

Rainer Dormels (2014)

Profiles of the cities of DPR Korea – Songrim

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IV.2.15. Songrim

Kyomipho – the port of Kenji

Songrim is an industrial satellite town in the lower reaches of the Taedong-gang, south of the capital Pyongyang. It lies to the east of the Taedong-gang towards the Nampho-si and borders directly to the south on Pyongyang. Songrim is famous for the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex. Songrim was originally a remote village, but as a result of the establishment of the ironwork it has developed rapidly to an iron city. The water depth, which allows ship traffic of the Taedong-gang, and the establishment of the Songrim railway line (from Hwangju to Songrim) in 1908, the favorable traffic binding of the town as well as the plentiful availability of industrial water were positive location factors for the development of the ironwork.

Table Songrim-I. Basic data

Population	128,831 (Rank 25)
Area	65 km ² (Rank 27)
Population density	1,982 I./km ² (Rank 1)
Administrative units	19 <i>dong/7 ri</i> (73,1%) (Rank 10)
“Urban” population/“rural” population	74.4 %/25.6% (rank 20)

Until 1947, the name of Songrim was still Kyōmipho, the “harbor of Kenji.” A name that stems from a Japanese given name. When the Japanese military searched for a landing field for the preparation of the Japanese-Chinese war in the 1880s, they founded the landing field at today’s Songrim. Therefore the town was named after the responsible commander Watanabe Kenji 渡邊兼二, Kenji Port (Kenjiho, Korean reading: Kyōmipho). Because the surname was too common, the given name was chosen. After the construction of the ironworks in 1914, Songrim has developed with giant strides to a town of iron smelting. In 1950 Songrim had 50,000 inhabitants. 30,000 bombs alone fell during the Korean War on the ironworks.

The town lies on the eastern shore of the Taedong-gang and in its wide elevation level therefore predominantly consists of plains. In the East, however, it becomes a little bit hilly. The highest elevation is in the east of Masan-ri, situated at Songrim-san (187 m), which is assigned to the Wōlbong mountain range.

On the shores of the Hwangju-chōn (in the South) and the Maesang-chōn (in the North) (tributaries of the Taedong-gang) were piled up to the Tangsan field, the Sōkthan field, the Sinryang field, the Sinsōng field, the Masan field and the Sōsong field. After 1945 reservoirs were built.

Floods are a common danger in wide parts of the city, although floods are dammed by the construction of the west sea floodgate in Nampho and other preventive measures. (IPA-10 2003, 98).

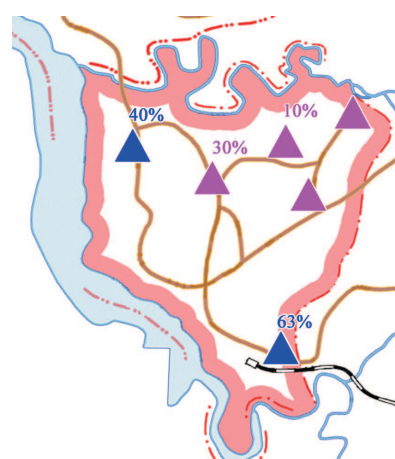


Figure Songrim-I. Forest area in the ri

Table Songrim-II. Climate values

Annual average	January temperature	August temperature	Precipitation
10.6°C (5)	-5.2°C (11)	24.5°C (2)	869.7 mm (18)

36% of the city area is agricultural land, 38% of which are used for wet rice agriculture, 48% for dry field agriculture and 10% for fruit cultures (apples, peaches, pears). Sinryang-ri in the southeast corner of the town has a forest portion of 63%, with Sōsong-ri in the northwest corner the forest area is 40%, with the neighboring Masan-ri at 30%, with remaining three ri in the Northeast the forest portion lies around 10%. Rice, maize, soy beans and vegetables are important agricultural products of the town. Chicken farms are in Tangsan-ri and Masan-ri directly to the north of the city center. Tangsan-ri, which lies in 2 km from the city center, is also an important vegetable producer of the town. The terrace

cultivation is supported by numerous pumps and miles long irrigation lines. Approximately 70 different vegetables are cultivated through irrigation agriculture. (IPA-10 2003, 108). An important vegetable service area of the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex is distant Sökthan-ri in the north-east corner of the city, 5 km from the municipal area.

Songrim – the town of the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex

The specific feature of the industrial structure of Songrim is the dominance of a company, the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex. As per KJY-26 (1990, 444) 85.2% of the industrial production, 54% of the industrial employees and 85.7% of the industrial company surface falls on this complex. However, most other companies of the town are also in direct or indirect connection with the iron complex, if it is as a supplier, or as a food producer for the employees of the factory.

