

# 1 Jomon Space: Life with the Sea and the Forest

~What we can learn from the Jomon people and their connection to nature~

## ■ Remnants from the Jomon Period

There are over 200 historic sites from the Jomon period (14,000-300 BCE) in Minamisoma, where excavations have unearthed items such as earthenware, clay figures known as *dogu*, and stone arrowheads. These sites were established in wide areas with easy access to resources through hunting and fishing, as well as through gathering nuts and acorns, which served as the staple food of the time. Particularly large amounts of dwelling sites and artifacts were unearthed at Urajiri Shell Mound in Odaka Ward, the Azumacho site in Haramachi Ward, and the Hachiman Woods sites in Kashima Ward, leading researchers to believe they were central settlements.

## ■ What is a Shell Mound?

Among these historic sites are the *kaizuka*, or shell mounds, where the Jomon people piled up the shells of the shellfish they ate. Bones of animals and fish that would have decomposed otherwise were preserved, providing valuable insight of the food and livelihoods of the people at that time. While not a single shell mound can be found in Kashima or Haramachi, several remain in Odaka. The former Ida River Inlet area became known for its high concentration of shell mounds, and for the Urajiri Shell Mound in particular, after the land was reclaimed from the sea during the Taisho period (1912-1926).

## ■ The Jomon People's Way of Life

From these sites, we can learn that the Jomon people made skillful use of the various resources found in areas connected to the sea, the rivers, and the forests, and adapted well to changes in the environment.

For example, large quantities of earthenware used to make salt were found at Urajiri as well as at the Nakasai site in Kashima Ward. From these artifacts it can be surmised that commerce was carried out with far-off settlements through the transportation of salt.

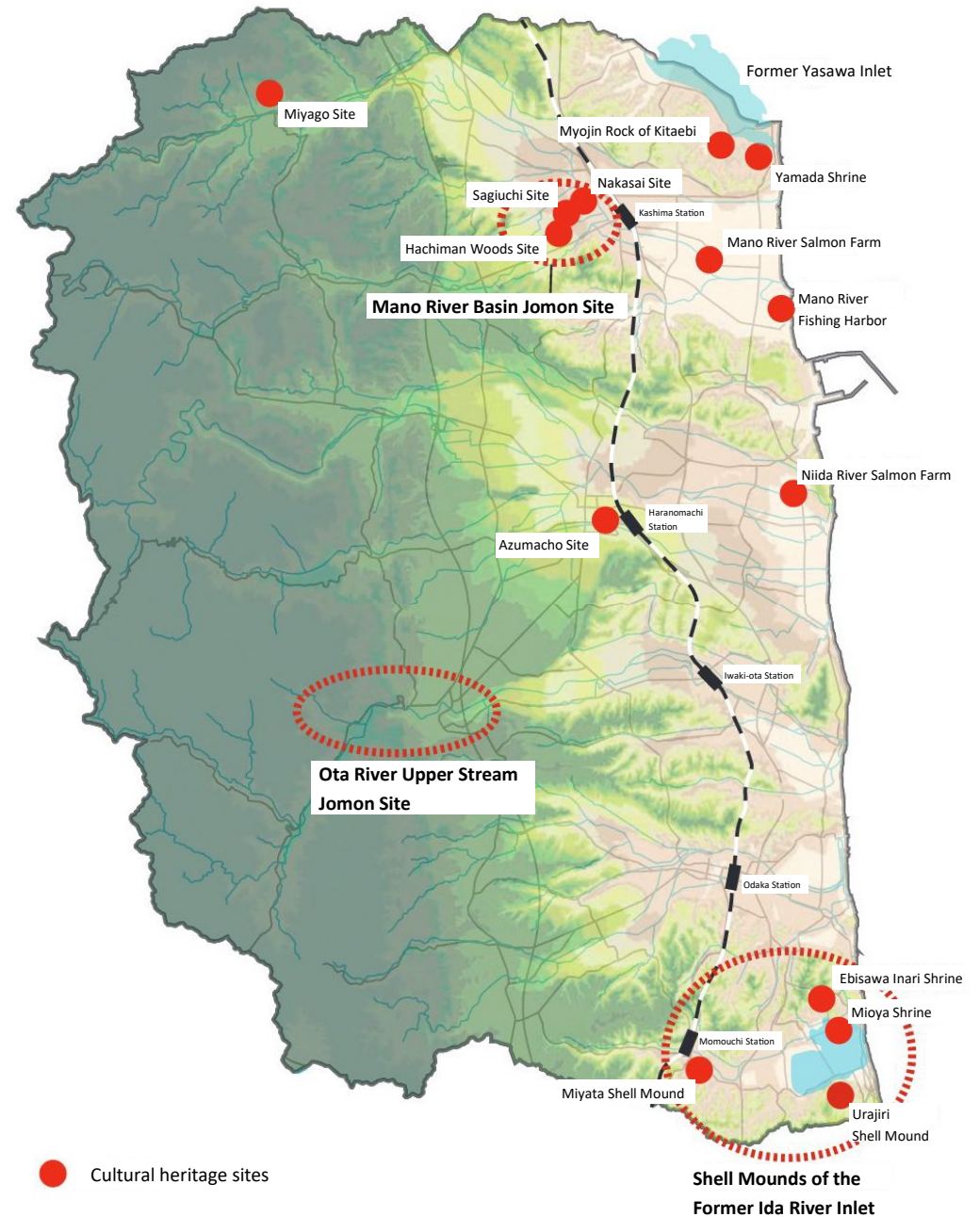
## ■ Using Resources from the Sea, the Rivers, and the Mountains

