

Importance of the protection activity as a member of the Global Geoparks Network

Ko Takenouchi^{1*}, Yoshiyuki Iwasaki¹, Hiroshi Miyajima¹, Yousuke Ibaraki¹,
Toshiyuki Oshima¹, Hitoshi Sekizawa¹, Naoshi Watanabe¹, Hiroko Torigoe¹, Seiichi Saito¹

¹Itoigawa Geopark Promotion Office

On August 2009, Itoigawa Geopark was included into the "Global Network of Geoparks assisted by UNESCO" (GGN) after passing the examination including the evaluation process that was held for 5days in July. Prof. Patric J Mckeever (Geological Survey of Northern Ireland) and Prof. Nicolas Zouros (Aegean University) were missioners who both have important role in the GGN organization.

What they specially emphasized during the evaluation was importance of the preservation which is a essential and fundamental element of the Geopark. Following are the suggestions from the GGN and the action to that of the Itoigawa Geopark.

1. Trading in Geological objects

Global Geoparks Network Charter clearly declaring that any managing body of Geoparks must not participate in the sale of geological objects within Geopark (no matter from where they are). Fossa Magna Museum is currently selling ornamental geological material and this not-traditional practice is in clear contradiction to the GGN guidelines and philosophy of the GGN. Now we stopped importing those from overseas and selling out the storage. Instead we are planning to replace mainly with locally produced goods.

2. Relations with Mining companies

There are two mining companies within the Itoigawa Geopark area. Although the GGN admits the need of mining, they consider the acts of mining as the destruction of geological materials. They especially concern the industry might interfere with the preservation policy of the Geopark. Therefore it is needed that the clarification with mine and quarry companies and exclusion of the mining land from the Geopark area. In reality we are reconciling the entry right to the Maikomidaira Geosite (Karst topography) with the mining company that has mining right there.

3. The selling of Jade

In Itoigawa around 30 shops and dealers are selling jade. The mission was particularly interested in the sustainability of collecting and selling of jade whether it is based on the principles of the GGN charter. The GGN basically recognize that the exploitation of jade is a cultural tradition for millennia. However another problem is the most of dealers are making their living on not only local jade but also Myanmar's. This is against the GGN charter. They do understand the principle of the Geopark, but under present circumstances, it is realistic to draw a line with them as the Geopark Management body.

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