

**Rainer Dormels (2014)**

**Profiles of the cities of DPR Korea – Munchon**

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Find an introduction to the project at  
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## IV.2.27. Munchon

### Industrial city in the Basin of Wonsan

Munchon is considered a factory town, where steel and colors are manufactured. Especially famous is the non-ferrous metallurgy. Besides the Munphyŏng Smeltery, which is situated in the former Munphyŏng-rodongjagu, the 18<sup>th</sup> May Factory, the Munchon Zinc Smeltery, the Munchon Dye Factory and the Okphyŏng Porcelain Factory are located in Munchon. There is a building materials industry (timber) and a mechanical engineering industry, where valves, machine tools and machinery for food processing are produced. The ceramic arts and crafts in the former Okphyŏng-rodongjagu is praised as a well-known specialty. There is also a modern fishing industry in Munchon. There are mainly Alaska Pollack, cuttlefish, sand eel, flounder, herring and anchovies caught. Famous is the oyster rearing in Songjŏn Bay in the far north-east of the city area.

Among the cities of the DPR Korea only Manpho has fewer inhabitants than Munchon.

**Table Munchon-I.** Basic data

Population	122,934 (Rank 26)
Area	278 km <sup>2</sup> (Rank 20)
Population density	442 l./km <sup>2</sup> (Rank 16)
Administrative units	16 <i>dong</i> /14 <i>ri</i> (53%) (Rank 20)
"Urban" population/"rural" population	75.3%/24.7% (Rank 18)

The terrain is flat in comparison with other regions in the Kangwon Province. 63% of the urban area occupies surfaces, which are below the sea level of 200 m. In general, the

area from Southwest to Northeast lowers gradually.



Figure Munchon-I. Landscape in the West (2012)



Figure Munchon-II. Downtown (2012)

The Masikryōng-sanjulgi is located on the southwestern border of the urban area, which is divided in a north-eastern direction into the mountain chain of Sokko-sanjulgi and the Chōnbul-sanjulgi and here are among others the Kulttuk-bong (772 m), Maebong-san (869 m), Sokko-san (734 m) mountains. The Masik-ryōng, which literally means “the pass is difficult for horses to overcome, so they have to take a break” (IPA-11 2003, 177), has a height of 768m and is located between Pubang-ri (Munchon) and Jakdong-ri (Popdong-kun).

Table Munchon-II. Climate values

Annual average	January temperature	August temperature	Precipitation
10.6°C (4)	-2.9°C (2)	22.9°C (17)	1,546.4 mm (1)

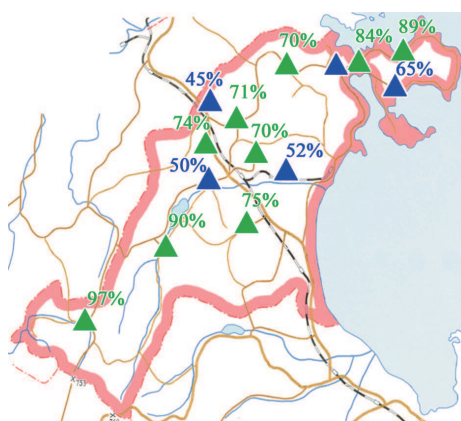


Figure Munchon-III. Forest area in the ri

The city has a mild oceanic climate and in the mountains in the southwest are certain features of the continental climate. The forest occupies 66% of the urban area and a large part consists of pine trees (oak and acacia). 34% of the agricultural area is occupied by wet rice cultivation, 51.2% by dry farming and 12.5% by orchards, on which 50% of the land consists of cultivated pear trees. In addition to two large Fishery establishments, there are four fishing cooperatives, aquaculture and processing facilities.

### City of non-ferrous metallurgy

Three of the most important non-ferrous smelters of the DPR Korea are located in this city: the Munphyŏng Smeltery, the 21<sup>st</sup> September Smeltery and the Munchon Zinc Smeltery. Also of importance is still the fishing industry. Other important industries of the town are mechanical engineering, the chemical industry and the food industry and the production of goods for daily needs.

**Table Munchon-III.** Ranking (in parenthesis: number of industrial enterprises or cultural institutions)

Munchon	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies-total	21 (8)	21 (10)	15 (12)	24 (3)	23 (16)	23
Companies-important	12 (3)	23 (0)	13 (6)		18 (8)	20 (4)
Cultural institutions			23 (2)			

**Table Munchon-IV.** Ranking (Total number of factories in relation to population)

Munchon	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies – total	4	8	3–2–21	20	12–3	5–7

Munchon, especially the former Munphyŏng-rodongjagu, is an industrial city. It is therefore not surprising, that the city with the second fewest inhabitants of DPR Korea does well in the ranking of the total number of companies in proportion to the number of inhabitants. But Munchon achieved relatively poorer results in KCNA, which may suggest that the factories in Munchon are less successful lately.

**Table Munchon-V.** Specification (in parenthesis: number of industrial companies)

Munchon	Light Industry	Heavy Industry	Mining	Energy
KOFC	20 (1)	2 (7)	–	–
MOU	17 (5)	2 (5)	–	–
IPA	19 (4)	2 (8)	–	–
KCNA	–	1 (3)	–	–
KIET	11 (7)	4 (9)	–	–

It can be ascertained that there is a clear specialization on heavy and chemical industry regarding the industrial companies in Munchon.

In chapter III.7.3. four companies were identified as important for Munchon. In addition to the Munphyong Smeltery and the 21<sup>st</sup> September Smeltery, these are also the Munchon Dye Factory and the 18<sup>th</sup> May Factory.

The Munphyōng Smeltery was founded in 1938 during the period of Japanese occupation after the name of Wonsan Steel Mill. During this time, they produced mainly crude copper (blister copper). The establishment was extended after the foundation of DPR Korea, so that various kinds of non-ferrous metals are now being produced. The raw materials come mainly from the mines Komdok (Tanchon) and Kaūn (Munchon). Main products are galvanized lead and galvanized zinc. Besides melting gold and silver, fertilizer is produced here. The smeltery has about 7,300 employees (KOFC 2010, 229).

The 21<sup>st</sup> September Smeltery is right next to the Munphyōng Smeltery, whose residue is processed by the smeltery. Construction of the plant was started in 1981. It employs about 2,500 people. Lead, zinc and gold are produced here mainly. It is considered as an establishment for the acquisition of valuta for the party, so that zinc and gold are exported to China and Japan. Factory facilities were imported from Japan in 1983 (KOFC 2010, 231-232).

The Munchon Zinc Smeltery is located 5 km north of Munphyōng Smeltery and specializes in electro galvanizing. It consists of 15 buildings. It was built in 2004 (KOFC 2010, 240).

Colorants are produced in the Munchon Dye Factory for fabrics, for industrial use and for the coloring of houses. It was built in the 1960s (IPA-11 2003, 179-180; KJY-27 1990, 467). The 18<sup>th</sup> May Factory was built in the 1950s as the Munchon Machine Factory; later it was called Munchon Valve Factory and later it received its current name. It is a factory that specializes in valves and pipe components. (IPA 11 2003, 180; KJY-27 1990, 467).

### Structural analysis Munchon

Munchon-si emerged from Munchon-kun. Munchon-kun itself had been disbanded in July 1972 and became, except for five *ri*,<sup>106</sup> part of Wonsan-si. In June 1976, Munchon-kun was then restored to its previous size.

At the time of dissolution of the *kun* in 1972, there were three *rodongjagu* in Munchon.

In 1952, the *rodongjagu* of Yathae (in 1958 renamed to Munphyōng-rodongjagu) and Kaūn<sup>107</sup> were established. In 1967, Okpyōn-ri was transformed to *rodongjagu*. In the course of integration to Wonsan-si, the administrative center of the county, Munchon-up, was divided into two *rodongjagu* (Munchon and Sōngmun). At the same time, Kaphyōng-ri and Koam-ri became *rodongjagu*. In 1974, the latter *rodongjagu* were converted to *dong*. When

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106 These five *ri* were first put into Chonnae-kun. Two of the *ri* were put in May 1974 into Wonsan-si.

107 Der Kaūn-rodongjagu was downgraded in 1984 to Kaūn-ri.

the Munchon-kun was then re-established in 1976, Munchon-up was formed again from Munchon-dong and Sŏngmun-dong and the other five *dong* were converted to *rodongjagu*.

The *up* and the *rodongjagu* were then reorganized into *dong* during the foundation of the city in 1991. Two *dong* were made from Sinan-ri: Sinan-dong and Pukhang-dong.

All *dong* thus arose at the foundation of the city in 1991, since then there were no other changes anymore.



Figure Munchon-IV. 18. May Factory (2012)



Figure Munchon-V. Central Street in Munchon (2012)



Figure Munchon-VI. *Dong* in Munchon

The *dong* can be divided genetically into the following units:

- the former *up* of the Munchon-kun in the Southeast
- the former *rodongjagu*  
 Munphyŏng with its iron and steel mills,  
 Okphyŏng, famous for its ceramic arts and its building materials factory,  
 Koam (fishing base)  
 Kaphyŏng (3 km from the former *up*). The Munchon Agar Factory is located there  
 (KJY-27, 1990, 476).<sup>108</sup>
- the in 1991 emerged *dong* on the coast in the northeast of the municipal area



Figure Munchon – VII and VIII. View towards Munphyŏng (2012)



Figure Munchon–IX and X. Okphyon (2012)

108 According to the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI n.d. c), the Munchon Agar Factory was built after the visit of Kim Il-sung to East Germany in 1984. “During Kim’s visit, he made an agreement with the East German government to acquire agar production equipment for bacterial cultures” (NTI n.d. c).

## Statistics

According to the IPA, Munchon consists of 30 administrative units (16 *dong* and 14 *ri*). In PSC-8 only 27 (16 *dong* and 11 *ri*) administrative units are mentioned. Kaŭn-ri is missing in the very South, while Samdong-ri in the North and Songjuk-ri in the West find no mention in this source.

Urbanized areas before the city founding (*up* and *rodongjagu*)

1952-1991 Munchon-up (1972-1974 as Munchon-rodongjagu; 1974-1976 as Munchon-dong)

1972-1976 Sŏngmun-rodongjagu; (1974-1976 as Sŏngmun-dong); (result of the temporal division of Munchon-up into two *rodongjagu* of Wŏnsan-si)

1952-1991 Yathae-rodongjagu (from 1958 Munphyŏng-rodongjagu) (1974-1976 as Munphyŏng-dong)

1952-1984 Kaŭn-rodongjagu (1974-1976 as Kaŭn-dong)

1967-1991 Okypyŏng-rodongjagu (1974-1976 as Okyphyŏng-dong)

1972-1991 Kaphyŏng-rodongjagu (1974-1976 as Kaphyŏng-dong)

1972-1991 Koam-rodongjagu (1974-1976 as Koam-dong)

	<i>Dong-Formation</i>	<i>Dong-Splitting</i>
1991 (16)	2	(9)

## Munchon – Small industrial city north of Wonsan

Munchon contains a basis of the North Korean non-ferrous metallurgy. Heavy industry companies characterize the city. There are also fishing companies and naval bases. Munchon is one of the smallest cities in the country and had been appointed in 1991 as a city. Temporarily it was part of the neighboring city of Wonsan.