into co-operatives ‘in which communal eating and work was organised’. Each village had a chief but they were not necessarily CPK staff (in fact, they rarely were), but they were answerable to the CPK commune chiefs. The commune would regularly send CPK cadres and ‘chhlop’ (night guards) to monitor the progress of these villages. The village chiefs, chhlop and informants would bear the right to arrest and detain ‘enemies’ in the villages, and if deemed guilty by the CPK staff in the communes, they would be collected and taken away to be put in district security offices/prisons, or simply murdered. Despite the seemingly linear, organized process of arrests and detention, the reality was far from institutionalized. It was very commonplace for villagers, convicted of wrongdoing, to be killed, in situ by other villagers and non-CPK staff, such was the nature of time.

**CPK prison structure:**

In keeping with the party political command structure, the prison structure supposedly followed a very similar, strictly linear pattern. According to Khmer Rouge historians, David Ablin and Marlowe Hood, ‘there was a prison-execution system operating throughout Cambodia at a national, regional, district and subdistrict level’.

---


There was one centralized prison, based in Phnom Penh (S-21), followed by an entire network of prisons, detention centres and security offices. S-21 was heavily connected with the central party. Subsequent prisons of lower rank and increased distance from the centre, were in theory the responsibility of the party but were also controlled under the auspices of the related level of CPK personnel, for example, a regional level prison would be the responsibility of the region head secretary. According to a statement from the ECCC, Khmer Rouge persecution was organized through ‘a nationwide network of security centres which were created throughout Cambodia. Mirroring the political hierarchy security centres were created in every subdivision and from one end of the country to the other’.\footnote{ECCC. 31st March 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 2. Chea Leang on CPK policy. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_6.1_TR001_20090331_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, page 10.}

The prisons, like the CPK staff-command structure, would be linked only vertically with the level directly above and below them. The theory behind this policy was that S-21 would be the primary node from whence the rest of the issues regarding detention would flow; for example, the most senior detainees would supposedly end up in S-21. S-21 would be the centre, and the most rural prisons would be the periphery. The CPK organized their detention system as follows, ‘from the communal prison at the base of the pyramid to S-21 at its apex these centres had but one purpose: to rid the regime of its perceived enemies’.\footnote{ECCC. 31st March 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 2. Chea Leang on CPK policy. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_6.1_TR001_20090331_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, page 5.}
Once a cadre, chief, militant or party member saw it fit to detain a perceived enemy, they would be sent to one of the prisons, and depending on the level of the prison or the level (hierarchically) of the detainee, they would either be ‘dealt with’ in situ, or be sent up the chain to a prison more befitting their rank or position.

Local authorities had the right to report and arrest individuals deemed guilty of infringements of CPK law. In general, the centre delegated discretionary responsibility to the local cadres to arrest who they saw fit. The centre distributed copies of the ‘Revolutionary Flag’, categorizing enemies, and the centre would also intermittently conduct regional ‘political education’ classes where higher-ranking staff would teach rural cadres about the standardized central narrative. Local cadres would then be in charge of arrests.

According to Etcheson, with regards to arrests outside of Phnom Penh, he argues that the most important part of the process were the district-level arrests, stating ‘districts were the key echelon in the hierarchy of Democratic Kampuchea because the districts maintained security offices which distinguished between enemies who were to be disposed of locally, and enemies who would be sent up the chain of command to higher-level authorities’. Etcheson argues that it was at the district level where the tipping balance of discretionary decision making

---

would be at its critical stage; the point at which a peripheral actor could truly operate autonomously from the centre if proper control was not maintained.

Additionally, the centre would also regularly send arrest lists to provincial areas if high-level enemies were thought to be in their midst, or if an individual in a provincial area was implicated in a higher-ranking confession then the centre would intervene. ‘Zone, sector and district security offices (would) also receive orders from the “upper level” to arrest and deliver individuals’.\(^{219}\) In total, the CPK theoretically presided over 196 prisons nationwide. Whilst S-21 was governed over directly by the Standing Committee, it was in fact a subsidiary organ of the Standing Committee that governed over the other prisons, ‘known as the Centre Military Committee (which) maintained control of security outside of the centre’\(^{220}\). Thus, it was the Central military committee who oversaw arrests and detention outside of the immediate remit of the Standing Committee, in Phnom Penh.

According to Duch (the chief of S-21), such was the strength of the vertical chain command structure of prisons, ‘that there was no horizontal communication


[between institutions].221 The command structure of the CPK in theory ran in both directions, both top to bottom and bottom up to top.

The prisons that this thesis will analyse are the following: (Kandal, Kampong Speu, Kampot and Takeo are the modern-day provinces that constituted the former Southwest zone). Hierarchical proximity from the centre; 222

---


222 Author’s drawing of the prisons for analysis.
The numbers in the bubbles represent their respective nodes, i.e. 1. Primary node, 2. Secondary node, 3. Tertiary node, 4. Quaternary node, and 5. Quinary node. In Democratic Kampuchean prison terminology, the 'nodes' relate to the

1. S-21 (Centralised prison).
2. Chrey O’Phneu (Region security centre).
3. Kraing Ta Chan (District reeducation centre).
4. Da Mon (Sub-district reeducation centre).

5. Phnom Sanlong (Zone security centre).
6. Chhouk (District reeducation centre).
7. Dang Tung (District reeducation centre).
8. Kampong Trach (District reeducation centre).
9. Phnom La-Ang (Region security centre).
10. Wat Kampong Tralach (District reeducation centre).
11. Kampot (Region security centre)

S-21 represents the most centralized prison being both closest to the party
centre in terms of communication, command, hierarchy and geography. Da Mon
sub-district militia centre represents the prison that was theoretically the most
peripheral in terms of hierarchy. Kampong Trach represents the most peripheral
prison geographically.\textsuperscript{224}

Nationwide, each prison was supervised and governed by ‘the police officers of
each zone...[the] police of each zone were under the direct supervision of each
representative zone and secretary...and each police office could not
communicate directly to one another—or with one another\textsuperscript{225}. The Standing
Committee members who ran the zones communicated directly with the Phnom
Penh-based Standing Committee. The zone leaders would then communicate
orders down the chain to their relevant police staff. Thus, the police officers of

\textsuperscript{224} Hierarchical and geographical proximity from the centre are therefore not
perfectly in unison.
\textsuperscript{225} ECCC. 30\textsuperscript{th} April 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 15. Duch on the police system of
CPK. Available from
page 74.
particular relevance to this study were those from the Southwest, working for Ta Mok.

It should be made clear at this stage that, in reality, the zone leaders had almost complete control over their respective zone militia, as they were in fact the military cohorts that belonged to the zone leaders. For most zones, this relationship was consolidated in the revolutionary violence that preceded the capitulation of Phnom Penh. Even at this early stage, during the revolution, the different zonal forces were receiving different orders directly from their respective zone leaders (who were the military commanders at the time). Military politics became extremely personalized and ensured one’s position was secured once the capital was captured. As Mertha notes, “throughout the civil war from 1970 to 1975, CPK forces were regionally based and largely autonomous from one another...conflicting orders from various military units guarding their “own secured” districts...(it) underscores the significant degree of autonomy among these military leaders who subsequently moved on to become zone commanders...(who) enjoyed a particularly expansive degree of power”.226 Therefore, it is clear that even before 1975, military commanders of different geographical locations were wielding power differently. The relationships formed at this time between commanders and subordinates, to a large degree, were to transcend CPK power even after they took ultimate control.

The practical function of a zone leader was very similar to that of a warlord, who had been assembled by Pol Pot to unite the nation under the political ideology of

---

226 Mertha. 2014. Pages 30-36.
socialism. The militaries of each zone did therefore not belong to the CPK directly, but to the zone leaders who were themselves members of the Standing Committee of the CPK.

The zones, therefore, had a degree of autonomy to control their own militia as they saw fit. The militias were the mainstay of all internal security matters, including arrests, detention, interrogation and execution. An example of this is the confession taken from Chou Chet (alias ‘Si’, the Zone leader of the West) admitting that ‘executions in the West Zone were carried out under Si’s own authority’.227 Thus, we can observe, the first major hierarchical disjuncture that could potentially lead to lower level order digression. The strength of the Khmer Rouge militia was not actually under the direct command of the CPK, rather the zone leaders. For these militias to carry out the exact orders of the CPK would have required that the zone leaders themselves were giving the same orders.

Communication structure;

Of the 81 interviews conducted with Cambodian citizens outside of the centre (i.e. those individuals not associated with S-21), not a single interview subject witnessed a communication technique other than that of hand-to-hand letter giving or oral message giving. No telephones or telegram machines were reportedly observed (though that certainly does not mean that they did not exist). It was a drawn conclusion therefore that letter/message giving and oral

---

reports constituted the majority of communication (in a state with few resources and finances, this is hardly surprising).

The most common form of communication with the Standing Committee itself were the Standing Committee meetings, which were supposed to be forums where the Standing Committee would relay its policies to its members and subsequent heads of authority. However, participation was not compulsory. 'Standing Committee meetings were always attended by at least two, and usually more, members of the Standing Committee, although several members of the Standing Committee had responsibilities as zone secretaries and thus they were frequently away from Phnom Penh and infrequently attended the meetings'.

To overcome this issue, according to Etcheson, the zone secretaries sent representatives in their place to receive directives, 'frequently senior cadre from the zones...would be invited...to report on the situation and to receive instruction from the Standing Committee'. Presumably, the messengers would then relay the meeting minutes to the respective zone secretaries.

Commands were sent vertically down, through consecutive nodes of authority, and we can only assume that the potential for the 'senior cadre' to misunderstand the Standing Committee’s directives or manipulate them for his

---


or her own ends existed. Furthermore, the zone leader’s interpretation of the 
senior cadres understanding of the Standing Committee’s directives may have 
been skewed, adding another variable of potential straying from the centralized 
directives.

Communication with lower-level cadres was supposed to be either conducted 
directly with one’s superior, or, cadres attended party training schools. These 
schools, according to Etcheson were places were the cadres were ‘indoctrinated 
with what was known as “the line” (which might be translated into ordinary 
language as the policies of the party and the government of Democratic 
Kampuchea’).\textsuperscript{230} Therefore, in theory, there were also instruments in place for 
members of the Standing Committee to teach the lower-level cadres the meaning 
of their revolution without the necessity to go through the zone leaders and 
other authorities. According to Etcheson, ‘party meetings were required to be 
held at each echelon at various periodic intervals, and this gave party 
committees at the various echelons more opportunities to discuss not only 
strictly party issues of organization and party – building and the organizational 
lines, but also to discuss the implementation of specific directives from the upper 
echelon\textsuperscript{231}. This would suggest, therefore, that ‘each echelon’ of the nation had at 
least some contact with the centre.

\textsuperscript{230} ECCC. 21st May 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 19. Etcheson on Party 
indoctrination. Available from 

\textsuperscript{231} ECCC. 27th May 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 22. Etcheson on party meeting 
frequency. Available from 
Nationwide, how frequent these trainings took place is unknown. In Chhouk district, Kampot province, the meetings took place approximately once a month.\textsuperscript{232} They were aimed at educating all units of the organization. Etcheson stated in court that these meetings were taken by the highest-ranking members of the Standing Committee including Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan.\textsuperscript{233} The accuracy of this statement is dubious given the unrealistic possibility of such a small cohort (the Standing Committee) presiding over such a large geographical area so regularly.

Despite the existence of superior contact and teaching, it was the zone leaders duty to ensure that the will of the CPK was being carried out, and if the CPK’s wishes were not in keeping with the zone leaders, then the subordinates of the zone leader would follow their orders rather than those that they received intermittently from the CPK, leading to lower level digressions from centralised policies.

There were also rallies that the Standing Committee organized which were aimed specifically at communicating directly with the lower-level cadres of the regime. For those cadres who also had access to the radio, the centre regularly broadcast their political line over the radio waves. The Revolutionary Flag was supposedly sent all over the nation and, in theory, it was not up for discussion

\textsuperscript{232}Information taken from the author’s interviews.
whether or not a party member had the option to study this publication, it was policy. There are confessions from S-21 that state that inmates accused of ‘failing to distribute Revolutionary flag issues to the cadres under their command’ were subsequently executed for this demeanor.

The Revolutionary Flag was intended to reach the most peripheral of cadres, instructing them of their revolutionary cause, and how they should behave. The centre regularly sent these publications to the countryside informing them about the party structure. The following excerpt is taken from the October-November Revolutionary Flag, 1977, ‘the Party Centre is the core of the Party as a whole. As it takes on large responsibilities, acting as a core is a must. If someone in it does not act as a core and cannot fulfill its duties; they must set them aside and let someone else who is capable of doing so fulfill them instead. This is our Party's organizational line’. In the same ‘edition’, the party centre advised on how the cadres’ political training would be organized, ‘cadres [will study] in the zonal and sector committees and there must be a system of holding revolutionary outlook classes on life sessions in the zonal and sectoral committees’. It would certainly seem therefore that it was the centre’s intention to educate the peripheral cadres, in the laws of the CPK, in situ.

236 Ibid. Page 11
Duch, as head of S-21, was tasked with ensuring that the cadres working at the most centralized detention centre knew of the party’s directives that were printed in the revolutionary flag, ‘I encouraged my subordinates to study the magazine personally’. Given the strict nature of the regime, it would have been expected of other detention centre leaders to ‘encourage’ their subordinates to study the directives. Failure to do so would have certainly resulted in death, but the extent to which the reading of the Revolutionary Flag and the implementation of its directives were policed nationwide is naturally unknown.

---

Chapter 4 - Primary node: The Party Centre and S-21

This thesis will now focus specifically on the dynamics of prisons and detention centres and their respective relationships with the party centre and other decision-making bodies that existed in Democratic Kampuchea. Prisons and detention centres are synonymous with political violence, and Democratic Kampuchea was no exception. According to historian David Hawk, 'the third, and highest tier in Pol Pot's pyramid of murder by government was a nationwide prison-executing system where scores of thousands were individually arrested, interrogated, tortured, and executed'.\textsuperscript{238} Each detention centre acted as a node of relative power, becoming geographically and hierarchical further in proximity from the centre.

The primary node of this analysis is the activity that occurred in the nation's capital, Phnom Penh. Both the party centre and the highest-ranking detention centre were located in Phnom Penh. The most important prison in Democratic Kampuchea was Santebal-21 (Security office 21), more commonly referred to simply as S-21. Internal and external security dealings of the greatest importance to the CPK were conducted by both the party centre and S-21. Craig Etcheson states, 'the party centre was known as the party centre because that is where national power, at the very apex of the organisation hierarchy, was concentrated'\textsuperscript{239}(as we shall observe, however, this was not always the case). S-


21 operated completely under the auspices of the party centre, being directly controlled by members of the Standing Committee, thus Etcheson states of S-21, "The security office that was associated with this penultimate node in the power pyramid of the Democratic Kampuchea state reflected the power of those to whom Duch reported". Etcheson here is referring to the relationship that existed initially between Son Sen and Duch, and then Nuon Chea and Duch. Their communication was direct, and S-21 truly operated under the immediate guidance of the party centre. Etcheson also stated that, with regards to its direct relationship with the centre, 'it makes more sense to view S-21 as a subordinate organ of the Standing Committee'. S-21 was therefore the penal institution that was most closely linked to the centre.

According to historian Philip Short, S-21 was the epitome of the state that the Khmer Rouge had created, noting, 'It was the pinnacle, the distillation, the reflection in concentrated form of the slave state which Pol (Pot) had created'. In comparing S-21 with primary node prisons from Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, Short notes that prisons of those countries represented 'monstrous aberrations, growing from the dark side of societies', whereas S-21 was a microcosm of the entire Cambodian nation. He draws this conclusion by stating that in both Russia and Germany, those outside of prisons and camps enjoyed

---

243 Ibid.
'certain freedoms' whereas Cambodian citizens, irrespective of which side of the jail bars they were on, were in some form or another bound slaves.

David Chandler similarly states that Cambodia en masse was itself in a nationwide bind. Using the terminology coined by Irving Horowitz, Chandler states that the entire country was 'a "sealed environment"',\(^{244}\) closed off from the outside world. Within the confines of the nation, S-21 was a total institution, a self-sufficient centre separated from the rest of society. Therefore, whilst Chandler agrees with Short that Cambodia, as a nation was not 'free', he does state that S-21 was a further separation from that of day-to-day society. In Chandler's view, S-21 was not simply a microcosm of Democratic Kampuchea.

S-21's primary function, according to Chandler, was to 'defend the Party Centre',\(^{245}\) and thus its day-to-day operations were such that those people considered to be of greatest threat to the regime ended their days there. S-21 was unique in that the detainees came from all over the nation, and covered a variety of ranks. S-21 was not, however, the first detention centre that primed itself on being the primary nodal organisation of the party centre. During their insurrection campaign, before capturing Phnom Penh from Lon Nol forces, the Khmer Rouge operated prison 'M-13' as early as 1970. M-13's primary function was similarly to remove the threats of their socialist revolution.

---

\(^{245}\) Ibid. Page 15.
Located in ‘Amleang, Kampong Speu’ the prison oversaw the inception of CPK detention policies and techniques. The head of the CPK special security, Duch, ran the prison. Alongside him were his deputies Mam Nai (Ta Chan), Meas Muth (Ta Meas) and Tang Sin Hean (Ta Pon). It was at M-13 that Duch et al began using torture and confession extraction on CPK enemies. During his cross-examination by Judge Nil Nonn in case file 001, Duch stated that the torture techniques used at M-13 were his own chosen techniques, and not methods that he was instructed to use by the party, stating, ‘I myself created such techniques’.  

It was during his tenure as leader at M-13 that Duch formed a reputation as a complete zealot of the regime, capable of carrying out the most unenviable of tasks. Duch had known Mam Nai from his days as a maths teacher ‘at the lycee in Kompong Thom’, Nai himself a biology teacher. Even prior to 1975, Duch had worked very closely with members of the—would-be Standing Committee, working as head of security for party centre member Vorn Vet in 1973. It was during this time that Vet’s deputy, Son Sen, would have noticed Duch’s precision and apparent lust for meticulous planning and detail. This is an important point as Duch was in a very unique position, able to form a very close relationship to the party. Other prison chiefs, as we shall observe, had to learn CPK policy.

---

almost immediately after their appointment. Therefore, he was in a much better position to implement ‘the will of the party’.

However, during his trial, Duch maintained that at absolutely no stage of his time of operations at M-13 did he orchestrate or decide upon who was to be arrested for the purposes of detention and execution. He stated that ‘a member of the Central Committee decided arrests’. Duch also maintained that he had no rights to release an individual once they had been arrested. Etcheson concurs with Duch’s statement, remarking, ‘I do not believe that the accused (Duch) had autonomous power or authority to release persons and I do believe that, had he done so, his position would have been in peril’. François Bizot was famously released from M-13 but it is equivocal whether or not Duch was directly related to his release. Etcheson does, however, note that there were circumstances where Duch could make some decisions within the prison institutions without the authorisation from a higher-ranking member of the Party Committee (for example, how much torture to inflict and the methods used). At M-13, with regards to arrests and the fate of prisoners after their arrests, one can argue therefore that Duch upheld the will of his superiors.

---


After the Khmer Rouge conquest of Phnom Penh, 'Santebal (security office) operations were transferred to the capital'. Initially, S-21 was in fact known as 'Office 15', where Duch himself worked from its inception, but not as its leader.

Son Sen gathered Duch to a meeting alongside Nat, a division leader of the RAK armed forces (Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea) to discuss the running of the prison. Nat had been head of Division 703, the arm of the RAK that had become the bastions of the Khmer Rouge struggle and who were extremely instrumental in the overthrow of Lon Nol forces. Thus, in 1975, ‘Son Sen appointed Nat as chairman of S-21 and Committee secretary’. According to S-21 survivor, Bou Meng, it was because Nat was initially in charge of S-21 that the decision was made to conscript S-21 guards and cadres from the division 703 rosters. Of those guards he writes, 'S-21 employed (in total) 1,720 youths, most of them ranging from 15 to 21 years old'. This is a clear illustration of staff employments who were close to the centre and who were regarded as being zealous about their duties.

The Khmer Rouge had specifically sought out these particular cadres during their earliest encounters of war with Lon Nol. Division 703 held a very high concentration of genuine CPK supporters, a very zealous cohort to say the least. According to Vannak Huy, some members of division 703 joined the Khmer

---

Rouge struggle 'out of a desire for revenge'. With the gravity of such desires, presumably transferred to their duties at S-21, it would have been a relatively simple task for any superior to turn these young soldiers into prison guards. Huy states, 'the Khmer Rouge quickly transformed these children [703 soldiers], who had never held a weapon, into gun-lovers and nationalists, and filled them with hatred and a desire for revenge'. Such a force would have been easily sculpted into obedient wardens, these youths had been the core of the revolution and now they were tasked with working in the centre that dealt with the handling of the issue of utmost importance to the party; security.

At the same meeting, Duch was appointed to be Nat's secretary. At that time, 'Duch divided his time between a sanetal prison at Ta Khmao (south of Phnom Penh) and interrogation centres scattered throughout Phnom Penh'. He employed his precision and expertise that he had perfected at M-13 and reinforced to the CPK that he was revolutionary zealot. His experience as a teacher made Duch an efficient and ruthless leader, commanding respect from his subordinates. Kok Sros, a former S-21 guard states, 'I was scared of him [Duch]'.

Duch's efficiency and effectiveness at work did not go unnoticed. In March 1976, Nat was sent to work in a military unit in the Eastern Zone, Duch was duly promoted to his position. Upon his promotion, 'Duch confirmed Hor, a former

---

257 Ibid. Page 23.
division 703 cadre, as his deputy, responsible for the day-to-day operations of
the office. However, Duch admitted he continued personally to oversee the
interrogation of the most important prisoners, and to be ultimately responsible
for S-21.\textsuperscript{258} From the standpoint of overseeing the daily mechanics of the facility,
Duch acted as an intermediary between the function of S-21 and the party centre
(and vice versa). According to Etcheson, ‘the Chairman of S-21 reported directly
to the very highest levels of leadership in the Communist Party of Kampuchea on
a daily and often personal basis’.\textsuperscript{259}

Because of this unique relationship between prison operations and the political
heads, it was undoubtedly the centre of tightest control by the party and the
‘main centre of imprisonment, tortures and massacres of all Kampuchea’.\textsuperscript{260} The
centre was supposed to be the party’s secret facility, known only to those who
needed to know of its existence. Former Party member, Tum, was himself
incarcerated in S-21 and pays mention to the fact, in his confession, that the
prison was intended to be kept a secret from the wider DK society. In his
confession, he made the following plea to Son Sen, ‘Brother, please save me in the
time so I can live...I swear to hide, until death, everything (that I know) about S-
21’.\textsuperscript{261}

\textsuperscript{258} ECCC, 30\textsuperscript{th} March 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 1. Se Kolvathy on CPK factual
data. Available from, \texttt{http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_5.1_En.pdf}
, page 13.
\textsuperscript{259} ECCC, 28\textsuperscript{th} May 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 23. Etcheson on S-21
communications. Available from \texttt{http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_27.1_TR0
01_20090528_Final_EN_Pub.pdf}, page 46.
\textsuperscript{260} Archive D40728. 1979. \textit{The extermination camp of Tuol Sleng}, Page 1.
S-21 itself was situated in central Phnom Penh in Sangkat Boeng Keng Kang 3 (BKK3) district, sandwiched between streets 143, 113, 320 and 350. ²⁶²

The vast majority of CPK leaders and heads were themselves teachers and educators, which is ironic given that institutionalised education was banished during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. However, perhaps more ironically was their choice of building for their most centralised detention centre, the S-21

building was once Chao Pohnpea Yat high school. There was also an adjacent building that was used in the complex that had been Boeng Keng Kang primary school. One can only assume that the choice of building was a decision made by the party because of the site's compartmentalised buildings, large capacity for operations, centralised location and ease of access to major roadways, but perhaps also the all too familiar surroundings of an educational facility were a 'home from home' for the party members.

S-21 was comprised of four main buildings; A, B, C and D. 'Building A' was used primarily for the detention of 'higher-ranking' inmates. Each prisoner was given a former classroom as a cell for detention. Prisoners in building A would be kept chained to their beds, feet shackled, for months as they were subjected to extensive confession giving, punishment and torture.

---

Of the 'higher-ranking' prisoners detained at S-21, the following list gives examples of such prisoners and their respective positions:

- Hou Nim (Minister for information of the Pol Pot regime)
- Toch Phoeun (Minister of public works under Pol Pot)
- Toch Khamdoeun (Diplomat)
- Chau Seng (Former minister under the Sihanouk regime)
- Phuong Ton (Agrégé in public law)
- Cheng An (Chairman of the industrial committee under Pol Pot)
- Vorn Vet (Second deputy Prime Minister in charge of the economy, Central Committee of the Pol Pot party).
- Tioun Tioeu (Doctor in medicine, Minister of public health under Pol Pot)\(^{264}\)

Buildings B, C and D were used for mass detention where many prisoners would either be chained together, forced to lie next to each other in lines against the classroom floors, or they would be individually chained to the floor in crudely built cinder block or wooden cells. Each cell was barely large enough to house a person, forcing the prisoner to be cock-legged as they lay on the floor. Ammunition boxes were used for defecation and urination but permission was required before one could excrete. Talking to other prisoners was absolutely forbidden.

Regulation postings on the walls of buildings B, C and D for the prisoners were as follows, 'Caution in Building "B-C-D":

1. You must absolutely not make contact with one another whether or not you know each other.
2. If you want to do anything, you must get permission from the guards.
3. You must not make sounds in your respective places.
4. When guards or other people arrive, you must not sleep.
5. During inspection, put your hands behind your back. Don’t try to be free."\(^{265}\)

Those members of the Standing Committee, who visited S-21, and certainly Duch himself, would have seen these instructions that were painted onto the chalkboards that were in the classrooms. One can therefore assume that such strict rules were in keeping with the will of the party. Many floors of the former-school prison complex had holes knocked through the walls to create both an external and internal corridor. The outside, external corridor, was lined with barbed wire to prevent inmates throwing themselves to the ground in an attempt to commit suicide.

Upon arrival, prisoners were blindfolded and bound. They would be taken to a room to have their mug shots taken and ‘(were) required to give detailed biographies, beginning with their childhood and ending with their date of arrest’. Depending upon the seriousness of their ‘crimes’ and rank, the prisoners would then be sent to the area of the prison that was most befitting their circumstances. Shackled, the prisoners would have to wait their turn to be interrogated.

Higher-ranking enemies slept on beds ‘and received the same (food) rations as the staff’ and some were even bathed and received medical treatment. Whether or not this special treatment was an attempt by the party to extract confessions more easily may never be known, but what is known, is that the

---

266 Ibid.
majority of S-21 inmates 'existed in a...world of misery and namelessness'. For the prisoners deemed least important, they were all shackled together by the ankle using one long pole. Men and women were separated and only the youngest of children could stay with their mothers, but were henceforth quickly executed, 'sometimes (after) as little as two days'.

Operations at S-21 followed a strict daily regime, for detainees and detainers alike. Inmates could be interrogated up to three times per day, starting as early as 5am. For prisoners not being interrogated, they remained captive in their respective cells, unable to communicate. Rations included, 'a few spoons of watery rice gruel...served at 8 in the morning and 8 at night'. Needless to say that given such meager amounts of food, those incarcerated for several weeks became severely emaciated. Illness was rife due to poor health sanitations and close proximity to others; healthcare for the majority of inmates was non-existent. Thus, perhaps it will come as no surprise that 'many died before they could be questioned'. In keeping with Browning's theory of enemy dehumanisation, prisoners at S-21 were treated like animals. This process will have been vital for many cadres to fulfill their daily duties, as most prisoners would have been socially and ethnically identical to themselves. Processes of dehumanization, worldwide, have been shown to be a common feature of centralised detention centres.

---

271 Ibid.
More than at any other prison or detention centre in the nation, the guards at S-21 received CPK-orientated training. Initially, the cadres themselves were picked under guise that they were particularly zealous, trustworthy and malleable.

According to Meng Try Ea, these ‘young cadres were indoctrinated, manipulated and cheated into becoming the builders of the Khmer Rouge revolution...with time, these young comrades became violent and brutal’. The young guards were first sent to a ‘technical school’ in Ta Khmao, a prison facility south of Phnom Penh. Like the guards, the interrogators also received training on how to extract satisfactory confessions. As we shall observe, guards at other prisons did not receive such intensive CPK-orientated training.

According to Hinton, interrogators were instructed in their classes that the party’s desired result would be successfully extracted by a ‘combination of “doing politics” and “torture”. The interrogators, like the guards, had to follow specific rules, given ultimately by the party, and ‘worked in a highly structured environment’. Irrespective of the training and dehumanisation process involved, even at S-21 there was a degree of autonomy available to both guards and interrogators, some of whom chose to go above and beyond their duties whilst others did not.

---

274 Ibid. Page 231.
275 Ibid. Page 234.
The interrogators themselves, despite having been instructed to pursue a political line of questioning and use ‘torture’ only when absolutely necessary, ‘many Khmer Rouge perpetrators seem to have used torture with abandon’.\textsuperscript{276} We will never know why some perpetrators choose to use torture unnecessarily, but to assume that it was pure sadism would overlook the process of dehumanization and other external forces. By the time of the event of interrogation and torture, the interrogators would have themselves not only feared for their own lives (given the intensity and direct contact with the centre) but they may well have viewed their victims with contempt. According to Hinton, ‘some Tuol Sleng cadres seem to have had an initial reluctance to brutalise prisoners’.\textsuperscript{277}

However, as we have already observed, Duch encouraged the cadres to ‘rid themselves’ of this reluctance. So whilst the guards were trained to use torture as a last resort, their immediate superior was also reminding them that torture, in the context of S-21, was not cruel or to be shied away from. Furthermore, S-21 was an environment that was rife with fear and perhaps most importantly, for most of the workers at S-21, they would have had first-hand experience of witnessing a former work colleague themselves being imprisoned at S-21, so the ‘motivation’ to not disobey Duch was strong. Duch’s sentiment naturally resonates with Browning’s theory; that any individual is able to be violent if one can remove personal liability through a process of dehumanization. Likewise, as we have observed, Himmler made similar speeches to his SS staff, arguing that

\textsuperscript{277} Ibid. Page 237.
the will of the greater good should exceed a subordinate’s revulsion of committing crimes that are immoral.

Beating and torturing when it was not necessary may have been a technique employed by many as an attempt to display to the party that they were supporters of the regime, to preserve one’s life more than anything else. As Hinton accurately notes, ‘the brutality of many cadres and soldiers at Tuol Sleng might be partly related to the atmosphere of fear and anxiety that pervaded DK in general and Tuol Sleng in particular...[as] those who failed (to commit acts of torture) could be accused of treason and be killed’.278 In this paradigm, it would seem as though overzealous brutality in itself was perceived as a mechanism to keep one’s life, and the rhetoric of Duch did little to alter this view. Every interview conducted with both cadres who had worked at S-21 and prisoners who had survived the experience commented on the extreme pressure placed upon workers at S-21 to follow the rules and deliver the desired results (namely satisfactory confessions). One survivor stated that ‘the cadres didn’t just perform every task that the superior asked of them, but they actually did more to try and please their superior’.279280 Another survivor stated that ‘I think that the cadres

---

279 Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 31st August 2012. Tuol Sleng, Phnom Penh.
280 The author’s interviews used for this chapter come from ‘seasoned’ interviewees. Whilst there is undoubtedly factual truth in their accounts and memories, their accounts have been shared many times with many different people. Therefore, one could argue that their narratives could partially be the products of memory and knowledge manufacture. All S-21 related interviewees have appeared in the ECCC courtroom as witnesses and have been cross-examined at great length.
had much pressure put on them, they had to follow and achieve whatever their superiors assigned for them.\textsuperscript{281}

Detaining the highest-ranking state enemies and the process of confession giving under interrogation and torture were arguably the most important functions of S-21 with specific regards to its relationship to the centre. Interrogation and confession giving is certainly not a practice unique to Cambodia, as it often appears globally in other politically violent environments. Stalin, for example, would ruthlessly interrogate to remove unwanted ‘microbes’ from Soviet society. The Khmer Rouge followed this practice in order to seek out the enemies in their own society. However, given that interrogations are generally conducted under the duress of torture, one can never truly believe the content of confessions.\textsuperscript{282}

When a prisoner was called for confession, they would, ‘first of all...list down all the people that that particular prisoner knew and after that they asked that prisoner to write down their activity relating to those listed people.’\textsuperscript{283} From their biographies, the prison staff would then decide how best to extract confessions from them. There were three methods of interrogation at the prison, ‘cold’, ‘chewing’ and ‘hot’. Cold interrogation was used for those prisoners of lowest rank who gave confessions with relative ease; the use of torture was not

\textsuperscript{281} Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 2\textsuperscript{nd} August 2012. Tuol Sleng, Phnom Penh.

\textsuperscript{282} The CPK themselves reserved the right to ignore a confession if they didn’t believe (or want to believe) its contents. For example, Pol Pot’s cook was accused of betraying the party but ‘Pol ruled that the charges should be ignored’. Short. 2004. Page 358.

\textsuperscript{283} Archive D15208. 1977. Letter of Pon sent to Duch about the Interrogation of the prisoners. Page 1.
needed. ‘Chewing’ interrogation was for those prisoners who needed to be interrogated regularly over a period of time in order to break them, psychologically and physically. And finally ‘hot’ interrogation was confession extraction under fiercely intense physical torturing, using the most medieval of techniques from toenail pulling to hanging.

According to the closing order from case file 002, the full range of torture available to the interrogators, to be used at their discretion were, ‘blows, electric shocks, a plastic bag over the head, and pouring water into the nose…fingers and toenails of persons undergoing interrogation were punctured and removed, at least one prisoner was allegedly fed excrement and others were forced to drink their urine…and applying an electric current to their genitals and ears’.284 Under such harsh conditions, all prisoners eventually broke and gave confessions (if they hadn’t already died during the process).

In nearly all of the confessions that exist today, there are admittances to having been ‘an agent of the CIA or an agent of the KGB, or having some kind of relations with the Vietnamese’.285 The party itself was obsessed with the idea of internal CIA and KGB agents being ‘burrowed’ within Khmer society, as Nuon Chea himself had asserted that these organisations, along with the Vietnamese, were responsible for the US bombings, and the large death toll, stating, ‘Cambodia is a

victim of the cold war. Admitting to being associated with such networks was considered to be an acceptable confession for the party, requiring no further interrogation, but as many a survivor has stated, they were forced into such a confession without even knowing who or what the CIA or KGB were, ‘the Khmer Rouge accused me of being a member of the CIA and the KGB. Because of that, the Khmer Rouge killed my family. I didn’t even know what the CIA or KGB was, and I still don’t now!’ (Interviewee laughs). The party was pushing confessions of these kinds to satiate their paranoia.

After a prisoner was accused and their crime was decided, the guards ‘made what we would call a report to the upper levels’. The party required constant, up-to-date reports on the inner workings of the prison. According to Ung Pech (the current director of the Tuol Sleng museum), ‘everybody reported up to the higher-levels’. The party published strict lines for the S-21 cadres on how to write reports, for example, the report guidelines were so meticulous that they even reminded cadres to ‘sharpen their pencils before writing’. The guards and interrogators had to follow this policy of reporting to the higher echelons as a means of control. Survivors of S-21 recognise that the prison workers had to work in this manner to preserve themselves, one survivor noted, ‘nobody dared to refuse the orders, so they just followed what the orders of their superiors

287 Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 2nd August 2012. Tuol Sleng, Phnom Penh.
289 Ibid.
were, even if that meant killing their own children or parents, otherwise they would have been accused of being enemies themselves'.

For the majority of the prisoners, their detention would last for ‘two to three months’, though some higher-ranking ‘enemies’ would be held for several months, resulting in several confessions. When each prisoner had given a confession deemed ‘satisfactory’, they were sent to be ‘smashed’ or ‘smashed to bits’, which was Democratic Kampuchean vocabulary for ‘execution’. In 1975, prisoner corpses were buried in the grounds of S-21 itself. However, given spatial constraints a new site for burial was needed. Chairman of the prison, Duch, decided upon a former Chinese burial ground located at Choeung Ek (now famously known as the ‘killing fields’). Located 13 kilometres from Phnom Penh, prisoners were blindfolded and put on trucks at S-21, and were then driven to the site where they were killed in front of mass graves. The mass graves contained hundreds of cadavers each. Before the graves were covered in earth, DDT was placed on top of the bodies to ensure that they were not leaving any living behind. Babies were smashed against a large tree. During the entire process, large speakers, mounted in the tree tops, played loud revolutionary propaganda and songs to both disorientate the soon to be executed prisoners and also mask their screams from those living nearby.

---

291 Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 2nd August 2012. Tuol Sleng, Phnom Penh.
Being the primary node of internal and external security, S-21 took receipt of prisoners from all over the entire nation. The personnel of the prison changed during the tenure of the CPK. In 1975, Nuon Chea, during a meeting, stipulated to the cadres exactly who was to be targeted in order to sweep the nation clean. The party purged the nation several times, the first of which occurred in September 1975, 'most of those targeted in the first wave of purges were civilian and military officials affiliated with the defunct Lon Nol regime'. The decision over who to send was made at the party level, not by Duch or the others working at S-21 directly. According to one S-21 confession, 'the Organisation put forth a policy of successively exterminating officers, starting from the generals and working down through to the lieutenants, as well as government security agents, policemen, military police personnel and reactionary civil servants'. The former Lon Nol associates, and political enemies of the regime were arrested and brought to S-21 for torture, interrogation, confession giving and then liquidation. The purge of these personnel lasted for approximately 12 months. David Chandler estimates that in this first year, 'fewer than 200 people were held'.

1976 saw the second purge take effect, similarly driven and directed by the Party's desire to rid the nation of perceived enemies and potential threats to the regime, this time around within their ranks, 'in October 1976, Pol Pot had several high-ranking CPK members arrested and imprisoned in S-21 in a move to tighten national security'. Within months of their rule, many CPK leaders had become

---

295 Ibid.
296 Ibid. Page 36.
suspicious of their own cadres and soldiers. The reign of terror truly began with this second purge as the paranoia of the party became insatiable. With the 'real' enemies disposed of, the CPK faced the challenge of justifying their right to rule in the face of failing domestic policies.

From confession extractions, implicated individuals were brought to S-21 to be interrogated. Only after one gave the names of those supposed fellow networkers of the regime’s downfall, would the confession be considered completed, therefore one had to give names, whether it be factually accurate or not. Those names gave the Khmer Rouge justification to continue purging, as Chandler states that the purges ‘(used) data drawn to a large extent from successive confessions’. 298 Whether or not those names used in confessions were truly enemies or collaborators will never be known. Those implicated in the peripheral areas of high-enough rank or importance were brought into S-21. They were rounded up either by ‘soldiers attached to Tuol Sleng (going) out to the provinces to pick them up, (They) were dispatched to Tuol Sleng from local level prison-execution centres’. 299 As the number of indicted persons spiraled exponentially, targets quickly became those members of society who were supposed to be the revolution’s victors, the peasant classes. No one was safe in Democratic Kampuchea.

Towards the end of the regime, S-21 had almost entirely transformed itself from an instrument meant solely for the purpose of removing class enemies and party

undesirables to a killing machine that liquidated the victims from every social sphere of an uncontrollable tornado driven by internal paranoia and fear.

According to David Hawk, ‘towards the end of Pol Pot’s rule there was a velocity and a particular perversity that even exceeds and belies the ostensible purpose and twisted logic of the place... (those) appearing in large numbers in the executing schedules—peasants, the people on whose behalf the revolution is supposedly being conducted’. S-21 was merely one functionary tool, among many which allowed the regime to provide itself with scapegoats for its failing policies and broken revolution. In sacrificing so many scapegoats, the regime ultimately destroyed itself. Hawk notes furthermore that, ‘looking at S-21 records (it becomes obvious) that the worse economically Cambodia became, “(more of) those being executed at Tuol Sleng as enemies of the revolution (were) coming from lower and lower down the social ladder”’. The Party would have known of the personnel that were entering S-21’s gates and made no attempts to curb who was being murdered there.

Ultimately, given the nature of increased centralised demands for scapegoats, the total number of inmates increased year on year. Having estimated that less than 200 people were detained in 1975, Chandler goes on to estimate that in 1976, ‘1,622’ people came through the S-21 gates, ‘6,300’ in 1977, and ‘5,084’ in 1978. Of the approximate 14,000 victims of S-21, Duch stated, ‘The “Standing

---

301 Ibid. Page 22.
302 Chandler. 1999. Page 36. N.b. The data is derived from the number of mug shots that have been recovered from the prison site itself.
303 Ibid.
304 Ibid.
Committee” of Democratic Kampuchea was directly responsible for sending prisoners (there)...as (the committee) made the decision referring to the number of people to be arrested.  

With the exception of captured Vietnamese prisoners of war and a handful of foreign citizens, the overwhelming majority of prisoners were Cambodian. Of that majority, ‘the largest group was composed of cadres, workers, and combatants as well as their relatives who came from virtually every office and unit in the country’. It is reported that 78 per cent were former DK workers, 4 per cent were those workers’ wives, 3 per cent were Vietnamese, and ‘the remaining 15 per cent of S-21s prisoners were a mix of new people, former Khmer Republic soldiers and officials, people described as ethnic Chinese, intellectuals, a small number of foreigners from foreign countries’. Having originally been a tool designed specifically to remove former Lon Nol officials and anti-regime intellectuals, S-21 became the anteroom of death for the very people who it was supposed to rescue. Almost 80 per cent of those who ultimately died at S-21 had at some point of their lives been supporters of the Khmer Rouge.

