
Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain (China) No 1665

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er

Location

Huimin Town
Lancang Lahu Autonomous County
Pu'er City
Yunnan Province
People's Republic of China

Brief description

Located on Jingmai Mountain in Huimin Town, Pu'er City, Yunnan Province, in southwestern China, the nominated property consists of a tea production area comprised of traditional villages within old tea groves surrounded by forests and tea plantations. This cultural landscape was developed over a period of a thousand years by the Blang and Dai peoples following practices that began in the 10th century. The traditional understorey cultivation of old tea trees is a method that responds to the specific conditions of the mountain's ecosystem and subtropical monsoon climate, combined with a particular governance system maintained by the Indigenous communities residing in this area. Traditional ceremonies and festivities relate to the Tea Ancestor belief that spirits live in the tea plantations and in the local fauna and flora, a belief that is at the core of this cultural tradition.

Category of property

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

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2021), paragraph 47, it has also been nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

Included in the Tentative List

29 January 2013 as "Ancient Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er"

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.

Comments on the natural attributes of this nominated property, their conservation, and their management were received from IUCN on 8 December 2022 and have been incorporated into relevant sections of this report.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 6 to 11 September 2022.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 3 October 2022 requesting further information about the organically evolved cultural landscape, justification for inscription, state of conservation, protection, factors affecting the property, free, prior and informed consent, and management.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 6 November 2022.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 21 December 2022 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the Interim Report including: conservation measures, planning and potential tourism development in traditional villages, ownership, and waste management.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2023.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2023

2 Description of the nominated 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 provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The nominated property is located on Jingmai Mountain in Huimin Town, Pu'er City, Yunnan Province in southwestern China. It consists of a tea production area composed of traditional villages located within old tea groves surrounded by forests and tea plantations, at an altitude of 1,250-1,500 metres above sea level. Tea cultivation is maintained by the Blang and Dai peoples, who follow traditional practices dating back to the 10th century.

Using the characteristics of the subtropical mountainous monsoon climate, Blang peoples developed an agroforestry system known as understorey tea cultivation, which

consists of domesticating wild tea trees and planting them under tall trees (“tea beneath arbours”). Three vertical layers are created, consisting of tall trees in the higher layer, tea trees and bushes in the middle layer, and herbaceous plants in the lower layer. Diverse and complementary species are arranged between tea trees and in the higher and lower levels. This method protects the tea plants from heavy rains, enables the level of sunlight to be controlled, and promotes the production of large tea leaves. Neither pesticides nor fertilisers are used; nutrition comes from fallen leaves and herbs in the lower layer, and protection from diseases is provided by the biological diversity of the plant community.

Tea leaves are picked in three seasons: spring, summer and autumn. The system is based on hand picking the top bud and two leaves from a tea plant’s branches. The traditional cultivation is accompanied by festivals, religious ceremonies, and traditional dances such as the Blang people’s Circle Dance, representing scenes of people working in the fields, or the Dai people’s Elephant Foot Drum Dance, celebrating the harvest.

The Jingmai Mountain – a general name designating a complex of mountains in the nominated property – is divided into three geomorphological units: Baixiang Mountain in the northeast, Nuogang Mountain in the northwest, and Mangjing Mountain in the south. Five clusters of old tea forests are found on these mountains, where nine traditional villages are also established. These Blang and Dai villages are each laid out with a central village core used for religious ceremonies and social gatherings. Each village is guarded by a sacred mountain, and each cares for one old tea forest. The Blang and Dai peoples follow animism, Theravada Buddhism, and Tea Ancestor worship. The latter is the belief that special spirits live in the tea plantations, the local fauna, and the local flora. Several religious structures are found in the traditional villages, including Buddhist temples and pagodas, and in the forests, such as spirit altars.

On Baixiang Mountain, three Dai traditional villages are scattered on its northern slope. Manggeng and Mengben villages are found within the Manggeng-Mengben Old Tea Forest. Jingmai Dazhai Village is established in the Old Tea Forest of the same name. The Dapingzhang Old Tea Forest is located south of this traditional village.

Nuogang Mountain contains the Nuogang Old Tea Forest, where the Dai Nuogang traditional village is located.

Five traditional Blang villages are scattered on the western slope of Mangjing Mountain, also known as Aileng Mountain to commemorate Pa Aileng (Aileng King or Aileng Chief). According to the Blang belief, Pa Aileng was the Blang tribal chief who first discovered tea in the area, and is worshipped as their Tea Ancestor. Mangjing Shangzhai and Xiazhai Villages-Manghong Old Tea Forest contains three traditional villages – Mangjing Shangzhai, Mangjing Xiazhai, and Manghong. The Wengji-Wengwa Old Tea Forest contains two traditional villages – Wengji and Wengwa.

Within the traditional villages, traditional wooden dwellings and stilted structures with tiled roofs are preserved. These houses have evolved over generations from simple wooden structures with thatched roofs to the latest type being used as residences and for tea processing and storage. Materials have changed throughout the years, but the overall architectural style has been maintained. Dai and Blang houses are similar, their differences being in the details and decorations. The most prominent difference is the symbol of the tea plant’s top bud and two leaves that Blang peoples place on their roofs.

The five clusters of old tea forests are separated by three protective partition forests, namely: the Jingmai-Nuogang protective forest, the Nuogang-Mangjing protective forest, and the Jingmai-Mangjing protective forest. They serve as protection from strong winds and pests, and as village boundaries.

