

# Exploring Dumulmeori: Navigating the Intersection of Cultural Landscape, Ecotourism, and Sustainable Management

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## Abstract

Dumulmeori is the confluence of the South and North rivers and the beginning of the Han River in South Korea. With its early morning mist, sunrise, huangpo sailboats and 400-year-old zelkova trees, Dumulmeori is an ecotourism resource, the first scenic spot on the Han River and a historical and cultural tourism resource with a variety of stories. This study offers a comprehensive exploration of Dumulmeori's cultural landscape to dive into its origins, key landmarks such as the 400-year-old Zelkova tree and its representation in artistic works. It discusses the current dilemmas surrounding Dumulmeori's management including the delicate balance of preservation and utilization and the need for collaboration among various stakeholders. It presents a promising branding project designed to improve tourism management by developing a harmonious brand identity that complements Dumulmeori's natural beauty. This study expects to extend strategic initiatives to ensure the sustainable development and responsible utilization of Dumulmeori's rich cultural and natural resources.

Keyword : Yangpyeong, Dumulmeori, Cultural landscape, Resource conversion, Tourism resources

## 1. Introduction

Dumulmeori, located in Yangpyeong, Gyeonggi-do holds profound historical and cultural significance within South Korean heritage. Situated at the confluence of the North Han River and the South Han River, Dumulmeori has long served as a vital transportation route and a protected water supply area for the metropolis. Its historical records can be traced back to the literature of the Three Kingdoms period and despite administrative changes over the years, it has retained its status as a county or township to preserve its natural and cultural landscape [1].

Dumulmeori is widely recognized as a renowned eco-tourism destination along the Seoul-Incheon Dumulmeori Han River to showcase notable features such as the majestic 400-year-old Zelkova tree, the picturesque Hwangpo sailboat, the enchanting morning fog and breathtaking sunrises. Prior to alterations in the river currents resulting from the construction of the Paldang dam, Dumulmeori thrived as a bustling pier that is steeped in captivating narratives. These exceptional attributes contribute to its significance as both a prominent landmark and a valuable historical and cultural tourism resource.

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There are several research on the focus on Dumulmeori region and its visitor's satisfaction and it suggest that the strategies should be considered to apply ecological planning factors [2]. Recent research is about the study of consumer perceptions of its representative tourists attractions on the region including Yangpyeong and Dumulmeori [3]. However, the main focus is on the successful reasoning behind its regional attractions beside its decline of visitors and ecological harmful effects on them. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to embark on a comprehensive examination of the elements comprising Dumulmeori's cultural landscape and to identify the challenges and issues surrounding its cultural heritage. This study will contribute to provide an instructive report on the cultural landscape resources of Dumulmeori, encompassing its historical, natural and cultural dimensions.

## **2. The origin of Dumulmeori as a iconic landmark**

Dumulmeori situated in the southwestern area of Yangseo-myeong derives its name from its geographical position as the convergence point of the headwaters of the Southern Han River and the Northern Han River. The indigenous Korean name 'Dumulmeori' is represented by the Chinese characters Yangseo-ri. During the Japanese colonial period in 1914, administrative regions underwent comprehensive consolidation to result in the amalgamation of Yonggin-ri, Sukgang-ri, and Dae-ri, collectively known as Yangseo-ri. Together with the geographical division of Yangseo-myeong and Yangdong-myeong, this constituted the western region of Yangpyeong-gun. The unification of Yanggun-gun and Gipyong-gun into Yangpyeong-gun in 1908 led to the establishment of Yangseo-myeong. The northern part of Yangseo-myeong is adorned by the prominent Chunggeo Mountain with its notable summit, Eastern Lightning Rock (378m) while the rest of the range extends inward. The southern tributary region of the Han River is characterized by cultivated areas and settlements, primarily focused on rice, vegetables, beans and other agricultural products. The construction of the Paldang Dam resulted in the formation of a large lake due to the impediment of water from the Northern Han River and the Southern Han River at the confluence point. The central electrified railroad traverses this lake [4].

At present, Dumulmeori refers to the administrative region encompassing parts of Yangseo-myeong and Yangseo-ri. Prior to the completion of the Paldang Dam in December 1973, the area was known by various names such as Hansuma-ri, Maljukku-ri, Dumu-ri, Duma-ri, Dugu-ri, Yangsu-du, Yangsu and others. It is now commonly referred to as Yangsuri.

### **3. Cultural Landscape of Dumulmeori**

#### **3.1 Dumulgyeong**

In 2010, the Ministry of Land, Transport, and Maritime Affairs in collaboration with the Seoul Regional National Land Management Office identified and designated eight ecological, historical and cultural landmarks in the Han River area, collectively known as the ‘Han River Eight Scenes.’ Among these designated sites, Dumulgyeong in Yangpyeong-gun stands out as the first scene to boast a captivating landscape characterized by misty fog, scenic sunrises and the breathtaking beauty of all four seasons. These ecological tourist resources contribute to its unique appeal. Positioned at the confluence of the North Han River and the South Han River with Jukga Island as a backdrop and the flow from Geomgang Mountain’s Geomdae summit in Gangwon Province, Dumulgyeong offers a panoramic view that showcases the splendor of the Han River.

