

Cambodia
Web Resources and First Person Narratives

Web sources:

Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)

<http://www.d.dccam.org/Survivors/Index.htm>

http://www.d.dccam.org/Documentation_Center_of_Cambodia.htm

The Digital Archive of Cambodian Holocaust Survivors

<http://www.cybercambodia.com/dachs/stories.html>

Cambodia Tribunal Monitor

<http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/>

NIU SEASITE. Cambodian Recent History

<http://www.seasite.niu.edu/khmer/Ledgerwood/Contents.htm>

Ledgerwood Crossroads Lecture on The Khmer Rouge

http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/ledgerwood/khmer_rouge.htm

First Person Narratives:

Alive in the Killing Fields: Surviving the Khmer Rouge Genocide

Nawuth Keat and Martha Kendall, National Geographic Society (2009)

Behind the Darkness: Taking Responsibility or Acting Under Orders

Youth for Peace, Phnom Penh (2011).

Short interviews with people who served in the Khmer Rouge regime, from spies to soldiers, messengers, and security guards.

Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge

Laurence Picq (1989)

Bou Meng: A Survivor from Khmer Rouge Prison S-21

Huy Vannak, Documentation Center of Cambodia (2010)

A Cambodian Prison Portrait, One Year in the Khmer Rouge's S-21

by Vann Nath, English translation, White Lotus, 1 edition (1998)

Tuol Sleng used to be a high school but was made into a torture center. It will undoubtedly feature on your itinerary if you go to Phnom Penh. Many of the 14,000 faces scared to death will look into your eyes. One of the very few people who survived the S-21 security prison was Vann Nath. He has published his account of the year he spent in that a place of absolute horror.

Cambodian Witness: The Autobiography of Someth May

Someth May, Random House (1986)

Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields : Memoirs by Survivors

by Dith Pran, et al, Yale University Press (1997)

With the Khmer Rouge, the genocidal Communist political group that wreaked havoc in Cambodia in the early 1970s, again poised to overtake Cambodia, *Children* is a timely reminder of the country's recent bloody past. More than two dozen accounts of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror have been compiled by Dith Pran, whose own account of surviving Khmer Rouge "reeducation" and escaping to Thailand became the movie *The Killing Fields*. Children played a key role in Cambodia's genocidal endgame. They were to be the first generation of the "new" Cambodia and were subject to physical labor, violence, and forced separation from family. Most disturbing is the similarity of the accounts. *Ted Leventhal* (Booklist)

Crossing Three Wildernesses, A Memoir

by U Sam Oeur with Ken McCullough, Coffee House Press (2005)

From Publishers Weekly

Taking readers into the heart of Cambodian culture with this compelling litany of triumphs and terrors, poet Oeur (*Sacred Vows*) recalls his life as an adroit survivor. Growing up with his farming family in the Cambodian countryside, he had a bucolic boyhood, herding water buffalo away from rice paddies, before a 1961 scholarship took him to California State University. He attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop amid the 1960s unrest: "All the tumult that seemed to be tearing America apart, looked like real democracy in action to me." Back in Cambodia in 1968, he married, was elected to the Khmer Republic's National Assembly and became a delegate to the U.N. After Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge caused Cambodia to become a "synonym for insanity," in 1975, millions died from diseases, starvation and execution (the three titular wildernesses). Although Oeur evaded the "killing fields" by feigning illiteracy in six forced-labor camps, there were 23 deaths in his family during the Pol Pot regime. He returned to the U.S. in 1992 and now lives in Texas. This sensitive summary of his nomadic life resonates with passion, poignancy and self-insight.

Daughter of the Killing Fields

By Theary C. Seng, Fusion Press (2005)

The Elimination: A Survivor of the Khmer Rouge Confronts his past and the Commandant of the Killing Fields

By Rithy Panh with Christophe Battaille, Other Press (2012)

By the award winning film-maker Rithy Panh, this book tells his personal story of surviving the Khmer Rouge era interspersed with stories from his film making and his interview with convicted war criminal Duch, the commandant of the notorious S-21 torture and execution center.

Escaping the Khmer Rouge

By Chileng Pa with Carol A. Mortland, McFarland and Co. (2005)

Facing the Khmer Rouge: A Cambodian Journey

Ronnie Yimsut, Rutgers University Press (2011).

First They Killed My Father : A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers

by Loung Ung, HarperCollins (February 1, 2000)

Written in the present tense, *First They Killed My Father* will put you right in the midst of the action--action you'll wish had never happened. It's a tough read, but definitely a worthwhile one, and the author's personality and strength shine through on every page. Covering the years from 1975 to 1979, the story moves from the deaths of multiple family members to the forced separation of the survivors, leading ultimately to the reuniting of much of the family, followed by marriages and immigrations. The brutality seems unending--beatings, starvation, attempted rape, mental cruelty--and yet the narrator (a young girl) never stops fighting for escape and survival. Sad and courageous, her life and the lives of her young siblings provide quite a powerful example of how war can so deeply affect children--especially a war in

which they are trained to be an integral part of the armed forces. For anyone interested in Cambodia's recent history, this book shares a valuable personal view of events. --*Jill Lightner* (Amazon.com)

Golden Bones

Sichan Siv, Harper Collins (2008)

Hear Me Now: Tragedy in Cambodia

by Sophal Leng Stagg, et al, Mancorp Publishing (1996)

This is a true story of Sophal Leng Stagg. Sophal was nine years old when she and her family were forced to leave their home in Phnom Penh in April 1975, joining the multitude of Cambodians who were dragged through hell by the brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge. This is the story of Sophal recounting the unimaginable pain, suffering, starvation and disease that she miraculously endured. Sophal Leng, despite all odds, survived and is finally able to tell her story.

