Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku

Jomon culture is an exceptional prehistoric culture in world history that lasted for over 10,000 years; it is characterized by harmonious relations between human beings and nature. Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku are a valuable cultural heritage attesting to the value of Jomon culture.

To pass on these Jomon archaeological sites to future generations, four prefectures of Hokkaido, Aomori, Iwate, and Akita together with the related municipalities are working together for the inscription of the Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
**Value of Jomon archaeological sites**

**Jomon culture unique to the Japanese archipelago**

The beginning of Jomon culture dates back some 15,000 years before present, when the climate of the Japanese archipelago became warmer rapidly. Forests of deciduous broad-leaved trees expanded and produced a lot of acorns, chestnuts and walnuts. Landforms and environmental conditions became more suitable for fish and shellfish to grow. As a result, the Japanese archipelago saw rich biological diversity of an exceptional degree even in the global context.

Jomon culture is a unique prehistoric culture that existed in the Japanese archipelago and lasted for over 10,000 years. People were able to lead a sustainable life in harmony with the bountiful nature and managed to adapt adeptly to changes in climate and the natural environment. It is characterized by the earliest pottery-making in the world and the establishment of villages where people were able to live a stable life.

Jomon culture is distinctive as compared with contemporaneous Neolithic cultures in other parts of the world in that it achieved sedentism based on hunting, gathering, and fishing as the basis of livelihood without opting for full-fledged agriculture or stockbreeding and that it enjoyed harmonious society and long-standing Jomon culture. It is an extremely important culture in the history of humankind.

**Sedentism**

Adapting to the natural environment at that time, Jomon people invented tools, such as pots, bows, arrows, and fishhooks. They gradually changed to sedentism, while continuing to make livelihood based on hunting, gathering, and fishing. They built pit dwellings and eventually villages. Within a village, dwellings and tombs were made. Some villages became large to function as regional centers.

Monuments such as large pillared structures, ceremonial earth mounds, and stone circles were also constructed.

These villages did not have defensive moats or walls around them, indicating that Jomon people had peaceful, harmonious society. In addition, they conducted active long-distance exchanges and trades across the sea and beyond mountains, as is evidenced in the existence of jade, asphalt, and obsidian in places where they do not occur naturally. Lacquerware, accessories, and ceremonial clay figurines have been unearthed, showing the sophisticated spirituality of Jomon people.

**Ecological Jomon**

Jomon people made livelihood based on hunting, gathering, and fishing, making various tools for these purposes. These artifacts show how they tried to improve their hunting and fishing methods and cooking methods.

**Trade and exchange across the strait**

Jomon people conducted active trade and exchange, even across the Tsugaru Strait between Hokkaido and Aomori Prefecture, for goods such as obsidian and shellfish accessories.
Harmony with nature

During the Jomon period, Hokkaido and northern Tohoku were covered by beech forests and other deciduous broad-leaved trees. The ecosystems of rich biodiversity provided Jomon people with access to diverse natural resources, both forest products and marine resources, on a sustainable basis. As a result, Jomon culture lasted for over 10,000 years. In the surrounding areas of the villages, many useful trees such as chestnut trees, walnut trees, and lacquer trees were planted, forming “Jomon Satoyama”, or productive ecosystems modified with human intervention. In particular, it is likely that chestnut trees were more or less cultivated for food and timber. Although there were global climate change, environmental change, and natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis, Jomon people managed to adapt and overcome these difficulties. Jomon people maintained their livelihood, using natural resources on a sustainable basis without inflicting significant load on the nature, and lived in harmony with the natural environment. As a result, Jomon culture lasted over a long period of time. Harmony with nature lies at the heart of their culture, which could be considered to be one of the important undercurrents of Japanese culture in association with the subsequent developments of Japanese people’s attitudes toward nature, cosmology, or values.

From Jomon to the present

Jomon culture lasted over 10,000 years up to around 300 years BC, when full-fledged rice cultivation started in the Japanese archipelago. It does not mean that it was a stagnant culture or a primitive culture. Instead it was a mature society of its own complete with excellent craftsmanship and sophisticated spirituality. In addition, it is not too much to say that Jomon people are direct ancestors of Japanese people and that the modern life of Japanese people is an extension of Jomon culture. There are many things that people living today can learn from Jomon culture, such as wisdom and practice of incorporating the bountiful blessings of nature into daily lives, life with nature, and care for family and friends. It is important that we proudly succeed to Jomon culture and pass it on to future generations.

