

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive (Cambodia)

Ref N° 2008-04

PART A - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive contains photographs and documents from the site's existence as the S-21 prison and interrogation centre. It is estimated that over 15,000 prisoners were held in this former high school, and only a handful of them survived the ordeal. The archive contains photographs of over 5,000 of these prisoners as well as "confessions" -many extracted under torture- and other biographical records of prisoners and prison guards and officials in the security apparatus.

The archive constitutes the most complete existing documentary picture of the Democratic Kampuchea prison system which was a fundamental part of the regime under which perhaps 2-3million people (25-30% of the population) lost their lives in a period of 3 years, 8months and 20 days. Undoubtedly crucial as evidence to be used in the forthcoming Khmer Rouge Trials, the archive is also an essential part of Cambodia's recent history.

Its significance as a part of the Memory of the World stems from its testament to man's inhumanity to man and its documentation of one of the most extreme examples of crimes against humanity in the 20th century with a major impact on world history.

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive has archived iconic status internationally as for representing the tragedy of the crimes that took place in Cambodia and being used widely on covers of books and DVDs, film posters, tourist brochures and in catalogues for multiple exhibitions.

2. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1. Name:

H.E Mr CHEA SORPHORN, Secretary of State Office of the Council of Ministers, in charge of National Archives of Cambodia

2.2. Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

I submit this nomination in my capacity as the representative of the Cambodian Memory of the World Committee (CMWOC) in the process of being established and as the Secretary of State at the Office of the Council of Ministers in charge of the National Archives of Cambodia. In this capacity, I represented Cambodia at the MOWCAP Meeting in Canberra in February 2008 at which the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives were inscribed in the MOWCAP Register.

2.3. Contact person(s)

H.E. Chea Sorphorn, Mr Chey Sopheara and Dr Helen Jarvis

2.4. Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

His Excellency Chea Sorphorn, Secretary of State Office of the Council of Ministers (in charge of the National Archives of Cambodia) Russian Boulevard PoBox 1065 Phnom Penh Tel, fax: +855 23 212 437 Tel, fax: +855 23 430 582 Email: archives.cambodia@camnet.com.kh

Mr Chey Sopheara, Deputy Director Department of museums (in charge of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum) House #23, Street 348, Boeung Kengkung III, Khan Chamkarmon Phnom Penh, Cambodia Tel: +85523216045 Email: sopheara@online.com.kh

Dr Helen Jarvis, Advisor Office of the Council of Ministers Russian Boulevard PoBox 1065 Phnom Penh, Cambodia Tel: +855 12 812 658 Email: helenjarvis@online.com.kh

3. IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1. Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives

3.2. Description

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives:

a)-Documentary collection:

- The confession of 4186 detainees (handwritten or typewritten text in Khmer),
- 6226 biographies of prisoners and DK members (1975-1978) (handwritten or typewritten text in Khmer),

- 56 Khmer Rouge *Revolutionary Flag* magazines,

- 185 Khmer Rouge's notebooks, and

- 5,136 various documents such as the name list of prisoners sent to the detention building, the daily lists of prisoners arriving in the prison, and the statistics lists of the people implicated in the confessions of others who were accused of involving with enemies etc.

b)-Audio Visual Collection:

- 6147 photographic prints (B&W 8"x10"): photographs of members of DK, Tuol Sleng victims, demolished buildings, researching activities, mass graves, piles of bones and skulls, photos of visitors,

- 5847 negative films (6x4.5cmB&W), regarding the above mentioned photographs,

- 212 reels of microfilm containing confessions of prisoners, Khmer Rouge notebooks, the *Revolutionary Flag* magazine, etc.

c)-Torture Instruments:

63 shackles and 6 meter-long bars, 53 shackles and 1 meter-long bars, 1,243 shackles (leg shackles and arm shackles); 2 wooden- beds for torture and 1 iron water basin for torture.

Bibliographic references

David Chandler, *Voice from S-21: terror and history in Pol Pot's secret prison* University of California Press, 1999 Rachel Hughes, *Fielding genocide: post 1979 Cambodia and the geopolitics of memory*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Faculty of Art, 2006 David Niven and Chris Riley, *The Killing fields*. -Santa Fe : Twin Palms 1996 Craig Etcheson, *After the killing fields*. - Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2005 Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, *Getting away with genocide: elusive justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*. - London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004 Nic Dunlop, *The lost executioner: a story of the Khmer Rouge*. - London: Bloomsbury, 2005

Internet web sites

www.yale.edu/cgp
www.dccam.com
www.eccc.gov.kh
www.unesco.org

Referees

Professor David Chandler, Monash University (Australia)
Professor Ben Kiernan, Yale University (USA)
Professor Judy Ledgerwood, Northern Illinois University (USA)
Mick Newnham, National Film and Sound Archive (Australia)

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1. Its authenticity established?

