

Balancing Conservation and Development in National Parks of Japan: Success or Failure?

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the historical development of national park policy and administration in Japan from the perspective of achieving sustainable development in nationally important ecological areas. Contrary to the widely held belief, the national park system in Japan has been unsuccessful in balancing conservation and development. The fundamental reasons for its failure are as follows: the Japan's national park system has been largely founded and developed based on economic grounds and held sway by economic development policy; the policy and administrative coordination between government units concerning conservation and development has not been carried out; public participation and environmental groups' involvement in the decision making have been extremely limited; national parks have been perceived in the public image not as distinctive national heritage but as finest and popular tourist sites; and the dominant interest of tourism and recreational development has prevailed over conservation interest. Japan's unsuccessful experience and lessons imply that there is urgent need to drastically reform our national park system, largely founded on the Japanese model, in order to save our last national environmental heritage.

Key Words : National park system, important ecological area, conservation, development, policy, administration, historical evaluation, Japan

1. Introduction

The integration of conservation and development has been the central theme in international environmental arena since the early 1970s and reflected a dramatic shift in the international conservation approach from the competitive relationship between conservation and development to the cooperative relationship between them. From the proposal of Ecodevelopment in the early 1970s to the concept of Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development declared in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and

Development, continuous international conservation efforts have emphasized the particular need and importance of balancing conservation and development(IUCN, 1980; McNeely and Miller, 1984; WCED, 1987; Woo, 1992). In fact, these recent challenges have been integrated into the concept of SD(Sustainable Development). Although the concept of SD seems to be ideal, it is extremely difficult to be realized largely due to its ambiguous character. But one of important rules is that the conservation of diverse ecosystems and their resources is among the prerequisites for SD(IUCN, 1980) and one of essential conditions for preventive

environmental policy in the future.

In contrast to the mainstream of international environmental movement, our nation has paid little attention to nature conservation, protecting environmentally diverse and valuable ecosystems from development. Efforts to pursue nature conservation thus have been far lagged behind those to cope with environmental pollution mainly due to social and political indifference and misconception of separating nature conservation and environmental pollution. While the issues and problems of nature conservation have not been wide social and political concern, our precious national, regional, or local ecosystems have continued to be destructed. In a single year of 1993, massive developments, for instance, included Yangsoo power station project in the Jirisan National Park, youth training center being constructed in the Sokrisan National Park, and expanding Muju resort development in the Deogyusan National Park.

Our national parks have been formally designated and established as the most nationally significant natural and cultural resources representing Korea (the 1980 Natural Parks Law). The conservation system of Korea's national parks has, however, founded not on the North American national park model imposing strict preservation principle, but on the Japanese model allowing considerable development activities without its critical evaluation. Consequently, our national parks have been constantly endangered by a variety of private and public developments as Japan has already taken and experienced the wrong course which has been extremely difficult to be corrected. Unfortunately, there has been the widely held misconception among conservation specialists in Korea that the Japan's conservation system is far better than our system. Contrary to this popular belief, the Japanese model has had enormous impacts on destroying valuable

ecosystems and high environmental quality in our national parks. Before the blind introduction of what Japan has been doing, there must be the fundamental review of what has been happening in Japan.

In these respects, this paper conducts the historical evaluation of the Japan's national park system particularly from two perspectives of policy and administration and explains the fundamental reasons why it has failed in balancing conservation and development. This broad yet thorough assessment provides valuable ideas and lessons that should be applied to correcting and reforming our national park policy and administration.

2. National Park Policy and Administration in the Prewar Period

2.1. Emergence of the National Park Idea and Monumental Preservation Movement

The national park idea was introduced in Japan by a few intellectuals late in the Meiji period (1868-1911). But the national park movement took hold in the 1910s and 1920s. Since the destruction of natural resources and the loss of wildlife by this time were generally seen neither national problem nor public issue, the movement grew out of two major developments, the establishment of urban parks on the one hand and the preservation of historic and natural monuments on the other. The monumental preservation movement which focused on particular buildings, objects, and species was emerged to counter against the destruction of old religion and culture caused by Meiji government modernization programs designed to westernize Japan. This movement

was closely associated with the development of nationalism to protect Japan's imperial nationality and finally led to the 1919 Law for the Preservation of Historic, Scenic, and Natural Monuments (Oyadomari, 1985; Uchida, 1935). Meanwhile, the first park system of Japan, as a part of government modernization programs and a symbol of a new western cultural era, was created by the Decree no. 16 of Dajokan (a strongly centralized government) in 1873 (Tokyo-To, 1975). However, the new park system was not able to establish most large areas of scenic beauty as parks due to its focus on urban areas and requirement of public ownership. This limitation in turn led to the emergence of local petitions for establishing large parks in rural areas particularly where tourist sites for foreign visitors began to be developed.

