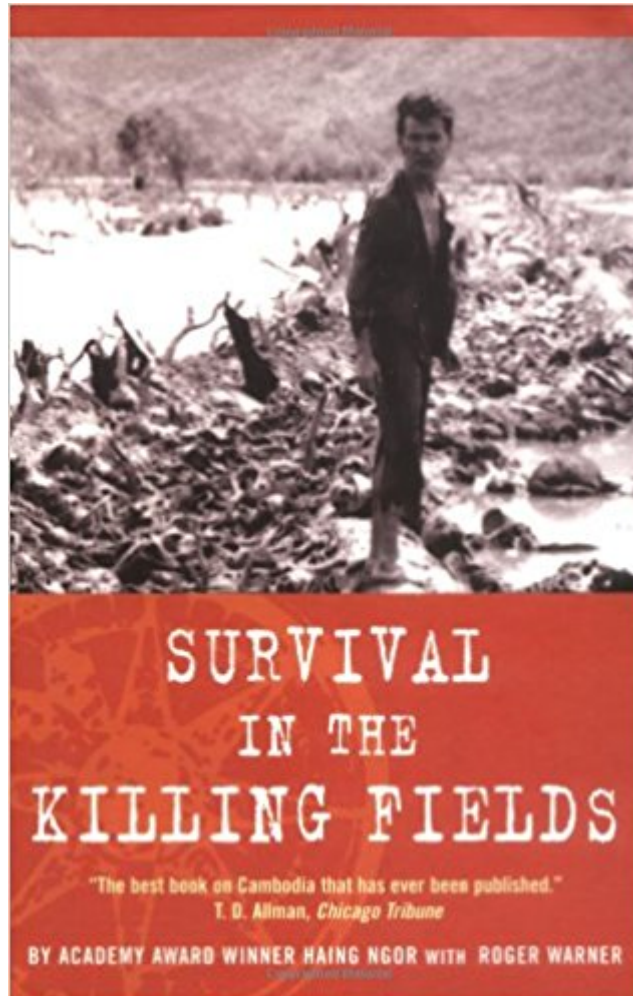




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# Survival In The Killing Fields



## Synopsis

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. Like Pran, too, 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."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For his role as the journalist Dith Pran in the film *The Killing Fields* (1984), Haing Ngor, a Cambodian doctor with no acting experience, won an Oscar®. In playing the part, he drew on his own tormented life as a war slave during the Cambodian civil war, which makes the agony seen in the film seem mild. Funded and fueled by Chinese Communists, the Cambodian Khmer Rouge were a gang of brutal thugs who dispossessed, robbed, raped, tortured, and murdered so many of their

countrymen/women that somewhere between a third and a half of the population was decimated. Ngor himself was tortured three times and lost a finger for calling his wife "sweet." Before each of the three tortures, the listener is warned that it will be violent, but this highly compelling account has few equals among stories of cruel, sadistic oppression masquerading as ideology and should be heard in full by anyone who cares about freedom. Unlike most programs written with a collaborator, the narrative voice here is distinct and wholly convincing, and British actor Crawford Logan's authoritative reading is terrifyingly real. This is a very demanding program, but it is of such high merit and rare importance that it deserves a place in every collection. Highly recommended. Peter Josyph, New York Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"The best book on Cambodia that has ever been published."

This book is a personal account, a biography, not like the majority of books that I like - I usually read books more on the general war history and politics, where the main characters are not the common people. However I found this common men history extremely interesting, for the detailed way which he tells us how life was under the Khmer Rouge regime (too much detailed for the sensible, may I add). I found everything very truthful, as I have read in other sources, the bad things that he says happened to him and other cambodians are not any exagereted at all, and he does not try to be a "hero" - in various parts he admits his moments of cowardice, dishonesty and feelings of vegeance (every human being has their flaws, I find the accounts that dont expose this unreallistic). A high recommended book on one of the worse social experiments and war tragedies of all time, the cambodian holocaust, and altough he (rightly) blames the khmer communists for what happens, we must not forget that a lot of other ideologies, including our western powers, have done and are doing right now the same the khmer rouge did, for example Syria.