The land-use system developed by the Blang and Dai peoples on Jingmai Mountain consists of a horizontal land use that connects the forests, the old tea forests, and the traditional villages, and a vertical land use that connects the headwater forests at the top of the mountains to the river at the bottom, providing water to the whole social-ecological system of traditional villages, tea forests and tea plantations, farms, and the valleys located at lower altitudes.

The nominated property has an area of 7,167.89 ha, and a buffer zone of 11,927.85 ha. Property boundaries follow natural features such as ridgelines and rivers (Nanlang and Nanmen rivers) as well as forests’ edges. The delineation of the buffer zone follows natural features as well as the administrative boundaries of towns and villages surrounding the nominated property.

Historically speaking, the region of the Lancang-Mekong river basin where Yunnan Province is located is regarded as the origin of cultivated tea trees and the centre of distribution of *Camellia sinensis*, the tea plant that is currently cultivated worldwide. The nominated property is considered to be the place of origin of Pu’er tea, one of its varieties. Ethnographic studies indicate that the ancestors of Blang people discovered tea groves in this area a thousand years ago, during the Tang and Song Dynasties. Following their arrival in this area in the 14th century, the Dai people collaborated with the Blang people to enrich existing technologies for tea planting and processing while integrating their own worldview. A tea culture gradually emerged, involving various activities around tea, including tea-making, tea-eating, tea-drinking, tea-tasting, and tea-utilising. Tea gradually developed into a commodity. During the Song Dynasty and up to the Qing Dynasty, Pu’er City was the centre of tea collection and distribution for important transportation routes, including the Ancient Tea Horse Road. In 1406, the tea of Jingmai Mountain became a tribute tea, which was offered to the Emperor as the best product. This designation resulted in enlarged tea plantations and new villages being formed in parallel with the development of farming activities. During the Qing Dynasty, until 1949, Pu’er tea went through a period of

prosperity, increasing the planting of tea and the output from Jingmai Mountain while consolidating a tea culture in the area, as well as expanding the villages and tea forests.

The founding of the People's Republic of China saw the promotion of agricultural modernisation. In the 1970s, modern tea plantations were developed in the protective partition forests and on terraced land near the old tea forests, aiming for a high-yield variety of tea tree. However, it was found that this method had a harmful effect on the old tea trees, bringing diseases and pests. Recently, the protective partition forests have been restored and traditional methods revalidated.

The tribal management system was abolished in 1949. A villager governance system has since been developed. It separates administration from religion and is based on a tripartite social governance system of tribe-government-religion that combines traditional and modern systems. The protection of the old tea forests persists under the control of the villages' regulations. The area came under Lancang County heritage protection in 2002, along with the promotion of tourism activities in Jingmai.

State of conservation

The remote location of the nominated property has supported its protection. Old tea forests and the environment of Jingmai Mountain have been protected for centuries by local communities through their belief systems, with some tea trees in the forests being more than 200 years old.

According to the State Party, the historic layouts of the villages have been maintained, though some villages have been expanding in size since 1949. Newer tea processing factories, tea drying sheds, and modern buildings have had an impact on the traditional villages. The Old Tea Plantations of the Jingmai Mountain was inscribed on the seventh list of National Priority Protected Sites in 2013. Demolitions of modern buildings and repairs and reconstructions of traditional dwellings have subsequently been undertaken in six of the traditional villages (Wengji, Manghong, Mangjing Shangzhai, Mangjing Xiazhai, Nuogang and Jingmai Dazhai). Improvements have also been made in their basic infrastructure, including water systems, sewage, waste management, and roads. Strict regulations have been enforced in the area to maintain the traditional building style, including for newly built infrastructure.

Traditional cultivation was disrupted after 1949, with an increase in tea production and the establishment of terraced tea cultivations in the forests. Agricultural modernisation also affected the health of the old tea forests. Restorations have been undertaken recently to recover the traditional understorey tea cultivation system in the terraced plantations, now called "ecological tea plantations", and the protective partition forests have been restored.

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 good.

Factors affecting the nominated 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 nominated property are development and demographic pressures, potential tourism pressures, and possible future impacts of climate change on tea production and culture.

Urban development, particularly population growth and village expansion, is currently affecting the nominated property. This factor is being addressed by Lancang County through town planning, including the delineation of village boundaries and the elaboration of guidance for building and maintaining traditional features in new housing projects. A document entitled *Guidelines for Construction Activities in Jingmai Mountain Heritage Site* has been produced and is under implementation since April 2022, according to the additional information provided by the State Party in February 2023. These guidelines aim at maintaining the historic layouts of the villages and the traditional architectural style for old and new buildings, and are based on the *Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Villages* adopted in 2009.

Even though population is growing in the area, ICOMOS notes that a lack of youth engagement in the agricultural practices and traditions could become a factor affecting the sustainability of the nominated property. In the additional information provided in November 2022, the State Party described the initiatives being developed, motivated by the registration of Jingmai Mountain as a national heritage site, to involve youth in the conservation and continuation of the tea culture of the area. The State Party confirms that educated youths are returning to the area to undertake tea-related business, get involved in the tourism sector, and provide support to the older generation in adapting the traditional tea market to digital technologies.

The main environmental pressures are the lack of sewage systems in the villages and the pollution and traffic caused by the transportation network within the nominated property. These issues are currently being addressed by installing appropriate sewage systems and by reducing and re-routing the existing traffic within the nominated property.

In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information about the potential impacts of the proposed Menglian-Menghai Expressway to be constructed to connect Jingmai Mountain to the new regional airport. The State Party responded in November 2022 that a Heritage Impact Assessment had been undertaken and an alternative route had been selected to avoid negative impacts on the nominated property.

