

Rainer Dormels (2014)

Profiles of the cities of DPR Korea – Huichon

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IV.2.2. Huichon

Gate to the plateau of the province of Jagang

Energy scarcity and the backwardness of their industrial companies are two of the main obstacles in a pathway to the recovery and to the development of the North Korean economy. In North Korean propaganda, Huichon is a symbol of the overcoming of these problems. Due to “Huichon Speed,” dams for hydroelectric power stations were constructed in Huichon from 2009 and the Huichon Ryōnha General Machinery Plant is regarded as an embodiment of North Korean state-of-the-art technology due to the CNC-Technology that is employed in this plant.

Huichon is located at the southern tip of the province of Jagang, which was founded in 1949. In 1967 it was appointed to a city. Based on the number of inhabitants, it is one of the small cities of DPR Korea, but the area size, which belongs administratively to the municipal area, is relatively large. Due to the location near the northern border of the Koryo kingdom and the location of the pass, military camps were set up in this region, already in the Koryo as well as in the Joseon period.

Table Huichon-I. Basic data

Population	168.180 (Rank 22)
Area	984 km ² (Rank 6)
Population density	171 l./km ² (Rank 25)
Administrative units	21 <i>dong</i> /12 <i>ri</i> (64%) (Rank 16)
“Urban” population/“rural” population	80.9%/19.1% (Rank 15)

Huichon, which is located between Chōngchōn-gang and Huichon-gang, had developed into a market as gate to the plateau of Jagang Province, where agricultural products from the surrounding area as well as products from the plateau region had been traded. Due to the construction of important mechanical engineering companies, Huichon developed rapidly after the Korean War into an intermountain city (Kang Sōk-o 1984, 305).

Even today, Huichon belongs to one of the relatively easily accessible cities of the DPR Korea. The city is situated at the Manpho-Railwayline, which connects Suncheon with Manpho. On this railroad Huichon is located closer to cities in the southern neighbouring province of Phyongnam (Suncheon 109.8 km, Kaechon 70.9 km) than to other cities of its

own province of Jagang (Kanggye 140.8 km, Manpho 190.1 km). Concerning the traffic, Huichon is very well connected with Pyongyang. There is a 146 km long motorway between Pyongyang and Hyangsan, and from Hyangsan there are still another 21 km to the center of Huichon (JC 2009, 31).

Urban development in typical basin area

Huichon evolved in a basin, which is limited in the northwest by the Jōgyuryōng mountain range and in the Southeast by the Myohyang mountain range. In the latter, even the highest altitudes of the municipal area are reached, where the Myohyang-san (1,909 m), the Indal-san (1,693 m), the Chōnkhwae-san (1,929 m) as well as the Mudong-san (1,762 m) form the southeastern border. Between the Indal-san and the Chōnkhwae-san lies the Tasōtryōng (784 m), through which the road leads to Nyongwon. The road between Hyangsan and Huichon leads through the Wōllim-kogae (161 m) into the basin of Huichon. In the northwest the Maehwa-san (932 m) protrudes on the border to the Songwon-kun. Towards the Southwest the basin is open.

The largest area of the overbuilt municipal area is located inside the basin of Huichon. It has a west-east-extension of 11 km, a north-south-extension of 10 km and is situated at 140 m above sea level. The basin is a result of tectonic subsidence and subsequent erosion activity of the Chōngchōn-gang and its tributary rivers. Vast plains have not been sculpted, only merely smaller erosion surfaces in the valleys of the rivers can be found. The biggest surface was sculpted where the Chōngchōn-gang and the Huichon-gang flow together (PSC-8 2009, 455). The Chōngchōng-gang runs southeast of the overbuilt urban area, where various rivers converge.

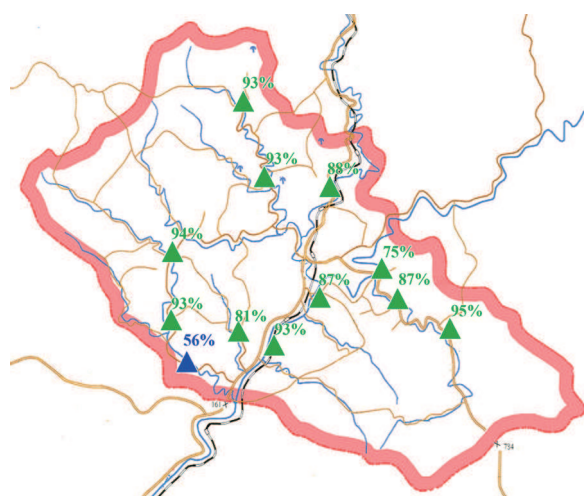


Figure Huichon-I. Forest area in the *ri*

Table Huichon-II. Climate values

Annual average	January temperature	August temperature	Precipitation
8.4°C (21)	-9.0°C (23)	23.2°C (14)	1,190.50 mm (8)

The municipal area is very mountainous. The land classified as forest amounts to 85% of the total area of the city. The land in the *ri* is mainly used as forest area. Forestry has a great significance in Huichon, inter alia: for the provision of mining timber.

Where agricultural cultivation is possible, it is operated at 75% in dry land farming.

The Jagang Province was particularly affected by the famine in the 1990s in North Korea. A UNICEF delegation visited Huichon on 4th April 1997 and found severe malnutrition in children (Unicef Österreich 1997).

In the northern part of the municipal area several mineral springs are located, of which the most important one, Kwadae, is situated 17 km in a north-western direction from the railway station of Huichon.

Most important city of machine construction in the DPR Korea

During the Japanese occupation, Huichon was heavily shaped agriculturally. In the early 1950s, during and shortly after the Korean War, they began to build a significant mechanical engineering industry. The biggest machine tools factory as well as the biggest precision machine factory of North Korea is situated in Huichon. Other important industrial sectors are inter alia: the textile and clothing industry, the glass industry, the pottery as well as the food processing. Additionally hydroelectric power stations have been constructed in and near Huichon.

Table Huichon-III. Ranking (in parenthesis: number of industrial companies or respectively cultural institutions)

Huichon	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies-total	19 (10)	24 (6)	26 (3)	8 (14)	24 (16)	20
Companies-important	17 (2)	13 (2)	27 (1)		17 (9)	23 (3)
Cultural institutions			25 (1)			

The ranking of Huichon in terms of the number of companies is similar to the rank in terms of population (Rank 22). Only the KCNA names for Huichon a lot more companies, which is related to the importance of Huichon for the North Korean propaganda as well as due to the frequent visits of Kim Jong-il.

Table Huichon-IV. Ranking – Total number of companies in relation to population

Huichon	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies-total	9	24	26–27–25	3	22–8	16–22

Table Huichon–V. Specification

Huichon	Light Industry	Heavy Industry	Mining	Energy
KOFC	–	4 (8)	–	2 (2)
MOU	8 (4)	9 (2)	–	–
IPA	19 (1)	2 (2)	–	–
KCNA	10 (7)	17 (4)	–	5 (3)
KIET	26 (4)	1 (11)	11 (1)	–

Statistically, Huichon exhibits according to three sources a specialization of heavy industry rather than of light industry, although the reverse is the case according to two other sources. Of course, one must consider that there are two significant machine construction companies in Huichon, which are crucial for the industrial structure of the city.¹³ KCNA and KOFC, two of the most current sources, also emphasize the importance of Huichon for the energy sector of the country.

In chapter III.7.3. three important companies were determined for Huichon, the two machine construction companies Huichon Ryōnha General Machinery Plant and Huichon Precision Machinery Factory (Factory February 26) as well as Huichon Silk Mill.

An important role for North Korean propaganda has the Huichon Ryōnha General Machinery Plant (formerly known as Huichon General Machine Factory). During the year 2010 the factory got this new name. It is the largest machine tool factory in the country and, and is proclaimed by the North Korean propaganda as “a model plant of machine-building industry in the 21st century” (Pyongyang Times 11.2.2012, 6). Particular pride is taken in the production of CNC (Computerized Numerical Control) machine tools, which are equipped with the Juche-based CNC technology.

The construction of the factory, which is situated in Jōnphyōng-dong, began in 1951, i.e. during the Korean War. In 1954 the first machines were produced with Czechoslovakian help (KOTRA 1995, 122). The factory is considered a “mother factory” for the machine tool factories of North Korea and is considered as a model company for other machine tool factories in the country. Due to the first Six-Year-Plan (1971-1976), the factory was of great importance in the early 1970s. The factory employs 7.000 people and has the size of 1.070.000 m² (KOFC 2010, 252). The factory is located 6 km from Huichon’s railway station.

The precision machine factory of Huichon is the largest of its kind in the country. Covering an area of 150.000 m² (KOFC 2010, 255), approximately 3,000 people are

¹³ According to KJY-24 (1990, 596-570) had the mechanical engineering in Huichon in 1954 a share in the industrial production of 66.6%, in 1960 it was 77.8%, in 1970 87.8% and 70.9% in 1983.

employed. According to the representation in KOFC (2010, 255), the factory was built in 1953 with Czechoslovakian help and expanded in 2008.¹⁴

The silk factory of Huichon (Huichon Silk Mill) is situated on the banks of Chŏngchŏn-gang and began on 5th September 1988 with its production. Mainly cocoons from northwest of Korea are processed.

In parts of the Youth Electric Complex (Chŏngnyŏn Electric Appliance Complex) presumably armaments are produced.

In the Technical University of Huichon, technicians are particularly trained in the field of mechanical engineering. A predecessor of this educational institution was the University of Telecommunications of Pyongyang, which had been founded in 1959. In 1965 the latter moved to Huichon Jŏnsin-dong and was thus named University of Telecommunication of Huichon. In 1969 it got its present name.

“Huichon Speed” – The power plant construction as a symbol for the ascent to the great and powerful nation

In 2009, the slogan “Huichon Speed” was issued in North Korea. This refers to a mobilization measure which was also described as “a new Chollima speed” and thus reminiscent of the mobilization measure in the construction after the Korean War. As explained by the KCNA on 17th November 2009, “Huichon Speed” is based “on the revolutionary soldier spirit.” The occasion of the proclamation of the slogan “Huichon Speed” is the construction of the Huichon Power Station on the headwaters of the Chŏngchŏn-gang. The construction should have been completed by the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-il has inspected the site eight times and punctual for the North Korean anniversary, in April 2012, the completion of the power block I and II was announced, whereby the hydroelectric power station of Huichon was finished. Through this not only the power supply for the capital Pyongyang was improved, but the hydroelectric power stations also have the function to protect the area of the arable land of the Chŏngchŏn-gang from flooding. The construction began in 2001; the capacity of the power plant is estimated at about 300,000 kilowatts (RKI 7.4.2012). It would thus be the largest power plant of North Korea, which was built in the past 20 years. According to the Pyongyang Times, specifically the dams have been built with great speed: “The dams which had been considered to take over ten years were built in less than two years” (Pyongyang Times 11.2.2012, 6).

14 After representation in KJY-24 (1990, 570), the plant was first built in 1951 as a factory for car accessories and began its production in 1952. In 1954, it was then specialized and extended to the construction of precision machines.

The capitals of the northern neighbour–*kun* of Songwon and Tongsin were once part of Huichon–*si*

The Huichon-*kun* emerged in 1952, and it included one *up* and 22 *ri*. In 1954, a part of Ryujung-*ri* was added to Huichon-*up*. In the same year Jŏnphyŏng-*ri* developed into rodongjagu. In 1967 Huichon was awarded the status of a city.

Twice, in 1981 and 1990, the city has been reduced in size in favour of the neighbouring northern counties. In 1981 Myŏngmun-*ri* as well as Yangji-*ri* were added to Songwon-*kun* and Chŏngun-*ri* to Tongsin-*kun*. Myŏngmun-*ri* was then turned into a new *up* of the Songwon-*kun* in 1987. In 1990 Chŏngun-*ri* was combined with a part of Chŏngsang-*ri* (Huichon-*si*) and thus formed the new Tongsin-*up* (Tongsin-*kun*). The new *up* of Songwon-*kun* and Tongsin-*kun* are therefore located on the edge of their *kun*, but both are on the Manpho-railway line.

Three new *dong* in the mid 90s

When becoming a city in 1967, the new *up* was split up into nine *dong* and the Jŏnphyŏng-rodongjagu into three *dong*. At the same time, five new *dong* were created from *ri*.

Figure Huichon-II shows the 17 *dong* from 1967 (displayed with the current city borders).

The five new *dong*, which emerged from the former *ri*, are located at the edge of the former *up* or respectively the former rodongjagu. It is noticeable, that three new *dong* (Jinsin-*dong*, Phungsan-*dong*, Sinhŭng-*dong*), have emerged north of the former *up* where previously Jisin-*ri* was located.

Between 1981 and 1995, four *dong* were added. As a result of the splitting from existing *dong*, Chuphyŏng2-*dong* and in 1995 Chŏngnyŏn-*dong* were created in 1981, both in the region of the former Jŏnphyŏng-rodongjagu, where the Huichon Ryŏnha General Machine Factory is located. In 1994, Chŏngha-*ri* as well as



Figure Huichon-II. 17 *dong* (1967)



Figure Huichon-III. 21 *dong* (1995)

Kalhyŏn-ri in the northeast of the city each were established as a *dong*.

According to KJY-24 (1990, 577), there are three regions in Huichon in which the proportion of workers of the population is particularly high, namely the regions of Jŏnphyŏng, Phungsan and Chuphyŏng. Based on this information and the above analysis, it can be concluded that Jŏnphyŏng region is meant to be the northern part of the former working class district of Jŏnphyŏng, which had

been established in 1954. The region of Phungsan refers to three new *dong* in the North of the former *up*, which had emerged from Jisin-ri in 1967 at the same time as the city founding of Huichon Furthermore, the region of Chuphyŏng refers to the southern part of the former Jŏnphyŏng-rodongjagu. Here, new *dong* emerged in 1981 and 1995 due to the splitting of already existing *dong*.

Statistics

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

1952-1967 Huichon-up (1)

1954-1967 Jŏnphyŏng-rodongjagu (2)

	<i>Dong-Formation</i>	<i>Dong-Splitting</i>
1967 (17)	5	(10)
1981 (18)	-	1
1994 (20)	2	-
1995 (21)	-	1

Huichon – City with two centers and two important companies

Huichon has been known since the 1950s as a city of mechanical engineering. The largest machine tool factory and the largest precision machinery factory of the country are located here. Although numerous industrial companies of other sectors were settled in Huichon over time, the two engineering factories form the backbone of the industry of Huichon. Recently, the city of Huichon plays an important role for the energy supply of the country. Hydroelectric power plants were built in a very short time, so that the term “Huichon Speed” was coined. Thus, the Huichon Ryōnha General Machine Factory and the hydroelectric power stations of Huichon became the flagship of the North Korean propaganda.

The overbuilt urban area of the town center of Huichon can be divided into an area in the South, the former *up* and into an area in the Northwest, the former Jōnphyōng-rodongjagu. Through both areas runs a broad central street, where high-rise residential buildings as well as public facilities are situated, in the South is the Namchōn street and in the North the Chuphyōng street.¹⁵ The first area includes the railway station and adjacent in the west of the station is Jōnsin-dong, where the Technical University of Huichon is located. Within this area lies on the western side of Huichon-gang the Huichon Precision Machinery Factory. A second center has formed near the Ryōnha machine factory, where the Kim Il-sung statue and building for the worship of the “eternal president” and the Huichon hotel as well as the stadium of Huichon are located.

15 cf. KJY-24 (1990, 577).