#### **3.2 Zelkova Tree: a testimony of Dumulmeori’s history**

The Zelkova tree in Dumulmeori stands as a living witness to the region’s rich history estimated to be over 500 years old and reaching an impressive height of 30 meters with a remarkable width of 8 meters. Fondly known as the village god grandmother, this majestic tree was once accompanied by the village god grandfather Zelkova tree. However, during the era of Japan’s forced annexation, the village god grandfather trees were tragically felled to produce rifle plate butts. Subsequently, the Zelkova trees faced further challenges during the devastating Eulcheok flood in 1925 and the commencement of the Paldam Dam construction in May 1968, eventually becoming submerged in the 1970s. Unfortunately, the village god grandfather tree succumbed to flooding and was ultimately felled within a year of being water-logged. For over 400 years, these Zelkova trees served as sacred sites where various rituals were conducted, bearing witness to the cultural significance of Dumulmeori [5].

#### **3.3 Appreciation of Dumulmeori through artistic works**

The captivating beauty of Dumulmeori’s landscape has been celebrated throughout history, inspiring numerous scholars to depict its enchanting scenes through various forms of artistic expression. Renowned artworks such as Lee Gun-pil’s Dosunggangyoudo and Gyongjae Jeong Seon’s Dokbaektang have beautifully captured the essence of Dumulmeori. As shown in [Fig. 1], Lee Gun-pil’s masterpiece

created in 1845 vividly portrays the picturesque sight of Dumulmeori with a specific focus on Gimchun Cliff and Sungchung (Prinetree grove pavilion). Preserved in the Dogangsungyou album, this artwork exemplifies the popular literary painting style of the 19th century while incorporating elements of Namjong trends in literary calligraphy and featuring a simplistic yet elegant artistic approach in the background [6].



[Fig. 1] Lee Kun-pil <Two rivers induction>

Another notable masterpiece Gyongjae Jeong Seon's Dokbaektang is an esteemed piece within the Gyongkyomyungsung album renowned for its portrayal of the Yangpyeong-gun landscape, particularly emphasizing Dumulmeori. As shown in [Fig. 2], this artwork captures the scholarly atmosphere surrounding study pavilions and ranches to highlight the educational influence associated with Gyeongjae Jeongseon and the supplementary books of the Jangdong Kim family [7]. Dumulmeori's allure has also been praised by esteemed scholar Dasan Jeong Yak-yong, who expressed his admiration for the region in letters addressed to Seon Master Choui at Dacheungsa [8]. In one such letter, Dasan vividly describes his downstream journey from Seosul Temple in the Yongmun mountains and it leads to the meeting point of the Nokhyo waters (the Han River that flows upwards from Yeosu). With poetic flair, Dasan eloquently depicts the shimmering water and majestic mountains, the intricate delta and delicate sand particles and the pure allure that captivates the senses. He highlights the poetic beauty of peach blossoms blooming along the river in March to invite others to join in the delight of composing poems and playing the Geomongo, a six-string Korean zither. Ultimately, Dasan extends an invitation to all who are intrigued by such profound pleasures to embark on this enchanting journey while embracing the profound beauty of Dumulmeori.



[Fig. 2] Gyeomjae Jeongseon <Monologue>

### 3.4 The 400-year-old Dodulmeori Dodang (Tutelary) Festival

The Dodulmeori Dodang Festival also known as the Han River Basin Village Religion has been an enduring cultural celebration for centuries. Commonly referred to as the Tutelary Rites or Gochang Rites, this festival holds deep significance as a sea god festival with prayers and rituals conducted to ensure the safety of ships and the well-being of the village. As shown in [Fig. 3], the festival features the presence of stone altars and stone piles, unique to the upper sanctuary of the southern and northern Han River in Yangsori. These altars located near the Zelkova tree in Dumulmeori serve as sacred spaces for invoking the sea gods of the Dodang grandfather and Dodang grandmother. In a broader context, the festival encompasses invocations for ancestral tablets or altar portraits of Buddha as the form of 'Tojuguri Shrine.' Traditionally, the Dodang Festival takes place on the 2nd day of September in the lunar calendar and was historically celebrated as a grand village event spanning three to four days.



[Fig. 3] Dodang Festival

### **3.5 The culture of pier areas and horse stable inns**

Dumulmeori, as a pivotal transportation hub connecting Gangwon Province and Seoul, played a crucial role in facilitating river ferry channels [9]. As shown in [Fig. 4], it was renowned for its vibrant pier areas and Maljeokkari (horse feeding areas) which buzzed with activities and services. Before the advent of land routes, Dumulmeori served as an essential midway pier on the journey from Jeongsun and Danyang to the final destination at Mapo pier. The surroundings of Dumulmeori thrived with numerous boarding houses, brothels and drinking establishments in order to cater to the needs of boat travelers at the Dumulmeori pier. These drinking houses operated from February to March until November when the ice formation or the last remnants of frost disappeared to offer a variety of alcoholic beverages. In terms of food, they provided Haejang rice cakes including Chinese cabbage and soybean soup with glutinous rice cake rolls renowned for their hangover-relief properties. The pier areas and horse stable inns in Dumulmeori reflect the dynamic cultural fabric of the region as vital nodes of transportation and hospitality to facilitate the exchange of goods, information and cultural practices.