Craftsmanship of Jomon people

Lacquerware of different types has been unearthed from Jomon archaeological sites, including earthen pots, baskets, bows, combs, and earrings. An earthen pot with pigment in it and a piece of cloth that was used to filter lacquer have also been discovered. Because it is not easy to use lacquer, it is probable that there were craftsmen who had special skills. The earliest lacquerware unearthed so far in the world was found at the Kakinoshima Site in Hakodate City, Hokkaido.

Rich spirituality of Jomon people

Objects probably used for rituals such as clay figurines, stone bars, and rock plates have been unearthed. They are made of various materials, and in various shapes. It is thought that they were used to wish for good catch and safety, to pray for funerary purposes, or to show power. The clay tablets imprinted with hands or feet of a child might be associated with parents caring for their children.
Hokkaido and northern Tohoku have excellent natural environments still today, as is exemplified by World Natural Heritage properties, Shirakami-Sanchi (in Aomori and Akita Prefectures) and Shiretoko (in Hokkaido). This is also an area where Jomon archaeological sites are concentrated as compared with other areas of the Japanese archipelago and that in a good state of conservation. There are many invaluable archaeological sites that bear testimony to the wisdom and ingenuity of our ancestors. The national government of Japan designates archaeological sites of high academic and historical value as historic sites, out of which those of particularly high academic value that can be considered to be a symbol of Japanese culture are designated as special historic sites. Historic sites in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku are large, reflecting the scale of Jomon culture in this area.

**Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku**

Historic sites in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku consist of 17 component parts that are designated either as historic sites or as special historic sites such as Sannai-Maruyama Site and Oyu Stone Circles.

**Time capsules of Jomon culture**

Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku consist of archaeological sites (settlement sites, shell middens where bones are well preserved, and low wetland sites where organic materials are well preserved) and monuments (stone circles and earthenwork burial circles). The former is associated with the beginning of sedentism, the maturation of society, and Jomon people's life and livelihood. The latter is associated with the development and sophistication of spirituality.

These archaeological sites are located in various places ranging from coastal areas to hills, lake sides, and river basins, indicating sustainable land uses of Jomon people adapting to different environments without inflicting too much load on the natural environment.

The southern part of Hokkaido and the northern part of Tohoku, centering around the Tsugaru Strait, were culturally integral throughout the Jomon period: Ento pottery culture in the Early and Middle Jomon periods, Tokoshinai culture in the Late Jomon period, and Kamegaoka culture in the Final Jomon period.

This so-called Tsugaru Strait Cultural Area is characterized by the world's earliest pottery and lacquerware and large-scale stone circles. Also, clay figurines showing rich spirituality and artistic character have been found in high density. The influence of this area extended to other areas through active long-distance trade and exchange; this area played a role as a cultural center in leading Jomon culture. In other words, this area represents Jomon culture.
**Story of 10,000 years**

The *Jomon* period is divided into six periods, depending on the characteristics of pottery and other factors. *Jomon* Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku contain archaeological sites dating from each of these periods, covering the distinctive characteristics of all these periods, so that the series can collectively tell a complete story of *Jomon* culture, which lasted for more than 10,000 years, while experiencing the *Jomon* transgression, climate change, and changes in natural environment.