The first national park proposal was a form of a petition for designating Mt. Fuji as a national grand park, by a House member from Shizuoka Prefecture (equivalent to Do in Korea or State in the US), submitted to the Imperial House in 1911 (Uno, 1970). In addition to this, there were three other petitions received in the same year House Session (Kaku, 1978). But the government response at this time was not positive because its primary concern was the preservation of historic and natural monuments. A national park proposal reemerged when the same petition, as one of four petitions submitted in 1911, for establishing Mt. Fuji as a national grand park in commemoration of the Meiji Emperor was resubmitted to the Imperial House in 1921.

2.2. Contrasting Views and Limited Debates Between Conservation and Development

The possibility of creating a national park, however, was already in the process of

investigation within the then Ministry of Home Affairs beginning in 1920. Problems within the Home Ministry were the fragmented investigation, the divided ideas, and the jurisdictional struggle between the two sections, the Geography in charge of the preservation of historic, scenic, and natural monuments and the Public Health responsible for park administration. The most significant was the contrasting idea between the two. While the Geography Section considered a national park equivalent to a natural monument and thus stressed the natural protection, the Public Health Section saw it as a recreational area from the point of view of promoting public health and therefore emphasized the recreational development (Oyadomari, 1985; Tanaka, 1981).

This division obviously resulted from the conflicting ideas between the two leading and highly respected scholars, both in landscape architecture and forestry, Tsuyoshi Tamura and Keiji Uehara. While Tamura valued human manipulation of natural landscape, Uehara argued for natural protection in accordance with the preservation of natural monuments. Tamura strongly believed that landscape beautification and artistic techniques should create a national park because nature is imperfect and has many defects (Tamura, 1918). He had even possessed the strong anthropocentric philosophy that nature should be conserved for the sake of human use (Tamura, 1918). On the contrary, Uehara who visited the US national parks in 1921 earlier than Tamura emphasized the preservation of important natural and cultural environment in close relation to the protection of historic, scenic and natural monuments as well as forest reserves and strongly believed that the preservation of such important landscapes should be the primary purpose of a national park (Uehara, 1924). The more dramatic difference between the two was the use of a

national park. While Tamura stressed resort use and facilities, such as hotel, vacation home, hot spring development, golf course, and tennis court, and economic benefits of local development (Tamura, 1918), Uehara argued that national park use should be spiritual enlightenment, environmental education, and scientific research (Uehara, 1924). Tamura was particularly interested in the development of roads and the use of car for public use of a national park (Tamura, 1918). Uehara called a Tamura's proposed idea not a national park but a public park and warned that such resort use would lead to the destruction of natural assets, the land speculation, the political use of attracting local voters, and the urban leisure use with no public walking (Uehara, 1924). He was obviously very accurate in predicting what was going to happen in national parks of Japan.

The personal yet very important debate between the two did not lead to either public discussion or the appointment of investigating committee. Although Uehara had the right concept, his idea was ignored because it provided neither economic benefits nor political interest. Unfortunately, his concept has been neither thoroughly reevaluated nor fully appreciated in Japan. Ironically, the Tamura's idea has been widely accepted and has had profound impacts on national park planning and management. Tamura had been a major architect of national park legislation and administration and has been called a father of Japan's national parks. It is not surprising that national park administration dominated by Tamura school has gone hand in hand with tourism policy and administration.

A few intellectuals and groups advocating a national park were also divided according to the two different views. While the public health idea was getting a momentum with the support of local leaders who saw the national park

designation as their regional pride and local economic opportunities, neither government initiators nor a few intellectuals clearly knew and proposed the concept and mechanisms of planning and managing a national park. Without the development of a clear national park idea, the movement was gradually absorbed into government economic policy.

2.3. Intervention of Economic Policy and Enactment of the 1931 National Parks Law

During the 1920s, Japan suffered from a series of economic crises, the devastating economic impact of the 1923 Kanto earthquake, the 1927 financial crisis, and the 1929 world economic depression. The continued economic depression ironically provided the ample opportunity to create a national park as one means of economic recovery. Beginning in 1927, the development of international tourism had been promoted as one of government policies for obtaining foreign currency and the creation of national parks was seen an important means of achieving such policy (Sorifu, 1980). Since then, the national park movement was strongly supported by the tourism interest, particularly the then Ministry of Railways and private transportation companies.

