THE LAND AND MARITIME AREAS OF CAMBODIA
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The information and data that follow are based on official documents in the aftermath of the independence of Cambodia from French in 1953, in regard to the transfer of territory of French protectorate to Cambodia, land and sea areas. The Gneva Accords of 1954 pledges to guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia.

Under the leadership and request of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, from 1965 to 1969, many foreign countries recognized and respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia in her existing borders from French. The Cambodian People understand their right to protect and defend the French legacy that was transferred to all Khmers.

I. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: The Kingdom of Cambodia is located in Southeastern Asia, and bordered by the Gulf of Thailand, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.

Geographical coordinates: 13 00 N / 105 00 E, the center of the country.
II. **THE LAND BOUNDARIES:** In practice, boundaries (or borders) are very important for **INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, and TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY** for Cambodia and all countries. One can say that “no border is no country.” As a matter of facts, a territory is an area that is administratively limited by boundaries or borders. Now, boundaries can be categorized as “natural borders and man made borders.

1. **The Natural Boundaries.** There are two kinds of natural boundaries: **Watershed** and **Thalweg.** The two kinds are usually adopted to establish boundaries in many countries.

1.1. **The watershed (line)** is a dividing line along the highest points of continental area. The imaginary boundary line between Cambodia and Thailand are found in the chains of Dangrek and that of Cardammom Mountain.

The watershed line along the Dangrek Range and the Chain of Cardammom have been adopted, and internationally recognized as boundary between Cambodia and Siam (Thailand) since the French Protectorate era. The boundaries were surveyed and drawn by the Franco-Siamese Commission based on the Convention of February 13, 1904 (in the eastern section of the Dangrek Range), and confirmed by the Franco-Siamese Treaty of March 23rd, 1907 and its protocol of delimitation.

According to the term of the said Treaty, the boundary line (frontier) follows the watershed line of the **Chain of Cardammom (Phnom Kravanh)**, in southwestern part of Cambodia, then cross the flood plain west of Tonle Sap, and continues its way to the western section of the Dangrek Range in Bac Roneas. Then the boundary follows the watershed of the Dangrek Range eastward to meet the eastern section of the Danrek Range, in the vicinity of Preah Vihear Temple.

The above configuration is similar to that of the Dangrek Range, north of the country, and the Chain of Cardammon Mountain (Phnom Kravanh) to southwest; whereas the mountainous area of Kantuy Neak, in the northeastern area in the province of Rattanak Kiri.
1.2. **The Thalweg** is another imaginary boundary line along the lowest waterway of the river bed. The Thalweg in Tonle Ropouv River has been adopted by the French protectorate, as a boundary between Cambodia and Laos, in the provinces of Preah Vihear/Stung Treng (Cambodia) and the province of Champapasak (Laos).

![Diagram](image)

2. **Man Made Boundaries.** There are different structures established by men added to natural boundaries.

2.1. **Canal** is dug in the ground serving as waterway to divert water for irrigation purpose. In practice, it can also be used as boundary along the Thalweg in it. Many countries use Thalweg boundary. However, the canal of Vinh Te itself (in Takeo province) is not used as boundary between Cambodia and Vietnam. According to Sarin Chhak’s book on border (LES FRONTIERES DU CAMBODGE), the Thalweg that runs in the Vinh Te Canal is not taken as boundary between Cambodia and Vietnam. For the time being, a new canal runs in parallel with Vinh Te Canal.

2.2. **Road or Dike** is an earthen embankment raised along the water stream to prevent flood. It can also be used as boundary.

2.3 **Road and telephone poles** beyond the canal of Vinh Te are used as boundary in the area between Kompong Trach (Kompot/Cambodia) and Hatien (Vietnam).

2.4 Modern boundadary is established by new method of measurement of distance, using new machines in metric system (meter, kilometer), or English system (foot, yard, mile). Another important development is to find direction, using machine to measure angles, horizontally and vertically, in **degree or grad** (grade).

III. **THE LENGTH OF LAND BOUNDARY SECTION:** The boundary or border is a very important element to separate land in different parcel for individual property, public
and administrative domain. For a country, border plays an important role in politics, economic, taxes, and other governmental purposes.

Since the independence from France, Cambodia has a total length of land boundary of 2,573 km, adjacent with three neighboring countries:

1. **Cambodia-Laos Border of 541 km** long, to the north of Cambodia. This section of boundary was established by Orders of Governor General of Indochina in the years 1901, 1903, and 1905. Made from wood, no boundary post is found. Border verification on delimitation and demarcation are executed by Cambodia-Lao Mixed Commission.

2. **Cambodia-Thailand Border of 804 km** long, to the west, northwest, and north. The section of the border were established by the Franco-Siamese Convention of February 13th, 1904, and the Franco-Siamese Treaty of March 23rd, 1907. The 123 wooden-border posts were replaced by cement in the years 1918 and 1919. There are disputes between Khmer and Thai (starting in 2008) regarding Preah Vihear’s vicinity, Prasat Tamoan’s vicinity, and others.

3. **Cambodia-Vietnam Border of 1,228km** long, starting in northeast, to east, and southeast. In this section, between Cambodia-Vietnam, the boundaries was successively established and modified many times by the decisions and orders of Governor General of French Indochina (headquartered in Hanoi), from the years 1870, 1873, 1914, 1935 and 1942. Under the colonial period, the whole section of the boundary constitutes an “administrative boundary.”