Yes. The site was abandoned on 7 January 1979, as the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea (UFNK) with the support of the Vietnamese Army drove the Democratic Kampuchea officials from the city and it was discovered the next day by two photo-journalists accompanying the troops. It was almost immediately converted into a museum under the direction of Mai Lam (Vietnamese expert in criminology). Some visitors, including journalists, saw the site and described the archive in the following weeks. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum was opened to the public on 19 August 1979.

While there have been some claims (mainly from former Khmer Rouge leaders) that the exhibits were fabricated or falsely presented, no challenge has yet been mounted to the authenticity of the archive (or indeed the site itself).

4.2. Its world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?

The events during the regime of the Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), are revealed more clearly in this archive than in any other single source. The devastating consequences for the Cambodian people are widely considered to constitute crimes against humanity. More than a quarter of the population lost their lives. Perhaps some hundreds of thousands were executed, following imprisonment and torture. The crimes that are revealed through the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives have had a major historical, political, diplomatic and judicial impact at the national, regional and international level.

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives detail the fate of these prisoners, most of whom were executed at the “Killing Field” of Cheung Ek or died in detention in Tuol Sleng prison. What remains from a meticulous program of photographing and recording of "confessions" and biographical information combined with documents showing the structure and composition of the security apparatus provide an irreplaceable window into the machine of terror.

While crimes of humanity have happened elsewhere in the world, nowhere have they reached the extremes of systematic and nationwide suffering by their own regime that were seen in Cambodia. Only few other cases have been as systematically documented as the S-21 prison. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Archives have achieved iconic status internationally because of representing crimes against humanity as well as the tragedy of the crimes that took place in Cambodia. This representation became one of the main images of the country itself, being used widely on covers of books and DVDs, film posters, tourist brochures and exhibition catalogues.

In 2006 the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) were established to bring to trial senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those most responsible for these crimes. In the unique experiment in seeking justice for the victims, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations have joined together to establish a hybrid tribunal involving national and international judges, prosecutors and defense lawyers, working under national and international law and under national procedure to international standards. The first person charged by the ECCC was Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, who was Chief of the Security Office-21(S-21 prison). Clearly the archive from this prison will form an essential part of the evidence advanced during his trial. In this way, the archive attains second major justification for recognition as part of the Memory of the World.

4.3. Is it one or more of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style satisfied?

- a) Time - these archives represent the principal collection of document remaining from the period of Democratic Kampuchea.
- b) Place - what took place within this site cannot be reconstructed from any other source with more authenticity and completeness than these archives.
- c) People - the essence of the security apparatus is revealed, as well as the objective condition of the prisoners and, occasionally, the spark of human dignity that resisted all possible attempts at degradation.
- d) Subject and theme - history, politics, and justice are shown here in their starkest form.
- e) Form and style - the machinery and technology of torture and death are shown in meticulous detail.

4.4. Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination?

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives are the single surviving documentary collection from a nationwide prison system. As well as the documents from the S-21 prison, the archives include other documents from Kraing Ta Chan prison in Takeo.

Although probably only covering one-third of the prisoners who were incarcerated at S-21, the archives give an overall and integrated picture of the institution.

While copies have been made of both the photographs and the documents, the preservation of the originals is of high value and could face threat of destruction should the political climate in Cambodia change, or just from the ongoing ravages of a tropical climate.

Many Cambodian institutions face problems of lack of capacity and management skills, due mainly to the after-effect of the Khmer Rouge regime itself, in destroying so many Cambodians, including almost all of those with education or technical training. This archive is no exception, and the technical demands for preservation and access to such a significant collection are critical.

5. *LEGAL INFORMATION*

5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture, Department of Museums.

5.2.1. Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

Mr Chey Sopheara, Deputy Director, Department of museums (in charge of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum).

5.3. Legal status

- (a) Category of ownership: public
- (b) Accessibility: open
- (c) Copy right status: public and asserted
- (d) Responsible administration: in place and effective
- (e) Other factors

6. *MANAGEMENT PLAN*

Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage?