S-21 staff:

S-21 naturally required an army of staff, some of whom have already been mentioned. We shall now look at each member of staff of particular importance to this thesis, and their subsequent relationship with the prison and the party centre. Below is a diagrammatical representation of the S-21 staff hierarchy;[^308]

1. Hor at S-21 prison (Phnom Penh), administration for monthly education.
2. Hor at Prey Sar prison (Phnom Penh).
3. Num Huy at Prey Sar prison (Phnom Penh), reeducation, rice production, vegetable plantation.
4. Phai, Hor’s deputy.

It is generally accepted that despite its fiercely kept secrecy, the highest Party members themselves knew of S-21, Chandler notes, ‘there is no doubt that Pol Pot knew about S-21 and monitored its progress’. However, it was not Pol Pot himself that dealt directly with the chairman of S-21. Initially it was ‘Son Sen (who) was directly involved’. As deputy Prime Minister, Son Sen was well versed in CPK policies regarding S-21. According to Chandler, Son Sen ‘monitored its operations closely. He read and annotated many confessions...and ran study sessions for S-21 cadres’.

When Duch replaced Nat, Son Sen would have communicated with him instead. During his testimony in case file 001, Duch stated that he spoke with Son Sen by telephone, nearly ‘every evening’. Son Sen would similarly regularly send messages to Duch on how best to go about his operations; the following letter from Son Sen (‘referred here to by his alias ‘Khieu’) to Duch is an example of this;

‘Greetings to beloved Comrade Duch,

It is necessary to be careful (when examining confessions). In any case, each and every response must be conscientiously reviewed because some of their

responses also attack us (members of the Central Committee). Some of them
attack purposefully. Some of them are afraid and just talk and talk. Therefore it is
necessary to really be conscientious and really weigh things. Most warmest
revolutionary fraternity.

Khieu. 5th October 1977 313

In reminding Duch that he must conscientiously review every confession, it can
be assumed that Son Sen regularly reviewed the confessions himself and was
regularly kept up to speed with the day-to-day goings on at the prison. Similarly,
Duch would have been well aware of what the party wanted of him and his staff.

In 1977, brother number two, Nuon Chea replaced Son Sen. Almost daily contact
was maintained between Duch and Nuon Chea, as had been the case with Son
Sen. During the enormous purges it was Nuon Chea who instructed Duch and his
staff how best to deal with the prisoners, according to Philip Short, “so many
thousands of Eastern zone soldiers were sent to S-21 that it was unable to cope
with the influx...Chea said “there is no need to interrogate them, just smash
them”.” 314 Ultimate authority in security matters at S-21 was certainly
centralized. Each confession, once deemed satisfactory, would be signed by Duch
and then sent to the Party for secondary authorization. There are thousands of
confessions that survive bearing Nuon Chea’s signature and annotations.

313 Archive D16976. 1977. Note from Son Sen called Khiev sent to Duch. Page 1.
Whilst Pol Pot fiercely rejected the claim that he knew of S-21’s existence, according to a former S-21 cadre, Pol Pot is known to have visited the prison on at least one occasion. Former S-21 gate-keeping guard, Yin Lonh, stated the following during an interview with DC-Cam vice director, Kamboly Dy, in answer to the question, ‘did you ever see Pol Pot at S-21?’, ‘sure’.\(^{315}\) Yin Lonh went on to state that a handful of high-ranking officials would visit the prison from time to time, in particular to ‘visit’ high-ranking prisoners. Yin Lonh remarked that once the visit had occurred, the visited prisoner would then ‘disappear’.\(^{316}\) The Standing Committee therefore were clearly aware of the prison, and actively engaged in its operations, superseding the staff, their tasks and centralised policy.

Duch, as chairman of the prison (for the majority of its operation) was in charge of daily operations. Having gained a reputation as a regime zealot during his time overseeing operations at M-13, and equipped with his own staff who themselves were well trained in the art of torture, Duch was an obvious choice to be chairman. However, Duch has consistently maintained that he never wished to be promoted to the level of chairman (but felt that he had no choice but to accept given the nature of the party). He stated in case file 001 that, ‘I was regarded as the German Shepard, that’s why they (Chea and Sen) trusted me’.\(^{317}\) As we observed with the example of Stangl, a rational superior will invariably seek to

\(^{315}\) Archive KSI0019, 12\(^\text{th}\) May, 2005. *Interview with Yin Lonh*. Page 1.

\(^{316}\) Ibid.

employ subordinates whom they can trust and depend upon to carry out their directives.

Born ‘Kang Kek Lew’ in 1942, Duch grew up in the same province as Pol Pot, Kampong Thom that is located in central Cambodia. A variety of sources claim that Duch excelled at his academic work during his school years, it is reported that he came second in a nationwide maths contest. However, his former High school teacher, Khmer Rouge historian Michael Vickery, claims that ‘he didn’t stand out...he had acceptable scores, didn’t talk much in class, but like I said, he didn’t stand out’. One could argue therefore that Duch was ‘an ordinary man’.

In 1964 he was appointed to be an official at the Teacher Training School in Phnom Penh. Every source that worked with Duch, without exception, remarked upon his diligence, attention to detail and efficiency. He was the perfect tool for the exaction of putting CPK policy into practice.

The day-to-day running of the prison was conducted under the guidance of Duch, but he states that ‘whatever happened it had to be done through my superior...we could not evade from that’. Duch also stated in case file 001 that he carried out the wishes of the Party to the letter ‘for fear that I would be punished’. Given the previously discussed strict vertical nature of the

---

319 Author’s interview with Michael Vickery, 13th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
command structure in Democratic Kampuchea, if we are to believe Duch’s statement, the orders that he then disseminated to his subordinates would have been purely the wills and wishes of the party. Clearly fear was one of many mechanisms used by the CPK to ensure that its subordinates, no matter how senior, performed their duties and wills.

Whilst Duch was operating under the auspices of the CPK, he did have the ability to personalize some fundamentals of S-21, making some fairly major decisions of his own accord. For example, it was the party who made arrest lists, and implemented arrests, but once a prisoner arrived, it was up to Duch and his brigade as how best to extract confessions that would satiate the party’s desire for evidence that saboteurs had been at work (explaining their failures), vindicating their arrests.

Similarly, it was Duch who made the decision to transfer prisoners to the burial site, Choueng Ek. The decision was made largely on the basis that there was a genuine fear that the increasing number of corpses, if buried at S-21, would lead to widespread disease. As Duch was not going against any decisions that the CPK themselves had made, we can assume that the subordinate decision-making process at S-21 was actually welcomed. It allowed operations to take place without constant supervision.

From all conducted interviews with those who either worked or were detained at S-21, the overwhelming understanding of command dynamics at the prison was very much that in keeping with CPK directives. According to Him Huy, ‘everyone in S-21 followed their orders from their respective superior’.\(^{322}\) Certainly in theory, this was the model at S-21 that the party centre wished for, a vertical chain of command. Similarly, survivors of the camp agree with the aforementioned statement, one interviewee stated that, 'the cadres had to follow the regime, otherwise they would have been killed because the Khmer Rouge would have accused them of being enemies of Angkar'.\(^{323}\) Another survivor confirmed the command dynamics that occurred from Duch to the lowest level sub-unit guard, 'The command pressure came from the top all the way down to the bottom'.\(^{324}\)

Witness statements and factual evidence would unequivocally suggest that the prison, S-21, was a centre that was directly controlled by the CPK. Those who worked at the party had to follow their immediate superior’s orders for fear of ending up in S-21 itself. Unlike Nazi concentration camps, but similar to Soviet Gulags, those guards or cadres who were considered to have disobeyed the directives of the party would end up as prisoners in the very place where they had worked. The party centre directly educated the guards on how they should work, and representatives from the party visited the prison. Duch was in daily contact with a member of the Standing Committee throughout the entire

\(^{322}\) Author’s interview with former S-21 guard, Him Huy. 27th July 2012. Phnom Penh. Him Huy is one of the few former perpetrators who have publically admitted their own participation in CPK-related violence.

\(^{323}\) Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 2nd August 2012. Phnom Penh.

\(^{324}\) Author’s interview with an S-21 survivor. 31st August 2012. Phnom Penh.
duration of its operations. In this sense, S-21 truly was part of the CPK’s primary node.

Conclusion:

Despite the latitude for the interrogators to choose how to torture their prisoners, one could not ‘kill’ in excess at S-21, partly because of the strict nature of the prison, but mainly because those prisoners in S-21 would die anyway. It was more a matter of how and when rather than ‘if’. Interrogating, torturing and confession taking was standard practice as part of the inevitable execution of an individual. No staff member of S-21 had anything whatsoever to do with who was to be arrested. Even Duch himself could not directly arrest someone to be taken to S-21; those decisions were made above his head.
Chapter 5 - Secondary node: The Southwest zone, Ta Mok and Phnom

Sanlong

Moving down a node on the linear chain of geographical and hierarchical
proximity from the ‘centre’, this study shall now focus its attention on the
‘secondary node’. In Democratic Kampuchean terminology, this is better known
as the ‘Zonal level’.

After the conquest of Phnom Penh in 1975, the CPK divided Democratic
Kampuchea into seven zones (with their respective zone numbers and
secretaries);

2. Southwest Zone ('zone 405', Chhit Choeun (alias Ta Mok)).
3. North Zone ('zone 303', Koy Thuon (alias Thuch) until 1976, Ke Pauk until
5. West Zone ('zone 401', Chuo Chet (alias Ta Si)).
6. Northeast Zone ('zone 108', Ney Sarann (alias Ya)).
7. Central Zone (The Central zone was not initially part of the CPK
   restructuring, but was conceived in 1977. Ke Pauk of the North Zone
   became the secretary).325

The theoretical purpose of dividing Democratic Kampuchea into zones was to
allow the party a structure around which they could disseminate their orders,
playing on the pre-existing hierarchical frameworks of the nation. Ta Mok, for

example, was already the regional head of the area that was to become the ‘Southwest zone’, and his militant staff were to become the enforcers of the Khmer Rouge policy in that zone, at least, that was the theory. The zone would also follow the traditional command structure of a vertical chain. Unless granted special access, zones could not communicate directly with one another, but through the centre. One could argue therefore that the CPK in fact anticipated issues of dissidence, and installed a policy of divide and rule in order to prevent challenges from those operating at lower-levels.

The zone would then itself become a decision-making centre from where orders would theoretically be disseminated directly downwards. According to Etcheson, with reference to a document entitled, ‘Decision of the Central Committee regarding a number of matters’, he stated that, “the authority to smash is delegated to a number of organs of the party...base (level) smashing is to be decided by the zone Standing Committee”. This means that zone committees and zone party secretaries, in particular, had an independent authority to kill.\textsuperscript{326} The zone level was clearly therefore a decision-making centre in itself, and crucially, despite being subordinate to the centre, able to orchestrate ‘smashing’ beyond the orders of the centre.

As the party itself had few centralized military apparatus or command forces, it was a necessity that the zones functioned with the centre in the way that they

were intended to. The initial intention of the party was to treat each zone the same, imposing the same agricultural production quotas upon the residents of each respective zone, and the same socialist policies.

Situated below is a map representing the seven Democratic Kampuchean zones.

---

In addition to the seven zones, there were a number of independent special regions; the first was the ‘Kratie Special Region number 505’. The second was the ‘Siem Reap Special Region number 106’. There were also autonomous sectors; sector 103 (in Preah Vihear), sector 105 (Mondulkiri), Kampong Soam seaport (modern day Sihanoukville) and Phnom Penh city itself. All were considered autonomous sectors. In 1977, sector 103 and special region number 106 were amalgamated together to create a new North zone and the former North zone became the Central zone.

The two special regions and autonomous sectors, whilst immediately situated under the primary node, did not function as the zones did. The principle function of the special zones was to militarily protect the ancient city of Angkar (neighbouring Siem Reap) and the Vietnamese border. The autonomous sectors were constructed to transcend the zonal level, bypassing it completely and communicate directly with the party. The Central and Standing Committee had complete control and influence over all of these independent areas. Referring back to the same document, ‘Decision of the Central Committee regarding a number of matters’, Etcheson states that the special regions (106 and 505) were governed by the CPK, and that ‘smashing is to be decided by the Standing Committee’.328 These special areas were not governed over by a zonal committee but the centre itself. It is clear therefore that at this level, there were those zones that could initiate killings and those that could not.

Each of the seven zones operated under the auspices of the centre, with their respective zone leaders being members of the Central Committee or the Standing Committee. So Phim, Ta Mok, Koy Thuon, Ke Pauk, Nhim Ros, Chuo Chet and Ney Sarann were at some point all Standing Committee members.

According to Craig Etcheson, the zone secretaries would communicate with the centre primarily through the media of ‘telegrams and face to face’\textsuperscript{329} contact. In addition, Etcheson states that the centre would also actively contact the zones themselves, ‘leaders from the party centre would travel out into the zones...to observe first-hand what was happening around the country’\textsuperscript{330} It is clear, therefore, that members of the centre, at least in theory, were very much aware of what was happening at zone-level operations. In sending high-ranking members of the regime to the sites of action in the zones, the CPK was at least in theory attempting to implement the control mechanism of directly delivering (some) directives to a more peripheral area and, to an extent, observing their exaction in order to curb the zone-level subordinates from pursuing their own goals at the expense of the centre.

With regards to communicated information, specifically between the zones and the centre, the closing order from case file 002 states that it was mainly issues surrounding ‘the agricultural situation...the livelihood of the people and the enemy and military situation’\textsuperscript{331} that were reported on. Telegrams on these matters would be sent between the zone and centre as frequently as at least once a day. The zone secretary would be given a schedule as to when their telegram was to be expected by the centre.

The zone secretary did not control the zone on his or her own; every secretary was part of a larger zone committee. According to Meng-Try Ea, the committee was usually made up of at least three individuals, responsible for ‘economic, military and security matters’.\textsuperscript{332} The committee would compile reports, based on their own reports (received from the lowest levels of their jurisdiction), which would then be forwarded on to the centre. The following is an example report, written in 1977, about the defense and economic situation in the Southwest zone;

‘Report to respected and beloved Angkar,

re: The living standard and health of the people in the four regions (13, 25, 33 and 35). Nowadays, the people have gotten cholera, and some people have died.

\textsuperscript{332} Meng-Try Ea. 2005. \textit{The chain of terror: the Khmer Rouge southwest zone security system}. Phnom Penh: Documentation centre of Cambodia. Page 20
Therefore, the local hospitals have launched campaigns against this disease by sending medical workers to examine and treat patients,

3rd June 1977,
Southwest Zone’

This kind of report was a tool of the zone, designed to keep the centre ‘up to date’ with daily activities. However, these reports were certainly brief and with little reliance on concrete evidence or use of statistics, we can argue therefore that their function as an informative tool was secondary to the process of communication in general. As a result of these reports, the centre could then choose to act. However, the centre rarely forced the hand of the zone, allowing the zone committee the autonomy to react to their localized situations as they themselves saw fit. According to Steve Heder, ‘the Zone Party committees were to lead and implement policy down to the district level and below’.

It was their role to ensure that party rhetoric and practice was disseminated throughout.

The zones were designed to function as a linchpin for interactions and control between the centre and the lower-levels. According to Etcheson, such was the strength of this narrative that it was actually formally implemented into CPK statute law, noting, ‘article 19 of the CPK statutes describes the security and

responsibilities of the zones. Zone committees were responsible for cadres'. Furthermore article 19 stipulated that '(the) zone committee was to enforce discipline in the zone framework'. Therefore it is clear that it was in fact the zone's legal responsibility to carry out certain tasks on behalf of the centre, including issues of security.

In Heder's 'reassessing the roles of the senior leaders', he states that the 'linkage between the Centre and the districts was mediated via the zones...leading zone and sector cadres came to Phnom Penh for regular meetings and special consultations with Pol Pot and Nuon Chea, and there was also much written communication back and forth between the Centre and the zones'. This reaffirms the notion that zones played a pivotal role in the communication and command chain between the centre and the periphery.

The zones were to communicate and enforce the directives of the party to the regions, sectors, districts, sub-districts, communes, co-operatives and villages that it governed over, 'the statute of the CPK states that the tasks and functions of the zone committees were to "lead the implementation of tasks"...as such, they

(the zones) were empowered to “designate new work according to the Party line”.

This allowed the zone the ability to control its own internal security matters and issues. The zones were authorized to inflict legitimized violence as they wished.

Despite the zones being implemented as intermediaries, each zone was very different. In reality, there was no official blueprint for the zones to follow, and whilst the publications and socialist rhetoric was sent nationwide, there were so many entrenched nuances in each zone that it would have been impossible to even consider that each zone would have behaved in the same way or delivered similar results. Each zone maintained independence, autonomy and freedom both from other zones, and also from the centre itself. One could argue therefore that the CPK was unable to entirely control each of the zones as they might have wished. However, as we shall observe, there were incidences where it was actually in the CPK’s own interests to let the zones pursue their own ends.

Looking initially at 1973, five of the initial six zone secretary leaders were promoted to Standing Committee status. Whilst one could interpret this as the CPK’s desire to reward particularly-zealous Khmer Rouge supporters with such senior positions, the reality is much more likely that the party required traditional area leaders, already armed with their own military forces, to be a part of the revolution to take the nation from Lon Nol and his forces. Michael

Vickery notes that, ‘Pol Pot never commanded any troops. A year after 1975, he tried to put all the troops together into a single army but still much of the army was under the regional leaders who were then made zone chiefs’. 339

The dynamic of the relationship between the zones, their respective leaders and the party was therefore far from straightforward. Each zone secretary held their own military strength, superior to anything that the party on its own could muster, and invariably these militias were never more faithful to Pol Pot than their respective zonal leader. 340 As we shall discover with Southwest zone chief, Ta Mok, his troops were faithful to him above all others. Furthermore, the zone secretaries themselves, for the majority, were influential members of the party itself. If the party were to implement any kind of change or policy in a zone that required military strength, they would need the co-operation of at least one of the other zones. The evidence would suggest that the zone staff were deferential to their zone secretary above that of the centralized party, as Duch states, ‘I would like to emphasise that police officers of each zone was under the direct supervision of each representative zone and secretary’. 341 Ultimately, control was not completely in the hands of those centre heads located in Phnom Penh, control lay in their ability to manage the zones themselves.

---

339 Author’s interview with Michael Vickery. 13th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
To an extent, the zone heads had their own agendas, and each zone committee had to govern their respective zones differently because the problems that they faced differed from zone to zone. After the evacuations of the cities in 1975, new people were forced to live with base people. Depending on the zone, and the degree to which there were preexisting feelings of social malaise, this policy had hugely differing effects. According to Vickery, feelings of proletarian hatred of the new people were particularly stark in the Northwest zone, specifically in the villages that surrounded the former city of Battambang. The area had been a Lon Nol stronghold, with the posting of thousands of troops who had ‘rounded people up and massacred them previous to 1975’.342

Once the Khmer Rouge had removed Lon Nol from Phnom Penh, the peasants in the Northwest began to kill new people in their droves and themselves ‘massacred the former Lon Nol soldiers (in the area)’.343 It was this specific example, given by Vickery, that led him to state (as mentioned in the introduction), ‘Pol Pot couldn’t have stopped them, even if he’d wanted to!’344 We can observe therefore a key reason behind the ‘why did they kill?’ argument. In the newly founded DK society, subordinates of the regime were free to exercise violence on behalf of the CPK. In the regime’s infancy, the enemies of the centre and the people were very similar, namely the former regime workers of Lon Nol.

342 Author’s interview with Michael Vickery. 13th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
343 Ibid.
The lower level subordinates therefore attacked the former Lon Nol soldiers with gusto. Much like the frenzy of violence associated with events such as Kristallnacht, actions occurring soon after the dawn of a 'new law' demonstrate to us the extent to which social malaise can fuel violence. However, as we shall observe in the Khmer Rouge context, after the CPK's enemies had been removed, the enemies of the state and the enemies of the people differed greatly as feelings of social malaise persisted.

These grievances were obviously heightened in areas of poverty, social imbalance and skewed land ownership, for example, one third of the rural population in Takeo (a town in the Southwest zone) owned less than one hectare of land by the late 1960s, and this in part contributed, in the 1970s, to violent eruptions by the proletariat classes. Historian Ben Kiernan writes, 'there was a class of rootless, destitute rural dwellers with very few ties to the land' and it was from this class that 'the 1970 peasant uprisings against Lon Nol (began)...the major centre of anti-government activity was Ang Ta Soam in Takeo province in the Southwest'.

Conditions that preceded the CPK victory were in some parts of the nation channeled into social hatred. According to Kiernan, 'in July and August 1973 the Southwest zone of Cambodia was carpet-bombed...the impact of this bombing in the Southwest tipped what had been a delicate CPK factional balance there in

---

345 Kiernan. 2008. Page 6
346 Ibid.
347 Ibid. Page 214.
favour of Pol Pot's "centre" group. The bombing was a tragic afterthought from the US government, conducted under the guise of wishing to wipe out the Viet Cong, believed to be hiding in the jungles on the Cambodia-Vietnam border. Below is a map depicting the extent to which the Southwest was bombed by the Nixon government; (the purple dots represent cluster bombs, the red dots represent tactical bombs and the yellow dots represent bombings by US 852 planes).  

---


349 Combined mine area and US bombing data (n.d.). Available from: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-E-aOs6khjb4/T4wFwsmQ6yI/AAAAAAAAT1I/eldyZrfN8UQ/s1600/PNP_Kampot_USBombing5.jpg, accessed on 9/1/2014. The total death toll associated with these bombings varies, but Khmer Rouge historian, Solomon Kane estimates that 'the (bombing) campaign would have made 300,000 to 1,000,000 victims among the Khmer Rouge guerillas and civilians'. Solomon Kane, 2007. Dictionnaire des Khmers Rouges. Bangkok: IRASEC. Page 56. However, political scientist Professor Marek Sliwinski estimates that the figure was in the region of 'about 53,000 people, both civilians and military'. Henri Locard. 2008. Accuracy is of the essence for new Khmer Rouge dictionary. Phnom Penh Post, October 1st 2008. Page 1.
Once the Khmer Rouge had taken Phnom Penh, those Southwest cadres who had fought for the revolution returned to working and fighting directly for Ta Mok, not Pol Pot or another force that was based in the capital. The capital itself had relatively few standing militia members, the majority were sent to the zones to oversee the revolution and ensure its implementation, at least that was the theory. They had been instrumental in the revolution but no longer served the party in the same way. The party was therefore, militarily speaking, at the mercy of the zonal warlords.

A further issue for zonal differentials was the requisite rice quota. The CPK stipulated that every hectare of Cambodian paddy field was to produce three tons of rice, a policy that was at the very basis of their revolution. This figure of three tons was nonnegotiable, as the party believed that it was not an unrealistic quota despite the fact that ‘none of these guys (in the party) were agricultural specialists’. According to Michael Karnavas, ‘this agricultural policy was certainly possible in some areas, but not everywhere’. Given the potential difference of rice production, and the importance that the centre placed upon these quotas, the zone’s relationships with Phnom Penh obviously differed enormously. The inability to deliver rice and meet the quota was often reason enough to accuse individuals of sabotaging the regime. For example, the village

---

350 Author’s interview with Michael Vickery. 13th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
351 Author’s interview with Michael Karnavas. 26th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
of Kraing Ta Chan in the Southwest zone sent an individual to prison for stealing rice and 'burying it underground'. They were subsequently executed.

In addition to the rice quota issue, a zone's proximity to Vietnam, or at least the areas where Vietnamese insurgencies were taking place, also seemed to be a factor in a zone's relationship with the Central and Standing Committee. Throughout the era of Democratic Kampuchea, the Cambodia-Vietnamese border was a hotbed of insurgencies and conflict. Not to waste the opportunity to turn these conflicts into propaganda and excuses as to why the regime was failing to meet its own demands, the party blamed these insurgencies on the troops stationed in the zones that were affected. The blame in some circumstances went to the very top of the zone.

The Southwest zone and the Eastern zone were two zones that bordered Vietnam that demonstrate perfectly the differences that any particular zone could have with the centre. Post 1975 saw an increased concentration of border controversies as troops from both Cambodia and Vietnam invaded their respective neighbours. As Vietnamese insurgencies grew in number, the party looked for scapegoats to explain these raids. Given the different relationships that the Centre had with the zone secretary of the Southwest, Ta Mok, and the East zone secretary, So Phim, the directives from the centre were polar opposite, as were the outcomes. Ta Mok was given the license to deal with his troops on the border as he saw fit, which resulted in 'the Southwest Zone army receiving an order from Ta Mok to gather up troops stationed along the Cambodia-

Vietnam border in Takeo province, load them onto trucks, and send them to the zone security centre (prison). Ta Mok had these troops murdered, and then had their wives and children murdered as well. The zone committee, however, remained in tact and no blame was placed on Ta Mok himself. Ta Mok was given the freedom to deal with the problem himself.

The Eastern zone, however, was handled in a completely different manner. The party decided that the entire zone had to be purged from top to bottom to remove the internal enemies. The party accused the Eastern zone cadres of conspiring with the Vietnamese and intentionally sabotaging the regime. As has been previously mentioned, the party did not themselves possess an armed force that could rival that of a zone secretary, so the party had to outsource their need for military strength to another zone in order to purge the East. Unsurprisingly, they chose the zone leader whom they believed was their closest ally and revolutionary zealot, one Ta Mok.

The zone cadres of the Southwest were generally considered to be the most reliable as they were operating under the fiercely enthusiastic Ta Mok, and many of the military leaders were in fact handpicked by Ta Mok (Meas Muth, for example, the former Navy commander for the zone, was Ta Mok’s son-in-law). The party centre requested that Ta Mok and his band of followers purge the East.

---

‘when the Southwest became the stronghold of the Pol Pot regime and Mok went on to purge’. Indeed thousands of Eastern zone cadres were killed ‘(by) his (Mok’s) Southwest zone troops in the purge of the East’, either in situ, or were sent to prisons. We are therefore observing a CPK control mechanism of using the most zealous actors (in this case, the Southwest cadres) as pawns of regionalized control in areas of susceptibility.

Such was the strength and influence of the Southwest zone cadres, staff, troops and secretary (Ta Mok), that he was to go on to orchestrate and facilitate purges all across the nation. When the other zones failed to deliver on their rice quotas, and the CPK required yet further scapegoats, it was Ta Mok whom they used. At the beginning of the regime, ‘he (Mok) was formally number 7 in the CPK hierarchy, and by the end of the regime, he was de facto Number 3...as a full rights member of the Standing Committee across the course of the entire regime, it is clear that Mok was a key actor of the Party Centre’.

Ta Mok was certainly in a unique position as a zone secretary when compared with other secretaries. By 1978, he had purged the East Zone, West Zone and Northwest Zone. After the purges, Mok’s Southwest zone cadres replaced the former cadres of the respective zones. Kiernan notes after the purges, ‘early 1977 saw...cadres selected by the Pol Pot group from the Southwest Zone started to arrive in the villages’. The party followed the classic policy of replacing

---

356 Author’s interview of Craig Etcheson. 23rd November 2012. Phnom Penh.
357 Ibid.
former heads with their own people. In Ta Mok, the party had an individual who they knew they could not control and feared, but also believed that his actions and intentions were closer to their own than the former zone secretaries.

The Northwest zone is a classic example of the centralized-party refusing to accept or acknowledge that failure to deliver on policy demands may have in fact been unrealistic expectations and poorly executed regime education dissemination. In 1976, Ieng Thirith, wife of Ieng Sary, visited the Northwest zone and was in a state of disbelief when she discovered the ‘truth’, ‘she found out that people were suffering and starving and stuff which was not the way that things were supposed to be...her interpretation was that the saboteurs had gotten in and caused this’.359 Clearly the party would not even entertain the idea that perhaps they themselves had made a mistake and instead looked for a suitable culprit, even if that meant the zone secretaries themselves.

Ieng Thirith relayed this interpretation to journalist Elizabeth Becker, stating, ‘the Northwest zone secretary Ruoh Nheum, East zone secretary So Phim and other such local party bosses had “all the power” in the countryside where they were using their authority’.360 If this account is to be believed then it is fair to say that the party was quick to lay the blame on the secretaries that they themselves empowered rather than internalize the problem and look to readdress their own policies.

359 Author’s interview with Michael Vickery. 13th April 2013. Phnom Penh.
This mechanism is certainly not specific to the CPK. Another example of intermediary actor removal after centralised disapproval is that of former Treblinka death camp commandant, Irmfried Eberl. Eberl was relieved of his position after it was discovered that he was not following Nazi protocol and was ordering and murdering far too many Jews through the Treblinka death machine, temporarily dragging the camp’s operations to a halt. Former staff member, Willi Mentz, wrote of Eberl, ‘when I came to Treblinka the camp commandant was a doctor named Dr. Eberl. He was very ambitious. It was said that he ordered more transports than could be ‘processed’ in the camp’. Upon its discovery, Eberl was removed from his position, ‘Hauptsturmführer Christian Wirth came to Treblinka and kicked up a terrific row. And then one day Dr. Eberl was no longer there’. Like the especially zealous Ta Mok had replaced the other intermediary actors who had been removed, Eberl was replaced by Nazi party favourite, Franz Stangl. Stangl, as we have observed, was also very ‘ambitious’, but was so within the confines of the Nazis’ expectations.

Ta Mok and his men also took the West zone to task. Ta Mok and Chou Chet (zone secretary of the west) had initially governed the old Southwest zone together. Both enthusiastic revolutionaries, their interests conflicted and a power struggled ensued. The old Southwest zone was eventually split into a new Southwest zone and a West zone in order to prevent a full-blown conflict, to

362 Ibid.

After the purge of the West zone, Chou Chet found himself in S-21. His confession reads as follows;

‘To my respectful and beloved Revolutionary Party:

...I see the mistakes I have committed in my life.... However, at this time, I would like to deeply beg for my life from the Communist Party of Kampuchea...please, the party, forgive me.

20\textsuperscript{th} May 1978

Chou Chet, alias Sy


It is clear that for most of the zone secretaries, there was no safety in their position, anybody it would seem could end up on the wrong side of the law. Only the strength, zeal and fear of Ta Mok himself kept him safe from the ‘upper brothers’. Given that the staff of the Southwest were loyal to Ta Mok above all else, it is hardly surprising that the party feared him.

If we are to assume that the ‘secondary node’, the zonal level, represents the first delegation of power both geographically and hierarchically, the CPK faced an issue; how does one ensure that the will of the party is being implemented now
that the party is not the first point of contact or the primary initiator of order?
The original party plan was clearly to divide the nation up into zones, and then communicate with the lowest levels through the zone secretary. When the party desires and wills were not being met (as they perceived it), invariably the entire zone staff took the brunt. Their initiative, therefore, was to transcend this disjuncture by implementing staff that they believed they could trust to carry out their revolution, that of the Southwest staff.

It is clear that the theoretical purpose of the zones and the reality of their functions differed. According to Heder, ‘formal policy and formal structures didn’t operate as they were supposed to operate on paper’. He states that the function of the zone was essentially to ‘review the districts’ work and give forward planning, passing on the line to the centre, explaining party policies and urging their implementation, giving their own instructions and ‘sorting out’ specific problems’. However, the reality seems to have been much more brutish. The party required scapegoats to explain their failures, and given the extent to which the nation reeked of paranoia and fear, the witch-hunt was to consume those members of the party who had been entrusted as the zone secretaries, for example, Koy Thuon of the North zone was accused of being a

CIA\textsuperscript{367} agent and was subsequently whisked off to S-21. Ultimately only Ta Mok survived the reality of the zone dynamics, as arguably, the Southwest zone did not actually function as a zone proper, rather as an armed wing of the central party.

This thesis will now focus specifically on the Southwest zone, Ta Mok and the respective prisons and security centres that were located in the Southwest zone. As we have already discussed, each DK zone was unique and therefore the following analysis of the Southwest zone is not intended to serve as a template for the other zones—they were all very different. Similarly, Ta Mok, as a zone secretary was not similar to the other zone secretaries.

The Southwest Zone:

The decision to choose the Southwest zone as my case study has several explanations. As it has already been made clear, the Southwest zone has many interesting qualities, with both very interesting personality politics and a specific uniqueness that makes the zone particularly fascinating. I have already paid mention to the pre-1975 revolutionary background of the zone, and the particularly autonomous relationship that Ta Mok had with the rest of the CPK. I have also already mentioned the fact that the zone was considered to be particularly zealous and an impressive force for revolution by Khmer Rouge standards. However, every zone had unique facets with interesting personality

politics. What makes the Southwest zone particularly appealing as a case study is the fact that it was an incredibly practical location for me to base my research on.

Whilst it may seem an obvious observation, the Southwest zone, like no other zone, stood the test of time. Therefore, as a test case, one could almost argue that the Southwest zone had fixed variables (upon which changes over time can be tested) in its leader and, to a lesser extent, its cadres.\textsuperscript{368} This zone provides an excellent opportunity for an in-depth study as it was largely uninfluenced by external forces\textsuperscript{369} once the CPK came to power until the nation’s liberation in 1979.

From a practical research point of view, this zone retains the highest percentage of living former perpetrators (given the comparative lack of purging).

Furthermore, it is relatively close geographical proximity to Phnom Penh. There is also a substantial community in Anlong Veng (situated on the Thai border) that has a high proximity of former Southwest zone cadres. These cadres followed Ta Mok after he escaped, with the rest of the remaining CPK leaders, to this region after 1979. As I shall demonstrate with my empirical data, some of these former cadres remain particular zealous and pro-Ta Mok even to the present day. In my own interviews in Anlong Veng, I found the following account to be commonplace amongst many former perpetrators, 'He (Mok) would often

\textsuperscript{368} Many cadres in the Southwest were killed or transferred so naturally the zone endured personnel changes but importantly the central nucleus of the zone remained intact from 1975 until 1979. Therefore, one can argue that the Southwest zone revolutionary ‘ethos’ that cadres imbibed remained more consistent than in any other zone.

\textsuperscript{369} Becker notes '(Mok) slavishly protected his zone from interference by the centre or the other zones'. Becker. 1986. Page 191.
join in helping us with our tasks. People who worked under Ta Mok followed him, we loved him so we wanted to work for him even if that meant volunteering.\textsuperscript{370}

Additionally, as an opportunity to test the extent to which lower level agency and autonomy were prevalent in Democratic Kampuchea, the Southwest zone offers us a fascinating insight into the extent to which cadres digressed from their directives in an environment that was already digressing. As I shall demonstrate, Ta Mok himself did not always follow CPK orders as he himself had motivations to pursue certain personal agendas. Against this backdrop, certain members of Ta Mok’s subordinates and Southwest cadres cohort digressed even further. As I shall demonstrate, some cadres were more violent than they needed to be, and some individuals were altruistic and rescuing in an environment of violence. Both extremes demonstrate agency and lower level decision making rather than blind order following.\textsuperscript{371}

The map of Cambodia below shows where the Southwest zone was situated, it is the area shaded in grey.\textsuperscript{372}

\textsuperscript{370} Author’s interview with a former perpetrator. 17\textsuperscript{th} August 2013. Anlong Veng, Oddar Meanchey.
\textsuperscript{371} Referring specifically to lower level excesses and variation, Burgler writes, ‘the way measures were implemented could differ from area to area...local Khmer Rouge had quite some latitude in their interpretation and execution of guidelines...quite a lot depended on the discretion and arbitrariness, the humanity (and) confidence (of cadres)...The difference between a sympathetic and a cruel village chief was often enough the difference between life and death’. Burgler, 1990. Page 92.
The Southwest zone was relatively densely populated when compared with other zones, ‘in 1977 (the) population was 1,500,000, primarily ethnic Khmers’.\textsuperscript{373} According to Vickery, before 1975, the Southwest zone ‘was the poorest agricultural zone in Cambodia, where economic conditions were deteriorating even in the 1950s’.\textsuperscript{374} The Southwest zone was extensively carpet-bombed and was also particularly susceptible to Vietnamese insurgencies given its proximity to the Vietnamese border. Given these preexisting factors, and obvious motivations for wishing to pursue acts of violence, the Southwest zone

\textsuperscript{374} Vickery. 1984. Page 86.
was quick to become a hotbed of socialist transformation. Vickery states that ‘the revolutionary transformation of the Southwest began as early as 1971’.\footnote{Vickery. 1984. Page 87.} Therefore, the Southwest zone, or at least parts of it, had four years of CPK revolutionary support before they finally came to power.

Once the CPK had taken power, the centre regularly visited the area, and similarly Ta Mok visited Phnom Penh. As a witness at case file 002, Pol Pot’s former body guard, Rochoem Ton stated that, ‘Yes (Pol Pot visited the Southwest zone), when I was with him, he would go to the zone office to meet with the zone committee...to come and work with him’\footnote{ECCC. 25\textsuperscript{th} July 2012. Case file 002. Trial day 84. Rochoem Ton on Pol Pot and Ta Mok. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/court doc/E1_96.1_TR02_20120725_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, page 99.}, Pol Pot, as the Party Secretary General, was the most senior member of the party, he would therefore have known, to some extent, the intentions of the zone committee.

With its close links to Pol Pot and perceived exhibition of zealous cadres, the Southwest zone became the zone ‘of “Pol Pot-ism” par excellence, the power base of the Pol Pot central government. Its influence, after 1976, gradually spread out to encompass the entire country’.\footnote{Vickery. 1984. Page 86.} Such was the favour of the Southwest zone with the centre that they awarded Tram Kak, a Southwest district, with ‘national excellence’ status. In the Revolutionary flag, Tram Kak was painted as a bastion of the regime; ‘Mok and his associates turned Tram Kak into a “model district”'}
for the entire country. This award was given in 1977; by this stage the ‘entire country’ was effectively being run, at least in part, by Ta Mok.

Instead of Pol Potism, analyzing the Khmer Rouge dynamics at a more micro-based level reveals that ‘Ta Mokism’, certainly from the zonal level down, is a better representation of the reality that was in fact occurring. In the Southwest zone, it was Ta Mok who governed, controlled and ordered the masses, and it was Ta Mok’s interpretation and manipulation of CPK policy that was to be the order of the day. Ta Mok is frequently reported to have said ‘above Mok’s head, is just a hat’ (na loe mok mearn te mek dtei). The interpretation of this would be that he considered himself deferential to no one.

Ta Mok:

Synonymous with the regime, Ta Mok maintained a reputation, until the day he died, of being the fiercest revolutionary zealot that the Khmer Rouge possessed. As a key member of the anti-colonial movement, the Khmer Issarak, it is clear that even before the Khmer Rouge socialist transformation of Cambodia, Ta Mok bore a disdain for capitalism, feudalism, power influences and control from external forces. Speaking with his former bodyguard, in regards to Ta Mok’s feelings towards the ‘new people’, the guard answered, ‘it is certainly true that

---

he did not like those people who came from the towns and cities, he really hated the nobility’.  

In part, as a senior member of staff, (but still being theoretically subordinate to Pol Pot and Nuon Chea) Ta Mok was expected to separate his own personal feelings from official policy which stated that new and base people were to be treated the same, but clearly Ta Mok saw no problem in letting his own feelings and opinions govern widespread policies. His strength meant that no control mechanism that Pol could use would have had any effect other than to antagonise him, so Mok was left to his own devices.

Whether it was driven by fear or favouritism, Ta Mok was clearly closer to the party nucleus than any other zone secretary. During case file 002, manager of the transportation section of the Southwest zone office, Khiev Neou, stated that ‘I saw Pol Pot in Takeo, in Ta Mok’s house and Ta Mok was regularly in Phnom Penh for meetings’.  

Pol Pot and Ta Mok’s close relationship, whether through fear or genuine good relations, is unknown, although it is a likely combination of both factors. Chandler notes, ‘the Southwest...became a severe and very loyal portion of the communist regime’.

---

380 Author’s interview with Ta Mok’s former bodyguard. 17th August, 2013. Anlong Veng, Cambodia.
Ta Mok gave Pol Pot what he needed in exchange for an enormous degree of power, and the evidence from a multitude of sources would suggest that not only did Ta Mok possess much power, but also enjoyed wielding it. Witness Meas Voeun during case file 002 stated, 'I know for sure that Ta Mok enjoyed the - - some kind of high authority, absolute power, and he could make any decision on his own'.\(^{383}\) It is clear therefore, that Ta Mok operated with an enormous degree of autonomy from the centre. The centre realized that he was beyond controlling and therefore embraced him. According to Chhouk Rin, '(Ta Mok) dared to interrupt Pol Pot (in study sessions). I don't think Nuon Chea and others would dare to interrupt Pol Pot'.\(^{384}\)

Over the course of the regime, Ta Mok's relationship with his own cadres only helped to strengthen his own position. Their loyalty to him above everyone else, including the party, gave Mok the leverage to govern as he pleased. Chandler notes, 'Ta Mok, over the years, had developed a very loyal and capable set of subordinates who were the people who operated the Southwest'.\(^{385}\) His entire sphere of influence, one could argue, was greater than that of the CPK.

