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## **Jomon Prehistoric Sites (Japan) No 1632**

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### **Official name as proposed by the State Party**

Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan

### **Location**

Hokkaido, Aomori, Iwate, and Akita prefectures  
Japan

### **Brief description**

Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan consists of 17 archaeological sites that represent the pre-agricultural lifeways and complex spiritual culture of a prehistoric people. Located on the southern part of Hokkaido Island and northern Tohoku, this serial property attests to the emergence, development, and maturity of a sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society in Northeast Asia, which developed from about 13,000 BCE to 400 BCE. The series of settlements, burial areas, ritual and ceremonial sites, stone circles, and earthworks are located in a variety of landforms such as mountains, hills, plains, and lowlands, as well as near inner bays, lakes, and rivers with an abundant flow of water.

This area of northern Japan had rich arborous and aquatic resources, with deciduous broad-leaved forests that featured abundant nut-bearing trees, as well as ideal fishing conditions created by the intersection of warm and cold currents off the coast. Migratory fish such as salmon and trout swimming upriver could be caught inland. Under these favourable environmental conditions, prehistoric people living in northern Japan were able to secure food without developing agriculture.

The Jomon people initiated a sedentary way of life about 15,000 years ago, as indicated tentatively at first by the use of pottery, and later by the construction of more permanent dwellings and ritual sites, and the year-round exploitation of nearby resources. Over a period of more than 10,000 years they continued hunter-fisher-gatherer lifeways without changing to an agrarian culture, adapting to environmental changes such as climate warming and cooling and the corresponding marine transgression and regression. Already in the very early stage of sedentary life, the Jomon people developed a complex spiritual dimension. They made graves and also created ritual deposits, artificial earthen mounds, and stone circles that were used for rituals and ceremonies.

### **Category of property**

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of 17 *sites*.

## **1 Basic data**

### **Included in the Tentative List**

5 January 2009

### **Background**

This is a new nomination.

### **Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission**

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members, and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 4 to 15 September 2020.

### **Additional information received by ICOMOS**

A letter was sent to the State Party on 24 September 2020 requesting further information about the proposed justification for Outstanding Universal Value, integrity, factors affecting the property, boundaries, legal protection, and conservation. A response was sent by the State Party on 10 November 2020 containing clarifications on the requested subjects.

On 17 December 2020, ICOMOS sent an Interim Report to the State Party, which requested further clarification and elaboration by the State Party concerning Jomon culture, the selection, delimitation, and protection of the nominated component parts, ownership, management, research, documentation, inventory, exhibition of the archaeological finds, and role of the indigenous population. The State Party responded on 25 February 2021. All responses received throughout the evaluation process are incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

### **Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

18 March 2021

## **2 Description of the property**

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

### **Description and history**

Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan is a serial nomination consisting of 17 component parts located in the southern part of Hokkaido Island and, across the Tsugaru Strait, in northern Tohoku on the northern part of Honshu, the main island of the Japanese archipelago. Six component parts are located in the southwestern part of Hokkaido Prefecture on Hokkaido Island, and eight in Aomori Prefecture, two in Akita Prefecture, and one in Iwate Prefecture in northern Tohoku. They are located in different types of geographical settings ranging from mountains and hills to plains and lowlands, and include inland bays, lakes, and rivers with an abundant flow of water. In prehistoric

times, cool-temperate deciduous broad-leaved forests of chestnut, walnut, and other nut-bearing trees covered an extensive area of this region. Warm and cold currents intersected off the coast, creating rich fishing grounds. In addition, migratory fish such as salmon and trout seasonally swam upriver.

The pre-agricultural society known as the Jomon culture exploited this rich environment starting about 15,000 years ago. Hunters, fishers, and gatherers, the Jomon people abandoned mobility and adopted a sedentary lifestyle. Along with sedentism, which progressed through three main stages (emergence – development – maturity), this cultural group also embraced a complex spiritual dimension that was expressed through their material culture by means of lacquered pots, clay tablets with the impression of feet, and the famous goggle-eyed *dogu* figurines, and ritual places such as earthworks and large stone circles reaching diameters of more than 50 metres.

Throughout the more than 10,000 years of development and sedentism, the Jomon people adapted to changing climates without developing an agrarian way of life, an adaptation that became increasingly common in other parts of Northeast Asia and China from around 9,000 BCE.

The 17 archaeological sites included in the nominated property are ordered chronologically and categorized into six stages of sedentism by subdividing each of the three main stages of emergence, development, and maturity into two sub-stages. These sub-stages are categorized as follows: Settlements emerge (one site); Settlement facilities are divided (one site); Settlement facilities diversify (three sites); Hub settlements appear (three sites); Ritual centres and cemeteries appear (four sites); and Ritual centres and cemeteries are separated (five sites). These six developmental sub-stages based on sedentism coincide with the conventional Jomon chronology: incipient, initial, early, middle, late, and final.

Archaeological scholarship has identified Jomon culture as an early example of a sedentary yet non-agricultural society. The recognition of this combination of cultural traits has helped to fracture the binary conception of mobile hunter-gatherers and sedentary agriculturalists as being mutually exclusive lifeways. The archaeological discoveries related to Jomon culture have thus played an important role in challenging the stage theory of human social evolution. Today, the Jomon culture appears to be an important part of Japanese identity.