Heaven Becomes Hell: A Survivor's Story of Life Under the Khmer Rouge

by Ly Y, John S. Driscoll (Editor), Yale University Southeast Asia Studies (2000)

Ly Y and his wife survived; their first-born son, Prasat, age 18 months, did not. The child died during the forced march from Phnom Penh after their family and the city's inhabitants were driven out by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. The evacuees and hundreds of thousands of others ended up in labor camps where most perished. This is a rare, first-person account of four harrowing years, mostly tragic, sometimes touching, and sometimes even humorous.

In the Shadow of the Banyan Tree

Vaddey Ratner, Simon and Schuster (2012)

One of the only first person narratives written by a member of the Cambodian royal family.

Leaving the House of Ghosts: Cambodian Refugees in the American Midwest

by Sarah Streed, McFarland & Company (2002)

Survivors of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge now living in the Midwest tell their stories in this work. Many of them were children during that time, unable to comprehend exactly what was happening and why, but now able to reveal the trauma they experienced. Noeun Nor and Sinn Lok recollect being wrenched from their families and put into labor camps around the age of five. Prum Nath talks about her mother encouraging her to eat the last grains of her family's rice. Sokhary You remembers giving birth on a mountain without a doctor or hospital and using rusty scissors to cut the umbilical cord.

Leaving Year Zero: Stories of Surviving Pol Pot's Cambodia

by Richard Lunn, University of Western Australia Press (2004)

Lucky Child : A Daughter of Cambodia Reunites with the Sister She Left Behind

by Loung Ung, HarperCollins (2005)

Ung's autobiographical *First They Killed My Father*, (2000) chronicled her harrowing childhood under Pol Pot's genocidal regime, which claimed the lives of her mother, father, and two sisters. In an essential companion timed for release on the thirtieth anniversary of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge takeover, Ung unflinchingly continues her memoir with her arrival in Vermont alongside her sister-in-law and brother, who, able to "borrow enough gold to take only one of his siblings with him," chose his tough youngest sister as the "lucky child." Ung agonized over everyone she left behind, but especially regretted her 15-year separation from her last surviving sister, Chou. Here she tells their parallel life stories, effectively

interleaving her own narrative of an '80s, valley-girl adolescence (laced with posttraumatic episodes) with chapters about Chou's growth to adulthood amid threats of land mines and Khmer Rouge raids. By daringly (and remarkably successfully) assuming her sister's point of view, Ung brings third- and first-world disparities into discomfiting focus and gracefully dramatizes the metaphorical joining together of her haunted past with her current identity as a privileged Cambodian American. When the narratives fuse at the sisters' long-awaited reunion, their clasping of hands throws wide the floodgates to tamped-down memories--a cathartic release that readers will tearfully, gratefully share. *Jennifer Mattson, Copyright © American Library Association.*

The Murderous Revolution: Bunhaeng Ung's Life with Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea

Martin Stuart-Fox and Bunhaeng Ung, Bangkok: Tamarind Press (1986)

Unique in that it contains Bunhaeng Ung's detailed illustrations of life in Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia.

Music through the Dark: A Tale of Survival in Cambodia

Bree Lafreniere and Daran Kravanh, University of Hawaii Press (2000)

From Booklist

Lafreniere retells the story of Daran Kravanh, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge reign in Cambodia. Written in Daran's voice, with photographs and historical information added by Lafreniere, the book recounts the terrorism of the Khmer Rouge, and the political dogma that stripped Cambodians of their possessions, families, and lives. Daran was born into a musically talented family of nine children and a culture that cherished music. After his family was separated and Daran was under strict control of the Khmer Rouge, he found an accordion, an instrument he had loved since childhood. The Khmer Rouge allowed him to play with a group of captured musicians, soothing captors and captives alike with their music. Daran also adopted a spiritual outlook that enabled him to maintain his sanity and to assist others. He nearly gave up living when he learned about the death of his family, but again music saved him. This is a beautiful, poetically written story about the endurance of the human spirit and the sustaining and restorative powers of music. *Vanessa Bush Copyright © American Library Association.*

Never Fall Down: A Novel

Patricia McCormick with Arn Chorn-Pond, Brazer + Bray (2012)

On the Wings of a White Horse: A Cambodian Princess's Story of Surviving the Khmer Rouge Genocide

Oni Vitandham, Tate Publishing (2005)

Red Undertow: From Khmer Rouge's Cambodia to Freedom

Khieng Sieu Lim, Translated by Chester J. Qian, Mirror Books (2006)

This book provides the perspective of an ethnic Chinese born in China and initially sympathetic to the revolution – fascinating in that he was present at so many key events in DK history.

