

AmakusaGeopark : A 100 million year record

UGAI, Hiroaki^{1*} ; HASE, Yoshitaka² ; HIROSE, Koji²

¹Amakusa Geopark Promotion Office, ²Goshoura Cretaceous Museum

The Amakusa Islands are located in the southwest area of Kumamoto Prefecture: a beautiful archipelago with geologic and geographic characteristic landscapes and a 100 million year history, not to mention a treasure of ancient fossils offering its visitors a fantastic glimpse into times gone by. An unique culture has been carved out of life on these islands by its inhabitants adding to the many breath-taking sightseeing opportunities. The purpose of the AmakusaGeopark is to highlight the diversity of geology, geography, history, culture, industry and ecology in Amakusa with a mind of ecologic conservation and economic growth.

The geologic history of the Amakusa area began about one hundred million years ago, when some granitic magma intruded into the deep underground in the eastern area of Amakusa Islands resulting in uplifting and the formation of an ancient land development. Various ancient life forms flourished both on this ancient coastal area and in the sea.

After the extinction of the dinosaur, the Amakusa area underwent a repeated uplift and subsidence where its palaeoenvironmentchanges from deep-sea floor to terrestrial, and was under a tropical climate in the Eocene(50 to 40 million years ago). Intrusive rocks originated from felsic and intermediate magma intruded into the Paleogene strata of Amakusa Islands sometime during the early Miocene.

At the Amakusa Islands, the Cretaceous and Paleogene rocks were tectonically deformed due to the spreading of the Japan Sea crust forming three distinct synclines and two anticlines in the area.

In the Last Glacial period (about 20,000 years ago), the human hunt for animals such as deer and ancient elephants flourished on the plains and in the forests of Ariake and Yatsushiro sea areas. Modern humans settled on these coasts from about five thousand years ago. At the end of the 16th century, western culture began to blossom in the Amakusa area due to the geographical advantage of facing the East China Sea. After the Amakusa Rebellion, people began to exploit underground resources working in coal, ceramic and stone mines which lead to the development of stone masonry in the 20th century.

The Amakusa area is currently focusing on new regional development promotion using the AmakusaGeopark as its prime vehicle of education, research and public interface.

Keywords: Geopark, History, A 100 million year