ICOMOS also notes the lack of adequate waste management at the nominated property. In additional

information provided in February 2023, the State Party clarified that a waste management system has been established since the submission of the nomination dossier, and that facilities to collect garbage as well as appropriate sewage systems have been installed in the traditional villages. In addition, environmental awareness campaigns are being carried out.

Potential tourism development is foreseen in the event of an inscription on the World Heritage List. The number of annual visitors reached 500,000 in 2018. The tourism strategy proposed in the Conservation Plan for the Cultural Heritage of Old Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain as a National Priority Protected Site (2017-2035) sets out provisions for visitor management, including limiting development within the nominated property and buffer zone.

Weather variations caused by climate change could potentially affect the nominated property. The production of tea and maintenance of the old tea forests and traditional cultivation methods are highly dependent on the current subtropical mountainous monsoon climate and a specific calendar for harvesting. Traditional practices and the intangible cultural heritage expressions associated with the nominated property related to tea cultivation could also be vulnerable to shifting seasons and potential extreme weather events. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested further information from the State Party on strategies to address the possible impacts of climate change and the potential development of a climate adaptation plan for the nominated property considering its potential Outstanding Universal Value. The State Party responded in November 2022 that scientific studies have been carried out on the resilience of the old tea forests, and a monitoring system has been developed to understand the impacts of factors related to climate change. Furthermore, the State Party mentioned that a property-based climate adaptation plan was being contemplated.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is good, and that factors currently affecting the nominated property are development and demographic pressures, while the impacts of tourism pressures and climate change may increase in the future.

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 cultural landscape of the old tea forests developed on Jingmai Mountain is an exceptionally well-preserved testimony of the traditional understorey tea cultivation model, being maintained for over a thousand years by Blang and Dai peoples.
- The unique tribe-government-religion tripartite social governance system has been maintained by the

Indigenous peoples living in the area and promotes the sustainable use of the natural resources and especially the old tea forests, based on their distinctive Tea Ancestor belief.

- The horizontal and vertical land-use system based on the traditional knowledge of the Indigenous peoples of Jingmai Mountain and developed by adaptation to the mountain environment represents an outstanding and sustainable landscape system which protects the old tea forests and promotes the harmonious living of communities in traditional villages and forests.

Based on the nomination dossier, the key attributes of the nominated property are the interrelations between the horizontal land-use patterns – forests, tea forests, and villages – and vertical land-use patterns – mountain, headwater forests and forests, tea forests, traditional villages, dry farming fields, paddy fields and rivers; the topographic features of Jingmai Mountain; the water system; the five clusters of old tea forests; the three protective partition forests; and the nine traditional villages where Blang and Dai peoples reside. As well, important attributes include the characteristics of the traditional dwellings; the locations and layouts of the traditional villages; and the religious structures located within these villages and forests. Traditional festivals, religious ceremonies and the Tea Ancestor belief associated with the tea culture are also attributes, as is the tripartite social governance system of tribe-government-religion, which supports the protection and conservation of the old tea forests.

In the nomination dossier, the State Party presents the old tea forests, protective partition forests and traditional villages as attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, whereas two villages are not considered as attributes but are located within the nominated property, namely Laojiufang (The Old Wine Houses Village) and Nuogang Xinzhai. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested a clarification regarding these villages in relation to the protection of the cultural landscape as a whole. The State Party responded in November 2022 that all villages within the nominated property, even those that are not considered as attributes, have been designated and comply with the regulations associated with a National Priority Protected Site.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around qualitative assessments on the grounds of a thematic approach referring to agricultural landscapes generally, and within these, to tea landscapes specifically. It has examined agricultural landscapes throughout the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as properties with tea plantations, following the guidance of the ICOMOS Asian Tea Cultural Landscape Research Framework. It includes comparisons with tea plantations within Asia, China, and other Pu'er tea mountains in Yunnan Province, where the nominated property is located.

The comparative analysis proposes that a gap exists in the World Heritage List regarding tea cultural landscapes

that the nominated property would fill. The analysis includes fifteen World Heritage Sites that are cash crop agricultural landscapes, such as the Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape (Hungary, 2002, criteria (iii) and (v)) and the Coffee Cultural Landscape of Colombia (Colombia, 2011, criteria (v) and (vi)), and four rice farming landscapes, including the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras (Philippines, 1995, criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)).

Specifically addressing tea cultural landscapes, comparisons are made with Assam, India (19th century), Darjeeling, India (19th century), Kyoto and Uji, Japan (12th century), Java Island, Indonesia (19th century); Embu, Kenya (20th century), Central Province, Sri Lanka (19th century), and Phongsaly, Laos (approximately 17th century). The analysis proposes that the understorey cultivation model stands out from the large-scale terraced tea plantations around the world, as does the longer history of Pu'er tea cultivation on Jingmai Mountain compared to other tea growing areas.

Within China, the nominated property is said to distinguish itself from other tea plantations due to the preservation of the traditional understorey cultivation method and to the belief system associated with it. The analysis concludes that the nominated property is representative of the Pu'er tea mountains, as it has maintained the authenticity of the particular tea cultivation method, land-use system, and Tea Ancestor belief.

ICOMOS considers that the comparison to other types of agricultural landscapes inscribed on the World Heritage List is not as relevant as the comparison with other tea plantations in the world, and especially those located in Asia and China. ICOMOS considers that a more in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences with these properties could have strengthened the case presented. ICOMOS notes that a more extensive analysis of traditional villages with similar characteristics is missing, and that a focused analysis of religious, spiritual, and cultural associations with tea cultivation would have been relevant. Nevertheless, ICOMOS considers that the type, number, and location of the properties covered in the comparative analysis is adequate to demonstrate the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property in relation to the type of property within its geo-cultural region and the global context.

