

# Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty (Republic of Korea)

No 1319

*Official name as proposed*

*by the State Party:* Royal Tombs of the  
Joseon Dynasty

*Location:*

Seoul Metropolitan City,  
Gyeonggi-do and  
Gangwon-do  
Republic of Korea

*Brief description:*

The Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), located in the Republic of Korea, are comprised of 40 tombs. The tombs, some of which are single mounds and some of which form tomb clusters, are spread among 18 different sites. Constructed over five centuries, they convey the monarchy's world view and understanding of topography, and demonstrate Confucian principles, especially those associated with ancestral rites.

*Category of property:*

In terms of categories of cultural properties set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of 40 *monuments*.

## 1. BASIC DATA

*Included in the Tentative List:* 16 January 2006

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination:* None

*Date received by the World Heritage Centre:* 31 January 2008

*Background:* This is a new nomination.

*Literature consulted (selection):*

Lee, Chang-Hwan, "Preservation and Maintenance for Cultural Landscape of Royal Tombs Area Pivoting on Seoul in the Joseon Dynasty", 2007 ICOMOS Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting: *Heritage and metropolis in Asia and the Pacific*, p. 97-11, Seoul, ICOMOS-Korea, 2007.

National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, *Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty: Legacies of Elegance*.

*Technical Evaluation Mission:* 21-29 September 2008

*Additional information requested and received from the State Party:* ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 6 January 2009 on the following:

1. The rationale for the inclusion of certain elements in the buffer zone, rather than in the property area.

2. The justification for excluding guardian mountains, and especially one of those associated with Heolleung Cluster, from buffer zones.

3. The need to provide further information on the restoration of the topography and landscape of Seosamreung Cluster, together with a timetable of the works.

4. The need to provide assurances concerning:

- The removal of the Shooting Range and Sports Training Center at Taereung Cluster (in, respectively, 2008 and 2014);

- The removal of the Korean National University of Art at Uireung Cluster (in 2012); and

- The improvement of the environment for the buildings west of Seoreung Cluster (in 2012).

ICOMOS received a response (20 pages) from the State Party on 27 February 2009, in which all the matters raised in the letter of 6 January 2009 were satisfactorily addressed. The responses are included in the report below.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:* 10 March 2009

## 2. THE PROPERTY

### *Description*

During the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) 119 tombs were constructed within the Republic of Korea. Each tomb is designated *neung*, *won* or *myo* depending on the royal status. Of these, 40 were royal tombs for Joseon Dynasty kings and their consorts (and there are a further 2 located in DPR Korea). These occur as single mounds or in clusters. The earliest royal tomb was constructed in 1408 and the last royal tomb was constructed in 1966. A list of the 18 royal tomb sites in the Republic of Korea, including the names of the royal tombs contained within each site, is as follows (all tombs listed in order of burial):

Region: Gyeonggi-do:

- Donggureung Cluster (E1): 9 royal tombs - Geonwolleurung, Hyeolleung, Mongneung, Hwireung, Sungneung, Sureung, Hyereung, Wolleung and Gyeongneung
- Hongyureung Cluster (E2): 2 royal tombs - Hongneung and Yureung
- Sareung Cluster (E3): 1 royal tomb - Sareung
- Gwangneung Cluster (E4): 1 royal tomb - Gwangneung
- Yeongneung Cluster (E5): 2 royal tombs - Yeongneung and Yeongneung
- Jangneung Cluster (E6): 1 royal tomb - Jangneung

Region: Seoul:

- Seolleung Cluster (M1): 2 royal tombs - Seolleung and Jeongneung
- Heolleung Cluster (M2): 2 royal tombs - Heolleung and Illeung
- Taereung Cluster (M3): 2 royal tombs - Taereung and Gangneung

- Jeongneung Cluster (M4): 1 royal tomb - Jeongneung
- Uireung Cluster (M5): 1 royal tomb - Uireung

Region: Gangwon-do:

- Seoreung Cluster (W1): 5 royal tombs - Changneung, Myeongneung, Inreung, Hongneung and Gyeongneung
- Seosamreung Cluster (W2): 3 royal tombs - Huiyeong, Hyoreung and Yereung
- Olleung Cluster (W3): 1 royal tomb - Olleung
- Paju Samreung Cluster (W4): 3 royal tombs - Gongneung, Sulleung and Yeongneung
- Jangneung Cluster (W5): 1 royal tomb - Jangneung
- Jangneung Cluster (W6): 1 royal tomb - Jangneung
- Yungneung Cluster (W7): 2 royal tombs - Geolleung and Yungneung

The tombs were built to honour the memory of ancestors, to show respect for their achievements, to assert royal authority, to protect ancestral spirits from evil and to provide protection from vandalism. A royal tomb was a sacred place where the deceased could “live” in the afterlife amidst dynasty-protecting ancestral spirits.

