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# Jodensavanne Archaeological Site (Suriname) No 1680

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## 1 Basic information

### Official name as proposed by the State Party

The Jodensavanne Archaeological Site: Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery

### Location

District of Para  
Suriname

### Brief description

Located on the densely forested banks of the Suriname River, the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site in northern Suriname is a serial property with two component parts that illustrate early Jewish colonisation attempts in the New World. The Jodensavanne Settlement, founded in the 1680s, includes the ruins of what is believed to be the earliest synagogue of architectural significance in the Americas, along with cemeteries and the foundations of brick buildings, boat landing areas, and a military post. The Cassipora Creek Cemetery is the remnant of an older settlement founded in the 1650s which ceased to exist three decades later when its inhabitants migrated two kilometres downstream to Jodensavanne. Unusual for the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora, these early Jewish colonies were not situated in existing urban settings, and were longer-lived than many. Located amidst Indigenous territory, the settlements were inhabited, owned, and governed by Jews who lived there together with free and enslaved persons of African descent. The settlements had the most extensive arrangement of privileges and immunities known in the early modern Jewish world.

### 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 two *sites*.

### Included in the Tentative List

30 June 1998 as “The settlement of Joden Savanne and Cassipora cemetery”

### 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 nominated property from 5 to 9 September 2022.

### Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 3 October 2022 requesting further information about authenticity, documentation, boundaries, buffer zones, factors affecting the property, monitoring, research, archaeological investigation, ownership, and funding.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 3 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 management, budget, development pressures, property boundaries, carrying capacity, tourism, visitor infrastructure, community participation, climate change, and risk preparedness.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 15 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 comprised of two component parts: the remains of the Jodensavanne (“Jewish Savanna”) Settlement on the heavily forested banks of the Suriname River; and the nearby Cassipora Creek Cemetery.

The Jodensavanne Settlement contains two cemeteries, the foundations of brick buildings, boat landing inlets for access from the river, natural (medicinal) springs, Ceiba trees considered sacred by the Indigenous and enslaved West African peoples, and a military post belonging to a ninety-four-kilometre-long military defence line (the *Cordonpad*) that protected the area’s plantations against attacks and connected the settlement to the Atlantic Coast. The main building of the settlement, the Beraha VeSalom synagogue, is referred to as the earliest synagogue of architectural significance in the Americas. Now in ruins, it was constructed with imported European bricks in a Dutch vernacular style, but details of its design are still unclear.

The second component part of the nominated property is the Cassipora Creek Cemetery, which lies about two kilometres south of the Jodensavanne Settlement. It is the remnant of an older settlement founded in the 1650s and

abandoned in the 1680s when its inhabitants migrated down the river to Jodensavanne. Some scholars have suggested that the move to Jodensavanne may have been due to malaria, or to the search for healthier living conditions, more space, and a better water supply. In contrast to the Jodensavanne Settlement, it was never charted as a village or town. No further information is available at this time concerning the Cassipora Creek Settlement, and only the cemetery is included in the nominated property. The area suspected of being the location of the Cassipora Creek Settlement is included in this component part's buffer zone.

The earliest cemetery, Beth Haim Velho at Cassipora Creek, has 216 graves with stone markers, but it is estimated that there were more than 400 burials in total. The oldest gravestone is dated 1666 and the most recent 1873, which shows that the cemetery was used beyond the existence of the settlement and in parallel with the Jodensavanne Cemetery. The Cassipora Creek Cemetery is the only Jewish cemetery in Suriname with two prism-shaped gravestones, which were traditionally reserved for rabbis and other community leaders. The gravestones at the cemetery have inscriptions in Hebrew, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Aramaic, and combinations of these languages; only about 11% show some sort of iconography. Most of the gravestones probably originated in Amsterdam and were incised before shipment to the Americas.

The Jewish burial site in Jodensavanne contains 462 gravestones, with dates between 1685 and 1873. Epitaphs are mainly in Hebrew and Portuguese, with some in Spanish, Dutch, and Aramaic. Some of the texts include combinations of these languages. Only 6.7% of the gravestones show iconography. The graves are generally in an east-west orientation, and some are lined with bricks. It is estimated that some 900 persons were buried in the cemetery, but nearly half of them evidently could not afford gravestones. The wooden markers used instead are now lost, and future work is necessary to locate these graves.

Also included in the Jodensavanne component part is the African-Creole cemetery, Nengre Berpe. Located a relatively short distance from the Jewish burial site, it contains 135 graves with wooden markers, nearly all facing east. It is assumed that there are many more graves, not all of which have been located. The remaining wooden markers have small non-historic metal protective caps. In most cases the epitaphs are faded or unreadable. Some of the graves had wooden frames or fences, very few of which remain. A few graves have horizontal stone slabs, and some are lined with bricks. The oldest identifiable grave at this cemetery dates from 1860 and the most recent from 1959. Archival information indicates that the use of the cemetery by free and enslaved persons who lived and worked at Jodensavanne began before 1794. The African-Creole cemetery's hybrid burial practices are considered by some scholars to be a typical example of cultural symbiosis.

