

Reconstructing the Significance of the Dalseong Ruins in Daegu

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Abstract

Daegu Dalseong Ruins, an ancient tomb complex, has suffered from the effects of urban development and resulted in the loss or alteration of many tombs. While previous excavations have focused on the tombs, research on the Dalseong fortress has been limited. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to emphasize the importance of a meticulous examination of local historical resources to authenticate the true essence of Dalseong and shed light on its historical context and cultural significance. The study examines the geographical location, the archaeological remains and the historical and cultural significance of these ruins. Through careful analysis, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical and social dimensions encapsulated within the Daegu Dalseong Ruins.

Keyword : Daegu, Dalseong Ruins, Burial Mounds, Dalseong Mud Castle, Three Kingdoms Period

1. Introduction

The Daegu Dalseong Ruins stand as a notable ancient burial site, specifically recognized as Gochong, within the city of Daegu. The authenticity of this site has been verified through extensive research and documentation. Historical accounts recount the presence of numerous tombs dating back to the Three Kingdoms period scattered across the nearby hills. However, the relentless forces of urban development such as the expansion of the city area have resulted in the destruction or alteration of a significant portion of these tombs. In addition to the ancient tombs, the Dalseongtoseong fortress occupies Independence Hill to serve as a political hub for Daegu throughout successive generations. As such, the Daegu Dalseong Ruins offer a unique opportunity to examine the historical significance of this region and highlight its central role since the era of the Three Kingdoms through the remnants they preserve.

Such lack of preservation and its damage on the tombs is not domestic situation. The El Castillo pyramid, also known as the Temple of Kukulcan located in Chichen Itza, Mexico, offers an example of the loss and alteration of tombs. Over time, the pyramid and the potential tomb inside it have been subject to weathering and damage including some caused by tourists. In 2006, a tourism-related incident caused a portion of the pyramid's upper structure to collapse which resulted in irreversible damage. As

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a result, a significant amount of potential information about the Maya civilization was lost [1]. Bettini and Massa analyse the conservation problems of the ancient tombs in Tarquinia. Visitors' presence leads to ongoing fluctuations in the tomb's relative humidity. To mitigate this, a transparent barrier has been installed. This barrier allows visitors to view the tomb interior without altering its environmental conditions or having direct contact with the painted walls [2]. Another study suggests digitally assisted preservation and restoration of a fragmented mural in a Tang Tomb [3].

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to conduct a thorough investigation of the Daegu Dalseong Ruins with a comprehensive analysis of their geographical location within the region and an in-depth exploration of the archaeological remains to ascertain their significance. By doing so, this paper sheds light on the cultural, historical and social dimensions encapsulated within the Daegu Dalseong Ruins in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of this exceptional heritage site.

2. Position and condition assessment of the ruins in Dalseong

The Daegu Dalseong Ruins, acknowledged as a prominent ancient Gochong tomb in Daegu, occupy a significant position within the administrative boundaries of Bisandong and Naedangdong located in Seogu, Daegu city. Specifically designated as historic relic #42, these ruins are accompanied by several other ancient tombs #83~87 which are situated in Pyeongri-dong [4]. Historical evidence suggests the existence of numerous ancient tombs from the Three Kingdoms period, dispersed across a low hill extending southwest from Dalseong, the initial earthen ramparts constructed on an adjacent hill. Regrettably, the urban development activities including city expansion and cultivation practices have inflicted severe damage upon these ruins and resulted in their destruction or alteration [5].

Geographically, Dalseong is positioned at the northern extremity of a deteriorated low-lying area known as the west erosive low area to encompass a peneplain extending from the eastern slopes of Waryongsan to the western region of the mountainous floodplain. Adjacent to Dalseong's eastern periphery, the mountainous floodplain is delimited by the border of Dalseocheon. Historical records from the Japanese colonial era confirm the former presence of a branch of Dalseocheon, which appeared to envelop the lower section of Dalseong's eastern rampart. However, the rapid pace of urbanization has rendered this feature challenging to trace accurately. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that substantial ancient tombs were found along a ridge situated at an elevation ranging from 50 to 60 meters, connecting the western outskirts and the southern region of Dalseong [5].

3. Significance of the Remains

3.1 Dalseong old tombs

Dalseong Gobun-gun, originally constructed on a hill extending from Dalseong and connecting to the western slopes of Waryong Mountain, now exists in a state of ruins, rendering the tracing of its remnants challenging. However, archival records from the Japanese colonial era provide valuable insights and confirms the presence of 87 burial mounds as shown in [Fig. 1].



