

Rainer Dormels (2014)

Profiles of the cities of DPR Korea – Phyongsong

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IV.2.7. Phyongsong

Established as a city of science

Phyongsong is a new town located north of the capital Pyongyang and is the administrative center of the Phyongnam Province. Phyongsong was founded as a city of science in the 1960s. However, in 1995 the southern part of the city, in which *inter alia* the Academy of Natural Sciences is situated, became part of Pyongyang. Phyongsong remained as the center of education for young professionals of various sectors in the region, however it also evolved more and more into a place for wholesale marketing of imported goods from China. Yet in the course of economic policies in 2009, the wholesale market of Phyongsong was also closed.

Table Phyongsong–I. Basic data

Population	284,386 (Rank 12)
Area	381 km ² (Rank 17)
Population density	746,4 l./km ² (Rank 11)
Administrative units	21 <i>dong</i> /13 <i>ri</i> (62%) (Rank 17)
“Urban” population/“rural” population	83.2%/16.8% (Rank 13)

In all the categories of the above table, Phyongsong takes a middle position among the 27 cities in the DPRK (between rank 11 and rank 17).

It is stated that Phyongsong was founded in the 1960s as a city of science. Since it is reported that Kim Il-sung gave instructions to look for a suitable site for a science city near Pyongyang in 1960. Eventually, Kim Il-sung himself declared the area as suitable when he walked around Sain-ri, in Sunchon city in October 1964. He has also arranged the incorporation of surrounding areas for the foundation of a new city, which he then even appointed as a provincial capital. It is said that the name of “Phyongsong” was personally given by Kim Il-sung (Chosun Ilbo January 8, 1996). Phyongsong means “fortress guarding the capital Pyongyang” and consists of the first two syllables of the words Pyongyang (平壤) and Söngsae (城塞) (Fortress) (IPA 3 2003, 48).

After the Academy of Sciences was founded, many research institutes have been established under the auspices of the College of Natural Sciences and Phyongsong gradually began to adopt characteristics of a scientific research city. The main research and teaching institutions, such as the Academy of Natural Sciences, and Natural Sciences University, were located in a special science district in the south of Phyongsong. Between this district and the rest of the city a significant social gap developed. While the residents of the science district enjoyed a standard of living such as the population of Pyongyang did, the remaining residents suffered under a standard of living, which was common to other provincial cities of North Korea (Chosun Ilbo January 8, 1996). In 1995 a separation of both parts of the city was carried out and the southern part now forms the Unjong-kuyok of Pyongyang.

Hilly land east of the Taedong-gang

Phyongsong is located in the basin of the Taedong-gang (according to the classification of landscapes by Lautensach 1945) in the hilly land of Phyongan-namdo (Kang Sök-o 1984) or at the threshold between the northwestern coastal district and the North Korean mountain district (Saitschikow 1956). In the municipal area, low to moderate topographic highs are usually achieved. More than half of the municipal area lies at an altitude of 100 to 200 m above sea level.

Located in the west of the city is the Chöngryöng-san, as part of the Chöngryöng mountain range, with its height of 547m as the highest elevation. In the southeastern area of the city Phyongsong subsides more and more. Overall, about 53% of the total area of the city is declared as mountains and forests. The most important plains in Phyongsong are the Kangdong plain and the Chasan plain. The former is crossed by the Taedong-gang, which in turn forms the eastern border of the city. The Chasan plain extends to the northern

boundary of the area of Phyongsong and is traversed by tributary rivers of the Taedong-gang. Northwest of this plain is the Taebongsan water reservoir, the largest in the municipal area. Popular as a place of excursions for the inhabitants of Phyongsong is the water reservoir in the southwest of the urban area in Sangcha-dong.

The agriculture of Phyongsong is of major importance as well. Especially the cultivation of fruits such as apples, pears and peaches was promoted lately. 28% of the total area of Phyongsong mainly serves as fields for rice, corn and soybeans. Other important vegetables in the region are radish, Chinese cabbage and spinach. A flagship business is the Paeksong co-op farm, in which sometimes even foreign ambassadors “assist” (KCNA 4.6.2005).