### Chronological table of the *Jomon* period vis-a-vis world history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Major events in Japan</th>
<th>Events in the world</th>
<th><em>Jomon</em> Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku</th>
<th>The characteristics of <em>Jomon</em> pottery in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13,000 BC</td>
<td>Paleolithic Period</td>
<td>- Microlithic culture spreads in the Japanese archipelago.</td>
<td>- Peking Man. Mural paintings of the Lascaux Cave are drawn.</td>
<td>- Sannai-Maruyama Site</td>
<td>The earliest, undecorated pottery (ca. 15,000 years before present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,000 BC</td>
<td>Incipient <em>Jomon</em></td>
<td>- The use of pots and bows and arrows starts; sedentism advances; and villages appear.</td>
<td>- The earliest temple (Göbekli Tepe) is built in Turkey.</td>
<td>- Odai-Yamamoto Site</td>
<td>- Kakikoshima Site (up to the Late <em>Jomon</em> period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 BC</td>
<td>Early <em>Jomon</em></td>
<td>- Climate warming progresses and the sea level rises (<em>Jomon</em> transgression). - Shell middens appear.</td>
<td>- Rice cultivation starts in the downstream area of the Yangzi River. - Agriculture (rye) starts in the Mesopotamia region.</td>
<td>- Kitakogane Shell Midden - Sannai-Maruyama Site (up to the Middle <em>Jomon</em> period) - Tagaya Shell Midden (up to the Middle <em>Jomon</em> period) - Futatsumori Shell Midden (up to the Middle <em>Jomon</em> period) - Irie Shell Midden (up to the Late <em>Jomon</em> period) - Korekawa Site (up to the Final <em>Jomon</em> period)</td>
<td>Patterns appear on the pottery, ranging from rouletted impressions, to seashell-incised patterns and then code patterns. The number of pots with the pointed bottom increases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 BC</td>
<td>Middle <em>Jomon</em></td>
<td>- Culture characterized by cylindrical pottery is established. - The number of settlements increases and some settlements become regional centers. - Technique of using lacquer develops.</td>
<td>- Chinese civilization starts. - Mesopotamian civilization starts.</td>
<td>- Ofuine Site - Oshino Site</td>
<td>Flat-bottomed pots decorated with various code patterns (old <em>Ento</em> style) is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 BC</td>
<td>Late <em>Jomon</em></td>
<td>- Large settlements develop into regional centers. - Trade of jade, obsidian, etc. flourishes.</td>
<td>- Indus civilization starts. - Pyramid of Khufu is built.</td>
<td>- Oshino Site - Goshono Site</td>
<td>New <em>Ento</em> style (Goshono Site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 BC</td>
<td>Final <em>Jomon</em></td>
<td>- Large settlements that appeared in the Middle <em>Jomon</em> period decline and settlements become scattered and decentralized. - Stone circles appear.</td>
<td>- The Code of Hammurabi - Yin Dynasty China - Tutankhamen.</td>
<td>- Kitusuki Earthwork Burial Circles - Takasaki Shell Midden (up to the Final <em>Jomon</em> period) - Komakino Site - Oyu Stone Circles - Iseodai Site</td>
<td>The pots become thinner and the linear patterns combined with code patterns appear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 BC</td>
<td>Yayoi Period</td>
<td>- Kamegaoka culture flourishes. - Many tools for rituals such as goggle-eyed clay figurines and clay masks are made, and accessories also become diverse. - Rice farming is introduced to northern Kyushu.</td>
<td>- The “Spring and Autumn” period and the Warring States period of China</td>
<td>- Omori-Katsuyama Site - Kamegaoka Site</td>
<td>Elaborately decorated Kamegaoka-style pottery is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 BC</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Conservation and promotion**

Many of the *Jomon* Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku are open to the public as archaeological parks for the purposes of conservation and promotion. Many NGOs provide guided tours introducing the charm and value of the archaeological sites to visitors, organize events for visitors to experience *Jomon* culture, and disseminate information widely through various means. Local people, NGOs, and local governments are working together to interpret the value of *Jomon* culture and pass it on to future generations.
Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku

The interpretation facilities located at the individual Jomon archaeological sites are introduced below. Check the official web site of the Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku for further detail:

1. Historic Site, Ofune Site
   - Hakodate Jomon Culture Center
   - 201-1 Usujin-cho, Hakodate City, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~17:00 from April to October
   - 9:00~16:30 from November to March
   - Closed on Mondays, on last Friday of each month, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
   - Adults JPY 300
   - Students JPY 150
   - http://www.hjcc.jp/index_e.html
   - Hakodate City Board of Education
   +81 142 24 2122

2. Historic Site, Kakinoshima Site
   - Hakodate Jomon Culture Center
   - 101-1 Usujin-cho, Hakodate City, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~17:00 from April to October
   - 9:00~16:30 from November to March
   - Closed on Mondays, on last Friday of each month, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
   - Adults JPY 300
   - Students JPY 150
   - http://www.hjcc.jp/index_e.html
   - Hakodate City Board of Education
   +81 142 24 2122

3. Historic Site, Kiusu Earthwork Burial Circles
   - Chitose Archaeological Operation Center
   - 42-1 Otsatsu, Chitose City, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~17:00
   - Closed on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays, except for the second Sunday of the month
   - Free

