

**Identification**

<u>Nomination</u>	Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji area
<u>Location</u>	Nara Prefecture
<u>State Party</u>	Japan
<u>Date</u>	1 October 1992

**Justification by State Party**

Eleven of the buildings that compose this nomination were constructed before or during the 8th century AD and are the oldest surviving wooden buildings in the world (criterion iii).

The Horyu-ji buildings are outstanding not only for their overall design but also because of the sophisticated design of details (criterion i).

They express the long, rich history of the wooden Buddhist temples of east Asia, as well as the history of the Buddhist religion itself (criterion iv).

**History and Description**History

Buddhism entered Japan from China via Korea in the mid 6th century AD. In the 7th century the pious Prince Regent Shotoku founded the religious centres of Horyu-ji and Chugu-ji. The Hokki-ji complex was founded later, in his memory, on the site of Shotoku's palace by his son, Yamashiro-no Oe-No O.

A disastrous fire destroyed the original Horyu-ji buildings in 670, but structural remains survive below ground in the precinct known as Wakakusa Garan to the southeast of the later West Temple (Sai-in). Rebuilding commenced almost immediately and continued into the early years of the 8th century. The West Temple was completed first, followed by the East Temple (To-in) on the site of Shotoku's Ikaruga Palace. The great temple complex attracted a number of monasteries (Shi-in); these began as communities of Buddhist priests grouped around lecture halls, but in the 11th century they were gradually extended by the construction of temples, built by the priests and their disciples.

From its foundation Horyu-ji was considered to be the temple which guarded the Empire, and so it always enjoyed the protection of the Imperial family. In addition, the cult of Prince Shotoku, which began in the 12th century, attracted many pilgrims, and as a result Horyu-ji was always immaculately

maintained and conserved. Hokki-ji was almost completely destroyed at the end of the 16th century during political disturbances and only the three-storey pagoda remains from the original construction.

With the Meiji restoration of 1868, which was accompanied by a more prominent role for Shintoism, Horyu-ji fell into a decline. However, the pioneering Law for the Preservation of Ancient Shrines and Temples 1897 resulted in it becoming the subject of a major restoration effort, and it has retained its primacy in Japanese conservation policies and programmes since that time.

### Description

The plan of Horyu-ji is patterned on the Chinese style of building in the Six Dynasties Period (Bai-wei: 222-589), with a relatively asymmetrical arrangement of the buildings. The structures are based on the Chinese bay system, a modified version of post-and-lintel construction with intricate bracketing designed to transfer the weight of the heavy tiled roof down to the massive wooden columns that support them. They are especially noteworthy for the skilful use of entasis on the columns and their cloud-shaped brackets.

The nomination covers 48 buildings in total - 21 in Horyu-ji East Temple, nine in Horyu-ji West Temple, 17 monasteries and other buildings, and the Hokki-ji pagoda. Of these, 28 were built before or during the 8th century - the Kondo (main hall), Gojunoto (five-storey pagoda), Chumon (inner gate), and Kairo (roofed corridor) of Horyu-ji West Temple and the Sanjunoto (three-storey pagoda) of Hokki-ji. These may justifiably be claimed to be the oldest surviving wooden buildings in the world.

The four old buildings in the Horyu-ji West Temple (Sai-in) all date from 680-710. They are surrounded by ancillary buildings such as priests' living quarters, refectories, gates, etc. Fifteen buildings in the complex are designated National Treasures and six are Important Cultural Properties.

Two of the buildings in the Horyu-ji East Temple (To-in) date from the first half of the 8th century - the Yumedono (main hall), an exceptional octagonal building, and the Denpodo (lecture hall). Another important structure, rebuilt in the 13th century, is the Raido (worship hall), which houses ashes of the Buddha. Three buildings in this group are National Treasures and six are Important Cultural Properties.

Of the Horyu-ji monasteries (Shi-in), most of which date to the 13th-17th centuries, 14 are designated as Important Cultural Properties. The Hokki-ji Sanjunoto (three-storey pagoda), the completion of which is dated to 705 by an inscription, is designated as a National Treasure.

## **Management and Protection**

### **Legal status**

Ownership in all the buildings and land that are the subject of the nomination is vested in Religious Juridical Persons.

The 19 National Treasures and 29 Important Cultural Properties are designated under the provisions of Article 27 of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties 1950 (revised 1975). The definition of National Treasures is "those properties which are of especially high value from the viewpoint of world culture and which are the matchless treasures of the nation." Furthermore, the Horyu-ji complex is designated as an Historic Site (Article 69) and Hokki-ji as an Archaeological Site (Article 57-4).