[Fig. 1] At the time of excavation and investigation of tombs during the Japanese colonial period, Tombs No. 37, 50 and 51 in Naedang-dong, Daegu

7 of them were subjected to investigation including 37 units in 1923 [7]. The region surrounding Dalseong is rich in diverse archaeological ruins, dating back to the Bronze Age. Notably, the Chimsan-dong ruins situated north of Dalseong yielded significant artifacts such as stoned-axes. These ruins alongside the Yeonamsan ruins nestled amidst mountains and streams attracted early attention. Although the excavation of the dolmen in Chilseongdong did not yield any infrastructure or grave goods, it exhibited distinct characteristics of a megalithic monument. In the Pyeongri-dong ruins that came to light during the construction of an apartment complex in 1970, a plethora of relics including weapons and harnesses were unearthed. These ruins offer invaluable insights into the social transformations that occurred in Daegu from the Bronze Age to the early Iron Age. In conjunction with Dalseong Gobun-gun, the Daemyeongdong Gobun-gun that was investigated during the Japanese colonial era serves as a testament to the architectural style of Gochonggobun in Daegu during the 5th to 6th centuries and preserves distinct characteristics of the local community. Moreover, the

Gyeongsanggamyoung, Daegueupseong, and Sajikdan, all intertwined with the Eupchi of the Joseon Dynasty, are situated to the east and west of Dalseong. Excavations conducted in Namseongro 33 and 45beonji unearthed manufacturing relics predating and postdating the demolition of Daegu Eupseong in 1906 [6]. The Dalseongtoseong fortress, constructed on the independent hill connected to the north of this Gobun-gun, served as the political epicenter of Daegu, retaining its significance throughout subsequent generations [7].

The Dalseong tomb represents a crucial link to South Korea's Three Kingdoms period (57 BC - 668 AD), specifically the Kingdom of Silla. The rich historical context of the tomb provides insights into the funerary practices, societal structure and lifestyle of the period. The Dalseong tomb and its artifacts shed light on the sociopolitical dynamics of the era. High-status items such as gilt bronze crowns and other elite grave goods suggest the tomb was for individuals of significant importance, possibly ruling elites or nobility. This suggests a structured society with social hierarchy. Furthermore, artifacts identical to those found in Gyeongju, the capital of Silla, show that the region was under Silla's influence and hints at the sociopolitical relations and power dynamics at play during this time. In cultural perspective, the tomb and its contents provide valuable insights into the beliefs, customs and artistic expressions of the Silla period. Moreover, the tomb represents an important cultural heritage site for South Korea and contributes to the national identity and pride. It is a source of local heritage education and tourist attraction, thereby playing a significant role in cultural preservation and promotion.

3.2 Dalseong mud castle

The initial exploration of Dalseongtoseong's archaeological features commenced in December 1917 when Torii Ryuzo conducted an investigation specifically focused on the rampart. This investigation targeted the layers containing relics discovered during the excavation work for the construction of an east seongche, a shrine dedicated to worship. By inserting a prospecting trench, the investigation confirmed that the rampart consisted of a composite structure of earth and stone. Subsequently, during the construction of Gukchemyeongjunggwan in Dalseong in 1941, Kyoichi Arimitsu led an investigation prompted by the damage inflicted on the rampart. In October 1968, Professor Yun Yong Jin from Kyungpook National University initiated the second investigation which concentrated on the layers revealing relics encountered during the clearance work for the establishment of a cultural center. Lastly, in August 1970, an excavation investigation centered on the layers containing relics discovered during the dredging of the old shrine to construct a water bird discharger in the park.

The 1968 investigation yielded significant findings to unveil the internal base of the rampart

measuring 27 meters in width and a height of 6 meters. All four occupation layers were meticulously examined. The lowest layer, identified as occupation layer IV, consisted of sandy soil deposited over the rock. This layer represented a cultural stratum dating back to the period from the 1st century BC to the 2nd century AD evidenced by the considerable presence of animal bones and Gosik vessel. Occupation layer III situated above layer IV was characterized by distinct reddish-brown mountain soil, clearly distinguishable from sediment introduced by river flow. Artifacts such as mirror, cuddle and steamers were excavated from this layer. The abundance of earth vessel adorned with victory and lattice door decorations suggests a chronological record spanning from the latter part of the 2nd century to the early part of the 4th century. Occupation layer II composed of mountain soil presented pottery dating to the early 4th century. Finally, occupation layer I situated atop layer II revealed red soiled layers and foundation soil to indicate a composite composition of soil.