There are three keys to understanding the royal tombs: the topography of the site and the layout of the tomb; the types of burial mounds, the sites’ associated structures and the nature and aesthetic qualities of site-specific stone objects; and the rites associated with the burials as well as extant documents that verify the construction process.

During the Joseon Dynasty, sites were chosen according to *pungsu* (*fengshui* in Chinese) principles. Accordingly, outstanding natural sites were chosen, which were mainly along two mountain chains stretching to the north and south of the Han River that flows through present-day Seoul. The burial mounds, the “heart” of a royal burial ground, were usually placed in the middle of a hillside. Protected from the back, they face outward (to the south) toward water and, ideally, toward layers of mountain ridges in the far distance.

The burial chamber was located at the point where propitious energies are said to be concentrated and it was fortified with a dirt covering, creating the mound. With a low, curving wall and knoll at the back, energy is further directed toward the burial chamber.

In addition to the *burial area*, royal tombs consist of a *ceremonial area* and an *entrance area*, and each area has a different function and symbolic meaning. The burial area is the sacred place of the dead and it contains an open, grassy area, the burial mound and a spirit road that descends to a T-shaped shrine. The shrine is the centre of the ceremonial area and it is here that ancestral rites are conducted to symbolise the meeting of the living and the dead. The shrine is linked by a worship road to a red-spiked gate, the main entrance to the royal graveyard. The entrance area, itself, lies beyond the gate and it contains the forbidden stream with a stone bridge, the house of the tomb keeper and additional buildings used for ceremonial preparations. The separation of the living and the dead is further symbolised by the nature of the roads: the *chamdo*, the

worship road, links the main gate to the shrine and is shared by the living and the dead, while the *sindo*, the spirit road, links the shrine to the burial mound and is used solely by the dead.

The layout described above generally follows the layout prescribed as part of the Confucian ritual system. However, variation is found in the number and placement of burial mounds within a site, and this is categorised as follows:

- Tombs with a single mound
- Tombs with twin mounds
- Tombs with three parallel mounds
- Tombs with a joint burial mound for the king and queen
- Tombs with double mounds on separate hills
- Tombs with vertically placed double mounds

In addition to the burial mounds, associated buildings are an integral part of the royal tombs: the T-shaped wooden shrine (*jeongjagak*), where ancestral tablets are kept and royal ancestral rites performed; the stele shed, which protects the tomb stele; the royal kitchen, where food for the royal ancestral rites is prepared; the guards’ house, located southeast of the T-shaped shrine and facing the kitchen; the red-spiked gate (*hongsalmun*), which marks the beginning of the worship road at the southern end of the tomb era, signifying entry to the sacred realm; and the tomb keeper’s house (*jaesil*), where ritual equipment is kept and overall preparations are made for royal ancestral rites.

Royal tombs are adorned on the outside with a range of stone objects, including ceremonial artefacts and figures of people and animals that are placed around, and in front of, the grave mound. All serve the purpose of wishing the interred a peaceful afterlife.

Around the burial mound, on the upper platform (*sanggye*), a 12-angled retaining stone protects and decorates the mound. A stone fence, slightly further out, encircles the mound, and outside of this fence pairs of stone sheep and tigers face outward, their backs to the mound. Further out, a low wall shelters the components on three sides. At the open side, and in front of the mound, there is a stone table on which spirits can play. And to the right and the left of the table are stone watch pillars.

In the middle platform (*junggye*), a four- or eight-sided stone lantern is found in the middle with two civil servants and their horses, both in stone, nearby. In the lower platform (*hagye*), two military officials and their horses, in stone, are found.

The ancestral rites associated with the royal tombs are considered sacrosanct. They were practiced until the late Joseon period and into the short period of the Daehan Empire (late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Under Japanese colonial rule and during the Korean War, they were stopped, but revived afterwards (1966) as a means to preserve the ritual practices associated with the Joseon Dynasty. Sites were chosen for their proximity to the capital, Seoul, which reflects the need for kings to have close access to their fathers’ graves in order to pay due respect and honour.

In the Joseon Dynasty there were two categories of rites: funeral rites (*hyungnye*) and auspicious rites (*gilbye*). The royal tomb was constructed during the process of *hyungnye*. The rules for performing these ceremonies are called The Five Rites, which are detailed in two books: the “Five Rites” chapter of *Sejong Sillok* (Annals of King Sejong) and *Gukjo Oryeui* (Five Rites of the State, which was published during the reign of King Seongjong). When conducting the funeral of his father, the new king followed the procedures specified in the books.