### **Boundaries**

The area of the nominated serial property's 17 component parts collectively totals 141.9 hectares, with buffer zones totaling 994.8 hectares. The boundary of each component part is based on the distribution of the site's archaeological deposits, identified mainly through archaeological surface survey, gridded test-pitting, open area excavation, and hand augering, as well as the landform upon which the site is located.

The buffer zones are protected by the national Landscape Act, among other legislative mechanisms, whereby local municipal governments prepare a landscape plan that closely controls all development within the setting of a Historic Site, including the integrity of the general views from the property and particularly any visual connections with elements of importance for the Jomon culture, such as mountains, forests or the sea.

### **State of conservation**

As long as there are no drastic changes to the environment (changes in groundwater levels, for example), or archaeological excavations, archaeological contexts normally remain relatively stable. In general, the excavated features at the 17 components have been recorded and reburied under 30 to 200 centimetres of protective soil, with a root screen to prevent root intrusion. The few original elements left exposed, such as stone circles, are constantly monitored, protected, and/or treated in order to avoid deterioration. Some elements are protected by modern structures or reburied during winter, while others are treated with water-repellent and/or anti-fungal agents.

Each of the serial property's archaeological features can thus be categorized in one of five basic states of conservation: still unexcavated and covered with a protective layer of soil; unexcavated, but in a part of the site that is in private hands (six of the component parts have privately owned areas) and which cannot be covered by protective soil; excavated and reburied under a protective layer of soil; excavated and protected by a modern structure; and excavated, regularly monitored, and given protective treatments.

The active conservation methods have been developed by specialists in conservation, and are implemented by on-site archaeological teams, some of which include conservators. Only the privately owned parts of the sites seem to be at more risk of direct damage. However, the State Party is advancing a plan to acquire all elements of the sites and is working together with the private owners in order to find the best solutions. In the second submission of additional information, following ICOMOS' Interim Report, the State Party describes the landowners as being cooperative.

Conservation of the archaeological sites is also connected to the visual aspects of the natural setting that are sometimes disturbed by "non-compliant" modern constructions such as roads, buildings, power transmission towers, radio towers, and wind turbines located on the property or in the buffer zones. The State Party is in the process of removing such infrastructural elements or mitigating their impact by planting vegetation screens, for example, or painting the elements. The trees that are planted aim to allude to the Jomon-period vegetation and resource base.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is adequate, and in some cases is in the process of being improved through the acquisition of the areas not yet owned

by the State Party, the removal of non-compliant elements, and the mitigation of the impact of others.

### Factors affecting the property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the property are related to development pressures. Major pressures that might take place in the future include roads, wind power and photo-voltaic generation facilities, mobile telephone antennae, and electricity transmission lines. Nevertheless, the current legislation seems to protect the nominated property and its buffer zones adequately, as has been shown in the past by the suspension of construction work that would have damaged archaeological contexts.

Natural factors that could conceivably affect the nominated serial property in the future include earthquakes, storms, floods, sediment-related disasters, volcanic eruptions, snow and freezing damage, as well as fire. However, Regional Disaster Prevention Plans as well as the Conservation and Interpretation Plan developed for each component part appear to prepare the nominated property in an adequate manner. The monitoring of environmental pressures and the preparation and planning for natural disasters both indicate a reasonably high degree of control over these factors that could potentially affect the property.

## 3 Proposed justification for inscription

### Proposed justification

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

- The 17 component parts of the nominated serial property include settlements, burial areas, and ritual and ceremonial sites that include stone circles and earthworks.
- The Jomon culture started using ceramics at a very early date, which together with the subsequent development of more permanent dwellings, ritual sites, and year-round use of resources is taken to mark the start of a globally rare pre-agricultural sedentary society.
- The diverse locations and geographical settings of the settlements, ranging from mountains and hills to plains and lowlands, and including inland bays, lakes, and rivers, show constant adaptation to the changing environment during the period from about 13,000 BCE to 400 BCE.
- This hunter-fisher-gatherer society developed a complex spiritual culture expressed through lacquered pots, clay tablets with the impression of feet, the famous goggle eyed *dogu* figurines, and other material culture, and ritual places including earthworks and large stone circles reaching diameters of more than 50 metres.

### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is presented in three parts: comparison of sites located in southern Hokkaido and northern Tohoku (41); comparison with sites located in Northeast Asia (14); and comparison with sites located elsewhere in the world (19), including World Heritage properties and Tentative List sites broadly comparable to the nominated property's proposed Outstanding Universal Value and attributes.

The sites are compared on the basis of "perspectives" that are linked to the attributes identified for the nominated property: lifestyle, characterized by the managed use of natural resources; complex spirituality, as evident in rituals and ceremonies; diverse relations between the settlement locations and livelihood; and transition of the form of settlements.

The State Party also mentions having taken into account the ICOMOS report *The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future* (2004), as well as discussions at international conferences convened on Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan.