---


Ta Mok further strengthened his own position within the regime by promoting his family members to the positions that surrounded him most closely, 'Mok's kingdom was also his personal fiefdom. His power as secretary of the Southwest zone was already cemented, and a virtual dynasty created, by about a dozen of his relatives holding official positions around the zone'.\(^{386}\) Most notably, his daughter (Khom) was the Party Secretary in Tram Kak district, the jewel in the Southwest crown. Her husband was Meas Muth, commander of the DK navy. Ta Mok took the initiative to also employ 13 other family members in positions that directly surrounded him. When asked if he thought the move was purely nepotistic, Karnavas replied, 'in those days it was important to have people around you that would watch your back. You could call it nepotism, I don't think that it was, I think in those circumstances it's more about ensuring one's own survival...in putting his own people in places, he was more or less autonomous'.\(^{387}\)

Mok was clearly a shrewd tactician with a very astute understanding of the political dynamics that were ensuing both at a centralized level and also at a peripheral level. In employing family members around him, Ta Mok was providing a level of protection for himself that he knew that he could rely upon. He brokered positions for his family and ensured certain tactical marriages took place that effectively made him invulnerable to a coup. The regime was rife with


\(^{387}\) Author's interview with Michael Karnavas. 26\(^{th}\) April 2013. Phnom Penh.
mistrust and so Ta Mok had to install safety measures that held greater cohesion than political enthusiasm or professional obligations. Various mafias have long employed such tactics to great success. Here we can clearly observe that Ta Mok was using his own control techniques and mechanisms in using staff that he could trust above all others.

Ta Mok is widely remembered as an incredibly aggressive individual who was feared by most people who interacted with him. Former Southwest cadre, Tit Khem, remarks 'He was the King of Takeo...everyone was afraid of him. What he said, what he did'.388 Ta Mok is unanimously remembered as being both cruel and bloodthirsty, earning him the nickname 'the butcher'.389 In general, the Southwest death toll, directly relating to Mok, is estimated to be over '100,000 (people are said to have died through Ta Mok's direct orders)'.390 Given the vagueness of 'direct orders', it is impossible to know exactly what is meant by this statement, but it is estimated by Meng-Try Ea, that in security centres based in Takeo province alone, '190,000 people were executed'.391 Whether those deaths are considered to be part of a direct order, or simply detention protocol, we will never know, but it is certainly fair to say that Ta Mok's autonomous position with the centre did little for the safety and security for those living in the zone.

390 Ibid.
This thesis will now shift its attention specifically at the institutionalized killing machines that existed at the Southwest zone level-detention centres and prisons that were certainly directly governed over by Ta Mok and his immediate committee. Zone level prisons were better known as 'zone security centres'. These huge prisons held a thousand or more prisoners: Khmer Rouge soldiers and their family members, as well as those who had committed offenses at the zone level. These centres served as both hard labour and execution sites.392

Southwest security centre system;

Like every zone, the Southwest zone had a strict prison system that followed CPK policy. The Southwest had a security centre at the zone level, three security centres (on four campuses) at the regional level, 21 security centres at the district level and 225 security centres at the sub-district level, totaling 250 security centres in the entire zone.393 The prisons and security centres were predicated along the longs that the zone was divided. Each province in the zone was accredited a regional number; Kampong Speu province became ‘Region 33’, Kamprot province became ‘Region 35’, Kandal province became ‘Region 25’ and finally Takeo province became ‘Region 13’. In each region, Ta Mok established militarily bases, which provided staff members for the security offices, again, to ensure personal loyalty to Ta Mok above all others. Internal security was governed over by the respective hierarchical prison committees and the military.

393 Ibid. Page 27
Each region was divided into districts and sub-districts; Region 33 was divided into 6 districts and 61 sub-districts. Region 35 was divided into 5 districts and 40 sub-districts, Region 25 was divided into 5 districts and 61 sub-districts. At each hierarchical level, the Southwest zone had representative security centres in every region, every district and every sub-district. According to Meng-Try Ea, 'many Southwest zone security centres were housed in pagodas or schools, and sometimes smaller government buildings or structures built specifically as detention centres'.

394 Much like the buildings used for S-21, these buildings presented the Khmer Rouge with an opportunity to imprison perceived enemies in buildings that were both constructed in such a way that they already had a number of small rooms, surrounded by large, open expanses of land but also represented the epitome of institutions that the Khmer Rouge had banned, namely religion, schools and the former government.

From the level of zone security to the level of sub-district and communal internal security centres, the theoretical function of the prison was to sweep the Southwest clean of the enemies of the regime. Perceived enemies would be reported, arrested, detained, interrogated, forced to perform hard labour and finally, enemies would be invariably executed. If enemies were deemed to be too 'high-level' or 'high-risk' for the institution that initially did the detaining, the respective security staff would write a report and then send it up the chain of prison hierarchy to ascertain whether or not the prisoner needed to be sent to another prison. Theoretically, if a enemy was deemed highly ranked or

dangerous enough, then they would be elevated out of the zone system all together, and would be moved into Phnom Penh, usually to S-21.

The rest of this chapter will focus specifically on the highest-ranking security centre of the Southwest zone, Phnom Sanlong. It represents the secondary node as far as the prison system of Democratic Kampuchea was concerned, theoretically deferential only to S-21 and the CPK.

**Southwest zone level detention centre**<sup>395</sup>

---

<sup>395</sup>Ezilon (n.d.) ‘Map of Cambodia’. 
Phnom Sanlong:

Phnom Sanlong prison was located in Sanlong commune, Treang district, Takeo province (7 kilometres west of National road 2, 1 kilometre south of road 126 and 100 kilometres from Phnom Penh). The prison itself was situated on Phnom Sanlong, or Sanlong Mountain. 396

The map above is a crude representation of a bird's eye view of Phnom Sanlong prison. The footprint of the mountain is represented by the thin circular line, but the prison shape from above resembles a square shape as the sides of the mountain have been quarried, exposing a mountain with four straight sides.

396 Author's drawing of Phnom Sanlong prison.
‘Sanlong is surrounded by a mountain range and 4 km squared in total, and the whole mountain area was used as the prison for the Southwest zone from 1976 until 1979 under Ta Mok and the two chiefs...Comrade Seng and Comrade Seun’. 397 The prison itself was divided up using the natural geography of the mountain. ‘Prisoners were segregated in both their living quarters and their work. Female prisoners were held in Kanchreap village, west of the mountain, while male prisoners were kept in Lauk village, north of the mountain’. 398

The prison was initially constructed in 1976 when its primary function was to liquidate Southwest troops whom Ta Mok considered to have broken ‘Angkarian law’. The accused military personnel would arrive with their families (including young children). The detainees were divided by gender and age and were then set to perform hard labour. The prison had ‘two execution sites, one in the mango orchard and one at Phnom Tauch’. 399 Phnom Tauch is located approximately 40 kilometres north of Phnom Sanlong in Angkor Chey district, Kampot province. DC-Cam evidence states that ‘20,000 400’ bodies have been exhumed from the burial ground located at the execution site.

---

As the regime continued, Phnom Sanlong became a place for anyone considered to be an enemy of Angkar, from high-level former Lon Nol associates to thieves of palm leaves (these lower-level enemies were generally transferred up from lower-level prisons). The current commune chief of Sanlong informed me that the majority of detainees were mostly ‘soldiers and Khmer Rouge cadres’. However, a vast array of other sources suggest that students were in fact the largest cohort to have been executed at the prison, ‘Phnom Sanlong became a gravesite for students and youths’, ”Phnom Sanlong is hell, a dreadful camp, a collective tomb of students”. According to a national curriculum lecturer’s textbook on Phnom Sanlong, it specifically states that it was the higher-educated students that were most brutally tortured, ‘by having their throats slits, being beaten with wooden sticks, and being burnt to death’. Approximately 5,000 students died in the prison. Ta Mok undoubtedly knew of these events and would have actively ensured that they occurred.

The influx of students, youths and intellectuals was a result of the changes that were occurring not only in the prison, but also in greater society. As the stream of military personnel began to ‘dry up’, new scapegoats were needed. Whilst students and intellectuals, it could be argued, are natural enemies of a socialist revolution, the systematic execution of ‘youths’ was not CPK policy. Heder states that it was in fact official policy to fully integrate such ‘former enemies’ into the newly constructed society, ‘according, therefore, to the optimistic official Party

401 Author’s interview with the Sanlong commune chief. 18th March 2013. Sanlong village, Takeo province.
view at this time, 95% of the new people were “good” people who could be reeducated “to see the revolutionary path.” These “new peasants” were in general politically trustworthy...“Virtually all of them” could be politically “refashioned” now that they were labourers... It was therefore imperative for the revolution “not to see them like before, as bourgeoisie, as university faculty...as petty bourgeois students”. Because they had lost everything materially, their “quintessential class reality” was already changing considerably for the better...The essence of the Party’s policy was “to reeducate them again and again.”. Official policy was therefore not requesting that students be executed in prisons. The fact that it happened, however, would suggest that CPK policy was not properly enforced or policed.

The majority of these youths and students had been evacuated from Phnom Penh, Takeo city and Kampot city. They were ‘new people’. Whilst actively targeting new people, because they were new people, was also against party policy, it was such a widespread nationwide phenomena that this policy was clearly only ‘true’ in theory and centralized directives, not in reality. New people were easy targets for scapegoating because they were essentially aliens in a new society that had already stereotyped them. The traditional infrastructure that had enveloped the urban dwellers was entirely removed leaving them vulnerable to the hatred of the countryside dwellers that many harboured.

After the arrested youths had been separated by their gender, they were then separated once more; those who committed particularly serious crimes, and

---

those deemed to have committed less serious crimes. One Phnom Sanlong survivor stated that the prison campus contained a series of holding houses and that ‘those that were detained in those houses were the prisoners who had been accused of having done something very wrong. For those prisoners whose crimes were considered to be less serious, they were allowed to stay outside of the houses, but they had to remain on campus’. The prison had no walls, but the perimeter was guarded 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. According to a prison survivor, ‘it was a jail without walls. There was a perimeter that we had to stay within; I think it was about 500 metres from the mountain walls in every direction that we had to stay within. If we walked across the line, we would have been shot’.

Those prisoners who worked outside spent their detention ‘smashing up the rocks that they quarried from the sides of the mountain’. The working day began at sunrise and could last until midnight. Food supplies were meager and as a result, prisoners became emaciated during their detention. Prisoners were not allowed to talk with one another as it was considered to be counter-revolutionary behavior, ‘the punishment for such offenses was imprisonment, torture and execution’. There was to be no break for these prisoners and so many were literally worked to death.

---

406 Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
407 Ibid.
408 Ibid.
The majority of prisoners were never released as the secrecy of the prison was of paramount importance to Ta Mok and his staff. Some prisoners were killed immediately if they fell sick or tried to run away. According to Meng Try Ea, lower-level perpetrators were afforded a degree of freedom to act when they were dealing with prisoners, having been granted such freedoms at ‘unit meetings’.\footnote{Ea, 2001, Page 2.} One example of this kind of freedom was being able to kill a caught runaway without permission. Given that the prison did not have tangible walls, the temptation to run away must have been enormous, and this freedom of agency to act may have been the result of multiple escape attempts by prisoners.\footnote{It was also reported to me that working during a successful escape attempt was reason enough for a prison guard to be arrested, so it was probably more of a necessity rather than a freedom if one wished to keep their own life.}

Furthermore, another area of lower-level freedom that was commonly mentioned in my interviews was the issue of food distribution. According to many survivors, ‘sometimes the guards would only give a person 30 grains of rice’,\footnote{Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.} and a big cause of death was either direct starvation or execution related to starvation issues. However, whilst food rationing could be at the discretion of cadres, and starvation was a widespread problem, the same interviewee went on to confirm that starvation in the prison was a decision made ‘from above’.\footnote{Ibid.} To solely blame the cadres who worked at the prison for starvation related deaths is therefore disingenuous.
Villagers living not too far from Phnom Sanlong would see Ta Mok regularly visit
the prison, presumably to attend the prison guard meetings amongst other things.
One prison survivor stated that the prison staff would have to attend meetings
with Ta Mok 'every quarter'\(^{414}\) (i.e. every three months). Ta Mok's presence can
be observed as a control mechanism to ensure his subordinates followed his will
as he would have been able to observe first hand what was happening at the
prison. Knowing that he could arrive at any moment would have surely been a
constant source of threat in the minds of the guards at the prison to follow his
directives, as he was so vehemently feared.

When it was a prisoner's time to be executed, in addition to the methods of
execution already mentioned, the following methods were also employed. Some
prisoners had to dig their own graves and were then either buried alive or the
'prisoners were tied to a tree and then the Khmer Rouge cadre would use a sharp
knife to remove their liver, then the ties to the tree were removed, the victim
would then be ordered to walk towards the open holes that had been dug'.\(^{415}\)
Needless to say, torture techniques were primitive and not time efficient.
Naturally, many prisoners were killed in situ at the prison, but there was also a
great deal of prisoners who were placed on trucks, and then driven off to be
killed in off-site killing fields. One example of this occurred in 1976, when
prisoners were trucked off in their hundreds (presumably to Phnom Tauch).

\(^{414}\) Author's interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18\textsuperscript{th} March 2013.
Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
Latterly, when new prisoners from all tiers of Democratic Kampuchea were brought to Phnom Sanlong, the prison staff wished to kill the students and educated individuals first and foremost so they appealed to the prisoners to describe their educational backgrounds. The guards explained to the prisoners that the centre required intellectuals to help with their operations and promised that their daily duties would no longer be ‘digging or breaking rocks under the sun, but a central duty’.\footnote{Ea. 2005. Page 120.} Unsurprisingly, ‘many prisoners signed up’.\footnote{Ibid.} The guards however had tricked the prisoners who signed up and ‘carried off the prisoners in trucks to Phnom Tauch, where they were killed’.\footnote{Ibid.} Such an enormous operation with such callous undertones would certainly have not gone unnoticed by Ta Mok, he may have even given the guards the idea in the first place.

According to another prison survivor, ‘the higher-level cadres would sometimes visit the prison on a weekly basis but then at other times they would visit less frequently and it was something more like once a month’.\footnote{Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18\textsuperscript{th} March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.} Sometimes the higher cadres would communicate by ‘messengers with hand-written letters’\footnote{Ibid.} with the lower-level cadres rather than by meeting face to face and therefore this could have allowed the lower-level guards the opportunity to operate the prison largely as they pleased, ‘the lowers could make their own decisions, they didn’t
need the immediate permission from the higher authorities’. However, as we shall observe, prison cadres rarely used their authority to commit acts against the wishes of Ta Mok. Death was invariably inevitable at Phnom Sanlong and the process of cruel beatings may well have been avoided, but mass starvation seems to have been unavoidable.

The two most crucial facets of Phnom Sanlong, with regards to the centre in Phnom Penh, were the following: the issue of prison monitoring and the upward transferal of prisoners from Phnom Sanlong to S-21. Firstly, with monitoring from Phnom Penh, given Ta Mok’s autonomy with the centre, no party member higher than himself ever visited the prison. There are no accounts of any visits, and every interviewee replied that they had never known of any sightings of anyone from Phnom Penh, other than Ta Mok himself returning from the capital, ‘(the other) higher brothers never felt the need to visit this place and I don’t know of any villager who ever saw them’. Pol Pot was therefore unable to control Phnom Sanlong perhaps as he may have wished through the medium of his own presence. But it is also very plausible that the use of Ta Mok was in fact Pot’s control mechanism in itself; if it was good enough for Mok then it was good enough for Pot.

Secondly, and more importantly, every source agrees that no prisoner, irrespective of their rank, was ever sent to a prison higher in the nodal chain than Phnom Sanlong. Duch stated that ‘Ta Mok never sent anyone to S-21,

---

421 Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
422 Ibid.
ever’.\textsuperscript{423} Similarly an interviewee stated, 'I never heard of or saw any prisoner being transferred to S-21'.\textsuperscript{424} This is of vital importance because it truly demonstrates ‘Ta-Mokism’. Mok’s autonomy meant that he did not have to conform to orthodox internal security protocol.

Irrespective of who ran the prison, high-ranking former Lon Nol soldiers were supposed to be sent through the S-21 machine in order to take confessions, but Ta Mok’s autonomy (and the obvious benefits of being geographically separate from the centre) meant that it was not to be the case. Phnom Sanlong represented a ceiling of command, no one could go above or beyond it. This ceiling allowed for a huge degree of autonomy and cruelty, and other members of the CPK did not get involved, as one interviewee stated, ‘to be honest, I don’t think that the Khmer Rouge leaders in Phnom cared too much about this area because they trusted the cadres in this area’.\textsuperscript{425} The extent of the autonomy is clear. In light of this, Phnom Sanlong and Ta Mok could be considered as a pseudo primary node.

A further issue to consider is that of the differential between those Khmer Rouge cadres who were working outside of the prison, and those who were working inside of the prison. Khmer Rouge cadres who worked and governed over the villages and co-operatives had a very different role to those cadres working

\textsuperscript{424} Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
\textsuperscript{425} Ibid.
inside the prison, but were still part of the execution process (though it was less direct). The cadres who worked outside of the prison were responsible, in part, for orchestrating arrests and authorizing arrests.

According to a survivor, the process of arrests and report writing were as follows, 'The village chief and commune chief together reported to the district chief, and then the district chief came to arrest them...they (the chiefs) could make their own decisions and they could accuse whoever they liked in the village. And then after that, the provincial chief wouldn’t need to come directly themselves, they would just trust the report and thus just send a chhlop (night guard) to come and make the arrest'.

The implication of this statement demonstrates that agency and freedom to make decisions existed, and was not always monitored.

The issue of agency surrounding arrests could not happen at S-21 as the arrest reports were not only being written at the highest levels, but also background checks were made of the supposed crimes (including case histories and biographies of the supposed culprit). However, at Phnom Sanlong, the potential for false arrest lists to be made existed. A provincial chief was employed to oversee the villages underneath them, and yet there seems to have been a policy of accepting any report, which led to the invariable murder of the indicted.

426 Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
individual. It was reported to me that the party centre was kept in the dark about this process, 'as many arrests were not even reported'.

Once a prisoner arrived at Phnom Sanlong, their fate was almost sealed, so one can therefore argue that the cadres working outside of the prison did in fact have much more influence over a person's chances of survival than those working inside. Furthermore, the cadres outside of the prison were not being so closely monitored by an individual as senior as Ta Mok. Village chiefs and commune chiefs ultimately had control over the cadres who worked for them, and their behavior was controlled by their discretion. A survivor stated that the cadres working inside the prison, however, were 'following the regime “nearly” 100 per cent'. There was clearly a huge differential between operatives inside of the prison and outside of the prison, the lack of control outside of the prison led to higher degrees of personal discretionary decision-making.

One interviewee, when referring specifically to the cadres who worked outside of Phnom Sanlong prison stated, 'sometimes they (the cadres) clearly had the freedom to make their own decisions, for example, when workers were out in the fields, if someone broke a tool, they would be shot and killed immediately. They didn’t ask to have permission before they killed someone'. Other than having the 'freedom' to kill escapees, prison cadres would have been

---

427 Author's interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
428 Ibid.
429 Ibid.
reprimanded for such ad hoc murder. The same interviewee went on to state that ‘the village chief used to change the orders (from the centre)’.\textsuperscript{430} 

Furthermore, the villages around the prison were subject to ‘a lot of revenge killings’,\textsuperscript{431} due to a large degree of pre-existing social malaise. Several interviewees stated that cadres used the regime as an excuse to take revenge on those whom they envied and hated. This would suggest that the villages around the prison, which were largely responsible for bringing people to the prison to be detained, were acting with autonomy.

Despite the cruelty that occurred at the prison, every surviving witness stated that the lower-level cadres who worked \textit{inside} the prison had an incredible degree of pressure put on them to follow their orders because of their close proximity to Ta Mok. Therefore we can argue that there is a clear dichotomy between internal and external motivations for violence between those working inside and outside of the prison. For those working inside, the external pressures of fear, peer pressure and coercive order following seem evident. Conversely, for those who worked outside, issues of malaise and revenge were reportedly ever present providing evidence for a range of internally-driven motivations for violence.

Regarding those cadres working inside of the prison, all survivors agreed that the decisions to kill had largely been made before the prisoners had even

\textsuperscript{430} Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18\textsuperscript{th} March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province. 
\textsuperscript{431} Ibid.
arrived, it was again a matter of how and when, ‘they (the guards) didn’t ask permission to kill because the end result was not considered important’. The evidence would suggest that Phnom Sanlong was an institution that was predicated on the notion that ‘if one refused their orders, then one would be killed’. The freedoms that they were afforded, for example in food distribution, demonstrate that they could implement their own decisions to a degree, but the decision to kill itself had largely been made for them above their heads.

It is not known how many people perished at Phnom Sanlong prison but one account by an individual called ‘Pronh’ suggests that Ta Mok was not pleased that the prison capacity was only at 12,000 when it should have been ‘15,000 prisoners’. If this report is to be believed in addition to the figure from Phnom Tauch burial ground, then upwards of 32,000 prisoners died at Phnom Sanlong. If this is the case, then more people perished in Phnom Sanlong than did at S-21.

Conclusion:

As a secondary node, the principle function of the zones was to act as a decision-making centre, deferential only to the primary node. The theoretical function of the zones was to ensure that party policy, directives and rhetoric were implemented at a lower-level. However, the reality of the zone infrastructure and secondary node functions in the Southwest zone were far from the ideological theory. Ta Mok, as zone secretary, wielded an enormous amount of power. He

---

432 Author’s interview with a Phnom Sanlong prison survivor. 18th March 2013. Phnom Sanlong, Takeo province.
433 Ibid.
was a fierce tyrant who commanded the cruelest cadres and largest army in the nation, regularly used to purge other zones, and deployed new staff members in the vacant positions created by the purges.

The party both feared and respected Ta Mok. His position both within and outside of the party was unique as he was particularly autonomous; no one tried to control him. The freedom that Ta Mok had, led to blurred lines between the party centre and the Southwest zone. In theory, the hierarchical and geographical proximity from Phnom Penh would suggest that Sanlong should have functioned as a secondary node. However, the Southwest zone functioned, in some respects more similarly to a primary node. The Southwest zone did not follow the laws of Pol Potism, but Ta Mokism. Ta Mokism, in many respects, superseded the Central Party.

More specifically, relating to the influence that a separation from the centre had, the cadres in the Southwest zone, even at the zone level, enjoyed a greater degree of agency and freedom than their Phnom Penh-based counterparts. As previously stated, the provincial chiefs had the freedom to authorize arrests, a privilege certainly not experienced by those cadres working in Phnom Penh. However, the staff at the zone level prison, Phnom Sanlong, much like the S-21 staff operated under the strict auspices of a Standing Committee member. Whilst both sets of prison staff had marginal degrees of freedom with regards to torture and food distribution, they still had a strict line to follow and were deferential to a member of the primary node.
In reality, there was no prison higher than Phnom Sanlong (S-21’s existence was inconsequential to those who were arrested in the Southwest zone). It would be disingenuous to argue that the staff at the prison had genuine freedom. There were margins of agency, but they could not prevent a prisoner’s death.

The cadres working outside the prison, however, implicated and authorised arrests that were seemingly not always ‘necessary’. The area, being in the countryside offered a geographical proximity that facilitated personalized decision-making. The hierarchical fracture also allowed for autonomy over whom to arrest given that the process of monitoring was not properly implemented or enforced. This allowed cadres to revenge kill and use the regime to their own advantage. This truly was a secondary node, a delegated decision making body who governed with sizeable freedom immediately below the primary node. To that extent, we see a reversal of what we observed in the prison. There is therefore a clear dichotomy between some of those cadres who worked inside and outside of the prison, following externally and internally driven motivations for committing acts of violence (or acts that would lead to certain violence). There is a mixture of motivations that are associated with this prison site but, of those cadres most closely associated with Phnom Sanlong, it would appear as though externally driven motivations formed the greatest and most significant rationales behind committing acting of violence. The pressure of being in such close proximity to an individual as feared as Ta Mok must have been overwhelming to many.
Chapter 6 - Tertiary node: The Southwest regions, Chrey O’Phnue, Kampot and Phnom La-Ang.

This chapter focuses on the tertiary node of the CPK command structure, the ‘regional’ or ‘sector’ level (the two terms can be used interchangeably). The theoretical function of the tertiary node was to be directly subordinated to the secondary node. Such was the intended nature of the CPK command structure that the regional level would communicate with the centre through the medium of the zone and vice versa. The tertiary node was in itself a decision-making centre, with the authority to make decisions regarding economic social and internal security matters.

Whilst it was, at least in theory, the duty of the region to implement CPK directives and policies at the regional level (on behalf of the centre), this chapter will assess the extent to which the reality of the situation differed from this ideology. In keeping with the previous two nodes, the nucleus of the assessment will centre on the respective regional security centres, The Southwest region security centres.

Whilst the rest of this chapter will focus specifically upon the command dynamics at the regional level that existed within the Southwest zone, it is of value to note that, much like the zones, the sectors also failed to follow any kind of systematic blueprint in terms of behavioural protocol or day-to-day operations. According to Philip Short, Democratic Kampuchea was, ‘unlike orthodox Communist states, where decision-making is highly centralized and
implementation is in theory monolithic, Khmer Rouge Cambodia was unruly'.

Short is therefore implying that 'unruly' behavior in Democratic Kampuchea was the result of a lack of centralized decision making. In light of the previous chapter, this chapter will also highlight regional level individuals whose behavior skewed the regime.

Offering an insight into one way in which actors altered standardized policy, Heder states, 'the regions were supposed to keep sufficient rice for the regions and for the regional troops. The surplus was given to the organization for sale abroad. But since there were cadres in the regions who wanted to have a good reputation, they sent a lot of rice to the Centre, which caused a shortage in the regions. And they sent the rice to the centre in order to climb up the hierarchy instead of providing enough rice for the people in the regions'. The policy of denying others state property, in this case rice, in an attempt to better one's own stance is a clear digression of socialist policy and demonstrates opportunism exploited by one's own position of authority at the expense of human life. The excess of rice delivery to the centre is tantamount to the excess of murder, as one resulted in the other. Therefore, rice and promotions, are internally and externally-driven motivations for committing violence to excess. In some cases,

---


an abundance of a surplus in rice was actually manufactured by denying it to the
domestic population rather than the result of a bountiful harvest.

Heder goes on to explain that the issues surrounding surplus delivery of rice to
the centre was symptomatic of a bigger issue at hand; insufficient control
mechanisms to control those granted with authority from the pursuit of personal
interests. He writes, ‘the main problem was...there wasn’t sufficient analysis of
the real situation. Everyone believed in the reports of one another and the cadres
drafted false reports, keeping rice for themselves, and not feeding the people’.
This would suggest, therefore, that there was no pressure on these cadres to get
promoted, better themselves or kill people, they did it because they could. Heder
highlights the system of false reporting and unchecked reporting, that as this
chapter will unveil, was of grave importance to the high levels of killing that
occurred at the regional level.

Whilst the Southwest regions do not serve as a ‘regional model’ for the entire
nation, they are an excellent example of digression from the centre, and more
importantly, digression amongst themselves; regions in the same zone behaved
with a large degree of autonomy.

437 ECCC, 17th July 2013. Case file 002. Trial day 212. Stephen Heder on rice
438 A point made by Southeast Asian lecturer, Professor Martin Fox, ‘the degree of
regional autonomy...in the CPK meant that some aspects of the programme were
put into effect more or less gradually, or with more or less leniency in different
The Southwest regions:

The Southwest zone was divided into four regions, 13, 25, 33 and 35. Structurally, each region functioned like a smaller version of the zone. At the head of each region, there was a committee, functioning with the same mandate as the zone, the dissemination of party policy. Etcheson states, 'like the zones, the sectors were governed by three-person party committees, consisting of a secretary, a deputy secretary, typically responsible for security matters, and a member typically responsible for economics'.439 The region secretaries were invariably former military chiefs, and the secretary with the blessing of the Standing Committee appointed their committees. Therefore, the party centre was still at least influential in the appointments of the region leadership positions.

As a decision-making node itself, the region level was intended to further act as a lynchpin between the zone level and the district level, instilling centralized policy but ultimately governing at the regional level. The regional committee was supposed to control the cadres who worked at that level to make sure that they were operating within the laws and wishes of the CPK. Heder argues however, that this was not always the case, 'sector secretaries often merely passed on the general instructions from above to local cadre, down to the district level, but paid little attention to whether they were doing what they were supposed to do

or not’.Former Khmer district and sector secretary, Sao Sarun, stated that ‘sector-level leaders went to meetings at the centre, once every month, in meetings attended by the sector committee, the sector army, and the district committee. The sector committee (then) brought the word from the centre level and explained...(how) to track down the embedded enemies who contacted the Vietnamese and the enemy traitors’. The centre was therefore instrumental, to a degree, in giving the directives that it wished to implement at the regional level. Regular meetings in the centre would also suggest that the centre were very much aware of what was happening at the regional level.

---

At the regional level, the majority of staff were not members of either the Central Committee or the Standing Committee, they were in fact higher-ranking or former higher-ranking military personnel. According to Chandler, most security centres were under the supervision of the zone and the divisional military.\footnote{ECCC, 23rd July 2012. Case file 002. Trial day 82. Chandler on security protocol. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_94_1_TR002_20120723_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, page 65.} For example, region 13 (modern day Takeo province) sourced nearly all of staff for the committee and head office from the military, Ta Mok’s own personal military personnel.

In 1970, the region 13 secretary was Ta Saom, who governed until 1976. Pre-1973, Ta Saom’s deputy was Ta Mok’s son-in-law, Meas Muth. ‘In 1973, Muth was made secretary of Southwest Zone Division 3, which fought Khmer Republic forces in Takeo, Kampot, and Kampong Speu provinces’.\footnote{Human Rights Watch. 2011. UN Office of Legal Affairs Fails to Act Despite Judicial Misconduct. Available from: http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/03/cambodia-judges-investigating-khmer-rouge-crimes-should-resign., accessed on 27/2/2014.} Mok’s influence and the strength of the reputation that preceded Southwest zone staff meant that after April 17th, 1975, Muth was promoted to head commander of the navy, ‘Muth or his immediate subordinates allegedly ordered local executions of both division and ordinary people, without reference to higher levels of authority’.\footnote{Human Rights Watch. 2011. UN Office of Legal Affairs Fails to Act Despite Judicial Misconduct. Available from: http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/03/cambodia-judges-investigating-khmer-rouge-crimes-should-resign., accessed on 27/2/2014.} Whilst this statement is not referring to his time as deputy chief of region 13, it does demonstrate the extent to which individuals connected with Ta Mok and the Southwest zone wielded autonomy from the supposed framework that the CPK implemented.
Underneath the respective regional committees were the region level security centres. The function of the security centres was to detain, torture and interrogate region level arrests. This chapter will focus on two region security centres, Chrey O’Phnu and Kampot. The Kampot region 35-security centre was located on two campuses, and this chapter will focus on both of those sites, one of which was located in Kampot town and the other was located on Phnom La-Ang, Kampot province (therefore there will be an analysis of the operations at three separate sites in total).

**Region security centres:**

According to Meng-Try Ea, the regional security centres were of two types. The facilities were either ‘execution facilities...{or they} functioned more as a reeducation camp’. Both kinds of facilities required prisoners to perform ‘forced labour, including construction of irrigation and other water-control works’. Given the inhumane conditions that prisoners were forced to live in, detainees in both sets of facilities were subjected to systematic murder. Whilst the execution facilities ensured it was the case, the reeducation camp, though designed to function as a site of rehabilitation, practically ensured that the majority of the detainees were never released as well; ‘the inhumane working conditions imposed brought about many deaths from starvation and disease’.

---

444 Human Rights Watch. 2011.
446 Human Rights Watch. 2011.
447 Ibid.
In either facility, death was almost inevitable, whether it be in situ or by transfer to a prison at the zone or centre level.

Multiple sources suggest that before 1976, many of those arrested at the regional level were in fact those 'linked politically, socially or through family ties with the defeated Khmer Republic'. However, once the 'conventional enemies' of the socialist revolution had been removed, the crosshairs of the Khmer Rouge shifted their attention to a new cohort. As of 1976, the vast majority of regional level arrests were directed at the respective regional-level military personnel. Bearing in mind that the majority of security office staff had themselves been former members of the military, many were faced with guarding former work colleagues. The former militants were arrested because they were considered to have committed acts of treason. These soldiers were comprised from former Lon Nol militants and Khmer Rouge soldiers. In addition to the arrests made at the regional level, prisoner personnel naturally included those prisoners who were deemed high-ranking enough to be sent to the regional level security centres from below.

The wave of former militants were not the only personnel that the regional prisons took receipt of. Post 1976, 'a small number of prisoners at the Region 35 reeducation camp were the wives, relatives and children of those who had already been arrested or killed by the Khmer Rouge'. The prisons were operating with the intention of removing the perceived enemies of Angkar, even

---

448 Human Rights Watch. 2011.
if that meant removing their families as part of the process. Khmer Rouge rhetoric was awash with slogans and perhaps this one if the most fitting for such a ‘thorough’ process, ‘pull the roots when cutting the weeds’. Rather than assuming that the families were themselves contaminated dissidents, it is much more plausible to assume that the CPK were conducting Mafioso politics (removing individuals who may have felt the desire to commit acts of revenge on behalf of murdered family members). If we are to assume that the CPK themselves believed in a Hinton-style model of disproportionate revenge, then an aggrieved family member could pose a threat of wishing to exact revenge tenfold.

As was the case with all level security centres, the proletarian classes were not exempt from the clasps of the respective prisons. As the regime continued, the party needed increasingly to share the blame for failed centralized policies, and the lower-level perpetrators were afforded a greater agency to ‘make their own decisions’. The party sent out reports to the region secretary to gather up all those members of society within the jurisdiction of the respective regional prison who had been mentioned in the confessions taken at S-21 or any of the zone level security centres.

In addition to the party’s arrest requests from above, there were arrest dynamics happening below. The surrounding villages would arrest ‘enemies of Angkar’ at the discretion of the respective regional, sector chiefs, cadres, chhlop and

villagers alike. Furthermore, if a prisoner was arrested at a district or sub-
district level and deemed ‘dangerous-enough’, they would be transferred up to
the regional level. Seemingly neither the regional secretary nor committee would
question a lower-level arrest, assuming that it had been made on apparent
‘legitimate grounds’. As far as the region was concerned, this is the crux of one of
the main issues as to why so many people were exterminated; the cadres were
not properly monitored so they arrested far more people than their superiors
were calling for. Given that it was unmonitored, arrests were made at the
discretion of the cadres, and there was a wide scope for arresting those people
whom the arresting cadres themselves had a personal problem or vendetta with.

According to Etcheson, focusing specifically at the region level security centres,
he highlights the lack of cohesion and understanding of what constituted an
‘enemy’ and who was deemed dangerous enough to be subject to different kinds
of arrests; he noted, ‘serious prisoners...were typically either worked to death or
executed outright’.451: We can only assume that ‘serious prisoners, refers to those
who had affiliations with the Lon Nol regime or who posed a serious threat to the
current regime. Light prisoners could ’eventually be released back into society if
they worked a lot and were well behaved’,452 but the area surrounding enemies
that seemed to grant the greatest degree of latitude for acts of agency with

regards to arrests was that of the ‘intermediate category’. This category, according to Etcheson, was the most fluid with regards to categorization. It was open to personal interpretation, they ‘were people who were being evaluated to determine whether they should be placed in a light or serious offender category. Because there was no network or framework of laws in Democratic Kampuchea and because policy, as pronounced by the upper echelon of the organization evolved continuously, people could not always know what constituted opposition to the people’s state or any kind of infraction that might lead to incarceration...in that respect the discipline meted out by the state of Democratic Kampuchea was extremely arbitrary’.

The testimony above by Duch is of importance to this chapter, and this study in general, as it highlights two crucial tenets of the dynamics that were at play during Democratic Kampuchea. Firstly, it demonstrates a lack of centralized order when explaining who or what constituted an enemy, leaving such enormously important decisions to the lower-levels. It also demonstrates the movement that is so often overlooked in periods of politicised violence. The regime changed, it ‘evolved’ and so did its functions and its objectives. For example, the rhetoric in 1975 was to eliminate Lon Nol soldiers, the rhetoric in 1976 was to uncover internal networks, the rhetoric in 1977 was to remove internal saboteurs, and by 1978 the notion of ‘enemy’ was so confused that no one was free from the term any longer. It provided a platform for a plethora of

---

interpretations of the centralized directives, if individuals at the lower-levels were even listening to them.

In addition to this, it reminds us how important recognizable public law is to our understanding of society. In ‘ordinary’ society, we do not need a policeman or a lawyer to regularly remind us what is legal and what is illegal. For many of us, public law is ingrained into our society and culture so we know what the ‘boundaries’ are both legally speaking and morally speaking. The threat of the police or penitentiary law is always with us, and the dim view that society takes on immoral behavior is also with us all of the time. However, this does not excuse the infliction of violence.

In Democratic Kampuchea, ‘ordinary’ law was removed and replaced with ‘Angkarian law’, which had no set text and changed daily. Furthermore, killing became such an everyday norm that its public perception also changed. When Duch refers to this ‘intermediate category’ and one’s ‘personal interpretation’ we should remember just how much the paradigm had shifted in Democratic Kampuchea, decisions were made ad hoc and at one’s discretion because that was the contemporary norm. It was an opportunity for uncontrolled cadres to employ their own free will (even if they knew that they were acting immorally).

There were arrests made on non-homogeneous ethnic and religious grounds. Having been a heavily populated area of the Cham people (an Islamic Southeast Asian ethnic group), Kampot, for example, and its surrounding areas saw the Cham people massacred in their droves. Whilst the order to banish religion was a
decision that was made at the very top, the evidence from Kampot would suggest that their widespread execution wasn’t implemented until '1976'.454 In other parts of the country, the Khmer Rouge forces didn’t start killing the Cham until ‘the second half of 1977, which [then] spread nationwide in 1978’.455 The process of waiting at least 9 months to commit an act of genocide on a prescribed enemy of any socialist revolution would suggest that the Cham themselves became easy targets for arrests and execution as the CPK looked for enemies to justify their ailing policies. Abolishing religion is one thing, to commit genocide on the followers of a particular religion is quite another.

Regarding torture and interrogation, Meng-Try Ea writes, a prisoner would be held for ‘two to six days to break his or her spirit before interrogation’.456 During the ‘holding’, food would be withheld, or at least rationed beyond a humane level. When the interrogations began, during the questioning, the interrogators would give cigarettes, food and water to the prisoner. The policy was cleared geared towards the interrogator gaining the favour and co-operation of the prisoner. The intensity of the treatment and hostility increased as the questioning did, eventually leading to full-blown physical and mental torture, ‘prisoners were interrogated multiple times because the security centre cadres realized that the first and second confessions were “not yet clear and detailed and complete at all, and further interrogation would always be a step-by-step development toward progress”’.457 There was clearly a mandate towards getting a ‘satisfactory

---

454 Human Rights Watch. 2011.
455 Ibid.
457 Ibid. Page 105.
answer’ to justify the rationale behind imprisoning the detainee in the first place. Prisoners would be forced to ‘unveil’ their networks, therefore indicting more, possibly innocent, people.

Like S-21, the prisoners at the regional level security centres were subject to both hot and cold torture techniques. Hot methods, intended to physically break a prisoner, included ‘electric shock, pulling out fingernails, clubbing, beating with whips and electrical wires, breaking the arms, legs, or ribs, strangling, and wrapping the head with a plastic bag to make the victim stop breathing’.458 The process of widespread, institutionalized torture would suggest that there were torture policies and protocols that were to be adhered to. This would further suggest that there were torture classes or ‘educational classes’ where instructions and techniques were taught. According to his former bodyguard, Rochoem Ton, Pol Pot regularly taught cadres and guards in the Southwest zone office how to behave, he stated ‘Pol Pot would attend meetings in the Southwest, at the zone office...and then he would invite other sector leaders or chiefs to come and work with him...it was both at the sector level, as well as the district levels (that) he gave detailed instructions regarding the specific situation’.459 Whether or not Pol Pot was influential in the teaching of torture or interrogation is unknown, but it is obviously clear that, to an extent, members of the Standing Committee were engaged in the direct oversight of region level policy.

After a satisfactory confession, the majority of prisoners would be executed, 'it is estimated that only perhaps one in ten region security office inmates survived their imprisonment'. The security centre chief was ultimately the one who decided who should be executed. From entering the security centre to being executed there was a three-stage process that nearly every prisoner was subjected to; interrogation, confession taking (and their subsequent approval by the regional committee) and finally execution, 'only a few were sent on to S-21'. Before 30th March 1976, the region committee and secretary would only be able to 'smash' once the centre had given them permission, however once the declaration was signed (allowing smashing autonomy to the military commanders who were heavily influential in the respective regional security offices) such 'permission' was no longer required.

The rest of this chapter will now be focused specifically on three regional security centre sites.

---

461 Ibid. Page 110.
Region 33 and region 35 security centres.\textsuperscript{462}

Chrey O’Phneu:

The first regional security centre that this thesis shall analyse is region 33’s Chrey O’Phneu. The prison site was another mountain prison located in ‘Cheung Phnom village of Veal sub-district’,\textsuperscript{463} 2 kilometres north of the junction of road 124 and 125, and 50 kilometres from Phnom Penh. The day-to-day prison operations were monitored by security chief Ta Ben, his deputy chief Ta Khon, the region secretary Ta Chong and crucially, Ta Mok. Mok was personally involved in this prison and governed with an enormous margin of personal influence. Unsurprisingly, the other chief members of staff were all directly answerable to Ta Mok.

