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THE CAMBODIAN HOLOCAUST

Yale project posts photos, maps, other evidence on the Internet, spurring call for another Nuremberg

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Whey stare straight ahead from black-and-white photographs — young girls, elderly men, peasant farmers — taken moments after their arrest by the Cambodian Communist army, the Khmer Rouge.

There are thousands of such pictures, of men, women, boys and girls, many of them anonymous, many of them forgotten. All of them dead.

Researchers at Yale University have painstakingly catalogued these photographs, along with mountains of documents from the brutal Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, and are using the Internet to make them public.

Last month, they began to release the most comprehensive collection of data ever gathered on the Khmer Rouge dictatorship and its casualties. There are photographs of more than 5,000 victims, and pictures and maps showing the sites of prisons and thousands of mass graves. The project has compiled more than 10,000 photographic images alone.

The Web site — <http://www.yale.edu/cgp> — is updated constantly with more pieces of



Clara Peisson / The Hartford Courant

Ben Kiernan, left, and Craig Etcheson run the Cambodian Genocide Program at Yale University. Their Internet site offers thousands of photographs (including those at top) and other evidence showing the extent and horror of the mass murders of 1975-79, including those at top.

evidence from the genocidal war. Nearly 1.7 million people are believed to have been murdered during the regime's four-

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A woman's tale of terror

When the Cambodian Genocide Program's Web site carries this account by Yoko Naito, a 47-year-old Japanese national who was in Cambodia with her husband and their two sons when Pol Pot took over. Her husband was a Cambodian diplomat in the government of Lon Nol. The account is contained in a document dated August 1979 and available at the bibliographic database at the Web site, search for record B00002.

On the night of April 17th, 1975, many rockets were fired onto the city, and nobody could sleep. At about 5 a.m., there was a lull in the shelling, and we took breakfast. Nothing was heard over the radio. . . . Pol heard of the tanks flying white flags into the city. The people lined the streets clapping their hands. We told one another: At last, the war is over.

We were moved to tears spontaneously at this historic moment. We cooked our meal early, and our lunch was over by 11 a.m. In the afternoon, a bus loaded with helmeted armed soldiers drove up to our street. . . . Pol Pot's soldiers, using loudspeakers, ordered the people to get out and fired at the houses having closed doors. For three consecutive days, the people had to register their names. . . and were told to leave the city immediately. They brought with them only a few clothes as they thought they would soon return. My husband told me to hide my rings, arm bracelets or the earrings for fear of danger during the trip. I put all my valuables into a wardrobe and brought with me only a few

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Public radio has been a disap-

paper... to get down very easily... the main... bulletproof vest. This will not ex-



■ A former high school in Phnom Penh became a prison run by the Khmer Rouge secret police. Today it is a museum dedicated to the history of the genocide.

Ben Kiernan

A new Web site lays bare the killing fields of Cambodia

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year reign, which ended in 1979. Their bodies were dumped in a countrywide system of mass graves known as the killing fields.

"This was one of the biggest crimes of the 20th century," said Ben Kiernan, director of Yale's Cambodian Genocide Program. The database was developed in collaboration with a team led by Helen Jarvis at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.

The program hopes to be a catalyst for justice for the victims and a place where refugees begin to learn the fate of loved ones.

"The Cambodian Genocide project will have a profound effect on the survivors, who can now ask the questions that have haunted them for decades," said Mary Scully, director of Khmer Health Advocates, a West Hartford organization that helps refugees with medical care and resettlement. "The project's use of the Internet means that survivors can safely search for answers and can also provide their knowledge of events, identify victims and offer testimony."

Several databases

By browsing the Web site, you can find information from several databases.

There are photographs and maps detailing the system of mass graves. One database allows the user to plug in information and get a victim's arrest photograph. Much of the information in the initial release onto the Internet focuses on "S-21," also known as Tuol Sleng Prison, headquarters of the Khmer Rouge secret police.

Another database directs users to books and articles on Cambodia and the regime of Pol Pot, the most notorious of the Khmer Rouge leaders.

One of the project's biggest discoveries was the secret police archives, which had never before been publicly examined. The day after the Web site went on-line Jan. 27, the first prime minister of the Cambodian government called for

an international criminal tribunal for the top Khmer Rouge leaders.

Kiernan, a professor of Southeast Asian history who has written several books on the Pol Pot regime, says the databases can be used by those still seeking to identify missing family members and by scholars studying the region. Also, the database could prove invaluable in the event that the Khmer Rouge leaders are brought to trial, as was done to Nazi leaders at Nuremberg after World War II.

"If there is a tribunal, it will be possible to identify particular crimi-

nals and victims," Kiernan said.

Cambodians investigate

Last year, the project established a documentation center in Cambodia, which trains Cambodians in research and investigative techniques.