The State Party compares 41 legally protected archaeological sites in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku drawn from Stages I to III of the Jomon chronology. From these, the 17 archaeological sites that most directly contribute to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value have been selected as component parts of the nominated serial property. Consideration of the diverse relations between the settlement locations and livelihood has been excluded from this comparison, since it represents the characteristics of the distribution of settlements in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku and therefore does not work for the purpose of selecting individual component parts.

A slightly different approach was chosen for the comparisons of other sites located within Northeast Asia. The nominated serial property was compared to 14 areas (instead of specific properties) in terms of the duration and content of sedentary hunter-gatherer cultures, using four "perspectives" related to the proposed attributes, formulated as questions. Most areas were screened out because the duration of life based on hunting, fishing, and gathering was shorter than that of the nominated property. Furthermore, sufficient knowledge about that period does not yet exist for most of these areas, which makes a detailed comparative analysis difficult. The State Party indicates that among the nine areas where a hunter-gatherer lifestyle continued, only the eastern and northern parts of Hokkaido in Japan had ritual places that were separated from settlements, and only southern Tohoku and northern Kanto regions and the southern Kanto, Koshinetsu, and Tokai regions, all in Japan, show a transition of settlement structure or a diversity in location and environment of any comparative significance.

At the global level, the nominated property is compared with 19 other properties selected from the World Heritage List and the Tentative Lists, based on the mention of sedentism. These properties, located across the five UNESCO

regional groups, are associated with a wide range of World Heritage criteria; only four are serial properties. In general, the properties are considered not comparable due to the lack of one or more of the “perspectives.” Especially in the single-site category, it is not surprising to find that the compared properties do not show diverse relationships between settlement locations and livelihood, nor a transition of the form of settlements. Serial properties and cultural landscapes are more diverse and have more potential to offer comparable parameters, but often lack either the settlement or the spiritual aspect.

The State Party concludes that, with the 17 component parts selected for nomination, it is possible to understand a sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer lifeway that continued for a period exceeding 10,000 years, and to see thoroughly how sedentary settlements emerged, developed, and matured over time. It is also possible to know how people at that time created a distinctive spiritual culture.

While the comparative analysis is detailed and far ranging, it can be argued that some of the properties used for comparison are irrelevant since they are not focused on pre-agricultural sedentism and spirituality. However, it can also be concluded that the paucity of properties with a comparable set of characteristics highlights the nominated property’s exceptionality, with its long, uninterrupted chronology, environmental settings, and cultural traits.

ICOMOS notes that there is inadequate analysis of certain distinctive areas in other regions of the world that are comparable to the Jomon culture’s sedentary, pre-agricultural, spiritual, sustainable-resource settlements, such as Archaeological Sites of the Chinchorro Culture (Chile, Tentative list) and the Pacific Northwest Coast cultural area exemplified in Sᑭang Gwaay (Canada, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981, criterion (iii)). These areas are briefly mentioned in the comparative analysis, but are too quickly dismissed for their differences in environment, chronology or cultural traits.

ICOMOS notes that the State Party in its additional information highlighted that the nominated serial property aims to represent only the specific development of the Jomon culture in northern Japan, even though Jomon culture sites can be found throughout most of the country. The nominated property components represent a recognizable, congruous cultural area, based, for example, on pottery style, ritual and ceremonial facilities, locations and structural developments of settlements, and especially the particular environmental setting.

For serial properties, the *Operational Guidelines* require that the nomination set out the rationale for choosing the component parts, in terms of comparing them with other similar components and justifying the choices made. The 17 component parts that make up the nominated serial property were selected from amongst more than 20,000 Jomon-period sites located in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku. Choosing the component parts was based on: (a) the possibility of verifying the representativeness of the site based on the results of archaeological excavations; (b) the

site’s state of conservation and its designation by the national government as a Historic Site or Special Historic Site; and (c) the existence of thorough protective measures put in place by responsible local governments with instruction and advice from the national government. ICOMOS considers that the rationale for and justification of the choices made is adequate.

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

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

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (v).

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 the property bears exceptional testimony to a globally rare prehistoric sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society which continued over more than 10,000 years, and which nurtured a complex spiritual culture.

ICOMOS considers that the property bears a unique testimony to the Jomon culture in northern Japan. The culture, with its early development of a non-agricultural sedentary way of life, expressed its complex spirituality through ritual constructions and impressive material culture.

Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures) or human interaction with the environment, especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property is an outstanding example of the development of sedentism from emergence to its subsequent development and maturity. People in this region maintained a hunter-fisher-gatherer way of life for a very long period of time by developing diverse modes of livelihood, adapting to various locations without altering the land significantly, as was the case with agrarian societies.

ICOMOS considers that the rare and very early development of pre-agricultural sedentism from emergence to maturity is well exemplified by the nominated serial property’s component parts. Through the careful selection of the components, the State Party has managed to show the different adaptations of the culture to its ever-changing environment.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (v).

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## **Integrity and authenticity**

### **Integrity**

The integrity of the nominated property is based on archaeological remains that exemplify the cultural traits and site types of the ancient Jomon culture in northern Japan. It is comprised of sites that show the initiation of sedentism and the separation between the residential area and burial areas; sites that show the diversity of settlement facilities during the warm, marine transgression period and hub settlements that have ritual places; and sites that demonstrate the maturity of sedentism through stone circles, cemeteries, and settlements. The component parts of the nominated serial property are of adequate size individually, and as a group they include all important archaeological remains.