Table Songrim-III. Ranking (in parenthesis: number of the industrial companies or cultural facilities)

Songrim	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies-total	27 (3)	26 (4)	23 (4)	25 (2)	27 (11)	27
Companies-important	21 (1)	17 (1)	25 (1)		26 (3)	26 (1)
Cultural facilities			18 (4)			

Table Songrim-IV. Ranking (total number of companies in relation to population)

Songrim	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies – total	26	26	21 – 25-14	25	27 – 26	26 – 27

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

Songrim	Light Industry	Heavy Industry	Mining	Energy
KOFC	–	10 (2)	4 (1)	–
MOU	17 (2)	18 (1)	6 (1)	–
IPA	3 (3)	22 (1)	–	–
KCNA	–	7 (1)	–	1 (1)
KIET	10 (5)	7 (6)	–	–

Thus the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex is the only company of the city, which was determined as important in chapter III.7.3.

The Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex is situated in Songsan-dong on the shore

of the Taedong-gang. This ironwork is, after the Kim Chaek Iron and Steel Complex in Chongjin, the second largest one of the DPRK. It gets its iron ores from the mines of Songrim, Unryul, Jaeryong, Thaethan and Tŏkwŏn. Northeast, 1.7 km away from the complex, the railway station Songrim is situated. The two-lane unpaved street to Hwangju is 2.5 km away. Large ships cannot dock onto the Taedong-gang, however since the complex lies within the industrial region of Pyongyang, an organic interaction is possible between the different iron works. The energy is sourced from its own power station, or from the power station Pyongyang. Coal comes from mines of the regions of Anju and Kangso, limestone from the mines Sŭngho-ri, Sindŏk, Songrim. On a company surface of 3,300,000 m² 10,000 people are employed.

Because the factory possesses relatively modern equipment, it is also shown to foreign delegations (KOFK 2010, 201).

The Mitsubishi Company had examined iron works in the area of the Hwanghae Province from 1912 and starting from 1913 it established a temporary department for the construction of the ironworks. Then in 1917 the construction of the work was started: the first ironworks on the Korean peninsula and in 1918 the production began. This Mitsubishi iron work was later renamed into Kyŏmiphŏ- or Kenjiho iron work. The iron works were built approximately 13 km from Hwangju-up in a fishing village on the tributary of the Taedong-gang. Because the iron ore pits lie in Jaeryong, Unryul and nearby Anak (and Hasŏng), Songrim is a favorable place to supply the ironworks with the iron ores obtained from here. Also the overland transport is very favorable; the connecting Songrim line (built in 1908) from Hwangju to Songrim, is connected with the mainline of Seoul to Sinuiju. The Taedong-gang supplies the utility water and therefore there are good natural conditions for the arrangement of an industrial complex. In the ironworks raw iron was produced for military purposes and was brought to Japan. The factory was rebuilt after the retreat of the Japanese in 1947. During the Korean War the iron work was strongly damaged and in 1958, after the reconstruction work was concluded, the production was resumed again. In particular in the 80s it came to enlargements and modernizations. Today the ironwork, which carries in the meanwhile the name Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex has developed to the basis on the iron production with different departments. Once the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex occupied 18,000 people with approximately 120,000 inhabitants in town and generated one quarter of the national annual steel production. In 1994 the production stopped, after the coke imports from China stopped and the local coal deliveries dried up. In 2002 a conversion was carried out, in order to be able to use local anthracite coal instead of the coke that would have to be imported (KOFK 2010, 201-205; IPA-10 2003, 99).

The port of Songrim on the shore of the Taedong-gang is one of eight trading ports of North Korea and, besides Nampho and Haeju, one of three on the Yellow Sea coast. It lies 40 km from Pyongyang and was used during the Russian-Japanese war by the Japanese as a

landing strip for materials, among other things for the construction of rails, and has grown bit by bit, when new iron ores were found. The port of Songrim was declared a trading port in 1975, however, the function of the port is mostly for the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex. The water depth is described as 11 m. There are three quays: one for commodities, one for raw material delivery for the Hwanghae ironworks and one for the import of crude oil from Chinese Darien (KOFC 2010, 115). The port of Songrim also is famously known for the fact that rice auxiliary deliveries from South Korea are extinguished.

In the town there are several educational institutions and cultural facilities, which exist to a large part in connection with the ironworks. The University of Technology of Songrim was founded in 1960 to educate the workers of the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex and other factories. Its predecessor is the industrial college of Kyŏmiphŏ. In 1961 a research institute was founded in Songrim for fuel chemistry.

The day-care center “Children’s Palace Songrim” was built on the edge of the Songrim-san, in particular for the care of toddlers of the workers of the ironworks Hwanghae. It can accommodate 1,500 toddlers (up to kindergarten age). Predecessors date back to 1948, and when in 1957 the factory increased, the day-care center was also developed. In 1973 a new building was built and the day-care center was renamed to “Songrim Children’s Palace.” (IPA-10 2003, 100-102).

In 1969 the North Korean authorities began to build in a test phase “apartment blocks in the style of Songrim” to save costs for building materials. (Pae Ki-chan 1994, 136). An important measure was that above all building materials from the respective region were mainly used. Also units of factory workers should help with the building of a house. This application of wide parts of the population in the construction of houses, admittedly needed a simplification of the realization of the building of a house (Jang Se-hun 2006b, 480). The model, tested in Songrim, was applied later on also in many other towns of the country (Pae Ki-chan 1994, 136).

In 1947 city foundation, in 1954 slight reduction of the city’s territory

In 1914 Ryongbok-ri (county of Hwangju) was converted into three *ri*, Kyŏmiphŏ, Tong-Kyŏmiphŏ and Sŏ-Kyŏmiphŏ. Then in 1938 three *ri* were merged to Kyŏmiphŏ-up, so that the county of Hwangju had now two *up*, because Hwangju-myŏn had been appointed at the same time also to *up*.

In 1947 Kyŏmiphŏ-up was combined with Songrim-myŏn to the city of Songrim.

Thus due the foundation of the city of Songrim in 1947, 28 *ri* were established, of which some were combined in 1952.

In 1954, when the province of North-Hwanghae was founded, the Songrim-si was

reduced slightly in favor of the Hwangju-kun.⁶⁴ For the time afterwards IPA-10 (2003) describes no enlargement or reduction of Songrim-si.

1957: Twelve *dong* on the Taedong-gang shore are combined into five *dong*

Then in 1955 15 *ri* were converted into *dong*. Now 15 *dong* and seven *ri* originated. Twelve of these *dong* were located on the shore of the Taedong-gang, where now Songsan-dong, Wölbong-dong and Sinhüŋg-dong lie. This is the area with the iron work and the port of Songrim. Two *dong* were in the center of the city (Ungok-dong and Chölsan-dong) and one in the southeast of Songrim (Unha-dong).

Then in 1957 twelve *dong* on the Taedong-gang shore were regrouped to five *dong* now. In 1958 Unha-dong became Sinryang-ri; in the west of the city two new *dong* originated (Oryu-dong and Tongsong-dong). These were the only *dong*, which have not originated from splitting off of already existing *dong* after 1955. Then in 1961, five new *dong* originated by separating from already existing *dong*, four of which are situated in the city center, one in the east of the municipal area.



Figure Songrim-II. Dong (1955)



Figure Songrim-III. Dong (1967)

The comparison of the distribution of *dong* between 1955 and 1961 makes clear that in the time of the reconstruction of the iron works until 1958, there have been numerous administrative changes. One could put up the hypothesis that on the Taedong-gang shore the housing developments (and with it the *dong*) have disappeared in favor of factory and port arrangements and later new housing developments have originated above all in the

⁶⁴ A part of Sinryang-ri came to Samjön-ri (Hwangju-kun).



Figure Songrim-IV. Dong (1992)

center of the town.

The changes in 1967 go in the same direction as the changes in 1961. From four new *dong* three lie in the center and one in the East.

In the 1970s there are no administrative changes. The changes in 1988 and 1992 show two trends.

1. In 1988 as well in 1992 the number of *dong* situated on the Taedong-gang shore decreases around one *dong* in each year as a result of merging of *dong*.
2. In the east of the city two new *dong* originate in 1988, in 1992 another *dong* originates.

Dong (divided by the location within the city)

	Total	Shore	Center	Southeast	West	East
1955	15	12	2	1	–	–
1957	8	5	2	1	–	–
1958	9	5	2	–	2	–
1961	14	5	6	–	2	1
1967	18	5	9	–	2	2
1988	19	4	9	–	2	4
1992	19	3	9	–	2	5

The following trends appear:

Industrial removal on the Taedong-gang shore in the 50s and in the 80s/90s

In the second half of the 1950s, the number of *dong* on the Taedong-gang shore dramatically decreased. It stands in connection with the reconstruction of the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex. Residential areas disappeared in favor of port- and industrial facilities. Between 1988 and 1992 the number of *dong* on the Taedong-gang shore further decreases. Here other interior works in the hut or in the port were possibly carried out.

Removal of residential districts in the center of the city in the 1960s

Between 1961 and 1967 the number of *dong* increased in the city center of Songrim from two to nine. This shows an increase of residential districts in the city center.

From the 1960s and strengthened in 1988/92: “New life” in the East of the city

In the 1960s the first two *dong* in the east of the town originated. In 1988 and 1992 the number of *dong* increased in the east to five, of which *dong* with the names Sae-sallim “new life” 1-4 exist. These names already provide information that these *dong* will be new residential areas.

Statistics

	<i>Dong-Formation</i>	<i>Dong-Splitting</i>
1955 (15 <i>dong</i>)	15	-
1957 (8 <i>dong</i>)	-	-7
1958 (9 <i>dong</i>)	-1/2	-
1961 (14 <i>dong</i>)	-	5
1967 (18 <i>dong</i>)	-	4
1988 (19 <i>dong</i>)	-	-1/2
1992 (19 <i>dong</i>)	-	-1/1

Songrim – Industrial satellite town of Pyongyang

Songrim is dominated by one single company, thus the Hwanghae Iron and Steel Complex. Under changing development conditions this concentration on heavy industries could lead to big challenges for the economic situation of the city.

With the aim to contribute to the necessary diversification of the city’s economic structure, the North Korean government in 2013 named the Songrim Export Goods Processing Zone as one of 14 new planned economic development zones of the DPRK.