The effort to create a national park was finally succeeded in the 1931 National Parks Law. Of course, the dominant interest of this law was not the protection of ecologically important areas, but the tourism and recreational development on economic terms. Politically, the 1931 law was a pork barrel legislation which could offer various economic projects associated with tourism to attract local constituents (Ikenouye, 1981; Oshima, 1931; Oyadomari, 1985). It is worth to note that while the British government rejected the establishment of

national parks due to financial crisis in 1931 (Woo, 1992), the Japanese government adopted it to help solve financial crisis in the same year. In addition, the law included a lot of concessions made to other government departments concerned with the development and use of natural resources in the park area (Zadankai, 1966). The conflict was resolved basically by two means: the use of ambiguous and flexible languages in the bill (Oyadomari, 1985) and the stipulation that other government departments should be consulted and agreement should be reached in advance in designating, planning and managing national parks (Tokubetsu Incho, 1930).

2.4. Adoption of Multiple Use Concept

The 1931 law had neither the explicit definition nor the clear concept of a national park, which led to the continued vague status in later years. In fact, the pure preservation has been considered neither possible nor desirable due to the limited extent of wild nature, the existence of private ownership, the need of accommodating national and local economic development, and the recreational development associated with tourism. Therefore, the planning and management concept has been completely multiple use in practice. To both protect and develop a national park, the law employed three major measures which have basically remained unchanged till today. They were: a national park plan composed of two divided plans - a protection plan (a zoning plan and accompanying regulations) and a use plan (a provision of various use facilities); the permission requirement for development in a designated special area; and park facility provision scheme implemented by public or private sector. The national park administration was the responsibility of the Public Health Section of the Sanitation Bureau

within the Home Ministry and was transferred to the MOHW (Ministry of Health and Welfare) in 1938 and to the EA (Environment Agency) in 1971. The law set up the National Parks Advisory Council (now the Natural Parks Special Committee of the Natural Environment Conservation Advisory Council attached to the EA) to have expert comment and opinion on national park matters submitted by the national park bureaucracy.

2.5. Designation of National Parks and Tourism Development

Twelve national parks were designated between 1934 and 1936. Most designated parks were either fine scenic or popular tourist areas already well known by the public. The designation process had, however, the enormous difficulty in reaching agreements with other government departments concerning timber cutting, agricultural land development, hydropower stations, and military installations. Although no one doubted that Mt. Fuji and Hakone region was to be one of first national parks, the designation was delayed due to such difficulty, particularly in negotiation with the military, and was realized in 1936.

While the designation of national parks was the primary concern in the 1930s, little effort was made to plan, manage, and administer national parks. Rather, the priority given to the tourism development appeared soon when some roads and bridges already began to be planned as a part of a national park plan even before the draft of national park plan guidelines and the designation of special areas. In addition, the national park authority created in 1933 the regulation relief area out of the designated normal area which included most local towns and villages and required only the notification for certain specified changes and uses in order

to quickly respond to local pressures for alleviating even such a minimal measure. Such piecemeal efforts were even ceased due to the outbreak of the World War II.

3. National Park Policy and Administration in the Postwar Period

3.1. Postwar Economic Reconstruction and the 1957 Natural Parks Law

The completely stopped national park administration during the war was resumed as a part of cultural policies in 1945 by the order of the GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Powers) (Tamura, 1951; Tsuchiya, 1981). The GHQ made a significant contribution to promoting Japan's national parks in the early postwar period. It invited Charles A. Richey from the US National Park Service to obtain his guidance for planning and managing national parks and his report was issued in 1948 (Richey, 1948). Although the Richey report has not been fully appreciated in Japan, it was the most critical review of many problems of Japan's national parks that was made public and recommended a number of important measures for planning, management, administration, and budget. However, national parks were once again tied to the tourism development as one way of Japan's postwar economic reconstruction (Itoga, 1985; Sorifu, 1980; Tsuchiya, 1981). This interest was reinforced by four major measures taken by the end of 1950: golf course, ski resort, boatcruise, and horseback riding were added as park use facilities to a use plan (the 1947 amendment of the Implementation Rules of the National Parks Law); the creation of the National Park Division within the MOHW in 1948, which was supported by tourism interest

(Oyadomari, 1985); the creation of a new category of park as areas equivalent to national parks (the 1949 amendment of the National Parks Law), called quasi-national parks in later years, to respond to more local requests for the national park designation; and finally the designation of five additional national parks between 1946 and 1950. A significant protective measure undertaken in the 1949 amendment of the National Parks Law was the creation of Special Protection Areas to protect the key features of the park, which was already proposed as Preservation Areas in the 1937 National Park Plan Guidelines (Ikenouye, 1981; Tsuchiya, 1981) and was recommended in the Richey Report. But the designation of such areas was limited to very small areas in a few national parks.