The sites also include, to a degree, their interaction with the environment. The decision to exclude present-day rivers or seashore from some of the selected component parts is motivated by the fact that important changes to the paths of the watercourses and to the sea level have occurred over thousands of years. That is, their present positions are not necessarily representative of possible Jomon-era associations.

The nominated serial property is protected by law and does not suffer from the negative impacts of natural disasters or large-scale developments. Only a few archaeological features were damaged by past construction works. There are, however, several modern constructions such as buildings, wind turbines, high-voltage cables, municipal roads, and a municipal cemetery, referred to as “non-compliant elements,” that have impacts on the views to and/or from the component parts. The State Party presents plans to mitigate such impacts by planting tree covers, for example, or by removing the non-compliant elements in the future.

The State Party indicates that while further excavations are possible, they are not considered urgent at this time. Nevertheless, in response to a question by ICOMOS, the State Party indicated in its additional information that (test) excavations are planned/ongoing at four sites in order to confirm the presence of archaeological remains. Some sites have areas set aside for future excavations, while others have committed to excavations following the removal of on-site modern features. Any future excavations must be approved by the national government, and cannot have an impact on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity or integrity of the nominated serial property.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the whole series as well as the integrity of the component parts is satisfactory, but that the work already started by the State Party to mitigate or remove non-compliant elements must be continued.

### **Authenticity**

The nominated serial property retains a high degree of authenticity in terms of locations, forms and designs, materials and substances, uses and functions, traditions and techniques, and spirit and feeling, most of the archaeological remains having been buried untouched for thousands of years.

Only very few archaeological features were damaged by construction works in the past. More recent construction projects in some cases helped identify the sites and were suspended and changed once the importance of the finds was established.

The State Party acknowledges that the changing climate has brought about environmental changes affecting, for example, the cool-temperate deciduous broad-leaved forests (Boreal Beech Forest) that were important during the Jomon period due to the abundant forest resources such as chestnuts and walnuts, among others. However, attempts have been made to reconstitute elements of the paleoenvironment by planting similar species of trees, and by protecting the visual connection of the sites with, for example, the forest, the sea or the mountains.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the whole series as well as the authenticity of the component parts is satisfactory.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been met, and the integrity and authenticity of the individual component parts that comprise the series have been met, although work on removing or mitigating the impact of non-compliant elements needs to be continued.

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### **Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription**

The justification of this nomination is based on the very early and long period of pre-agricultural sedentism of this hunter-fisher-gatherer society, and the development of a complex spiritual culture. The comparative study shows that the property is exceptional in that it exemplifies a very early and long-lasting development in an ever-changing environment, and justifies consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List.

Furthermore, the nominated serial property includes a wide range of different types of sites, which evolved and diversified over time in response to the society's needs. The very complete collection of traits assembled in this property allows the story of this sedentary pre-agricultural culture to be told in a very clear way. The proposed selection of component parts has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii) and criterion (v).

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been met, and that the integrity and authenticity of the individual component parts that comprise the series have been met, although work on removing or mitigating the impact of non-compliant elements needs to be continued.

#### **Attributes**

The attributes that contribute to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated serial property relate to the pre-agricultural lifeways, complex spiritual culture, diverse relations between settlement locations and livelihoods, and transition of the form of settlements over time of the ancient Jomon culture in northern Japan.

These aspects are expressed physically through the landscapes that contained the Jomon culture's resource bases (forests, rivers, sea); the material culture (stone arrowheads and other hunting tools, pottery, lacquered ceramics, *dogu* figurines, clay tablets); the archaeological features and constructions with probable ritual use, including stone circles, graves, and artificial earthen mounds; the locations of the settlements in different geographical settings such as mountains, hills or plains, and next to rivers, forests or the sea; remains of pit dwellings and other structures, shell middens, dumping grounds, storage pits; and the evolution and diversification over time of the settlement pattern and the site types.

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ICOMOS considers that the identified attributes contribute to the justification for inscription.

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## **4 Conservation measures and monitoring**

### **Conservation measures**

Most of the archaeological features have been reburied under a layer of soil to protect them from modern activities. The elements that have been left uncovered for the visiting public to see receive active consolidation and conservation treatments. For example, at the Kitakogane settlement site (component 003), the archaeological remains of a watering place are covered with sandbags and protective sheets during the winter to prevent the stones from being frozen or moved from their original positions. Stone tools have been treated for conservation. Other interventions include the in situ sterilization of surfaces of archaeological remains, the application of fungicides and water repellent, and the removal of precipitated salts. When the State Party considers exposing original archaeological features, the materials and structure of the archaeological remains must first be determined to be strong, as is the case with stone circles; scientific preservation treatment must be applied to prevent deterioration from rain, snow, mould, and lichens; and fences must be installed to restrict visitor entry.

The active conservation measures have been developed by specialists in conservation and are implemented by on-site archaeological teams, some of which include conservation specialists. The conservation and maintenance activities are implemented following the conservation and interpretation plans developed (or in development) for each archaeological site. These plans are generally updated every 10 to 15 years, or in response to changes at the site (for example, expansion or the addition of infrastructure).