\textsuperscript{462} Ezilon (n.d.) *Map of Cambodia*.
During an interview with journalist Nate Thayer, Duch stated, 'I received prisoners (at S-21) sent by sectors, zones and the Central Committee for the whole country, except for the Southwest Zone, where Ta Mok had his own interrogation and detention centre, Chrey O'Phneu'.\textsuperscript{464} Akin to Phnom Sanlong, prisoners considered less dangerous were not detained for the entire day, but free to move around though they did have to perform 'heavy labour'.\textsuperscript{465} Prison survivor, Meas Leap, states, 'after I had been placed at the mountain, the security guards forced me to work harder than I did (in the base village). I was required to plow farmland from 3 a.m. to 12 p.m. without rest. I then had to look after three pairs of cows. Immediately after that assignment, at 3 p.m., I was supposed to go back to plowing'.\textsuperscript{466} The day was clearly long and strenuous, especially for the elderly. The process of overworking people, without adequate nutritional reward was undoubtedly a policy of slow execution.

General living conditions at the prison were also generally so unsatisfactory for human welfare that daily deaths from the inadequate provisions occurred, especially amongst the child cohort. Witness Rom stated, 'in the Children's unit, people died every night. Many died when they returned home from work, due to exhaustion, and others died of cold from sleeping without a blanket to cover their bodies. In the morning, when the unit chief came to awake them, some of

\textsuperscript{464} Nate Thayer. 28\textsuperscript{th} - 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1999. Duch Interview. Ta Sanh village, Samlaut. Available from: \url{Natethayer.typepad.com/blog/kr-personalities-mam-nay/}. Accessed on 7/3/14.
them had already passed away'. Ta Mok certainly would have known of these occurrences and yet there is no evidence at all that he tried to change or remedy the situation, in fact Duch states, with specific reference to the prisoners of this prison, that 'Ta Mok didn’t care about the mental state of his victims. He just tortured them and killed them'.

The prisoners were split into six cohorts; each group would then live in a co-operative. The cohorts were, ‘the elderly, widows with children, widows without children, female youths, male youths, and children (fewer men than women were imprisoned at these sites)’. Each co-operative hall ‘housed thousands of people’. Initially the prison was constructed to imprison Khmer Rouge cadres and Lon Nol associates. The prison then took a large receipt of cadres who had been arrested in the purges, specifically from the Eastern zone (post 1979 exhumations of the gravesites associated with the prison have unveiled corpses ‘in green military uniforms...believed to be those of Eastern zone soldiers’). Eastern zone soldiers should not have ended up in this prison, being further away than S-21 and lower ranking, thus it demonstrates the inability to curtail Ta Mok’s pursuit of his own goals.

Latterly it became a hard labour camp for members of society that Ta Mok wished to remove—the majority of whom were women and children, ‘(the prison) was under the administration of Ta Mok and was known for its ferocity in

---

468 Thayer, 1999.
471 Ibid.
“sweeping away” all potential enemies of Angkar’. On the day when an inmate was considered not to have done a full days work, prisoners were ‘arrested and sent to nearby Wat Champa for interrogation and torture’. The prisoners were generally not killed in situ; the majority were killed at Preah Sdech and Prey Khlong villages.

Chrey O’Phnue shared a lot of similarities with Phnom Sanlong. There are no records that any inmate from Chrey O’ Phnue prison was ever sent further up the chain of detention (i.e. to either Phnom Sanlong itself or S-21), despite the arrival of Khmer Rouge cadres from the East and Lon Nol forces. Ta Mok’s relationship with the centre transcended two prisons, allowing him the autonomy at Chrey O’Phnue also to completely govern the prison as he wished. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone from Phnom Penh ever visited the prison. Deaths from perishing seemed preventable and highly unnecessary given the highly labour-intensive and grueling daily tasks that were imposed upon the elderly and children.

Despite the centralized emphasis on ‘reeducation’ in the regional prisons, there would appear to have been minimal attempts at reeducation in Chrey O’Phnue. Like Phnom Sanlong, Ta Mok turned the prison into another anteroom of death. It is estimated that ‘tens of thousands of women and children died at the security

office of Chrey O’Phneu. There have been 16 pits and mass graves discovered relating to the prison.

Kampot:
The regional level security centre of region 35 was divided into two sites; Kampot and Phnom La-Ang. Kampot prison was designed to function as an execution facility whereas La-Ang was a designated reeducation facility. This chapter will firstly focus on the prison’s primary campus site in Kampot town.

Before analyzing the prison dynamics, it is necessary to first contextualize the history that surrounds Kampot town itself. Kampot was fully evacuated, in the same vein as other towns and cities were. Kampot was evacuated the day before Phnom Penh itself was emptied on the 16th April 1975. Prior to the evacuation, Kampot had been a hotbed of anti-Lon Nol support. Geopolitically speaking, Kampot was carpeted with aerial bombs from the US air force in the months leading up to the take of Phnom Penh and ‘every district in Kampot would be affected by these bombs’.475

When the CPK took the decision to evacuate the town, the first wave of evacuations were naturally directed at the Lon Nol soldiers who had been posted in Kampot’s military base, ‘immediately after the war was over...all the Lon Nol

---

soldiers had to disarmed’.\textsuperscript{476} The Lon Nol troops were then either massacred in situ or sent to the regional security centres. The town was then emptied of its inhabitants, ‘the whole city had to be evacuated’.\textsuperscript{477} During his testimony in case file 002, former commander, Chhouk Rin, stated that when Kampot dwellers asked the Khmer Rouge forces why they were being evacuated, the response would be, ‘(because) enemies would be among the population and they would pose some risk to us and so for safety reasons, we’re evacuating’.\textsuperscript{478}

The evacuation of Kampot was not unique in Cambodia, given the nationwide policy of removing urban dwellers from their capitalist bases, but the evacuation of Kampot was personally overseen by full-rights members of the Standing Committee, which certainly did not happen everywhere. According to Chhouk Rin, Ta Mok planned the evacuation, giving his own personal justifications for why it was necessary to carry it out, and then he personally oversaw it. ‘Ta Mok chaired the meeting in Kampot in order to plan the evacuation, a month before Phnom Penh’s fall. He (Mok) said, “It is not necessary to have markets or cities. All people must be evacuated to the rural areas in order to build the rural

economy". It is clear, therefore, that the implementation of the evacuation came from the centre, and was performed under the guidance of Ta Mok. The Kampot evacuees were either forced to travel by foot along national road 3 either towards Phnom Penh to the north or Kampong Saom to the west, or road 33 towards the Vietnamese border in the east.

Whilst the evacuation of towns and cities was a prerequisite of the Khmer Rouge revolution, Philip Short argues that each zone could act with autonomy with regards to how the evacuations took place. He notes that the Southwest zone, and therefore Kampot, carried out evacuations very much as Ta Mok wished to, 'individual zones had quite a lot of latitude in how they carried out the evacuation; that soldiers from the Eastern zone, for example, tended to be more lenient than those from the Southwest...different zones, different policies...low-level military cadres behaved in really significant ways...the policy was the same, but the implementation was different'. Through the example of evacuations, it is clear that Ta Mok was less 'lenient' than he could have been and so were his troops. This undoubtedly led to inflated numbers of those who found themselves in the execution and detention facilities.

According to a prison survivor from Kampot, once the town was emptied, 'only the higher cadres were allowed to stay in Kampot town'.\textsuperscript{481} The same interviewee stated that the remaining high-ranking cadres in Kampot were closely linked to the officials in Phnom Penh. Much like Charles Tilly argues, violent actors often mirror a violent superior, and that certainly seems to have been the case in the Southwest.

The evacuation of Kampot created a two-step process of arrests; initial and staggered. The initial evacuation provided the regional security system the opportunity to separate ‘the wheat from the chaff’, Lon Nol soldiers, former Khmer Republic politicians, and anyone with Lon Nol associations. Those discovered would be killed or ushered into the prison. However, for the rest of the former Kampot population, they were moved into the neighbouring districts and sub-districts, set to work in agricultural communes and co-operatives. These former urban-dwelling refugees were now at the mercy of their respective chiefs, police, guards, chhlo̊p and even neighbours. It was from this evacuation process that the staggered arrests came for the former Kampot dwellers.

In their new surroundings, it was very much base people and new people politics. From the outset, it is apparent that the directives from the village chiefs to the Kampot evacuees was that they were to work harder than their base people counterparts. An interviewee stated, ‘it was common for the unit chief to assign us tasks, but he treated the old and the new people differently when he

\textsuperscript{481} Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
was assigning tasks'. The tasks assigned to the new people would invariably be much more labour intensive. Furthermore, when both cohorts were working at their respective tasks, their treatment continued to differ, the same interviewee stated, 'if a base person did something wrong, he wouldn't accuse or report them but if we (the new people) did anything wrong then he would definitely report us and accuse us of being at fault'. As previously mentioned, being reported for arrest, at any level, was almost tantamount to one's execution.

Base level disdain for urban dwellers was not confined to Phnom Penh. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that those who had lived in Kampot were considered to be tainted with the same bourgeoisie brush, 'the new people were treated much worse, in my opinion, the reason for this difference is because before the Khmer Rouge began to rule, the new people were resented as they were seen as being some kind of nobility...it was the general thought that...the new people had much more comfortable and luxurious lives. The old people considered that their lives in contrast had been much harder'. It is therefore not surprising that the new people suffered so much worse than the base people did, but this was not centralized policy. It was never the intention that prior issues of class would be taken forward into the newly constructed Democratic Kampuchea.

462 Author's interview with a Kampot survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
463 Ibid.
464 Ibid.
Such deep-seated levels of social hatred and malaise transcended issues of work activities and went as far as fundamental human survival. The dynamics were such that the Khmer Rouge cadres could give themselves justification to remove new people from society. A new person could be worked so hard in the field that they died of exhaustion. A new person could be given such meager food rations that they died of starvation, or the cadres could get there first, 'the way that we were treated when we got sick was different. If the new people were sick, and had to stay at home then we would not receive any food. If a new person was sick for a number of days then the chhlop would arrive, take that person away and execute them. This was not the case for the old people'.

Therefore, if a new person’s inability to work was not reason enough to arrest them and send them to the security office, it was reason enough to kill them, indiscriminately without any apparent permission needed from a higher-force. A different interviewee suggested that the chhlop in particular were especially ‘jealous’ of the new people. It was never the CPK’s intention for the new people to be treated so differently and be subject to systematic degradation. However, such was the ferocity of so many of the base people and the lower-level cadres towards the new people cohort that the CPK was unable to stop it from happening.

In order to disguise the fact that many cadres were acting of their own volition, they would often tell the villagers that it was the will of ‘Angkar’. In the

---

485 Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
486 Ibid.
aforementioned notes on the terminology of Angkar, its meaning was not clear, and therefore offered cadres the opportunity to remove any public personal responsibility, 'sometimes when the cadres themselves wanted us to do something for them, they would say 'Angkar wants you to do this do this for me' or 'Angkar needs you to do this now'.\textsuperscript{487} It was the perfect alibi for a cadre to mask his or hers own freewill, and such is the brutalization process that occurs during periods of politicized violence, that the use of 'Angkar' may have been as much for the cadre's desire to fool himself or herself, as it was to fool their victims. As Milgram and Zimbardo's experiments demonstrated, believing that one is not responsible for one's behaviour makes the process of violence exaction unquestionably easier.

Furthermore, it was not only those who were charged with the authority to inflict CPK policy who were instrumental in the attacks on the new people. Some base people themselves were also a key function of the process of arresting new people. One interviewee stated, 'the chhlop would only listen to the unit chief but the unit chief would listen to the base people about us (new people)...some of the base people treated the new people so badly'.\textsuperscript{488}

Jealousy was often cited as the main cause of social malaise from the base people towards the new people. A multitude of sources from the Kampot area noted that the base people harboured nothing but hatred for the new people, 'it was a result of the perception that all people who lived in towns were corrupt and big

\textsuperscript{487} Author's interview with a Kampot survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid.
supporters of the previous regime. New people at that time were resented for having had opportunities to get more from the previous regime than those who lived in the countryside had.\textsuperscript{489} This perceived social imbalance often created the necessary conditions for wishing to commit acts of revenge. In the case of the villagers surrounding Kampot, this revenge was exacted by facilitating the arrests of new people.

The example of Kampot would suggest that the regional level and the surrounding villages within its immediate sphere of influence possessed a sufficient distance from the centre, both geographically and hierarchically, that allowed systematic killing outside of a prison context. At both the centralized level and zonal level, prisons functioned as engines to liquidate high-level prisoners, whereas whilst there were an enormous amount of incarcerations at the regional level, there was also a great deal of killing in the field. As we move down the chain of nodal command, the sphere of influence, in terms of a numerical head count (of perpetrators and victims alike), increases exponentially. As there was no longer such a close connection with the centre, perpetrators could 'get away with more', and this often meant immediate execution. The following paragraphs will focus specifically at regional level excesses of murder.

When questioned about the extent to which the chhlop and guards surrounding Kampot killed excessively, all interviewees stated that it certainly was the case.

\textsuperscript{489} Author's interview with a Kampot survivor. 14\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
They all unanimously made mention of the fact that they experienced at least one case of witnessing, first-hand, a perpetrator killing someone when they did not need to. One interviewee noted that the excesses were primarily allowed to occur because their superiors did not prevent it, 'as I understand it, the higher-level cadres gave the orders to the lower-level cadres but I really don't think that they cared at all about what the final result of their orders were'.\footnote{Author's interview with a Kampot survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.} The lack of monitoring leading to varying degrees of ad hoc violence that was evidently an endemic issue that led to the lack of superior directives being implemented.

Given the CPK command structure, the orders that were received in the villages surrounding Kampot town were disseminated from Kampot itself. As we shall observe, the manipulation of centralized control was not confined to base level perpetrators alone, as it also went higher. Numerous eyewitnesses revealed to me that the Kampot office itself implemented a degree of agency with regards to the regime's commands. An interviewee stated that, 'they (the Kampot office officials) wouldn't have completely changed the orders but they certainly did more than they were ordered to. I think that the higher-ranking officers in Kampot town were following the orders of the regime but they did more every time'.\footnote{Ibid.}

The proximity of geography and hierarchy, despite being closely linked to the centre in some regards (monthly meetings etc.) allowed the region to manipulate the regime to certain degrees. Because of the sphere of influence that the region
governed over, this manipulation led to further manipulation by the cadres who were working under the direct auspices of the region. In response to whether or not the geographical distance was a factor in the strength (or there lack of) of centralized control of Kampot, one interviewee stated, 'Yes, I think because it’s far, it was the case'. In keeping with Charles Tilly’s works on collective violence, we are experiencing a clear demonstration of how a violent centre can be mirrored to the lower-levels. Furthermore it evolves Tilly’s view and illustrates how a relative authority, who is operating largely upon his or her own volition, further exacerbates the issue of agency.

The interviewee was then asked if lower-level cadres in Kampot ever committed more killings than they were ordered to. The response was a resounding, ‘yes, yes, yes...the cadres did change the orders from what they had received themselves...they were always doing more than was necessary’. In some instances, these excesses would result in instantaneous death, or it would result in an arrest warrant that the perpetrator knew full well spelled death for the unlucky individual.

The security centre in Kampot town was originally built as a provincial prison, designed to detain those who broke the law during the eras of Sihanouk and Lon Nol. During the Lon Nol regime, Khmer Rouge soldiers were often imprisoned in the Kampot prison. According to Meng-Try Ea, the prison centre ‘held two

---

492 Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
493 Ibid.
detention cells and one interrogation room.\textsuperscript{494} One Kampot prison survivor stated that the prison staff would use a variety of torture instruments (in addition to the ones previously mentioned), including ‘instruments made of wood, (used) to squeeze or press me’.\textsuperscript{495} The same source noted that the other torture techniques that they witnessed were ‘ropes, wooden sticks...and pincers to pull out peoples nails’.\textsuperscript{496} Such was the overwhelming strength of the dehumanization process, that the Khmer Rouge torture staff were not phased by the task that they had been ordered to perform, in fact, several sources suggest that some cadres took pleasure in torturing, ‘I saw two Khmer Rouge cadres named Korng and Keurn were smiling whilst torturing their prisoners, especially whilst they were pulling out the prisoners nails’.\textsuperscript{497}

Whilst interrogating and confession taking was supposed to be a rigid protocol, there is also evidence to suggest that the prison cadres would sometimes kill prisoners before confessions were taken. Kampot evacuee survivor stated, ‘the Khmer Rouge soldiers killed my mother for no reason having ’raped her and cut off her breasts...they then proceeded to cut out her liver and eat it...they didn’t even extract a confession-rather just killed her straight away’.\textsuperscript{498} Rape was forbidden by the CPK (upon its discovery, it was reason enough to kill the offending cadre or guard). This is a clear example of lower-level staff straying from the official party line, using the regime for their own purposes.

\textsuperscript{494} Ea, 2005, Page 98.
\textsuperscript{495} Archive D24541. 20\textsuperscript{th} January 2001. \textit{Interview with Deuloh, Dang Torn District, Kampot province}. Page 39.
\textsuperscript{496} Ibid. Page 43.
\textsuperscript{497} Ibid. Page 44.
\textsuperscript{498} Archive D00616. 30\textsuperscript{th} November 1995. \textit{Events in 3 years, 8 months and 20 days in Kampot province}. Pages 1-2.
According to the same survivor, ‘those kept in the regional detention centre could not sleep for the fear of death’.\textsuperscript{499} The staff would torment the prisoners who were detained. Prisoners would be starved and then the staff would offer them \textit{borborskol} (traditional Khmer sweets), ‘but some were intentionally laced with poison, those who ate them, ran the risk of death’.\textsuperscript{500} There are several reports stating that prisoners often sat in silence, as they were too frightened to talk with one another, ‘if they were seen talking, it could be seen as spying or espionage, and would invariably lead to death’.\textsuperscript{501} The methods of execution used at the Kampot security centre were throat slitting (with palm tree branches) and live burial. After a prisoner had been executed, they were driven to the ‘car park of Bokor mountain’\textsuperscript{502} (approximately 15 kilometres away). It is reported that 3,914\textsuperscript{503} bodies have been exhumed from the site. The estimated total death toll for the entire area was 100,899 people.\textsuperscript{504}

\textbf{Phnom La-Ang:}

The final prison site of this chapter is Phnom La-Ang. Located on Phnom (mount) La-Ang, Dang Tung district, Kampot province. Phnom La-Ang was the second prison campus site of the region 35-security centre. It was situated approximately 125 kilometres south of Phnom Penh, and 25 kilometres north of Kampot town.

501 Ibid.
502 Ibid. Page 3.
503 Ibid.
504 Ibid. Page 1.
The prison, according to Vickery, 'was not a special building, but simply a penned enclosure, and the prisoners were not chained or otherwise physically constrained'.\footnote{Vickery, 1984. Page 96.} An interviewee confirmed that it was not a sophisticated prison complex, noting, 'It didn’t have walls, but there were some gated fences at some parts of the mountain. It would have been impossible for an escape though as the mountain was surrounded with armed guards. It was a prison that was outside. When it rained, they got wet and when it was sunny they got hot and burned. I would also add that the cadres and guards at that prison were very young'.\footnote{Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.} The prison would seem to share some similarities with Phnom Sanlong, in that a vast majority of the prison was wall-less and had an armed perimeter. Furthermore, prisoners were obviously exposed to the intense elements of Khmer weather.

According to an interviewee who was detained in Phnom La-Ang for two years, the site was kept as secretive as possible; 'I was able to notice that La-Ang security office was a secret place that didn't allow just anyone to enter, even the officials from the ministry. It was the place for interrogation for the accused people, those considered to be an enemy of Angkar'.\footnote{Author’s interview with a La-Ang prison survivor. 1\textsuperscript{st} August 2012. Dang Tung, Kampot province.} From the interviewee's statement, one could infer that the centre did in fact not have as close control over the prison site as they could have had. If the prison site was 'strictly off limits', even for some higher-ranking officials, then it is fair to say that this could...
have afforded an enormous margin of latitude to the prison staff to behave in the manner that they pleased. Eyewitness accounts note that Ta Mok was never seen at Phnom La-Ang, despite its supposed parallel hierarchy with the Kampot security centre.

According to an interviewee who served as a prison guard at La-Ang, arrests did not come from the higher-echelons, like Ta Mok for example, but were a result of village and commune-level reports, 'If the chief of the village or commune didn’t report any prisoners or victims to be sent to La-Ang, there would have been no prisoners there'.\(^{508}\) The arrest dynamics surrounding La-Ang were therefore base level up, highlighting the possibility for false reporting and opportunism, as we have already seen that commune and village chief behavior went largely unchecked. The interviewee stated that there was an occasion when they received 'prison training from higher cadres', but in general the lower-level prison guards were deferential only to the prison chief. In response to the question of whether or not the La-Ang prison guards had the freedom to practice CPK policy as they pleased, the interviewee stated, 'yes, there was freedom. In particular, the perpetrators could use freedom to do what they wanted with the prisoners who had tried to escape from the prison'.\(^{509}\) How much freedom the guards truly wielded will never fully be known, but the example given demonstrates that there were some instances where they could make their own decisions.

\(^{508}\) Author’s interview with a former La-Ang prison guard. 12\(^{th}\) August 2012. Chumkiri commune, Kampot province.

\(^{509}\) Ibid.
Despite being part of the region 35-security centre, where the campus in Kampot functioned as an execution centre, Phnom La-Ang was constructed to function as a ‘reeducation camp’,\textsuperscript{510} or at least, that was the theory. According to an eyewitness of the Phnom La-Ang, the prisoners were set to work once they had been detained, ‘the prisoners worked differently. For those of them that were not sick, they would collect corn from the field. The older prisoners and prisoners who were considered to have committed more serious offenses would thresh the corn to release the ears. I remember when I was working near there, if an ordinary person came close to the perimetre of the prison, the guards would beat the prisoners relentlessly in front of us to act as a deterrent to us to work hard and not break any rules’.\textsuperscript{511} Whilst the prison was designed to function as a reeducation centre, this statement would suggest that the prisoners were actually just subject to hard labour and humiliation. Craig Etcheson confirmed that these sites rarely ‘reeducated’ (in our understanding of the terminology), stating, ‘conditions at this network of reeducation camps were so inhumane that there was generally a very high death toll among inmates in those camps’.\textsuperscript{512}

The same witness stated that, of the prisoners that they saw, ‘they didn’t have handcuffs on but some of them were bound. In what I witnessed, about 10 people died per night and I could see that it was through starvation. I could see that they were starving. I wouldn’t know how many people died there exactly,

\textsuperscript{510} Ea, 2005. Page 98.
\textsuperscript{511} Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
but so many people were sent there. When entering the prison, I could see that they had their hands tied together and were walked in a line together. I remember that the Khmer Rouge cadres would order one accused to hit the person in front of them to get them to walk faster to the prison. This is further evidence to suggest that the true function and emphasis of the prison was not actually reeducation as that would suggest that the prisoners maintained the potential to be reintegrated back into ‘normal’ society, but it is clear that prisoners were dying of preventable causes and killed in situ. The secrecy of the prison may have been to hide the fact that the prison was not functioning as it should have or perhaps it was never designed to function as a reeducation centre, and its secrecy merely purported the myth.

The secrecy of the prison and guise of a reeducation centre would naturally enable the prison staff at Phnom La-Ang an enormous degree of agency to exact ‘prison law’ as they saw fit. Another Phnom La-Ang survivor stated, ‘the lower Khmer Rouge cadres were able to create their own rules and roles in the prison (by themselves)...if a prisoner ever tried to escape, when he or she were caught up by the security guards, they could injure or even kill them because at that time there were no means of contact, for example a telephone to contact with the higher Khmer Rouge cadres who were in Kampot town. So because it would have taken time if they had to wait for the orders from the higher-ups so they just killed directly’.514

513 Author’s interview with a Kampot survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
514 Author’s interview with a Phnom La-Ang survivor. 11th August 2012. Dang Tung district, Kampot province.
Some members of staff were in a position to make their own decisions because they were protected by secrecy and a geographical proximity that didn’t allow for immediate communication with either Kampot, the zone or the centre. Rather than use their agency to protect the prisoners, or at least keep them alive (as was the primary function of a ‘reeducation centre’), the prison staff seemed to have encouraged execution and ensured that it happened, ‘sometimes, if the prisoners made a mistake, they would kill them immediately without needing an order from their superiors. They could kill who they wanted’.\textsuperscript{515} There was seemingly no impetus on reeducation whatsoever, and in fact it would appear that the prison essentially functioned as an execution site, ‘I would say that most people who were sent there died, but it would not all have been a result of direct physical execution, a lot of people starved to death there or perished’.\textsuperscript{516} The overwhelming transformation from a reeducation centre to an execution site is, to an extent, the reflection of lower-level dynamics overpowering centralized directives.

Much like Kampot and Chrey O’Phnue, the prisoner constituency were the following cohorts; ‘new people, people related to the previous Lon Nol regime, highly educated people, nobility and so on...one reason that they were arrested was because the Khmer Rouge had accused them of being enemies of Angkar’.\textsuperscript{517}

\textsuperscript{515} Author’s interview with a Phnom La-Ang survivor. 1\textsuperscript{st} August 2012. Dang Tung district, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{516} Author’s interview with a Phnom La-Ang survivor. 11\textsuperscript{th} August 2012. Dang Tung district, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{517} Author’s interview with a Phnom La-Ang survivor. 1\textsuperscript{st} August 2012. Dang Tung district, Kampot province.
These prisoner cohorts included the usual suspects; the educated, the noble, political enemies, but the imprisonment of new people with no reasoning other than the fact that they were ‘new’ would suggest once more, that the lower-level arrest dynamics were skewed, and provided a platform for base people to implicate new people, to ensure that they were sent to a prison, in this instance an execution centre moonlighting as reeducation centre. In response to the question ‘do you think that new people were sent to La-Ang just because they were new?’ the eyewitness stated, ‘many more new people were sent there...the new people who were sent there would have been sent there for just the slightest of mistakes’.518

Given the constant executions that took place at Phnom La-Ang, over 100 mass graves were uncovered, with the subsequent exhumation of approximately 10,000 people.519

Conclusion:
The evidence that this chapter has presented would suggest that the regional level, to an extent, demonstrates an increased degree of agency from the zonal level. However, the evidence does not present one generalized model by which all three prisons can be judged.

518 Author’s interview with a Phnom La-Ang survivor. 13th September 2013. Dang Tung district, Kampot province.
Chrey O'Phnue was clearly governed directly by Ta Mok, which allowed for fewer instances of lower-level agency and digressions from Mokism. Chrey O'Phnue was supposed to function as a labour camp for ‘reeducation’, but the evidence would suggest that, like Phnom Sanlong, it was just another opportunity for Ta Mok to remove members of society that he didn’t care for. This is one individual who, whilst holding a central position, acted in the way as he pleased and few could stop him.

The dynamics in region 35 were slightly different. The primary function of the Kampot-based prison was to execute political enemies, members of the Lon Nol regime and prescribed enemies of Angkar. Whilst the prison undoubtedly functioned to meet these demands, there is also evidence to suggest that prison protocol was not always carried out, with rape and the disembowelment of prisoners taking place alongside tardiness over confession taking.

Furthermore, Kampot prison presided directly over an area where prisoners were sent straight to the prison (without background checks). The structure at that level seemed to allow lower-level cadres an enormous degree of freedom to arrest anyone whom they seemingly pleased. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people who were simply unpopular. New people in particular were targeted for their stereotyped prior existence and the base people took the opportunity to exact revenge as they saw fit. The regional officials or prison officials failed to monitor these lower-level dynamics and never questioned the motives behind an arrest or an arrestee. This is a clear demonstration of how geography from the centre and hierarchical fracturing
allowed certain people the opportunity to make their own decisions. The power to kill was manipulated and misused. One could kill for one’s own benefit, whatever that may have been.

Similarly, Phnom La-Ang suffered from the same problem, only this time, Phnom La-Ang was deferential still to the wishes of those officials of Kampot, at least that was the intended theory (therefore a greater hierarchical disjuncture existed at this prison). However, the reality demonstrates that in fact La-Ang staff rarely requested permission from their Kampot superiors, and ran the prison as they wished. Like Chrey O’Phnue, La-Ang was supposed to function as a reeducation facility but instead it became a site where individuals were left outside to perish under the elements or starve to death. Also, similar to the Kampot security centre, the personnel who were executed at the prison were drawn from the surrounding countryside once the CPK’s prescribed enemies had themselves been killed. After the Lon Nol associates had been murdered, the prison machine needed fuel and so the prison structure offered an opportunity to the lowest levels to kill who they wanted to.

The tertiary node is the beginnings of the inordinate degree of murder that occurred in Democratic Kampuchea. It also presents evidence of internalized, internally driven motives for violence. The regional level was the first level of the command structure that allowed for extensive revenge killings and unmonitored arrests. According to Heder, ‘killings, probably most, were committed by regional and local authorities acting not as part of such a tight chain of commands, but of a looser and more diffuse hierarchical structure of delegated and discretionary
authority in which the top provided only vague and general guidelines, giving wide latitude to the lower-downs, all the way to the bottom, to decide who was and who was not an enemy and what to do with them. These lower-downs were certainly not just following orders.\textsuperscript{520} During case file 002 of ECCC proceedings, David Chandler agreed with this statement of Heder’s. The evidence from this chapter would certainly support Heder’s statement also. There were guidelines for the lower-levels at the regional level to follow, but largely, they didn’t. This demonstrates the transcendental nature of the motives that underlie internally and externally driven violence.

Chapter 7 - Quaternary node: The Southwest districts, Kraing Ta Chan, Chhouk, Dang Tung, Kampong Trach, Wat Kampong Tralach.

This chapter will focus on the quaternary node of the CPK command structure. In Democratic Kampuchean terminology, the quaternary node was known as the 'district level'. The districts were a level below the region/sector level and the level above the sub-district level.

The districts were designed to function, in theory, as the zones and regions did, consisting of an identical staff hierarchy, 'as with zones and sectors, districts were also governed by three-person Party Committees consisting of a secretary, a deputy secretary responsible for security, and a member responsible for economics. District secretaries were, generally speaking, appointed by the sector secretary with the approval of the zone secretary and the Standing Committee'.\(^{521}\) The setup of the secretary hierarchy mirrored the zones and the regions. The appointment of staff, having been made a higher level, would suggest a degree of deference to and influence from at least the regional level. It would have also granted an opportunity for zone and sector leaders to put 'their own people' in a position of authority. Ta Mok's daughter, Khom, for example, was made district chief of Tram Kak and held the position until 1976.

Like the zone and regional level, the district level functioned as a decision-making centre. And like the theoretical function of the zone and the region, the

---

primary function of the district level, with regards to internal security, was arresting and detaining state enemies. It was ultimately up to the district's discretion as to which level an enemy should be moved to, whether to 'reeducate' or execute at the district level, or transfer them up the detention chain network, 'districts were a key echelon in the hierarchy of Democratic Kampuchea because the districts maintained security offices which distinguished between enemies who were disposed of locally, and enemies who would be sent up the chain of command to higher-level authorities'.

The cadres associated with the district level were supposed to attend centre-led politicization lessons, study sessions designed to teach the regime and its lower-level implementation. According to Etcheson, there were instances where such meetings took place with the district staff, 'these sessions were held regularly for cadres from all units...involving cadres from the...districts...everyone could be appraised of the current policy lines of the Party and the government. These sessions were often led and taught by Nuon Chea and/or Khieu Samphan'.

There is evidence, therefore, that on at least one occasion, some staff from the district level attended central meetings led by very senior members of the Standing Committee.

---


However, Van Rout (alias Meuan) suggests that the meetings may have taken place in name only. In an interview with Heder, Meuan stated, ‘some district secretaries and other grassroots cadre who came to study sessions over which Nuon Chea presided were clearly unable to follow or fathom what he was saying. His positions were more sophisticated and made at a speed that they could not handle. Some (cadres) just gave up taking notes and nodded off. When asked whether they understood, they would perk up and say “yes, comrade” and then return to the districts and do whatever they pleased, while citing the authority of the Angkar in doing’. Therefore one could argue that the meetings had little effect on their audience, as the information was not disseminated in a way that was always universally understood.

My own interviews and secondary data suggest that most of the lower-level district prison cadres were aged between 14 and 17 years of age, and mainly uneducated. Evidence taken from the highest levels also substantiates the claim that the cadres were not suitable for such political complexities and party policy nuances. During his testimony in case file 002, author of ‘year zero’ and Phnom Penh evacuation survivor, Father Francois Ponchaud, stated that, ‘Khieu Samphan acknowledges that one of the errors of his regime was to have given the power to unprepared or incompetent cadres. “We did not have time to train the cadres; we gave them responsibilities too rapidly. And, indeed, it is these lower-ranking cadres who killed ...(cadres) often who were ignorant, who

couldn't read or write'. The fact that the cadres were not suitable for such meetings, therefore, was known even to the highest echelon. To expect an illiterate cadre to take notes about convoluted political concepts was therefore an oversight by those leading the study sessions.

However, Khieu Samphan, Ponchaud states, also noted that these cadres were extremely "frustrated". Thus perhaps the cadres had no intention of absorbing and digesting the centralized rhetoric. They were in a position of power, new to them, which enabled them to vent these 'frustrations' as they wished. Unsurprisingly, at the district level, these frustrated cadres especially targeted the new people. And their frustrations were not the result of a sense of ideological class-consciousness that they learned in their political training, rather it was issues of base jealously and resentment that fostered feelings of frustration.

During a very lengthy interview with an Angkor Chey district (Kampot province) survivor, the extent to which new people were targeted by base level cadres was made very apparent to me, 'I lost all 4 of my brothers during the regime, we were the 17th April people [new people] so we were targeted...the village chief paid much attention in observing me and my behavior. The lower cadres were

---


originally from this area [Angkor Chey]...the lower cadres forced me to do hard work even when I was sick...my legs were swollen but they still made me work. The cadres hated me, just because I was from the city. I worked in a unit, carrying land for dam building. I had to carry ‘shit’ (human excrement) as well. The Khmer Rouge used to order me to taste the shit to test for its ‘saltiness’. It was human shit. If I refused, they wouldn’t have fed me. I had to do this work because I was a new person. I’m originally from Phnom Penh.\(^{527}\) It is clear from this person’s testimony that the treatment for some of the new people was particularly atrocious.

I asked this particular interviewee if they thought that this treatment was the will of the CPK, ‘I think that the decision came from the lower-level cadres because they just didn’t like me full stop. In all honesty, I’m not sure, but that is my gut feeling. I think when it came to issues of ordering certain killings then those kinds of decisions were supposed to be made by the higher authorities but decisions could easily be made by the lower (district) authorities without permission from above...I am positive that they (the lower-level cadres) changed their orders to suit themselves’.\(^{528}\) I asked the interviewee if they thought that the geographical and hierarchical distance from the CPK made this freewheeling behavior possible, and they responded, ‘yes, yes, yes’.\(^{529}\) Through this testimony we are able to observe how some individuals made decisions of their own.

\(^{527}\) Author’s interview with an Angkor Chey district survivor. 25\(^{th}\) November 2012. Angkor Chey district, Kampot province.
\(^{528}\) Ibid.
\(^{529}\) Ibid.
volition. Their agency was determined by their own personal feelings and actively digressed from their own orders and the directives of the CPK.

The misunderstanding of central directives was not the dominant reason why so many cadres at the district level killed to excess. As this chapter will demonstrate, district cadres, in their masses, literally took the law into their own hands because of the hatred of the city people that so many harboured. To return to the final sentence of Heder’s interview, it is also apparent that at the district level, as at the regional and zonal level, the term ‘Angkar’ provided the cadres with a smokescreen to cover their own decision-making ability and decisions. We will observe that new people were being killed in their thousands because of issues such as long-standing feelings of social malaise and deep-seated jealousy (though the motives to kill in a lawless society were naturally endless). The ability to kill as one pleased, as we shall see, was made easier at this level given the increased proximity of geography and hierarchy from the CPK.

It was in fact at the district level where formalized policy finally began to truly break from the reality of the day-to-day goings on. Heder notes, ‘my overall impression is that practice in general did not follow this formal procedure, that it was often the case that the decision was made lower-down, sometimes as low as the district...so there was a disjuncture between formal policy and structure’.530

As we shall observe at the district level, even the threat of Ta Mok did little to

control the behavior of many of the lower-level cadres, such was the
geographical and hierarchical disjunction from him. The cessation of formal
policy has hugely important ramifications when we consider and observe the
behavior of many of the cadres at this district level.

As we have already discovered, 'formal policy' at both the zone level and regional
level was certainly not adhered to entirely, with an increasing degree of agency
and autonomy the further down the nodal chain of command one travels, so one
would anticipate that the district level would demonstrate the same
characteristics, but to a greater degree. The district therefore represents a
subjective tipping point, which arguably represents the final point over which
the rigid theoretical structure of the CPK was able to comprehensively reach, but
generally didn't reach in reality. As this chapter will illustrate, there were some
areas where the policy was known and adhered to in part and other areas where
it was actively ignored.

**Southwest districts:**

As the zone had been split into divisional regions, the regions were themselves
also divided further into districts. Region 13 (Takeo province) was subdivided
into five districts; Tram Kak, Angkor Chey, Treang, Koh Andet and Kiri Vong.
Region 25 (Kandal province) was subdivided into five districts; Leuk Dek, Kean
Svay, Koh Thom, Sa Ang and Kandal Stung. Region 33 (Kampong Speu) was
subdivided into six districts; Srong, Kong Pisei, Tram Khna, Samrong, Prey
Kabass and Bati. And finally Region 35 was further subdivided into five districts;
Prey Noup, Chhouk, Dang Tung, Kampong Trach and Touk Meas. As
aforementioned, each district was governed by a committee, and contained at least one 'district reeducation centre'.

**District reeducation centres:**
In keeping with all prisons, detention and security centres nationwide, the primary function of the district reeducation centres was to facilitate the immediate detention of perceived enemies. Their fate was then decided upon by the heads of the respective reeducation centres, and in some cases the district committee itself. According to district level nurse, Meas Saran, it was the district office who dealt with the questions surrounding what should be done with specific individuals once they had been arrested, ‘to my knowledge...it was up to that district office to decide whether to forward the list for an upper authority decision concerning the fate of those prisoners’.\(^{531}\) A prisoner would therefore either be held at a district reeducation centre or be transferred up the chain of security centres.

Once a prisoner was set to remain at the district level, they would be incarcerated at their closest district reeducation centre. It was at the district level that so much more of the CPK related prison-based killing occurred (when compared with the regions and zone). According to Etcheson, this was in part due to the number of prisons per capita and the closeness to a larger degree of the general population, ‘it is completely clear that the vast majority of the

---

executions happened at the district echelon security centres, due primarily to the fact that there were so many more full-scale security centres at that echelon than at any other, by a factor of six or seven, and also due to the fact that cadres at the lower echelons were closest to the masses, and therefore in the best position to determine who is an "enemy" (at least as they perceived it).

The district level represented an evolution of the water and oil relationship that existed between the base and new people. The disdain that so many of the base people harboured towards the new people was finally unleashed in so many of the districts throughout Democratic Kampuchea. The process of 'score settling' and personal goal theory married together to create a perfect storm of obligatory, externally-driven killings and also the indiscriminate, ad hoc, internally driven killings that were symptomatic of a society suffering from a temporary paradigm shift into the sphere of legitimized violence.

A district survivor told me in an interview that, 'the lower cadres hated me because I was originally from Phnom Penh. The lower cadres were told by the commune chief to be particularly cruel to the new people, but they needed no encouragement...the village chief himself really hated us. He used to lie to the higher authorities saying something like “every time a new person walks under the coconut tree, they steal one of our coconuts for themselves”. Even though it wasn’t true, they would report lies like that about us because of their hatred for

532 Author’s written correspondence with Craig Etcheson. 24th November 2012.
us'. These rumours and lies formed the basis for so many of the arrest reports that were issued, which led to perilous arrests. They also helped to nurture the myths of internal saboteurs in every aspect of society.

To an extent, one could argue that detaining someone at a low level suited the regime as 'high-level prisoners' had to be relentlessly interrogated and on occasion, the justification behind an arrest and possible execution had to be reviewed. However, keeping a prisoner at district level effectively meant that, whilst a prisoner would be subject to torture, interrogation and ultimately (in most cases) execution, thorough investigations were not necessary, and thus the potential for highlighting unjustifiable arrests was much slimmer.

Furthermore, the issue of cadres themselves being under-skilled and inappropriate brokers of life and death, especially at the district level, was a crucial determinant behind explaining why such a high degree of killings at this level occurred. For example, as we shall observe there was a mass of juvenile cadres, formally of the pariah state who were made the decision-makers over those members of society who had formerly been from the perceived 'high society'. The widespread perception amongst these cadres was that the former-urban bourgeoisie had been scornful of their countryside cousins (before their empowerment with authority and weaponry), and on occasion had even actively contributed to their economic difficulties (but this in no way justifies one's murder).

533 Author's interview with an Angkor Chey district survivor, 25th November 2012. Angkor Chey district, Kampot province.
A population can be incredibly voluminous (as the district level was), but execution of this degree, still requires a dynamic cohort of individuals arresting and reporting to an equal degree. As we have previously mentioned, the cadres at the district level were young and lacking in education, and more importantly, 'frustrated'. It was the cadres' zealous desire to execute that led to such a high level of deaths at the district level. The presence of a large population and a large number of prisons alone does not explain why so many people were killed at this level without acknowledging that the behavior of the cadres as well.