In the vicinity of the African-Creole burial site lies the Wijngaarde family graveyard, consisting of five modern graves of the Indigenous Wijngaarde family, the most recent dating from 2004.

The area of the two component parts totals 24.8 ha with two buffer zones totalling 19.45 ha, according to revisions of the boundaries submitted by the State Party in February 2023.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese or Sephardic Jews fleeing the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition established Jodensavanne as an independent agrarian Jewish settlement within the colony of Suriname. Created under favourable English and later Dutch rule, it prospered for more than 100 years. The settlement, located on high ground in the densely forested frontier zone amidst Indigenous territory, was inhabited, owned, and governed by Jews who lived there with free and enslaved persons of African descent. It had the most extensive arrangement of privileges and immunities known in the early modern Jewish world.

The two settlements are unusual for the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora, since most of the other early Jewish colonies in the Americas were concentrated in existing urban settings, and many were shorter-lived. By the early 1700s, most of Suriname's Jewish population was concentrated in Jodensavanne and its surrounding plantations. The 575 Jews residing here made this the largest Jewish agrarian area in the world. These Sephardic settlers, engaged for the most part in agriculture and trade, helped the Dutch transform Suriname into the Dutch Republic's most profitable possession in the Americas.

The plantations, which are not included in the nominated property, produced mainly sugar and coffee. By 1787, the centre of Surinamese Jewry had shifted fifty kilometres north to Paramaribo, due to a crisis in the plantation economy and increased insecurity caused by a series of Maroon attacks and rebellions by enslaved persons. On 2 April 1825, by an Order of the Crown, all the special "privileges, concessions, and exceptions of whatever nature" afforded the Jewish inhabitants were abolished, and their rights reverted to those of other inhabitants. In 1832 the settlement was affected by a fire. In 1865, the Beraha VeSalom synagogue was used for worship for the last time, ending 180 years of serving the Jewish community. Its roof collapsed in 1873 and the building fell into ruin. That same year the last persons were buried in the Cassipora Creek and Jodensavanne Jewish cemeteries. The settlement and the cemeteries were completely abandoned and subsequently overtaken by nature. Today, the nominated property exists as two archaeological sites within a dense forest.

#### **State of conservation**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century several attempts were made to clean the Jodensavanne Settlement site, on some occasions accompanied by detailed documentation of the ruins and even some publications of the results. On 11 October 1971 the Jodensavanne Foundation was created

with the aim to preserve, protect, and maintain the remains of the former Jewish settlement. Conservation work was done at the ruin of the synagogue in the 1970s to stabilise it and improve its appearance. A small museum was built and visitor facilities were installed. Archaeological explorations at the site in the early 1980s could not establish the original street plan around the synagogue. They also showed that the soil's acidity had left the human remains in the cemeteries in a very poor state of preservation. A plan to develop a theme park at the site, without a focus on conservation of the cultural heritage elements, failed due to insufficient support.

The civil war (1986-1992) saw the destruction of the visitor facilities and rendered the archaeological site inaccessible. After the war, the Jodensavanne Foundation reopened the site, undertook some maintenance, and started to promote it as a tourism destination. In 1998 and 2000 the World Monuments Fund included Jodensavanne on its World Monuments Watch. In the 2000s the site was surveyed and mapped, and the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust at UNESCO financed the development of a management plan (2008-2012) for the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. The most recent consolidation work at the synagogue and at some of the brick graves in the Jodensavanne Cemetery was done in 2011. In 2019, a UNESCO-funded conservation project focused on the tropical hardwood grave markers at the African-Creole cemetery. They were given surface treatments and fitted with small metal caps to protect the end grain of the wood.

Conservation activities and maintenance are currently done by two employees and members of the nearby Indigenous village of Redi Doti. The Cassipora Creek Cemetery is more difficult to access and does not get the same level of maintenance as the Jodensavanne component part.

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.

#### **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 linked to the climatic conditions of Suriname.

Mean daily temperatures of 27 °C, relative humidity between 80% and 90%, and heavy rainfall cause weathering processes and degradation of the construction materials at the settlement and the cemeteries. Earth movements and tree falls can also affect the elements directly. Biological agents such as lichens, fungi, algae, mosses, and insects also cause direct and indirect damage to the materials.

The most common factors seem to be weathering of the surfaces of the grave slabs and wooden grave markers and movement of the brick and stone elements. Apart from the displacement of built elements (disintegration

and tilting), this movement can lead to fractures, as seen on some grave slabs. The movement, fracture, and disintegration of elements can be worse on sloped surfaces (erosion) and areas with vegetative growth and possible tree falls. The State Party considers that the impact of these factors can be minimised by applying the necessary conservation strategies and actions. Most of these factors are well identified and understood, and the necessary actions are being taken.