Owners of designated monuments and sites are required to manage, repair, and present them to the public (Articles 30, 31, 34-2, 47-2, 74). Any action which may alter the designation requires Government permission (Articles 43, 80). The national Government is authorized to subsidize the repair and management of designated buildings and sites and to provide technical assistance (Articles 35, 47).

### **Management**

The management is the responsibility of the Managerial Office for the Preservation of Cultural Properties at Horyu-ji, which administers Government grant-aid and supervises all works.

Under the Ancient Capitals Law the Horyu-ji area and its buffer zone were designated a Conservation District of Historic Natural Features of Ikaruga-cho in 1966. In the same year Nara Prefecture designated this as the Ikaruga Scenic Landscape District. Within the Conservation District, the Horyu-ji precinct is further designated a Special Preservation District, within which all activities are strictly controlled. Ikaruga-cho has a City Plan (1989), which designated the nominated area and most of the buffer zone as an Urbanization Control Area. The Urbanization Promotion Zone in the southern part of the buffer zone has special controls to ensure visual harmony with the monuments.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### **Conservation history**

Maintenance and conservation work have been carried out continuously on these structures for some thirteen centuries, with the support first of the Imperial House and more recently from the National Government. Large-scale repairs were carried out at Horyu-ji in the 13th and 17th centuries (twice). Work was carried out continuously between 1895 and 1985 in a three-phase campaign. It took two forms - major works (total or partial dismantling, repair, and reconstruction) and minor works

(reroofing and retouching of wall surfaces). Major works were also carried out to install effective firefighting equipment. This work, which is continuing, is supervised by on-site conservation architects, and full documentation is available in published form.

During Stage 1 (1895-1933) work concentrated on Hokki-ji Sanjunoto, Horyu-ji To-in Yumedono, and Horyu-ji Sai-in Chumon and Kairo. A comprehensive conservation plan for the entire complex was drawn up in 1934, and a national conservation office was established on-site. During Stage 2 (1934-55) work took place on 22 buildings, including the Horyu-ji Sai-in Kondo and Gojunoto and the Horyu-ji To-in Yumedono and Denpodo. During this period the Sai-in Kondo was destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt using new timbers (based on earlier architectural survey), but the fire-damaged timbers were preserved in a new storage building, where they are on display to the public. Stage 3 (1959-85) saw the designation and conservation of 17 further buildings and completion of work elsewhere in the complex.

The Hokki-ji Sanjunoto had been extensively repaired in 1262 and 1678. It was the subject of major conservation works in 1898-9 and 1972-5.

### Authenticity

Work carried out since 1895 has been to the highest standards of contemporary conservation practice. From 1934 onwards new techniques have been developed for the conservation of wooden structures, and especially in the case of interventions involving dismantling and reconstruction (which is a fundamental component of the Japanese conservation ethic).

Japanese conservation practice conforms with established principles of authenticity in design, materials, techniques, and environment. The use of new materials is rigorously controlled, and all proposals have to be submitted to specialist committees for comment and approval. In view of the standardized modular construction of Japanese wooden structures, reconstruction and replacement involve a minimum amount of conjecture. Special attention is paid to the use of traditional tools and techniques in conservation work.

### **Evaluation**

#### Qualities

The monuments in the Horyu-ji area are of outstanding importance in terms of their contribution to the development of Buddhist architecture. They also represent the oldest and some of the largest wooden structures in the world.

Conservation work of the highest order has been carried out for nearly a century there. The management of the monuments is irreproachable and the protection afforded to them is comprehensive, stemming from a series of overlapping national, regional, and local ordinances.

### Comparative analysis

The Horyu-ji temple complex is the oldest and most complete in Japan. Whilst the design and techniques originated in China, Japanese wooden temple architecture represents a cultural tradition that is wholly distinctive and unique.

### Additional comments

This group of monuments was visited by ICOMOS expert missions in September 1992 and April and August 1993.

