

”100 Earth Heritages” and its Geographical Concept

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¹AJG Geopark Committee, Committee for ”100 Earth Heritages” Selection

1. The Association of Japanese Geographers and ”100 Earth Heritages”

Geopark Committee in the AJG aims to choose ”100 Earth Heritages”. They organized three symposiums and four questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, Committee of 100 Earth Heritages Selection has launched in 2012 and started the selection. This committee has members of the AJG who are both researchers of physical and human geographies. This article introduces a manner of the selection work for understanding a priority of value in Japanese geography.

2. Manner of 100 Earth Heritages Selection

The committee proposed questionnaire survey to members of the AJG several times in order to reflect their opinions in the selection. As a result, 264 places of proposed sites were shown (including some overlap); 155 from speakers and 40 from the audiences in March of 2012, 7 from speakers and 38 from the audiences in March of 2013, 20 from questionnaire respondents and 4 from questionnaire on the web. Based on the list of a total 264 places of proposed sites, the vote by the member of the committee and an argument were performed in July, 2013, and an 65 Earth Heritages were picked up. Enumeration and the vote of the new proposed site by the committee have been held again, and 33 Heritages were added afterwards. It has remaining two places at January 31th, 2014.

3. Contents of 100 Earth Heritages

In January 2014, 98 places of Earth Heritages are chosen. As for the Earth Heritages, 47 prefectures have one heritage at least. It depends on consideration in that the heritages should be used for geographical education in schools in Japan. However, on the other hand, the difficulty of the evaluation of the geographical value hides in the back of this consideration. In other words, geographical valuableness can insist on in area wherever of Japan.

4. Geographical Values from the perspectives of 100 Earth Heritages

For each heritage, the commentary sentence for choice reason is written. This article clarifies geographical value by considering the contents of the commentary sentence. The contents of sentences mostly consist of the plural sites. This is because a certain reciprocal viewpoint (story) was made between the sites. A nature and human reciprocal relations are seen in the contents. For example, in one of Yoshino River District, this district has mountains of steady sedimentary rocks and rivers cutting sharply between the mountains, this becomes the precondition of the creations of small and unique bridges for movements between the villages for settlements. Such nature and human relations are frequent in the commentary sentences of other heritages. In other words, it is thought that the geographical value from ”100 Earth Heritages” is these reciprocal relationships.

On the other hand, the contents of the commentary sentence can point out the problem, too. This article points out two dimensions. First one is seen in the contents. A writer of the commentary sentence is only physical geographer or humanities geographer. Therefore the contents are slightly deflected to physical or human geographical contents so that they should start to learn about each other’s fields. The second problem can point out that there is a giving an environmental determinism like impression for a reader, because a natural condition is described as a precondition in the sentence. So, it may be said that it is necessary for geography to discuss the environmental determinism. If the general relationship of a natural phenomenon and the humanities phenomenon is proved scientifically, it is one of the geographical directionality for Geoparks.

Keywords: Earth heritages, Physical geography, Human geography, Regional geography, Environmental determinism