In addition to the two books, palace scholars produced three different kinds of documents to mark the sacredness of the royal ancestry and magnify the departed king’s legacy: *sillok* (annals); *uigwe* (records of state events); and *neungji* (tomb records).

### History and development

The place of tombs, and especially royal tombs, is central to understanding Korean culture. As expressed in the nomination dossier, royal tombs are the final resting places for the royal family, and, as such, the tombs not only indicate the status of the family but become carefully constructed complexes for ancestral worship.

The dolmen, the oldest known tomb in the Korean Peninsula, was built from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age. During the Three Kingdoms Period, construction principles were defined for tombs and it was the Silla Kingdom, in particular, that developed the tomb system unique to Korea: a wide hole in the ground, lined with wood, filled with stones and covered by earth (the mound). After the Silla conquered the other kingdoms (with the help of the Chinese), what is called the Unified Silla Period emerged and it was within this period that Korean royal tombs developed unique characteristics, such as stone tigers in four directions, stone tables in front of the burial mound and stone objects with unique features. Royal tombs were built not only on flat land, but on mountains as well.

During the Goryeo Kingdom (918-1392), royal tombs continued to be built using Unified Silla principles, but they were built between mountain ridges with west to east flowing streams. They included new features as well, such as the watch stone pillar, stone lantern, T-shaped shrine and stele shed. Additionally, stone tigers, lions and sheep surrounded the burial mound.

Construction during the Joseon Dynasty has a degree of consistency, although there are some variations reflecting the wishes of the king or his descendants. Compared to royal tombs built during the Goryeo Dynasty, royal tombs constructed during the Joseon Dynasty were built on hills and divided into three areas, with the upper/burial area having upper, middle and lower platforms.

There are five development phases of the Royal Joseon Tombs:

- In Phase 1, Continuation of Goryeo Kingdom principles, changes are seen in the design of stone lanterns and the use of octagonal stone pillars.

- In Phase 2, Emergence of Joseon principles, the Joseon Dynasty adopted its own funeral system based on The Five Rites of the State (state protocol and etiquette).
- In Phase 3, Emphasis on geomancy principles, some simplification of tombs occurs, i.e. balustrades replace screens and stone chambers are replaced by those with plaster walls.
- In Phase 4, Emergence of realism, the practice of having stone figures of scholars occupy a platform higher than the one for stone figures of soldiers is discontinued and stone figures are reduced to life-size.
- In Phase 5, Transformation to reflect the change in royal title from king to emperor, there is an increase in the number of stone figures and they are placed in new positions at the front of the platforms used for ancestral rites.

In addition to the five development stages, stone objects, in particular, underwent slight changes in size and shape, although the object types and their layout remained unchanged. Four phases of stone objects have been identified.

- First Phase: Early 15<sup>th</sup> century to middle 15<sup>th</sup> century. Examples: Geonwolleurung of King Taejo (1408) and Changneung of King Yejong (1470). Characteristics: Royal tombs built on hills; stone horses.
- Second Phase: Late 15<sup>th</sup> century to late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Examples: Seolleung of King Seongjong (1495) and Gangneung of King Myeongjong (1567). Characteristic: Stone objects increase in size.
- Third Phase: Early 17<sup>th</sup> century to early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Examples: Mongneung of King Seonjo (1630) and Uireung of King Gyeongjong (1724). Characteristic: Stone objects become smaller in later years.
- Fourth Phase: Middle 18<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Examples: Wolleung of King Yeongjo (1776) and Yureung of Emperor Sunjong (1926). Characteristic: Two platforms replace the usual three.

### Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty Values

The values of the Royal Tombs of Joseon are linked to the overall layout of the tomb, and, more specifically, to the three areas of the tomb - the burial area, the ceremonial area and the entrance area; the three platforms of the burial area; and all the associated constructions and objects. The setting and vistas are linked as well as they demonstrate the importance of *pungsu* in determining the location and orientation of the tombs. Within the tomb, the natural order is embraced through the type and positioning of forests, trees, shrubs and plants.

The values are also linked to the continuance of ancestral rites.

### 3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

#### *Integrity and Authenticity*

##### *Integrity*

Serial nomination:

As a serial nomination, the sites convey a complete understanding of the setting, layout and composition of the Joseon royal tombs.

As individual sites, there are minor exceptions: part of the *jaesil* site of Yeongneung Cluster (E5) is not included in the property area; part of the *jaesil* site of Jangneung Cluster (Yeongwol Jangneung) (E6) is in the buffer zone; the *yeonji* and *geumcheongyo* of Hyoreung (Seosamreung Cluster) (W2) are not included in the property area; and the *yeonji* of Jangneung Cluster (W5) is not included in the property area.