The growing expansion of quasi-national parks and prefectural parks (established by prefectural ordinances) finally led to the 1957 Natural Parks Law that replaced the 1931 National Parks Law. The major outcome of the 1957 Law was the integration of national parks, quasi-national parks, and prefectural natural parks into the natural park system. Again, the key interest behind this law was the tourism and recreational development as a part of postwar economic recovery (Oyadomari, 1985). Two more national parks were designated in 1955.

3.2. Development Boom and Destruction of National Parks

While national parks had been expanded and tourism and recreational development had been prevailed after the war, many areas of national parks were significantly damaged by agricultural land development, hydropower station construction, and excessive timber cutting. Particularly, Sengokugahara in the Hakone region and red

pine forests in Mt. Fuji were destroyed by agricultural land development(Tsuchiya, 1981). No major action was taken to stop such enormous loss. But one step to minimize the destruction of forest was the 1951 agreement between the MOHW and the FA(Forestry Agency) that classified special areas into class I, II and III and regulated timber cutting in each class and special protection area(Tsuchiya, 1981).

The 1960s in Japan was the era of development boom across the nation accompanied by the high economic growth and industrial expansion. Three major destructive forces that significantly damaged natural park areas were scenic highway construction for the tourism promotion, industrial site development on coastal areas for the economic expansion, and recreational development for urban population. National parks suffered particularly from scenic highway construction and recreational development. Scenic highways boomed in the anticipation of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic became the most destructive force in national parks(Asahi Shinbunsha Naiseibu, 1972; Kihara, 1971). One of good examples was the so-called 'Fuji Subaru Line' in the FHINP(Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park), which reached up to 2,350m of Mt. Fuji and destroyed a vast amount of trees during and after the construction(Fujino, 1986; Tsuchiya, 1981). Leisure boom created by postwar economic affluence led to the enormous development, headed by big business, of resort and leisure facilities across the nation. The FHINP was one of the best examples that experienced all kinds of such developments spearheaded by big transportation and real estate companies. Stirred by the National Park Division of the MOHW, many other government departments further enhanced recreational development and competed one another by creating their own but similar programs only

under different names. Neither the government nor the public concerned much about the environmental destruction in national parks during the 1960s.

Some measures were, however, taken to improve national parks. 30 years after the enactment of the national park legislation, the first national park office was established in the Nikko National Park in 1960, the second one in the FHINP in 1961, and two more by 1969. A local tax reduction on private land designated as special protection areas in national and quasi-national parks was introduced in 1966 not to primarily enhance the protection but to partly compensate private landowners for strict restrictions imposed. A small land acquisition program using 50-50 matching fund between national and prefectural governments was created in 1967 as an attempt to avoid the first possible court battle against the likely rejection of an application for vacation home land subdivisions in the FHINP. Despite some improvements in the early 1970s, these two measures have been of little use due to many limitations included in programs. Four additional national parks were designated between 1962 and 1964.

3.3. Antipollution Movement and the 1972 Law for the Conservation of the Natural Environment

The serious environmental pollution and the massive natural destruction were finally recognized in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A growing pollution problem became a public concern as well as a political issue by the late 1960s. The outcome of the nationwide antipollution movement was remarkable. In a single year of 1970, marked as the year of pollution control in Japan, the National Diet passed 14 pollution control legislations(Kawana,

1985) and 10 prefectures enacted new pollution control ordinances(Reed, 1986). The EA, as an organ of the Prime Minister's Office, was created in 1971. Stirred by antipollution citizens' movements, the citizen-based conservation movement, for the first time, emerged and spread nationwide in the early 1970s. A new conservation phenomenon was: 13 citizen-organized meetings for nature conservation in 1970; the creation of the Japan Union for Nature Conservation, affiliated with 77 small local groups, in 1971(Zenkoku Shizen Hogo Rengo, 1974); and the emergence of more than 700 new conservation groups(Kihara, 1972). The immediate response to this movement came not from the national government, but from prefectures. In 1971, 14 prefectures enacted nature conservation ordinances(Kankyochō Shizen Hogokyo, 1972).