**Southwest district reeducation centres:**

In total there were 21 district reeducation centres in the Southwest zone, one centre per district. Meng-Try Ea notes that of those 21, 15 of the prison sites were located at 'temples', the rest were in former schools and 'other buildings modified to serve as security facilities'. The centres were divided up into different areas to allow the separation of detention blocks from interrogation blocks. The prisons were further subdivided between those prisoners charged with light offenses (e.g. stealing food) and those prisoners charged with heavier offenses.

In keeping with CPK prison tradition, the first major waves of prisoners were Lon Nol soldiers. Once they had been liquidated, after 1976, this group (of prisoners) expanded to encompass their (the Lon Nol soldiers) families and

---

535 Ibid.
members of the general population',\textsuperscript{536} they were killed to prevent threats and vengeful activity to Democratic Kampuchea. Whilst the arrests and executions of Lon Nol soldiers were a centralized directive, the arrival of the evacuee population led to masses of reports and arrests made at the discretion of lower-level cadres, commune, co-operative and village chiefs, and base people also.

It was not until 1977 that the district level security centres really started to fill up with inmates. One possible explanation for this relates to an edition of the publication, ‘the Honorary Red Flag, Special issue’ which was distributed nationwide to cadres. An edition from 1977, stated that ‘(Cadres) must have the clear opinion and stance that the battle against the internal enemies is not finished. The old remnants of the enemy remain concealed, and might expand again... there must be absolute measures to eliminate them, no compromise, no hesitation or delay whatsoever’.\textsuperscript{537} The ‘enemies’ of the publication where what we can refer to as ‘political trenders’; teachers, feudalists, and landowners. This is a clear demonstration that there were centralised directives sent to the districts upon occasion.

The publication goaded the cadres to be ruthless and relentless in their revolutionary struggle. The make-up of 1977 and 1978 prisoners would suggest, however, that ‘political trenders’ was terminology as conveniently vague as ‘Angkar’ and ‘enemy’. For example, in Tram Kak (a district of region 13), of 500

\textsuperscript{536} Ea. 2005. Page 63-64.
\textsuperscript{537} Ibid. Page 66.
prisoners, only '252 were class/political trenders'. Irrespective of whether or not the 252 were in fact political trenders, it remains the case that they were only 50 per cent of the total prisoners to be incarcerated. Cadres could interpret the meaning as they wished, and the vast death toll of proletariat agricultural serfs would suggest that they did just that.

The environment offered empowered cadres and base people the opportunity to murder their neighbours because of issues other than political trending. The CPK was reminding cadres that there may still be enemies in their midst (partly to cover up their own ailing policies), but gave only very vague guides as to who these enemies might be if they did in fact exist. However, after these reports were sent, the cadres' behavior was not monitored. As the statements from interviews at this level will demonstrate, many lower-level cadres killed neighbours whom they had had long-standing feuds with before the regime even came to power.

There is also a great deal of evidence to suggest that jealousy was a large proponent of motive-based killing. As one interviewee recalls, 'the lower-level cadres could make their own decisions. They could report the most trivial things...if they wanted to. Sometimes the villagers would have absolutely no idea that they had done something wrong...sometimes the villagers had done nothing wrong at all but they were still reported because of jealousy or hatred. Then the village chief could just report what he wanted to his superiors...the cadres there

---

(Tram Kak district) definitely used the regime as an excuse to kill as they pleased.\footnote{Author’s interview with a Tram Kak district survivor. 25\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. Angkor Chey, Kampot province.}

The publication also highlights another nuance that is often overlooked. By 1978, the notion of feudalism or landlordism was well and truly over but the party and its machine continued, dogmatically, to accuse people of exposing feudalistic tendencies and capitalist behavior. How they achieved this, living in a socialist co-operative over the course of two years is unknown. Perhaps it does nothing more than demonstrate the drastic lengths that the party had to go to in order to create scapegoats out of thin air. For example, someone caught stealing food would be branded as a feudalistic capitalist on the grounds that they, at that moment, had seized ‘state property’ for themselves. An interviewee stated, ‘the things that the cadres were told were mistakes, was told to them by Ta Mok, so for example, Ta Mok told them that stealing things was a mistake so the village chief and commune chief considered it as a mistake as well. From that point onwards, the cadres could arrest whom they selected and send them to the prison without further permission from the higher authorities.\footnote{Author’s interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 25\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. Angkor Chey district, Kampot province.} The stealing of food, however, was an act performed out of desperation because the very regime that was accusing them of being a thief was starving them. The Khmer Rouge was creating enemies by the very virtue of their extraordinarily rigid policies (a piece of fallen rotting fruit, for example, was considered state property). Cadres could have turned a blind eye to such desperation if they had wished to.
Arrests could also take place on the grounds of being indicted in another’s confession. Confession taking was widespread at the district level, and part of the function of a cadre being ‘ruthless’ was to expose networks of saboteurs, whether they truly existed or not. Interrogation was carried out much like it was at the higher-ranking security centres as ‘interrogation at the district level followed an S-21 manual’.\textsuperscript{541}

As far as systematic detention was concerned, the centre certainly intended to create a system that mirrored what was happening at the top. Prisoners were to be politically broken before physical torture was applied, or at least that was the official line. The ‘officially’ acceptable methods of physical torture to be used at the district level were the following: ‘kicks and stomps, clubbing, bamboo or rattan whipping, breaking of arms or legs, branding, live burial, beatings, stabbing (with bayonets), squeezing of the temple and the chest, asphyxiation, drowning, waterboarding, clubbing of kneecaps and chain whipping’.\textsuperscript{542} A successful confession was one that could be obtained and be granted satisfactory by the district committee before the decision as to what to do with the prisoner was taken. Confessions were often sent by report, between the security centre and the district committee.

Once arrested, the indicted would be detained and interrogated. Depending on the seriousness of their supposed crime, they would either be detained as a

\textsuperscript{541} Ea. 2005. Page 73.
\textsuperscript{542} Ibid. Page 78.
serious offender or a light offender. A serious offender would be shackled to the ground, and not be allowed outside. Conversely, a light offender would be shackled at nighttime but be allowed to walk around the prison grounds during the daytime. ‘Duties for light prisoners were economic tasks, which were usually related to picking vegetables, cooking food and feeding the prisoners, disposing of waste, and carrying the corpses of those who died in their cells’. There are accounts of rape and other inhumane abuse, such as forced excrement eating of both sets of prisoners.

If the district committee took the decision to execute a prisoner, on the evaluation of his or her confession report and biography, the order would be sent back to the respective security centre to perform the operation. Cadres would enter the holding cells and announce the names of those to be killed, they complied as the cadres explained that the list that they were reading was for their release. They were blindfolded and bound at the wrists, and walked by the cadres to dug pits. ‘Upon reaching the pits, the cadres ordered the prisoners to kneel. No bullets were wasted: the cadres used hoes, oxcart axels or heavy bamboo to break the prisoner’s necks. Their throats were then slit and the bodies pushed into the pits’. The process was carried out in complete secrecy to manage the living prisoners, ensuring the pretense of the ‘release list’ worked for future victims of the security centre. In order to create such secrecy, the arrests were often done at night whilst loud music played to drown out the noise.

544 Ibid. Page 82
Other causes of death included the starvation, over-work and death at the hands of an over zealous interrogator.

The confessions and execution reports were supposed to be sent to the Party’s Central Committee. However, Meng-Try Ea states that the party centre in fact delegated this responsibility of checking district-level confessions to the zone level. There is evidence to suggest that the zone committee further delegated this responsibility to the ‘region committees’. Therefore, whilst it was official protocol to have the lower-level reports checked by the centre, they were in fact checked by the echelon that was their immediate superior. What Pol Pot or Nuon Chea should have taken receipt of was actually presided over and decided by regional heads Kang Chap and Sam Bit (though it is doubtful that even they read the reports). This may have been the CPK’s intention.

Most prisoners were killed in the district security centres that they were initially sent to, as the reports of the potentially high-ranking prisoners were not sent above the regional level. ‘A small number who confessed to having a network of enemy contacts or who had high-level positions in the Lon Nol regime went to the region security centres for continued interrogation’. One could argue, therefore, that the centre themselves, in delegating the task of report reading to the region, were directly involved in forcing the theoretical function of the rigid command structure of security centres to not operate as it should, leading to a skewed ceiling of prisoner transferal at each hierarchical level. There were

546 Ibid.
undoubtedly cases of high-level enemies being executed at low-level prisons.

Furthermore, this lack of centralized direct involvement in the prisoner personnel at the district level would have afforded the arresting cadres an enormous degree of latitude and agency to arrest as they pleased, no one higher ranking than a regional secretary was ever going to see their reports.

The chapter will now focus its attention on five district reeducation security centre case studies; Tram Kak (Kraig Ta Chan), Chhouk, Dang Tung, Kampong Trach and Wat Kampong Tralach.\textsuperscript{547}

\textsuperscript{547} Ezilon (n.d.) ‘Map of Cambodia’.
Tram Kak (Kraing Ta Chan):

The first quaternary node prison that we shall analyse is the district reeducation office located in Tram Kak, district 105, it is better known as Kraing Ta Chan prison. The prison was located in Kraing Ta Chan village, Kuh district, Takeo.
province (5 kilometres west of Ang Ta Soam market, located on national road 3, 70 kilometres from Phnom Penh).

The site became associated with the Khmer Rouge much earlier than 1975. During the 1960s, the area had been virgin forest, and offered a perfect opportunity to act as a ‘hiding place for the Khmer liberation groups against the Lon Nol regime’. From the primitive CPK hiding/meeting place, ‘in mid-1973 it was converted by the Sector Committee into a detention office...it evolved into a fenced-in compound’. Part of the conversion process included turning the old sleeping halls, eating halls and kitchens into cells, ‘each cell was 7 metres long and 5 metres wide’. Detention, interrogation and confession taking were all performed in these buildings.

The changing composition of prisoners who came through the gates of Kraing Ta Chan mirrored both the changing requirements of the centre to find enemies in society and also the increased opportunities afforded to lower-level actors to arrest whom they pleased. Naturally it was Lon Nol soldiers who were first to be detained at Kraing Ta Chan. Following them were the police forces who had worked for the Khmer Republic. 1976 saw the arrival of implicated family

---

549 Ibid.
members of those associated with the Lon Nol regime. According to Meng-Try Ea, between 1976 and 1978, Kraing Ta Chan also took receipt of those considered to have ‘political tendencies’$^{552}$ and their families.

Prisoners were arrested by district-level cadres, who arrested them either upon the receipt of letters and reports constructed by the lower cadres or from confessions that came from either Kraing Ta Chan itself or other security centres. According to a former guard, the process of arrests was initially based at village level, with the majority of prisoners originally arriving from the surrounding villages. Villagers (both base and new people) were observed by Khmer Rouge guards, chhlop, and by each other.

If someone was considered to be breaking the CPK policy then they could be reported, 'the village chiefs and the villagers themselves reported individuals-the reports came from the village. I believe that a lot of the people that were highlighted as enemies by the village had been individuals that were disliked before the regime. Their names being reported could well have come from long-standing problems'.$^{553}$ If the guard's statement is to be believed, it is clear that the basis for these arrests is derived from the interpretation of lower-level actors of what constituted anti-revolutionary behaviour.

Additionally, the guard's statement illustrates the subcontracting of authority to make decisions, in this case the decision to make reports on potential arrests,

---

$^{553}$ Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan former guard. 15th October 2012. Tram Kak, Takeo province.
opens up the possibility to introduce peripheral actor’s interpretations of ‘company policy’. It also opens up the opportunity for individuals, at least once removed geographically and hierarchically, to use the environment as an opportunity to improve one’s own standing. In this particular instance, the village reports were an opportunity for lower-level actors to exact revenge and vent feelings of pre-existing malaise. As we have already observed, and will continue to observe, feelings of social injustice and malaise were a potential motivation when we consider the question, ‘why did they kill?’

Focusing on the issue of arrests, and report opportunism at the lower-levels of the villages that fed the Kraing Ta Chan prison, prison survivors, district survivors and former perpetrators were all in agreement that advantage was taken of the process. One survivor stated that, ‘lower-level cadres used the regime as an excuse to kill but not for killing people directly...they would send villagers to their superiors or report them immediately if they did something wrong, even if it was just a small trivial mistake’.554 This interviewee stated furthermore that lower-level cadres would report more than they had to and they speculated a reason why, ‘the lower-downs certainly did more than they were ordered to, this was in order to try and please their superiors’.555

Doing more than was ordered from above in wishing to impress one’s superior, either for the desire to be promoted, be recognized, or to try to ensure the probability of saving one’s own life, demonstrates that the agency existed to do

---

554 Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor, 15th October 2012. Kraing Ta Chan. Takeo province.
555 Ibid.
more than one had to. Furthermore, it illustrates more salient motives that lead people to commit acts of violence and murder; praise from others, promotions, not wishing to be seen straying from ‘the group’ and protecting oneself.

Of the village cadres that were orchestrating the arrest reports, another survivor commented, ‘the lower cadres wanted to exercise their authority and position to demonstrate to us villagers that they had power over us...I think there is more than a possibility that the lower cadres didn’t always show their actions to the higher cadres’.556 In concealing one’s excesses from a superior, the desire to impress is lost so we can only assume that lower-level excesses of this nature were driven by ulterior motives, perhaps it was the desire to satiate one’s desire for sadism, as a deterrent to other villagers or the desire to impress one’s peers.

This particular example highlights a myriad of possible motives for killing. The demonstration of power over one’s social rivals through violence could suggest that some cadres actually enjoyed being violent (otherwise they wouldn’t have performed acts that effectively had no obvious tangible benefit to themselves other than temporal satisfaction). One interviewee noted ‘(the lower-level cadres) would often kill people in front of us villagers, partly as a display of authority and also to try and deter us from committing these so called ‘crimes’.557 Again, here is another motive for killing, an active deterrent and a signaling to the villagers to not be disruptive etc. In any case, public killing in this manner would demonstrate a greater degree of ‘toughness’ and ‘resolve’ by an actor to a

556 Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 4th November 2012. Tram Kak district, Takeo province.
557 Ibid.
potentially wider audience, which may or may not have been for the ultimate approval by one’s superior.

Once the sub-district reported a potential enemy to the district, the district would then sign the report and send it back to the sub-district to authorise the arrest (which was invariably the case; with the exception of a handful of arrest refusals made at the S-21 level, I never heard of a single arrest report being denied). Former deputy of the district front in Takeo, Pech Chim, stated during case file 002 that, ‘the sector would use red ink against the names to be killed’.\footnote{ECCC, 1st July 2013. Case file 002. Trial day 202. Former Takeo district deputy, Pech Chim, on sector activity. Available from \url{http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2014-05-12%202014-59%20E1_215-1_1_TRA002_20130701_Final_EN_Pub.pdf}, page 48.} The person in question would then be arrested and taken to the prison. He or she would then arrive at Kraing Ta Chan with the signed report (with all of the alleged offenses noted), ‘these reports were the basis for detainee interrogation’.\footnote{ECCC. 15th September 2010. Case file 002. Closing order (indictment), Kraing Ta Chan reports. Available from \url{http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/D427Eng.pdf}, page 129.} Confessions taken under torture and interrogation from Kraing Ta Chan are some of the only sets of prison confessions (other than those of S-21) that have survived to this day. According to Kraing Ta Chan survivors, ‘some (detainees) were interrogated within hours of arriving at the site. Interrogations were conducted every day’.\footnote{ECCC. 15th September 2010. Case file 002. Closing order (indictment). Interrogation at Kraing Ta Chan. Available from \url{http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/D427Eng.pdf}, page 131.} Confessions would then either be sent to the district or to the Party.
According to one interviewee, the detention protocol was thus, 'Each prisoner
would be detained for three days in the cells. During the three days, we would be
interrogated as much as three times. We were then told that after those three
days that we could leave the prison and be reunited with our families and loved
ones, but in fact it was Kraing Ta Chan policy to kill a prisoner after three days of
detention and interrogation. I used to see the soldiers sharpen their knives, then
they would turn the music up very loudly to confuse and distract the prisoners. I
then saw the guards walk the prisoners over to the pits and they would execute
them'.\textsuperscript{561} Children were killed by being smashed against large tree stumps.

All interviewees remarked on the difference of the behavior between those
cadres who worked outside the prison and who worked inside the prison. Those
cadres who worked inside the prison were given fewer freedoms and were
heavily monitored by their superiors (although there is evidence to suggest that
beatings during interrogations were crueler than they needed to be). The
perception of the prison was that there was certainly a stricter regime to follow,
and the cadres were expected to follow it. The stricter hierarchy and closer
hierarchical proximity to a superior would have ensured that cadres were less
likely to follow their own paths and personal goal motivations. This naturally led
to fewer digressions of violence (although a prisoner's fate was usually sealed by
the time they were arrested).

\textsuperscript{561} Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 4\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. Tram
Kak district, Takeo province.
As the regime ran its course, one final major cohort of prisoners came through the gates of Kraing Ta Chan, they themselves could be considered as very 'high-level' prisoners. Their arrival was the result of Kraing Ta Chan's function, in part, as an overflow car park to S-21. As a result, some of the purged cadres from other zones ended up on Kraing Ta Chan (therefore not as a result of lower-level arrest reports). The use of Kraing Ta Chan for this function must have been a direct result of the fact that it was Ta Mok who was purging them.

Staff at the prison also changed as the function of the prison changed. According to a survivor who was detained in the prison from September 1973 until 1979, the first prison chief was a man called 'Chen', but in 1975 he was replaced by 'Ta An'. Ta An's deputy was an interrogator called Duch (no relation to the S-21 chairman). The cadres were reportedly increasingly cruel and murderous as the regime went on, one interviewee's reasoning for this was the increased pressure felt by all staff when 'the Vietnamese were approaching'. A successful Vietnamese invasion would have led to the discovery of these prisons. This would certainly suggest that the cadres (and CPK) knew in part that their behavior was immoral. As some Southwest cadres learned of the fate of their peers, there must of undoubtedly been greater pressure on individuals to try and protect one's own interests.

---

562 Author's interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 15th October 2012. Kraing Ta Chan, Takeo province.
563 Ibid.
564 Author's interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 4th November 2012. Tram Kak district, Takeo province.
The staff of Kraing Ta Chan were in relatively close communication with the centre. Firstly, from the centre down, survivors witnessed the presence of Son Sen, Ta Mok and even Nuon Chea, ‘Ta Mok came once every 15 to 30 days by car, usually with 2 or 3 bodyguards. When he came, the chief of the prison forced all of the prisoners back into the prison compound – in front of Ta Mok, no prisoner was allowed to be seen working outside’565. Ta Mok was clearly a large part of the authority at Kraing Ta Chan, and the chairman at the prison was naturally deferential to his position.

Of the interviewed former guards of the prison, in response to the question, ‘What did you consider the term ‘Angkar’ to mean?’ all of the subjects answered by referring, at least in part, to Ta Mok. For the guards at Kraing Ta Chan, he was certainly one of the most important members of Party. Ta An clearly wanted to demonstrate to Mok that he was controlling his guards and staff correctly by having them behave in particular way when he arrived. His hometown, being close to the prison, would have meant that his arrival could be a possibility at any time and the guards of the prison were clearly conscious of that fact.

As previously stated, the districts were supposed to send reports to the regional level when they needed ‘superior’ advice. The following reports were sent from the prison to the region asking for guidance;

565 Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 15th October 2012. Kraing Ta Chan, Takeo province.
Throughout the aforementioned report, please can Angkar give us some information about this kind of disease (in the prison) and help me to consider how to make a decision, and please give me some suggestions about how to fix this problem.

Jun,
26/5/1977\textsuperscript{566}

'Re: a prisoner (Sat Peou) who has stolen rice from the co-operative and hid the rice by burying it underground;

Dear Angkar,

I’d like to request ideas from the Party to deal with this issue

Jin
2/10/1977\textsuperscript{567}.

The kinds of responses that the prison would then receive in relation to such requests can be demonstrated by the following example (Sam was the regional secretary of region/sector 13);

'Interrogate in order to get this enemy network in order to 'purify' (kill) them, and that is the party's decision on the matter.

Ar Sam
27/12/77\textsuperscript{568}

\textsuperscript{567} Archive D00199. 1977. Page 1.
\textsuperscript{568} Archive D00202. 27th December 1977. Report on the acts of people to be sent to District 105 police. Page 1.
This report demonstrates that, at least from the regional level, there were orders that suggested extreme violence. This would infer that prison guards did not need their own motives to kill as a higher authority was ordering it. However, all this does is confirm that within the prison walls, the relationship between the subordinates and superiors was much clearer. There were rules to follow, and the guards working at the prison generally followed them. As we have observed at the nodal levels prior to the quaternary level, guards working in the prison structure had less opportunity to digest from their orders so the personal motivation to kill, one could argue, was smaller.

The following communication, by report, demonstrates the deferential relationship that Kraing Ta Chan had even with the Tram Kak district committee. The letter begins with a plea by the Kraing Ta Chan chairman, Ta An, to Kit Nhuos, a member of the Tram Kak district committee with regards to how an interrogation of a man called 'Try' (a supposed traitor), should be carried out.

‘Please comrade bong (Kit) get us information. I am waiting to practice/perform whatever you decide.

An
2/9/1977’

Kit’s response,

‘Please Comrade An, search for all networks, and you must be careful.

Kit,'
The use of language and action of waiting until a response was sent shows that the prison staff at Kraing Ta Chan, at least to a degree, were honouring the relationship that they were engaged in with their superior. If the contents of this report were carried out to the letter then we can certainly argue that the guards at this prison were at least following the directives of their superior. Kit's response alleviates the guards at this prison from needing their own motives to kill. It also suggests that guards at this prison were not digressing from 'company policy'.

The district and region were clearly giving very specific advice to the prison workers at Kraing Ta Chan as to what they should do, and with regards to interrogation and execution, the messages are clear. We will never know, however, whether the responses to these reports from authority would have been the same. There are dozens and dozens of these reports that survive to this day that were sent between the prison and the region. The staff of Kraing Ta Chan were clearly very deferential to their superiors. Given the fear of Ta Mok and the grey lines that separated detainer from detainee, it is not surprising that many of the guards in the prison chose to follow their orders rather than follow their own motivations.

---

Kraing Ta Chan did, on occasion, send prisoners to S-21 if they were considered dangerous enough. According to Meng-Try Ea, when Kraing Ta Chan prisoners were sent to S-21, it was 'a two-step process. First, the zone committee sent reports about prisoners to the Party Central Committee. Second, the Committee decided to order the S-21 Committee to take measures to transport the prisoners to S-21 prison'.\textsuperscript{570} It is clear therefore that there was a formalized chain of communication between the two prisons, and there was a centralized policy with regards to prisoner transportation. It would also suggest that Mok's influence at the prison was not as great as it was at Phnom Sanlong and Chrey O'Phnue.

Upon occasion, the chairman of the prison had to report directly with the party, and some party members would occasionally come to monitor the progress of the prison. Kraing Ta Chan imposed institutionalized interrogations in order to extract confessions to satiate the party's desire to find scapegoats in DK society. Lower-level excesses within the prison would appear to be similar to those that occurred at S-21, with excesses restrained to zealous brutality during interrogations. The main differential between the two facilities were the arresting processes that were completely different. S-21 arrests were orchestrated by the CPK and Kraing Ta Chan arrests were largely orchestrated at lower-levels. Most of the prisoners who came through the Kraing Ta Chan gates had been indicted on arrest lists that, as we have observed, were written by lower-level cadres who had a variety of personal motives which led them to want to commit acts of violence infliction and execution upon certain members of society.

\textsuperscript{570} Ea. 2005. Page 111.
Kraig Ta Chan oversaw the executions of an estimated '10,045 people'.\textsuperscript{571} Once a prisoner was arrested, their death was almost inevitable. The major issue as far as this thesis is concerned are the events that led to such arrests, why certain people were arrested and who it was that facilitated such arrests i.e. the motivations behind certain cadres wishing to inflict violence upon others with regards to a geographical and hierarchical disjuncture. The reports that led to arrests were not checked and therefore, any lower-level report would almost certainly mean one's death even though the execution was not direct. The evidence would suggest that there were several examples of unnecessary reporting, and therefore deaths.

This lower-level dynamic did not go unnoticed by victims of the regime or neighboring villagers. Approximately ten interviewees commented on the process of indirect murder at the lower level. The following story from a survivor is representative of a common narrative, 'The village chief of my family home did not like my parents before the Khmer Rouge came to power so it was a very easy decision for him to select them to be sent to Kraing Ta Chan. This is another clear demonstration of possible motivations to inflict violence upon others; the issue of score settling. The regime was an opportunity for that particular chief to 'take action' against those who he personally did not like. In my village, Ta Mok

certainly didn’t know what was going on...one chief could be very good and another chief could be very bad'.

The final quotation that I wish to share with reference to Kraing Ta Chan is that of a brother of a murdered prisoner. He explained how lower-level cadres would actively report individuals in the full knowledge that it would spell certain death for that person. The interviewee was adamant that ‘the lower-level village staff were the most dangerous and murderous cohort, the lowest levels of the Khmer Rouge regime were 100% the most dangerous. I want to see the lowest levels tried because they were certainly the worst’. He stated that the lower-level cadres were pushing for promotions, score-settling and harboured genuine hatred towards the former-urban dwellers. The evidence would certainly suggest that there was a great deal of autonomy at the village level to facilitate and orchestrate arrests that meant certain death. With regards to the dominant rhetoric that is purported by international law, and in Cambodia’s case, the ECCC, this interviewee’s statement would certainly suggest the local level cadres had much more autonomy than the international legal council pays attention to. Following the protocol that they do, the ECCC misses what happened in areas such as Tram Kak.

Chhouk:

572 Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan prison survivor. 4th November 2012. Tram Kak district, Takeo province.
573 Interviewee screamed and slammed fist down upon a table
574 Author’s interview with the brother of a murdered Kraing Ta Chan prisoner. 4th November 2012. Tram Kak district, Takeo province.
Chhouk is a town situated in modern Kampot province. Chhouk was known by the Khmer Rouge as district 72. It is situated 105 kilometres southwest of Phnom Penh, on the national road 3. Unlike Kampot, despite being a town, Chhouk was never fully evacuated. It was only emptied during the day to allow people to go and work in the fields that surrounded it. According to Vickery, Chhouk had been regarded as a centre of socialist purity and Khmer Rouge support long before the party successful took Phnom Penh, ‘Chhouk had for years been a Communist stronghold’.\textsuperscript{575} Being a stronghold may well have been a major factor as to why the town was not comprehensively evacuated.

Chhouk, being located on national road 3 took a large receipt of new people from both Kampot and Phnom Penh. The arrival of evacuees created a dichotomous dynamic in and around Chhouk with regards to the feelings of the base people towards the new people. According to Vickery the feelings of the base people, harboured towards the new people, were not uniform, ‘there was a clear difference between villagers north and south of the road from Chhouk to the town of Kampot. The north side was the old communist region, and villagers there generally disliked city folk. The people south of the road were also peasants, but more in touch with town life and less radical’.\textsuperscript{576}

The divergence in attitudes towards new people in and around Chhouk, whilst hostile in places, meant that Chhouk was not entirely a hotbed for social malaise, as many of the countryside proletariat (base people) had been living in a society

\textsuperscript{575} Vickery. 1984. Page 95.
\textsuperscript{576} Ibid.
that was well integrated with townsfolk before the Khmer Rouge revolution.

Vickery states that in 1975 and 1976, conditions in Chhouk were comparatively not as bad as they were in other parts of the nation and this was largely due to the fact that food conditions were adequate, the cadres were local people, locals had not been forced to leave their homes and despite being a destination for new people, their numbers were not so overwhelming that they created an imbalance. As we can observe in all societies, economic misery and inadequate food supplies do nothing for social tension but exacerbate the underlying resentments harboured. Chhouk’s relative ‘wealth’ in the early stages of the revolution helped to prevent such tensions from boiling over.

This relative harmony did not survive the entirety of the regime, however, as food shortages began to occur, the Chhouk cadres were sent all over the nation to enforce the regime and evacuees continued to stream into the area. As previously stated, the Southwest cadres were always seen as being the most zealous cadres of the revolution. When many of the other zones were taken over by Ta Mok, he used his own people to ‘prop up’ the regime. This is a classic centralised control mechanism. However, the trade off of this mechanism is that to gain such zealous actors in one location generally infers that you lose them in another location.

Such were the levels of increased social unrest and agricultural failures that, ‘in 1977, there was a major purge in Chhouk, during which the chief of the reeducation centre and its entire administrative committee...were arrested and
presumed executed'. Chhouk was therefore victim of the regime as it changed; during the period where agricultural quotas were met, there was no need to find scapegoats in society, but as rice production waned, justifications had to be made in the form of arrests. Coupled with an increase in new people, it may come as no surprise that they were increasingly easier arrest targets for the Chhouk cadres.

The district 72 secretary was Ta Kot, who worked directly for Sam Bit of region 35. The local name for the district 72 reeducation security centre was 'Chamkar Sak buon'. According to a Chhouk survivor, Chamkar Sak buon was 'the place where interrogation and execution took place. And from what I understand, the majority of people who were sent there were in fact executed'. According to a survivor of Chamkar Sak buon prison, the prison chief was a man called Ta Peap. The prisoners were 'banned from being in groups and were largely banished to stay in halls throughout their detention'. The interviewee went on to explain the physical conditions of the prison, stating that 'Chamkar Sak buon security office was not a very secret place at all at that time. Most people knew about it...I do remember that the prison camp was divided into three sections; 1) Handcuffed prisoners were detained in dark rooms and they basically just waited there to be killed. 2) Prisoners who had not committed any serious crimes or mistakes/ordinary prisoners were put in groups and they had to perform hard tasks such as building dams. They were taken to work outside the

578 Author’s interview with a Chhouk district survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
579 Unfortunately, no more is known of Ta Peap.
580 Author’s interview with a Chamkar Sak buon prison survivor. 8th August 2012. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
prison but were brought back in before sunset. 3) The young prisoners were detained as a group and they had to go out and work like the ordinary prisoners did, but their tasks were not as hard.\textsuperscript{581}

The prisoner's statements suggest that the reeducation centre followed a relatively rigid structure of operations, in keeping with the general function of the original district reeducation security office design. Unlike Tram Kak, the Chhouk security centre was well known by all those who lived in close proximity to the prison.

The prisoner personnel were 'April 17\textsuperscript{th} people (new people), ethnic Chinese, Cham, nobility or anyone who was considered to be an enemy of Angkar in the Chhouk district'.\textsuperscript{582} This statement comes from a prison survivor who was detained in 1978 so by the time of his detention, the Lon Nol soldiers and Khmer Republic politicians would have already been executed. The interviewee themselves had been an inhabitant of Phnom Penh before the Khmer Rouge revolution and was therefore arrested for having been a new person, with 'noble tendencies'. The interviewee stated that his detention at Chamkar Sak buon was beyond traumatizing and is unable to forget the experience, 'I particularly remember how thin the handcuffed prisoners were. They were sat in their own excrement. It became difficult to recognize them because they looked more like ghosts than people'.\textsuperscript{583}

\textsuperscript{581} Author's interview with a Chamkar Sak buon prison survivor. 8\textsuperscript{th} August 2012. Chhouk district, Kampong province.
\textsuperscript{582} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{583} Ibid.
Within the prison, the cadres were largely drafted from the surrounding area. An eyewitness of the prison stated that the prison cadres could be easily divided into two distinct groups, higher-level and lower-level. They stated that ‘most tasks were performed by the lower cadres. The higher cadres just worked in the office and gave orders’\textsuperscript{584}. Of the two distinct groups, the prisoners had much more contact with the lower ranking cadres. A prison survivor recalled that the cadres had a great deal of pressure put on them by the higher-cadres, but a margin of ‘freedom’ existed. The survivor stated that such freedom extended to being ‘able to beat prisoners and use impolite language’\textsuperscript{585}. But ultimately, and most importantly, the lower-level cadres at Chhouk prison could not influence a prisoner’s fate directly.

The process of arrests in Chhouk followed the general practice at the district reeducation security centre level. The arrests were made either at the district level, usually in the villages and communes that surrounded Chhouk, or at the sub district level with subsequent prisoner transferal. The interview subjects of Chhouk were all in agreement that, whilst the cadres outside of the prison were subject to pressure from their superiors, they also wielded a great deal of autonomy, especially with regards to district level arrests. One interviewee noted that the cadres often used the regime as an excuse to kill people as they pleased to, noting ‘it was the case. They didn’t kill them straight away but they reported people, which meant the same fate. They could say something bad to

\textsuperscript{584} Author’s interview with a Chamkar Sak buon prison survivor. 8\textsuperscript{th} August 2012. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{585} Ibid.
their superiors about someone to get them arrested. People who were hated by
the cadres would be taken away and killed'.\textsuperscript{586} As we have seen on countless
occasions, this process of being over zealous about report-making, leading to
arrests, was a very easy way for cadres to kill members of society in excess.

On interviewing a former lower-level district cadre in Chhouk, their take was
(unsurprisingly) different as to who was responsible for the excessive killing in
the district. Rather than stating that the cadres were to blame, the interviewee
stated that it was the chiefs of the surrounding villages (only) that were to
blame. The interviewee stated that 'the chiefs of the villages were completely in
charge, and they insisted on regular reports, so many people died because of
them'.\textsuperscript{587} The cadre is therefore implying that it was in fact the village chiefs who
were requesting reports implicating individuals rather than being presented by a
surplus of reports constructed from the volition of cadres.

There was undoubtedly a double dynamic, as the village chiefs themselves may
have requested reports for the same reasons as the cadres were writing them in
the first place, for example, to please one's superior, to kill as one pleased or
purely a misuse of one's authority. The combination of the two naturally led to a
very deadly cocktail. One interviewee recalled that several village chiefs and
cadres used their power to abuse the new people, stating 'the base people were
never under that much pressure from the cadres. However, the April 17\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{586} Author's interview with a Chhouk district survivor. 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2012. Chhouk,
Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{587} Author's interview with a former Chhouk district cadre. 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2012.
Chhouk district, Kampot province.
people’s (new people) living conditions was very bad. They were looked down upon by the cadres and the base people, Some cadres killed and punished them.\textsuperscript{588} This is a clear illustration of personally-driven motivations for violence; from the level of zone downwards, the new people received far worse treatment than the base people. They were the victims of hate crimes, class-based crimes, jealousy, score settling and also pawns in a game of power.

There were four killing fields around the Chhouk district office area, ‘Got S’lar, Drop Bearn Bo Pail, Prey Romir and Kapo Rean, all of which together resulted in the deaths of approximately 11,750 people.\textsuperscript{589} The total death toll of Chhouk district was undoubtedly higher.

**Dang Tung:**

District 78, modern day Dang Tung district, is located approximately 130 kilometres south of Phnom Penh and 15 kilometres southeast of Chhouk district. This thesis has visited Dang Tung district once before when analyzing regional level ‘reeducation facility’, Phnom La-Ang.

According to one Dang Tung district survivor, the district office was located on two campuses, the prisons were called ‘Prey Joksean and Prey Katai’.\textsuperscript{590} The two sites were located in Prey Pongokee, Dang Tung district, Kampot province. The interviewee recalled that the majority of prisoners sent to the district

\textsuperscript{588} Author’s interview with a former Chhouk district cadre. 29\textsuperscript{th} July 2012. Chhouk district, Kampot province.


\textsuperscript{590} Author’s interview with a Dang Tung district survivor. 28\textsuperscript{th} July 2012. Dang Tung, Kampot province.
reeducation security centre(s) were 'the new people, and also those people who were related to the previous, former Lon Nol regime'. Surrounding the Dang Tung district security office there was a killing field called Prey Joksean (named after the first of the two prisons), located in Srao Lou village, Dang Tung. Another district survivor witnessed firsthand an execution that took place at that killing field and stated that, 'at that place, over 3,000 people were killed and most of them were the new people and people who were related in some way to the Lon Nol regime'.

The same interviewee recalled that there were another two killing fields under construction up until the day that the Vietnamese liberated Dang Tung. The first site was an extension of the site already at Prey Joksean and the second was being constructed for the second prison campus, '(there were) two killing fields called Prey Joksean and Kapal Pleun, there are two ponds there located near the Khmer Rouge communal eating halls of the prisons, those two ponds were going to be used to kill more people, but luckily the Vietnamese forces liberated us in time so they were never used'. This statement would imply, therefore, that there was a desire at Dang Tung to increase the murdering capacity at the two prison sites.

591 Author's interview with a Dang Tung district survivor. 28th July 2012. Dang Tung, Kampot province.
592 Ibid.
593 Ibid.
Evidence from a Dang Tung prison survivor stated that they had been arrested for 'being Vietnamese and a forest thief'.\footnote{594} They were then subjected to meager rationing, torture and interrogation. In their testimony they stated that 'I was only served one small bowl of rice daily for 44 days...they used a kind of torture instrument on me, made of wood, to squeeze and press me. They (the Khmer Rouge cadres) also used plastic bags to asphyxiate us'.\footnote{595} This prisoner was in fact released from the prison and was tasked with growing vegetables and rice. His release was made possible because of his connection with the unit chief of Dang Tung. This example shows a very different side of agency and freedom that could obviously be wielded by knowing the 'right' people. The staff of the prison were clearly deferential to the unit chief and allowed a very rare release of a prisoner to take place.

Of the cadres who were working outside of the prison campuses, but within the arrest network that fueled them, the power and command dynamics were naturally very different from what we have discovered internally. According to one source, ‘it was the district level (who had the authority to kill) because during the meetings they provided the authority to kill whoever acted against the will of the Party, without even accusing them first or reeducating them so they would just smash them’.\footnote{596} Therefore, it was the primary function of the district level to be ultimately in charge of the killing that took place in Dang Tung, but it would seem as though the district committee delegated this

\footnote{594}{Archive D24541. 2001. Page 39.}
\footnote{595}{Ibid.}
\footnote{596}{Archive D24538. 18th January 2001, Interview with Duk Huoy, Dang Torn District, Kampot province. Page 31.}
authority during meetings to lower-level actors to kill perceived enemies of the state. The potential for one to abuse such authority is therefore enormous, especially given that no formal process of ‘trial’ or even accusation had to take place. The killing could be ad hoc and indiscriminate.

According to the same source it was in fact the commune chief who had the right to arrest, not the cadres or chhlop themselves, ‘the prisoners were then at that time sent to the local prisons and then their fate was decided as the directives went up the chain of command but the district level had the authority to kill. The district level had this authority granted to them in 1976’. 597 The commune chiefs calculated and assessed the validity of the arrest lists and reports of traitorous behavior. If the chief freely agreed to all lists without scrupulously checking the situation from whence they came, then he or she bears a degree of responsibility for those who were then subsequently arrested.

The interviewee went on to state that in Dang Tung, it was actually more common for individuals to be killed before they reached the prisons. In answer to Meng Try-Ea’s question, ‘between the killing in the detaining office and killing immediately after seeing the mistake, which was more prevalent at the time?’ the interviewee stated, ‘killing immediately happened more often’. 598 This would demonstrate a digression from centralized policy, as it was never the intention of the party for this to happen, as the right to ‘smash’ did not extend to lower-level district cadres. Their freedom to do so, however, demonstrates a failure to

598 Ibid.
implement central policy at this level. Some individuals could do as they pleased without being answerable for their behavior.

In reference to the general behavior of the peripheral cadres of Dang Tung district, an interviewee stated that the cadres were certainly subordinated to their superiors, but that did not stop them also performing as they pleased, 'They had to listen to their superiors but some of them just made their own decisions, even if their superiors ordered them to do a certain thing, they still did another. Sometimes they decided to do things without permission, for example I know of a person called Tuon who arrested a member of my unit and then just killed him in front of us'.

599 The interviewee stated that it was in fact the higher-cadres of Dang Tung who deserve more of the blame for the killings as it was they who allowed the regime to 'stray' as it did.

Given the lack of data on this prison, I shall attempt an estimate of how many people were killed at the prison of Dang Tung and its surrounding area on the little numerical information that I have. One of the killing fields had over 3,000 bodies exhumed from several mass graves. There were two killing fields, and this area saw a high degree of killing before an individual even reached the prison (though that doesn’t necessarily mean that their cadaver didn’t end up in these graves). So I estimate the death toll to be between 7,000 and 12,000 people. The plan to extend two killing fields to bigger sites would infer that the Khmer Rouge cadres were running out of space to bury all of the bodies that they had killed.

599 Author’s interview with a Dang Tung district survivor. 28th July 2012. Dang Tung, Kampot province.
600 Ibid.
Kampong Trach:

Kampong Trach district was referred to as ‘district 77’. It is located 140 kilometres from Phnom Penh, in an almost due south direction. It is the district of this study that is closest to the Vietnamese border. Immediately after the evacuation of Kampot, Kampong Trach was a destination for many of the town’s population. According to several interviews, Kampong Trach was also an evacuation destination for evacuees from as far as Sihanoukville, 150 kilometres west of Kampong Trach. The percentage of new people in Kampong Trach post 1975 was therefore high.

Furthermore, according to Chhouk Rin, the Khmer Rouge wasted no time at all implementing their own staff in Kampong Trach to oversee operations, ‘after the evacuation of Kampot, security was the responsibility of the authorities at the base (for region 35)…Ta Sean, chief of Kampong Trach was arrested and disappeared’.\(^601\) The Khmer Rouge obviously regarded Kampong Trach as an area that needed to be tightly controlled by the regional authorities in Kampot, and therefore employed a control mechanism of sending their own shock troops to an area of perceived susceptibility. A combination of being closely located to Vietnam with a high proportion of new people was obviously reason enough for the party to be wary.