ICOMOS observes that portions ranging up to 57 % of six of the component parts are not yet owned by the Local Government Authority. This situation could conceivably hamper timely conservation efforts. ICOMOS notes that the State Party says that the privately owned parts of the sites are equally protected by law, and that the owners are cooperative. Nevertheless, it is important that the State Party continues its ongoing efforts to transfer the privately owned parts of the sites into government hands.

### **Monitoring**

A monitoring record is kept by the local prefectures and municipalities in charge of the individual component parts, under the guidance of the national Agency for Cultural Affairs. Issues that need to be discussed at a higher level are forwarded to the Council for Preservation and Utilization of Jomon Prehistoric Sites, which consists of the governors, mayors, and other representatives of the relevant local governments. The Council collects information and keeps an annual record.

All the archaeological sites have at least one dedicated archaeologist who is present on site and responsible for monitoring. These members of the technical staff make regular visual inspections in order to monitor impacts due to a number of different factors. The monitoring is focused particularly on the state of conservation of the exposed archaeological features such as stone circles.

The monitoring indicators described by the State Party deal with the state of conservation of the nominated property's components, and also include indicators for the effectiveness of management, issues such as development pressure, and the number of visitors. The indicators appear to be adequately linked to the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and to the identified threats.

The nomination dossier includes a list of more than 200 very brief summaries of existing reports and results of previous reporting exercises.

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ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures and monitoring processes for the component parts are adequate and well planned, as attested by the state of conservation maintained for the nominated property as a whole over a period of many years.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Documentation

The component parts and their contribution to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated serial property are well described. There is also a list of the latest inventories that makes reference to reports on archaeological surveys and excavation. The site descriptions and Annex 4 with supplementary information contain excavation plans indicating the locations of the excavated areas, some excavation drawings (plans and profiles), as well as a number of illustrative photos from excavations. While there are some photographs and repeated references to the unearthed artefacts, some of which are being exposed in the on-site or municipal museums, no detailed information on the inventories is given. The response presented by the State Party to a question on this subject by ICOMOS does not add substantial information.

The investigation histories of the component parts point towards a large volume of documentation and publications. Some of the latter are mentioned in a bibliography, which is nearly entirely in Japanese.

While the large volume of information available on these 17 component parts, and on Jomon culture in general, makes it impossible to be itemized in total, it would be advantageous to present a clearer picture of what information is available regarding the processes of excavation, documentation, and object inventory. Furthermore, it would be useful to include in the bibliography more international publications on Jomon culture and the nominated component parts.

### Legal protection

The existence of robust legal protection was one of the selection conditions used to identify the 17 component parts from amongst the many existing Jomon archaeological sites in northern Japan. Thus, all the nominated component parts have been designated by the national government as Historic Sites or Special Historic Sites under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, and are therefore strictly protected. Any alterations proposed at these sites need prior permission from the Commissioner of the national Agency for Cultural Affairs. In response to a question by ICOMOS, the State Party clarified in its first submission of additional information that there is no difference in legal protection or management between Historic Sites and Special Historic Sites.

In the buffer zones a number of laws and regulations are applied, among them the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the Landscape Act, the City Planning Act, the Forest Act, the River Act, and the Act Concerning the Establishment of Agriculture Promotion Areas, as well as the related ordinances based on these laws. Any type of alteration proposed in a buffer zone requires prior permission, and must comply with regulations on scale, height, shape, colour, structure, etc. In addition, the

relevant administrative organizations provide appropriate instruction and advice to the proponent of the alteration.

The property and at least parts of the buffer zones are also protected as "Land Known to Contain Buried Cultural Properties," a protective instrument available under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Mentioned in the State Party's second submission of additional information, this instrument requires prior notification to be submitted before any development is undertaken. ICOMOS would appreciate receiving maps showing the extent of the areas covered by this protective instrument, in relation to the nominated property's component parts, buffer zones, and (Special) Historic Sites.

The legal protection in place has been effective, as shown by the fact that several of the component parts were first discovered during construction works, which were subsequently stopped and the plans changed in order to avoid destruction of the site.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is adequate and has proven to be effective. The issue of private ownership at some of the component sites is being addressed, and will probably take 5 to 10 years or more to resolve due to budgetary limitations.

### Management system

The management structure of the nominated serial property is complex, involving different levels of government as well as different local governments. Under the supervision of the national government, 14 Local Government Authorities, as the custodial bodies designated under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, are responsible for the 17 component parts. They have developed individual preservation and management plans for each of the component parts with the exception of the Tagoyano Site (component 004), Kamegaoka Burial Site (016), Irie Site (009), and Takasago Burial Site (015), which are managed under combined plans. All of these plans include a Conservation and Interpretation Plan, a Management Plan, an Action Plan for Comprehensive Management, and a Landscape Plan.

There appears to be little discernible difference amongst the Local Government Authorities in their approach to site management, since their management plans have been developed on the basis of specifications provided in a Manual for the Improvement Works of Historic Sites (2005), a document published under the supervision of the Agency for Cultural Affairs to provide technical guidance. Generally speaking, the local management plans lay out the responsibility of the Local Government Authority for daily maintenance and management measures at its site(s), including dedicated on-site staff, monitoring protocols, and the ongoing implementation of the site's Conservation and Interpretation Plan.

