



City profile

Growth, decline and the challenges facing a policy-dependent and former-colonial city: Gunsan, Korea



Changhyo Yi*, Junyoung Ryu

Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Seoul, Siripdaero163, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul 130-743, Republic of Korea

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 May 2014

Received in revised form 17 October 2014

Accepted 13 November 2014

Keywords:

Urban growth and decline

Policy-dependent city

Former-colonial city

Saemangeum project

Historic and cultural regeneration

ABSTRACT

Gunsan is a Korean port city that was designed by Japan in the early 1900s and grew during the Japanese Ruling Era. The urban space of Gunsan was separated into two districts: the new settlement region and the region inhabited by Koreans. The city was one of the fastest growing cities in Korea after the opening of the port, but the urban growth rate slowed remarkably in comparison with those of other Korean cities because of the government-initiated industrialization strategy after the 1970s. The urban growth history of Gunsan is characterized by the dramatic urban transformation of a non-capital city which reacted to changes in historical conditions from the colonial era to the present, manifesting a typical example of urban growth or decline affected by national spatial policies. The urban development pattern of Gunsan means it can be defined as a typical 'policy-dependent city'. Currently, the most important urban development issues of Gunsan are the regeneration of the old downtown and regional economic growth, and representative urban projects are the Modern Cultural City project and the Saemangeum development project. Well-balanced enforcement and management between these urban development projects that are again attempted in a policy-dependent city will be the thing that is necessary and sufficient for sustainable urban growth.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Gunsan is a port city that was designed by Japanese colonial officials in the early 1900s. It grew rapidly during the Japanese occupation of Korea and was raised to the status of a city in 1913 and was promoted to the status of an 'urban-rural composition city' through an administrative alliance with Okgu-gun—the rural area surrounding the city of Gunsan—in 1995 (Kim, 2000). Currently, Gunsan is a major component of the Jeonju–Gunsan–Iksan (JGI) metropolitan region in southwestern Korea. The JGI metropolitan region has an area of 1107.58 km² and a population of 1.207 million, as of 2010, of which Gunsan accounts for 394.94 km² and 261,000, respectively (see details in Table 1). Gunsan is a high-tech manufacturing industrial city¹ and an international trade seaport that is located at the mouth of the Geum River approximately 200 km south–south–west of Seoul on the midwest coast of the Korean Peninsula (see Fig. 1).

In Korean, "Gunsan" means 'a gathering of several islands looking like a mountain'—a reference to the 13 islands of the Gogunsan

Archipelago located off the coast of Gunsan (Kim, 2000). The surrounding area of the city is the Honam Plains, which is one of the most fertile breadbaskets in Korea. Geopolitically, Gunsan occupies a nodal position with access to water transport via the Geum River, as well as marine transport via the Yellow Sea. Traditionally in this area, a maritime transport system that carried and stored grain paid as a tax was developed, and commercial transactions in connection with Ganggyeong—one of the largest commercial cities of the Choseon Dynasty²—through the Geum River were quickly conducted (Kang & Lee, 2008; Kim, 1997; Kim, So, Yi, & Lee, 2006; Park, 2011) (see Fig. 1 for the place names).

In Gunsan, the tidal range of the Yellow Sea is over 8 m in height. Although a significant obstacle to shipping, an international seaport was opened by order of Japan on 1 May 1899 (Rimmer, 2008). The colonization through the Japanese imperial government caused sweeping political, economic, and social changes in Korean society (Kim, Kim, & Nahm, 1995). The urban spatial structure of Gunsan had been shaped by colonial policy and plans of the

* Corresponding author.

¹ According to Statistics Korea, half of Gunsan's GRDP (45.3%) is generated by manufacturing production, and the manufacturing of Gunsan is mainly composed of the automotive, precision machinery and chemical industries.

² Choseon was a Korean state that lasted approximately five centuries, from 1392 to 1897. Early in the foundation of the dynasty, the capital city was relocated to modern-day Seoul. The Choseon period has left a substantial legacy, such as the Korean language and the cultural norms of current-day Korea.

Table 1General indicators of Gunsan (as of 2010). Source: http://kosis.kr/statisticsList/statisticsList_02List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ATITLE01&parmTabId=M_02_01_01.

Category	Division	Unit	JGI region	Gunsan
Land size	Administrative district	km ²	1107.58	394.94
Population	Total	Persons	1,206,640	260,546
	Male	Persons	598,629	132,090
	Female	Persons	608,011	128,456
	Foreigners	Persons	6804	1701
	In-migration	Persons	215,810	50,842
	Out-migration	Persons	215,915	48,601
Household	Total	Households	431,777	95,649
Housing	Total	Units	390,283	94,945
Regional economy	Annual budget	Billion \$	2.779	0.781
	Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP)	Billion \$	18.799	6.592
Employee	Total	Jobs	763,188	188,250
	Primary industries	Jobs	1156	193
	Manufacturing	Jobs	59,596	25,497
	Construction	Jobs	24,779	4688
	Energy and environment	Jobs	4480	1402
	Retail	Jobs	60,449	12,653
	Service	Jobs	594,882	139,837
	Public administration	Jobs	17,846	3980

Japanese imperial government during the colonial era, and Gunsan rapidly developed into an international port city during that time.