[Fig. 2] Dalseong Mud Castle

Recent endeavors by the Daedong Cultural Heritage Research Center have encompassed prospecting investigations in the vicinity of Dalseong mud castle, precise excavation investigations of the Dalseong mud castle public parking lot in 2016, and the Daegu Bisandong community center in 2017 as shown in [Fig. 2]. Culturally, the fortress along with other archaeological finds in the area has contributed to the understanding of cultural practices during the Silla period. Events like the annual Dalseong Citizen's Day also demonstrate the cultural value of the fortress to the local community. Also, its construction marked the transfer of political and military significance from Kyungsan to Dalgubeol (now Daegu). The fortress reflects the shift in power and territorial control during the Silla period, and even in the centuries that followed. The existence and preservation of Dalseong today represent a tangible link to this critical period of sociopolitical change.

The most vital excavation investigation concerning Dalseong remains outstanding. Preliminary findings

from prospecting excavations suggest that Dalseong's fortification incorporated a combination of masonry and compacted clay at the intersection. The mud castle that are designated as historic relic #62 spans a perimeter of 1,300 meters and encompasses an area of 105,238 square meters. The artificially constructed rampart reaches a height of 4 meters while the east gate stands at an impressive 11-meter elevation. In particular, the northwest rampart commands an even greater height of 20 meters. Moreover, the northwest section where Dalseowon once flowed into the natural moat, exhibits a prominent topographical elevation [8].

3.3 Other excavated relics

An array of relics has been unearthed including accessories such as gilt bronze crowns, golden accessories, silver accessories and crystal accessories. The discovery of weapons alongside various harnesses like horse sash decorator and age, further contributes to the corpus of artifacts retrieved from the excavation sites. Of particular significance is the identification of a gilt bronze crown that bears a striking resemblance to the crown excavated in Kyungju, a momentous finding that underscores Daegu's connection to the realm of Shilla including its ancient capital, Dalgubeol. In additon, the recovered earthenware from the Dalseong Ruins showcases distinctive characteristics indicative of typical Shilla pottery to provide additional support for this historical association.



[Fig. 3] Gilt bronze crown excavated from Dalseong Tombs in the 5th century during the Three Kingdoms Period

Historical accounts confirm the construction of Dalseong mud castle in 261 AD during the reign of Shilla King Cheomhae. The region gradually came under Shilla's control with evidence suggesting its full domination by Shilla in the latter half of the 4th century. Initially, Kyungsan held greater political weight than Daegu after the establishment of Dalgubeol as Shilla's territorialized city. However, as Shilla expanded its influence to the Nakdong River, the political and military importance shifted from Kyungsan to Daegu. The construction of the castle of Jangsan in Kyungsan in 219 AD and the castle of Dalbeol in 261 AD marked a significant transfer of power, favoring Dalgubeol as the new center. The 5th century witnessed Shilla's implementation of an indirectly dominating local governance system, exemplified by the construction of the castle of Dalbeol in Daegu and the appointment of military officers with Nama's official rank, highlighting the military significance of Daegu.

Excavation findings reveal that the gilt bronze crown discovered in Dalseong old tombs is chronologically slightly later than that found in Imdang old tombs. Furthermore, Daegu's Daemyeongdong tombs or Jukgokdong tombs yielded a greater number of elite grave goods. As Daegu emerged as a strategically important military location, the significance of Hwawon mud castle that guards the Nakdong River and Geomdan mud castle became increasingly prominent. However, the current condition of Dalseong mud castle only permits fragmentary investigations of its rampart with no comprehensive archaeological excavation undertaken to fully unveil its internal structures. Thus, conducting meticulous excavation investigations of Dalseong mud castle is imperative to comprehensively comprehend the rampart's characteristics and internal features, ultimately shedding light on the historical status and significance of Dalseong.

4. Conclusion

This paper centers on the Daegu Dalseong Ruins, an eminent ancient tomb complex located in Daegu. The region once housed numerous tombs dating back to the Three Kingdoms Period, but the ravages of urban development have led to the loss or alteration of many of these tombs. Adding to the historical and political significance of the area is the presence of Dalseong mud castle, a fortress constructed atop Independence Hill. The aim of this study is to thoroughly examine the location and importance of the Dalseong Site including both the tombs and the Dalseongtoseong fortress. While ongoing excavations have focused on the tombs, research efforts dedicated to the Dalseong fortress have been restricted to partial examinations of its walls. Consequently, a scrupulous investigation of local historical resources becomes imperative to authenticate the true essence of Dalseong. By doing so, this study seeks to shed

light on the historical context and cultural significance of the Daegu Dalseong Ruins and contributes to a comprehensive understanding of this remarkable heritage site.

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