[Fig. 4] Pier Areas in Dumulmeori

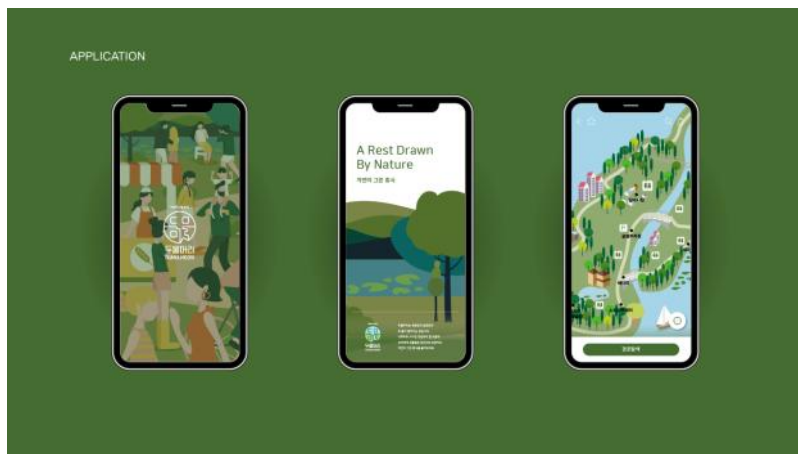
## **4. Disucssion**

Dumulmeori stands as a place of exceptional natural and cultural significance with its beauty and heritage captivating visitors from all around. The preservation of its natural landscape has been safeguarded through various developmental restrictions to ensure the integrity of its natural resources. However, these restrictions have also posed challenges for the cultural development and livelihoods of the local community. The area is subjected to overlapping regulations to encompass acts for natural

preservation, water supply source protection, environmental policies, shore regions, developmental restrictions and military facility protection.

The current influx of over 1 million visitors to Dumulmeori annually has exacerbated management issues and identifies the need for comprehensive systems to address the diverse challenges. Mere imposition of restrictions is insufficient to tackle these problems effectively. It is imperative to implement measures that leverage the potential of Dumulmeori, while simultaneously managing and preserving its natural and cultural landscape through redevelopment and restoration initiatives. Moreover, special regulations should be recommended to navigate the complexities imposed by the various acts that apply to the Dumulmeori region.

By adopting a holistic approach that balances preservation, utilization, and effective management, Dumulmeori can thrive as a sustainable and culturally vibrant destination. Emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts between stakeholders including local authorities, community members and relevant governing bodies, it will be instrumental to ensure the long-term preservation and responsible utilization of Dumulmeori's natural and cultural treasures. Thus, the problem of lack of tourism management in Dumulmu is being addressed through various methods of branding and website development.



[Fig. 5] Branding project and its application

For example, a fictional branding project was created to address the lack of tourism management in Dumulmeori [11]. As shown in [Fig. 5], the project aimed for an organic, minimalist and harmonious design that emphasizes the natural beauty and features of Dumulmeori. As part of the project, a range of logos and brand identities were developed to blend in with the natural landscape of Dumouleori. These were designed to be applied to a variety of applications including brand colors, type, pictograms,

signage guidelines, leaflets and posters. In addition, a website was developed to provide information about Dumulmeori and allow visitors to share their experiences. However, detailed information on this aspect is not yet available.

## **5. Conclusion**

Dumulmeori, as the confluence of the North and South Han Rivers, has immeasurable historical and cultural significance within the South Korean heritage. Its rich ecological tourism potential deeply rooted in captivating landscapes, iconic landmarks such as the Zelkova tree and profound cultural traditions represented by the Dodang Festival, contribute to its popularity as an esteemed tourism destination. The artistic representations of Dumulmeori's landscape further enrich its cultural identity. However, the region faces numerous challenges due to overlapping regulations and the ever-increasing influx of tourists. The need for a holistic approach encompassing preservation, utilization and effective management is crucial for Dumulmeori's sustainable future. This would involve striking a balance between safeguarding the natural landscape and cultural heritage while also catering to the developmental needs and livelihoods of the local community.

In this regard, this study was conducted to suggest initiatives towards comprehensive tourism management. By creating an organic, minimalist and harmonious design that highlights Dumulmeori's natural beauty, the study addresses a shared vision coupled with strategic planning and effective management to preserve Dumulmeori's natural and cultural treasures. This study expects to extend strategic initiatives to ensure the sustainable development and responsible utilization of Dumulmeori's rich cultural and natural resources.

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