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

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 nominated property represents a unique model of understorey tea cultivation, supported by a tribe-

government-religion tripartite social governance system that, based on the Tea Ancestor belief, has protected the environment and preserved the old tea forest cultivation traditions for more than a thousand years.

ICOMOS considers that the continuous upkeep of the understorey tea cultivation for more than a thousand years is remarkable, and provides an exceptional testimony to the history of tea culture. The nominated property bears this living cultural tradition supported by the belief and governance systems of Indigenous peoples which promote sustainable practices for tea production and the use of natural resources. These traditional practices developed by the Blang and Dai peoples over a long period of time follow careful considerations of the mountain climate, topographic features, and local flora and fauna, demonstrating an important local and traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge and belief systems in Jingmai Mountain have enabled the conservation of ancient tea forest, the sustainable use of natural resources and the development of an organically evolved cultural landscape that safeguards cultural and biological diversity.

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 cultural landscape of old tea forests is an outstanding example of a system of sustainable land use that is based on a combination of a horizontal and a vertical land-use patterns. This land-use system permits the complementary use of natural resources in the mountainous environment of Jingmai Mountain. The location and layout of the traditional villages and the style of the residential buildings represent the Blang and Dai peoples' cultures and traditional knowledge, which are founded on a worship of mountains, nature, and Tea Ancestors. This belief system enables a harmonious coexistence between the Indigenous peoples and their environment.

ICOMOS considers that the traditional land-use system in the nominated property represents an outstanding example of a human interaction with a challenging environment that is vulnerable to negative impacts of modernisation, urban development, and climate change. The complementary spatial distribution of different land uses and settlements provides for a water system and the creation of microclimates that support both the cultivation of tea and the well-being of communities residing in this organically evolved cultural landscape.

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

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property is based on the preservation of the social relationships and ecological interdependencies between the climate, the topographic features, and the cultural practices of the Blang and Dai peoples on Jingmai Mountain. All the key attributes necessary to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are included within the boundaries, including the old tea forests, the protective partition forests, the tea plantations, the traditional villages, the traditional knowledge and governance system associated with the tea culture, and the cultural and spiritual expressions associated with that culture such as festivals, religious ceremonies, and traditional dances.

The boundaries also encompass the immediate setting, thus reinforcing the integrity of the cultural landscape.

The buffer zone adds a layer of protection to the nominated property, containing forests, farms, and villages where development is regulated. ICOMOS notes that traditional villages within the nominated property are currently under pressure from urban development and could be negatively affected in the future by increased tourism development.

ICOMOS considers that the restoration of forests and “ecological tea plantations” in the tea terraces has had a positive impact on both the functional and visual aspects of the nominated property. ICOMOS also notes that the integrity of the cultural landscape is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

While recognising the existence of threats, ICOMOS considers the integrity of the nominated property to be satisfactory.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the nominated property is based on the location, use, and function of the old tea forests, the location, form, and design of the traditional villages, the form and design of the traditional houses, and the form, function, and substance of the land-use system, including the horizontal and vertical patterns. It is also based on the continuity of traditions associated with the tea culture on Jingmai Mountain. ICOMOS notes that maintaining the authenticity depends on the continuous presence of the landscape elements and the continuous upkeep of the land-use system, as well as the cultural practices associated with the understorey tea cultivation and the related belief and governance systems.

Written sources on the history of the tea cultivation in the area and the occupation and development of Jingmai Mountain by Dai and Blang peoples are missing, and most existing information is based on legends, oral history, and traditional knowledge held and transmitted to younger generations by the elders of the Jingmai communities.

According to the State Party, the traditional understorey tea cultivation method has remained the same over time, and the proposed Outstanding Universal Value is justified on the basis of the continuity of the cultural tradition of old tea forest cultivation by Dai and Blang peoples. However, the nomination dossier indicates that tea cultivation practices have undergone changes throughout the years, with modernisation and tea commercialisation having had a particular impact. In its additional information letter of October 2022, ICOMOS asked for further evidence that demonstrates the continuity of traditional tea cultivation practices in the nominated property, such as current and historical illustrations and land-use maps of the tea forests and plantations, and for more information on the relationship between Blang and Dai peoples and the cultural practices proposed as sustaining the cultural landscape of old tea forests. The State Party responded in November 2022 that the elderly on Jingmai Mountain are witnesses to the continuation of the understorey tea cultivation method, and are the carriers of this traditional knowledge. Furthermore, the State Party clarified that historical illustrations of this remote area are not available.

ICOMOS notes that Nuogang village has been relocated and that the majority of residential buildings within Manggeng and Mengben villages are not considered to be traditional. Furthermore, restorations have been undertaken in some of the landscape elements. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information regarding these restorations in order to better understand whether they may have had an impact on the authenticity of the nominated property. The State Party responded in November 2022 that the restorations refer to the recovery of the understorey tea cultivation method in tea terraces that had been altered in the 1980s to increase yields, and which are not considered attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. In February 2023, the State Party provided further explanation regarding the conservation measures in the nominated property, clarifying the methods used that are proposed in the *Guidelines for Construction Activities in Jingmai Mountain Heritage Site* (2022) and the *Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Villages* (2009). ICOMOS notes that these measures aim at maintaining traditional building practices and recovering the traditional built environment in the traditional villages of the nominated property.

While noting that landscape elements and cultural practices have evolved and are in a state of ongoing adaptation to various social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors, ICOMOS considers the authenticity of the nominated property to be satisfactory. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that, due to the nature of the nominated property, limits of acceptable change need to be established in order to maintain its authenticity and its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, based on its present state of conservation.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property have been met.