In addition to the local plans, a Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan has been developed by the Headquarters for World Heritage Registration Promotion for Jomon Prehistoric Sites, which consists of

the governors, mayors, and heads of the boards of education of each local government. This plan sets out policies for the integrated conservation and management of the nominated serial property as a whole. Based on this comprehensive plan, the Council for the Preservation and Utilization of the World Heritage Jomon Prehistoric Sites promotes the conservation, management, utilization, and improvement of the whole nominated property.

The Council is supervised by, and reports directly to, the national government's Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is responsible for (among other matters) Japan's World Heritage properties. The Council does not contain expert members, but solicits expert advice as needed from a dedicated Expert Committee for Preservation and Utilization of World Heritage Jomon Prehistoric Sites.

This management system allows a degree of independence at the local level, while being informed and guided by national legislation, the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan, and the Headquarters for World Heritage Registration Promotion for Jomon Prehistoric Sites, among others.

Daily conservation and management activities are financed by the local government or owners that are designated as the custodial bodies of Historic Sites under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. The national government provides financial assistance for recovery from natural disasters, installation of preservation facilities, disaster prevention facilities, visitor facilities, and archaeological excavations.

ICOMOS considers the management system to be very complete, as it provides a coherent overall structure as well as the needed local flexibility. Furthermore, it joins different levels of government in the decision-making processes and involves the local population. ICOMOS notes that the local plans are all in Japanese and for that reason difficult to assess. However, discussions with State Party representatives indicate that the documents appear adequate for their purpose. However, the periodicity of revisions to the various management instruments would require clarification.

#### **Visitor management**

Forecasts have suggested that visitor numbers can be expected to increase by as much as 200 percent if the nominated property is inscribed on the World Heritage List. Based on this forecast, visitor facilities at most component parts have already been scheduled for upgrading. Because the majority of the 17 component parts are most easily accessed by automobile, new car parks are being created and existing car parks enlarged. Visitor capacities at most of the museums and visitor centres will likely accommodate this increase; where carrying capacity is not sufficient, interventions are being planned. The local governments will take the necessary steps to appropriately receive visitors, taking into consideration the conservation of the property, safety of visitors, and specific situations of the individual component parts.

All of the components have some kind of explanatory board and a volunteer guide service; six have open-air presentations, seven have indications on the ground surface, eight have three-dimensional models, nine have vegetation that alludes to period resources and/or the paleoenvironment; and one component has a digital "restoration." Pamphlets for some of the components are available on the nominated property's website.

Since most of the archaeological elements are buried under a protective soil fill, some local authorities have developed life-size interpretive models of key features, especially pit dwellings and shell middens. The models are designed and constructed so as not to have any impact on the archaeological deposits and be easily removed without any damage to the deposits. The models help visitors visualize elements that are otherwise invisible, due to the protective soil cover.

The volunteer guide service available for all sites provides an additional interpretive experience for visitors. Some sites also offer a self-guided option by means of a free on-line application (with Japanese-only content). Interpretive themes are consistent with the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS considers the nominated serial property to be well prepared for visitors. The State Party is aware of the possible rise in visitor numbers in the case of inscription on the World Heritage List, and is in the process of preparing the sites for this possibility. Furthermore, several actions are planned or in progress to update the interpretation facilities, including virtual and augmented reality technologies.

#### **Community involvement**

The State Party mentions the participation of local residents in education, dissemination, preservation, and utilization of the component sites. In addition, local communities and civic groups participate in the Liaison Meeting for the Preservation and Utilization of the World Heritage Jomon Prehistoric Sites, thereby partaking in decision-making concerning the preservation and utilization of the individual component parts. All of these points indicate the inclusion of the local population in key objectives for the nominated serial property, as well as in the decision-making processes concerning it.

ICOMOS notes that a variety of community events are held at the sites, and that the Jomon culture in general is taught in schools and appears to be a valued part of Japanese identity.

ICOMOS considers that the involvement of the local communities in the processes of nomination as well as in the maintenance and management of the nominated property is adequate. In response to a question by ICOMOS concerning the involvement of the Ainu, an indigenous group of northern Japan, the State Party signaled its openness to include interested parties who are not yet involved.



### **Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property**

The legal protection in place is adequate and effective. The management system is likewise effective, providing a coherent overall structure as well as local flexibility under the supervision of the national Agency for Cultural Affairs. Furthermore, it joins different levels of government in the decision-making processes and involves the local population. The nominated serial property is well prepared for visitors, and local communities have been involved in the processes of nomination as well as in the maintenance and management of the property.

Private ownership at six of the 17 component parts is in the process of being addressed, but will probably take 5 to 10 years to resolve, with the possibility of more time in some cases.

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ICOMOS considers that the protection and management of the nominated serial property are well developed and effective.

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## **6 Conclusion**

The nominated property Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan consists of 17 archaeological component sites that represent sedentary pre-agricultural lifeways and a complex spiritual culture of prehistoric people starting about 15,000 years ago.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List. ICOMOS also considers that the rationale for choosing the component parts and justifying the choices made is adequate. ICOMOS further considers that the identified attributes contribute to the justification for inscription.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii) and criterion (v).

