



TENTATIVE LIST SUBMISSION FORMAT

STATE PARTY: THAILAND

DATE OF SUBMISSION:

Submission prepared by: Thailand

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Name of Property: Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements

State, Province or Region: Songkhla Province, Thailand

Latitude and Longitude, or UTM coordinates:

No.	Name of the Component	Coordinates of the Central Point
1	Phang Yang, Pha Kho and Si Yang ancient towns	7.65040 N, 100.36586 E
2	Sathing Phra ancient town	7.47112 N, 100.42783 E
3	Fortified Settlement of Singora at Khao Daeng and Laem Son	7.20745 N, 100.57066 E
4	Songkhla Old Town at Bo Yang	7.20065 N, 100.59055 E

DESCRIPTION:

Over thousands of years, several settlements have emerged, evolved, and developed around Songkhla Lake, a coastal lagoon in southern Thailand. It is a natural brackish water lagoon with a complex cultural and ecological system, and the only one in the country. Although labeled a lake, it defies conventional definitions due to its geomorphological character. Situated on the Malay Peninsula in the South of Thailand, this coastal lagoon is known for its distinctive physical appearance that consists of three connecting water bodies stretching from North to South. The southern-most reaches of the lagoon is *Thalesap Songkhla*, where the lagoon meets the open sea. To the north, the protected wetland of *Thale Noi* is connected with the upper part of Songkhla lagoon. The lagoon is flanked by *Sankala Khiri* and *Bantud* Mountain Ranges on the west, where there are rich mineral resources including tin and manganese. To the east, the *Sathing Phra* Peninsula extends 75 kilometres along the coast, a testament to the lagoon's captivating allure. According to the geomorphological studies, the peninsula was originally a collection of islands or sand accretions; later fused by the gradual accumulation of sediments from the lagoon's precursor, ultimately isolating the lagoon from the sea of the Gulf of

Thailand. The lagoon's water is a blend of fresh mountain streams from the west, and the ebb and flow of salty tides from the sea, a delicate balance that has been harnessed over time for more efficient transportation and irrigation systems, still evident today. The fertile natural surroundings of Songkhla Lake fostered the growth of numerous settlements that have thrived in harmony with the lagoon's ecosystem. Over time, these settlements have evolved into unique towns and cities, a testament to the dynamic interplay between humans and the natural environment – the Songkhla lagoon itself. This proposed property, Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements, consists of four components: 1) *Phang Yang, Pha Kho and Si Yang* ancient towns including their associated archaeological sites; 2) *Sathing Phra* ancient town; 3) *Fortified settlements of Singora* at *Khao Daeng* and *Laem Son*; and 4) *Songkhla Old Town* at *Bo Yang*. These component parts constitute the center of lagoon settlements surrounding Songkhla Lake or Lagoon. They represent distinct phases of historical development that vividly illustrate the intricate relationship between humans and the natural environment, and the traditional settlements that have developed in close interaction with their aquatic environment. This collective heritage forms a truly unique aquatic tapestry within the panorama of lagoon settlements in Southeast Asia.

Khao Khu Ha and Pha Kho are archaeological sites in the central part of the peninsula that contain evidence of ancient settlements. Meanwhile, the remnants of the past in the forms of temples and settlement layouts, complete with earthen mounds, moats, water channels, canals, reservoirs, and more, provide insights into the Phang Yang, Si Yang and Sathing Phra ancient towns. These settlements represent the pivotal hubs within the lagoon communities of Songkhla that flourished between the 7th and 10th centuries. Archaeological finds such as stone tools, potteries, etc., suggest that several hunting-gathering communities probably settled around the lagoon as early as 1000 BCE. However, the earliest settlements known globally were located on the Sathing Phra peninsula, which was likely one of the port towns along the coastline trade route spanning from the South China Sea to the Gulf of Bengal. Beyond these early settlements, the “*Rawa*” water management system comprising an east-west linear canal network connecting the sea and the lagoon, along with north-south canals for transportation purposes, is outstanding evidence of early settlements. Other archeological remains such as reservoirs or *Phang* or *Traphang*, that can be found around *Phang Yang* ancient town, earthen mounds and ramparts, rock art relating to Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism at Khao Khu Ha. This evidence suggests the influence of China and India which adapted to the local contexts of lagoon settlements. The precise emergence of *Singora* remains unclear. It is debatable when the settlements at Sathing Phra peninsula, particularly in Pha Kho, evolved as a central node in the lagoon settlements. Most historical studies recognize these settlements as early-city states originating in *Singora* or later in *Songkhla*.