Since the independence, the border was marked with 124 border posts made from cement. The demarcation has been proceeded since 1987, using the bilateral treaty and agreement signed with Vietnam, and many problems have not been solved by lack of transparency.

IV. **THE MARITIME BOUNDARIES:**

The maritime area of Cambodia is about 95,000 km², which is technically called, “continental shelf.” As the area of continental shelf is surround by borders or boundaries, we need to know the legal bases that the delimitation and demarcation of the boundaries depends upon.

Our research shows that the delimitation and demarcation were reviewed and established Mr. Sean Pengse, former Minister of Industry and Mines in the 1970’s, and his technical team in 1972.

As Mr. Sean Pengse commits to solving the borders problem, he has been nominated president to lead the Cambodia Borders Committee Worldwide (CFC-CBC), since 2000. The Headquarters in Paris (France) is to connect with all CFC-CBC members worldwide, in regard to Cambodia’s borders issues. When His Majesty the King Norodom Sihanouk was on the throne, the CFC-CBC worked with the King to solve border problems with Vietnam, but the problems still continue until today.
1. **Coastline:** 443 km long, in southwest, from a common point of Cambodian-Thai border at Cham Yeam with coordinates, 102° 54’ 81”N /11° 38’ 84”E, in Koh Kong province to the common point of Cambodia-Vietnam in Hatien. The straight line between the two points is 215 km.
Notes: The unequal border treaties and agreements signed in 1982, 1983 and 1985, between the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and Socialistic Republic of Vietnam (SRV) are incompatible with the Paris Peace Agreement of October 23rd, 1991 on Cambodia. PM Hun Sen tried to legalize it by and Additive Treaty in October 2005, signed by King Norodom Sihamony. In spite of the ratification by the King, however, these bilateral treaties and agreements remain invalid, because they have been invalid and void by the terms and conditions of Paris Peace Agreement of October 23rd, 1991 on Cambodia.

The Treaty on Historic Waters is a loss for Cambodia, because Cambodia simply shares her own territorial waters with Vietnam.
NOTES:

1. **YELLOW**: The area of Historical Waters’ Treaty, Cambodia shares with Vietnam a territorial sea of 10,000 km², signed on July 7th, 1982.

2. **PINK**: Under the effect of the above Treaty, Vietnam claimed possession of the Overlapped Zone of Cambodia-Vietnam of 30,000 km²;

3. **GREEN**: For the same reason, the Overlapped Zone of 30,000 km² is enhanced by Thai-Vietnamese Agreement of August 11th, 1997, secretly signed on the back of Cambodia, right after a coup d’etat in Cambodia of July 5-6, 1996.

4. According to these agreements, Cambodia is in a position of losing a huge territorial sea and enormously reduced from 95,000 km² to 25,000 km². In fact: [ 95,000 km² – (10,000 + 30,000 + 30,000) km² = 25,000 km² ].
CONCLUSION

Cambodia is likened to a gem stone in Southeast Asia. France had saved a small portion of the former Khmer Empire and transferred the remaining legacy of 181,000.035 km² to Khmer people to preserve and keep as for their subsistance in the mid of the 20th century. As Mchas Srok, Khmer should know their motherland, and know how to preserve her, Cambodia, for the next generation.

Legally, Khmers must come together in unity and enshrine the supreme national interest. Among others, sovereignty and boundary are a crucial issue for a country to survive and assure territorial integrity and inviolability, and the well-being of all citizens.

Technically, the area and the length of the boundary are closely related. For instance, an area of a rectangle is closely dependent on the variation of its sides. For the same reasons, an area of a country is closely related to its border’s dimensions. That means the length of the border must be constant in order for the area to stay constant. Therefore, the boundary / border must be checked and protected to make sure that no encroachment is occurred.

- **Land Area**: 181,035 km² (Ref: The Cambodian Constitution 1993).
- **Sea Area to claim**: 95,000 km² of continental Shelf (Ref: Kret # 439-72 PRK).
- Khmer must unite first before dealing the sovereignty issue!

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ANNEX

The land area of Cambodia is \text{181,000.035km}^{2} \text{ or } 69,898 \text{ sq.miles.}
THE BREVIE LINE OF JANUARY 31ST, 1939.

NOTES:

1. The Brévié Line is established by order of General Governor Jule Brévié, March 31st, 1939;
2. The Brévié Line is not a boundary line, but it is just only a dividing line of police and administration;
3. The Brévié Line does not specify the ownership right, and expects the Island will attach to mainland Cambodia in the future through sedimentation.
4. On June 7th, 1957, Prince Norodom Sihanouk (then Prime Minister) orders the Khmer Royal Armed Forces to defend the Island of Krachak Ses.
5. On December 30th, 1957, King Norodom Sumaramit signs a Kret to reserve the historic rights over the island of Koh Tral.

6. NB: An area that may be subjected to a potential claim is sometimes called an irredenta. However, not all irredentas are necessarily involved in irredentism.

Ref: Presented at the monthly meeting of Cambodian-American Council of Washington in Burien Library, along with the introduction of Cambodia History by Mr. Van Sar, on July 17, 2016.