---

According to an interviewee, unsurprisingly, the influx of new people living with base people led to a dichotomy of state authority implementation, needless to say, the treatment of the two groups was very different. A former Kampong Trach base person stated, 'it was common for the unit chief to assign us tasks, but he treated the base people and the new people differently when he was assigning tasks. For our village chief as well, he treated us differently beyond that of simply assigning work duties. If a base person did something wrong, he wouldn’t accuse or report them but if the new people did anything wrong then he would definitely report them and accuse things of being their fault'.

The new people obviously presented the chief in Kampong Trach with an opportunity to make easier choices with regards to who to be violent towards, whether it was pressure from one’s superior to make arbitrary arrests or fueled by personal motivations. New people were naturally the obvious choice, allowing the chief to not make too many of his own enemies with the Kampong Trach ‘elders’, and also raising fewer questions with one’s own superiors. The new people, having been evacuated, were removed from their own networks of security and were effectively placed in an environment that was already well established. To kill them over the base people posed a lower cost risk to the respective chiefs.

If, however, there was no such pressure from above, the district authorities may have just genuinely disliked the new people, and the statement above relating to

---

602 Author’s interview with a Kampong Trach district survivor, 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
the unbalanced distribution of work task would certainly suggest that it was in fact that case. Working new people almost to death and starving them (as was so often the case) further justified one’s decision to kill them. The new people became increasingly unproductive as their energy levels drained, and furthermore, their skeletal physique would have concreted, within the perpetrator's psyche, that these were not equals, but beings that were less than human (Nazi concentration camps functioned on the separation between those who were physically fit and the ‘muselmann’; those so emaciated that they no longer resembled human beings). The process of dehumanizing victims by starving them and overworking them is ultimately a self-fulfilling process. Base people who had a vendetta or score to settle would have found it easier to kill their new person foe if they no longer represented a member of society that they felt a part of.

A former ‘new person’ interviewee who had been sent to Kampong Trach stated that it was not just the village chiefs in Kampong Trach district who harboured resentments towards the new people; ‘the base people considered that their lives in contrast had been much harder. It was terrible...they simply refused to speak with us’. The strength of the base people’s disdain for the new people could well have influenced the decisions made by the chief. With seniors targeting their authority towards new people, and the base people rejecting the social assimilation with the new people, their bad treatment at the district level is therefore of no surprise. The chhlop, who often actioned the night murders in

---

603 Author’s interview with a Kampong Trach district survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.
Kampong Trach, were all from the base people cohort. In Kampong Trach
district, ‘if a new person was sick for a number of days then the chhlopcould
arrive, take that person away and then execute them. This was not the case for
the base people. The chhlop didn’t like the new people at all. In my opinion they
were jealous of us’. 604 This is a potential motive behind the violence of the base
people and the chhlop’s violence, directed towards the new people.

Of the cadres outside of the district reeducation centre in Kampot, the district
cadres were ‘usually about 12 or 13 years old and most of them were not
particularly educated at all. The Khmer Rouge used to educate them in the forms
of violence that they should put upon us...As I understand it, the higher cadres
gave the orders to the lower-level cadres but I really don’t think that they cared
at all about what the final result of their orders were’. 605 As I demonstrated in the
introduction, many violent institutions and political revolutions use young
people because of their effectiveness to be violent with little regard for the
consequences of their actions.

Patrice Chanuel states that young actors are looking for approval from their
superiors, stating, ‘clearly they have a greater desire to please their superiors
than someone who is older. Even if they are of a rebellious nature, they are still
at the age when they only feel comfortable when they are under the control of

604 Author’s interview with a Kampong Trach district survivor. 13th September
605 Ibid.
someone older than they are. They need examples in their lives'.\textsuperscript{606} In Democratic Kampuchea, if all they ever heard was 'how terrible these new people are', then it is hardly surprising that these inexperienced juveniles wished to impress their superiors and the base people en masse by inflicting violence upon the new people.\textsuperscript{607} They were clearly of value to some of the higher-ranking actors and even the CPK for their malleability and deference to authority. The Kampong Trach survivor interviewee, who mentioned the armed youths, was actually evacuated to five places during the era of Democratic Kampuchea (Sihanoukville, the Vietnamese borderlands, Kampong Trach and Chhouk), and of the five places, 'the cadres were worst in Chhouk and Kampong Trach'.\textsuperscript{608} One can only assume this was a direct result of a particularly large influx of new people sent to these two places that were still governed by base people authorities.

There were two prison sites of the Kampong Trach reeducation district office. The first was a place called 'Knarch Prey, in Rong Vean commune',\textsuperscript{609} and the second was a temporary structure erected at the foot of the Kampong Trach Mountain, in the caves. According to a Kampot province study, the Kampong

\textsuperscript{606} Author's interview with Patrice Chanuel, 7\textsuperscript{th} August 2013, Phnom Penh. Chanuel himself has first hand experience of witnessing child soldiers at work during his military campaigns in Zagreb, and extensively during his tenure with 'CARE US' in Sierra Leone.


\textsuperscript{608} Author's interview with a Kampong Trach district survivor. 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2013, Kampot town, Kampot province.

\textsuperscript{609} Ibid.
Trach district had one major killing field, 'Phnom Lao' from which 8,916\(^{610}\) bodies have been exhumed. Unfortunately, I have no more information on the specifics of the prison(s). One can assume that they did not differ so much from the other district reeducation centres.

With regards to the command and communication structure of Kampong Trach, the CPK structure would suggest that all directives had to come from the security zone office for region 35, based in Kampot. According to an interviewee, the officials in Kampot and Phnom Penh were 'closely linked'.\(^{611}\) With regards to order dissemination from Kampot to the districts, the interviewee confirmed that during their time in Chhouk (where they were also temporarily an evacuee), 'the orders certainly came from Kampot',\(^{612}\) but they were completely unsure of the extent to which Kampong Trach received direct communication from Kampot. They stated that the higher-ranking officials, based in Kampot 'did not know about the conditions for the ordinary people there (in Kampong Trach)...so I think that the orders were changed from the highest position to the lowest position'.\(^{613}\)

If districts of the same region were different, with regards to a district's relationship and communication structure with the zone, then it is fair to assume that the apparent lack of centralized directives, from Kampot to Kampong Trach (when compared with Chhouk) would have led to lower-level authorities

---


\(^{611}\) Author's interview with a Kampong Trach district survivor. 13th September 2013. Kampot town, Kampot province.

\(^{612}\) Ibid.

\(^{613}\) Ibid.
manipulating the regime to their own advantages. The enormous death toll at one killing field in this district provides some evidence to suggest that this was the case. Of all the sites where interviews were conducted, Kampong Tralach was certainly the place where the new and base people divide seemed most stark.

**Wat Kampong Tralach:**

The last district reeducation centre that this chapter shall focus on is Wat Kampong Tralach. Geographically, it was the furthest prison from Phnom Penh being 160 kilometres from the capital, Whilst Wat Kampong Tralach was a district reeducation centre, it was not a district in itself. Wat Kampong Tralach was located in Kampot district. The reeducation centre was located in the temple, or ‘wat’ of Kampong Tralach, approximately half way between Kampot and Kampong Tralach on road 33.

According to an interviewee, prior to the regime, Kampong Tralach had been an area of fierce resentment towards the Lon Nol regime. They were resented because they had ‘food, money and beer, all funded by the US’. Therefore envy was clearly an underlying resentment that was harboured in this area, which was a motive for wanting to commit violence against the former regime. When the Khmer Rouge transformed the wat into a security centre prison, Lon Nol soldiers from the area were the first major cohort of prisoners.

---

614 Author’s interview with a Kampong Tralach survivor. 19th May 2013. Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot province.
After they had been executed, the majority of the prisoners were, 'mostly new people, and especially a lot of children'.\(^{615}\) As we have previously observed, new people were often associated with the former regime (as they were considered to be the main benefactors of Lon Nol's economic policies), so the malaise felt towards the Lon Nol soldiers was the very same malaise that was felt towards the new people. According to an interviewee from Kampong Tralach, new people were much hated in Kampot district, and the high degree of new people arrested was a reflection of that. When asked why they were disliked, they responded 'there certainly was hatred and jealousy towards those people. Also I think that the higher cadres felt disappointment with the new people who hadn't entered the regime as a lot of them had opposed it'.\(^ {616}\) Much like we have seen in other districts, the new people were a common target for arrests and execution because of pre-existing social malaise and a general lack of centralized support for them after their evacuations. They were the easiest of targets after the Lon Nol soldiers and Khmer Republic politicians.

The main part of the prison was located in the Buddhist temple, approximately 20 metres by 20 metres, and it functioned more like an execution site than a reeducation centre. The wat was within a Buddhist complex that was fenced in. The other buildings in the complex (the sanctuary, monk's quarters and dining room all became the detention cells and interrogation sites) also served as prison buildings after their conversion. 'Inside the sanctuary, four rows of iron

---

\(^{615}\) Author's interview with a Kampong Tralach survivor. 19\(^{th}\) May 2013. Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot province.

\(^{616}\) Ibid.
bars were used for shackling prisoners. Prisoners were taken to the forest behind the temple to be killed and buried.\textsuperscript{617}

According to an interviewee who actually discovered the prison after the Vietnamese liberation, the site of the wat was soaked in blood. The full statement of the prison’s discovery was as follows, (given whilst sobbing intermittently) ‘I was 16 when the Vietnamese liberated the area, the Khmer Rouge had killed three of my siblings and my parents...I went straight to Wat Kampong Tralach. When I discovered it, the trees surrounding the site were covered in blood, and there were dead babies and children strewn all over the grass. The babies and children had been killed by being smashed against the trees. Upon entering the wat I saw decapitated bodies, limbs and blood everywhere. I was told that 2 days before I arrived, the prison guards had heard that the Vietnamese soldiers were coming so they took the fit and healthy prisoners to Kep national park and executed them. I don’t know much about the prison’s function but I do know that most people were held here for between 2-3 days before they were executed, and during the detention process prisoners were never offered food.\textsuperscript{618} The prison was functioning as an execution site, with little attention paid to reeducation.

Little is known about the prison cadres personnel, however the cadres who operated in the direct vicinity of the district reeducation centre seemed to function with an enormous degree of agency. One interviewee categorically

\textsuperscript{617} Ea. 2005. Page 60.
\textsuperscript{618} Author’s interview with a Kampong Tralach survivor. 19\textsuperscript{th} May 2013. Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot province.
stated that the cadres used to change and manipulate their directives, 'I think it happened because cadres believed that it would result in promotions...for me it was the unit chief who changed things the most'.\textsuperscript{619} The motive here to commit violence was therefore done, at least in part, in the hope that it might gain a promotion.

The same interviewee stated that because cadres knew that the unit chief was happy to make his own decisions on the spot, they would contact him directly to acknowledge and approve their arrest reports, stating, 'they [the cadres] made their own decisions. They executed people a lot. The cadres would often go directly to the mobile or unit chief and request specific people to arrest. The unit chief didn’t request of those cadres a reason for the arrest'.\textsuperscript{620} It would seem therefore that the unit chief allowed the lower-level cadres the freedom to arrest and execute as they desired. There is no evidence from Wat Kampong Tralach to suggest that any cadre was ever pressured to force an arrest or punished for not killing zealously enough.

With regards to communication with Phnom Penh, or any central actor, as Wat Kampong Tralach was geographically the furthest site of this study’s interest, the results of this district office are particularly interesting. Every interviewee from the site stated that no one from the area ever saw a senior officer between 1975 and 1979. Another interviewee stated, 'because of the long distance from Phnom Penh, no one really cared. If somebody killed somebody, nobody really cared, we

\textsuperscript{619} Author’s interview with a Kampong Tralach survivor. 19th May 2013. Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{620} Ibid.
were not their problem. They (the district authorities and cadres) would just kill and then bury a person and that was that, they didn’t need permission from anyone'.

One interviewee believed that there may have been an arrangement of contact established with a higher authority and seemingly it followed the correct protocol of going through the various nodes (in this instance Kampot regional facility) but the issuing of centre-based directives did little to change the behavior of the cadres in this area, stating ‘the cadres in Phnom Penh would send directives here but they wouldn’t contact our village chief directly, what they would do is contact the provincial chief. Those people would then contact the communes, and then the directives would be given to the cadres. The cadres then, however, often went above and beyond this directive’. The distance from Phnom Penh would certainly therefore suggest that a great deal of autonomy was being afforded to lower-level actors because the CPK’s control mechanisms were literally not strong enough to extend to this level, both hierarchically and geographically.

At the wat itself, it is estimated by several sources that between 700 and 750 people were executed in Wat Kampong Tralach. However, according to the ‘Report of the research team of the people’s republic of Kampuchea in 1981’, the

---

621 Author’s interview with a Kampong Tralach survivor. 19th May 2013. Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot province.
622 Ibid.
Khmer Rouge executed '21,151' people in total at the prison site. This study came after extensive exhumation of the prison's surrounding grounds and killing fields. There is clearly an enormous difference between these two sets of statistics. Given what we have discovered at other district reeducation centres, the latter statistic is more likely to represent the reality of the Wat Kampong Tralach death toll.

**Conclusion:**

The district level functioned in a manner that was, in general, very far from its original design. According to Francois Ponchaud, the district level specifically manipulated the orders and directives of the CPK centre, stating 'obviously there can be some distortion or loss of meaning. The same goes for written directives...at the district level...that was the reality'. Of the five 'district reeducation security centres'/district level prisons analysed, each example demonstrated a significant amount of autonomy from the systematic CPK command structure.

Each site was theoretically deferential to their respective regional security office. The command structure at the quaternary level was supposed to disseminate CPK orders and directives that had been sent to the region. The practice of this policy, however, was rarely implemented. Each district level prison behaved more like a total institution. The district was separated from the region partly by

---

geography but mainly by a hierarchical disjuncture. Districts were largely left to govern themselves. The villages that surrounded the district reeducation security centres provided arresting staff, local cadres, chiefs and prison guards. The local areas had an enormous degree of pre-existing social malaise (a result of the economic and social inequality that was associated with the former Lon Nol regime) coupled with an influx of the generally disliked new people. This led to the implementation of a local law, governed over by individuals who had the authority to suppress their subjects. Chiefs, cadres, guards, and ‘ordinary people’ wielded a huge latitude of agency and used this authority to settle their own scores, and action violence against those whom they had nothing but contempt for.

The term ‘Angkar’ was of particular convenience to the staff members at the district level. It offered them the opportunity to cover their tracks as they disguised their own actions with a regime smokescreen, namely the most vague of all of the Khmer Rouge terminology, ‘Angkar’. The district level oversaw a huge death toll that was largely a result of individuals actioning their own desires, which was facilitated by the geographical and hierarchical disjuncture between the tertiary and quaternary node. Senior members of the party were unable to control the total institutions that districts had become. Whether this was intentional or not is unknown but the overwhelming sense from both victims and perpetrators was that the regions and upwards simply did not care about what has happening at the district level.
The district level provided a new level of order sub-contraction and in doing so offered a new platform for individuals to misinterpret, misunderstand, manipulate and exact their authority to their own advantages and benefits. At the zonal and regional levels, there was at least one member of the Central and Standing Committee as members of security office staff at the respective levels (Ta Mok, Meas Muth, Sam Bit etc.). This direct personal link with the centre allowed a degree of central policy implementation at both the secondary and tertiary node. The transcendence of central authority at these levels allowed, at least to some degree, forms of control as central 'HQ staff' were acting to an extent as 'branch managers'. At the district level, there was no such connection with the centre, so the quaternary level is truly the first incidence of a genuine relationship collapse and breakdown in Democratic Kampuchea.

The legal narrative regarding genocide and crimes against humanity is so top-heavily focused that the lower-level dynamics are overlooked. As Etcheson stated, this level oversaw a larger degree of the killing than the region, and yet the reasons as to why and how are not analysed by post-genocidal law. If cadres killed in excess, ignored their orders and acted as they liked, why should their superiors bear responsibility for the crimes that they committed? International law assumes that the superiors bear the tools to stop the behavior and the knowledge of what is happening below them. If, however, they are fed false reports or the killing that occurred was kept secret, then how can we expect a superior to act? The Quaternary level clearly demonstrates the extent to which some human beings can behave if they are left to their own devices with no systematic repercussions for their behavior.
Chapter 8 - Quinary node: The Southwest sub-districts, Munty Da Mon.

The final node that this thesis shall analyse is the Quinary node, or the sub-district level. The level represents the ‘most peripheral’ node of the entire study. Being a node, this chapter will assess the extent to which the sub-district had autonomous decision-making abilities, and to what extent the capacity to make decisions extended. Being the most peripheral node, we will also assess the extent to which a geographical and hierarchical distancing from the centre truly impacted upon the command structure of the DK internal security system. If the argument of this paper is to be realized then this level will demonstrate a greater degree of agency and autonomy of one’s own decision-making ability than the previous nodes have demonstrated as one should expect to observe the greatest displays of autonomy.

Unlike the zone, region and district level, the sub-district level, whilst being theoretically subordinated to the immediate level above, was composed of a slightly different hierarchical makeup. According to Etcheson, ‘Sub-districts were governed by a CPK branch committee, which was the lowest level of the CPK hierarchy. Unlike the structure of higher-echelon party committees, branch committees typically had more than three persons although all committee members remained under the authority of the branch secretary’.\textsuperscript{626} The sub-district level was therefore clearly the furthest in hierarchical proximity from the CPK.

Whilst the borders of the zone, region and district levels generally fit within the pre-existing borders of pre-CPK Cambodia (zones being a combination of three to four provinces, regions being provinces and districts being provincial sectors), the sub-districts themselves were a CPK construction. Before 1975, the lowest level of structured living ‘units’ were villages and hamlets. These villages were part of a greater network community (each community was usually comprised of between six and ten villages). However, post 1975, the CPK amalgamated the villages into much larger entities known as ‘co-operatives’ or ‘communes’. These co-operatives and communes were the sub-district level (i.e. each co-operative/commune was a sub-district).

Each co-operative was, to an extent, a closed environment. They were designed to be self-sufficient and self-serving. The primary function of the these co-operatives was to provide a rice yield that was bountiful enough to feed the co-operative, the regional military and provide the centre with a surplus that could then be sold overseas to generate foreign exchange that could be then used to industrialise. That was the theory, at least. Each co-operative orbited around a communal eating hall where workers ate, supposedly together, but as previously mentioned in prior chapters, new and old people usually ate separately in order to distribute uneven rations. Etcheson states that ‘other units of the organization existed within the communes such as mobile brigades, local militia and various kinds of work groups’.627 Being the final node of order and command, the ‘militia’

---

627 ECCC, 18th May 2009. Case file 001. Trial day 16. Etcheson on work groups. Available from
associated with the communes were the lowest ranking Khmer Rouge guards and cadres. An essential issue that needs qualifying at this point is that the militia, cadres and chiefs (village and commune) literally lived, ate and slept alongside the villagers, both new and base. The villagers were scrupulously observed at this lowest of levels. The chhlop were also derived from this militia group.

An archive, discovered in Tuol Sleng (S-21) in 1996, shows that there were written directives sent down to the sub-district level on how to operate.

"How to report"

'The village reports to the commune, and then the report goes on (higher to the district). You should report about your work in the village and every 3 months, the village chief has to arrange a meeting and give a new plan'.

There is evidence, therefore, that at least one directive was written by a 'higher authority', presumably the party, to tell the sub-districts how they should report village-level behavior and contact higher authorities. Unfortunately, it is unclear how many of these directives were written, whether they were in fact sent, and if so, to which village. Furthermore, on the face of this document, it would seem as though there were active attempts to maintain a functional relationship of control to ensure that the higher authorities knew of lower-level activity.

However, these kinds of reports, as control mechanisms, actually do very little to illustrate what happened in reality as a result of such an agreement. It is very easy to set up an arrangement and outline the rules but it is a much harder task to enforce it in reality and monitor its function.

According to historian Philip Short, it was the villagers of the communes who fueled the Khmer Rouge revolution. This was largely in part due to the fact that he considered the villagers as ‘poor peasants (who) were brutal and violent’. Short justifies his statement by stating that ‘you can’t expect them to behave like refined educated gentlemen and gentlewomen, they’re not. Life is brutish in the very deprived villages’. Long has the focus of revolutionary strength been pinned on the power that the proletarian peasants command, with works like James Scott’s ‘weapons of the weak’ stating that oppressed peasants, under certain circumstances, will eventually revolt. Whilst there are countless examples of class struggles emanating from the lowest levels of society, Short’s analysis of the Khmer lower classes is seriously open to question. As Milgram and Zimbardo’s work has shown us, we are all capable of being brutal and violent.

---


Short is correct, however, in his acknowledgement of the high proportion of militia living amongst ‘ordinary people’. The sub-district level was certainly the level of ‘normal society’ with the highest degree of militia per capita. He states ‘you have literally hundreds of thousands of village militiamen...village chiefs, police, others, soldiers, who also took part in this regime’. The high degree of armed individuals living with non-armed individuals, including members of society who were traditionally hated by the peasant classes (namely the new people) naturally led to an uncontrolled killing spree in many places.

Short states that at the sub-district level, one of the most effective methods of lower-level control was that of food distribution. Acknowledging that uneven food distribution between base and new people was absolutely not a part of the centralized directives, he states ‘food was used as a means of control by the local officials. It was one of the best means of control and motivation that they had. But from the top, the word came down from the Standing Committee that people must be fed properly’. The misappropriation of food was clearly a tactic used by those who commanded little hierarchical power, but great power at the lower-levels. The right to distribute food gave peripheral actors essentially the power of God; directly they were choosing who to kill and who to keep.


Food rationing became a vicious circle as villagers weakened by starvation became very unproductive and fewer in number (as they became ill or died), so the amount of rice being produced lowered; this meant that the amount of rice at the sub-district lowered in net total, but also lowered in a relative total as the cadres at the sub-district level sent exponentially larger amounts of rice to the centre, partly to mask their ad hoc killings but also to better one’s own relations with the higher authorities. As villagers starved and rations waned, the intensity of lower-level politics intensified. Villagers were forced to steal, which gave the cadres more excuses to kill them. The sub-districts of deprived areas were very much every one for themselves.

Short notes that this failure was because ‘the system was dysfunctional. It didn’t work’. Unrealistic rice quotas, empowering uneducated cadres and celebrating over-deliveries of rice to the central paddy-bank were all key factors that both directly and indirectly fueled the dire food situation at the sub-district level. Short actually, to a degree, sympathises with the cadres at this level stating that they were stuck in a perennial dilemma with regards to maintaining a balance at this level given all of the opposing dynamics that were at play, he stated ‘when the local cadres tried (to implement centralized policies); on the one hand to follow the orders coming from the centre; on the other hand to control their population; and thirdly to force people to work hard enough to produce large

---

amounts of rice, they were caught in a web of contradictions from which they decided the best answer, in most cases, was to apply extremely harsh policies.\footnote{ECCC. 8th May 2013. Case file 002. Trial day 178. Philip Short on CPK policies. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2013-05-24%2013:37/E1_1911_TR002_20130508_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, page 50.}

Whilst Short is certainly correct in stating that villagers at this level had to follow the centre’s policy on rice production, ‘controlling the population’ and ‘following the centre’s orders’ are two tenets of the CPK policy that are essentially very vague and left open to one’s own interpretation. The cadres chose to apply ‘extremely harsh policies’, and that is the crucial thing to note, the cadres chose to implement policy and control upon the general population with harshness. It was not a centralized directive to do so.

Finally, with regards to the lower-level dynamics, Short states that the local level leaders themselves of the co-operatives and communes were directly responsible for a degree of the mistreatment that some local level peasants experienced, especially the new people, ‘local leaders looked after their own (base people); what happened in the next sub-district, the next village, was not their concern. It made a mockery of centralized directives’.\footnote{ECCC. 9th May 2013. Case file 002. Trial day 179. Philip Short on co-operative power dynamics. Available from http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2013-06-03%2011:21/E1_1921_TR002_20130509_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, pages 7-8.} Theoretically all villages, districts etc. were part of a much larger machine that was a functionary of the centre. Each ‘local leader’ was supposed to work for this machine, not themselves, and yet we see clearly here that leaders at this level were working
for themselves and didn’t care for their fellow workmates. They were cadres who were pursuing their own directives, and the centre suffered from a combination of no effective way of controlling them from doing so or even effective knowledge that all of these problems were permeating through the society over which they governed.

We shall now move to the final presentation of Democratic Kampuchean prisons. In keeping with the rest of the thesis, it will be a sub-district level prison from the former Southwest zone.

Southwest sub-district security centres:
The Democratic Kampuchean terminology for the sub-district security centres was ‘Sub-district militia centres’. According to Meng-Try Ea, ‘the Southwest zone contained 225 sub-districts...the sites (of the militia security centres) generally had a building that served as a sub-district militia centre as well as a temporary detention centre. A few sub-district militia centres did not hold prisoners; instead, they sent those accused of “crimes” to work at hard labour sites’. 636

There was therefore an emphasis on detention, forced labour, possible reeducation and execution. Of the prisoners detained, they were ‘new or base people who were apathetic about their duties’. 637 Apathy is a subjective behavioural trait that was obviously another conveniently vague license for those with authority to action ad hoc law as they pleased. However, it also demonstrates another particularly nuanced form of social malaise; if an

---

637 Ibid.
individual is perceived to be particularly apathetic about their work duties (for example) then that may well anger another, who may use this as a motivation to commit an act of arrest or even violence.

If a prisoner worked hard at their respective labour site then they could theoretically be released back to their co-operatives. However, if a prisoner was considered to be beyond reeducation or redemption then they faced temporary detention at the militia centre (as their death was inevitable) or they would be transferred up to a district reeducation centre. Prison labour, according to Meng-Try Ea included 'cutting down trees, making charcoal, and planting crops'. He states that most of those who performed such tasks were base people. One can only assume that this was the case because new people were either killed immediately or generally transferred to the district reeducation centres.

Whilst the prisons at the levels that we have previously analysed faced the almost inevitable process of interrogation, it was not widespread at the sub-district level. Prisoners were asked basic questions when they arrived but they were not necessarily systematically forced to give names and life histories under rigorous physical violence. However, torture was a characteristic of the sub-district militia centres. Torture was usually applied to 'prisoners who were seen as not working at full strength or who had dissatisfied reeducation personnel'. Despite the high-level of torture, executions at the sub-district level were, relative to the sub-district population, lower than they were at the district level.

---

639 Ibid. Page 44.
This was in part due to prisoners being transferred to the district level to be executed there, but also the retention of base people at the militia centres to work as hard labour and be reeducated.

Ea states that 'the Khmer Rouge seemed to genuinely seek to reeducate the base people (whom it praised as ideal for its brand of agrarian communism) rather than execute them'. 640 Whilst on the one hand, these centres should be celebrated for their emphasis on rehabilitation and generally sticking to the CPK security centre design, on the other hand, all that the sub-districts demonstrate is further evidence to suggest that the new people and the base people were treated completely differently. The official policy categorically stated that the new people and the base people should not be treated differently and yet the sub-district militia centres show very clearly that their treatment was polar opposite. With regards to this issue, a sub-district interviewee from Takeo province stated, 'At the highest level, those people who were writing the policies were saying that everyone should be treated equally so I think that it was just the decisions being made by the villagers, it didn’t even come from the chief'. 641 This is therefore a demonstration of some individuals ignoring their centralized directives to pursue their own agency.

Having been starved half to death, many new people were arrested and then either instantaneously killed, or sent to the district to be killed. Base people, however, received better food rations and were given the chance to gain

641 Author’s interview with a Kirivong district survivor, 17th August 2013. Thlat commune, Anlong Veng, Oddar Meanchey province.
redemption, a chance to be 'reeducated' back into 'normal society'. The militia centre merely reflects the fact that lower-level cadres had the opportunity to treat people differently.

_Munty Da Mon_:  
The sub-district militia centre that has been chosen as the case study for this chapter is Munty ('office') Da Mon. It is also referred to as simply 'Da Mon'. Other spellings of the site are Ta Mon and Ta Man. This site has been chosen especially for this chapter in an attempt to highlight the accuracy of this thesis's argument. Until this point, the geographical and hierarchical proximity from the centre has been assessed and analysed largely in linear unison, i.e. in geographical terms, the zonal level prison was general closer to the centre than the regional level prisons, and the regional prisons were generally closer to the centre than the district prisons. Whilst this is not surprising given the structure of the CPK command structure, it does make it difficult to ascertain which factor was more influential, geographical proximity or hierarchical proximity from the centre. In light of this, a sub-district militia centre that was very close to the centre in geographical terms was chosen in order to see which factor was more influential. If the CPK command structure was upheld as it should have been, then geography, in theory, should not have been an influence whatsoever in how the militia centre operated.
The map above shows the location of Munty Da Mon militia centre. It was located in Russie Dom village, Pra-Phnom Sub-district, Angkor Chey District, Kampot province (District 106, Region 35), 3 kilometres east of road 31, approximately 85 kilometres south of Phnom Penh. Munty Da Mon was therefore geographically closer to Phnom Penh than Phnom Sanlong, Kampot, Phnom La-Ang, Chhouk, Dang Tung, Kampong Trach and Wat Kampong Tralach. Only Chrey O’Phnue and Tram Kak were closer to Phnom Penh. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Da Mon was only 20 kilometres from Phnom Sanlong and 15 kilometres from Tram Kak district, two places that we already know Southwest zone secretary, Ta Mok, spent a lot of his time. There is a good road between these locations so in theory it would have been easy to get to this prison site.

---

642 Ezilon (n.d.) ‘Map of Cambodia’.
from either Tram Kak or Phnom Sanlong (making it easier to monitor). However, Da Mon was hierarchically the lowest of all of our prison case studies.

Munty Da Mon was located ‘8 kilometres from the District office seat, in Angkor Chey’.\(^{643}\) The sub-district secretary of Pra-Phnom was a man called Saroon. Saroon was supported by his two secretary deputies, Tonh and Proh and 20 plus guards.\(^{644}\) Da Mon prison itself was overseen initially by ‘a man called Reat. Reat was then killed by someone called Pon, who then himself became the prison chief, and then after that he in turn was killed by Torn who then himself became the Da Mon prison chief’.\(^{645}\) According to the interview subject responsible for this statement, the contemporary chief of Treang commune, the killings of the Da Mon prison chiefs were not decisions made at sub-district, district or even the regional level, rather ‘the order came from Ta Mok’.\(^{646}\)

If Ta Mok was making decisions, such as the one above, then we can observe how theory and reality divulge even as low down as the sub-district level. In theory, Ta Mok would not have needed to make these decisions. Whilst he was ultimately in charge, the sub district chief, Saroon, should have been making these decisions. However, as Ta Mok was often close by, he was able to make these decisions in person. We are observing, therefore, that geographical proximity was able to influence hierarchical distancing also, moving this particular prison closer to a member of the Standing Committee (bypassing the

\(^{643}\) Archive D17166. 7th September 2000. *Interview with Nat Klah*. Page 1.

\(^{644}\) Ibid.

\(^{645}\) Author’s interview with the commune chief of Treang, Takeo province. 25th November 2012. Russei Dom village, Kompot province.

\(^{646}\) Ibid.
sub-district, district and regional committee levels). Whilst, as we shall discover, this prison is unique in this function, it demonstrates excellently how geographical proximity can transcend hierarchical proximity with regards to control and monitoring. With the exception of Tram Kak, this kind of superior ‘closeness’ was not observed at any of the other district sites, which this thesis focused upon (and it occurred in Tram Kak for the same reasons as it did at Da Mon, i.e. geographical proximity). The order *should* have come from the Angkor Chey District chief, and yet it came from Ta Mok. One can only assume that the ease by which Ta Mok could visit the area of Da Mon facilitated this direct order. The interview subject did confirm that Ta Mok ‘used to drive past the prison in his car’.647 Whether or not the CPK would have actually favoured this kind of ‘closer’ relationship where possible, rather than following their own strict CPK command structure guidelines, is unknown. However, given that it was Ta Mok who was involved, the CPK probably had no intention in questioning this structural mutation.

The prison was constructed in 1973, and was comprised of a main prison campus enveloped by holding houses. According to a former prisoner of Da Mon, ‘there were many houses in that extermination camp, and in my house there were about 50 people kept there at a time’.648 Interestingly, the former prisoner referred to Da Mon as an ‘extermination camp’. Sub-district militia centres were not supposed to function in this way, but presumably Ta Mok knew how this

647 Author’s interview with the commune chief of Treang, Takeo province. 25th November 2012. Russcl Dom village, Kampot province.
prison was operating. The prison was ‘surrounded by seven layers of barbed wire. The Khmer Rouge used three buildings to detain prisoners; one building for male prisoners, one building for female prisoners and a building reserved for those prisoners who had committed a serious crime-soon to be executed’.\textsuperscript{649} It is clear therefore, that execution was very much a part of the function of Da Mon.

From 1973 until the 17\textsuperscript{th} April 1975, most of the prisoners sent to Da Mon were base people from Angkor Chey District who had ‘relatives working in Phnom Penh’.\textsuperscript{650} These base people were accused of being spies. Da Mon was, therefore, very active even before the conquest of Phnom Penh, demonstrating the strength and support of the Khmer Rouge in the Southwest zone. Physically speaking, at that time, ‘Da Mon security office only had one building, and it was initially used primarily as a place to kill base people’.\textsuperscript{651} Da Mon obviously had to grow to meet the demands of the sub-district level arrests.

From 1975 to 1977, Da Mon started to hold the ‘usual suspects’, new people, the ethnic Chinese, the Cham and the Vietnamese. 1978 saw the highest degree of execution at Da Mon, ‘prisoners had their throats slit and the blood was drained away onto a nearby cave floor...the prisoners were then taken to Prey Ta Koi, 3 kilometres from the prison, and buried’\textsuperscript{652}. A prison witness, Saphoeun, stated that there was a three-day period in 1978 when the ‘Khmer Rouge cadres killed

\textsuperscript{649} Pong. 2010. Page 18.

\textsuperscript{650} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{651} Author’s interview with the commune chief of Treang, Takeo province. 25\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. Russei Dom village, Kampot province.

\textsuperscript{652} Pong. 2010. Page 18.
about 300 prisoners per day, during the working hours.\textsuperscript{653} Another witness stated that during 1978, from each of the detention houses, 'every day, fifty people were sent out to be killed and fifty more came in'.\textsuperscript{654} Da Mon was clearly an execution centre and Ta Mok undoubtedly knew that.

When a prisoner was brought to Da Mon, they 'would be bound'.\textsuperscript{655} Once they were placed into a detention house, their binds would be removed and then their feet would be put into iron shackles. The prisoner would then be 'shackled at the waist...after those, they (the cadres) would put another shackle around the neck. But they did not shackle the hands'.\textsuperscript{656} Whilst many of the Southwest sub-district level militia security centres were little more than a collection 'of coconut trees'\textsuperscript{657} or 'a mango orchard',\textsuperscript{658} Da Mon was clearly a centre that was comparatively well-resourced with a large campus capable of holding literally hundreds of inmates at anyone given time, fully equipped with metal shackles akin to those in the Phnom Penh based S-21. One can only assume that such a well-resourced operation for a security centre so low in ranking represented Ta Mok's desire to rid his homeland and its surrounding areas of perceived enemies. Da Mon was clearly a site that 'benefitted' from having a very unique relationship with Ta Mok.

\textsuperscript{653} Pong. 2010. Page 18.
\textsuperscript{654} Archive D17165, 2000. Page 1.
\textsuperscript{655} Archive D17166. 2000. Page 5.
\textsuperscript{656} Ibid. Pages 5-6.
\textsuperscript{657} Ea. 2005. Page 40. The prison referred to was Saephy Sub-district militia centre, Region 33.
\textsuperscript{658} Ibid. The prison referred to was Po Angkrong Sub-district militia centre, Region 33.
The food supply at Da Mon was also meager. A prison witness stated, 'we ate rice gruel which occasionally had salt and vegetable peelings (mixed in). We ate rice gruel made from 1 or 2 grains of rice...when they (the cadres) were not feeling kind, they gave us no salt, we just ate rice gruel'.\textsuperscript{659} Whilst this is only one testimony, this is a clear demonstration that food supplies were less than adequate and that food rations were related to the fickle whims of the cadres. As the previous observations of this thesis have highlighted, and Short stated earlier, food distribution was clearly a form of control.

Gathered from several interviews, there is a great deal of information regarding the behavior of the cadres working inside of the prison, enforcing security, and those working outside of the prison, overseeing village life and sub-district arrests. Firstly, of those cadres who worked outside of Da Mon's perimeter, one interviewee stated that the cadres wielded the freedom to behave as they wished, stating 'the Khmer Rouge had some freedom to do what they wanted to do and especially with regards to the people who were considered to be the lowest of the low at that time. We were considered to be useless people and those cadres did their own thing in order to get a promotion'.\textsuperscript{660} Much like the statements from other prisons, the cadres were able to act with free will in order to pursue personal goals. It also illustrates the fact that whilst Ta Mok's control mechanisms may have been strongly felt inside of the prison, they did not transcend entirely to those cadres working outside of the prison (however, it

\textsuperscript{659} Archive D17164. 7th January 2000. Interview with Damon. Page 3.
\textsuperscript{660} Author’s interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17th November 2012. Da Mon prison site, Kampot province.
may well have been Mok's intention to allow cadres outside of the prison to pursue their own desires).

The following statement by a different Da Mon survivor is perhaps one of the most insightul and telling account gathered for this entire thesis with regards to over-excessive murder, and the reasons for it. 'they (the Khmer Rouge cadres) always did more than they had to. For example, if the higher authorities ordered the arrest of 5 people, the lower cadres would arrest 10 people. During the Khmer Rouge period, this whole area was filled with forests and on one day, I entered the forest to do my work because as a member of the youth unit, I was ordered to do so. I stumbled across Khmer Rouge cadres who were having a secret meeting in the same forest at that time. I could hear their discussion from where I was standing, and one Khmer Rouge cadre was telling the other cadres that "if the higher cadres order us to kill 5 people, we will kill 10 people". I heard them say that with my own ears. I heard them discuss that there was no need to kill the weak prisoners, but for the stronger villagers who could still muster strength, "we must kill them in order so that they cannot fight back against us". I recall that it was a short conversation, and the part that I really remember was their references to those who were often sick, they said "for those who are often ill, there is no need to kill them because they will die of their own accord anyway but for those with energy, they must be removed. I think they distorted the killing quotas because they all wanted promotions but also they wanted to show off their power to us villagers. I also think that there was a high degree of social hatred that existed in this area, between certain people, that was around even in the Lon Nol era, and that these perpetrators were in a position to use their
power against people that they had had long-standing problems with. Our area is quite far from Phnom Penh and so there was little control here from the centre, it allowed the cadres here to exercise a lot of freedom’. The statement from this interviewee paints a very clear picture for the argument of this thesis, lower level excesses made possible by a geographical and hierarchical proximity sufficiently far enough from the centre to prevent control and/or knowledge of the situation.

Those who killed were the empowered cadres. They killed, it would seem, because of zealotry and revenge/rebellion prevention. The CPK was unable to control their behavior as it was decided upon in the secret of forests, out of earshot from a higher authority and considered to be ‘far’ from Phnom Penh so out of reach of the CPK’s control mechanisms. The testimony therefore, is a highly instructive firsthand account of a member of society witnessing agency, freedom and autonomy in action. It is also highly constructive when we consider the implications of international criminal law.

Several interviewees at Da Mon independently echoed this statement. Another interviewee who left a very poignant message stated, (whilst laughing) ‘the lower-downs did more than they had to, if the higher cadres ordered the lower cadres to take a finger then they would take the whole arm’ (the interviewee acted out the sentiment on my own arm). There are several repetitions of this statement, all worded differently but intimating the same salient facts; the lower

---

661 Author’s interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17th November 2012. Da Mon prison, Kampot province.
662 Ibid.
cadres may have been following a general line of order in terms of what should be done, or who they should be executing but the evidence from all interviewee subjects at Da Mon suggest that they did these things far in excess of what was in fact 'necessary'.

Unlike the commune chief of Treang, the interviewees who survived the prison camp believed that the central directives, received at Da Mon, were changed to some degree; 'it (the party line) definitely changed. The lowest levels oversaw a lot more deaths than what was ordered from the centre...the lowest levels changed things the most. For example, the village chief, unit chief and commune chief'. If this was the case, then these are authority figures of huge importance and influence with regards to daily village life, but more importantly, sub-district level arrests. If the commune chief was changing the orders of the centre, to their own advantage, then that would have an enormous potential impact on the welfare of the villagers living in the commune.

An eyewitness of the camp noted that Khmer Rouge cadres from outside would come into Da Mon to receive orders, presumably about arrests. However, it is unclear whether or not directives from 'above' went directly to Da Mon through Ta Mok, or directly to the sub-district chief from the district. Once at the prison, the cadres received instruction as how to treat the villagers in the communes; 'I personally witnessed a Khmer Rouge cadre meeting and it was clear that they were receiving orders with regards to how they should be treating us. Every one

---

663 Author's interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17th November 2012. Da Mon prison, Kampot province.
to two weeks, the village chief and commune chief had to go to Da Mon to receive classes and get instruction\textsuperscript{664} The degree to which what was being taught was central policy is unknown, and the degree to which what was being taught was actually being implemented at the grass-roots level is also relatively unknown although the general agreement that the lower-level cadres did everything to excess would suggest that some of the directives were diluted and manipulated by individual actors.