Boundaries

The estimated number of inhabitants in the nominated property is 5,365, and 1,126 in the buffer zone is 1,126. At present, the population occupies the nominated property and buffer zone in four administrative villages and seventeen “natural villages” (term used to refer to the traditional villages in the law). These include the Dai, Blang, Han, Wa, Lahu, and Hani peoples.

The proposed boundaries of the nominated property are based on the boundaries of the Old Tea Plantations of the Jingmai Mountain National Priority Protected Site. These boundaries are largely defined by natural features such as forest edges, rivers, and ridgelines. The underlying rationale for the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated property has been applied appropriately and consistently.

The Han village of Laojiufang with 221 residents and the Dai village of Nuogang Xinzhai with 277 residents are located within the nominated property but are not considered to be attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Laojiufang belongs to a different tradition (not tea culture) and was built more recently. Nuogang Xinzhai was built in 2000 to protect Nuogang Laozhai, the Dai traditional village located on Nuogang Mountain, from development.

The buffer zone corresponds to the construction control area created to protect the environment, setting, and visual characteristics of the National Priority Protected Site, plus an area where no settlement is located. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested further information on the rationale to define the buffer zone and the mechanisms currently in place to protect the land use, setting, and key views of the nominated property. In its reply of November 2022, the State Party clarified that the buffer zone is designed to protect the setting, ecological integrity, watershed, and views from surrounding mountains by limiting development and restricting damaging activities in the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property are adequate to encompass the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and that the buffer zone provides an added layer of protection.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies the consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List, and that it meets criteria (iii) and (v). ICOMOS notes that there is a continuity of the traditional practices of tea cultivation even though the modernisation of tea production and its commercialisation have had an impact on the landscape and practices. ICOMOS considers that the requirements of authenticity and integrity have been met. However, the integrity of the nominated property is vulnerable to negative impacts of tourism development and climate change, and limits of acceptable change need to be established to maintain its authenticity. The boundaries

and buffer zone are adequate to support the integrity of the nominated property.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

Documentation related to the nominated property is collected, collated, stored, and maintained at the Archives Center of the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain. Surveys of the old tea forests, wildlife, and plant diversity were carried out in 2021, which can serve as a baseline for management, conservation, and monitoring. For the traditional villages, inscription as a National Priority Protected Site required an inventory of all heritage assets, thus establishing a baseline for conserving, managing, and monitoring the nominated property.

Conservation measures

The conservation of the nominated property is undertaken with the cooperation of the different levels of government (province, municipality, county, and village) and the traditional governance system based on the Tea Ancestor belief system at the village level. Since the different attributes in the nominated property require different conservation measures, a plan for each element has been created. The *Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Villages* (2009), and the *Guidelines for Construction Activities in Jingmai Mountain Heritage Site* (2022) laid out principles for the maintenance of the traditional villages and the traditional houses. Traditional conservation techniques are used for the old tea forests following the cultural practices of Blang and Dai peoples. Village regulations and folk conventions still regulate the practices of the residents on Jingmai Mountain.

The Plan for Villages in the Jingmai Mountain (2019-2040), based on a survey and analysis of the current state of fifteen villages in the nominated property and buffer zone, formulates conservation measures for the elements of each of the villages and proposes specific measures for each existing building in terms of repair, maintenance, preservation, minor restoration, major restoration or demolition. Regular maintenance is conducted as required in the Conservation Plan for the Cultural Heritage of Old Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain as a National Priority Protected Site (2017-2035). Villagers receive technical guidance from the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain on maintenance projects for protected traditional residential buildings under its responsibility. Funding is guaranteed through multiple channels, including different levels of government.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the nominated property is proposed to be carried out on five aspects: the natural environment; the human and social environment; the heritage attributes; presentation and utilisation of the property; and management capacity and effectiveness. Indicators include aspects related to the maintenance of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural practices. The Jingmai

Mountain Heritage Monitoring Mechanism has been established as a monitoring and early warning system. It includes daily inspection and disease monitoring of the old tea trees, among other tasks. Data is collected via satellite remote sensing, drones, high-resolution cameras, on-site environmental monitoring equipment, and a mobile application, Jingmai Mountain Monitoring Cloud. On-site automatic monitoring equipment has been installed in different key locations of the nominated property, and a patrol is carried out regularly. The data collected flows to a centralised system managed by the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain. ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system is adequate and supports the management of the nominated property by providing evidence for follow-ups, control, and decision making. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that the State Party should establish monitoring thresholds in order to determine limits of acceptable change for the nominated property in light of its potential Outstanding Universal Value.

In addition, IUCN notes in its report that the management system, including the monitoring programme, does not consider other species than the tea and protective partition forests. Following the recommendation of IUCN to integrate biodiversity values in the management system, ICOMOS considers that the State Party should integrate biodiversity indicators into its monitoring system considering as well the traditional knowledge of Blang and Dai peoples.

ICOMOS considers that the existing documentation provides a baseline for the management, conservation, and monitoring of the nominated property. Conservation measures encompass all the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and the monitoring system is adequate. Nevertheless, ICOMOS considers that monitoring thresholds for establishing limits of acceptable change and biodiversity indicators need to be included in the monitoring system.

ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring system is adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

The nominated property is protected by several laws that apply to its natural and cultural values. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics provides heritage protection to the entirety of the nominated property as a National Priority Protected Site (2013). The National Cultural Heritage Administration and Yunnan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism are in charge of enforcing these protective measures. In addition, the nominated property is subject to agricultural and urban planning laws. These laws are enforced by the People's Government of Yunnan Province at the provincial level, and by the People's Government of Pu'er City at the municipal level. The People's Government of

Lancang County, in coordination with the Jingmai Village Office and the Mangjing Village Administration Office, are in charge of implementing the laws at local levels. The People's Government of Pu'er City has established the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in 2018, which is responsible for the protection and utilisation of the nominated property. It coordinates with other relevant agencies and levels of government, as well as other stakeholders.

The villages of Nuogang, Wengji, and Mangjing were included in the second list of Traditional Chinese Villages by the Chinese Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance, in 2013. Religious monuments and sites in the villages are protected as Provincial Priority Protected Sites. In 2013, the People's Government of Yunnan Province established the Mangjing Village Blang People Traditional Cultural Ecological Protection Area. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Wildlife and the Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China protect the natural environment, flora, and fauna of the nominated property. In 2017, the State Forestry Administration of China included Jingmai Mountain as part of the Lancang National Forest Park of Yunnan, where the old tea forests are located. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage applies to the cultural expressions and traditions related to tea culture of the Blang and Dai peoples inhabiting the nominated property and other peoples living in the buffer zone. A traditional protection system is carried out by the Blang and Dai peoples, who care for the forests through their belief systems and customary laws based on communal and collective stewardship of the landscape.

The buffer zone is a construction control area with regulations for development and architectural style, thereby adding a layer of protection to the nominated property.

In addition, the "Old Tea Plantations and Tea Culture System in Pu'er, Yunnan" has been granted the status of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2012, which promotes the maintenance of sustainable agricultural practices in the area.

Management system

The Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain is responsible for managing the nominated property and implementing the Conservation Plan for the Cultural Heritage of Old Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain as a National Priority Protected Site (2017-2035) and the Conservation Management Plan for the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er (2020-2040) produced for the nominated property as a World Heritage site and that integrates other national, provincial and municipal plans, and other laws relevant to conservation and management. The inter-departmental and central-local coordination system combines five levels of

management: national, provincial, municipal, county, and town. This includes the Jingmai and Mangjing Village Committees that formulate village rules based on legal provisions and regulations for daily management. In 2018, an Advisory Committee of Experts for the Conservation and Development of the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er was set up, composed of experts from academic institutions and inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage of the nominated property. The Committee provides advice for decision-making on major issues concerning heritage protection and management.

The proposed Conservation Management Plan (2020-2040) is based on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and its attributes, and provides the basis and guidelines for the protection and management of the nominated property. The period of the plan runs from 2020-2040, including a short-term plan up to 2025, a mid-term plan from 2026-2030, and a long-term plan from 2031-2040. Covering both the nominated property and the buffer zone, the plan presents an assessment of the current management framework of the nominated property, including the legal and political context, as well as factors affecting the property. Based on this assessment, strategies are proposed and an action plan elaborated. Disaster risk management, tourism management, and interpretation are included in this plan. The plan is anticipated to be approved by the National Cultural Heritage Administration and implemented by the People's Government of Yunnan Province through the People's Government of Pu'er City and the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain as site manager.

Risks of earthquakes are moderate in Jingmai Mountain, and traditional pile dwellings can effectively reduce damages and losses caused by seismic events. Risks of fire are important in the traditional villages, where wooden architecture predominates. Adequate infrastructure to prevent hazards has been installed and the Village Plans for the Jingmai and Mangjing Administrative Villages in the Jingmai Mountain sets out priority arrangements for fire control facilities. Risk of pests are addressed by the Lancang County Forestry Bureau through daily monitoring, prevention, and control.

Construction activities that may have an impact on old tea forests and traditional villages but that meet management requirements of the protected site are subject to examination and approval by the competent administrative department in collaboration with the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain. Heritage Impact Assessments have been incorporated into the legal system. These must be submitted by proponents for any construction project within the National Priority Protected Site and be approved by the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

Visitor management

A tourism strategy and visitor management measures are proposed in the proposed Conservation Management Plan (2020-2040). The overall strategy is to focus on a "deep tea culture" experience, among other objectives. The tourist infrastructure (tourist service, visitor centre, and transportation centre) will be established in Huimin Town at the foot of Jingmai Mountain, outside of the boundaries of the nominated property. A carrying capacity has been established at 3,350 visitors per day (1,050 for the old tea forests and 2,300 for the traditional villages). Visitors arriving at the transportation centre will transfer onto clean-energy buses, with the aim of controlling the number of visitors and reducing pollution. Overall planning and strict controls will be put in place to restrict tourist accommodation facilities in order to avoid excessive commercialisation of village tourism. An overall interpretation and presentation framework has been developed for the nominated property.

In its interim report, ICOMOS requested further information regarding the tourism strategy for the nominated property and how potential pressures from the development of the villages would be contained. The State Party provided summaries of the Village Plans for the Jingmai and Mangjing Administrative Villages in the Jingmai Mountain (2021-2035), the Plan for Villages in the Jingmai Mountain (2019-2040) and the Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Jingmai Mountain in the additional information of February 2023. In these documents it is clarified how the State Party is controlling tourism and development pressures in the nominated property using strict village planning, boundaries, construction controls, capacity building and a controlled transportation system.