The National Park Division of the MOHW was upgraded and transferred to the NCB (Nature Conservation Bureau) of the EA with the expanded responsibility of nature conservation in 1971. The growing conservation movement exerted the pressure on the EA by opposing scenic highways and forestry roads under construction or planning in national and other natural parks. The main outcome was the temporary cancellation of such road developments. Good examples were the stop of Ozenuma highway construction halfway in the Nikko National Park and of a highway construction plan acrossing the Daisetsuzan National Park(Uno, 1981). However, the paradox was disclosed through the debate that they were already approved in the past by the National Park Division in consultation with the National Park Advisory Council. Meanwhile, the NCB had to work on drafting a new legislation for nature conservation because there was neither the basic law nor the practical law except for the 1957 Natural Parks Law and many prefectures already created nature

conservation ordinances that may be interpreted illegal. The Law for the Conservation of the Natural Environment was enacted in 1972. However, its actual outcome was not only a dramatic setback from the original proposal but big disappointment to both the NCB and conservation groups, since the core of the original bill was eliminated in negotiation with other ministries and agencies(Imamura, 1976; Oyadomari, 1985; Uno, 1981). The 1972 law simply stated the importance of nature conservation and the duties of national and local governments and created three categories of conservation areas, Wild Nature Conservation Area, Nature Conservation Area, and Prefectural Nature Conservation Area which rely on strict regulations for their protection. It lacked, however, supporting laws to implement various nature conservation works.

3.4. Some Improvements of the National Park Administration

Some improvements, as minimum requirements for the national park administration, were made in the early 1970s, though major changes were expected. First, a national park plan guideline was issued by the NCB in 1973 to review a park plan every five years(Uno, 1981). By this time, some parks had protection plans while others had not at all and park plans completed in the past had never been reviewed. However, reviews have never been undertaken as proposed. Secondly, regulatory rules and standards for reviewing development applications were prepared in 1974, for the first time since the creation of national parks. By that time, the decision had relied on administrative judgement case by case or situation by situation. Thirdly, total 10 national park offices were established by 1973. Ten national park offices cover 27 national parks with 107 staff(NCB, 1985). Four

more national parks were designated between 1972 and 1974 and one more in 1987. Today, there are 28 national parks totaling 7,911 mile²(20,490 km²) and they cover about 5.4% of total land area of Japan.

3.5. Loss of Nature Conservation Momentum and Failure of Environmental Impact Statement Bill

After the 1973 oil crisis, the nature conservation movement rapidly lost its momentum while the economic and industrial interest soon regained its strength. First, the designation of Wild Nature and Nature Conservation Areas was very slow and limited to very small areas mainly because national and quasi-national parks and forest reserves were excluded from such designation. There were 5 Wild Nature Conservation Areas covering only 22 mile²(56 km²) and 9 Nature Conservation Areas totaling only 29 mile²(76 km²). Secondly, the EA had proposed the EIS(Environmental Impact Statement) bill requiring an impact assessment for large-scale projects since 1974, but the bill had continuously failed to be passed because of strong opposition from the MITI(Ministry of International Trade and Industry), the MOC(Ministry of Construction), the LDP(Liberal Democratic Party and then ruling party), and big business groups (Oyadomari, 1985). Even a Bureau Chief of Planning and Coordination in the EA, a strong promoter of the bill, was dismissed in 1977 and subsequently large projects were approved one after another, including vacation home development in the special area of the FHINP(Mainichi Shinbun Shakaibu, 1980). In fact, Japan has been the unique nation among industrialized countries which has not enacted the law concerning the EIS. Thirdly, some of road schemes in natural parks cancelled in the early 1970s reemerged

and were reapproved in the latter half of 1970s. Fourthly, natural parks had emerged as large energy suppliers. The 1980 survey conducted by the EA revealed that almost 50% of hydroelectric and nuclear power and 100% of geothermal power were provided by power stations located in natural parks and that about 20% of total number of power stations were constructed in natural parks and more than half of them were located in special areas(Uno, 1981).