Regarding the actors inside the prison, their behavior was naturally different to those operating outside. Interviewees stated that their general impression was that the cadres inside the prisons were listening to their orders much more closely, and whilst they practiced relative freedoms, they were not consequential for anyone's survival. Once the cadres were working within a formal institution with a very strict command hierarchy, their behavior similarly changed to suit the CPK's directives as it was harder to engage in the pursuit of one's own desires as they were much more closely monitored and the threat of Ta Mok's imminent arrival constantly loomed. One interviewee stated, 'I think the guards did listen to the higher cadres, for example if the prisoners did something wrong, the lower-down prison officers would report it here (points to the main prison building of Da Mon). So when they got their orders for us who were detained, they were coming straight out of Da Mon, we could see it\textsuperscript{665} This particular statement would certainly suggest that, to an extent, even if the lower-level cadres were not acting completely in keeping with the Party's directives, they

\textsuperscript{664} Author's interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. Da Mon prison, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{665} Ibid.
were at least acting upon the orders of their prison chief, and therefore it can be argued that the motivations of violence were primarily externally driven.

With regards to Da Mon’s relationship with the authorities above the sub-district level, an interviewee stated, *as they understood it*, the directives were direct from Ta Mok’s office. Furthermore, they went on to state that the messengers that brought the directives, whilst young, were unlikely to have altered the messages as they were written down, stating ‘the regime directives did not change that much from Phnom Penh to Da Mon, I don’t think the distance and the personnel carrying messages affected the message too much. I think largely, what happened at Da Mon was what Ta Mok wanted’. In this regard, the geographical proximity to Ta Mok in fact allowed the transcendence of central power to reach the sub-district level.

The prison was surrounded by four mass killing fields, Prey Ta Koi, Phnom Grah, Otapow and Phnom Sramauy. When DC-Cam performed their memorial and burial mapping project, they discovered that 3,047 bodies had been buried directly beneath the Da Mon Facility. However, a further exhumation study of the surrounding killing fields, performed in 1982, uncovered the bodies of

---

666 The interviewee worked both directly and indirectly at Da Mon, present at Da Mon for one week in every month until 1979.
667 Author’s interview with the commune chief of Treang, Takeo province, 25th November 2012. Russei Dom village, Kampot province.
approximately ‘38,047 bodies’. Most of the 38,047 people who were killed ‘were people who had just come out of Phnom Penh’. It is therefore fair to say that ‘most’ of the people exterminated at Da Mon were new people. This reflects the particular disdain that both Ta Mok and the Southwest proletariat in general harboured towards their urban cousins.

Conclusion:

This particular case study has allowed us to highlight that geography, as a variable, played a vital role in the command structure of the Democratic Kampuchean security system. Ta Mok was clearly involved at Da Mon in a way that he was not required to be. He was instrumental in the allocation of staff, in the giving of orders and the teaching of prison directives but most importantly, he made his presence known in the area. There was no question that ultimately he was in charge, and he was never too far away if someone needed reprimanding. Da Mon could not easily be ignored, because of its geographical location.

The best example of this that I can offer is the issue of ‘Angkar’. When interviewees were asked in the districts what the term meant to them, other than at Tram Kak, the words ‘Ta Mok’ were not mentioned by a single interviewee. However, the very first interviewee at the Da Mon site, in response to my question answered, ‘If the cadres used the word ‘Angkar’ in this area then

---

everyone just assumed that they were talking about Ta Mok. For those at Da Mon, there was no question whatsoever who was in charge and who the face of the regime was. The cadres could not have strayed from this reality even if they had wanted to. Da Mon illustrates how important the geographical proximity between superiors and subordinates as a variable is with regards to the motivations that underlie violence.

When compared with the prisons analysed at all levels, Da Mon actually operated more in the way like one would expect to find at a secondary or tertiary node, implying that geography is an important variable with regards to the agency, freedom and autonomy that it grants to lower-level actors. Cadres and guards working inside of Da Mon knew that, whilst they could have some freedoms, they could not take the law into their own hands like some cadres did at the district and regional level, because Ta Mok was a tangible reminder of how fierce the Khmer Rouge machine could be.

The cadres operating outside of the prison seemingly arrested and executed more people than they were ordered to, so to an extent, this demonstrates the significance of internally-driven motivations for violence. As for the cadres inside the prisons, whilst they could have reduced actions such as beatings and food distribution, they ultimately could not alter the fate of a prisoner once they had been detained in Da Mon.

---

672 Author’s interview with a Da Mon prison survivor. 17th November 2012. Da Mon prison, Kampot province.
However, it is significant to note that Da Mon is a special case, chosen for its anomalous qualities. The general assessments that can be made of the other Southwest sub-district militia centres is that they were in fact very peripheral indeed. It may be of greater value to imagine the sub-district as the roots of the district tree. The sub-district level was supposedly deferential to the district level only. And as we have already analysed, the district level was by far the most autonomous level of all of the CPK command levels. Most sub-districts, being so far from the centre, were only answerable to their immediate districts, and so the agency afforded to cadres was naturally significant, and therefore, so was the degree of killing.

When interviewing Francois Ponchaud, he stated that the digression of the CPK line, down the nodal chain of command, was comparable to the situation that children find when they play the game ‘teléfon’ \(^{673}\) (the French name for, ‘Chinese whispers’). He went on to state, ‘in my book, I said the same thing; the Khmer Rouge used the slogan “Komteck van a” and they literally meant by it, ‘scratch the social class’. In some parts of Cambodia, at the lowest levels, that was interpreted as ‘we must kill all people who are in social class ‘a’, in other parts of Cambodia it was interpreted as ‘we must push all people all people in the peasant classes’. The interpretations were very, very different’. \(^{674}\)

This example demonstrates the reality of a game like Chinese whispers.

Depending upon the communication structure, the individual manipulation, the

---

\(^{673}\) Author’s Interview with Francis Ponchaud, 31\(^{st}\) July 2013. Phnom Penh.

\(^{674}\) Ibid.
geographical distance and hierarchical junctures that a message travels through (i.e. the number of junctions/people that a message is passed through), the message that you get at the very end, irrespective of what it was when it was first given, may be very, very different. This particular example shows how simple it can be for one order to spell death for one class of people in one area, and how it can spell greater pressure (to perform hard labour) for another class in another area.

After this particular statement, Ponchaud did wish to add that he thought order misinterpretation was most likely at the ‘village level’.\(^{675}\) He qualified this assessment by stating that the village cadres were ‘ignoramuses from outside of normal society...those people expressed their frustration by killing people...they had (previously) been looked down upon by people, so when they could, they took revenge on those people’.\(^{676}\) Ponchaud is clearly inferring that at the village/sub-district level, there was a great deal of order manipulation taking place, partly through one’s ignorance to understand their directives and partly through an external desire to exact revenge on pre-existing issues such as score-settling and revenge for issues of perceived malaise. Both were to prove deadly at this level.

A common narrative that we have found in all levels of the CPK hierarchy is the issue of arrest reports, and their characteristics as indirect executions. A common theme, behind the justification to issue an excess of arrest reports, was

\(^{675}\) Author’s Interview with Francis Ponchaud, 31\(^{st}\) July 2013. Phnom Penh.

\(^{676}\) Ibid.
to kill in excess (but keep one’s hands clean in the process). And whilst this was unequivalently true in many examples, I discovered that at the sub-district militia centre of Da Mon, the theme of over-delivering on arrest reports in the hope that one would be ‘promoted’ was a much more dominant motive to be violent than in the interviews conducted at all other levels of this study.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that at the lowest of all levels, cadres wished to be promoted. They will have witnessed that every cadre above them bore the right to delegate responsibility and authority, and yet they were the final stop; the men who had to get their hands dirty, so to speak. The desire to elevate oneself from the outermost periphery must have been a huge motivation to do all that one could.

An interviewee, formerly of the Takeo Sub-district ‘Preah bat joun jun’, but now residing in the only remaining Khmer Rouge safe haven, Anlong Veng, commented at length about the sub-district process of trying to get oneself promoted. They stated, ‘If the lowest level cadres did not report issues to the higher-level cadres then there would have been no disappearances, those people wouldn’t have died. The arrests and the decisions to arrest were in fact beginning at the lowest of levels... (their deaths) were completely avoidable... they thought that if they sent reports then they would get a higher position (in the regime)’.677 The statement is therefore implying that the deaths of others could be used, as the cadres perceived it, as leverage to get oneself

677 Author’s interview with a Kirivong district survivor. 17th August 2013. Thlat commune, Anlong Veng.
promoted. To an extent it must have worked because literally thousands of Southwest cadres were exported all over Cambodia to prop up the regime in particularly vulnerable areas, such was the centre's faith in their ability to deliver the party's wills and wishes.

The set of case studies used for this thesis, when fixed upon the CPK command structure model, demonstrate that geography was seemingly the more influential of the two variables with regards to the agency that cadres wielded. Given that the majority of the Southwest prisons, security centres, reeducation centres and militia centres were located in geographical locations that were in places far from Phnom Penh and in relatively difficult places to reach, it may come as no surprise that the death toll of the Southwest, as a result of forced execution, was astronomically high.

The estimated total death toll from execution, for Takeo province (region 13) alone has been quoted by DC-Cam as '150,249'\textsuperscript{678} and Meng-Try Ea as '191,791'.\textsuperscript{679} Kampot province (region 35) is estimated to have had a total execution death toll of '100,899'.\textsuperscript{680} These two provinces alone equate to approximately one fifth of the total executed figure for the entire nation, and these are not even the figures for the entire Southwest zone. DC-Cam's death toll of those executed in Takeo province (150,249), estimates that 'peasant deaths'

\textsuperscript{678} DC-Cam. 4\textsuperscript{th} April 1997. Mapping project, 'Takeo 97'. Page 2. Phnom Penh: Documentation Centre of Cambodia.


\textsuperscript{680} Archive D00572. 1993. Page 1. Meng-Try Ea quotes the same figure.
made up ‘121,069’\textsuperscript{681} of that total. That means that 80.6 per cent of total deaths in Takeo province alone was constituted of the very people that the Khmer Rouge socialist revolution was supposedly designed to save. I chose the Southwest zone specifically to demonstrate this fact.

Ben Kiernan estimates that ‘21 per cent’ of the total nationwide population perished as a direct result of the Khmer Rouge regime. The figure of 21 per cent is an average of the differential between base people and new people. Unsurprisingly, new people suffered more as a result of the regime, with 29 per cent of their total population perishing, compared with 16 per cent of the total base people population. \textsuperscript{682}

"The major role of carrying out the revolution and the national liberation war had been taken by the workers and peasants who made up the majority. They have been the ones who have shouldered the heaviest responsibilities, so they must continue to reap the revolutionary rewards"\textsuperscript{683}

Pol Pot’s address to Yugoslavian journalists in 1978.

\textsuperscript{682} Kiernan. 2008. Page 458.
\textsuperscript{683} Archive D30254. 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1978. Pol Pot’s interview with Yugoslav journalists. Page 2.
Chapter 9 - Democratic Kampuchea's Oskar Schindler:

The chapters that we have assessed up until this point have focused on the
effects that differing geographical and hierarchical proximities from the centre
have had upon lower-level exactors of political violence in Democratic
Kampuchea. From 1976, violence was widespread throughout the nation, and
could be authorized by those at the party-central level, the zonal level and the
respective leaders of armed divisions of the RAK (who invariably ran the
regional/sector level). We have observed that, in general, the further one travels
geographically and hierarchically from the centre, the easier it became for lower-
level cadres to action displays of agency, autonomy and freedom from their
prescribed directives and party policy mandate(s). Irrespective of the 1976
mandate, the observations would suggest that the effective right to 'smash'
transcend this select group. The findings have indicated that smashing happened
at every level without senior authority or approval, with the majority of
smashing happening at the lower-levels.

This exponential growth of agency in Democratic Kampuchea is a real life case
study of agency inference. As power was increasingly subcontracted to
intermediaries, those who worked as intermediaries and their subsequent
subordinates often used the command disjuncture as an opportunity to
manipulate the regime to their own advantages.

With the increasing latitude afforded to the lower-level exactors of the CPK
revolution to make their own decisions with regards to their handling of
'ordinary citizens', enemies and prisoners, the evidence gathered for this thesis
both primary and secondary demonstrates clearly that lower-level cadres often chose to act to excess. And this excess was at the expense of others; whether it was others’ civil liberties, health, food rations or freedom. Most importantly, however, the majority of cadres chose to kill more than they had to. The freedom that cadres wielded resulted in misery for literally hundreds of thousands of people.

As I shall now demonstrate, however, there are always examples of those who choose not to engage in facilitating and/or exacting violence. According to Sofsky, ‘even in environments where violence has become a way of life, not everyone takes the chances on offer. Although the risk of non-violence may be high, contempt for it great, and penalties draconian...even in the concentration camp, that place of institutionalized cruelty, there were overseers and guards who did not show brutality’.684 Whilst the latter part of the statement refers specifically to the Nazi concentration camps, initially Sofsky is referring to no specific environment of widespread violence. It can be, therefore, applied to the Khmer Rouge cadres, soldiers and guards who are so pertinent to this study.

According to Ron Dudai, there are those in society who choose not only to not commit acts of violence but actually actively try to stop it from happening and remove certain individuals from situations where it may happen to them. Speaking specifically about those in society who ‘rescue’ in periods of political violence, he states, ‘acts of rescue carried out during episodes of mass atrocity

have a unique meaning, their importance amplified beyond the individual action...(because) a crime against humanity is a crime against "humaneness" that offends certain general principals of law...(therefore) acts of rescue, accomplished against a background of widespread and systematic violence, affirm the idea of humanity”. Therefore, it is clear that given the risks involved, the decisions to rescue against a backdrop of violence carries a certain threat to the rescuer. As we have observed in Democratic Kampuchea, one motive for killing was an attempt to demonstrate a particular level of zeal to one’s superior. It was a risk to kill in excess (as it wasn’t official policy) but given that violence was widespread, it was invariably less of a risk to kill in excess than to save in excess. Rescuing is clearly of greater risk to the rescuer than excessive killing is to a killer in periods of political violence. As this chapter will show, it is one’s relationship with one’s orders and directives that truly unveil the extent to which one can operate with any kind of agency and autonomy.

Such is the strength of institutionalized orders, according to Milgram, that ‘behaviour that is unthinkable in an individual who is acting on his own may be executed without hesitation when carried out under orders”. If Milgram’s statement is an acceptable assumption, it would imply that human beings, under the duress of orders, are theoretically capable of committing the most heinous of crimes. The compulsion to obey one’s ‘orders’ therefore, is a stronger force in terms of empirical actions than one’s own moral compass, sculpted through years of exposure to a social framework that essential supports and celebrates

---

those who do the morally right thing (i.e. in periods of delegitimized violence). One could argue, therefore, that actors could perform morally despicable crimes, but do so in perfect symmetry to one’s orders. This chapter is designed specifically to assess an example of a rescuer in order to demonstrate that it was possible to protect life in Democratic Kampuchea by disregarding one’s orders and social expectations, and that it was in fact rewarded rather than punished.

In 16 months of empirical data gathering I met a rescuer who performed tasks that ultimately saved lives (an Oskar Schindler, if you will). This person was performing acts that were made possible in part by his hierarchical status (being both low and high ranking at the same time, as a peripheral village chief) and a relatively far geographical distance from the CPK, but also through significant internally driven motivations.

This chapter will illustrate that some relative superiors did not celebrate violence but actually rewarded non-violent behavior. Furthermore, as we have already observed, the CPK in Phnom Penh often reminded their subordinates that violence should be a last resort. We will also discover that this person generally performed their tasks as they were ordered. The only digression was not to issue orders or monitor one’s subjects with violence. The person whom this chapter focuses upon was operating below the sub-district level, at the village level, the most peripheral level of the CPK security command structure.

The discovery of this person was entirely accidental. After approximately thirty or so interviews, it became ‘customary’ to hear of the atrocities that individuals
experienced during the Khmer Rouge regime. To hear of one losing all of their family members became disturbingly normal. To hear of one experiencing gross over indulgence in sadistic crimes by perpetrators similarly became normal. However, in a village that is situated about 20 kilometres from Chhouk town, approximately 100 kilometres from Phnom Penh, I heard very different answers to my interview questions.

My interest in this particular sub-district village was first pricked to a significant extent after a lengthy interview with the former chief of the eating hall of this particular village. In answer to the question, ‘were you ever personally hurt or injured by the Khmer Rouge?’ their response was the following statement, ‘No, because the chief of the village was a very good person. We helped each other. He loved the villagers very much. He often went to work with us. He performed the tasks like the other villagers. He gave us enough food, although it was not delicious, or very much, it was enough’. Naturally such a positive response to a question that had previously been answered by much darker answers led me to want to understand further the operational dynamics that were occurring at this particular village, and the chief behind them.

The statement of this particular interviewee, whilst positive and unusual, did not suggest that the village chief had done anything other than follow their own

---

687 The village in question must remain anonymous as its naming would lead to the identity of the individual in question being easily revealed. However, it is also important to state the village in question is located approximately 5 kilometres from a major road and is located directly upon a thoroughfare between a network of villages, but it cannot be considered to be 'easily accessible'.

688 Author's interview with a Chhouk district survivor, 13th August 2012. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
orders and directives received from the sub-district chief and committee council. However, the interviewee then went on to suggest that the village chief had pursued internally driven motivations of altruism by straying from their orders on occasion. In response to the question, ‘do you think that the cadres in this village used the regime as an excuse to kill people?’ the response I received was truly intriguing. ‘Yes, I think so, but that happened in the other villages (not this one). As for my own village, very few people were killed because the chief of our village really loved us. He often found excuses and good reasons in order to protect us from higher cadres when we were unable to finish our tasks. He would often say good things to his own superiors about us, and that kept us all safe’. This statement is an evolution of the previous statement as it clearly demonstrates an entirely new strain of agency, that of going beyond or against one’s directives in order to protect those under one’s direct supervision. In effectively lying to their superiors, the chief in question was putting their own life at risk in order to save others.

It was obviously of great importance to this study for the village chief in question to be interviewed about their own experiences and their understanding of the dynamics that they were both surrounded by and involved in. The village chief was formally interviewed twice and informally upon one more occasion. Cumulatively, the interviewing process of this particular individual took in excess of four hours, which represents the longest degree of any interaction with

---

689 Author’s interview with a Chhouk district survivor. 13th August 2012. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
any one-interview subject. To protect the identity of this rescuer, I will use the alias of 'Mr. Phal'\textsuperscript{690} for him.

Mr. Phal was in his mid-thirties when he was appointed to the position of village chief. From 1975 until 1977, he had been the chief of the adult working unit. In 1977 he married, and upon his marriage the chief of the Chhouk district made him chief of the entire village. The chief of the Chhouk district at that time was Ta Kot. Needless to say, until his appointment, there had been a different chief for the village.\textsuperscript{691} He explained to me in great length the command dynamics and order issue process that existed in his sub-district and Chhouk district, stating that 'after my appointment our relationship (his own relationship with Ta Kot) became closer, so I would see him once a month or sometimes twice a month'.\textsuperscript{692} Therefore, regular contact was had with his immediate superior, in this case the district chief (rather than the sub-district chief as one might expect), though it could not be described as 'often'. Mr. Phal then went on to state categorically that he never received direct orders from anyone other than Ta Kot. Ta Kot himself was subordinate to the region 35 hierarchies, who were themselves the subordinates of Ta Mok and the Phnom Penh-based party.

Whilst one could argue that this particular relationship was not entirely in keeping with CPK policy, as he should have been receiving his orders from his

\textsuperscript{690} Mr. Phal is not the real name of the rescuer, but it is the Khmer equivalent of 'Mr. Smith'.

\textsuperscript{691} Multiple interview subjects from the village in question have stated that the only people to have died in this village during Democratic Kampuchea did so under the tenure of the previous village chief.

\textsuperscript{692} Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
sub-district chief, it certainly suggests a rigid hierarchy that would have functioned in much the same way. In fact, it was arguably a more effective way of ordering party policy in that this particular mode of communication and ordering bypassed the respective sub-district chief making it by default, 'more centralised'. Quite why Mr. Phal did not receive his orders from the sub-district chief was never explained. He did explain, however, that as he understood it, 'Ta Kot got his orders from the chief of the province (Kampot, region 35), who at the time was a man called Ta Bit'.693 This Ta Bit was the same Ta Bit (or ‘Sam Bit’) whom we addressed in the tertiary node chapter. Ta Bit worked directly for Ta Mok as the region 35 secretary.

As we already know, Ta Mok operated largely independently from the rest of the party. Given the omission of the sub-district chief, the ordering process from Ta Mok to Mr. Phal went through two nodes of potential disjuncture, one at the regional level and one at the district level. Mr. Phal, one could argue, was therefore 'closer' to the centre than the party policy demanded as a bare minimum of his rank.

The process of political education, according to Phal, was conducted by the district level, 'it happened anywhere from once a month to once every three months...we didn't just have political education in those sessions (with the superiors), the commune chief would ask us a lot of questions about the

---

693 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
conditions in which the villagers lived in each particular village'. Mr. Phal's statement would therefore suggest that there was in fact a degree of mutual communication with the respective superiors taking an active interest in knowing the goings on in each village. The village chiefs were also exposed to a degree of political education, presumably presided over by the party centre. Phal stated, perhaps unsurprisingly, that he 'never changed the orders' of what he was given and taught in these education sessions when relaying the various centralized messages to his subordinate subjects.

Before 1975, the village had been a place of relative harmony. "(before the Khmer Rouge) they [the villagers] were friendly together, and you know, people in this area really loved each other". It would be fair to say therefore that issues of pre-existing social malaise, certainly amongst the base people, were negligible. With regards to issues surrounding usury and perennial indebtedness, Mr. Phal stated that 'people here owned their own land'. In addition to the apparent lack of pre-existing social malaise, it would appear that this particular village did not have any particular reason to dislike the urban people (who would become the new people evacuees) on a personal level. Social malaise and landlessness coupled with indebtedness to the urban people were often issues present in areas of particularly high death tolls, however, this village seemed to be missing these key ingredients.

694 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
695 Ibid.
696 Ibid.
697 Ibid.
Moral psychologist Kristen Monroe states that one of the key features that leads us to pursue morally right decisions in times of genocide is the 'distance'\textsuperscript{698} that individuals feel between each other. Distance, as she sees it is the underlying tenet of 'the distinction between "us and them"...people who are "different" become further devalued, ignored, dehumanized, and eventually killed because it was perceived to be the 'right' thing to do'.\textsuperscript{699} In the sites that we have previously analysed, the new people were very much perceived as being 'different' from the base people, and this was in part due to the fact that they were associated with a high degree of the social problems that base people had previously experienced.

As we have also observed, these associations and problems were often the motivations behind base people inflicting violence upon them. Monroe argues that for the 'us and them' dynamic to be eradicated, human beings have to view themselves as equals, stating 'classifying people into the same category seems to encourage similar treatment of them. Why? People are entitled to the same rights we are because they are "just like us". Classifying people as different makes it easier to justify mistreating them'.\textsuperscript{700} As we shall now observe, Mr. Phal did not treat the new people differently, and so there was no active policy to execute them in his village.

Like most of Democratic Kampuchea, new people were evacuated to this particular village. As we have experienced and observed in the previous chapters, the new people were invariably on the top of death lists and arrest

\textsuperscript{699} Ibid. Page 704-5.
\textsuperscript{700} Ibid. Page 731.
reports (once the Lon Nol soldiers and Khmer Republic politicians had disappeared), in keeping with the ‘last in, first out’ informal policy that most of the nation seemed to adopt. Therefore, it would be fair to expect that the same might have happened in this particular village (though we already know that some ‘ingredients’ of violence were absent at this site).

In reference specifically to the new people, evacuated to this village, Mr. Phal said, ‘a lot of new people came here...mainly from Phnom Penh, but it was a mixed bag; there were people here from as far as Battambang’\textsuperscript{701}...I want to say that I did not treat them badly. I actually tried to protect them by telling them that they should just follow the orders’\textsuperscript{702} It could be argued that Mr. Phal was in fact doing as he was supposed to in not targeting the new people specifically to perform difficult, labour intensive tasks, or giving meager food rations, or even simulating the motions that would have resulted in their arrests. He treated them as equals.

However, it would appear from his following statements that Mr. Phal actually had to work against certain forces to ensure the safety and survival of the new people sent to his village. Initially he stated that the former village chief before his tenure was not as forgiving as he was, ‘the previous village chief (up until 1977) treated the new people very badly in my opinion, for example, he

\textsuperscript{701} A large city in northwest Cambodia.
\textsuperscript{702} Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
personally stole all of their jewelry’. Much like the Nazi concentration and execution camps, jewelry and personal belongings were considered state property, and in Democratic Kampuchea, this was considered even more to be the case. In Nazi Germany, items such as jewelry only became state property once someone had been imprisoned or murdered, whereas in Democratic Kampuchea, even for those members of ‘ordinary society’, possessing personal wealth was a breach of state policy. Any individual caught stealing was invariably killed, so the former village chief was engaged in illegal activity.

Mr. Phal went on to state that it was very much his own influence, against the will of others, that kept the new people safe, ‘it was a decision I made from my own feeling of how people should be treated...In actual fact, the higher ranking cadres usually wanted to target and flank down the rich new people’. This statement is a clear indication that Mr. Phal quashed the motivations and desires of the ‘higher ranking cadres’ in order to prevent the executions of the new people in his care. This illustrates the different motives that certain individuals harboured towards others. Like the Jews of Europe or the Tutsis of Rwanda, the new people of Democratic Kampuchea were associated with an imbalance of wealth, and that for many was reason enough to kill them.

Undoubtedly risking his own life, Mr. Phal denied the higher-ranking cadres the opportunity to ‘target and flank’ the new people. This is a genuine demonstration of agency. Because of the equality policy that Mr. Phal insisted upon, and the

703 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
704 Ibid.
comparatively lower-levels of social malaise and bourgeoisie hatred that existed in the village, he was able to make the following statement in answer to the question, 'In your opinion, would you say that the new people and the base people cohabited in this village quite harmoniously at the peasant level?'. 'Yes, I would say that they worked together very well.'\(^{705}\) In order to ensure this balance, Phal undoubtedly ensured that such levels of harmony were met. His public displays of new and base people equality would have been observed by all the village members and set a moral standard for all to abide by.

Further regarding the issue of new people, Mr. Phal met increased difficulties as he was forced to navigate, control and curtail the behavior of the local chhlop. He stated that, of the chhlop, 'they were stricter with new people'.\(^{706}\) Thus the chief attempted, at his own personal risk, to actively readdress the imbalance of the strictness imposed upon the new people to not result in their deaths. The chhlop were not specifically designated to this one particular village, but the chhlop of this sub-district circulated around each village that constituted the entire sub-district on a nightly basis. As a control mechanism, it is hard to argue that the idea of employing spies to monitor a variety of villages and their lower-level behavior is not a ‘rational’ idea in theory. However, unfortunately, as was the case with so many lower-level cadres, the chhlops themselves were not monitored, so they arrested many of their own volition (Phal’s statement that the chhlop were stricter with new people demonstrates that clearly).

\(^{705}\) Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3\(^{rd}\) August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.  
\(^{706}\) Ibid.
There were 24 chhlop in total for the entire commune. When asked why specific chhlop were not designated to specific villages for any period of time, he stated that, 'basically, the higher authorities did not want the chhlop to be under the control of the village chief'.\textsuperscript{707} This was clearly a mechanism used by the CPK to ensure that networks and bonds were not made between individuals that might ultimately skew the regime. The higher forces wanted to use the chhlop as an instrumental force that was theirs for their disposal, not the respective area chiefs. This would suggest that the party may have been aware of issues regarding regional allegiances (though they may not have seen it in those terms), and keeping the chhlop neutral with regards to specific areas would surely have been a tool of the CPK to try to ensure that the chhlop remained theirs and not the chiefs.

Noting that the chhlop were much feared in his village, he stated '(the villagers were) very scared. The villagers were very worried when the chhlop were around. The only way that I can describe it to you is, imagine now if the police were to arrive unannounced, we would feel scared and concerned wouldn't we? It was like that. Even me myself, I was very worried when I saw the chhlop'.\textsuperscript{708} The fear Mr. Phal had of the chhlop, one might imagine, is in itself peculiar. What would a village chief have to fear? If a chhlop wanted to arrest someone or take someone away, the village chief, in theory would not need to stand in their way. However, one can only assume that Mr. Phal feared the chhlop because he was worried that they might discover that he himself was performing tasks that

\textsuperscript{707} Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.

\textsuperscript{708} Ibid.
would go against their wishes, i.e. treating the new people equally and not
inflicting punishment upon those villagers who made accidental mistakes, or as
we shall observe, that they might ask him to perform a task that would conflict
with his moral compass.

The chhlop of the area had come from the area, but not specifically from his
village. In response to whether or not they had been handpicked by the CPK
hierarchy, he responded ‘the most important policy as far as the chhlop were
concerned was to select those villagers who came from the lowest levels; I mean
by that, those people who had the lowest levels of education and those villagers
who were poorest’. There was, therefore, a clear policy by at least some
members of the CPK hierarchy to seek out those members of society who were
easily to manipulate. As discussed in previous chapters, poorly educated
members of society who occupy the lowest levels of the social structure are used
the world over by regimes that need ‘dirty work’ doing.

Regarding those who perform dirty work, Patrice Chanuel argues that, ‘every
organisation needs these people...to do the dirty jobs, the dirty jobs that are
related to war. If we consider a state of violence to be temporarily ‘normal’ then
organisations need those kinds of people to reach certain goals’. They present
an opportunity for the centre, but as we have also seen, controlling them not to
do more than what is ordered of them (if that is in fact considered wrong by that
particular regime) is an infinitely difficult task in itself. Specifically relating to

709 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot
province.
710 Author’s interview with Patrice Chanuel. 7th August 2013. Phnom Penh.
this issue, Chanuel stated ‘if a government or other authority decides to use people to do dirty jobs, knowing what they are capable of...they have to be controlled properly. Even natural born killers can be controlled...but you need to be behind them. You really need to have strong people to take care of them, to direct them’. As we have observed time and time again, the Khmer Rouge lacked enough of these ‘strong people’ to prevent the operatives of dirty work from going too far.

This village in question was no exception. Mr. Phal stated that in this particular area the chhlop were selected (in this case by the commune chief) because they were ‘considered to be the most pure of all the villagers’. They were ‘pure’ in the sense that they had not been associated with any particular previous political faction that may have engendered anti-Khmer Rouge sentiment in their minds, and also pure in the sense that as many of them were incredibly young, their minds were still open to receiving orders. However, rather than being the epitome of the regime in situ, they themselves had axes to grind having been poor and part of a pariah state, they harboured resentment and envy towards the new people. The social openings and rebalances that the regime created offered these chhlop the opportunities to take advantage of the clean slate that they were presented with.

In the surrounding villages, but not his own, Mr. Phal stated that the chhlop had categorically used their position to kill as they had wished. Firstly he stated that

---

711 Author’s interview with Patrice Chanuel. 7th August 2013. Phnom Penh.
712 Author’s interview Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
there had been several cases where if a chhlop had had a long-standing problem with a member of a particular village, come 1975, that chhlop would use the regime as an excuse to arrest that person. He stated, ‘there were definitely those cases that happened...there were often special reports from the chhlop and lower cadres, sent to the higher authorities regarding arrests and these reports were incredibly dangerous because there was no follow up investigation of these reports, so the report was taken as it was’. The negligence to monitor the chhlop’s behavior and arrest reports demonstrates that the chhlop at this level were certainly indirectly and directly afforded a great latitude to arrest as they pleased, but naturally the excesses demonstrate that the chhlop themselves were going far above and beyond what they needed to do to satiate the regime. The chhlop were therefore, responsible for the excessive arrests (and subsequent deaths) that they caused.

Given the nature of the village chiefs in the surrounding villages, not actively curbing the behavior of the chhlop and the lower cadres, the death tolls of the surrounding villages were naturally much higher than the village in question. Mr. Phal stated, ‘yes, for example, I know that villagers in the other villages were sent to district security offices and other detention centres’. The majority of the villagers from this area who had been sent to the sub-district and district security offices were sent on the back of the arrest lists made by the chhlop. The respective village chiefs of the other villages in the area did not set themselves against these lists and posed no opposition to the will and desires of the chhlop.

---

713 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
714 Ibid.
and thus villagers were sent to their deaths. We are able, therefore, to once again observe the vital role that Mr. Phal played in actively stopping his villagers from being sent from the village to their almost inevitable deaths. Mr. Phal, of his own volition chose to state after this last statement that ‘I fully had the opportunity to behave in a worse way than I in fact did. But I chose not to be cruel’.

This revelation is very fitting with the observation made by Sofsky, ‘in general, people know what they are doing and why they do it’. Phal therefore made the conscious decision not to facilitate or aid the arrests and killing of his village subjects whereas the village chiefs of the other villages were at best apathetic.

As we have observed with so many of the prison sites and security centres that operated in Democratic Kampuchea, jealousy amongst individuals was cited as a major reason behind cadres and chhlop wishing to indict others. The village chief stated that ‘(arrest) reports were embellished and I think that may have been a result of jealousy’. The process of embellishment was made possible, partly through the apparent lack of control and monitoring over the arrests in the first place and the agency that was afforded to these cadres. The area in question was essentially the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder and geographically far from Phnom Penh and so this would suggest that my argument is correct, a greater proximity (both hierarchically and geographically) from the centre led to a very large potential for the agency inference to be possible. What this chapter is illustrating is that agency didn’t have to result in excessive violence. Mr. Phal has

715 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
717 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
demonstrated that it could result in excessive good deeds if that was the goal that one wished to pursue.

In direct relation to this particular site's geographical relationship with the centre, the Mr. Phal stated that it certainly did have an effect upon the decisions that one, especially one in relative authority, could take. In response to the question 'do you think the distance from Phnom Penh helped one to follow their own feelings?' he answered, 'Yes, I would say that it was the case'. Having then asked him why he thought that might be the case, he stated that it was the 'weakening of centralized control'. Whilst we have seen the negative effects of what such political weakening can have, Mr. Phal is a demonstration of the positive effects that political weakening can have in the hands of an individual who wishes to use their position to do good. Like the potential to commit excesses of fundamentally bad things, the village chief was able to do good things to excess.

Like the rest of the nation, this village and its surrounding agricultural paddy land was to produce three tonnes of rice per hectare. Mr. Phal stated that, 'the (rice quota) order came from the district directly to the commune, and then from the commune, it came directly to me. At that time, the order was three tonnes per hectare. They told us if we could not meet our quota then we had to push the

---

718 Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
729 Ibid.
villagers'. Such an order naturally leaves the meaning of 'pushing villagers' open to all kinds of interpretations. The political power that rice commanded was far more than a staple foodstuff. It was the mark of success and one's dedication to the regime. It transcended all spheres of life. Many chiefs considered that if they could ever deliver in rice production, either at source, or the over delivery of rice to the central rice bank, then it would be considered by the party that this particular chief was a true zealot. The motives for producing a lot of rice, even at the expense of others' well being, is therefore clear. If nothing else, it was perceived as a passport to survival. Naturally, this placed an enormous degree of pressure upon those who produced it, distributed it and sent it to the party.

Once all of the rice under Phal’s geographical jurisdiction had been harvested, ‘it would be put into a big grain silo...there was enough at that time to allow the villagers to eat rice (as grain) rather than the watery gruel (bobor lit. porridge). However, Khmer Rouge trucks would arrive here without any notice whatsoever and take the remaining harvested grains from our silos, leaving nothing. I don’t know where they were taking it’, He and the villagers were therefore then left with nothing until the next harvest.

In response to the question, ‘did you ever feel the pressure to make sure that there was always mountains of rice in the silo just in case the Khmer Rouge were to arrive at any moment (i.e. deny day to day ‘adequate’ rations for the

---

720 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
721 Ibid.
villagers)? he stated ‘the higher cadres and authorities never actually stipulated how much rice we had to give Angkar but whilst we were using the rice ourselves, the trucks would just come and take what they wanted’. Clearly, at least in this village, rice was ‘taken’ rather than ‘given’. This dynamic would therefore ensure that Mr. Phal was not directly responsible for how much rice the Khmer Rouge took receipt of from this particular place. Naturally if the village had only produced a paltry amount, there would have undoubtedly been questions asked, but the idea of other village chiefs actively starving villagers in order to donate more, or at least construct a self-imposed quota seems to have been entirely unnecessary other than to ‘impress’ one’s superiors (a sufficient motive for many to commit an act of cruelty upon another).

Mr. Phal admitted that he was constantly terrified of the Khmer Rouge arriving unannounced because he himself never quite knew whether or not he had met his basic quota of three tonnes per hectare. He stated, ‘I was always worried...because at that time I could never meet my rice production quota...I would tell the commune chief that I was unable to reach the planned quota but I promised that we would do better in the following harvest...the commune chief (in fact) would ask the ten villages (that made up our commune) to join together for the quota in its entirety so the Khmer Rouge would accept my quota’. The commune chief himself, it would seem, was also a ‘good’ man too. He may well have liked Mr. Phal and wished to help him out. There is also the obvious

---

722 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
723 Ibid.
possibility that a village under his control, failing to meet its quota, would reflect badly on his ability to govern as a commune chief.

Whether the village in question did in fact meet its quota is unknown but what is clear is that Mr. Phal took it upon himself to bear responsibility for what he perceived to be a failure. Rather than wait for the Khmer Rouge to arrive and then blame his villagers for any failures, he preempted co-operative behavior with his fellow surrounding villages to protect the lives of his villagers. Admitting to one’s superior that one anticipated a failure that might displease the party must have taken a tremendous amount of courage. It would have been much easier for the chief to blame others than risk his own life. As a result of Mr. Phal’s own policies, rather than being punished, he was actually rewarded, ‘instead of being challenged for doing something wrong, I was actually praised for being able to provide the people of my village with rice grain rather than gruel...it demonstrated that ultimately we had met our quota’. Therefore Mr. Phal’s ingenuity and preemptive behaviour of asking for the commune’s surplus to feed his own people was certainly the right thing to do. The possibility to ask for grain from surrounding villages was naturally a luxury that not every village chief could have nationwide but the chief clearly took an enormous personal risk by pursuing this policy. The commune chief’s tolerance of this also demonstrates that they themselves were happy to go along with base-level policies as long as they could cream off an amount of rice for themselves. A commune chief with a different outlook may have resulted in a very different outcome.

---

724 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kep province.
Rather than guessing that the CPK would only be pleased with high death tolls and lengthy arrest lists, Phal demonstrates that it was in fact one’s ability to deliver on rice quotas that was most important. This begs the question, why didn’t more individuals follow this policy of rice over blood? I can only estimate that increasing a rice yield is much harder to achieve, so it was easier to be violent. Mr. Phal gave me another example of putting himself in personal risk to preserve the lives of his villagers, which ultimately resulted in him being praised by his superiors. In response to the question, ‘Did you ever lie to your superiors in an attempt to protect people in your village?’ Mr. Phal replied, ‘I experienced such an occasion once. I had an order from the commune chief to assign 25 villagers, per hectare, to harvest the rice and then I did something that I shouldn’t have done. I brought them all food and palm juice (to drink) to give to the villagers who were working. The commune chief saw me and told me that I hadn’t followed his orders and that I had done something that Angkar wouldn’t wanted me to have done. The commune chief then reported me to the district chief (Ta Kot) but luckily for me, the district chief actually said that I had done the right thing because he said that giving enough food to people would ensure that they could work to their full potential.’\textsuperscript{725} Mr. Phal’s statement is a very clear illustration of how one person’s interpretation can be very different to another. It would seem that Ta Kot himself was also a ‘good’ man and allowed Mr. Phal to make the right moral decisions. If Ta Kot’s outlook was in keeping with that of the party then this is certainly evidence to suggest that widespread starvation

\textsuperscript{725} Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
and cruelty was never an intention of the CPK, but a very unfortunate
manifestation of lower level, internally driven violent motivations.

Similarly, the statement above demonstrates the vague nature of the terminology
'Angkar'. In this particular example, 'Angkar' was in fact the district chief, who
himself stated that Mr. Phal had done the right thing. It also demonstrates how
the personal inferences of one man, in this case, any of the chiefs, can alter the
outcome of so many people's lives. One man's interpretation of the regime was
clearly very different from the other.

Throughout the interview, Mr. Phal reiterated upon several occasions that, given
his hierarchical position as chief, his life was constantly in danger. He stated, 'I
was always worried about the possibility of being executed'. One could
rationalise therefore, that if Mr. Phal had not feared his own death, that actively
ignoring orders or pre-empting agricultural failures may have been risky but a
risk that one could at least calculate, but the fact that he did in fact fear for his
own life on a constant basis just goes to demonstrate, to an even greater degree,
just how courageous his actions were. Whilst he knew that his actions were
moral, he clearly knew that not every cadres would have agreed with his policies.

In response to whether or not this village was in isolation with regards to its
stance on preserving human life in the local area (i.e. compared with the other
villages in the commune), it is clear that this village really was a rarity, even

---

726 Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
within the same commune. Firstly, despite the other village’s obvious rice surpluses, the respective chiefs did not give their villagers and workers proper rice grains but watery gruel instead. Mr. Phal notes, ‘in the other villages, where they were eating porridge, it wasn’t because they hadn’t met their quota’.  