Reflections of a Khmer Soul

Navy Phim, Wheatmark (2007)

Written by a woman born in April 1975, this book explores the legacy of growing up in the US as a Cambodian American in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge.

Soul Survivors: Stories of Women and Children in Cambodia

by Carol Wagner, Creative Arts Book Company (2002)

Soul Survivors gives voice to the women and children who stayed in Cambodia after the genocide (1975-1979), when nearly two million people died from execution, starvation, or disease. It also includes the stories of two refugees who came to the US as orphans, returning as young adults to help their country. These engaging personal narratives reveal that hope and kindness survived the darkest period of Cambodia's recent history.

Stay Alive, My Son

by Pin Yathay, Touchstone; Reprint edition (1988)

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge guerillas filed into Phnom Penh, signaling the start of a reign of terror which would devastate an ancient culture and cause the deaths of over two million Cambodians in just three years. Astonishingly, Pin Yathay, a successful, highly educated professional, survived that terrible time. And he escaped "the killing fields," carrying with him the memory --- etched in his heart --- of the seventeen members of his family whose lives were lost. His stunning memoir will shock and transform all who read it.

The Stones Cry Out: A Cambodian Childhood, 1975-1980

by Molyda Szymusiak, et al, Indiana University Press (1999)

In 1975, Molyda Szymusiak (her adoptive name), the daughter of a high Cambodian official, was twelve years old and leading a relatively peaceful life in Phnom Penh. Suddenly, on April 17, Khmer Rouge radicals seized the capital and drove all its inhabitants into the countryside. The chaos that followed has been widely publicized, most notably in the movie *The Killing Fields*. Murderous brutality coupled with raging famine caused the death of more than two million people, nearly a third of the population. This powerful memoir documents the horror Cambodians experienced in daily life.

Survival in the Killing Fields

by Haing Ngor, Roger Warner, Carroll & Graf Publishers (2003)

Nothing has shaped my life as much as surviving the Pol Pot regime. I am a survivor of the Cambodian holocaust. That's who I am," says Haing Ngor. And in his memoir, *Survival in the Killing Fields*, he tells the gripping and frequently terrifying story of his term in the hell created by the communist Khmer Rouge. Like Dith Pran, the Cambodian doctor and interpreter whom Ngor played in an Oscar-winning performance in *The Killing Fields*, Ngor lived through the atrocities that the 1984 film portrayed. Ngor was a doctor by profession, and he experienced firsthand his country's wretched descent, under the Khmer Rouge, into senseless brutality, slavery, squalor, starvation, and disease--all of which are recounted in sometimes unimaginable horror in Ngor's poignant memoir. Since the original publication of this searing personal chronicle, Haing Ngor's life has ended with his murder, which has never been satisfactorily solved. In an epilogue written especially for this new edition, Ngor's coauthor, Roger Warner, offers a glimpse into this complex, enigmatic man's last years--years that he lived "like his country: scarred, and incapable of fully healing."

Survivor: The Triumph of an Ordinary Man in the Khmer Rouge Genocide

by Chum Mey, Documentation Center of Cambodia (2012).

The Tears of my Soul

Sokreaksa S. Himm, Monarch Books (2006).

To Destroy You Is No Loss: The Odyssey of a Cambodian Family

by JoAn D. Criddle, (Thida Mam) East/West Bridge; Updated edition (1989)

From Publishers Weekly

With the Khmer Rouge takeover in 1975, 15-year-old Teeda and 15 members of her upper-class family were among millions driven from Phnom Penh into the countryside. Now living in America, Teeda here recounts a terrifying, slavlike existence. PW called this "a poignant testament to the human will to survive." *Copyright 1989*

When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge

by Chanrithy Him, W. W. Norton & Company (2000)

From Publishers Weekly

Born in Cambodia in 1965, Him lived from the age of three with the fear of war overflowing from neighboring Vietnam and suffered through the U.S.'s bombing of her native land. However, thanks to her loving and open-minded family, her outlook remained positive--until 1975, when the Khmer Rouge seized control and turned her world upside down. (According to a Cambodian proverb, "broken glass floats" when the world is unbalanced.) Armed with a nearly photographic memory, Him forcefully expresses the utter horror of life under the revolutionary regime. Evacuated from Phnom Penh and and shunted from villages to labor camps, her close-knit family of 12 was decimated: both parents were murdered, and five of her siblings starved or died from treatable illnesses. Meanwhile, the culture of local communities was destroyed and replaced with the simple desire to survive famine. Yet for all their suffering throughout these years, the surviving Hims remained loyal to one another, saving any extra food they collected and making dangerous trips to other camps to share it with weaker family members. Friendships were also formed at great risk, and small favors were exchanged. But by the end of the book, Him finds herself surprised when she encounters remnants of humanity in people, for she has learned to live by mistrusting, by relying on her own wits and strength. When the Khmer Rouge were overthrown, Him moved to a refugee camp in Thailand. Today she works with the Khmer Adolescent Project in Oregon. This beautifully told story is an important addition to the literature of this period. *Copyright 2000*