There are two other minor exceptions: The guardian temples of Jangneung (E6) and Yungneung (W7) are either in the buffer zone (Jangneung's guardian temple) or outside the buffer zone (Yungneung's guardian temple), rather than in the property areas.

Given these exclusions, ICOMOS sought clarification from the State Party as to the reason(s) why these seven sites have been included in buffer zones (or, in the case of one of the sites, outside a buffer zone), but not in the property areas. In addition, ICOMOS sought clarification from the State Party as to whether or not these sites could be incorporated into the property areas in the future and a letter was sent to the State Party on 6 January 2009 regarding these exclusions. In response to the letter from ICOMOS, the State Party replied on 27 February 2009 as follows:

- The *jaesil* site of Yeongneung Cluster (E5) is scheduled to be included in the property area in 2009.
- The *jaesil* site of Jangneung Cluster (Yeongwol Jangneung) (E6) is already included in the property area, but the boundaries are unclearly marked on maps. Modifications have now been made to the maps.
- The *yeonji* and *geumcheongyo* of Hyoreung (Seosamreung Cluster) (W2), in light of their significance and relevance to the royal tombs, have been included in the property area as of 18 December 2008.
- The *yeonji* of Jangneung Cluster (W5), in light of its significance and relevance to the royal tombs, has been included in the property area as of 18 December 2008.
- The guardian temples of Jangneung (E6) and Yungneung (W7) are adequately protected as the buildings and their significant artefacts and relics have been designated as cultural heritage at either the state, provincial or municipal level and are managed as separate designated cultural heritage areas. In addition, the temples have been privatized as religious facilities

Certainly, urban development has affected the sight lines of some of the sites (Seolleung, Heolleung and Uireung), but it appears that urban construction is visible only near the top of certain tombs. Strict legislation now ensures that development within the buffer zones is controlled.

The integrity of the sites is significantly enhanced by the perpetuation of traditional ancestral rites.

##### *Authenticity*

Over time, elements of the sites have been repaired, restored and reconstructed. The burial areas have seen the least intervention, while the ceremonial and entrance areas have seen the most, and largely because the use of wood as a building material. The original function has been continued at all sites and a sacred atmosphere has been largely maintained, especially at the less urban sites.

Regarding form and design, only a few entrances have been changed (Seolleung and Heolleung, for example), and, in the 1970s, the form and location of Yeongneung's *jaesil*, *chamdo* and *geumcheongyo* were altered. Regarding materials, most repairs have been done using the same materials as the original ones, although, in the 1980s, cement was used to repair cracks in stone elements (a wall at Yureung, the *chambo* of Illeung and stone works at Hyoreung and Sulleung, for example). Traditional technology has been largely followed, except for replacement materials for the *chamdo* at Yeongneung, Uireung and Hongneung, for example.

Overall, the Royal Tombs of Joseon have marked authenticity.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met, and especially in light of the clarification from the State Party as to the inclusion/exclusion of the aforementioned seven sites from the property areas.

#### *Comparative analysis*

The Royal Tombs of Joseon are compared with royal tomb architecture from other Confucian cultures: China, Japan and Vietnam. Compared with Chinese royal tombs, one of the most important differences is that the Joseon royal tombs are dominated by the natural environment whereas the Chinese royal tombs are dominated by man-made constructions. As well, the Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (inscribed in the World Heritage List in 2000, 2003 and 2004 on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi)), have ceased to function as sites of ancestral worship, while in Korea the Royal Family Organization holds regular memorial services.

Compared with Japanese royal tombs, the Joseon royal tombs have a longer, more continuous history. In Japan, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., various types of burial mounds (mausoleums) were constructed (the variance was in plan), but, after the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the royal tombs became significantly smaller and hemispherical in shape. As well, with the practice of Buddhism, stone pagodas replaced burial mounds. It was only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when emperors again ruled the nation, that royal mausoleums reappeared in Japan.

The most meaningful comparison with Vietnamese royal tombs is with those built during the Nguyen Dynasty, which ruled Vietnam from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1945. Seven royal tombs were constructed during this period on

the outskirts of Hue and in many ways they are patterned after Chinese royal tombs.

All of these royal tombs have burial mounds in common, but what most sets the Royal Tombs of Joseon apart is the consistent demonstration of the culture's own view of nature and the universe. As a result, the structures surrounding the burial mounds developed in different and distinctive ways.

Within the Korean Peninsula, two sets of royal tombs have been inscribed on the World Heritage List: Royal Tombs of Silla Kingdom (57 B.C.-935 A.D.), which are included under Gyeongju Historic Areas, Republic of Korea (2000, criteria (ii) and (iii)), and the Koguryo Tombs (37 B.C.-688 A.D.), which are included under the Complex of Koguryo Tombs (DPR Korea) (2004, criteria (i), (ii), (iii) et (iv)) and the Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom (China) (2004, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v)). The royal tumuli of the Silla Kingdom were generally built on flatland, while the royal tombs of the Koguryo Dynasty were built in mountainous terrain.

The Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty are a later series of royal tombs that together with the earlier two series helps to complete the Korean Peninsula's long history of royal tomb construction. And, unlike the locations of the earlier series, the Joseon royal tombs are located on the sides of hills, looking toward mountains in the distance or valley floors below.

Serial nomination:

ICOMOS considers that the State Party has demonstrated a systematic and detailed rationale for including all the royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty within its national boundary.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for inscription on the World Heritage List.

### ***Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value***

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value for the following reasons:

- Development of royal tombs under Confucianism and East Asia philosophies;
- Unique funeral culture respecting nature;
- Construction and record-keeping traditions reflecting important phases in human history;
- Continuity of the Confucian tradition of ancestral worship.

Serial nomination:

As a series, the royal tombs convey the history and world view of the Joseon Dynasty over more than five centuries (1392-1910). Considered as individual royal tombs, the properties speak to various phases of royal tomb development within the dynasty. However, considered as a cohesive whole, the development of the royal tombs over time, and their cumulative stories and associations, offers a compelling view, within the context of royalty and

ancestral worship, of the beliefs and practices of the Korean people both historically and today.

### ***Criteria under which inscription is proposed***

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi).

*Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that elements of Confucian principles, Buddhism, Taoism and indigenous ideas were all taken into account in the location, layout and design of the tombs.

Given the history of the development of the Royal Tombs of Joseon, ICOMOS queries whether the royal tombs demonstrate an interchange of human values or an *assimilation* of human values. The evolution of Korean royal tombs is framed by a tomb system that is unique to Korea, and by the Unified Silla Period (pre-918), Korean royal tombs developed unique characteristics. In addition, the developed royal tombs appear to have had little or no influence on relevant tomb architecture within Asia.

Similarly, considering the Royal Tombs of Joseon within the context of Asian philosophy and religion, there is marked *assimilation* of human values, as expressed in Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, but little evidence of an exchange of human values.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated.

*Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that, compared to other Confucian cultures, the integrated approach to nature and the universe in the Joseon period created a unique and important funeral tradition associated with the royal tombs. By adopting the principles of *pungsu* and maintaining the natural environment, a distinctive sacred place was created for the practice of ancestral rituals.

ICOMOS considers that the Royal Tombs of Joseon bear a unique testimony to a cultural tradition of ancestral rites that has been practiced continuously from the beginning of the Joseon period to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and, again, from 1966.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that within the Joseon period there are period-specific

differences, as reflected in the spatial layout, architectural design and usage, as well as in the scale of stone objects.

ICOMOS considers that the Royal Tombs of Joseon, as a comprehensive series, are an outstanding example of a unique type of royal tomb architecture that responds to its setting and reveals, through its buildings, structures and related elements, the tradition and practice of ancestral rites.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

*Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that state ancestral rites were held on a regular basis during the Joseon period, and except for periods of political turmoil, they have been conducted on the day of state ancestral worship every year by the Royal Family Organization and by the worshipping society for each tomb. As well, the Joseon Dynasty maintained a system called *Jongmyo* (Royal Ancestral Shrine) for the display and worship of ancestral tablets

ICOMOS considers that the Royal Tombs of Joseon are directly associated with a living tradition of ancestral rites within the context of Confucianism.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi) and that the Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated.

#### 4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

##### *Development pressures*

The effects of urban development are one of the major factors affecting the property, especially sight lines from the sites and water flow into the sites for feeding ponds. Progress has been made to control some of the adverse effects, such as building height restrictions in the Seolleung buffer zone and the expansion of the buffer zones around Seosamreung Cluster and Taereung Cluster.

##### *Tourism pressures*

Tourism has an impact on sites in the more urbanised areas, especially the entrance areas. Visitation is especially heavy in the months of April, May and October, although some tombs remain off-limits to ordinary people.

##### *Environmental pressures*

Acid rain, foreign plant species and aggressive moss pose problems, while white ants damage structures in wood and wild boars attack people and damage structures.

Yeongneung Cluster, for example, suffers from excessive moss growth.

##### *Natural disasters*

The greatest natural disaster risk is from fires. Torrential downpours pose little risk.

##### *Impact of climate change*

With global warming, there will be effects on flora and fauna, and, as previously mentioned, white ants are already a problem. It is anticipated that wooden and stone structures will be affected as well.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are pressures from development, the environment and tourism as well as such natural disasters as fire.

