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REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRIES  
AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF  
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE

Geographical Names of the Kingdom of Cambodia

(Submitted by Cambodia)\*\*

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# Geographical Names of the Kingdom of Cambodia'

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## **Abstract:**

This report describes the geographical names and related activities that has been undertaken in the Kingdom of Cambodia since 1991. It includes various National Gazetteers, Geographical Coding System, National Committee on Geographical Names (NCGN), and Romanized System. The approved Geographical Names of all the Provinces and Municipalities by NCGN, the Transliteration System for Cambodian BGN/PCGN 1962 System, and Transcription System for Khmer are also covered.

## **Background:**

The Geography Department (GD) was established in 1991 under the Council of Ministers, and in year 1998, GD transferred to newly established Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction. One of its principal mandate is to produce, manage and publish topographic maps as well as geographic based data for the Kingdom of Cambodia. In 1994, using the Topographic map at scale of 1 : 50 000 produced by US Army in 1960-70s, GD started to collect and update administrative data, which included names and location of villages, communes, districts, provinces, municipalities, and administrative boundaries. In 1995, GD released the first provisional Gazetteer (at village level) of Cambodia in Khmer and Romanized.

## **National Gazetteer**

At present, in Cambodia there are three existing Gazetteer:

- ❖ The second edition Gazetteer of Cambodia which was published by the US Defense Mapping Agency (US DMA) in 1971. It was approved by United States Board of Geographic Names. Only Romanized names were shown.
- ❖ Based on the above Gazetteer, in early 1995, the Geography Department has produced the first edition of its Gazetteer (villages' names). It was a provisional version. Both Khmer and Romanized were shown for all administrative units (Provinces, Districts, Communes and Villages). The Romanized system used in this edition is similar to US DMA published in 1971.
- ❖ In 1996, GD released second edition of its Gazetteer. Generally, the Khmer system and its content were not much changes. However, the Romanized system was simplified by removing all of accent marks (see annex 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Paper to be presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the United Nations on the Geographical Names, date 27 august-05 September 2002, Berlin Germany.

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Till to date, none of these three editions was officially approved by Cambodia. However, the second edition Gazetteer by GD is being widely used by many organizations in Cambodia including the National Census 1998, the 1:100,000 topographical maps published in 2000, etc.

## **The Geographical Coding System (GCS)**

During the establishment and compiling Gazetteer, Geography Department developed a national standard geographical coding system representing of all villages, communes, districts, provinces, and municipalities. The system was designed mainly for administrative division: 2 digits for province, 4 digits for district, 6 digits for commune and 8 digits for village. For example, **17030101** it means: 17 for province of Siemreap, 1703 for District of Banteay Srei (Third district of Siemreap province), 170301 for Commune of Khnar Sanday (first commune of Banteay Srey district) and 17030101 for Village: Banteay Srei. While having difficulties using difference Romanized names from one organization to another, the Geographical Coding System was widely accepted as the standard for data exchange between the major relational database systems, standard coding for all geographical information systems (GIS) data, standard for database coding system, etc. The GCS is freely distributed to all concern organizations. With the changes of Geographical Administrative Information (new provinces, districts, communes, or villages), the Geography Department is updating GCS and keep all concerned organizations up to date as well.

### 4. National Committee on Geographical Name (NCGN)

Toward the National Standardization of Geographical Names, in August 2000, the National Committee on Geographical Names was established . The members of NCGN in which includes representative from:

1	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction	Chairman
2	Ministry of Interior	Vice-Chairman
3	Ministry of Public works and Transport	Member
4	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	Member
5	Ministry of Agriculture, forestry, wildlife and fishery	Member
6	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International cooperation	Member
7	Ministry of Justice	Member
8	Ministry of Religion	Member
9	Ministry of Tourism	Member
10	Office of Council of Ministers	Member
11	Ministry of Culture and Fine Art	Member
12	Royal Academy of Cambodia	Member

Main tasks of NCGN are:

- To review all documentations and histories related to geographical nameç in Cambodia
- To conduct research and study on geographical nameç in meaning and writing in Khmer and translate to Romanized baçed on Khmer Grammar
- To review and approve those Romanized names in a unique system with the international standard
- To diçtribute the approved geographical names and make permanent correction.

Till to date, NCGN officially approved geographical names of 24 Provinces and Municipalities, these are:

Cod e	Name in Khmer	Name in Romanized	Code	Name in Khmer	Name in Romanized
1	bnPaymanC <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> y	Banteay Meanchey	13	RBHvihar	Preah Vihear
2	)at;dMbg	Battambang	14	éRBEvç	Prey Veng
3	kMBg;cam	Kampong Cham	15	eBaFi_sa	Pursat
4	kMBg;qñaMg	Kampong Chhnang	16	rtnKIrI	Ratanak Kiri
5	kMBg;s<W	Kampong Speu	17	esomrab	Siemreap
6	kMBg;FM	Kampong Thom	18	RkugRBHsIhnu	Sihanoukville
7	kMBt	Kampot	19	sPwgERtg	Stung Treng
8	kNpal	Kandal	20	sVayerog	Svay Rieng
9	ekaHkug	Koh Kong	21	taEkv	Takeo
10	RkecH	Kartié	22	]tprmanC <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> y	Oddar Meanchey
11	mNĐIKIr1	Mondul Kiri	23	RkugEkb	Kep
12	PñMeBj	Phnom Penh	24	Rkugéb:lin	Pailin

