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Geology and Climate of Niigata Prefecture

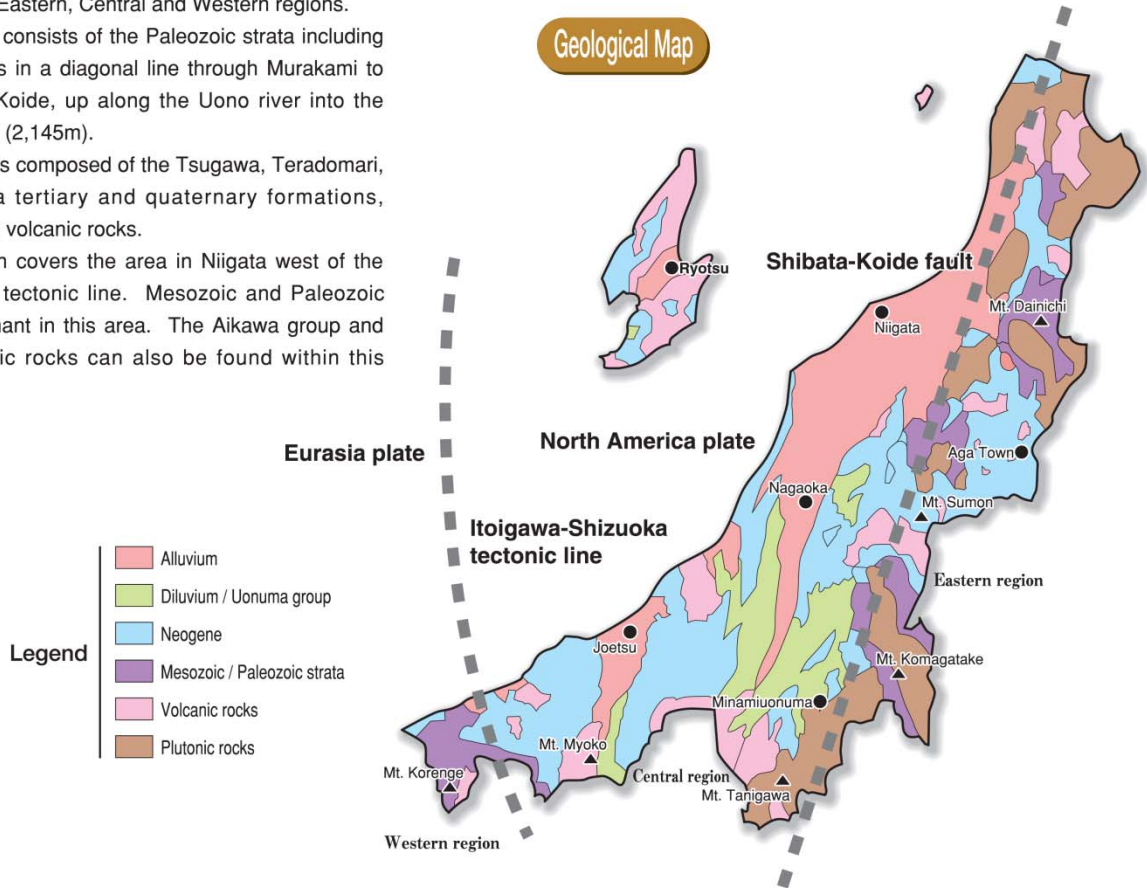
Geology

Niigata prefecture can be divided geologically into three different areas: the Eastern, Central and Western regions.

The Eastern region consists of the Paleozoic strata including granites, which runs in a diagonal line through Murakami to Shibata and onto Koide, up along the Uono river into the region of Mt. Naeba (2,145m).

The Central region is composed of the Tsugawa, Teradomari, Shiiya, Nishiyama tertiary and quaternary formations, Uonuma group, and volcanic rocks.

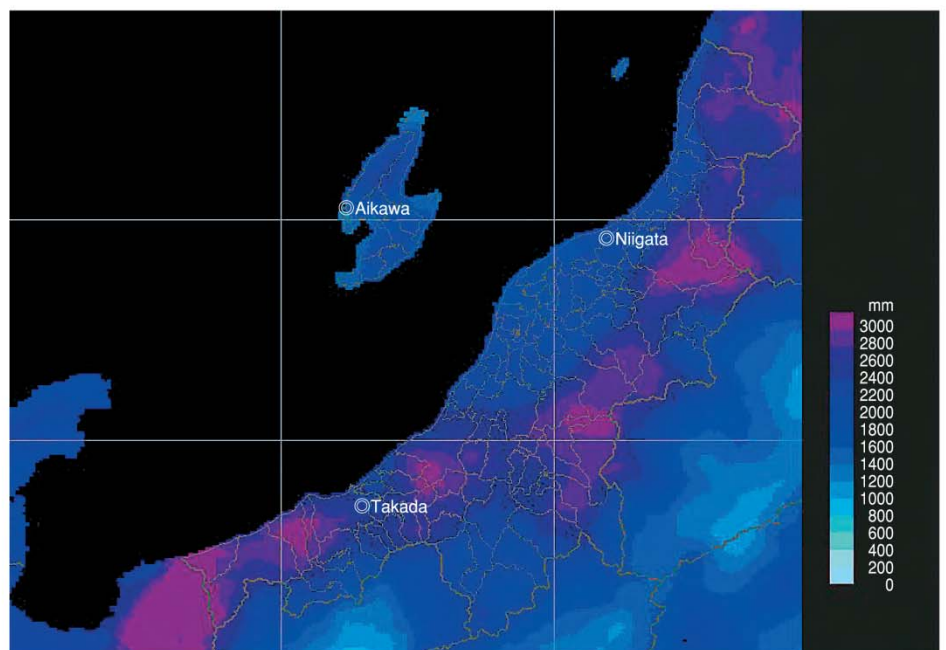
The Western region covers the area in Niigata west of the Itoigawa-Shizuoka tectonic line. Mesozoic and Paleozoic strata are predominant in this area. The Aikawa group and quaternary volcanic rocks can also be found within this region.



Climate

Niigata's climate is heavily influenced by the Sea of Japan and the prefecture's high mountain ranges. These mountains isolate and shield Niigata from the Pacific Ocean and characterize Niigata's climate, which is typical of areas on the Japan Sea coast. Niigata is known as a region with one of the largest snowfalls in the country.

Snow begins to fall in Niigata in November and lasts until April. Snowfall is especially heavy in the mountainous regions. 80 percent of Niigata receives an average maximum snow accumulation of over one meter. Over half of Niigata's annual precipitation occurs in winter as snow and sleet. Average annual precipitation in Niigata prefecture is as follows: 1,775.8mm (Niigata Regional Meteorology Observatory), 1,514.1mm (Aikawa Weather Station), and 2,779.0mm (Takada Weather Station). Precipitation is normally highest in the Chuetsu and Joetsu regions.



Annual precipitation average (Statistics period : 1971-2000)

Niigata Regional Meteorological Observatory