

Concept behind the Tateyama Kurobe geopark: towards the cooperation of private and administrative organizations

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The Toyama plain is divided roughly into two equal parts by the centrally located Kureha hills: the east side, called Gotou (East of Kureha), and the west side, called Gosai (West of Kureha). Each side has its own landscape and traditions. On the west side, in Gosai, you have a region where the influence of the Kaga clan is still felt strongly; on the east side, in Gotou, you have a region influenced by the unique shape of the land, with a steep mountain range over 3000 meters tall overlooking many coastal alluvial fans, where the many people live. The Tateyama Kurobe geopark is based in Gouto, this east side, with its landscape and traditions, and with its people's industriousness and thoughts that shaped the region.

A peculiarity in this region is that, in order to protect the land and understand its value, governments have supported many residents and organizations, which would then pursue various activities on their own.

With this in mind, various local regional study groups, field researchers, university and high school teachers, and other professionals gathered together and, on January 20th 2013, created the Kurobe Tateyama geopark Research Group. The Group has proposed to turn the whole region into a geopark, conducting various researches about the current amount of human activity and natural resources in the region, as well as about the future tasks and responsibilities that would come with the organization of a geopark. At the same time, they contacted the various local governments situated in the region to promote the idea of geopark, as well as to receive their support regarding its current and future activities. Also, and this is the peculiarity of this region's geopark, the group also made contact with the region's business community, where they not only promoted the geopark but also promoted their direct participation in its activities, making the local businesses, which are at the base the local industries and economy, have a strong role in all the geopark activities.

This is how, on December 9th 2013, the Kurobe Tateyama geopark Association was founded, upon what would become its predecessor, the aforementioned Kurobe Tateyama geopark Research Group. This Association, receiving support from both local businesses and local governments, was given the responsibility of all activities pertaining to the realization of the geopark in terms of human resources. The Association itself is privately run, their members linked to regional development and local business leaders. The organization currently consists of the following groups: activity planning group, research and education group, Geo-guide formation group, Geo-tourism group. While, at this moment, the geopark is supported by a volunteer staff, in the future, the organization seeks to have the geopark fully supported economically by local firms and touristic businesses.

Also, the Association seeks support from the local governments, mostly in three forms: support in the protection and usage of the designated geosites through bylaws and regulations, usage of the geopark in local and environmental education and disaster prevention by inclusion into the school curriculum, and making of the various public museum employees' currently volunteer work in the geopark organization into a part of their duties. At this moment, the Association is preparing the "Tateyama Kurobe geopark Support Municipalities Conference", in order to get a hold on their support to fully start the geopark's activities during 2014.

The association aims to have the geopark activities supported by the partnership of both private and public sectors, by having them be responsible for the maintenance of both activities and installations. This is how we are aiming for regional development through the Tateyama Kurobe geopark.

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