



Sannai Maruyama Site

The Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan are the remains of a unique sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society developed over a very long period of time from 13,000 BCE to 400 BCE. It bears exceptional testimony to preagricultural lifeway and complex spiritual culture of prehistoric people, attesting to the emergence, development and maturity of sedentism of a globally rare sedentary hunter-fisher-gatherer society in Northeast Asia which developed over 10,000 years.

Attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property

Attribute(a) Demonstrating a lifestyle characterized by managed use of natural resources

Prehistoric people in this region made a managed use of abundant forest and aquatic resources in a sustainable manner and started to lead a sedentary, hunter-fisher-gatherer life around 15,000 years ago. They developed a sedentary lifestyle for more than 10,000 years without changing to agrarian culture. In the meantime, various changes in the climate and environment occurred, such as marine transgression, regression, large volcanic activities, earthquakes and tsunamis. However, they managed to adapt to these changes.



Pieces of the earliest pottery in Northeast Asia (ca. 13,000 BCE)

1 Odai Yamamoto Site (Stage Ia)



Stone sinkers (Fishing tool)

2 Kakinoshima Site (Stage Ib)

Horse chestnut, chestnut, and walnut seeds

3 Goshono Site (Stage IIb)



Arrowheads (Hunting tools) made of obsidian

6 Sannai Maruyama Site (Stage IIb)



Animal bones

6 Sannai Maruyama Site (Stage IIb)

Attribute(b) Demonstrating complex spirituality, as evident in rituals and ceremonies

Prehistoric people in this region had already established a complex spiritual culture through daily life. Graves are one of the typical examples and they attest to ancestor worship in the sense. Shell mounds and artificial earthen mounds had served as ritual facilities. Not only waste materials from daily life such as shells, but also human bones, animal bones, intentionally destroyed pots and stone objects, and clay figurines were also discovered.

The spiritual culture of people in this region is most evidently represented by stone circles. Some stone circles were built probably in consideration of the movement of the sun or in relation to landmarks or other stone circles in the surrounding area. They provide a clue to the worldview of people at that time.



Clay tablets with footprints

2 Kakinoshima Site (Stage Ib)



Stone Circles and Sunset at the summer solstice

12 Oyu Stone Circles (Stage IIIa)



Clay figurine "dogu"

6 Sannai Maruyama Site (Stage IIb)



Circular grave surrounded by tall embankments

13 Kiusu Earthwork Burial Circles (Stage IIIb)

Attribute(c) Demonstrating diverse relations between settlement locations and livelihood

Settlements are the base for people's life. Their locations are considered to have been related closely to livelihood and vividly reflect the worldview of people at that time. To secure food in a stable manner, diverse locations were selected for settlements. Skills and tools for obtaining food were developed in accordance with the specific conditions of different locations.



Bone-made fishhooks

9 Irie Site (Stage IIIa)



Basket (Jomon pochette)

6 Sannai Maruyama Site (Stage IIb)



Lacquered clay pots

17 Korekawa Site (Stage IIIb)



Antler comb

5 Futatsumori Site (Stage IIa)

Attribute(d) Demonstrating the transition of the form of settlements

Prehistoric people in this region changed the settlement structure in adaptation to climate change and social situation, while they continued a sedentary, hunter-fisher-gatherer lifestyle for more than 10,000 years.

Sedentary life started at the same time as the emergence of pottery. After settlements were formed, functional separation appeared within the settlement subsequently, such as clear distinction between residential areas and burial areas. As the warm climate continued, hub settlement facilities diversified in some villages that had special facilities and were clearly different from small settlements in the surrounding area. Following this, space or facilities that were specialized for rituals and ceremonies developed. As the climate became cooler and the settlements became smaller and more dispersed, cemetery-ritual place was built jointly by several settlement groups outside their settlements. Furthermore, cemeteries maintained jointly by several settlement groups came to be built separately from spiritual place, functioning as a bond between different settlements.



Pit dwelling

7 Ofune Site (Stage IIb)



Pit grave unearthed under shell mound

8 Kitakogane Site (Stage IIa)



Storage pit

6 Sannai Maruyama Site (Stage IIb)



Archaeological remains of an artificial earthen mound

7 Ofune Site (Stage IIb)