#### 5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

##### *Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone*

The property and buffer zone boundaries are clearly marked on maps, but are hard to decipher on site. For the 18 clusters (40 tombs), the property covers an area of 1756.9 ha with a buffer zone covering an area of 4251.7 ha. The combined area is 6008.6 ha.

The boundaries of the property support the values of the property, especially since five of the sites, which were originally included in buffer zones (or thought to be in a buffer zone) (part of the *jaesil* site of Yeongneung Cluster (E5), part of the *jaesil* site of Jangneung Cluster (Yeongwol Jangneung) (E6), the *yeonji* and *geumcheongyo* of Hyoreung (Seosamreung Cluster) (W2) and the *yeonji* of Jangneung Cluster) (W5)), are now in property areas. In addition, adequate justification has been provided for why the guardian temples of Jangneung Cluster (E6) and Yungneung Cluster (W7) have not been included in the property areas.

The extent of the buffer zones varies. Within Seoul, the five clusters have buffer zones extending 100 metres from the property, and these are under the control of the city's Cultural Heritage Protection Ordinance. In the metropolitan area (Gyeonggi-do and Gangwon-do), the 13 clusters have buffer zones extending 500 metres from the property, and these are under the province's Cultural Heritage Protection Ordinance.

For reasons of distance, i.e. beyond 500 metres from the property areas, most buffer zones do not include the guardian mountains facing royal tombs. In the case of Heolleung Cluster (M2), for example, and in response to a specific query from ICOMOS, the State Party has explained in its letter of 27 February 2009 that the facing guardian mountain, Mt. Illeungsan, is 1.5 kilometers away from the property area. The State Party has further explained that the Mt. Illeungsan area is under district government protection through its designation as an eco-park and greenbelt.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the property areas and buffer zones are adequate.

## **Ownership**

The property has been state-owned since 1945. Most of the buffer zones are privately held, but the government has purchased (some) private lands around entrance roads to enhance site values and management. In addition, for Taereung Cluster, there has been a land transfer agreement between private owner(s) and the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA), and a land transfer agreement is underway for Seosamreung Cluster.

## **Protection**

### *Legal Protection*

In 1970, all 18 clusters (40 tombs) were designated national historical sites under the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (CHPA) (revised 2000). Under this legislation and the National Land Planning and Utilization Act (NLPUA), development within the property is prohibited to ensure the protection of the historical and cultural landscape.

Within the buffer zones, development must be approved by the Cultural Heritage Committee (NCHC), and the head of the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA) has the right to demand that measures are taken to conserve the landscape. Guidelines are in effect for six of the clusters (Donggureung Cluster, Hongyureung Cluster, Sareung Cluster, Jangneung Cluster (W5), Jangneung Cluster (W6) and Yungneung Cluster), and similar guidelines are expected for the other royal tombs. In urban areas, planning rules of the local government apply, but, it appears, final approval must come from the national level.

### *Traditional Protection*

The Royal Tombs Management Offices are under the CHA. The Ancestral Worship Society, set up by the Royal Family Organization, plays an important role in the protection of royal ancestral rites.

### *Effectiveness of protection measures*

Protective measures are effective; moreover, gaps have been identified, and measures have been taken, or planned, to ameliorate such gaps.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate, but urges the State Party to produce guidelines for appropriate development in the remaining 12 buffer zones.

## **Conservation**

### *Inventories, recording, research*

The property has been registered and recorded in the royal archives. As well, historical records, as mentioned previously, cover site selection, the form of royal tombs and the repair of royal tombs.

## **Present state of conservation**

The present state of conservation is good, except for the *jeongjagak* (T-shaped shrine) and *suragan* (royal kitchen) at Heolleung Cluster, which are currently being conserved. The incorrect restoration of structures at Yeongneung Cluster in the 1970s will be rectified by 2011. Commitments have been made regarding the removal of the Shooting Range and Sports Training Center at Taereung (M3) (in, respectively, 2008 and 2014) and the removal of the Korean National University of Art at Uireung (M5) (2012). There has also been a commitment to improve the environment for the buildings west of Seoreung (W1) (2012). Additional information received from the State Party on 27 February 2009 included assurances/plans (and completed measures) for the timely removal of these non-conforming facilities. However, in its supplementary information (Appendix 7), the State Party refers to the possible relocation and improvement of military facilities at Olleung (W3) and the relocation of military facilities at Jangneung (W6). Both situations will need to be further investigated in the future.

### *Active conservation measures*

As well, active steps have been taken to investigate and ameliorate the effects of acid rain. Stone objects, in particular, have suffered from water erosion and moss. However, conservation work relating to stone remains is in the research and experimental stage.

The conservation of wooden elements follows best practice within East Asia and the international community. In compliance with CHA practice, it appears that certain treatments are carried out every five years, roof conservation every ten years and major conservation, according to conditions, every 20 years. Heolleung Cluster is currently being conserved.

