

Development of Local Cultural Resources Based on the Concept of Ecomuseum -Focusing on Cheorwon, Gangwon Province-¹

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Abstract

Cheorwon is a field of our history where military cultural relics as well as historical cultural assets are located as the capital of Taebong that took the world by storm. The DMZ near the city shows the possibility of the city as a good ecotourism site encompassing the historicity and clean image. Nevertheless, it cannot dispel the negative image resulted from the tension of armistice frontier, severely cold winter weather and the poverty of rural community. Accordingly, this study proposes a method to improve the image of the region by utilizing the cultural resources of Cheorwon based on the concept of eco-museum. Eco-museum which becomes theoretical base of the study is a new form of museum to make a whole area as a museum unlike conventional museums attracting audiences to the collections exhibited in the limited space. The ecomuseum will contribute to the activation of sustainable local economy.

Keywords: *Cheorwon, the DMZ, cultural resource, ecomuseum, ecotourism, sustainable development*

1. Preface

1.1 Background and Purpose of Study

Industrialization accelerates escape from agricultural communities and urban concentration and the sense of relative deprivation causes vacantization and impoverishment of agricultural villages. Accordingly, eradication of economic gap between cities and rural villages becomes the goal of major policies of local governments as well as the central government. Consequently, various divisions have performed a wide variety of farming economy activation policies under different titles such as green tourism, beautiful village-making, eco-village making and traditional theme villages. They may be positive in a way of encouraging visitors to experience rural life, yet locals did not have enough chances to take part in [1]. From this context, these programs may be degenerated into profit pursuing one-time program responding to the interest of tourists rather than improving the understanding on the region or preserving sustainable local cultural assets.

Thus, this study suggests to utilize cultural assets of Cheorwon and to promote local economy through sustainable development by introducing the concept of ecomuseum which comprises with functions of the museum such as the preservation of local assets, exhibition and education and local residents' participation.

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1.2 Scope and Methods of Study

The study selected historical and cultural resources dispersed in Cheorwon area as the subjects of ecomuseum and tried to propose a sustainable utilization method by identifying the current status of those assets. It also tried to identify the method to preserve the ecology and cultural resources in the region efficiently and to connect them to eco-museum. For the purpose of this, it was tried to understand the concept of eco-museum first and to propose practical and applicable methods. This study was carried out by paying three times' site visit and visiting to Cheorwon Office and Cheorwon Cultural Museum and by taking literature review.

1.3 Definition of Ecomuseum

Georges Henri Riviere, founder of ecomuseum, defined ecomuseum as "the museum to historically explore the life of local residents, and the development process of natural environments and social environments, and to contribute to local community development through preservation, cultivation and exhibition of natural and cultural assets in the field." Ecomuseum contributes to the development of local community by preserving the dispersed relics and assets in the field intact and utilizing local legacies with local governments, allowing the residents to participate in actively unlike conventional museums which attract audiences passively in a building [2].

There is another definition by European Network of Eco-museum. It defines eco-museum as 'a dynamic way to preserve, interpret and manage the inheritance of local community for the sustainable development of the community.' In other words, the participation of local residents is very important in eco-museum, as it prevents the vacantization of agricultural communities by enhancing the pride in the region and improving the love for the community and promotes local economy. Additionally, ecomuseum is the strategy to let other people than the local residents evaluate the value of the region by enabling the local residents to understand the local history, culture and life of the region and to have attachment and pride in the region, and the field to understand the traces of ancestors in the time flow from pre-history to the present and to prospect the future [3].

There are three basic elements of ecomuseum: 1) A particular region or territory is needed to be a specific target. 2) A proper method is essential in setting up an ecomuseum site because community-based activities and communal sentiment of the ecomuseum are required for sustainable development. Namely, community residents should participate in operating ecomuseum as the main body. 3) For a physical dimension, the various cultural resources scattered around the region should be preserved in favor of both locals and visitors. In other words, they need to be well-conserved on-site. Accordingly, the ideal ecomuseum keeps pursuing the efficient maintenance of networking structure among these elements in balance.

2. Current Status and Utilization of Cultural Resources in Cheorwon

2.1 Current Status of Cultural Resources

Cheorwon in Gangwon Province was selected as the subject of ecomuseum for the study. It is because Cheorwon has military cultural assets such as Labor Party Headquarter² and infiltration tunnels of North Korea as the field of 'Security Education' and various cultural

² The three-story building located at Cheorwon-eup is constructed in 1946. Used as The House of Labor Party until the break of the Korean War, it is now one of the tourist attractions that keep the vestiges of the Korean War. This place was designated as a Cultural Property on February, 2001.

remains such as Gungye's Castle and Dopiansa or Dopiansa Temple, as the old capital of Taebong³ as well as potentiality of ecotourism with beautiful natural environment including the Hantan River. As of December 2012, Cheorwon in Gangwon Province is composed of 4 eups(counties) and 7 myeons(districts) and has the population of 48,084. It records 2.41 people per household ranked at the 9th place among 18 cities and rural counties. It is the second largest rural county in Gangwon Province after Hongcheon. It is equipped with favorable conditions to make an ecomuseum utilizing the human resources of the region.

