

A Mekong odyssey

The hydroelectric construction boom along the Mekong is well documented. So without knowing much more than that there was lots of documentation I went off to Kampot where nearby one of these phenomenal [Space Odyssey](#)-esque slabs of concrete is being erected.

On the bus to Kampot a man told me that part of the construction site had collapsed due to the poor weather that had been occurring throughout the past week. Apparently it had been on the news. "Damn" I thought, an opportunity for a swim at the base of the dam wall was looking slim.

Flowing alongside Kampot is the Kamchay tributary to the Mekong. Further North is the Bokor National Park which will be largely flooded as a result of the [Kamchay dam's](#) reservoir. Sinohydro, the company that built the phenomenally large Three Gorges Dam is responsible for the construction of the Kamchay project. It's one of several large dams that Chinese state owned energy companies are constructing along the lower reaches of the Mekong in Cambodia and Laos.

"Onward" I said to a young chap on a scooter at 5am and soon we were going across the newly constructed bridge arching over the Kamchay and along the long, newly constructed road to the entrance of the dam site. Passing the barbed wire and moat encircling the ominous Sinohydro administration building, which would have fulfilled the deepest fantasies of masochistic NGO activists, we eventually arrived at a lowered boom gate prohibiting us from going further. The unkempt Khmer guard at the boom gate became animated and sternly gestured that we turn around.

Along the way back to Kampot I took some photos of the powerful current the dam is meant to take advantage of. Nearby there were farmers beginning to plow their paddies. Standing on the eroding river bank, there wasn't much preventing me from falling in and going for that swim.



I wonder what sort of conversation the farmers along the Kamchay and the farmers who [recently died](#) at the Xiaowan dam in Yunnan could have had.