However, Gunsan has not grown as quickly as comparable cities because of the growth pole development strategy implemented by the government after the restoration of Korean independence (Park, Kweon, & Lee, 2006). As a result, traces of the opening port era remain as modern features in the city. Thus, Gunsan is known as one of the most representative cases for a study on the changes that take place after the opening of a colonial port city (Kang & Lee, 2008; Yoon, 1985); the city government is today trying to perform a historic and cultural urban regeneration scheme using its assets. Meanwhile, another contemporary regional development issue is the Saemangeum development project. This project is intended to reclaim land from the sea on a large scale, with 283 km² of reclaimed land and a lake as large as 118 km², through a national development policy. Despite tension between environmental preservation and the development of the project in the late 1980s, the sea dike was completed in April 2010. The expectancy of regional growth has increased, beginning with the internal development direction since the establishment of the Saemangeum Development Agency in 2013.

Gunsan is defined as a typical ‘policy-dependent city’. Such cities emerge in the process of the urban growth in third-world countries (Kim et al., 1995). The purpose of this paper is to introduce the historical evolution of the urban change processes in Gunsan, such as its formation, growth, and decline, and to highlight the recent key policies and projects for urban development. The first two parts of the article trace the historical process of change in the city before examining current urban development issues. The latter part of the paper presents a review of recent national and local development policies for the urban growth and regeneration of Gunsan.

The opening of the port and urban growth

On 1 May 1899, Gunsan, along with Seongjin and Masan,³ officially became an open port to foreign trade by the government of the Great Han Empire.⁴ The opening of the port of Gunsan had been discussed by Japan since 1879, which was the opening date of Incheon

Port, because of the economic and military benefits of the Japanese Empire (Sohn, 1976). This area was an optimal place for the exploitation of grain by the Japanese imperial government because Gunsan occupied a key economic position in the Honam Plain—one of the most fertile plains—and hosted the Ganggyeong business district, which was one of the three largest marketplaces in Korea and was a military base for the transport and taxation of supplies from the southwestern Korean region to Hanyang (currently, Seoul) during the Joseon Dynasty (Kim et al., 1995, 2006; Park et al., 2006; Sohn, 1976). At that time, one of the aims of the government of the Great Han Empire was to increase customs revenue through the opening of ports (Sohn, 1976).

The general foreign settlement⁵ of the total area of 572,000 m² was established through the Japanese imperial government in Gunsan after the opening of the port (Kang & Lee, 2008; Rhee & Ryou, 2005; Yoon & Hong, 2004). As shown in Fig. 2, the street structure of the international settlement was a grid pattern of four by eight (Park et al., 2006; Song, 2004). The width of the main roads was 10 m, and each square lot was 40–50 m by 65 m (Park, 2011). The settlement region took the shape of a modern city, with a well-appointed street network and infrastructural facilities. On the other hand, the region inhabited by the Koreans was irregular (Kim et al., 2006; Song, 2011; Yoon, 1985) and was located around the rail station (see Fig. 3). It resembled a dual city that made for architectural and social distinction, as has been found in other colonial cities (Abu-Lughod, 1965; King, 2009). Likewise, the urban space of Gunsan was separated into two differentiated districts, the shapes of which remain in the old downtown area of Gunsan (Kang & Lee, 2008; Yoon & Hong, 2004).

After the opening of the port, Gunsan was one of the fastest-growing cities in Korea. This growth followed the establishment of the city's role as an outpost for rice production as well as a port of entry for Japanese industrial products. This increased the economic prosperity of Gunsan and drew a huge influx of people into the region. The population increased from only 558 in 1899 to 57,589 in 1944—a factor of approximately 103 times in only 46 years. In the 1930s, the population of Gunsan was the seventh largest in the nation. The migration of Japanese workers continued until 1940, although the proportion of Korean residents rapidly expanded according to the growth of the city after the 1920s (see Fig. 4).

³ Seongjin is located in North Korea, and the city was renamed Kimchaek in 1951. Masan is located approximately 35 km west of Busan and became one of the three cities of Unified Changwon, namely, Changwon, Masan, and Jinhae, in 2010.

⁴ The Great Han Empire is the name of the state of Korea that succeeded the Joseon Dynasty and existed from the proclamation of the dynasty replacement (1897) to the annexation of Korea by the Japanese imperial government (1910).

⁵ A territory within a country that is ceded by the national government to an entity other than the state (usually a colonial power) that holds sovereignty (Kim et al., 2006; Marinelli, 2010).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7418661>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7418661>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)