Within the maze of documents, photographs and prison records, some in English and others in Khmer, lie clues to the fate of some victims. For example, an original document from a 1979 "People's Revolutionary Tribunal" includes

the testimony of Yasuko Naito, a 47-year-old Japanese national who was married to a Cambodian diplomat. She describes how she was tortured and testifies that her husband and children were killed.

"Our main task has been to try to figure out who did what to whom, and we believe we have succeeded in that much more than we would have thought we would have been able to," said Yale researcher Craig Etcheson, who has worked closely with Kiernan on the program.

The extensive records of the Khmer Rouge secret police allowed

researchers to learn the jobs of various officials.

"So we know in great detail who was responsible for executions and torture and interrogation," Etcheson said. "They also kept detailed records of many of their victims. Some of the important prisoners were required to produce a confession of their 'crimes.' Since they hadn't committed a crime, and didn't know what they were supposed to confess to, many were subjected to a long process of torture until they gave one."

In 1994, the U.S. State Department gave the program \$500,000 and authorized it to begin documenting the events in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. The program also has received \$160,000 from the Dutch government. A \$10,000 grant from the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies enabled the program to create maps of the mass graves, often using satellite technology. The program also recently received a \$250,000 grant from the Henry Luke Foundation to continue research.

Still killing

The Khmer Rouge were driven from power by the Vietnamese army in 1979, but they continue to wage a guerrilla war against the government from bases in Thailand. "They are still killing," Etcheson said.

During the "three years, eight months and 20 days" of the Khmer Rouge regime, almost 20 percent of the population was killed, and a half-million others fled the country. About 100,000 refugees have settled in the United States, and about 2,000 are living in Connecticut.

Scully, of Khmer Health Advocates, said she hoped the project could someday lead to restitution for victims. Many refugees in this country face an uncertain future as welfare reform strips benefits from legal immigrants, she added.

A crime with the scale and scope of Cambodia's killing fields "justifies continued attention and exhaustive research," Kiernan said, "and, if possible, an accounting for what happened."

Atrocities included man nailed to door

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things and my identity card.

The soldiers urged us to hurry up. They said the enemy was going to bomb the city. At that moment, in front of a [jndecipherable] smith's shop opposite my house, I saw a man was tied up to a big iron gate. He was screaming desperately. In reply to my question, he said he had refused to go because he wanted to wait for the return of his wife, and the soldiers said they put him in chains so that he would stay there for good.

We went along Highway 7; on our way, we met many patients who were driven out from . . . hospitals. There were patients who had been operated on only a few hours before, whose cuts were still bleeding, with swarms of flies around them. This sight made me think of a picture of hell I had seen somewhere. The naked body of a man, we saw a door, with his chest inscription reading "enemy." Pol Pot soldiers standing nearby laughed and told passers-by to have a good [missing word] at the victim. We felt anxious about our future.

After spending a night outdoors, we were urged to walk. We came to a brick kiln where there was a terrible stench. The next morning, some people found a number of corpses in the kiln. The dead bodies had

uniforms of the Lon Nol regime. . . . My oldest son immediately burnt his new khaki trousers.

Along the way, the refugees spent much time outdoors. Rain soaked them, but they could not change from their wet clothes. Naito's eldest son was exhausted and took ill. He died of inflammation of the intestines. She buried him and carved his name on a nearby tree trunk. The refugees kept moving; food was running low. They settled for a time in a small village.

Every day, each family, big or small, was given three tinfuls of rice a day and a spoonful of salt. Here, we had to wake up at 4 a.m. to do all kinds of farm work - weeding, ploughing, transplanting. . . . On July 31, 1975, my second son fell from [a tree] he had climbed to get leaves for making a roof. I asked the village chairman to take him to the nearest hospital (as they did to a soldier 20 days before), but he refused. I went to get some herbal medicine and boiled it for him to take, but the herb was not effective. Two weeks later, my son died.

She and her husband were moved from place to place. Her husband's health was declining.

My husband was made to transport trunks. Three days later, he returned with a long face. I asked to do the job instead of him. Four days later, the ulcer on my leg broke, and

I experienced an unbearable pain. Nevertheless, I had to go on working until the wound on my foot festered. I got a four-month leave.

Later, my husband was sick with malaria. He also suffered from diarrhea and malnutrition. His body smelled, and he died on Dec. 19, 1975. I became a widow. Six months later, I had to leave the place and my husband's grave for a new village.

Villagers took pity on her and hid her in a Kampuchean family, fearing she would be killed because she was Japanese. She did farm work and served as a cook. Time passed. On June 12, 1977, the village was cordoned off.

On that day our village was plagued with the presence of black-clad men. We were followed everywhere we went, even while bathing. Everybody was as silent as a church. The village was a downfall at night, and nobody could have a wink of sleep. On the next morning, the Pol Pot soldiers came, returning the hoes, spades and baskets they had borrowed from us. Traces of blood and human hair on these tools made us shudder.

She lived in constant fear until Jan. 17, 1979. That's the day she heard the news over the radio that Phnom Penh had been liberated.