In a different era, spanning from the late 14th to the 17th century, Patthalung, another city situated on the opposite side of the lagoon, played a crucial role as an administrative and religious centre of Theravada Buddhism for these settlements. The Sathing Phra peninsula, in turn, became a frontier region, connecting lagoon cities and other states. It was not until the 17th century, according to several historical records and maps, that Singora was identified as a prominent and illustrious city, standing out as a remarkable trade hub among cities around Songkhla Lake. This was about the same time that the Kingdom of Ayutthaya flourished and

expanded from the Chao Phraya River basin, the central plain of Thailand, to the Malay peninsula in the South. In response to this expansion, the city-states in the peninsula, including those around Songkhla Lake, had to adapt or strengthen their defences or even relocate their administrative centres to align with Ayutthaya's authority. Historical studies affirm that the *Sultanate of Singora* was re-established at the southern part of the Sathing Phra peninsula, known as Hua Khao Daeng or Khao Daeng. This renaissance was led by a Muslim leader, whose lineage remains uncertain, as to whether he was a descendent of someone who once served at the court of Ayutthaya or an Indonesian hailing from central Java. Various maps and archaeological remains of most forts, city walls, and moats, indicate that Singora of Khao Daeng was strategically situated amidst a small mountain range between the sea and the lagoon where Thalesap Songkla lies. The fortification along the mountain range, extending to the coastal area, served as an impregnable defence system to Ayutthaya Kingdom's advances for years. Its lagoon character, mountain range and several islets provided an ideal natural harbour to protect trade ships and junks, during the monsoon seasons. Singora eventually assumed a crucial role as a control and connecting junction linking the settlements around Songkhla lagoon with the wider world through the trade routes during its zenith. As such other lagoon cities became natural providers of agricultural and aquacultural resources, sustaining Singora's existence and commerce. Remarkably, unlike Ayutthaya which adopted a monopoly trading system, Singora of Khao Daeng implemented a free-tax trade policy with other states and nations. The free-tax approach proved immensely attractive. However, Singora of Khao Daeng was defeated by Ayutthaya, and became a subordinate city of the Kingdom.

After the Ayutthaya Kingdom was attacked and destroyed in the late 18th century, the administrative centre of the Kingdom was moved to Thonburi, and later to Bangkok which were both strategically chosen locations nearer to the mouth of the Chao Phraya River. The centre of Singora was also relocated to Laem Son, another mountain range on the other side of the lagoon. Subsequently, around the mid-19th century, it was moved again to Bo Yang, an area to the south of Khao Daeng, which has since been developed into what *Songkhla* is today. Singora or Songkhla at Bo Yang bears distinctive characteristics of a rectangular walled city clearly influenced by traditional Chinese city planning principles; readily discernible in its urban structure and architectural style. The city also features a collection of forts built across multiple historical periods. The earlier forts can be reasonably presumed to have been integral components of the fortifications of Singora of Khao Daeng, serving defense and protection purposes. In contrast, the forts constructed as part of the rectangular city wall unmistakably reflect beliefs and traditions in city planning as well as their role in boundary demarcation.

The administrative centre of the lagoon settlements of Songkhla Lake was moved several times throughout its rich history spanning over a thousand years. It transitioned from Sathing Phra to Pa Kho at the middle of the Sathing Phra peninsula on the east side of the lagoon, and then to Pa Kho-Patthalung on the inner west side. Subsequently, it shifted from the mountainous area at the tip of the peninsula, *Khao Daeng* to the foot of another mountain, *Laem Son*. Finally, it found its enduring home in the coastal plain of *Bo Yang*. Through these relocations and transformations, Singora or Songkhla continued to benefit from its strategic and unique landscape location. This remarkable setting includes the pivotal juncture of the Sathing Phra peninsula where Khao Daeng and Laem Son are situated; the coastal sediments of Songkhla and

a number of islands and islets scattered in the sea and within the lagoon. This intricate network provides an ideal harbour for ships and junks navigating the maritime trade route along the coastline from China to India. The captivating landscape described in historical records left an indelible impression on foreign voyagers. It has become the quintessential image of the gateway to the lagoon settlements of Songkhla Lake.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value:

The proposed property demonstrates a dynamic and evolving development and adaptation over a long span of time, adapting to changing contexts with each successive establishment of Singora's administrative centres. *Rawa*, a traditional water management system found mainly in the central region of the Sathing Phra peninsula, likely bears influences from South China while the *Phang or Traphang* reservoirs may have originated in Ancient Khmer practices when Hinduism arrived on the peninsula. Over time, this system would have adapted to the brackish area, and blended with religious beliefs including Hinduism and Buddhism. This may be evident in the remains of ancient settlements, sacred caves, religious Bas-relief sculptures and indigenous rituals. Arguably, the most glorious period of these lagoon settlements occurred when the Sultanate of Singora at Khao Daeng served as the administrative centre that controlled Songkhla Lagoon. During the period of the rulers of Singora, Dato Mogol and his successor, Sultan Sulaiman, some of the most robust fortifications of Southeast Asia were constructed using locally-sourced building materials. Other lagoon settlements contributed essential natural resources for trade, including rice, fish, spices, inland goods, feathers of Kingfisher bird, etc.

The natural features of the mountain ranges at the tip of the Sathing Phra peninsula, Songkla Cape, the surrounding islands and islets as well as Thale Sap Songkhla and the deep sea along the coastline of the peninsula, formed a secure harbour for ships and junks during the challenging monsoon seasons. Moreover, Singora adopted a free-tax trading policy as an incentive for its business partners to compete with more powerful states. As such, during the period of Sultan Sulaiman, Singora became one of a few self-sustaining states of its time. This period came to an end when Singora was defeated around the late 18th century, subsequently becoming one of the Southern frontier towns of Ayutthaya Kingdom. In the late 19th century, the administrative centre was moved to Bo Yang, and came to be known widely as Songkhla rather than Singora. The fortification system at Bo Yang, designed as part of the rectangular walled town, drew inspiration from Chinese traditional town planning. However, the function of the forts of Bo Yang may have shifted focus from defense to boundary identification and landmarks because of the flourishing commerce in the region.

Criteria met

(i)	✓(ii)	(iii)	✓(iv)	✓(v)	(vi)	(vii)	(viii)	(ix)	(x)
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The proposed property meets the following criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List, as outlined below:

Criterion (ii) Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements exhibit an important interchange with other civilisations along the coastline maritime trade route. The wealth of archaeological evidence of urban structures, religious buildings, architecture, sophisticated water management system and fortifications presents a vivid reflection of the diverse beliefs, customs, and traditions found in the settlements around Songkhla Lagoon including Phang Yang, Si Yang, Pha Kho, Sathing Phra, Singora of Khao Daeng, Laem Son and Bo Yang. These settlements

resonate as cultural crossroads that have engaged in profound exchanges with China and India as well as other regional influences of Java and Khmer. Over time, Khao Khu Ha exemplifies the settlements located in the heart of the Sathing Phra peninsula clearly influenced by Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism while the fortified town of Singora at Khao Daeng reflects Muslim ideology and a possible adaptation of European fortification systems. It is evident that Singora at Laem Son and Bo Yang, too, adapted Chinese feng shui to the local contexts aspects while preserving the intrinsic balance between natural and cultural spheres.

Criterion (iv) Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements serve as a remarkable illustration of advancements in maritime navigation knowledge during different historical periods, specifically within monsoon latitudes. These latitudes are characterized by winds and storms that had historically posed a serious impediment to regional long-distance trade between the Chinese and Indian sub-continent. The intellectual prowess of the people living in the lagoon settlements, especially on the Sathing Phra peninsula, is evidenced by their utilization of the natural landscape. This landscape is composed of the mountainous areas at the tip of the peninsula which is an effective natural protection from both natural and human-induced disasters. Furthermore, the inner area of the mouth of Songkhla Lake is an ideal harbour for navigators who passed through the treacherous monsoon latitudes along the maritime trade route. Consequently, the lagoon settlements, particularly those positioned around the mouth of the lagoon, evolved to become important port towns along the west coast of the Gulf of Thailand. Their strategic location and the ingenious adaptation to the challenges of maritime navigation in monsoon latitudes made them pivotal hubs for trade and exchange between the Chinese and Indian sub-continent. This unique historical development demonstrates the exceptional contributions of these settlements to the evolution of maritime navigation knowledge.