### *Maintenance*

Daily maintenance is carried out by the Maintenance Team under CHA.

### *Effectiveness of conservation measures*

The property as a whole is well-maintained and appropriately conserved.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the overall conservation of the property is good.

## **Management**

### *Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes*

The management system is highly centralised and well-organised. At the top is the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA) (Royal Palaces and Tombs Management Division).

Five groups advise the division: Cultural Heritage Committee; Scientific Advisory Committee; Royal Family Association; Maintenance Team; and Local Government

Cultural Heritage Division (for Jangneung Management Office (Gangwon-do) only).

Directly under the CHA (Royal Palaces and Tombs Management Division) are five official offices: Eastern Region Management Office; Central Region Management Office; Western Region Management Office; King Sejong Shrine Office; and Sareung Management Office (Traditional Plant Nursery). Relevant royal tombs are directly under these offices. However, as mentioned above, Jangneung Management Office (Gangwon-do) is directly under the Local Government Cultural Heritage Division, and as such, reports through the division to CHA.

Serial nomination:

The organizational structure and associated responsibilities and processes indicate that there is an overall management framework for all components.

*Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation*

A Management Plan for the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty was formulated in September 2007. The goal of this plan is to conserve and manage the royal tombs in a more systematic and scientific manner. It appears that the main contribution of the plan is to affirm pre-existing good practice.

The sites lack a comprehensive tourism plan. ICOMOS considers that this is necessary in order to protect site values.

Site interpretation exists at all sites open to the public, but the signage system currently lacks uniformity from site to site. Although there are a number of interpretation initiatives, the significance of the royal tombs needs to be more forcefully expressed.

*Risk preparedness*

The CHA has compiled a Manual for Disasters in Cultural Heritage and a Practical Manual for Fire Prevention and Recovery.

*Involvement of the local communities*

The private Royal Family Organization, in particular, has made significant contributions to maintaining the intangible values of the royal tombs. In addition to carrying out research on rituals and ritual education, the organisation has established an ancestral society at each royal tomb. The ancestral societies help in efforts to conserve the royal tombs and conduct ceremonies on the days specified for royal ancestral rites.

Wider community involvement is seen in the “One Heritage One Guardian” voluntary programme, which has encouraged community involvement with site maintenance.

*Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training*

All financial resources for conserving and managing the Joseon Royal tombs come from the budget of the national government. The budget is divided into three main

categories: conservation; management; and promotion. There are both internal and external training opportunities.

*Effectiveness of current management*

The current management system and policy framework appear to be effective.

However, ICOMOS recommends that a tourism management plan be formulated and implemented immediately and that site interpretation be more engaging.

ICOMOS considers that both the management system and general policy framework are adequate. However, ICOMOS recommends that a tourism management plan be developed and implemented immediately and that future site interpretation be improved to be more engaging.

## 6. MONITORING

Great importance is attached to property monitoring. Should the sites be inscribed in the World Heritage List, the State Party advises that systematic monitoring will occur every two years. Currently, there is a checklist based on authenticity, conservation and management. Each area has appropriate indicators.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring of the site is appropriate.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Primarily centred around Seoul, the Royal Tombs of Joseon are located on mountain sides in conformity with *pungsu* principles. The tombs, which are understated in design and human in scale, are complexes of burial mounds and associated buildings, structures and elements, including a range of stone objects, such as stone lanterns, animals and human figures. The various parts of the complex are placed within a strict ceremonial hierarchy, in which worshippers move through increasingly sacred spaces to pay respect to the most honoured of ancestors, the kings of the Joseon Dynasty.

### *Recommendations with respect to inscription*

ICOMOS recommends that the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty, Republic of Korea, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi)**.

### *Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value*

The natural surroundings of the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty, shaped by the principles of *pungsu*, create a delicate setting for the living tradition of ancestral worship and its associated rites.

The royal tombs, with their hierarchical ordering of areas from the profane to the sacred, and their distinctive structures and objects, are an ensemble that resonates with the historic past of the Joseon Dynasty.

**Criterion (iii):** Within the context of Confucian cultures, the integrated approach of the Royal Tombs of Joseon to nature and the universe has resulted in a distinctive and significant funeral tradition. Through the application of *pungsu* principles and the retention of the natural landscape, a memorable type of sacred place has been created for the practice of ancestral rituals.

**Criterion (iv):** The Royal Tombs of Joseon are an outstanding example of a type of architectural ensemble and landscape that illustrates a significant stage in the development of burial mounds within the context of Korean and East Asian tombs. The royal tombs, in their response to settings and in their unique (and regularized) configuration of buildings, structures and related elements, manifest and reinforce the centuries old tradition and living practice of ancestral worship through a prescribed series of rituals.