4. Historic Site, Kitakogane Shell Midden
   - Kitakogane Shell Mound Information Center
   - 75 Kitakogane-cho, Date City, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~17:00
   - Closed from December to March
   - Free

5. Historic Site, Irie-Takasago Shell Middens (Irie Shell Midden)
   - Irie-Takasago Shell Middens Center
   - 44 Takasago-cho, Toyako Town, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido
   - +81 142 76 5802
   - 9:00~17:00
   - Closed on Mondays and from December to March
   - Adults JPY 150
   - Students up to high school JPY 100
   - Toyako Town Board of Education
   +81 142 74 3010

6. Historic Site, Irie-Takasago Shell Middens (Takasago Shell Midden)
   - Irie-Takasago Shell Middens Center
   - 44 Takasago-cho, Toyako Town, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~17:00
   - Closed on Mondays and from December to March
   - Adults JPY 150
   - Students up to high school JPY 100
   - Toyako Town Board of Education
   +81 142 74 3010

7. Special Historic Site, Sannai-Maruyama Site
   - Sannai-Maruyama Jomon Site
   - 305 Azu-Maruyama, Sannai, Aomori City, Aomori Pref.
   - +81 17 766 8282
   - 9:00~18:00 from June to September and the “Golden week” holidays from the end of April to the early May
   - 9:00~17:00 from October to May (excluding the “Golden Week”)
   - Closed on the fourth Monday and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
   - Adults JPY 410
   - High school and university students JPY 200
   - Children (incl. elementary and junior high school students): Free
   - https://sannaimaruyama.pref.aomori.jp/english

8. Historic Site, Komakino Site
   - Komakino Jomon Site
   - +81 173 42 6490
   - 9:00~16:00
   - Closed on Mondays, following day of the month, New Year holidays
   - Adults JPY 200
   - Students up to high school JPY 100

9. Historic Site, Omori-Katsuyama Site
   - Omori-Katsuyama Site
   - 34-3 Kanita-Odaisawabe, Oaza-Nozawa, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido
   - 9:00~18:00 from April to October
   - 9:00~16:00 from November to March
   - Closed on Mondays, following day of the month, New Year holidays
   - Adults JPY 300
   - Students up to high school JPY 150
   - http://www.korekawa-jomon.jp/
Historic Site, Korekawa Site

Korekawa Archaeological Institution
1 Aza-Yokoyama, Korekawa, Hachinohe City, Aomori Pref. +81 178 38 9511
9:00~17:00
Closed on Mondays from November to March, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 200
High school and university students JPY 100
Elementary and junior high school students JPY 50
http://www.korekawa-jomon.jp/english-toppage/

Historic Site, Goshono Site

Goshono Jomon Museum
2 Aza-Goshono, Iwadate, Ichinose Town, Ninoge-gun, Iwate Pref. +81 195 32 2652
9:00~17:00
Closed on Monday (except for holidays)
Closed on the day following a holiday (except when it falls on a Saturday or Sunday)
Closed on the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 300
University students JPY 200
Children (incl. elementary and high school students): Free
http://goshono-iseki.com/en

Historic Site, Tagoyano Shell Midden

Jomon shell midden exhibition museum, Kamegako Archaeology-Collections (Kanko)
58-1 Kizukuri Wakamidori, Tsugaru City, Aomori Pref. +81 173 42 6490
9:00~16:00
Closed on Mondays, following day of national holidays, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 200
High school and university students JPY 100
Elementary and junior high school students JPY 50
https://www.city.tsugaru.aomori.jp/soshiki/kyouiku/syakaikyoiku/shakukan/1788.html (only in Japanese)
Tsugaru City Board of Education +81 173 49 1194

Special Historic Site, Oyu Stone Circles

Oyu Stone Circle Center
45 Aza-Manza, Oyu, Towada, Aomori City, Aomori Pref. +81 186 84 8710
9:00~17:00
Closed on Mondays from November to March, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 300
University students JPY 100
Children (up to high school): Free

Historic Site, Kamegako Site

Tsugaru City Kizukuri Kamegaoka Archaeological Material room
100 Biyozukan, Kizukuri Tateoka, Tsugaru City, Aomori Pref. +81 173 45 4540
9:00~16:00
Closed on Mondays, following day of national holidays, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 200
High school and university students JPY 100
Elementary and junior high school students JPY 50
https://www.city.tsugaru.aomori.jp/soshiki/kyouiku/syakaikyoiku/shakukan/1788.html (only in Japanese)
Tsugaru City Board of Education +81 173 49 1194