Community involvement

Residents of the nominated property are responsible for the daily management of the old tea forests and traditional residential buildings. A mechanism for communication and cooperation with the community stakeholders is proposed in the proposed Conservation Management Plan (2020-2040). According to the State Party in the additional information of November 2022, suggestions by villagers and approval of proposed regulations by them have been requested and integrated into the management system. A Protection Convention for Pu'er Jingmai Mountain Ancient Tea Forest Cultural Landscape proposes consultation with relevant villages and protection commitment letters has been signed by property owners and users of the old tea forests and traditional residential buildings, as well as the Agreement on Repair and Conservation of Traditional Dwellings (F1-protected at national level). The content of these documents was explained and translations to English were provided by the State Party in the additional information sent in February 2023.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection of the property is comprehensive and that the management system is robust. ICOMOS considers that the proposed Conservation Management Plan should be approved in priority and start implementation accordingly. In particular, ICOMOS considers that the integration of the traditional governance system and the participation of the local communities in the management of the nominated property will be positive for its long-term conservation.

6 Conclusion

The Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er represents a significant contribution to the development of a tea culture and to the continuous practice of understorey tea cultivation by the Blang and Dai peoples inhabiting the Yunnan Province in China. Comprising an organically evolved cultural landscape of ancient tea forests, tea plantations, and traditional villages, the nominated property illustrates a combination of horizontal and vertical land-use patterns that support the sustainable use of natural resources and the well-being of its communities. The land-use system and tea cultivation method are the result of adaptations and interactions of Indigenous communities with the mountainous environment and subtropical monsoon climate in Jingmai Mountain for more than a thousand years.

ICOMOS notes that the comparative analysis would have benefitted from an in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences of the tea landscapes presented as comparators, a more extensive analysis of traditional villages with similar characteristics, and a focused analysis of spiritual and cultural associations related to tea cultivation. ICOMOS nevertheless considers that the comparative analysis is adequate regarding the type of property, the geo-cultural region, and the global context, and thus justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (v). ICOMOS notes that the condition of authenticity is satisfactory in spite of disruptions to cultural practices, modern development, and recent restorations. As well, ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the nominated property is satisfactory, though vulnerable to negative impacts of tourism development and climate change.

The state of conservation of the property is good.

The legal protection of the tangible, intangible, natural, and cultural heritage, complemented by a comprehensive planning system, is adequate. The management system is based on the establishment of a property-specific administration authority, the Administration for the Conservation of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain, operating in cooperation with five levels of administration

(national, province, city, county, and village) and following a tripartite social governance system of tribe-government-religion with the support of local communities.

The proposed Conservation Management Plan (2020-2040) for the nominated property as World Heritage integrates protection and planning instruments and comprehensively addresses short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, including daily management, disaster risk management, tourism management, and interpretation. Heritage Impact Assessments have been adequately integrated into the management system.

ICOMOS recommends that, due to the vulnerability of the integrity of the nominated property as an agroforestry site, a climate vulnerability assessment and climate change resilience and adaptation plan be developed for the nominated property, addressing the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, in conjunction with the establishment of monitoring thresholds for defining limits of acceptable change. In addition, ICOMOS recommends the integration of biodiversity indicators in the monitoring system considering the traditional knowledge of Blang and Dai peoples. Furthermore, ICOMOS notes that the daily management of the nominated property falls under the responsibility of the local communities, and considers that the integration of modern and traditional governance and management should be maintained. ICOMOS further notes that the involvement of youth in the sustainability of the nominated property is of primary concern and recommends the development of specific strategies that would ensure the continuity of the traditional tea cultivation.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er, China, be inscribed, as a cultural landscape, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii) and (v)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er is located in Huimin Town, Pu'er City, Yunnan Province, in southwestern China. This organically evolved cultural landscape consists of a tea production area of old tea groves, tea plantations, forests, and traditional villages on Jingmai Mountain. This land-use system has been developed over a thousand years by the Blang and Dai peoples following traditional practices that date back to the 10th century. The traditional understorey cultivation of old tea trees is a method that responds to the specific conditions of the mountain ecosystem and subtropical monsoon climate combined with a particular governance system maintained by the Indigenous communities residing in this area. Traditional ceremonies and festivities related to the Tea Ancestor belief that special

spirits live in the tea plantations, local fauna, and flora are at the core of this cultural tradition.

Criterion (iii): The Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er represents an exceptional testimony of the understorey tea cultivation traditions that enabled the development of a complementary spatial distribution of different land uses providing ecosystems and microclimates that support both the cultivation of old tea forests and the well-being of communities residing in this organically evolved cultural landscape. Blang and Dai peoples sustained these traditions for over thousand years by following a tripartite social governance system of tribe-government-religion that, based on the Tea Ancestor belief, has protected the natural resources and preserved the old tea forests. Traditional practices follow careful considerations of the mountain climate, topographic features, and local flora and fauna, demonstrating important local and traditional knowledge that safeguards cultural and biological diversity.

Criterion (v): The Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er is an outstanding example of a sustainable land-use system based on a combination of horizontal and vertical land-use patterns. This land-use system permits the complementary use of natural resources in the mountainous environment of Jingmai Mountain and represents an exceptional example of a human interaction by Blang and Dai peoples with a challenging environment that is vulnerable to negative impacts of modernisation, urban development, and climate change. The location and layout of the traditional villages and the style of residential buildings represent the cultures and traditional knowledge of Blang and Dai peoples.

Integrity

The integrity of the property is based on the preservation of the social relationships and ecological interdependencies between the climate, the topographic features, and the cultural practices of the Blang and Dai peoples on Jingmai Mountain. All the key attributes are included within the boundaries, including the old tea forests, the protective partition forests, the tea plantations, the traditional villages, the traditional knowledge and governance system associated with the tea culture, and the cultural and spiritual expressions associated with that culture such as festivals, religious ceremonies, and traditional dances. The boundaries also encompass the immediate setting, thus reinforcing the integrity of the cultural landscape.