While the methods of utilizing nature changed over the years from the Jomon period onward, the lifestyle persisted through fishing and salt-making, as well as making tools using trees and plants. This way of life formed the foundation of Minamisoma's daily culture, and many folk sources tell tales of the area's abundant nature. Even now, you can feel the way the sea, the rivers, and the mountains are interwoven into the lives and livelihoods of people in current-day Minamisoma. The cultural artifacts and attributes cultivated in the wide variety of natural environments in each area reflect the charm of the daily culture of Minamisoma, a city that coexists with nature.



Information session, Azumacho Archaeological Site

## Cultural Heritage from the Jomon Period



## O Urajiri Shell Mound

A shell mound created in a central, large-scale settlement located in Urajiri, Odaka Ward, in the Jomon period. It is a large archaeological site spanning an area of around 7 hectares, located in an elevated area with a view out over the ocean. The shell mound was in use over a long period of time and is in particularly good condition, and is known for containing an extremely large amount of information concerning the Tohoku region during the Jomon period.

The tsunami caused by the Great Tohoku Earthquake in 2011 inundated the area directly below the Urajiri Shell Mound, filling a former inlet with seawater.



View from the Urajiri shell mound before the Tohoku Earthquake



Area around the Urajiri shell mound after the Tohoku Earthquake

Shell mounds were made from the food scraps of people long ago, such as the shells of shellfish. The bones of animals and fish, along with items like deer antlers, were preserved by the calcium in the shells. These items provide a deeper understanding of the Jomon period.



Layers of shells in the Urajiri shell mound



Wild boar bones in the Urajiri shell mound

Besides earthenware and items used in daily life, clay figures used in rituals known as *dogu* were also excavated at Jomon sites. The *dogu* excavated from the Urajiri Shell Mound possess unique features influenced by the northern Tohoku region and are called *Shakokidogu*, or “goggle-eyed *dogu*.”



*Dogu* unearthed at the Urajiri shell mound

## O Miyata Shell Mound

A shell mound located around 5km inland from the Urajiri coastline, preceding the existence of the Urajiri Shell Mound. Compared to now the air temperature was higher 6000 years ago around the time the shell mounds were made, allowing the ocean to encroach far inland.