Geographically, Cheorwon shares the boundary with Hwacheon and Yanggu in the east, Yeoncheon in Gyeonggi Province in the west, Pocheon in the south and Pyeongyang in the north. It includes 43.6 miles of armistice line of 155 miles (28%). Considering the historical and ecological meaning of DMZ⁴ although it can be fluctuated with political environment, Cheorwon can be said to have highly meaningful ecological cultural assets. As the access of general public has been controlled and regulated since Korean War, DMZ can have previous ecological resources by restoring natural ecology in northern area of the Civil Control Line. Conclusively, borderlands including Cheorwon are evaluated as the region with high ecological values so as to be called as 'Rich Repository of Natural Ecology' not only domestically but also internationally. Additionally, it attracted worldly attention because of it is the symbol of cold war as the one and only remaining division in the world. Considering the coming unification, it emerges as the land of opportunity that can be utilized as frontier base of South-North Unification, Repository of Ecology and Site for Tourism and History Education. To increase the in-flow of tourists, transportation and convenience facilities are also important. From this perspective, Cheorwon has good conditions of location as it is at most 90km's radius from Seoul. It is highly probable to develop the area as a place for leisure activities of capital area population.

In Cheorwon, there are various modern cultural assets such as Woljeong Station, Labor Party Headquarter and Iron Triangle War Remains as well as 21 cultural assets including national cultural assets, provincial cultural assets and registered cultural asset. Additionally, it has the most optimal conditions as an experiential and ecological tourists' attraction utilizing its beautiful nature such as the Hantan River, Togyo Reserve, Jiktang Waterfalls, and Sundam Valley. The followings are the cultural properties of Cheorwon.

Table 1. Status of Major Cultural Assets in Cheorwon

Status	Name of property
National Treasure No.63	Dopiansa Cheoljibirojana Buddha Sitting Statue
Treasure No.223	Dopiansa Three-story Stone Tower
Natural Monument No.245	Habitat for Migratory
Natural Monument No.436	The Hantan River Daegyo-cheon Basalt Canyon
Gangwon-do Tangible Cultural Asset No.105	General Kim Eung-ha's epitaph
Gangwon-do Intangible Cultural Asset No.9	Sangnori Jigyeong Dajigi
Gangwon-do Monument No.8	Gosekjeong and Sundam
Gangwon-do Monument No.22	

³ Taebong or Later Goguryeo was a country established by Gung Ye on the Korean peninsula in 901 during the Later Three Kingdoms period.

⁴ According to the official DMZ site, DMZ is a buffer zone to prevent an armed conflict after the armistice agreement. DMZ of Korea is established on 27 July, 1953 in accordance with 'The Armistice Agreement about military truce of Korea'. It is 248km long and 2km width on each side, south and north.

Gangwon-do Monument No.72	Cheorwon Jiseok Tomb Group
Gangwon-do Monument No.24	Chungryeolsa Site Municipal and Provincial Monument
Gangwon-do Monument No.78	Cheolson Earthen Ramparts and Stone Structures
Gangwon-do Monument No.87	Seongsan Castle
Cultural Heritage Material No.33	Cheorwon Hyanggyo Site
Registered Cultural Asset No.22	Dongsong Mae Buddha Statue
Registered Cultural Asset No.23	Labor Party Headquarter
Registered Cultural Asset No.24	Methodist Church
Registered Cultural Asset No.25	Ice Warehouse
Registered Cultural Asset No.26	Agricultural Products Inspection Office
Registered Cultural Asset No.112	Seungil Bridge
Registered Cultural Asset No.137-2	Geumgang Mountain Electric Rail Bridge
Registered Cultural Asset No.160	Site of Financial Institutes' Association Office
	Water Supply Tower in the Waterworks Bureau

Cheorwon Office

When classifying these cultural assets, we have historical cultural assets such as Dopiansa and Cheorwon Hyanggyo⁵ site that encompass hundreds of history and modern cultural assets such as Labor Party Headquarter, Seungil Bridge, Methodist Church and Agricultural Product Investigation Office. Basalt Canyon, Habitat for Migratory, and Goseokjeong⁶ can be natural cultural assets representing the beautiful scenery of Cheorwon. Cultural assets dispersed in the area can be essential elements to compose an ecomuseum and we need to develop a program with diverse combinations considering the characteristics, movement lines, preference and taste of tourists.

2.2 Utilization and Improvements of Cultural Assets in Cheorwon

Cheorwon has been performing three programs for tourism. First, there is a security tourism program utilizing its geographical characteristics linking Iron Triangle War Remains, the second tunnel, Cheorwon Peace Observatory, Woljeong Station, Cheorwon Crane Observatory and Labor Party's Headquarters. The second course is the theme course mixing cultural assets and ecological attractions together including Sambuyeon Falls, Sundam Valley, Seungil Bridge, Goseokjeong, Jiktang Falls and Dopiansa, and the last is experiential course where tourists can experience and enjoy rafting, bungee jump, trekking, survival game, 4 wheel biking, cart riding and Haneoul path trekking.