Yes

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives Management Plan:

6.1. Introduction

The four historic buildings (designated A, B, C and D) currently the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, were built in 1960 as a school. They were used during the Khmer Rouge regime as a prison and brutal interrogation centre. At least 15,000 prisoners were held, many tortured or killed on the site. A small fifth building, relatively recently built, houses the ticket office. The site was turned into a museum after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979.

6.2. Buildings Plan

The four historic buildings are in poor condition. The roofs leak, some ceilings are in danger of falling. The floor is sinking and uneven. The buildings are in need of painting. The historic Archives are located in the building B. It is proposed to build a new archive building between the Building B and C in which to store the invaluable and irreplaceable collection in property controlled environmental conditions under high security. Once the Archives collection have been transferred to the new building, it is planned to renovate the four blocks A, B, C and D, maintaining their integrity but making them weatherproof and safe for visitors and staff.

6.3. Original records Scanning Plan

While the original records are at present stored in acid-free materials and hanging files, the photographs and fragile and the paper records are deteriorating. This deterioration is being considerably hastened by researchers using the material. It is thus essential that the records are scanned and placed in a digital archive to which researchers may refer without causing further harm to the originals (possibility of Internet access).

6.4. Staff Development and Training Plan

The Museum staff is dedicated and conscientious but may lack the essential skills to improve the facilities of the Museum and provide necessary guidance of visitors and researchers. Thus it is important that funds are found for basic training and advanced staff development. We want staff to be able to attend workshops and conferences. In addition there is a need to attract Museum professionals to come to Cambodia to run courses in museology.

6.5. Outreach Plans and Recording Memories of Khmer Rouge Survivors

a. We plan to cater for school groups. The youth of Cambodia have little concept of what it was like under the Regime. It is important that they learn what happened in their country and that they are taught that such horrors should not be allowed to happen again.

b. Student who visits the Museum in school groups will be given a questionnaire to take home to their parents to seek their recollections of the era. This will assist the children to understand the difficulties of those times and also record the events before they are lost forever. These new records will be added to the Archive.

6.6. Mobile Museum Bus Plan

It is planned to have a Museum Bus that tours the provinces. At present few people from the provinces visit the Museum because of distances and lack of time. So we will take the Museum to them. We also intend to seek the recollections of older Cambodians from the provinces as explained in 6.5. (b)

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Provide detail of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or original Memory of the world committee.

- a) Director of the Department of Museum from the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts consulted on 24 August 2007 by Mick Newnham and on 8 September 2007 by Helen Jarvis
- b) Director of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum consulted on 23 August 2007
- c) Cambodian Memory of the World National Committee is in process of establishment. Deputy Prime Minister consulted on 20 August 2007 by representatives of MOW attending the 11th SEAPAVAA Congress and the General Assembly in Phnom Penh, and on 14 September by Helen Jarvis.

PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

1. ASSESSEMENT OF RISK

Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage

Not acute, but nevertheless latent. Registration will assist raising the profile of the archive for its benefit in terms of awareness, potential financial and organizational support.

2. ASSESSEMENT OF PRESERVATION

Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage.

Current state and condition, and previous preservation action:

a) The original negatives are held at the site in the archives room in glass-fronted cabinets. They were cleaned and placed in acid-free sleeves and cardboard boxes in 1992 (see 3.3 for photographs) by the Photo Archive Group. The negatives are suffering from silver oxidation and at least some have the base deteriorating (vinegar syndrome). Air-conditioning may be functioning only during the day, so that it is estimated that part of the collection is at, or very close to the onset point for decomposition (Mick Newnham).

Prints made in 1979 by Heynowski and Scheumann Studios of East Germany are exhibited in glassed notice boards, in non-air-conditioned rooms. They are replaced by new prints as they deteriorate. The prints are in varied states, some look fine and others are very badly oxidized.

b) The original documents are sleeved in individual hanging files held in fireproof filing cabinets, mostly at the site and some selected files or held under secure conditions elsewhere pending the trials at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

The confessions were filmed under the direction of the Cornell University Library's John M. Echols Collection on Southeast Asia and the Department of Conservation and Preservation at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, from January 1991 to April 1993. 213 microfilm reels held in Cambodia and at Cornell University Olin Library.

The documentary collection is being re-filmed since 1998 by the Documentation Center of Cambodia. 410 microfilm reels are held in Cambodia and at Yale University Sterling Library.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

H.E. Mr CHEA SORPHORN
Secretary of State at the Office of the Council of Ministers

(Signature)..... (Date).....