

Intangible cultural heritage in Japanese geoparks

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The purpose of this presentation is to report on the situation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Japanese geoparks. Important first points are the translation of the word 'geopark' into Japanese and ways to safeguard ICH in Japan. Japanese geologists introduced the word 'geopark' into Japanese with the phrase 'Daichi no Kouen'. 'Daichi' means 'the earth' and 'the land', and 'Kouen' means 'a park'. In brief, many Japanese people are aware that a geopark is not a geological park. Additionally, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties enacted in 1950 first defined in legal terms 'intangible cultural properties' so that it is very easy for us to introduce the importance of ICH into Japanese geoparks. We established the Japanese Geoparks ICH Working Group in 2012. In the case of San' in Kaigan Geopark, we began monitoring the ICH inventory in 2014. For instance, Inshu washi became the first registered national traditional art and craft from all the Japanese paper production areas of Japan in 1975. Ministry of the Environment listed the charming sloshing sound coming from paper drainage boards operated by paper craftsmen in 1996 as a Japanese cultural sound to be handed down to the next generation, along with being the sound of a sophisticated art. There are some, however, who are uncertain about showing ICH in geoparks. When these people ask us how ICH relates to geology, we use the word 'geostory'. A geostory includes geological, biological, and cultural aspects. All elements are interdependent on one another in the context of the history of the earth. ICH is one of these elements. Creating a geostory is important. The development process surrounding a lagoon named Koyamaike provides a good example. Koyamaike had an impact on the way of life around it, resulting in current environmental and cultural concerns there.

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