Historic Site, Isedotai Site

Isedotai Jomon Museum
100-1 Goshokanai, Higashi, Kitaakita City, Akita Pref. +81 195 32 2652
9:00~17:00
Closed on Mondays from November to March, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Free

Historic Site, Odai-Yamamoto Site

Sotogahama Oyama Funatsuo Museum
34-3 Kanita-odasawa, Sotogahama Town, Higashi, Tsugaru-gun, Aomori Pref. +81 174 22 2577
9:00~16:00
Closed on Mondays and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Free
Sotogahama Town Board of Education +81 174 31 1233

Historic Site, Washinoki Site

Morim Village Office for Archaeological Excavation and Research
292-24 Morikawa-cho, Mori Town, Higashi, Higashi, Ichinose, Aomori Pref. +81 1374 3 2240
9:00~16:00
Closed on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, and the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Free

Historic Site, Futatsumori Shell Midden

Futatsumori Historic Site Park
11 Aza-Kazakuenmae, Shichinohama, Hachinohe Town, Kamikita-gun, Aomori Pref. +81 178 58 5530
Closed in winter
Free
https://www.shichinohama-kanko.jp/futatsumonokazukou/(only in Japanese)
Shichinohama Town Board of Education +81 178 58 5530

Historic Site, Choshichiyachi Shell Midden

Hachinohe City Museum
35-1 Aza-Higashi-garnai, Nejo, Hachinohe City, Aomori Pref. +81 178 44 8111
9:00~17:00
Closed on Monday (except for the first Monday of the month and holidays)
Closed on the day following a holiday (except when it falls on a Saturday or Sunday)
Closed on the year-end holidays and New Year holidays
Adults JPY 200
High school and university students JPY 100
Elementary and junior high school students JPY 50
Information on Jomon archaeological sites

Web sites of Jomon archaeological sites

Official web site [https://jomon-japan.jp/en]

Web site for kids (only in Japanese) [https://jomon-japan.jp/Kids]

Logo of Jomon archaeological sites

The central figure in the logo represents Jomon pottery as well as the map of northern Japan (Hokkaido and northern Tohoku): the vortex representing the Tsugaru Strait symbolizes the powerfulness of Jomon culture. The color is that of pottery and lacquerware characteristic of this culture. Darker areas mark the locations of the 17 Jomon sites. The two Chinese characters signify Jomon (literally, “cord pattern”): “JOMON JAPAN”, short for the Jomon culture of Japan, is also a reminder that natural lacquer known today as Japan in English dates back to this period.

Site tour rules

Thank you for your kind cooperation to pass on our common invaluable treasure to future generations.

- No unauthorized vehicles, motorbikes, or bicycles are permitted to enter the archaeological site.
- Visitors are not permitted to enter restricted areas.
- Eating and drinking are not permitted within the archaeological site.
- No pets are allowed within the archaeological site (except for guide dogs, service dogs, and hearing dogs).
- Take back your trash.
- Smoking is prohibited at all places except for designated smoking areas.
- Pay attention to and follow the specific rules and instructions at individual archaeological sites and facilities.

Access

Proposing local governments of the Jomon Archaeological Site in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku
Hokkaido, Hakodate City, Chitose City, Date City, Toyako Town, Mori Town
Aomori Prefecture, Aomori City, Hirosaki City, Hachinohe City, Tsugaru City, Sotogahama Town, Shichinohe Town
Iwate Prefecture, Ichinohose Town
Akita Prefecture, Kazuno city, Kitaakita City

Contact Information
Jomon World Heritage Promotion Office, Culture Promotion Division, Bureau of Culture, Department of Environment and Lifestyle, Hokkaido Government +81 11 204 5168
World Cultural Heritage Registration Promotion Office, Department of Policy and Planning, Aomori Prefectural Government +81 17 734 9183
Culture Promotion Division, Department of Culture and Sports, Iwate Prefectural Government +81 19 629 6488
Cultural Assets Preservation Office, Lifelong Learning Division, Akita Prefectural Bureau of Education +81 18 860 5193

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