

# 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/AS/1593/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 21 December 2018

H. Exc. Mr Takio Yamada  
Permanent Delegation of Japan to UNESCO  
100, avenue de Suffren  
75015 Paris

World Heritage List 2019

**Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan (Japan) – Interim report and additional information request**

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2019. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan” was carried out by Eric Zerrudo (Philippines) in September 2018. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 1 October 2018, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding disaster risk management, legal protection, community awareness and involvement, 'Basic Improvement Plans' for each component, and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 31 October 2018 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2018, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2019. 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 2019.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Friday 23 November 2018 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the discussions at the ICOMOS Panel meeting. Following the completion of their deliberations, the ICOMOS Panel has identified areas where it considers further information is needed.

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

## **Importance of the Kofun period**

The justification provided for criterion (iii) rests on the ability of the kofun to represent the Kofun period of Japanese history (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries). The ICOMOS Panel understands that this period is one in which complex exchanges and diplomacy occurred between the Japanese archipelago and other areas of East Asia, and that it was a transitional period prior to the establishment of monarchical power. As discussed at the meeting on 23 November 2018, the ICOMOS Panel would request further advice on the significance of the Kofun period within the wider geo-cultural region of East Asia. A concise statement and summary on this point would be appreciated.

**Japanese concept of *seibi* ('improvement')**

This was explained to the ICOMOS mission expert, and seems relevant as part of the long-term approach to the maintenance of the kofun. The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased to receive additional summary information that explains the concept of *seibi* and its application to the care for the nominated kofun (including the ways in which this is incorporated within the legal protection and management system).

**Contemporary intangible heritage and rituals**

The ICOMOS Panel understands that the kofun are held in high esteem by contemporary Japanese society, and that rituals are practiced at the *ryobo* components (where facilities for worship are provided). This aspect of the nominated serial property is not yet clearly understood by the ICOMOS Panel, therefore additional information on this aspect would be appreciated.

Furthermore, the ICOMOS Panel requests confirmation of its understanding that the *ryobo* are only accessed by members of the Imperial family and staff of the Imperial Household Agency. The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased if the State Party could indicate whether there could be future opportunities for off-site interpretation of the *ryobo*. If these understandings are incorrect, please provide corrected information.

**Component 44 (Minegazuka Kofun) Buffer Zone**

A small extension to the Buffer Zone for this component was discussed in depth during the ICOMOS Evaluation Mission. The ICOMOS Panel would like to request confirmation that this Buffer Zone has been revised according to these discussions (including a map showing the new boundary).

**History of tree cover**

The ICOMOS Panel understands that the kofun were not originally covered by vegetation, but that most are now covered with trees and other vegetation. The ICOMOS Panel would be interested to receive summary information about these changes (i.e. the likely historical period when the kofun began to be covered by vegetation).

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

We would be grateful if you could provide ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre with the above information **by 28 February 2019 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines for supplementary 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 supplementary 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 process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to      Osaka Promotion Division, Department of Civic and Cultural Affairs - Osaka Prefectural  
                 Government  
                 Office for World Cultural Heritage - Monuments and Sites Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs  
                 UNESCO World Heritage Centre