3.6. International Trade Surplus and Promotion of Resort Development

In the early 1980s, the Japanese government began to change the focus of its economic policy from the export expansion to the development of domestic market mainly due to the growing international criticism on Japan's mounting trade surplus. The first proposed solution was the large scale resort development to increase domestic consumption and to promote regional development through the service industry(Kokudocho, 1987; Kokyo Toshi Zanaru, 1988; Maeda, 1987). The final outcome was the 1987 Comprehensive Resort Development Law, the so-called resort law, powerfully cooperated by five ministries(MITI, MOC, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Home Affairs) and one agency(National Land). This law intended to encourage private sector to develop resort facilities with tax and financial incentives. The EA originally participated in the process of proposing resort development but dropped out halfway, since the idea was so large-scale and too much development-oriented. Many natural parks including national parks are again threatened by such massive development pressure.

4. Conclusions

National park policy and administration in Japan as a whole have been developed within and influenced by the large framework of other national policies and administrations. The Japan's national park system throughout its history has been held sway particularly by economic policy. It has been largely founded and developed based not on pure conservation grounds but on economic terms. National parks of Japan have never got away from tourism and recreational development. The real irony is that while the designation and development of national parks had been promoted as one of important measures for building national as well as local economy, they are recently seen as prospective areas to spend a large amount of economic surplus.

The national park system in Japan has been more development-oriented than conservation-oriented and has not been successful in balancing conservation and development. Major reasons for its failure are explained as follows. First, it has not been able to coordinate and eliminate many overlapping and confusing areas between other government policies and administrations concerning conservation and development. The existence of their ambiguous relationship has contributed to allowing considerable development. National parks have constantly faced with a wide range of development issues and problems and often conflicted with other economic developments. Secondly, the decision making has been largely limited to the government circle. There has been neither considerable public participation in, nor significant environmental groups' influence on the Japan's national park system. It has thus been extremely difficult to bring about changes in national park policy and administration. Thirdly, Japan has failed in establishing the

public image of national parks as unique public asset and distinctive Japanese heritage belonging to all the people. Without the cultural tradition and public mind of conservation, important conservation areas can easily turn into popular tourist sites. National parks have been perceived neither nationally important resources nor Japanese heritage in the public mind, but the finest tourist and recreational resorts. The firm protection of national parks can not be guaranteed without strong public support. Fourthly, the dominant interest in establishing and managing national parks has been the promotion of tourism and recreational development as a means of economic policy. Little change has been made in this firmly rooted major interest. This has in fact determined the fate of national parks. The adoption of multiple use concept has enabled economic values and local interest to prevail over conservation values and interest.

What are policy implications of Japan's unsuccessful lessons for our national park system largely founded on the Japanese model? We have exactly the same major problems as Japan does. If we really want to save our last environmental heritage, there should be radical reform in the mistaken philosophy and concept of our national parks. Based on the establishment of right environmental values and concept, strict and strong conservation policy should be imposed on the planning and management of national parks and effective measures to achieve such policy should be devised. For the successful implementation of such policy and measures, the capability of administrative structure and resources should be strengthened. Above all, the most important key is that the decision making system should be widely opened and clarified and involve extensive public participation.

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일본의 국립공원 보호와 개발의 조화 : 성공 또는 실패?

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본연구는 일본 국립공원제도의 역사를 정책과 행정적측면을 중심으로 재평가 하였다. 일반적 인식과는 달리 일본의 국립공원제도는 보호와 개발을 적절히 조화시키는데 성공적이지 못하였고 이의 근본적 원인은 다음과 같이 요약된다. 일본의 국립공원제도는 크게 경제적 근거로 수립되어 전개되어 왔고 특히 경제개발정책의 지배적 영향에 의해 좌우되어 왔으며 보호와 개발에 관한 정부 부처간의 정책적 및 행정적 조정이 수행되지 못하였다. 또한 국립공원 정책과 행정에 관한 의사결정의 폐쇄성은 주민참여와 환경단체의 영향력을 극도로 제한하였고 국립공원의 대중적 인식도 유일한 국가유산보다는 오히려 유명관광지로 상징되어 엄격한 보호를 위한 대중적 지지력도 상당히 결여 되어왔다. 따라서, 관광개발 이득의 주된목적은 보호의 환경적 가치와 목적에 우선해 왔고 이는 오늘날까지 큰 변화없이 지속되고 있다. 이러한 일본의 실패경험과 교훈은 근본적인 평가없이 일본의 모델을 기본적으로 그대로 수용해 온 우리나라의 국립공원제도에 시사하는 바가 매우 크다. 우리의 영원한 국가적 환경유산을 구하기 위해서는 국립공원제도의 과감하고도 근본적인 개혁이 시급히 필요한 것으로 생각된다.