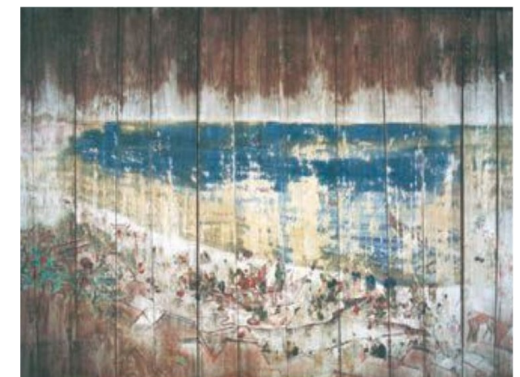
The earthenware excavated from the Miyata shell mound showcase the characteristic style of the area, and are highly valued as beautiful pieces made using the intricate Jomon method of pressing a straw-rop pattern into the earthenware.



Earthenware from the Miyata shell mound

## O Ebisawa Inari Shrine

A Shinto shrine built long ago for fishermen. The pinwheels sold here at the festival of the first “horse day” in the lunar month were known to be good luck charms. A votive drawing of dragnet fishing in the Meiji period as well a model of a Japanese-style boat were offered to the shrine, conveying the culture and beliefs of the time surrounding the ocean. The votive drawing depicts a detailed image of manners and customs of the time such as pulling in a catch of fish, making it an important source of knowledge about fishing communities.



Votive drawing of dragnet fishing

## K Miyago Archaeological Site (Kamitochikubo Site)

Located in Kamitochikubo, Kashima Ward, the Miyago site is famous for earthenware that was excavated from amongst a prehistoric stone-lined settlement from the Jomon period (roughly 4000 years ago). Human figures are sketched upon the earthenware, which is unusual. It is thought that these unique pieces contained the hopes and desires of the Jomon people. These items help us to better understand their religious views and festivals.



Earthenware from the Miyago archaeological site

## H Azumacho Archaeological Site



Field trip to the Azumacho site

A site to the east of Haramachi 1st Elementary School containing ruins from the Jomon period around 4000 years ago. Excavation of this site began alongside the Great Tohoku Earthquake disaster prevention mass relocation project. Dwelling places were discovered stacked upon each other, containing hearths filled with earthenware and surrounded by stones.

## K Wicker Basket from Sagiuchi Archaeological Site

A 3000-year-old wicker basket unearthed from the Sagiuchi site in Kashima Ward. It was found stuffed with walnuts, the first example of such a find in the nation. The basket was made to be the perfect shape and size for carrying walnuts, conveying the Jomon people's high level of skill in weaving baskets.



Wicker basket filled with walnuts

## O Salt Evaporation Ponds of the Former Ida River Inlet

A tool used to make salt was uncovered in the reclaimed area in Odaka Ward known as the Ida River Inlet. This tool, known as a *bappo* (lit. "hot water pot"), was filled with sand containing salt and washed in highly concentrated saltwater to extract all the salt. *Bappo* were used in many salt evaporation ponds near river mouths besides the Ida River Inlet, such as the Yasawa Inlet in Kashima Ward.



*Bappo* ("hot water pot")

## OK Former Ida River Inlet and Yasawa Inlet



Myojin Rock (Kitaebi, Kashima Ward)

Areas such as the Ida River Inlet which was tideland until the Meiji period, the Yasawa Inlet in Kashima, and the Kanazawa Inlet in Haramachi were reclaimed from the sea in the early modern period in order to expand the area's farmland. Shrines such as the Mioya Shrine and the Yamada Shrine were dedicated to those who had rendered distinguished service in those efforts. The shrines give an account of the project's history. The Myojin Rock in Kitaebi, dedicated to the Shiogama deity, also indicates it was once surrounded by sea.

## KH Salmon Fishing in Niida and Mano Rivers

Salmon fishing flourished in the Edo period and has been passed down to modern times. There are records of Niida River salmon being presented to the Tokugawa shogunate, and have been known since that period as a local specialty. Furthermore, religious festivals such as Ebisuko (a festival centered around prayers for success in business) took place in Izumi, Haramachi Ward, in which prayers were offered for large catches of salmon.



Salmon Fishing in Niida River (Haramachi Ward)