However, these programs are not organically linked but performed independently. Therefore they are insufficient to solidify 'unification of local community and residents', the basic ideology of eco-museum. Tourists who participate in various tourism programs including security spots do not get good guidance. If educational program explaining history of the region and military cultural assets linking with military experience events such as survival games or simple military exercises is introduced rather than finishing the course as simple visits, it will improve the effects of security education and can be developed as

⁵ The Hyanggyo were state-run provincial schools established separately during the Goryeo Dynasty (AD918-1392) and Joseon Dynasty (AD1392-1910). They served primarily the children of the yangban, or ruling elite upper-class.

⁶ Goseokjeong designated as nation tourist attraction in 1977 is one of Cheorwon 8 wonderful sceneries located on midstream of the Hantan River, which is famous for a huge curious rock dominating in the middle of the river.

tourism contents improving historical and geographical identity of Cheorwon located in the front line.

If a program including visits of security places and military experiences targeting foreigners who are nearly impossible to get military training unlike Koreans with conscription system is introduced, it will give foreigners interesting and exotic experiences. Additionally, we can publicize our potential energy that developed democracy overcoming the ruins of war and achieved economic prosperity.

In case of ecological tourism, it is recommended to develop a 'Rice Farming Experience' program linking with Odae Rice, the main crop of Cheorwon. It will extend the stay of tourists and can be developed into the experiential program providing constant visits by season or by terms escaping from the one-time tour. During this process, local residents will actively participate in the delivery of their accumulated farming experiences. Ecological tourism and rice farming experiential program can be linked with local festival such as Taebong Festival in September and promote the festival by enjoying the delight of harvest together with local residents and tourists. Considering the zeal for educational in Korea, rice farming experience will gain popularity as natural ecology learning field of children who are born and brought up in cities.

To attract participation of local residents, culture interpretation programs should be expanded which is available to some security tourists only at the moment. For this, it is recommended to open local culture education program such as 'Introduction of Cheorwon' for local residents to improve their pride as residents and to provide them with opportunities to actively participate in tourism programs in the area. Considering that most of local economy improvement policies are being operated based on the experts' opinions rather than local residents' opinions regardless of their positive intentions, it is needed to organize a local committee responsible for education of community members and sharing roles in order to build a practical eco-museum. Such committee should select cultural assets of the area, recruit human resources and operate eco-museum letting the residents the subjects of the operation in order to make the sustainable development the area. Additionally, it is necessary to provide concrete assistance to the residents such as tax cut and subsidization by Cheorwon authority.

Cheorwon is one of the coldest places in Korea. If introducing efficient weather marketing, the severely cold weather can be another attraction of eco-museum. For example, it can hold a sports festival such as ski, skate and sledge, or snow or ice festival. Considering the big success of Hwacheon's 'Landlocked Salmon Festival', Cheorwon can be a tourists' attraction throughout the year if utilizing winter weather marketing on ecomuseum components.

Paradigm shift is required for military facility protection area which occupies 95% of Cheorwon area. Ironically, it is the power to protect the beautiful ecology by preventing reckless development. As a result, Cheorwon can preserve its clean nature as it does not have factories that contaminate the local environment. As the aforementioned, if we can transit the severely cold winter weather to positive element and make it a brand such as 'Mecca of Winter Sports', it will maximize the positive image of nature-friendly agricultural village preserved by military protection area.

Considering the present situation that smartphone users are increasing geometrically, it is needed to develop an app more actively. Such apps should be able to provide tangible and intangible information inclusively such as introduction and contact number of culture interpreter who can guide the tour, transportation and accommodation as well as basic tourism information such as location, history, things to do and things to eat. It is needed to pay delicate attentions to post services for tourists so that it may not be limited to one-time tour only. The provision of information on local festivals and events will enforce the communications between residents and tourists and naturally induce revisits of the tourists.

3. Conclusion

In developing tourism contents for Cheorwon, the concept of ecomuseum suggests many advantages. First, the particular region left underdeveloped in Cheorwon can be endowed with complementarities in terms of local economy and unity of residents. As a result, it leads to improvement for both locals and tourists to access to the local cultural resources. Thus, it is projected to produce demand for rural tourism. Secondly, somewhat unsociable and unilateral level of local development involving only experts and public bodies should turn into a more open and plural structure accompanying with human and material resources. Such development of the region is effective in preserving local identity and improving its image. Also, the length of tourists should increase as well as their range of activities.

Once, security was perceived as negative mechanism coercing democracy under the name of 'anti-communism' in the tragic history of Korea. However, national security cannot be ignored even after the reunification because the geopolitical factors of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, the location and history of Cheorwon are big assets. DMZ which represents painful history of Korea is a natural paradise with its dramatic story-telling and the well-preserved nature. Accordingly, ecomuseum of Cheorwon mixed with ecology, culture and Korean history will be the foundation of reunified Korea to transit its stiffened image to history education field as an advance guard of national security.

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