## Romanized System

In practices, there are several systems to convert from Khmer names to Latin. Following are the Romanized Systems have been used Cambodia:

1. The system prepared by US Board on Geographic Names and British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (called BGN/PCGN system) in 1962, the last modification was in 1972 (Romanization systems and Roman-script spelling conventions, publish by the Defense Mapping Agency, 1994). This system was used in the topographic map at scale of 1:50,000 publish by US DMA in decade of 60 and 70. Those maps now are out of date, but still using in Cambodia. ( See **annex1**)

2. The system prepared by GD in 1994. This system based on BGN/PCGN 1962 system with few modifications. (See **annex2**).

3. After publication of first edition of Gazetteer, which was used the system 1994, users have provided comments and suggestions for improvements. A new Romanized system has been developed and designed by the GD in 1995, which accent mark was not used. This system is based on the system used by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service of the U.S. Government. The last system modification was in 1997. ( See **annex3**)

## Conclusion

The interruption of survey and mapping activities by the prolong of civil wars in Cambodia was significantly impact on the development and Standardization of Cambodian Geographical Names. Since 1994, GD has been working hard toward for adoption of one unique Romanized system for Khmer.

However, we were surprised with the UN recommendation of Romanize System for Khmer by Mr. Pierre Planques, Chairman of the Francophone Division of UNGEGN, as stated in his letter dated of 19/06/01. To my experiences, it would be very helpful if allowing Cambodian to review and study on the right system that allowing them to writing Khmer names into Romanized without having much complication. In reality, it is very difficult to force Cambodian to write by using the UN recommendation's system, because most users do not like to use the system with accent mark, or they have not pay much attention on the importance of toponymy.

Therefore, we would like to request for your technical support by providing us with the experiences that have been conducted elsewhere in which would be very helpful for NCGN's member to use these experiences to accelerate their research, development and standardization of Cambodian Geographical Names.

The supports would be in term of providing Technical Assistance (TA), conducting seminar or training courses in toponymy, etc.

Annex 1

TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM FOR CAMBODIAN  
BGN/PCGN 1962 System

Vowels

Independent	Dependent	ǣ-Series	ō-Series
	x		
	x <sup>h</sup>		ea
ខ្មែរ	x̄		ī
ខ្មែរ	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	eī	ī
	x̄ <sup>o</sup>	ōē	ōē
	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	œ	œ
	x̄ <sup>i</sup>	ō	ū
	x̄ <sup>u</sup>	o	u
	x̄ <sup>o</sup>	uō	uō
	x̄ <sup>o</sup>	œu	eu
	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	œī	œā
	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	iē	iē
	x̄	ē	é
ខ្មែរ	x̄	ē	ê
ខ្មែរ	x̄	œī	ey
ខ្មែរ	x̄	œō	oū
ខ្មែរ	x̄	œu	ōu
	x̄ <sup>o</sup>	om	ūm
	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	ām	um
	x̄ <sup>h</sup>	ām	ōām
	x̄:	āh	eāh
	x̄ <sup>o</sup> :	ōh	ōh
	x̄:	éh	éh
	x̄ <sup>o</sup> :	œh	ōh
	x̄ <sup>h</sup> :	āng	eāng

**TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM FOR KHMER**  
(Prepared by Geographic Department, 1995. Last inodification 1997)

<u>VOWELS</u>				<u>CONSO VANTS</u>				
Independent	Dependent	A-serie:	O-serie:		A-serie:		O-seriez	
		a	o		k	...	k	
		a	ea		kh		kh	
	e		e	i		ch		ng
	ei		ei	i		chh	<b>II</b>	ch
		oe	ue		d	∴	chh	
		eu	ueu		th		nh	
	o		o	u		n		d
	ou		ou	u		t		th
		uo	uo		th		t	
		aeu	eu		b		th	
		oea	oea		ph		n	
		ie	ie		s		P	
		e	e		h		ph	
	ae		ae	eae	...	l		m
	ai		ai	ey		a		Y
	ao		ao	ou				r
	au		au	ov				l
	ov		om	um				v
	rue		a m	um				
	rueu		a m	oam				
	lue		ah	eah				

□	ueu	□□□	eh	eh
		□□	oh	uh
		□□→□	aoh	uoh
		□→:□	ang	eang
		□□	ak	eak
		□□□	eh	is

**Note :**

1. Symbol (□) represents any consonants.

2. The symbol (□) occurs only in the combination (□□□). It is transcribed as shown below :

□□□□	oa	oa
□□□	ang	eang
□□□	ak	eak
□□□	ai	ey

It is disregarded in transcription; except (□→□□) that will be transcribed as (□□).

of the syllable. In word-initial position before a vowel letter, it is Romanized by the first vowel.