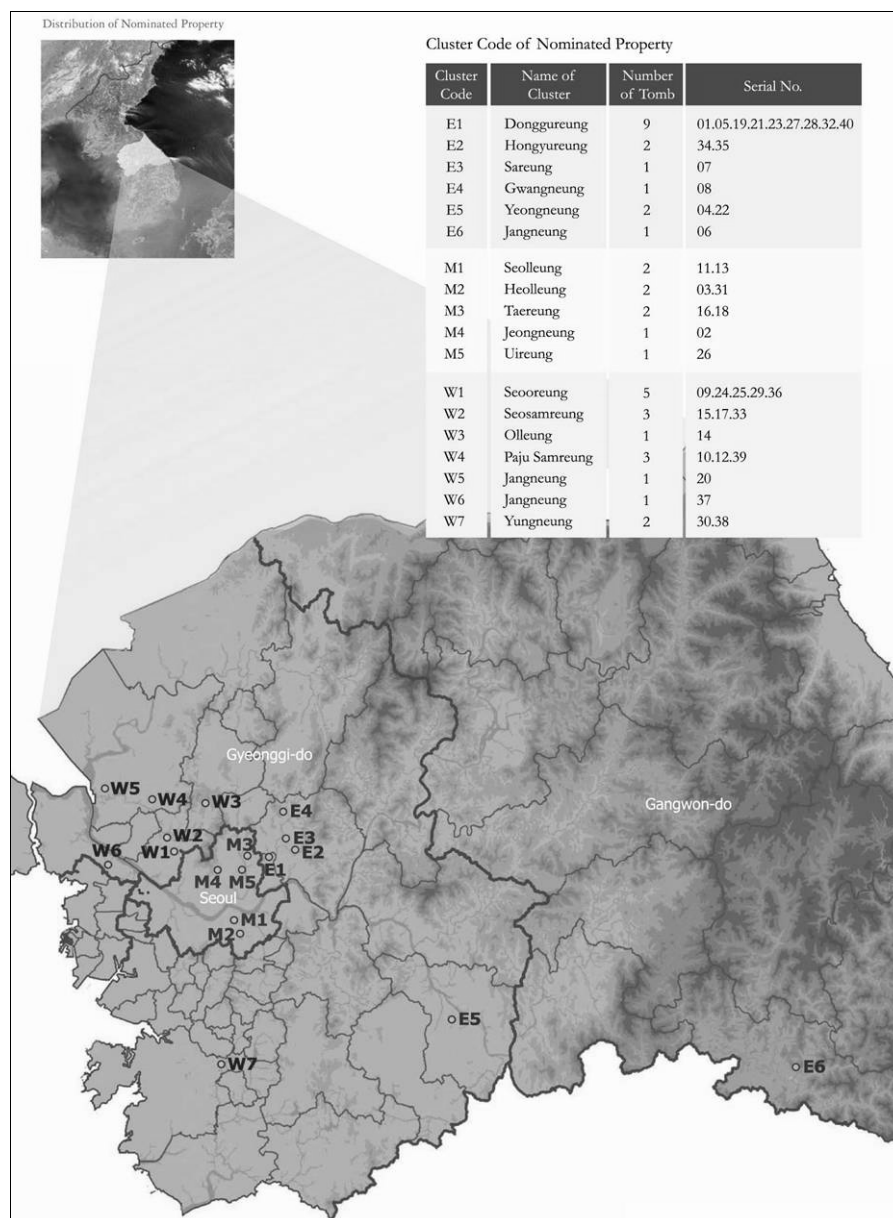
**Criterion (vi):** The Royal Tombs of Joseon are directly associated with a living tradition of ancestral worship through the performance of prescribed rites. During the Joseon period, state ancestral rites were held regularly, and except for periods of political turmoil in the last century, they have been conducted on an annual basis by the Royal Family Organization and the worshipping society for each royal tomb.

As a series, the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty retain their overall integrity and authenticity. Unrelated facilities are being relocated in some sites under the leadership of the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA).

Extensive legal protection, including traditional protection, exists, and an integrated management system is able to ensure consistency from property to property, including implementing and maintaining efficient measures in conservation initiatives and on-going property maintenance.

Furthermore, ICOMOS recommends that the State Party:

- Produce guidelines for appropriate development in the remaining 12 buffer zones;
- Develop and implement a tourism management plan;
- Improve future site interpretation to be more engaging.



**Map showing the location of the nominated properties**



**Aerial photo of Gangneung**



**Sareung – Landscape surrounding a Royal Tomb**



**Yereung – T-shaped shrine**



**Jeongneung – stone lantern**