ICOMOS notes that some of the wooden grave markers and fences were destroyed by a bushfire in the early 1980s. Fire and other factors such as floods, vandalism, development pressures (including potential environmental threats linked to mining activities upstream of the nominated property), and tourism infrastructure (such as the nearby river resort) are not considered by the State Party to have a significant impact on the nominated property or the buffer zones. While it seems that these factors are currently not serious threats, ICOMOS considers that it will be necessary to monitor them closely and to ensure the nominated property's protective mechanisms are adequate to address any future changes to the situation, for example due to climate change. While the subject of risk preparedness is addressed in several different documents, it would be useful to concentrate all the information in one integral risk preparedness plan.

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ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is adequate and that most factors affecting the nominated property are well identified and controlled. However, aspects linked to possible future threats, especially related to climate change and development pressures, should be closely monitored. The elaboration of an integral risk preparedness plan should be considered.

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### **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 Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery together are an unparalleled testimony of a Jewish civilization within the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora. They were the only enduring Jewish settlements in the world that were granted territorial and communal autonomy at the time, and constituted the largest Jewish agrarian region in the world.
- They feature one of the oldest surviving Jewish cemeteries in the Americas, as well as remnants of what is referred to as the earliest synagogue of architectural significance in the Americas.
- The Sephardic settlers helped the Dutch transform Suriname into the most profitable Dutch Republic possession in the Americas.
- They exhibited a strong interchange with enslaved Africans and their descendants, Maroons, and Indigenous people.

Based on the nomination dossier, the key attributes of the nominated property are the archaeological remains of the Jodensavanne Settlement, including the ruins of the Beraha VeSalom synagogue and other buildings, military repository, boat landing sites, natural springs, Ceiba trees, sand pit, Jewish cemetery, and African-Creole cemetery, and the Beth Haim Velho cemetery at Cassipora Creek.

### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around the following parameters for Jewish settlements: the type of settlement; the existence of basic privileges and/or restrictions; the participation of an army or militia; the existence of religious education; the existence of a tribunal, synagogue, and/or cemetery; the existence of a cultural interchange; and the economic base or main business. It has examined properties within the country, the region, and throughout the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, inserted in the Tentative Lists of States Parties, as well as other properties. No geo-cultural region has explicitly been identified, though the Caribbean and its vicinity can be inferred.

The comparative analysis first examines the national context of the Cassipora Creek and Jodensavanne settlements, and reaches the conclusion that they were the only autonomous communities of their kind in Suriname. ICOMOS considers that the nominated property stands apart in important ways from the other autonomous European communities known to have existed in Suriname, based on the information provided.

In the regional and international contexts, the comparisons focus on the Jewish communities that existed in Historic Area of Willemstad, Inner City and Harbour, Curaçao (Netherlands, 1997, criteria (ii), (iv) and (v)); Historic Centre of the Town of Olinda (Brazil, 1982, criteria (ii) and (iv)); Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison (Barbados, 2011, criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv)); City of Charlestown (Nevis island, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Tentative List); Speightstown in Barbados; Recife in Brazil; Kingston and Spanish Town in Jamaica; Pomeroon and Essequibo in Guyana; Oranjestad in Sint Eustatius, Netherlands; Philipsburg in Sint Maarten, Netherlands; Cayenne in French Guiana, France; and, outside the Atlantic region, Livorno (Leghorn) in Italy. All are important in their own ways, but in reference to the chosen parameters they lacked autonomy, were confined to a Jewish quarter or ghetto, shared the urban space with non-Jews, and/or had a relatively short-lived existence. The comparisons make clear that all these early Jewish communities had varying degrees of privileges and restrictions. The Jewish community of Livorno is the only striking parallel in terms of political status: like the nominated property, the Livorno community existed as a corporate group that functioned as a 'state within a state'. The Livorno community differed greatly, however, in its overall setting.

The comparisons with properties on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists that speak to Jewish settlements and cemeteries focus on Masada (Israel, 2001, criteria (iii), (iv)

and (vi)), Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius' Basilica in Třebíč (Czechia, 2003, criteria (ii) and (iii)), and The Jewish Cemetery of Altona Königstraße: Sephardic Sepulchral Culture of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century between Europe and the Caribbean (Germany, Tentative List). The State Party concludes that Masada is the only property that allows a meaningful comparison, since the other properties are focused exclusively on the cemeteries. Masada is ultimately dismissed, though, due to its completely different temporal and geographical contexts.

In view of the specificities of the Jodensavanne settlement and the parameters chosen for the comparative analysis, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is distinct from other testimonies that illustrate the first attempts of Jewish settlement in the New World.

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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 (ii) and (iii).

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

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Jodensavanne Settlement was located in a frontier zone amidst Indigenous land and participated in a slave society during the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this context, different cultures and ethnocultural groups (Jews, Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and European colonists) came into contact, collided, and connected with each other, resulting in tangible and intangible interchanges.

ICOMOS recognises that this Jewish community located in a frontier zone formed part of a slave-owning society, leading to interactions with other groups. However, little consideration is given by the State Party to the nature of these interactions. Furthermore, the interchanges of human values between these groups have only had a local impact; moreover, the interchanges for the most part are not expressed in tangible attributes. The State Party has not shown conclusively that these interchanges left an important mark on developments in architecture, technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design. For these reasons, ICOMOS considers that criterion (ii) has not been demonstrated.

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

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site is an exceptional testimony within the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora of a Jewish civilisation that was granted territorial and communal autonomy, a Jewish 'state within

a state' that existed successfully from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The settlement existed in an area adjacent to Indigenous territories, and the Jewish settlers were instrumental in its defence. Several of the material remains in the nominated property are exceptional due to their age (the cemeteries) and their architectural significance (the synagogue). Furthermore, the archaeological evidence at the settlement and cemeteries points towards a coexistence of different cultures and ethnocultural groups, including Jews, Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and European colonists.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is a testimony to the dispersion of Jewish communities within the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora. The Jodensavanne Settlement and the Cassipora Creek Cemetery are exceptional examples of early Jewish colonisation attempts in the geo-cultural region and are an important chapter in Jewish history. The location of the nominated property in the Americas and its material remains tell the story of an exceptional development of this 'state within a state'. ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has been demonstrated.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii), but that criterion (ii) has not been demonstrated.

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### **Integrity and authenticity**

#### **Integrity**

The integrity of the nominated property is based on the Jodensavanne Settlement, with the remains of its buildings, the cemeteries, and several other elements that played important roles in the development and daily life of the Jewish community, including the boat landings that connected Jodensavanne with the river, the military post and part of the defences (the *Cordonpad*), the medicinal springs, the sacred Ceiba trees, and the sand pit. It is also based on the Cassipora Creek Cemetery. The boundary of the Jodensavanne component part includes all the elements mentioned above.

The boundary of the Cassipora Creek component part delimits only the cemetery, leaving out the probable location of the associated settlement. This was the first autonomous Sephardic Jewish community in the colony of Suriname, and precursor of the Jodensavanne Settlement. In February 2023, the State Party extended the Cassipora Creek component part's buffer zone to include the area most likely to be the settlement's location. ICOMOS welcomes this extension. Considering the historical importance of the Cassipora Creek Settlement, ICOMOS suggests further exploring the possibility of including its location in the property, through a minor boundary modification request, if this one and its state of conservation can be accurately determined.

The attributes are intact, and the way major pressures on them are managed is adequate.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the whole series and of the individual component parts have been met.

#### **Authenticity**

The attributes that convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are substantially authentic in terms of their forms and designs, materials and substance, and locations and settings. In additional information provided in November 2022, the State Party stressed that ongoing maintenance work is based on the advice of specialists, and is done with great care regarding the original materials and substance.

In general terms, the authenticity of the remains as well as their settings do not raise any serious concerns at the moment. However, ICOMOS highlights the need to strengthen protection of the surroundings of the nominated property's component parts in order to avoid negative impacts to the authenticity of the nominated property in the future.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of authenticity of the whole series and of the individual component parts have been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the whole series and of the individual component parts have been met, and that the conditions of authenticity of the whole series and of the individual component parts have also been demonstrated.

#### **Boundaries**

The boundaries of the Jodensavanne Settlement component part were determined by identifying the location of the attributes and then following the limits of adjacent land properties – to the north, the boundary with the former Gelderland plantation (now part of the Indigenous land of Redi Doti), and to the south, the boundary of the Indigenous land (used in part for the Jodensavanne River Resort) – and by following the Suriname River to the west, and the main road to Pierrekondre Kumbasi and Redi Doti villages to the east.

The delineation of the Cassipora Creek component part is based solely on the limits of the cemetery as it was measured and researched during a comprehensive cemetery site survey in 1998. Together, the boundaries of the two component parts are logical in relation to the attributes that support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information from the State Party on the buffer zones. In its response in November 2022, the State Party proposed extending the Cassipora Creek Cemetery buffer zone to include the probable location of the Cassipora Settlement. Located northwest of the cemetery and reaching to the bank of the Suriname River, the probable location was identified during an exploratory archaeological investigation in 2018. In February 2023, the State Party submitted a revised buffer zone that was extended to the north and west

of the nominated property component part, following the outlines of the higher ground on which the cemetery is located. This revision had earlier been approved by the Redi Doti Village Council in November 2022.

The buffer zone of the Jodensavanne Settlement component part is a fifty-metre-wide strip that surrounds the nominated property. While this buffer zone may be sufficient to protect the integrity and the views of the archaeological site in the densely forested areas, ICOMOS considers that the viewsheds on both banks of the river and on the island to the west of the proposed Jodensavanne component part should be better protected against possible negative visual impacts on the Jodensavanne Settlement component part. The State Party informed ICOMOS in the additional information submitted in November 2022 that it has issued a request to designate the far bank of the river (the land of the state-owned former Horeb plantation) and the island in the Suriname River as a Special Protected Forest according to the 1992 Forest Management Act (S.B. 1992 No. 80). In the additional information supplied by the State Party in February 2023, ICOMOS was informed that the final decision on this issue is still pending.

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

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies the consideration of this Jodensavanne archaeological site for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets criterion (iii), but criterion (ii) has not been demonstrated. The conditions of authenticity and integrity of the whole series and of each of the component parts have been demonstrated. The boundaries as revised in February 2023 are logical in relation to the identified attributes.

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## **4 Conservation measures and monitoring**

### **Documentation**

While the historical and archaeological knowledge about the nominated property is adequate, the documentation, especially on some of the archaeological information including the archaeological artefacts, is not complete nor very well presented. Inventories of grave slabs with their inscriptions and iconography are mentioned, for example, but they are not presented in the nomination. While various maps of the cemeteries are included in the nomination dossier, a definitive and detailed topographical map showing all the attributes referenced in the nomination is missing.

In response to an ICOMOS request for additional information in October 2022, the State Party in November advised that several detailed inventories are in the possession of the Jodensavanne Foundation, and two scientific volumes based on surveys and documentation of the cemeteries have been published. Furthermore, the State Party indicated that online publication of the information on the cemeteries is proposed, following the example of the Jamaican Jewish Cemeteries Preservation

Fund. The State Party also presented a more detailed research programme, and mentioned several national and international collaborations to be carried out in the future.

ICOMOS considers that it is important to centralise the dispersed information about the nominated property in an accessible database. ICOMOS further considers that future research should focus on identifying and documenting missing features of the settlements and cemeteries. Detailed records also need to be kept concerning all conservation interventions at the nominated property's component parts.

### **Conservation measures**

The nominated property has passed through several cycles of deterioration, abandonment, and conservation, and is now conserved and presented as an archaeological site. The aggressive environmental conditions (heat, humidity, and many different biological agents) make constant care and maintenance necessary to keep the nominated property from being reclaimed by the forest and suffering further deterioration. The maintenance activities mentioned by the State Party include timely removal of seedlings, plants, and roots; insect and pest control; conservation of wooden grave markers; and regular tree inspections, with the timely removal of old, dead or dangerous overhanging trees.

Some of the degradation processes, such as stone flaking and peeling of surfaces of grave slabs, are considered by the State Party to be natural processes that cannot be influenced. Restoration projects, such as the brick-lined graves (2011) and wooden grave markers (2019), are carried out when necessary and when circumstances and funding allow; most of the funding for activities beyond normal site operation depends on donations.

Of the four persons working on site, recruited from the Indigenous village of Redi Doti, one is focused on 'green maintenance'. The others are engaged primarily in managerial tasks, as well as ticket sales and maintenance of the visitor and office facilities. For conservation interventions, personnel consists mainly of volunteers with on-the-job training, as was the case in the 2011 training in masonry repair work project for four youths from Redi Doti. While the State Party and especially the Jodensavanne Foundation deserve recognition for the conservation work done, it will be necessary to secure more regular funding in order to strengthen maintenance work and secure the availability of expertise in fields such as stone conservation.

### **Monitoring**

The Jodensavanne Foundation is responsible for monitoring the state of conservation of the nominated property. As in the case of conservation measures, the work is done by on-site and office personnel of this agency. The indicators proposed for monitoring the state of conservation of the nominated property do not reflect the whole spectrum of possible threats, nor all the attributes mentioned in the nomination dossier. The aspects to be monitored are, for example, the structural integrity or physical condition of the material remains at the nominated

property, as well as of the visitor installations. These indicators are proposed to be reviewed on an annual basis, mainly through visual inspection and photo comparison. Other aspects monitored are the number of tickets sold and the number of on-site accidents.

In the additional information provided to ICOMOS in November 2022, the State Party included a range of more detailed indicators, mainly concentrated on the graves, most of which can be used in a quantifiable way. While this system allows a somewhat acceptable state of conservation to be maintained, ICOMOS considers that it is necessary to include quantifiable indicators that monitor all the attributes as well as the general environmental conditions and changes to the surroundings of the nominated property. The indicators should not only record damages the nominated property already suffered, such as flaking of the surfaces of grave slabs and site encroachments, but should forewarn of negative impacts on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value before they happen. This type of data would also help detect long-term changes at the nominated property and its surroundings.

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ICOMOS considers that the dispersed documentation of the nominated property should be centralised in an accessible database. A definitive and detailed topographical map showing all the attributes referenced in the nomination should be prepared and submitted. ICOMOS also considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring system is further developed to encompass all the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value along with the general environmental conditions around the nominated property, and is adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire. ICOMOS further considers that regular funding is needed to strengthen maintenance work and secure expertise in fields such as stone conservation.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Legal protection

The two component parts of the nominated property are recognised as archaeological monuments under the Monuments Act of 2002 (S.B. 2002 No. 72). They have been legally protected at the highest level since 2009 through Ministerial Resolution No. 873 regarding the designation of the former Jewish settlement Jodensavanne and Cassipora Cemetery as an archaeological monument.

In 2008, the Jodensavanne Foundation was granted the right of use for rehabilitation, conservation, management, and touristic purposes, and since 2010 it holds the official land rights of the nominated property. The Foundation's bylaws (Art. 2) state its objectives as preserving, protecting, and maintaining the remains of the site, as well as managing and utilising the monument in the interest of the Surinamese public and tourism.

Furthermore, the local Indigenous peoples are the traditional custodians of the archaeological site, which adds

another layer of protection. While the two systems supplement each other, there is no detailed information on the functioning of the traditional protective system mentioned in the nomination dossier. Detailed information showing the ownership and land-use zoning of the areas surrounding the nominated property is also missing. Additional information submitted by the State Party in November 2022 provides written information on this issue, but no detailed maps. The additional information supplied in February 2023 includes maps, but the ownership of some of the areas surrounding the component parts is not clearly indicated.

ICOMOS notes the possibility of additional protection being afforded to the archaeological site and its surroundings by means of a legal decree of Public Land, designation as a Special Protected Forest, and/or use as community forest lands. No mention of these possibilities was made in the nomination dossier. In the additional information submitted in November 2022, the State Party indicates its probable adoption of a Special Protected Forest designation. No detailed information has been given by the State Party concerning the legal implications of such a designation.

### Management system

On 11 October 1971, the Jodensavanne Foundation was created to preserve, protect, and maintain the remains of the former Jewish Settlement, and today it is the official management authority of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. The property is co-managed as part of an agreement with the Indigenous village of Redi Doti. A Memorandum of Cooperation was first signed between the Jodensavanne Foundation and the Redi Doti Village Council on 4 July 2008. The present agreement (2021-2025) establishes that the Indigenous village of Redi Doti is co-responsible for the preservation, protection, and management of the cultural heritage of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site, while the Jodensavanne Foundation recognises its shared responsibility for the sustainable socio-economic development of Redi Doti. The Memorandum of Cooperation is evaluated and signed by the two partners every four years.

The Jodensavanne Foundation provides a 'development incentive' of 10% of its annual ticket sales to the local non-governmental organisation, the Khoréro Móthoko Foundation of Redi Doti, as an incentive to support local community activities. The Indigenous population has free admission to the archaeological site. Any changes to the management plan as well as any tourism, recreation or construction projects must be agreed to by both partners.

There are seven persons on the board of the Jodensavanne Foundation, including representatives from the Village Council, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and independent professionals. All maintenance personnel of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site are local inhabitants of Redi Doti. The State Party states that this heritage preservation cooperation model is unique.

The boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zones are respected by the Village Council. The operators

of the Jodensavanne River Resort, in existence since 2015 and bordering the Jodensavanne component part's buffer zone, have agreed that no encroachment shall take place in the buffer zone, and a written agreement to this effect was signed on 8 February 2023, according to additional information provided by the State Party. In the additional information supplied in November 2022, the State Party clarified that the resort is located on Indigenous land and is used with the consent of the Redi Doti village.

Operation of the nominated property depends heavily on income from entrance fees and private donations. The four persons from the Redi Doti village who are currently employed for on-site work are considered to be insufficient in number, and ICOMOS notes that only two are permanent staff, due to a shortcoming in funding. In order to improve the financial situation of the nominated property, prices have been raised as of November 2022, doubled in the case of non-residents. As stated in the additional information submitted by the State Party in November 2022, efforts are being made to add six additional persons from the village as on-site staff, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. A formal request was submitted to the Government of Suriname in February 2023 for an annual subsidy to help cover the operational and management costs of the nominated property.

The Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery Management Plan 2020-2025, which is an update of the 2008-2012 management plan, gives guidance for the management, protection, conservation, and promotion of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. There is no budget presented for the projects proposed in the management plan, but specific conservation and tourism-related projects are intended to be financed through donations.

A traditional management and protection system is mentioned by the State Party, which seems to be based principally on Indigenous traditional knowledge of diverse aspects of the relationship between people and nature. No formal agreements are mentioned.

The State Party highlights that the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site complies with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UNESCO policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Visitor management**

The Jodensavanne Archaeological Site yearly receives about 6,500 visitors, including students. The installations for visitors include a visitor's centre, two lavatories, two basic shelters, a guardhouse, several information boards, and a modernised stairway from the waterfront to the settlement's plaza. In 2001, the Jewish Heritage Program of the World Monuments Fund granted the Jodensavanne Foundation funds for signage to provide visitors with a self-guided tour. While the installations are adequate for the current level of visitation, they would have to be reviewed if there is a substantial increase in the number of visitors. The State Party declares that most of the potential negative effects of higher visitor numbers can be mitigated through

efficient management actions. In additional information submitted in February 2023, the State Party notes that a carrying capacity study is currently being elaborated by a graduate student of Tourism Management at the HZ University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. Based on an evaluation made during a recent UNESCO workshop entitled 'Sustainable Tourism Strategy for World Heritage Properties in Suriname' (Japanese Funds-in-Trust, July 2022), the number of visitors is expected to remain limited for the foreseeable future. Currently, donations from four corporate donors are being used for a 'Rehabilitation Touristic Infrastructure Project of Jodensavanne'.

Some of the visitor facilities at the Jodensavanne Settlement component part are located near the plaza and synagogue grounds. The State Party does not consider a relocation of these facilities to be necessary or useful at the moment, but indicated in the additional information it supplied in February 2023 that this might be reconsidered in the future. ICOMOS considers that this possibility indicates the need for an integral land-use plan and regulations for the Jodensavanne component part, as well as clear guidelines in the case of the Cassipora Creek Cemetery component part, which at the moment has no installations apart from an information panel.

A National Strategic Tourism Plan (2018-2030) exists, and further Strategic Tourism Plans at the district level will be developed.

#### **Community involvement**

The State Party stresses that the Jodensavanne Foundation has been working together with the Indigenous village of Redi Doti (population 120) since the nominated property's inclusion on the Tentative List in 1998. The community has been involved in the process of preparing the nomination dossier, for example through an online presentation (due to Covid-19) in November 2021. In the community there are positive expectations about the possibility of the nominated property being inscribed on the World Heritage List, including the conservation of the cultural heritage and the tourism potential of the property.

The nominated property is considered to be a place of memory by both the Jewish Surinamese and the Afro-Surinamese. Events have been commemorated at Jodensavanne, such as the 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beraha VeSalom synagogue in 2010 and the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of community leader Abraham Garcia Wijngaarde in 2015. There is also a current request from Maroon dignitaries to visit Jodensavanne.

The multi-year Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the Jodensavanne Foundation and the Redi Doti Village Council, as mentioned above, involves the local community in the decision-making processes at the nominated property. Furthermore, the on-site staff and many of the workers for projects at the nominated property are recruited from the local village. The Jodensavanne Foundation also recognises its shared responsibility for the sustainable socio-economic development of Redi Doti.



The Indigenous people of the Redi Doti village are valued as stakeholders, rights-holders, and partners in conserving, protecting, managing, and interpreting the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. Their traditional and Indigenous knowledge of the site and its surroundings is considered to be of central importance to understanding, conserving, and managing the site.

Capacity building of local personnel is done *in situ* by students from the universities, by local archaeologists who are involved in conservation activities, and through internships. Representatives of the community are also involved in awareness-raising and capacity-building activities planned by international organisations such as UNESCO, Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, and the Smithsonian Institution.

It is very clear that the focus of the Jodensavanne Foundation's collaborative efforts is on the local village. It is less clear whether there are any other groups that should be included in the decision-making processes concerning the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. The Chair of the Jewish Community of Suriname has stated that the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site is a very important part of Jewish history, mainly for Sephardic Jews, and has asked to be informed about activities and projects in the future. In this context, it is important to recognise that the history of the nominated property is complex and that, while there seems to be general interest, it remains unclear as to what degree the nomination is supported by the descendants of the formerly enslaved peoples.

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#### **Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property**

In summary, ICOMOS observes that the nominated property has the highest-level legal protection at the national level. A management plan exists by which the local Indigenous population is co-responsible for the nominated property's management. A traditional management and protection system is mentioned. The collaboration between the Redi Doti Village Council and the Jodensavanne Foundation through a renewable four-year Memorandum of Cooperation is evidently harmonious. No information is provided concerning the possible involvement of other groups of stakeholders. ICOMOS considers that an adequate and stable budget for the investigation, operation, maintenance, conservation, and presentation of the nominated property is essential.

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## **6 Conclusion**

The Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery play a special role in the history of the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora, based on its early establishment, duration, rural context, and the privileges and immunities that collectively set it apart from many other early Jewish colonisation attempts in the New World.

There is an evident commitment to the conservation of the nominated property by the State Party and the local community. The Memorandum of Cooperation between the Jodensavanne Foundation and the Redi Doti Village Council is an important element for its co-management.

ICOMOS considers that the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site meets criterion (iii). The archaeological remains, together with historical documentation, allow an exceptional story to be told of the centuries-long development of this Jewish 'state within a state'.

Several important aspects require further attention by the State Party. Of great importance is the acquisition of adequate and stable funding for the operation and maintenance of the nominated property. The designation of a Special Protected Forest zone also needs to be finalised.

The documentation of the archaeological site should be collected in an accessible database in order to serve, in part, as baseline data for the monitoring process. Quantifiable indicators should give information about the state of conservation of all the attributes of the nominated property, as well as general environmental conditions and changes to its surroundings.

While development pressures are currently not considered by the State Party to be serious threats, they need to be monitored closely and the nominated property's protective mechanisms need to be capable of addressing any future changes to the situation. For that reason, an integrated risk preparedness plan is recommended. In order to prepare the nominated property for an increase in tourism, it is important to conclude the study on carrying capacity and to complete a land-use plan.

Looking to the future, the State Party may wish to explore the possibility of including the archaeological remains of the Cassipora Creek Settlement within the property's boundaries.

## **7 Recommendations**

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

ICOMOS recommends that The Jodensavanne Archaeological Site: Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery, Suriname, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criterion (iii)**.

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

#### **Brief Synthesis**

Located on the densely forested banks of the Suriname River, the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site in northern Suriname is a serial property with two component parts that illustrate early Jewish colonisation attempts in the New World. The Jodensavanne Settlement, founded in the 1680s, includes the ruins of what is believed to be the

earliest synagogue of architectural significance in the Americas, along with cemeteries and the foundations of brick buildings, boat landing areas, and a military post. The Cassipora Creek Cemetery is the remnant of an older settlement founded in the 1650s which ceased to exist three decades later when its inhabitants migrated two kilometres downstream to Jodensavanne. Unusual for the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora, these early Jewish colonies were not situated in existing urban settings, and were longer-lived than many. Located amidst Indigenous territory, the settlements were inhabited, owned, and governed by Jews who lived there together with free and enslaved persons of African descent. The settlements had the most extensive arrangement of privileges and immunities known in the early modern Jewish world.

**Criterion (iii):** The Jodensavanne Archaeological Site is an exceptional testimony within the Atlantic Sephardic diaspora of a Jewish civilisation that was granted territorial and communal autonomy, a Jewish 'state within a state' that existed successfully from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The settlement existed in an area adjacent to Indigenous territories, and the Jewish settlers were instrumental in its defence. Several of the material remains in the property are exceptional due to their age (the cemeteries) and their architecture. Furthermore, the archaeological evidence at the settlement and cemeteries points towards a coexistence of different cultures and ethnocultural groups, including Jews, Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and European colonists.

#### Integrity

The integrity of the serial property is based on the Jodensavanne Settlement component part, with the remains of buildings, cemeteries, and several other elements that played important roles in the development and daily life of the Jewish community, including the boat landings that connected Jodensavanne with the river, the military post and part of the defences, the medicinal springs, sacred Ceiba trees, and a sand pit. The Cassipora Creek Cemetery component part's gravestones have inscriptions in Hebrew, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Aramaic, and combinations of these languages. The Cassipora Creek Settlement, the first autonomous Sephardic Jewish community in the colony of Suriname and precursor of the Jodensavanne Settlement, is not yet located, but its probable location is included in the buffer zone.

#### Authenticity

The attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value are substantially authentic in terms of their forms and designs, materials and substance, and locations and settings. Ongoing maintenance work is based on the advice of specialists, and is done with great care regarding the original materials and substance.

In general terms, the authenticity of the remains as well as their settings do not raise any serious concerns at the moment. There is a need to strengthen protection of the surroundings of the property's component parts in order

to avoid potential negative impacts to the authenticity of these settings in the future.

#### Protection and management requirements

The two component parts of the property are recognised as archaeological monuments under the Monuments Act of 2002 and have been legally protected at the highest level since 2009 through Ministerial Resolution No. 873. The Jodensavanne Foundation, created in 1971, is the official management authority of the property. It has the right of use for rehabilitation, conservation, management, and touristic purposes, and holds the official land rights of the property. Local Indigenous peoples are the traditional custodians of the archaeological site, which adds another layer of protection. The property is co-managed by the Indigenous village of Redi Doti. A Memorandum of Cooperation between the Redi Doti Village Council and the Jodensavanne Foundation establishes that the Indigenous village of Redi Doti is co-responsible for the preservation, protection, and management of the cultural heritage of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site, while the Jodensavanne Foundation recognises its shared responsibility for the sustainable socio-economic development of Redi Doti. Any changes to the management plan as well as any tourism, recreation or construction projects must be agreed to by both partners. The Memorandum of Cooperation is evaluated and signed by the two partners every four years.

The Jodensavanne Settlement and Cassipora Creek Cemetery Management Plan 2020-2025 gives guidance for the management, protection, conservation, and promotion of the Jodensavanne Archaeological Site. Operation of the property depends heavily on income from entrance fees and private donations. An annual subsidy from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is being pursued to help cover the operational costs of the property.

#### Additional recommendations

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

- a) Obtaining adequate and stable funding for the operation and maintenance of the property,
- b) Finalising the designation of the Special Protected Forest zone,
- c) Preparing and/or centralising the inventories of archaeological finds and the accompanying information, and presenting this information on detailed topographical maps and/or in a Geographical Information System (GIS),
- d) Identifying quantifiable indicators for monitoring the state of conservation of all the attributes of the property, as well as general environmental conditions and changes to its surroundings, in order to help detect long-term developments at the property and its surroundings,

- e) Elaborating an integrated risk preparedness plan for the two component parts,
- f) Evaluating the current land use (e.g., location of visitor installations) with the objective of developing a land-use plan for the property,
- g) Exploring the possibility and relevance of including additional interest groups and stakeholders in the property management process,
- h) Determining the carrying capacity of the property,
- i) Further exploring the possibility of including the remains of the Cassipora Creek Settlement in the property's boundary, through a minor boundary modification request, if its location and state of conservation can be accurately determined,
- j) Undertaking research on the interrelations between the different groups (Jewish people, local African descendants) that were living together in Jodensavanne in order to further the understanding of the property,
- k) Submitting to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2024, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47<sup>th</sup> session;



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated component parts (February 2023)