Having became engrossed in the history of "the killing fields" during a recent trip to Cambodia, I started reading books I could order online while traveling. Of the three that I read, which featured comparably grim survival stories, this was the most vivid, compounded by the incredible irony that this author -- a medical doctor -- went on to reach Los Angeles and win an Academy Award for portraying Dith Pran in THE KILLING FIELDS. It is no wonder, given personal experiences that the author vividly describes in this book, that the role of a man who also lived through and survived the horrors of the Khmer Rouge years was played so convincingly.

If you are interested in reading the memoir of someone who survived the reign of the Khmer Rouge, then I can't recommend any other book higher. I have read two other books from survivors, but Ngor's book was by far my favourite. What sets Ngor's book apart from the others that I have read is that Ngor was an adult when the Khmer Rouge took over. His memories are very lucid, and he fully comprehends what is going on around him. He watches his young wife die in his arms, those close to him betray, and everyone around him suffer. There are no high points throughout the entire odyssey. Ngor brings you to the senseless and incomprehensible suffering that pervades every aspect of life under the Khmer Rouge. One element I particularly enjoyed about Ngor's book is the extensive descriptions of Cambodian culture, attitudes and behaviour. Cambodian society (from what I can gather from what I have hitherto studied) is highly formal, with a rather complex series of formality set up for interaction with others and a rather reserved character in regards to expression of feelings. The most important of which in this context being "kum," which is a sort of bitterness and longing for revenge, that becomes evident in a lot of what is happening. You will leave this read with a feeling of not only being inside of what is happening, but also for the actual mechanisms guiding behaviour. This is, however, not a pleasant read in the least. The descriptions of the atrocities are beyond anything that I was expecting, and for that reason, I would seriously warn others that this is not for the faint at heart. Luckily, Ngor offers notes at the beginning of graphic chapters so that one can skip over them. You will lose sleep, and I can guarantee you that it makes any of those goofy horror movies like "Hostel" and "Turistas" look like a day at Disneyland. This horror is real, and not far in the past. Being that my normal area of study is Russian history, I have read a lot about the horrors of communism and tyranny, but nothing from the basements of Lyubyanka Prison or Mao Tse Tung's Cultural Revolution comes close to the abominable atrocities of Pol Pot's Cambodia. Ngor also describes his role in the classic movie, *The Killing Fields*, as well as his integration of life in America. An afterword by friend Roger Warner ends the book on a particularly haunting and sad note, but rightfully so, none the less. There are a lot of truly excellent books available by survivors of the Killing Fields, and this is the quintessential starting point for those who wish to learn more.

I read this book en route to Cambodia. I was in college when the genocide took place and had been familiar with the facts. This book tells the story from a personal point of view, of a doctor who lived a good life in Phnom Penh and lost everything. His detailed, day-to-day account of survival is haunting and stark. He does not paint himself as a saint, but rather as a normal person, flawed and normal,

who is swept up into Pol Pot's relentless drive to kill all intellectuals. It's not great prose, but it is direct, hard hitting and honest. I felt I had a very different perspective when I visited Cambodia. His story is remarkable and a must-read for anyone interested in this time period, in genocide or in Cambodia.

Amazing book. It will change you, you will realise that any problems you have in your life are trivial. The horrors wrought by communism are spelled out on every page...brutal, dehumanizing, and terrifying

Excellent book full of surprises. The author is quite an amazing guy. Of course, this book is also full of tragedy, so be warned... it is sad. Anyway, can't really say anything else others haven't except that I agree that it's well-written and I do recommend it. What I like about it is that beside the great story it's also a history lesson. Those are my favorite books. It's informative in an interesting way.

As difficult as it is and horrifying as the book is, I am happy it was written and it helps me to understand what happened and why. As an American I was sad to see our involvement early on in the deaths of so many innocent people. It leaves me thirsty for more knowledge on the subject matter and am driven to read more. How sad that this was the largest genocidal act since WW2, and hardly anyone knows it. Human suffering and strength revealed in the lives and deaths of a great percentage of an entire race of people. Deserves to be read and spoken of.

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