Criterion (v) Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements are outstanding examples of traditional human settlements that have emerged, evolved, developed, and transformed through the intricate interaction and interrelation between their inhabitants and the natural surroundings, particularly within the Songkhla lagoon eco-system. Over the span of time, these settlements were re-established and relocated around the lagoon several times, driven by diverse external factors. These factors included the early maritime trade routes, the external threats from neighbouring states, defense and protection strategies, flourishing trade and commerce, and various other influences. Despite these relocations and adaptations, the settlements have consistently fulfilled their primary function in producing and supplying sustenance for their populations. *Rawa* and *Phang* or *Traphang*, the traditional water management systems clearly demonstrate the ingenious ways local inhabitants harnessed the sea-water intrusion for cultivation and transportation. These systems co-existed with the domestication of freshwater resources from surface water resources and beneath the sand ridges along the coastal areas. The fertility of the land around the lagoon and the lagoon itself, rich in natural resources such as forest goods, spices, kingfisher bird's feathers, etc., further bolstered the self-sufficiency of these settlements. Notably, the entirety of the Sathing Phra peninsula was a frontier for these settlements in trading with other states. This is evident in the settlements at the middle of the peninsula which includes Phang Yang, Si Yang, Pha Kho and Sathing Phra, the fortified Khao Daeng, settlement at Laem Son and Songkhla at Bo Yang. Moreover, these settlements adeptly

leveraged their understanding of the local natural landscape and surroundings to develop strategies to protect themselves from various threats, whether caused by human actions or natural phenomenon. In consequence, these lagoon settlements evolved into self-sustaining cities unlike most port towns or areas that relied on supplies or goods from distant areas or hinterlands.

Statements of authenticity

Considering the historical re-establishments and relocations of Songkhla, the central hub of the lagoon settlements, and the potential transformations experienced by other lagoon settlements in response changing circumstances, the overall landscape of these settlements has retained its original character, embodying a dynamic and continuous process of evolution. Remarkably, the locations of the central settlements in each historical period, including the one in the middle of the Sathing Phra peninsula, the fortified Khao Daeng, the settlement at Laem Son and Songkhla Bo Yang, have consistently maintained a profound and visible interaction with their natural environment. In terms of physical attributes, the principal urban structures of Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements, such as city walls, earthen ramparts, moats, remains of buildings and archaeological finds, have been preserved in their original states, retaining their building materials and design. Although some functionalities such as defense and city protection have been adapted as they are no longer used, the essence of these structures endures as a testament to their historical significance. Furthermore, the Rawa and Phang water management systems located in the middle part of the Sathing Phra peninsula, offers a tangible glimpse into its historical form and function, with partial alterations made to accommodate evolving irrigation and domestication requirements amid changing surroundings. The living traditions rooted in the lagoon such as aquaculture, the production of local building materials, food supply practices, and more, continue to be actively upheld and practiced in Songkhla and other lagoon settlements to this day.

Statements of integrity

The integrity of Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements is readily apparent due to the abundance of archaeological remains found on the mountains, the ground, underground, and underwater at Phang Yang, Si Yang, Pha Kho and Sathing Phra, the fortifications at Khao Daeng, the settlement at Laem Son, and Songkhla at Bo Yang as well as the natural surroundings. These finds have been well preserved. Moreover, the attributes of this proposed property largely retain their original states in terms of building materials, designs, and locations while the lagoon ecosystem, a critical component of the landscape, has remained largely unchanged in recent years. This preservation is a testament to the recognition of the profound significance of Songkhla Lake, not only as the sole brackish lagoon in the country but also as one of the few lagoon settlements of immense cultural importance in Southeast Asia and potentially in the world. Nevertheless, there are some threats and challenges facing this proposed property. The Sathing Phra peninsula has been confronted with growing development pressures, transforming it into an industrial area along the coastal zones, particularly near the deep-sea port area. The traditional water management systems, *Rawa and Phang*, while still practised, are gradually undergoing changes due to real estate development. Despite these challenges, the remains of ancient settlements including city walls, moats, ramparts, forts, ancient reservoirs or *Tra Phang*, religious places, other archaeological sites, etc. are protected

legally and through traditional practices. Additionally, factors such as increasing tourism activities within and around the lagoon and ongoing infrastructure construction have an impact on the proposed property. At the same time, Songkhla at Bo Yang or Songkhla Old Town, faces potential issues relating to flooding and demographic changes. To address the concerns, a comprehensive conservation and management plan has been adopted and revised. This plan for Songkhla Old Town, designated old town, has been expanded to include Singora at Khao Daeng and Leam Son, ensuring the continued conservation and sustainable management of this historically and culturally significant area.

Comparison with other similar properties:

The comparators set to compare the nominated property with other similar properties at three scopes as follows.