Whether or not these village chiefs pursued a policy of unnecessary rationing because they wanted to ensure that there was a bounty of rice for the Khmer Rouge is unknown, but what is known is that they were not pursuing a policy that the district chief agreed with. This is clear because Mr. Phal was praised by his superior for providing adequate food rations for his villagers, ‘my superior gave me good credit for my work, so instead of being challenged for doing something different, I was actually praised for being able to provide the people of my village with rice grains’.  

Therefore, the imposition that other village chiefs put upon themselves to over deliver on rice quotas was in fact not a policy that had come from above. The idea that over delivery at the expense of others in order to please one’s superiors, certainly in this example, was a false one. The other village chiefs were clearly acting with autonomy, and pursuing policies that they fabricated of their own volition. Not only where they wrong but they severely affected the welfare of literally thousands of people.

Upon being asked why his village chief peers acted differently to why he did, Phal’s first thoughts were that it could have been their disdain for new people, a feeling that he did not have, stating ‘it could have been because of the village chiefs, sometimes they were not happy with the arrival or behavior of the new

---

727 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
728 Ibid.
people'.\textsuperscript{729} This is a possible explanation, however, the fundamental principles of the area, which Mr. Phal described, was that this commune had comparatively fewer problems with new people when compared with the rest of the nation (because of relative economic buoyancy, land ownership and rice production). Therefore, this issue similarly existed in the other villages of this commune as well. There were no large tracts of land that were owned by the urban elite in this area of Chhouk. Similarly, it had been an agriculturally bountiful area so people had not been starving before the regime.

Exploring possible explanations for the differential between villages, he stated, 'I would say that the main influence would be because of the village chief himself, and maybe their behavior was different because they wanted a promotion within the regime. Personally, I was not interested (at all) in a promotion'.\textsuperscript{730} If this was in fact the case, it is clear that the interpretation of one man's understanding of the regime and the way in which a promotion might occur resulted in the deaths of thousands. The individual who used the leverage of other's lives to facilitate one's own promotion would infer an enormous degree and latitude of personal responsibility.

Living in constant fear of the Khmer Rouge cadres arriving at any particular time and being forced to 'look for enemies' that didn't exist, Phal stated, 'In complete

\textsuperscript{729} Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{730} Ibid.
honesty, I was terrified of such a requirement being put upon me'.\textsuperscript{731} He stated that he never performed such activities because, in general, the Khmer Rouge cadres could see that his villagers were working hard for him. The other village chiefs, however, pre-empted that this situation would occur so rather than trying to repel the cadres desire for scapegoats to explain failures, they in fact killed villagers, almost as ritual sacrifices. According to Mr. Phal ‘when a village chief accused someone, no one would question the accusation...there were no follow up investigations’.\textsuperscript{732} Whether or not those village chiefs interpreted the lack of Khmer Rouge ‘following up’ as a general sense of approval of these sacrifices is not known, but given the dynamics of not killing in the village that we are looking at, these sacrifices were clearly completely unnecessary.

This entire discovery leads us to one crucial question, what was it about Mr. Phal that truly drove him to save rather than kill, especially when he freely admits that ‘it was very easy to kill someone at that time’.\textsuperscript{733} To truly understand this requires us to turn our attention to the theory associated with human behavior and our social bonds. One might assume that Mr. Phal, to an extent, felt less bound to the wider society around him than others did (though he was clearly strongly bonded to his village), and this led him to make freer, braver and ultimately more difficult decisions against the backdrop of widespread violence. However, Mr. Phal was bound by something intangible that he considered being far more worthy of his obedience than that of the fear created by the Khmer

\textsuperscript{731} Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
\textsuperscript{732} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{733} Ibid.
Rouge hysteria. Before the regime, Mr. Phal had been a Buddhist and had been for many years a monk.

Throughout the interviews it became very obvious that his previous occupation and religious beliefs were hugely influential in the sculpting of his behavior during Democratic Kampuchea. With specific regards to how he wished to treat his villagers, he stated, 'it was a decision I made from my own feeling of how people should be treated. I was a monk so I always tried to behave well'.734 According to Semitic language historian, Robert Pfeiffer, the fear of a deity can be of huge influence over an individual's behavior. Pfeiffer argues in, 'the fear of God', that an agent of religion is bound by both fear and love of a particular deity or variety of deities, he states 'one might compare this mixture (of fear and love) of fear and longing in religion with the normal attitude of a small boy towards his father: respect, submissiveness, and fear on the other hand, but admiration, affection, and trust on the other'.735 Mr. Phal was clearly more deferential to Buddha than he was to the social pressures and daily fear of a violent environment. The moral teachings of Buddhism coupled with a combination of fear and love for Buddha, and the consequences of one's after life were clearly strong determinants in sculpting Mr. Phal's behavior towards others.

His obedience to and respect for his own religious beliefs therefore transcended the strength of what his surrounding environment had in fact presented him

734 Author’s interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
with, an opportunity to improve one's own standard of living at others' expenses. Such was his religious discipline and ultimate fear of the consequences of his actions with regards to his religious beliefs that matters on earth took a secondary precedence. Fortunately for the villagers under his command, his religious beliefs were founded on performing tasks that were morally good. The respect for others being of paramount importance.

Ultimately, Mr. Phal considered his duty to religion before his duty to the Khmer Rouge. It was this subservience that facilitated him to risk his own life to save those of others. Because of its moral foundations, Mr. Phal was able to make the correct decisions as he saw it, rather than act blindly in an attempt to please one's superiors. In his own words he said, 'I chose to be kind'.736 This does lead us to a further issue, however, as his subservience was essentially to something that was not universally shared, but ultimately led to a situation that could have been replicated nationwide if cadres had wished to. Mr. Phal's actions were essentially deemed to be correct by his superiors. They did not need verification from a higher being that he was 'doing the right thing'. Whilst his motivation to do so was largely religious, one does not have to be religious to prevent oneself from doing what is morally right (i.e. religious individuals do not hold the monopoly over morality).

There are very few circumstances in everyday society where we observe a universal agreement that a particular person no longer deserves life. Whilst we

736 Author's interview with Mr. Phal. 3rd August 2013. Chhouk district, Kampot province.
have seen a variety of reasons that one can almost use to justify ones imperative
to kill or exact revenge, they are essentially excuses. For example, throughout
this entire experience, I have become accustomed to hearing that ‘stealing a
banana leaf’ or ‘an insect’ from a paddy field was a justifiable cause of death. Mr.
Phal did not have to be religious to save lives. It was not a mutually exclusive
contract that he signed with the CPK superiors. In the process not only did he
save the lives of hundreds, but also he saved his own life in the process. Whilst
one can always argue that cadres make calculated risks at any given moment
during periods of legitimized violence in order to preserve ones own life, ones
moral conscience seldom seems to figure in our decision making process. As
Sofsky states, ‘ultimately it is individuals who carry out atrocities’.737

The testimony of the former village chief does nothing but strengthen the
argument, which states that actors, especially at this level, had access to a very
wide latitude of agency and autonomy to act. What an actor chooses to do with
these freedoms is the crucial feature. The majority chose to kill.

Sofsky regards those who seek excuses either for themselves or for others as
‘apologists’.738 The theories purported by these apologists do very little to
explain why things happen as they do in periods of political violence. He states,
‘apologists for the therapeutic society moving sympathetically into reverse gear,
customarily see the perpetrators as victims...(of) unhappy childhood, inadequate
parents...the list of unfortunate circumstances is truly comprehensive... social

738 Ibid.
disadvantage, economic crises, poverty and exploitation, political upheavals
...according this theory, the perpetrator of violence is part of the unfortunate
society of the sick, the poor, the unemployed and the socially excluded...the point
is only too obvious. These threadbare notions seek to eliminate the concept of
guilt and free will. If the blame for violence is unloaded on psychological and
social inadequacy, no one can ultimately be held responsible for a violent act and
its consequences.\textsuperscript{739} Essentially it is the last sentence of this statement that
resonates louder than any other, one will always be able to excuse the behavior
of someone if they please to by explaining or justifying their actions with
possible contributing factors, no matter how influential or negligible these
factors actually are. If one looks hard enough then justifying excuses can always
be found if one chooses, as apologists do, to deny to themselves the atrocities
that humans are capable of committing of our own freewill.

The possible explanations for violence stated above certainly fit with the vast
majority of motives and reasons that this case study has presented, but it is this
isolationist approach that is most dangerous to our understanding. Did the
majority of the Khmer Rouge cadres come from poor stock into prominence
through a political upheaval? Yes. But there are examples of these ‘unfortunate
circumstances’ in every corner of the globe, and yet they very rarely lead to the
unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. Villagers
who also kindly partook in interviews with me estimated that Mr. Phai single-
haendedly saved the lives of approximately 750 people.

Chapter 10 - Conclusion and a contemporary view of international law with specific reference to political violence

This thesis has illustrated that in Democratic Kampuchea, an increase in geographical and hierarchical proximity from the centre resulted in a subsequent increase in the agency, autonomy and freedom for some enactors of the regime, especially those operating at the lowest levels to digress from centralised directives. This resulted, for many, in excessive violence and execution. Furthermore, the chapters on my chosen prison sites, it could be argued, demonstrated that geographical proximity, from a form of the central government was the dominant variable when compared with hierarchical distancing with regards to the agency associated with internally and externally driven violence motivations. Ultimately I have shown that the STV, that has long been associated with Democratic Kampuchea, is an incomplete reflection of events that occurred under the tenure of the CPK.

Throughout the chapters that are largely focused around my empirical data, I have also provided evidence for the bottom up narrative on the genocide debate. There is clear evidence to suggest that not every member of Democratic Kampuchean society was simply following orders, and by default, acted somewhere on the spectrum more towards internally driven violence. It would seem as though a significant degree of violence was committed for a plurality of reasons; a combination of externally molded reasons mixed with genuine internally driven motivations to commit varying acts of violence.
Therefore, I further conclude that a significant degree of the violence committed during the era of Democratic Kampuchea was not entirely pursuant with the CPK's directives, and therefore JCE, as a judicial mandate, whilst necessary to varying degrees, is not wholly representative of the 'Khmer Rouge' story. There is clearly a wider spectrum of internally versus externally; obligatory versus discretionary violence that is far more representative of the 'truth' than the current dominant narrative perpetuating knowledge producers would have us believe.

This thesis also confirmed that, of those who were committing acts of violence and doing the killing both directly and indirectly, there were a variety of actors. There were the traditional central superiors; Pol Pot and the Phnom Penh-based Standing Committee who oversaw the extermination of those associated with the former (Lon Nol) regime and the evacuation of towns and cities. Additionally, we observed the autonomous superior Ta Mok, who pursued his own personal goals and directives. There was then a plethora of intermediary superiors who were generally formed up of family members of members of government and of high-ranking members of the RAK army. Underneath them were the lower-level Khmer Rouge cadres. Many of these cadres were young, uneducated militia who had previously been a part of the pariah state. Of the active operatives in the villages, many of those who helped to facilitate the deadly arrest lists were base level proletariats. In addition to all of these cohorts, there were many individuals who we can simply refer to as 'ordinary people'; they were neither trained military or actors who possessed a particular skill set. Many of these people
committed acts of violence under the auspices of the CPK structure to varying degrees for a variety of reasons.

Of those who were violent and killed, this thesis has uncovered and highlighted several possible motives that led people to be violent (although no-one can say with any real certainty given the complexity of human psychology and motivations why people behave in the way that they do). The most pertinent motives seem to have been the desire to be promoted, the desire to demonstrate zealous and enthusiastic behavior, the fear of self-preservation, misinterpretation of centralised directives, a display of authority (in part to suppress future acts of violence), revenge, score-settling, social and economic malaise, prejudice, opportunism, racism, classism, jealousy, envy, frustration, religious discrimination and political discrimination. Each motive was present in varying degrees, spanning the wide spectrum introduced in my introductory chapter, and as we have observed, much of the violence that occurred was part of a cocktail of mixed-motives. What seems clear was that there was also a positive correlation between distance from the centre and a general move towards internally driven motives to be violent.

Perhaps the most important issue that this thesis has raised has been the observation of the treatment of new people, and motivations for wishing to kill them. This issue demonstrates that a variety of motives can be present at any one time. Many class-based stereotypes and social classifications would have been fostered by external forces, but additionally, many of my interviewees were
able to offer personal reasons for perceived violence against the new people; reasons that go above and beyond obligatory violence.

Specifically regarding the new people, if Ta Mok had not figured in this analysis, then one could easily argue that the treatment of new people, outside of the centre, was certainly an illustration of lower level agency. However, given that one member of the CPK did wish to treat new people badly, then one could argue that this was only agency in part (as cadress could have been following Ta Mok’s directives). I hope, however, that the evidence that I have put forward illustrates that this was also not simply the case.

I wished to demonstrate that even with the addition of Ta Mok, who had nothing but disdain for the new people, lower-level individual actors still killed in excess of what Ta Mok required because they had their own motives. I argue therefore that Ta Mok, in some regards, was simply a product of the same externally driven motivations that many of the Southwest cadres and base people were, an environment that hated the urban dwellers. Without Ta Mok, they would have still exacted violence upon the new people. To varying degrees, pre-existing feelings of social malaise transcended many aspects of the regime.

This thesis has also highlighted the techniques and mechanisms employed by the CPK and other significant figures of authority in order to try and maintain the proper function of the regime. The most important technique that the party employed, which this thesis has been largely based around, was the employment of specific individuals in specific positions of power, most importantly their use
of Ta Mok as a zealous law enforcer. The theory behind using him, especially
given that he commanded a huge number of cadres who were also seen as being
particularly zealous (the Southwest cadres) was a rational choice on the CPK's
part. He was instrumental in the purges of the ailing zones (most noticeably in
the East) and was undoubtedly the party's most influential pawn of power but he
ultimately was too strong for the party to 'effectively' control and, as we
observed, he himself became the alpha-nuclei, certainly of the Southwest zone.

In addition to the use of personality politics, the structure of the command
dynamic of the regime itself was intended to enable direct control from the
centre to the periphery. As we have already observed, the theory of the structure
was such that one could only communicate with one's superior, and that their
word was 'law'. Similarly, at each level of command, each respective hierarchy
governed over an internal security institution (a prison or a security centre
office). The theory behind such a structure is again, a rational one, providing that
personal pursuits of specific goals are kept out of the command and directive
chain.

However, the revolution was saturated with individuals pursuing 'personal goal
theory' and therefore the structure never functioned as it should. In some cases,
the CPK was issuing directive 'a' and the result at the sub-district level was 'z'.
The most notable example of this, that the thesis has highlighted, was the
treatment of the new people. For the vast majority, the CPK wished them to be
treated equally, but local cadres killed them in their hundreds of thousands.
Additionally, the strict, rigid structure, the hierarchical nodes relied on local staff
to help police the villages and communes, but once again, this process could not prevent certain individuals pursuing their own directives so false arrest lists and ad hoc killing dominated lower-level politics.

In addition to these static mechanisms of control, the party also employed dynamic processes in order to try and enforce the ever-changing environment(s) that they themselves were faced with. As we have observed, the most senior leaders, on occasion, travelled to different parts of the nation and gave political education sessions and lectures. Unfortunately, their influence ended when the sessions were over as the mechanisms and techniques to enforce that the teachings were actually employed at a grass-roots level were missing, therefore allowing some cadres the opportunity to enforce the law as they pleased, either because of misunderstandings (as we observed, some cadre were unable to follow/understand the political rhetoric) or because of a strong desire to pursue one's own goals and wishes.

Publications, most noticeably the Revolutionary flag, were sent all over the nation, again with political advice and behavioural guidelines, but much like the education sessions, there was no subsequent monitoring mechanisms to make sure that the publications and their messages were employed or enforced. General methods of communication (letters, telegrams, runners etc.) also followed suit and suffered the same results. Ultimately, the CPK employed mechanisms of control that failed to ensure that their directives were preferred to cadres’ own motives. There was a lack of centralized strength and the ability to enforce and monitor at the grass-roots level.
This thesis has also demonstrated that over time, the Democratic Kampuchean experience was not monolithic. The temporal dynamism of the Khmer Rouge experience led to the systematic execution of varying personnel. In the initial phases of the regime, violence was primarily externally driven. The enemies of the state were very much associates of the former Lon Nol regime. One can therefore argue that these deaths represent violence committed under duress and coercion coupled with varying degrees of following one's orders to meet the expectations of one's superior. To return to Heder's differentiation between 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' killings, there was a much higher degree of 'obligatory' killings happening at this stage.

As the regime continued and failed to meet its agricultural policies, new enemies were being sought out, and the decision as to who or what these enemies were was left to the lower-level cadres to decide. The nation's prison structure allowed some cadres and guards to exploit their positions to seek out enemies at their own discretion, leading to a shift in balance towards a much greater degree of internally driven 'discretionary' killings occurring. The degree of ad hoc indiscriminate violence and killing was the result. For those killed who were not state enemies, but the victims of individual authority exploitation, this represents the autonomy wielded by individuals outside of the party. Those individuals who used their authority to kill in excess, outside of the perimeters of what constituted the minimum to ensure self-preservation, it could be argued, should be the subject of investigation as it transcends the notion of JCE.
It is unquestionably the case that the CPK created the environment in which these atrocities occurred, and should therefore bear ultimate responsibility. There was also a great deal of violence that was committed that was pursuant with their directives so I do not wish to remove the importance of the top-down narrative but it simply does not shed enough light on the entire story. Specifically regarding this, Heder writes, ‘To recognize the limitations of the top-down approach is not to swing to an opposite extreme and imply that the evidence exonerates CPK senior leaders...on the contrary, it makes the cases more incriminating’.\footnote{Heder. 2005. Page 381.}

The ECCC has been following a statute (borne out of the Rome Statute) that fits neatly within the top-heavy focus of international criminal law, which indirectly protects low-level operators of their crimes that were \textit{not} pursuant with the senior leaders directives. Article 29 of the ECCC statute states, ‘the fact that (crimes) were committed by a subordinate does not relieve the superior of personal criminal responsibility’.\footnote{Abeyratne. 2012. Page 48.} The wording of this statute demonstrates that the law directs itself at the superior, and they must bear JCE responsibility for what their subordinates have done. The statute qualifies that such personal responsibility is due if the superior had ‘effective command and control or authority and control over the subordinate’.\footnote{Ibid.} There is no indication whatsoever as to what ‘effective’ actually means. Furthermore, this statute implies that whilst a superior has ‘authority’ over their subject, the very idea that a superior can always control a subordinate is simply wrong. As we observed at the varying

\footnote{Heder. 2005. Page 381.}
\footnote{Abeyratne. 2012. Page 48.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
nodes, there were several instances of subordinates acting without the superior’s knowledge or consent, but they acted anyway. The legal narrative partially masks reality and thus offers mechanisms to deliver ‘justice’ that are not wholly appropriate.

Blaming the party heads can only explain a part of the Khmer Rouge story. To believe this means accepting a top-heavy legal narrative that does not develop the kinds of lower level nuances and behaviours that this thesis has presented. Francois Ponchaud stated, ‘maybe the original (Khmer Rouge) idea was good...but the main people, the people who essentially sent people to their deaths was the “protean sahakar”, the co-operative chief...so they are most responsible for these massacres’. Ponchaud is referring to the lowest levels as there was little below the co-operatives in Democratic Kampuchea. He goes on to state that ‘it is the little cadres who often went beyond...in the executions’.

Naturally, the ECCC has had an enormous impact upon certain sectors of Cambodian society with regards to their perceptions of accountability and justice. Almost without fail, at the end of each of the interviews that I conducted, the interviewees would ask me questions relating to the ECCC. It was clear that very little ECCC-related information is being disseminated out of Phnom Penh.

---


Interviewees’ questions were generally focused upon the most basic of information relating to the court. However, the comments that stick most in my mind were those made by a Kraing Ta Chan prison survivor who asked me, ‘what kind of justice is this? Don’t you think that the money could be used here on a hospital or these roads? The lower-levels should be the one’s in court!’.

So this raises the question, if institutions like the UN, ICC and ECCC focus their attentions solely at the top, how can one ever expect to get accountability and justice for those injustices that have been committed at the lower-levels? As far as I understand it, large-scale ‘justice’ in the aftermath of nationwide political violence would be the vindication of the majority of the aggrieved parties. The UN and the ICC currently do not have the policies to carry out such large-scale actions, hence the top-heavy focus. These institutions burden themselves with the obstacles that a Western notion of justice is predicated upon, a courtroom, a prosecution, a defense, and in the case of the ECCC, an archaic French civil party co-prosecution. A defendant must be found guilty beyond what the West consider ‘reasonable doubt’. In the case of the ECCC, one ends up with about 200 members of staff per defendant. The UN and the ECCC have decided that for the average aggrieved Khmer, this is ‘justice’. As previously mentioned, in almost 5 years of court proceedings, this style of accountability and justice has led to the conviction of one man, Duch, who himself confessed to his crimes.

745 Author’s interview with a Kraing Ta Chan survivor. 15th October 2012. Ang Ta Soam, Takeo province.
So let us turn our attention to a system that set itself the task of vindicating the majority of the aggrieved parties at a grassroots level, the Gacaca court process of truth and reconciliation, carried out in post-genocide Rwanda. Much like Cambodia, Rwanda faced a situation whereby the numbers of those potentially implicated with crimes against humanity were so high that feasibly one institution can simply not process all cases, in a western model of court justice.

Time, finances and practicalities of logistics simply do not allow a western judicial system to work, a nation cannot put up to 50 per cent of its population behind bars, especially when that population consists of predominantly economically active men and women. The International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) and the national courts of Rwanda could not physically process the convictions of the 90,000 people it had behind bars across the country. So the Rwandans developed the Gacaca court system. It is predicated upon a traditional legal system used in Rwanda. It was designed to re-forge broken communities back together. According to Mark Drumbl, the Gacaca court system aimed to settle differences through command justice. He argues that the Gacaca system can promote 'reintegrative shaming among genocide perpetrators, something Western-style justice cannot do'.

The system itself is not much more than a public court whereby the aggrieved party is able to tell their stories in front of their former assailant, and this would invariably end in a public apology from said former perpetrator. Whilst the system was far from perfect with many critics, it did however demonstrate that the lower-levels, to an extent, have

---

publicly accepted responsibility for their actions. It also demonstrates that there is more than one way to deal with widespread justice seeking legal structures.

Whilst widespread transitional justice and retribution might seem unlikely in a western model of justice that focuses solely at ‘the top’, there have been changes in the last year in an international courtroom that make the prospect of viewing political violence at more than just one level seem possible. On the 31st of May, 2013, there was a groundbreaking shift in ‘international justice’ that occurred during the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal of former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Two high level cadres were acquitted of their charges because of the excess behaviour demonstrated solely by their subordinates. This case represented a landmark shift from focus on the to attention to the bottom as it was proven that ‘effective’ knowledge and control mechanisms were missing from the superior subordinate relationship.

The individuals in question are Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic. Stanisic had held the position of Deputy Head of the State Security Service (the “DB”) throughout the 1990s and Simatovic worked both for the DB in counter intelligence and he then moved to newly formed intelligence administration of the DB and commanded over the special operations unit of the DB. They were charged, under the auspices of JCE, of ‘(participating) in the formation, financing, supply and support of special units of the Republic of Serbia DB; They directed members and actors of the DB who participated in the perpetration of the crimes in the Indictment: They provided arms, funds, training, logistical support and
other substantial assistance or support to special units of the Republic of Serbia DB that were involved in the commission of crimes in Croatia and BiH between 1 August 1991 and 31 December 1995'.

However, it could not be proved that these two individuals had in fact been the planners and facilitators of such a maneuver. The court ruled that the following could not be proved on either accused party; '(i) the accused must voluntarily participate in one aspect of the common design (for instance, by inflicting non-fatal violence upon the victim, or by providing material assistance to or facilitating the activities of his co-perpetrator; and (ii) the accused, even if not personally effecting the killing, must nevertheless intend this result'.

Ultimately, their charges were dropped and they were acquitted because 'the offences charged were alleged to have been committed by members of military or administrative units, such as those running concentration camps and comparable "systems". In the structure of the DB, these systems were subordinate to the positions that the accused held, but given that it was deemed that these systems and the respective members of the military had acted in separation from their superiors, their superiors were not blamed or made responsible for the actions of their subordinates. It was considered that the two

---

749 Ibid.
accused had not ordered these acts, but their subordinates had performed them.
The subordinates are therefore legally responsible for these crimes.

This case marks a historic shift in international law but it is an isolated
occurrence. Although there is certainly a great deal of reasonance between the
ICTY case and the case at the ECCC, it remains to be seen whether a similar
judgment is likely or even possible at the Khmer Rouge tribunal.
Bibliography:

Books, Articles and Journals:

- Banister, Judith and Johnson, Paige. 'After the Nightmare: The Population of Cambodia'. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies. 1993
- Becker, Elizabeth. When the war was over. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1986.


• Documentation Centre of Cambodia and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. *Teacher’s Guidebook: The Teaching of “A History of Democratic*


• Guillou, Anne. *An alternative memory of the Khmer Rouge genocide: the dead of the mass graves and the land guardian spirits*. South East Asia Research. Volume 20, Number 2. 2007.


• Heder, Steve; Tittemore, Brian D. *Seven candidates for prosecution: Accountability for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge*. War crimes research office, Washington college of law, American university and Coalition for International justice. 2001


• Heder, Stephen. *Communist Party of Kampuchea Policies on Class and on Dealing with Enemies Among the People and Within the Revolutionary Ranks,*
1960-1979: Centre, Districts and Grassroots. London: School of Oriental and
African Studies. 26th April 2012.

- Heuveline, Patrick. *Between one and three milieu: Towards the demographic
reconstruction of a decade of Cambodian History (1970-79)*, Population Studies,

- Hilberg, Raul. *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe


- Hinton, Alexander Laban. *Cambodia's shadow: an examination of the

- Hinton, Alexander Laban. "A Head for an eye: Revenge in the Cambodian
2002a.


(Mass.): Blackwell. 2002c.


- Huy, Vannak. *The Khmer Rouge Division 703: From Victory to Self-

Penh: Documentation Centre of Cambodia. 2010.


• Kalyvas, Stathis; Shapiro, Ian and Masoud, Tarek (eds.). *Order, Conflict, and Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2008.


• Lemkin, Rafael. ‘Treaties and International agreements registered or filed and recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations’ in *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Article II. 1951.


• Phnom Penh Post staff. *Ta Mak aide jumps to Government*. Phnom Penh Post, December 13th-26th, 1996.


**Websites and Film:**

• CIA. *Kampuchea: A Demographic Catastrophe*. Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency. 1980, [accessed on 15/01/15].

  [http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/demcat.htm](http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/demcat.htm)

• “Chou Chet’s confession”. 1978, [accessed on 2/3/14]


• DC-Cam. “*Burial*”. 2008, [accessed on 1/3/14].

  [http://d.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/List_of_Burial_Site_Most_Updated.pdf](http://d.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/List_of_Burial_Site_Most_Updated.pdf)
• DC-Cam. "Kampot districts" (accessed on 23/10/12)
www.d.dccam.org/Database/Geographic/Provinces_map/Kampot/Kampot.php

• DC-Cam, "List of Mass Graves", (accessed on 19/10/12)
www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/TableList/List_of_Mass_Graves.pdf

• DC-Cam, "Mapping the Killing Fields of Cambodia, 1997. Takeo Province", (accessed on 19/10/12) www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/Mapping.htm

• DC-Cam, "Phnom Tauch site", 2000, (accessed on 16/01/14)
http://d.dccam.org/Database/Geographic/Provinces_map/Takeo/Detail.php?IDcode=210202

• DC-Cam, "Takeo districts" (accessed on 23/10/12)
www.d.dccam.org/Database/Geographic/Provinces_map/Takeo/Takeo.php

http://d.dccam.org/Projects/Magazines/Previous%20English/Issue19.pdf

http://d.dccam.org/Database/Geographic/Provinces_map/Kampot/Detail.php?IDcode=070702

• Ezilon (nd.) 'Map of Cambodia' (accessed on 9/11/13)
http://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/asia/Cambodia-physical-map.gif

• "Himmler's Speech" 1943 (accessed on 5/5/14)
http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-posen.htm
• Jean-Michel Filippi. 27th March 2012. ‘The Long Tragedy of Cham History’ (accessed on 01/03/15).
  https://kampotmuseum.wordpress.com/category/english/


• ICTY, “JICE Liability”, (accessed on 11/6/13)
  www.icty.org/x/cases/stanisic_simatovic/tjug/en/130530_judgment_p2.pdf

• ICTY. Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic Indicted by the ICTY for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes. 2003, (accessed on 15/3/14)
  http://www.icty.org/sid/8256

  http://cambodialpji.org/?page=detail&menu1=219&menu2=345&ctype=article&id=345&lg=en

  http://www.kqed.org/a/pacifictime/R703151830/a

• “Khmer Rouge zone map” (n.d.), (accessed on 24/10/13)
  http://kimedia.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/krzones1.jpg

• Kiernan, Ben. “Roots of genocide”. 1990, (accessed on 8/1/14)
  www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/esq/article/roots-genocide-
  new-evidence-us-bombardment-cambodia

• Lavoix, Helene. ‘Cambodia from 1945. (17/18 April, 1970), (accessed on
  15/10/14) www.massviolence.org/IMG/article_PDF/Cambodia-from-
  1945.pdf

• Ledgerwood, Judy, “Khmer Rouge biographies” (n.d.), (accessed on
  7/1/14) www.seasite.niu.edu/khmer/Ledgerwood/biographies.htm

• Lonely planet (n.d.) Map of Phnom Penh, (accessed on 21/12/13)
  http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/asia/cambodia/phnom-penh/

• Luco, Fabienne. ‘Between a tiger and a crocodile’: 2002. (accessed on
  04/01/15),
  http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001595/159544e.pdf

• Medical News Today. Children copy violent parents. 2003, (accessed on

• Oppenheimer, Joshua. The Act of Killing (Film). 2012.

• Perry, Gina. “Behind the shock machine”, 2012 (accessed on 22/4/14)
  http://scribepublications.com.au/books-authors/title/behind-the-shock-
  machine/

  http://www.hawaii.edu/powerskills/SOD.CHAP4.HTM#1

• Thayer, Nate. Duch Interview. Ta Sanh village, Samlaut. 28th -29th April 1999, (accessed on 7/3/14) Natethayer.typepad.com/blog/kp-personalities-mam-nav/


Archival Data from the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and Newspaper articles;

(Note, all archives were sourced, translated and read at DC-Cam. To access the archives, follow the instructions in the methodology. With regards to the date, the preferred date cited is the date of the constructed archive rather than the collection date or the translated date, although there are exceptions to this when...
the date of construction/writing is missing). The archive catalogue can be accessed directly at [http://ddcam.org/Database/Lod/index.php](http://ddcam.org/Database/Lod/index.php).

**Archives:**

- Archive D00013. Interview with Comrade Man Seng. 9th January 1995.
- Archive D00015. Interview with Comrade Tuy Kin. 9th January 1995.
- Archive D00016. Interview with Comrade Him Huy. 9th January 1995.
- Archive D00031. Temporary file on Pol Pot’s genocide in Takeo. 28th December 1984.
• Archive D00201. Report on the acts of people to be sent to District 105 police. 3rd January 1978.

• Archive D00202. Report on the acts of people to be sent to District 105 police. 14th May 1977.

• Archive D00203. Report on enemy's actions for Tram Kak District Police. 27th December 1977.


• Archive D00206. Report on the enemy's actions. 29th December 1977.


• Archive D00282. Confirmation based on the response by Try, a traitor, in Ta Pem sub-district. 2nd September 1977.

• Archive D00290. Report on Yan, a local new person. 2nd August 1977.


• Archive D00388. Document on how a sub-district and village chief works. 6th May 1973.

• Archive D00426. Guiding view for all locations. 1st July 1991.
• Archive D00510. Document about political line of security section and class system in the region. 18th December 1978.

• Archive D00552. Record on the people being killed by the Khmer Rouge in Chhouk district. 3rd November 1995.

• Archive D00572. Statistics of crimes in Kampot province. 8th October 1993.

• Archive D00616. Events in 3 years, 8 months and a 20 day period in Kampot province. 30th November 1995.

• Archive D00693. Decision of Central Committee on a number of problems. 30th March 1976.

• Archive D01266. Training about using the word Angkar and Party. 11th July 1977.


• Archive D01606. Crime committed by Son Sen called Khieu during his rule on Malay-south Sisophon-Pailin region. 8th September 1996.

• Archive D01610. Record about situation of defense and economic at Southwest zone. 3rd June 1977.

• Archive D02850. About Toeur, special force in Kampot Kampong Som province, provided by Kev Srorn called Sorn. 1998.

• Archive D03082. About Thea, soldier of transportation in Kampot province, provided by Chhit Chhort called Mei. 1998.

• Archive D05100. About Savoeurn, Team group of Battalion 213, Regiment 21, Division 21, provided by Mom Savoeurn called Mony. 1998.
• Archive D14422. Interview with Ung Pech, Director of Tuol Sleng Museum (Part I side A). 7th September 2000.

• Archive D15208. Letter of Pon sent to Duch about the Interrogation of the prisoner. 24th March 1977.

• Archive D16976. Note from Son Sen called Khiev sent to Duch. 5th October 1977.

• Archive D17009. Voice article: Translated from the notes describing the work of the life and death at Tuol Sleng. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17025. David Hawk's document about Tuol Sleng. 7th September 2000.


• Archive D17159. Interview with Im Pech, Director of the Tuol Sleng museum. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17160. Interview with Heng Nat. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17161. Interview with Ung Pech. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17164. Interview with Damon. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17165. Interview with a woman prisoner. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17166. Interview with Nat Klah. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17175. Letter from Pon to Duch about the measure for interrogating no IX in the past. 25th September 1976.

• Archive D17176. Letter from Pon to Duch about the measure for interrogating No VIII in the past. 26th September 1976.
• Archive D17177. Letter from Pon to Duch about the measure for interrogating No IX called Men San called Ya in the past. 26th September 1976.

• Archive D17178. Letter from Pon to Duch about the torture No XX. 24th March 1977.

• Archive D17183. Letter from Duch to a prisoner named Ya. 24th September 1976.

• Archive D17185. Voice article about the Tuol Sleng prison. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17186. Translation of S-21 Torture documents. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17198. Interview text of Steve Heder. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D17810. Harrassment of population of Kampot province. 7th September 2000.

• Archive D18008. Name list of Cham people who were interviewed. 7th September 2000.


• Archive D18818. Newspaper: Son Sen a very small concession. 22nd September 1985.

• Archive D18819. Son Sen a killer. 29th September 1985.


• Archive D24538. Interview with Duk Huoy, Dang Torng District, Kampot province. 18th January 2001.

• Archive D24541. Interview with Deuloh, Dang Torng District, Kampot province. 20th January 2001.
• Archive D24564. Interview with Pech Chhong, Kous sub-district, Tram Kak district, Takeo province. 7th December 2001.

• Archive D24565. Interview with Lim Teng, Popel sub-district, Tram Kak district, Takeo province. 9th December 2001.

• Archive D24566. Interview with Mao, Kous sub-district, Tram Kak district, Takeo province. 6th December 2001.

• Archive D24569. Interview with Dam, Popel sub-district. Tram Kak District, Takeo province. 2001.

• Archive D25399. Interview with Ay Sass, Boeng Taraung Village, Prey Khmum sub-district, Kampot district, Kampot province. 23rd November 2005.

• Archive D30254. Pol Pot’s interview with Yugoslav journalists. 24th March 1978.

• Archive D33055. Pol Pot’s lifeless Zombies. 3rd December 1979.


• Archive D40010. Voices from S-21, the pathology of terror in Pol Pot’s Cambodia. 12th February 2007.

• Archive D40728, The extermination camp of Tuol Sleng. August 1979.

• Archive I01589, The biography of Chhum aka Sek. 1995.

• Archive I01590, The biography of Nhet Mang aka Yann. 1995.

• Archive I04574, Revolutionary biography of Sokhan aka Khan. 1995.

**PA Interviews (as archives) and Newspaper articles:**

(For access to these interviews and periodicals, DC-Cam will have to be contacted directly, these files do not exist in an electronic format).
• Archive KHI0015. Interview with S-21 interrogator, Lach Mien. 2001.
• Archive KSI0019. Interview with Yin Lonh. 2005.
• Document 1743. “Sanlong Mountain is Southwest region office of Ta Mok” by Meng-Try Ea, Raseikupuche newspaper, 10th October 2001.

The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodian transcripts:

Case file 001:
- www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/Organisational_charts.pdf, Craig Etcheson's diagram of, Committee of Office S-21: Duch (Secretary), Hor (Duch's Deputy) and Huy (Committee Member) before the arrest of Nun Huy (in the second half of 1978), (accessed on 7/8/12).


- Day 1, 30th March, 2009.


- Day 3, 1st April, 2009.

- Day 4, 6th April, 2009.
• Day 5. 7th April, 2009.
  
  
  (accessed on 11/9/12).

• Day 11. 23rd April 2009.
  
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_15.1_TR
  001_20090423_Final_EN_PUB.pdf (accessed on 1/8/12).

• Day 14. 29th April 2009.
  
  pdf (accessed on 2/8/12).

• Day 15. 30th April 2009.
  
  pdf (accessed on 2/8/12).

• Day 16. 18th May 2009.
  
  
  (accessed on 2/8/12).

• Day 17. 19th May 2009.
  
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1-
  21_1ENG.pdf, (accessed on 4/8/12).

• Day 18. 20th May 2009.
  
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1-
  22_1ENG.pdf, (accessed on 5/8/12).

• Day 19. 21st May 2009.
  
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1-
  23_1ENG.pdf, (accessed on 6/8/12).
• Day 22. 27th May 2009.
  
  (accessed on 9/8/12).

• Day 23. 28th May, 2009.
  

• Day 24. 8th June 2009.
  

• Day 25. 9th June 2009.
  

• Day 44. 14th July, 2009.
  

• Day 45. 15th July, 2009.
  

• Day 46. 16th July, 2009.
  

• Day 47. 20th July, 2009.
  
Case file 002:


- Day 60, 3rd May 2012.

- Day 72, 11th June 2012.

- Day 78, 21st July 2012.
• Day 80. 19th July 2012.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_92.1_TR

• Day 81. 20th July 2012.

• Day 82. 23rd July 2012.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_94.1_TR
_002_20120723_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, (accessed on 24/7/13).

• Day 84. 25th July 2012.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/E1_96.1_TR

• Day 117. 9th October 2012.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2012-10-

• Day 131. 14th November 2012.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2012-12-
03%2013:59/E1_144.1_TR002_20121114_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, (accessed on
  5/8/13)

• Day 167. 11th April 2013.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2013-04-
29%2013:23/E1_180.1_TR002_20130411_Final_EN_Pub.pdf, (accessed on
  18/8/13).

• Day 168. 22nd April 2013.
  http://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/2013-05-

- Day 169. 23rd April 2013.

- Day 177. 7th May 2013.

- Day 178. 8th May 2013.

- Day 179. 9th May 2013.


- Day 209. 11th July 2013.
0938950_E1_222.1_TR002_20130711_FINAL_EN_PUB.PDF.pdf (accessed on 6/9/13).

- Day 212, 17th July 2013.


Author's interviews: (Please note that all interviews conducted about Kampong Trach were conducted in Kampot. Also, those named by their real names are done so because they are either a) in no threat of indictment by the tribunal of the ECCC or b) have already been granted impunity by the court. The majority of interviewee subjects remain unnamed for their own protection and my moral obligation to them). The number in brackets denotes the number of interviews taken on that particular day.

2012:

July

- 12. Him Huy, former S-21 cadre (1).
- 17. S-21 victim (1).
- 27. Him Huy, former S-21 cadre (1).
- 29. Chhouk district victims (5) and perpetrators (3).

August

- 1. Phnom La-Ang victims (4) Dang Tung district victims (6).
- 2. S-21 victim (1).
- 3. S-21 victim (1).
- 8. Chhouk district victims (3) and perpetrator (1).
- 11. Phnom La-Ang victims (2). Dang Tung district victims (3).
- 12. Phnom La-Ang perpetrators (2).
- 13. Chhouk district victims (2) and perpetrators (4).
- 17. Chhouk district victim (1).
- 22. Kampot victim (1).
- 30. Kampot victim (1) and perpetrator (1).
- 31. S-21 victim (1).

**September**
- 18. Tram Kak district victim (1).

**October**
- 2. Tram Kak district victim (1).
- 3. Tram Kak district perpetrator (1).
- 14. Tram Kak district victim (1).
- 15. Tram Kak district victims (4) and perpetrator (4).

**November**
- 4. Tram Kak victims (3) and perpetrator (1).
- 17. Da Mon victims (7) and perpetrator (1).
- 25. Da Mon victims (3) and perpetrator (1). Tram Kak victims (2).

**2013:**

**January**

March
- 14. Him Huy, former S-21 cadre (1).
- 18. Phnom Sanlong victims (5) and perpetrator (1).

April
- 26. Michael Karnavas, former defense lawyer of Ieng Sary (1).

May

July
- 31. Father Francois Ponchaud, Phnom Penh evacuation survivor (1).

August
- 1. Chhouk district victim (1).
- 3. Chhouk district victim (1).
- 7. Patrice Chanuel, former militant trainer for the former Yugoslavian army (1).
- 17. Anlong Veng victims (4) and perpetrator (2).
- 18. Anlong Veng victims (2) and perpetrator (2).

September
- 13. Kampot victims (4) and perpetrator (2).
- 14. Kampot victim (1).

October
- 13. Oxford (UK). Former member of the Nazi-German army (1).