ICOMOS considers that the requirements of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been met, and that the integrity and authenticity of the individual component parts that comprise the series have been met, though the work already started by the State Party to mitigate or remove non-compliant elements must be continued.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures and monitoring processes for the component parts are adequate and well planned.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is adequate and has proven to be effective. The main factor with the potential of affecting the nominated property is development pressure, however, the current legislation protects the nominated property and its buffer zones adequately, as the suspension of construction work that would have damaged archaeological contexts has shown. The State Party estimates that the issue of private

ownership at some of the component parts will be resolved, at least in part, over the next 5 to 10 years.

ICOMOS considers that the management system provides a coherent overall structure as well as local flexibility. Furthermore, it joins different levels of government in the decision-making processes and involves the local population. The periodicity of revisions to the various management instruments should be clarified.

ICOMOS considers the nominated serial property to be well prepared for visitors, and that the involvement of the local communities in the processes of nomination as well as in the maintenance and management of the nominated property is adequate.

## **7 Recommendations**

### **Recommendations with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan, Japan, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii) and (v)**.

### **Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value**

#### **Brief synthesis**

Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan consists of 17 archaeological sites that represent the pre-agricultural lifeways and complex spiritual culture of a prehistoric people. Located on the southern part of Hokkaido Island and across the Tsugaru Strait on the northern part of the Tohoku region, this serial property attests to the emergence, development, and maturity of a sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society that developed in Northeast Asia from about 13,000 BCE to 400 BCE. The series of settlements, burial areas, ritual and ceremonial sites, stone circles, and earthworks is located in a variety of landforms such as mountains, hills, plains, and lowlands, as well as near inner bays, lakes, and rivers.

This area of northern Japan had rich arborous and aquatic resources, with deciduous broad-leaved forests that featured abundant nut-bearing trees, as well as ideal fishing conditions created by the intersection of warm and cold currents off the coast. Over a period of more than 10,000 years, the Jomon people continued hunter-fisher-gatherer lifeways without changing to an agrarian culture, adapting to environmental changes such as climate warming and cooling and the corresponding marine transgression and regression.

The Jomon people initiated a sedentary way of life about 15,000 years ago, as indicated tentatively at first by the use of pottery, and later by the construction of more permanent dwellings and ritual sites, and the year-round exploitation of nearby resources. Already in the very early stage of sedentary life, the Jomon people developed a complex spiritual culture. They made graves and also created ritual deposits, artificial earthen mounds, and

stone circles that were probably used for rituals and ceremonies, and confirmed a social bond across the generations and between the settlements.

**Criterion (iii):** The Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan bears exceptional testimony to a globally rare prehistoric sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society which nurtured a complex spiritual culture, as revealed by archaeological artefacts such as clay tablets with the impression of feet and the famous goggle-eyed *dogu* figurines, as well as remains including graves, ritual deposits, artificial earthen mounds, and stone circles.

**Criterion (v):** The Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan are an outstanding example of sedentary modes of settlement and land-use from the emergence of sedentism through its subsequent development and ultimate maturity. The Jomon people maintained an enduring hunter-fisher-gatherer way of life by adapting to a changing climate without altering the land significantly, as was the case with agrarian societies. To secure food in a stable manner, diverse locations were selected for settlements, including near rivers where fish swimming upstream could be caught, in tidelands where brackish shellfish could be gathered, and near colonies of nut-bearing trees where nuts and berries could be collected. Skills and tools for obtaining food were developed in accordance with the specific conditions of different locations.

#### Integrity

The integrity of the serial property is based on archaeological remains that exemplify the cultural traits and site types of the ancient Jomon culture in northern Japan. The property is comprised of archaeological sites that show the initiation of sedentism and the eventual separation between the residential area and burial areas; sites that show the diversity of settlement facilities during the warm marine transgression period, as well as hub settlements that have ritual places; and sites that demonstrate the maturity of sedentism through stone circles, cemeteries, and settlements. The sites also include, to a degree, their interaction with the environment. The component parts of the serial property are of adequate size individually, and as a group they include all important archaeological remains that constitute settlements and ceremonial spaces as well as landforms or features showing their locations and environment. The serial property is protected by law and does not suffer from the negative impacts of natural disasters or large-scale developments. There are, however, several modern constructions, referred to as "non-compliant elements," that have impacts on the views to and/or from the component parts. Plans to mitigate such impacts by planting tree covers, for example, or by removing the non-compliant elements in the future have been developed.

#### Authenticity

The serial property maintains a high level of authenticity in terms of locations, forms and designs, materials and substances, uses and functions, traditions and techniques, and spirit and feeling, most of the archaeological remains having been buried untouched for thousands of years; some remains, such as stone circles, are visible above ground. The archaeological remains can thus be said to credibly and truthfully convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as relates to the ancient Jomon culture in northern Japan.