Traditional villages within the property are currently under pressure from urban development and could be negatively affected in the future by increased tourism development.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the property is based on the location, use, and function of the old tea forests; the location, form,

and design of the traditional villages; the form and design of the traditional houses; and the form, function, and substance of the land-use system, including the horizontal and vertical patterns. It is also based on the continuity of traditions associated with the tea culture on Jingmai Mountain.

Sources of information include the continuous presence of the landscape elements and the continuous upkeep of the land-use system, the cultural practices associated with understorey tea cultivation, legends, oral history, traditional knowledge and the related belief and governance systems.

Protection and management requirements

The property is protected at the highest level by national laws for cultural property, ecology, environment, forests, animal and plant species, and intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the local authorities have prepared and announced laws and regulations tailored to its protection. The buffer zone adds a layer of protection to the property, containing forests, farms, and villages where development is regulated.

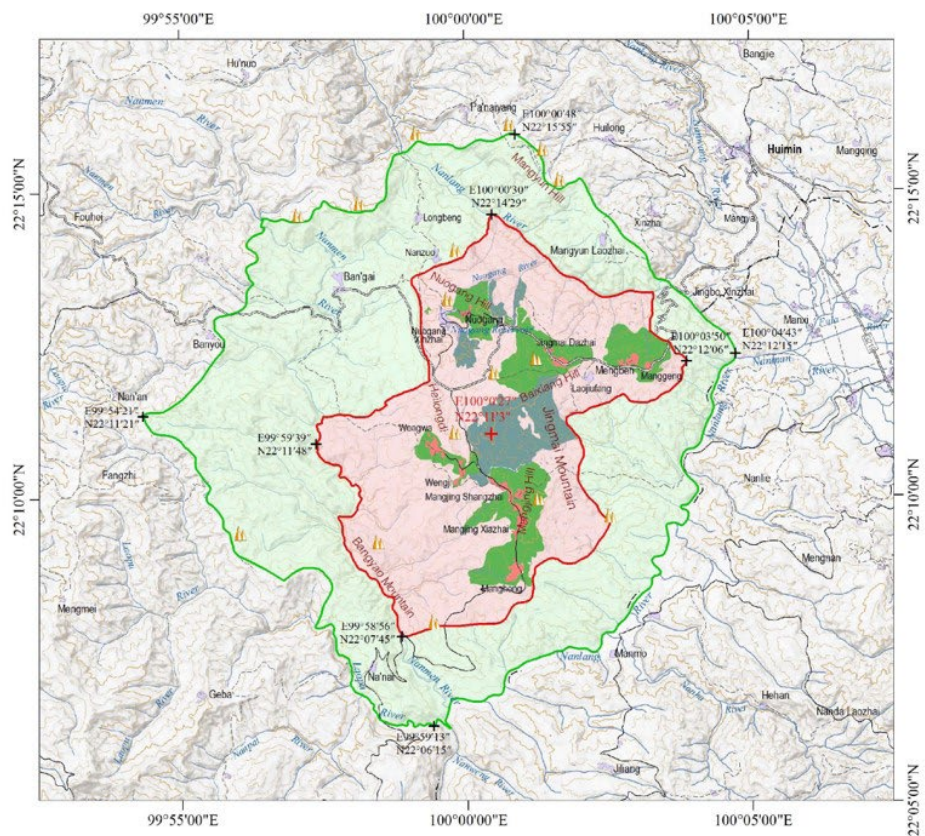
A protection and management system that involves all stakeholders, including the local authorities, villagers, and professional institutions, has been developed. This protection and management system, along with the tribe-government-religion tripartite social governance arrangement and relevant planning documents such as the Conservation Plan for the Cultural Heritage of Old Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain as a National Priority Protected Site (2017-2035), the Plan for Villages in the Jingmai Mountain (2019-2040), and the Conservation Management Plan for the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er (2020-2040) provide a robust mechanism for the conservation and management of the property and the sustainable development of its communities. The old tea forests, protective partition forests, villages, and entire environment of the property are the subjects of comprehensive monitoring, and a disaster preparedness mechanism has been developed.

Additional recommendations

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

- a) Approving in priority and implementing accordingly the Conservation Management Plan for the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er (2020-2040),
- b) Further developing a climate vulnerability assessment and climate change resilience and adaptation plan that address the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in conjunction with establishing clear limits of acceptable change for the cultural landscape with monitoring thresholds,

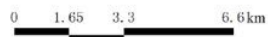
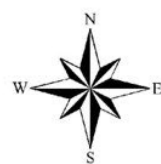
- c) Developing a strategy and programmes for the sustainability of the property by engaging youth in the intergenerational transmission of tea culture and related cultural practices,
- d) Integrating biodiversity values and indicators in the monitoring system of the property considering the traditional knowledge of Blang and Dai peoples,
- e) Strictly enforcing the tourism strategy, maintaining the carrying capacity of the property, ensuring adequate access, and managing potential growth of the traditional villages,
- f) Developing and implementing a Heritage Impact Assessment for any development proposals in the property, its buffer zone and/or wider setting that could potentially affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,
- g) Informing the World Heritage Centre of the intention to undertake or authorise all major projects which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, in line with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*;



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | Nominated Property | | State Road/
Provincial Road |
| | Buffer Zone | | County Road |
| | Old Tea Forest | | Machine-tilled Road |
| | Protective Partition
Forests | | River |
| | Component Villages | | Residential Area |
| | Boundary of Autonomous
Prefecture/City Boundary | | River/Water Body |

Nominated Property	7167.89ha
Buffer Zone	11927.85ha
Total Area	19095.74ha



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property