1. The outstanding traditional settlements demonstrating an important interchange with other civilisations along the coastline maritime trade route,
2. Port towns in monsoon latitudes exhibiting exceptional maritime navigation knowledge,
3. Exceptional settlements exemplifying traditional human settlements interrelating to lagoons.

Compare with other World Heritage Properties

The only lagoon settlement in the World Heritage List is Venice and its lagoon. While Venice shares similarities as a lagoon settlement, it is located in a different region and geographical context. Venice is primarily celebrated for its historic canals, architecture, and artistic heritage. In contrast, Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements place a strong emphasis on their cultural interrelation with the lagoon ecosystem and their historical importance as maritime trade centres.

Other World heritage properties may share some similarities which are related to lakes. For example, the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region, a transboundary and mixed property belonging to Albania and North Macedonia. Another property in the same region is the West Lake Cultural Landscape of Hangzhou in China but it focuses on the scenic beauty rather than the settlements. They do not share the same aquatic cultural traditions or historical maritime significance as Songkhla. Another group of World Heritage property that may compare to Songkhla and its lagoon settlements of Songkhla Lagoon is the port towns along the maritime trade routes such as Quanzhou: Emporium of the World in Song-Yuan China, Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca in Malaysia, and Old Town of Galle and its Fortifications in Sri Lanka. However, they may not emphasize the same level of interrelation with natural environments, particularly lagoon ecosystems. Furthermore, these properties may not exhibit the same degree of traditional self-sustainability that is a hallmark of Songkhla's history.

In conclusion, Songkhla and its associated towns and settlements of Songkhla Lagoon stand out as a unique World Heritage candidate in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific. They demonstrate significant interchange with other civilisations, possess a unique aquatic cultural tradition, and exemplify a traditional human settlement interconnected with their natural environment, especially the lagoon. Songkhla and its associated towns and settlements of Songkhla Lagoon offer a distinct historical and cultural narrative that is unparalleled among existing heritage sites.

Compare with other properties in the Tentative List

Within the Tentative List, there is only Chilika Lake in India that is a brackish water lake and a shallow lagoon with characteristics similar to Songkhla Lake or Lagoon. However, Chilika Lake is proposed for inscription under the criteria for natural properties, which means that it primarily emphasizes its natural attributes and values rather than cultural or historical significance. Therefore, it may not be compared with Songkhla and its associated settlements of Songkhla Lagoon, which place a strong emphasis on their cultural and historical significance.

Dali Chanshan Mountain and Erhai Lake Scenic Spot in China may be included in the comparative analysis as potential comparators. Although it is proposed as a mixed property and focuses on the scenic spots, there are several cultural issues relating to ethnicities in the region. The cultural issues and traditional aspects of ethnic communities within this site may provide valuable points of comparison with the nominated property.

Offering another potential basis for comparison is the Hainan Tropical Rainforest and the Traditional Settlement of Li Ethnic Group in China. These properties emphasize settlements interrelating with mountainous areas and traditional cultures of the Li ethnic group.

Compare with other lagoon settlements and coastal settlements.

Besides the properties in the World Heritage List and Tentative List, the other settlements located around lagoons in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific are taken into consideration for comparison with Songkhla and its associated lagoon settlements. Furthermore, there are numerous sites/settlements along the East coast of India and around the Bay of Bengal that are similar and were part of the same historical trade network as Songkhla, making them potentially relevant comparators at different points in time.

Among the lagoon settlements in the Indo-Pacific Ocean region, Tsing Yi Lagoon near Hong Kong in China, once accommodating boat people, has experienced urbanization and decreased cultural significance over time. Lake Jūsan in Japan, although a brackish-water lagoon-type estuary with historical value to the Ainu indigenous people, encountered challenges; its port town was destroyed by Tsunami in the 14th century, leading to decline in prosperity. The port town was not revived; abandoned; and fell into deterioration with only the remains of the port existing. In addition, Tam Giang–Cau Hai lagoon in Vietnam is more recognised as a natural area comprising several small lagoons than for its cultural aspects that seem to be less prominent. Similarly, Silot Lagoon in the Philippines is known as a natural area in Cebu for its natural features and the presence of resorts, with limited recognition for its cultural significance. It is evident that Songkhla Lagoon and its associated settlements stand out as one of the very few lagoon sites in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific that possess exceptional cultural significance. Their unique historical, cultural, and ecological attributes make them a rare and distinctive heritage property in the region, setting them apart from other lagoon settlements with lesser cultural recognition and importance.