In some cases, local authorities have developed life-size interpretive models of some key features, especially pit dwellings and shell middens. These models are intended to help explain to visitors some of the authentic elements that are otherwise concealed under a protective layer of soil. While the life-size models are presented as replicas, not reconstructions, and constructed so as not to have any impact on the archaeological deposits, new technologies are nevertheless explored to help visitors visualize some of the authentic archaeological features that must remain buried.

#### Management and protection requirements

All component parts of the property are designated and protected under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties as Historic Sites or Special Historic Sites, and strict long-term measures for protection and conservation are in place. In addition, an appropriate buffer zone has been delineated around each component part in which legal regulatory measures are in place to control activities with a view to ensuring the proper protection of the property.

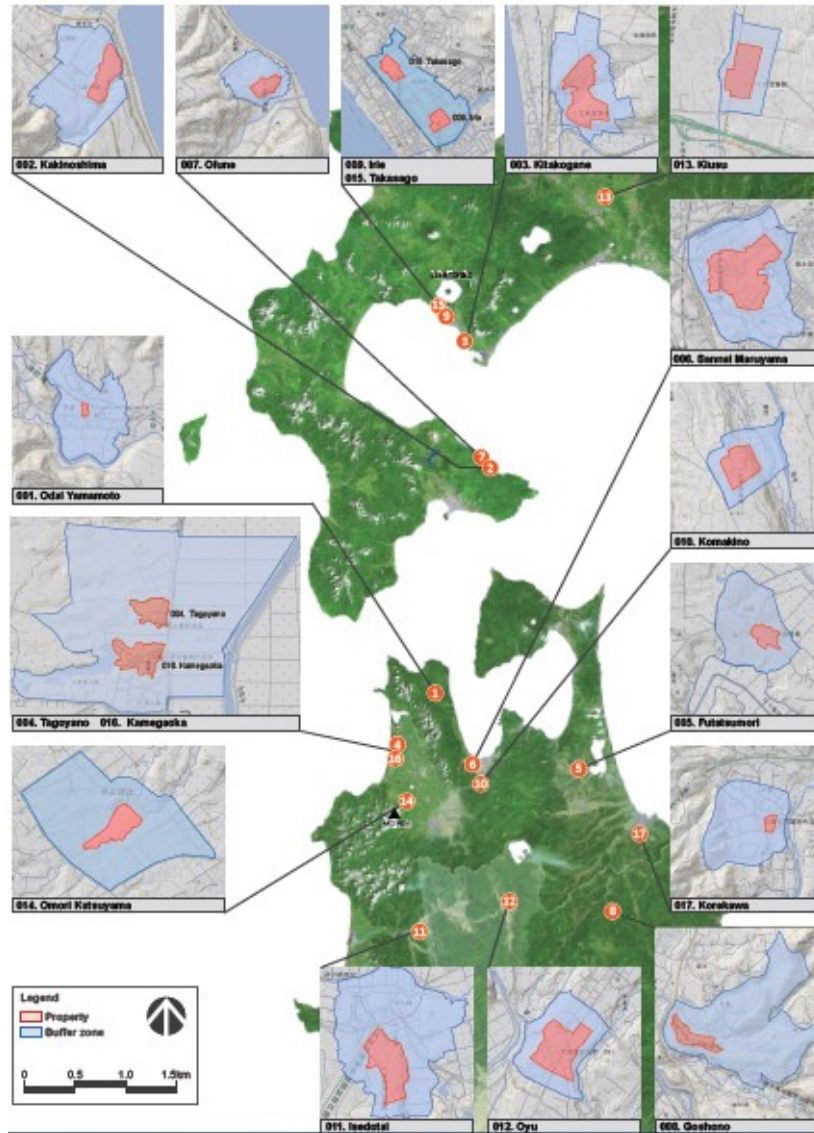
A Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan sets out the basic policies for sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity of the serial property in its entirety. Based on this plan, the Council for the Preservation and Utilization of World Heritage Jomon Prehistoric Sites and other organizations have been established. The conservation and management of the component parts is promoted in a comprehensive manner under the supervision of the national government of Japan and in coordination with other related organizations. The local and prefectural governments in Hokkaido, Aomori, Iwate, and Akita in charge of each component part have developed individual management and utilization plans and have also incorporated the conservation, management, and utilization of the individual component parts in their basic administrative plans. The state of conservation of the individual component parts is monitored periodically and systematically, based on specific key indicators.

The key issue that requires long-term attention is that six of the component parts include privately owned areas. Acquiring the entirety of each component part will better ensure the implementation of correct and timely conservation activities.

**Additional recommendations**

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Advancing the plan to acquire all areas of the component parts currently in private ownership,
- b) Removing non-compliant infrastructural elements or mitigating their impact,
- c) Extending the information on the archaeological records and the inventory of archaeological objects from the component parts (description of excavation and registration processes, and excavation reports),
- d) Adhering to the principles of good governance by maintaining an open mind concerning the inclusion of stakeholders not yet participating in the protection and management of the property, in line with paragraphs 40 and 117 of the *Operational Guidelines*,
- e) Supplying maps of all the serial property's component parts showing a clear delimitation of the World Heritage inscribed property, the buffer zones, the areas protected as (Special) Historic Sites, and the "Land Known to Contain Buried Cultural Properties";



Map showing the location of the nominated components