### **Recommendation**

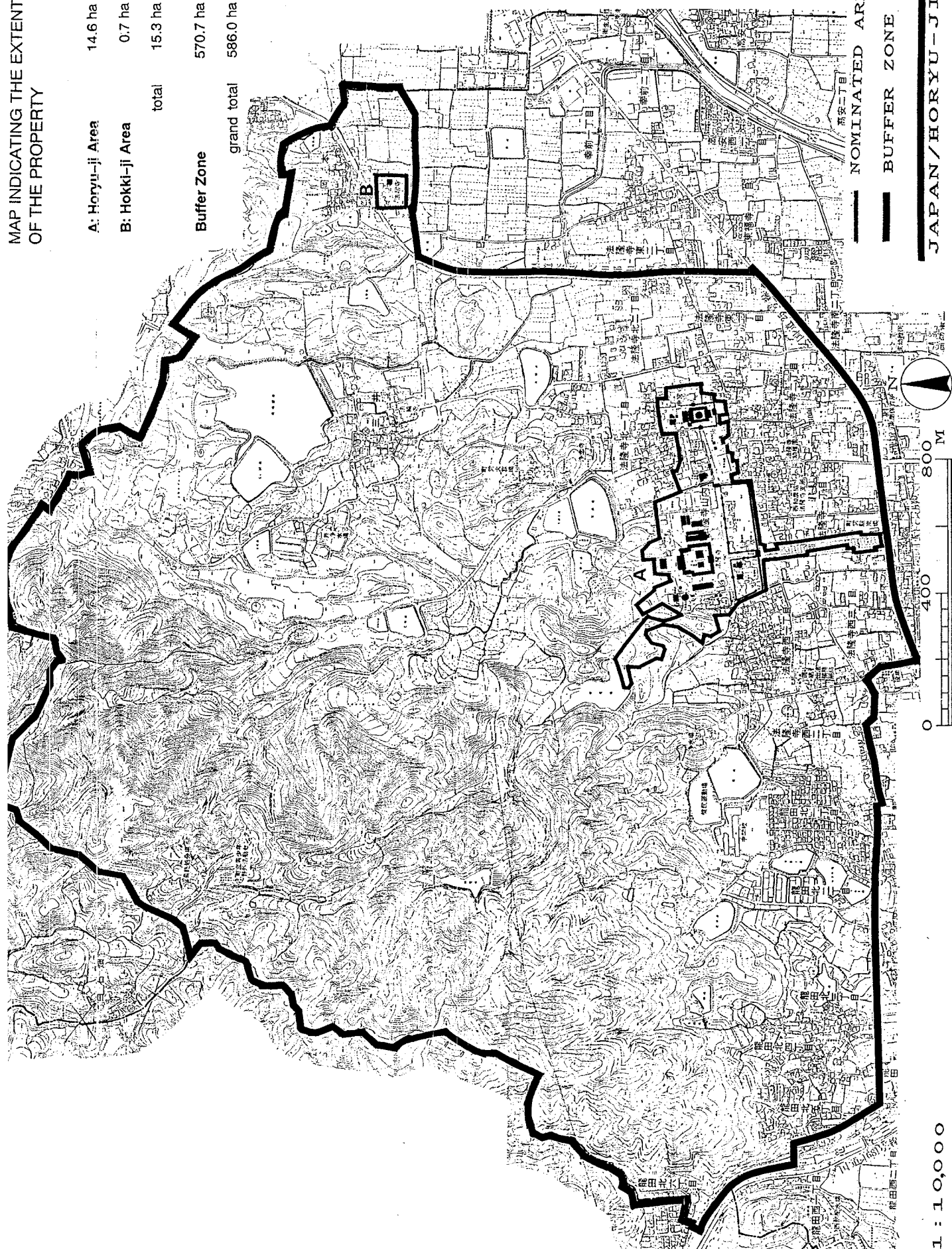
That this property be inscribed on the List on the basis of criteria i, ii, iv, and vi.

- Criterion i The Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji area are masterpieces of wooden architecture, both in overall design and in decoration.
- Criterion ii These are the earliest Buddhist monuments in Japan, dating from shortly after the introduction of Buddhism to the country, and had a profound influence on subsequent religious architecture.
- Criterion iv The Horyu-ji monuments represent the adaptation of Chinese Buddhist architecture and temple layout to Japanese culture and the subsequent development of a distinct indigenous style.
- Criterion vi The introduction of Buddhism into Japan and its promotion by Prince Shotoku marks a significant stage in the spread of Buddhism over this cultural zone.

ICOMOS, October 1993

MAP INDICATING THE EXTENT  
OF THE PROPERTY

A: Horyu-ji Area	14.6 ha
B: Hokki-ji Area	0.7 ha
total	15.3 ha
Buffer Zone	570.7 ha
grand total	586.0 ha



Horyu-ji : carte indiquant la délimitation du site /  
map indicating the extent of the property

# MAP INDICATING THE ZONES OF LEGAL PROTECTION

**A: Horyu-ji Area**  
Historic Site designated by  
the National Government. 14.6 ha

**B: Hokki-ji Area**  
Archaeological Site designated by  
the Nara Prefecture Education Board. 0.7 ha

total 15.3 ha

**Buffer Zone**  
grand total 570.7 ha

586.0 ha

Zone for preservation of  
historical features.

