

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/EG/1662/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 21 December 2022

H. E. Mr Tana Weskosith
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of
Thailand to UNESCO
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World Heritage List 2023

The Ancient Town of Si Thep (Thailand) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2023. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “The Ancient Town of Si Thep” was carried out by Ms. Jigna Desai (India) in September 2022. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 3 October 2022, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the boundaries, restoration plans, the management system, and the planned and approved development projects. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 7 November 2022 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2022, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2023. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2023.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation for attending the meeting held on 26 November 2022 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During the last part of its meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Importance of the Dvaravati period

The nominated property is a serial nomination of three component parts associated to the period of the Dvaravati civilisation that flourished in the central region of Thailand between the 6th and 10th centuries

AD. To assist with understanding of the global significance of the nominated property, ICOMOS would appreciate if a concise appendix on the history of the Dvaravati period could be provided, including its political, social, economic aspects.

In addition, could the State Party please provide succinct clarifications on the following questions?

- What is known about the reasons that led to the expansion of the 'inner' town beyond its original walls (giving the property its distinctive 'twin town' layout)?
- How has the co-presence of Buddhist and Hindu architectural and artistic traditions influenced the city's lay-out, official/residential elements and so on?
- Much of the nomination dossier is focused on the religious and artistic aspects of Dvaravati culture, which are distinctive and important. ICOMOS would also like to understand the level of attention that is given to the 'everyday domestic realities' that can be revealed through past and future research. It would be useful to understand how much of this kind of information is available, any plans for future investigations, and the capacity to develop enhanced interpretation that addresses these aspects.

Name of the nominated property

ICOMOS notes that the nominated property consists of the Ancient Town of Si-Thep and two other component parts, but only the town site is directly referenced in the proposed name. ICOMOS questions whether the name of the property could be slightly revised to reference the associated sites of Dvaravati culture.

Si-Thep boundary/buffer zone (component part 001)

ICOMOS observes that the boundary for component part 001 does not exactly align with the national designation of Si Thep ancient town, and this seems to be confirmed by the additional information received in November 2022 (page 8 and Appendix 6). ICOMOS is satisfied that the proposed World Heritage boundary is well-marked on the ground and that the site is fully protected, yet is also concerned to better understand why the proposed boundary is not the same as the Thai national registration of the Ancient Town of Si Thep and its compound. ICOMOS notes that creating several different boundaries for the ancient town could be potentially confusing for the adjacent community (now or in the future). ICOMOS considers that the boundary of nominated property would typically match the legal designation under the national law, and would be very grateful for a clear statement about why the State Party has chosen a different approach in this case.

ICOMOS notes that the northern extent of the buffer zone to component parts 001 and 002 runs through the middle of a village. The presence of villages in the buffer zone is not a specific concern for ICOMOS, but the alignment of the buffer zone in a manner that divides an existing village into two parts seems impracticable for future management. Would it be possible to extend the delineation of the buffer zone to fully encompass this village following the necessary community consultation? If so, please indicate the likely timeframe for this process.

Khao Klang Nok boundary (component part 002)

Based on the additional information provided in November 2022 (particularly Appendix 10), ICOMOS understands that there are significant elements of the monument occurring outside the current boundary, but that private land ownership means that further research and future boundary modifications must be negotiated carefully. This issue was usefully discussed during the Panel meeting session on 26 November 2022, where it was explained that the land will be bought and that a budget has been established for this in 2024. ICOMOS would appreciate receiving written confirmation about this, and an outline of how the processes of land acquisition are planned.

Access to the cave monastery (component part 003)

ICOMOS notes that the cave site is only accessible via a steep path which is used by local people for spiritual reasons. It seems that continuing to discourage access by other visitors is consistent with both practical and values-based considerations, but during the discussions on 26 November 2022 it was mentioned that there are some organisations that would like to improve access. Could the State Party please provide additional information about whether this will be permitted, and on the planned processes for Heritage Impact Assessment and community consultation that will be in place to consider this further?

Community engagement

It is clear from the information that has been provided that there are issues that will require ongoing and careful engagement with local people to ensure the sustainable management of the nominated property.

In addition to the initiatives that have been summarised in the nomination materials and additional information, does the State Party have proposals to ensure effective and long-term community engagement beyond the nomination and inscription processes, moving from informing/consulting to engagement and co-design of outcomes?

Heritage Impact Assessment

At this stage, there are no formal requirements for Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the nominated property, yet ICOMOS considers this to be an essential element for the management system that should be applied to all major projects (including for example, the proposed future visitor centre and other tourism infrastructure). The Advisory Bodies and World Heritage Centre have recently produced a new guidance on HIA. ICOMOS would be pleased to receive additional information about whether this could be incorporated into the management system of the nominated property in the near future.

Indigenous peoples

ICOMOS notes that there is some mention of the presence of Indigenous peoples in the nomination dossier, although this is not clearly explained, and it may be that this is referring to local communities generally. There is no current indication that Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from these groups has been obtained. Given the requirement for this in relation to the lands and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples mentioned in paragraph 123 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* it is important for ICOMOS that this point is clarified. If there are Indigenous peoples associated with the nominated property and FPIC has been formally obtained, ICOMOS would appreciate receiving information and evidence about how this was achieved.

Area of the component parts and buffer zones

ICOMOS notes that there are a few minor discrepancies in the number of hectares of the component parts and buffer zones indicated in the nomination dossier. It would be appreciated if the State Party can confirm the correct numbers.

Implementation of the management plan

ICOMOS notes the additional information received regarding the updated management plan and actions, and observes that a 5-year planning framework might be more effective than the current approach (which seems to deal with two years at a time). ICOMOS considers that some of the identified actions are key components of an overall World Heritage management system, such as fully developed plans for risk management and sustainable tourism, and suggests that these be incorporated into the planned actions. Could the State Party confirm whether this could be incorporated into the implementation plan and provide additional information about the process for adopting/finalising the draft management plan?

ICOMOS notes that archaeological research is a priority area within the management plan and that some actions have been foreshadowed (although many of the actions identified have now been postponed for 5 years or more). ICOMOS considers that it is essential to have a more strategic and comprehensive overview of these initiatives through the establishment of an archaeological research plan in place that addresses the areas of research, research questions and partnerships, archaeological recording protocols, and the long-term care of archaeological materials (etc). It would be useful to understand if such a plan could be developed, and the probable timeframe.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation procedure.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information **by 28 February 2023 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* for additional information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any additional information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So, we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation procedure.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Si Thep Sub-district Administrative Organisation
 The Si Thep Historical Park
 Thai National Commission for UNESCO
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre