

Steps toward Recognition as World Heritage

In today's society, in which preservation of the natural environment is an important challenge, we can learn much from the values and lessons taught by the Jomon culture, which flourished for over 10,000 years in harmony with nature without ever altering the surrounding environment in any major way.

For this reason, 4 prefectures of northern Japan and their municipalities are collaborating to have the Jomon ruins in the south of Hokkaido and north of Tohoku designated as UNESCO World Heritage. This area was home to large-scale villages from the start of human settlement to the end of the Jomon culture, and features stone circles and other monuments. It also shows that trade and a common culture continued to flourish over a long period of time despite the geographical boundaries of Tsugaru Strait, and represents the special value of the Jomon culture among the ruins left behind by other hunting-gathering societies throughout world history.



Component parts in Hokkaido

●Kakinoshima Site (Hakodate City)

Ruins of a village dating back 3,000 to 8,000 years. A U-shaped earthwork mound measuring 190m in length on which ceremonies about disposal of tools, such as pottery and stoneware, were performed.

●Ofune Site (Hakodate City)

Ruins of a village dating back 4,500 to 5,000 years. Features the remains of a large-scale settlement such as the remains of a pit-dwelling over 2m deep. The remains of marine animals such as whales and fur seals, a major source of food, have been unearthed.

●Irie-Takasago Shell Midden [Irie] (Toyako Town)

Remains of an adult who suffered from polio as a child have been unearthed, proving the owner was cared for a long period until adulthood.

●Irie-Takasago Shell Midden [Takasago] (Toyako Town)

Ruins of a village featuring a 2,500 to 4,200-year-old shell midden. Located on a terrace close to the inner bay area, it gives us an insight into the environment and production activities of that time.

●Kitakogane Shell Midden (Date City)

Ruins of a village dating back to 2,500BC featuring a shell midden from 5,500 to 6,000 years ago. While giving us insight into the Jomon livelihood which was based on fishing, and a waterhole had been used as ceremonial place where stoneware was disposed.

●Kiusu Earthwork Burial Circle (Chitose City)

The remains of mass grave surrounded by an enormous embankment dating back to 1,300BC. The embankment was created using the dirt from the sunken inner byrial yards and measures 75m in circumference. There are several graves located in the pit.

●Washinoki Site (Mori Town) *related site

The ruins of a 4,000-year-old monument/grave. With a diameter of 37m, it is Hokkaido's largest stone circle and was discovered during the construction of a highway. A tunnel was dug for the highway to preserve the ruins. It is not included in the world heritage candidate sites, but is a related property.

Heritage Assets of the Jomon ruins in Hokkaido and the north of Tohoku



Kakinoshima Site



Ofune Site



Irie-Takasago Shell Midden (Irie)



Irie-Takasago Shell Midden (Takasago)



Kitakogane Shell Midden



Kiusu Earthwork Burial Circles



Washinoki Site



Information provided by the Eniwa Board of Education, Obihiro Board of Education, Date Board of Education, Chitose Board of Education, Toyako Board of Education, Hakodate Board of Education, Mori Board of Education, Yakumo Board of Education, Yubetsu Board of Education, Rausu Board of Education, Reibun Board of Education, The Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture, Hokkaido Archaeological Operations Center, Александр Васильевский