Special zone for preservation  
of historical natural features.

Category 1 zone for preservatic  
of historical natural features.

Category 2 zone for preservatic  
of historical natural features.

Scenic zone.

Category 1 scenic zone.

Category 2 scenic zone.

Category 3 scenic zone.

Suburban open space  
conservation zone.

Nature conservation zone.

NOMINATED AREA

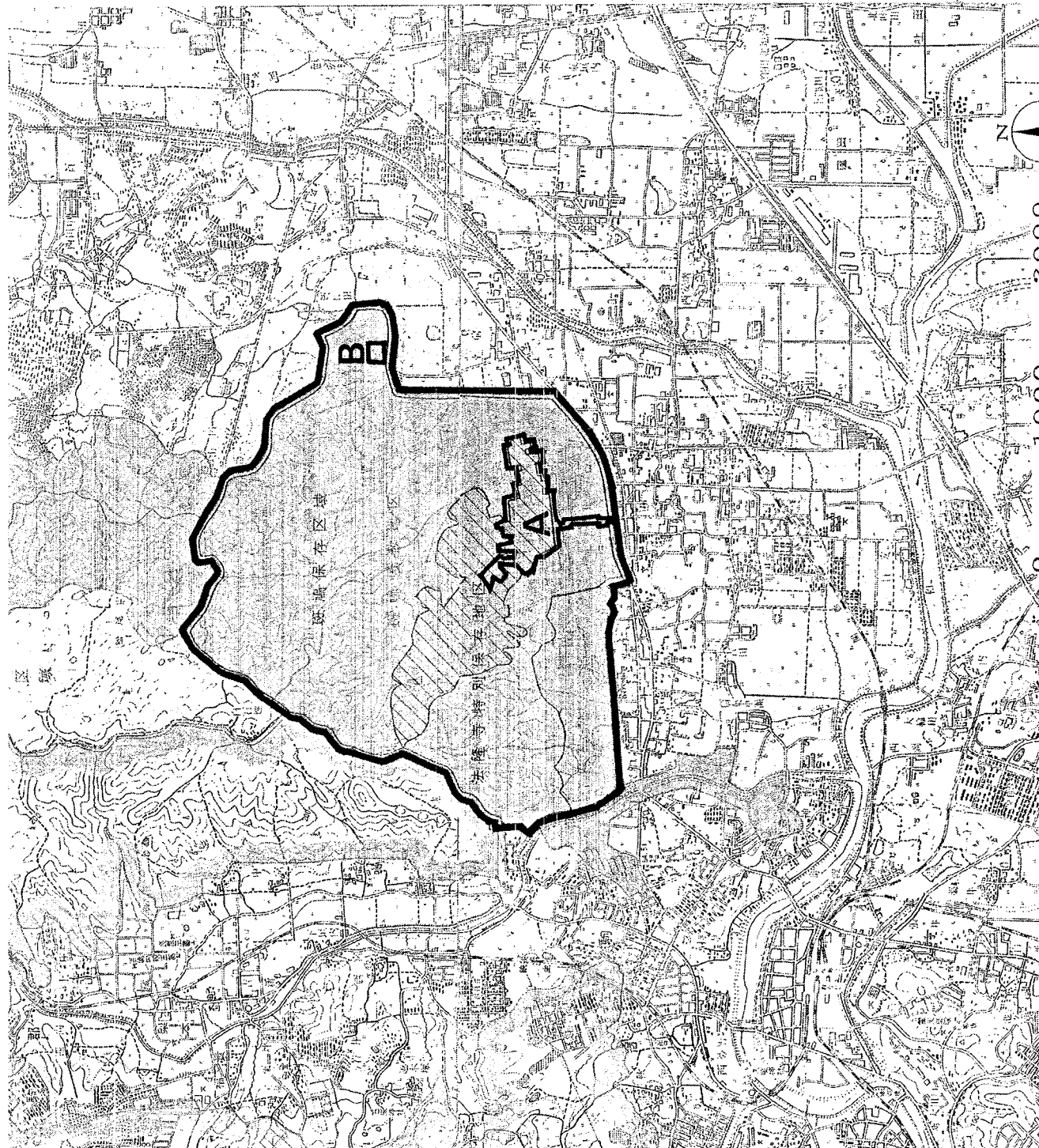
BUFFER ZONE

1 : 25,000

0 1000 2000 M

N

JAPAN/HORYU-JI



Horyu-ji : carte indiquant les zones de protection juridique /  
map indicating the zones of legal protection