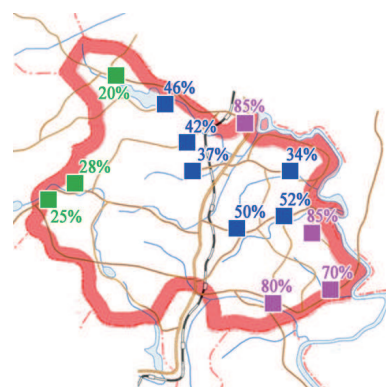


Figure Phyongsong-I. Agricultural land in the *ri*

Table Phyongsong-II. Climate data

Annual average	January temperature	August temperature	Precipitation
9.7°C (10)	-6.6°C (14)	23.9°C (9)	1,091 mm (8)

Light industry and military vehicles

The main industries of the city are the light industry and the automotive engineering industry. In terms of light industry, the production of daily goods plays a predominant role. There are bigger factories for the production of synthetic leather, rubber bands and watches located in the city. On a regional basis, in addition to daily goods, gemstones are processed. The vehicle engineering industry is also significant, since numerous kinds of cars are produced. Furthermore, textiles and foodstuff are produced in the city, which are not only sold nationwide but are even exported (PSC-8 2009, 396).

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

Phyongsong	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies-Total	23 (7)	15 (19)	13 (16)	21 (5)	22 (19)	19
Companies-Important	25 (1)	27 (0)	17 (5)		16 (10)	22 (4)
Cultural institutions			12 (11)			

Table Phyongsong-IV. Ranking (Total number of companies in relation to population)

Phyongsong	KOFC	MOU	IPA	KCNA	KIET	Summary
Companies – Total	24	18	10–17–9	24	26–20	23–23

The number of industrial companies is lower than one would expect in relation to population.

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

Phyongsong	Light Industry	Heavy Industry	Mining	Energy
KOFC	19 (1)	3 (6)	–	–
MOU	1 (18)	27 (1)	–	–
IPA	3 (12)	22 (4)	–	–
KCNA	1 (5)	–	–	–
KIET	13 (8)	12 (10)	–	4 (1)

Phyongsong is clearly specialized in light industry. When the KOFC and KIET sources convey a different picture, this is due to the fact that industries that produce commodities such as watches have been filed in these sources in the section of machine construction and thus formally are assigned to heavy industry.

In chapter III.7.3. four important companies have been identified for Phyongsong: The Phyongsong rubber band factory, the Phyongsong factory for agricultural machines, the Moranbong watch factory and the Phyongsong factory for synthetic leather goods. The main factory in Phyongsong however is the Phyongsong automobile factory (Factory March 16). This factory is being distinguished between a “new factory” and an “old factory” and is located in Kuwöl-dong.³⁸ 2.7 km northeast of the factory is the train station Ponghak. East of the factory there is a paved road leading to Pyongyang and Sunchon. An area of 248,000 m² belongs to the factory and approximately 7,000 to 8,000 workers are employed there. In 1974, the factory was expanded. The military jeeps Kaengsaeng 69 and Kaengsaeng 69 Na as well as Thaebaeksan trucks are produced here. The construction of 6-ton and 10-ton trucks were reported for 1999 and 2004. Armored cars are also produced here. The main suppliers for the automotive factory in terms of iron products are, the huts

³⁸ According to the Chosun Ilbo of 8.1.1996: the factory is presented as an automobile plant of Thaebaeksan, located in Paesan-dong. If this was correct, this factory would then no longer be located in the urban area of Phyongsong, due to the separation of Paesan-dong to Pyongyang in 1995. In the IPA this factory neither is found in the volume of Phyongsong (chapter Unjong-kuyok) nor in the presentation of the city of Phyongsong. However in the PSC-8 (2009, 396) vehicle manufacturing is recorded in the description of Phyongsong.

of Kimchaek and Songjin, and in terms of nonferrous metal products the metallurgical factory Puryong (kdb 2005b, 205-206) is mentioned. There is evidence that there is also a “Taebaeksan 96” truck assembling plant in Phyongsong since 2007, which was built by the Russian automobile manufacturer KamAZ (NKEW 2008).

According to Chosun Ilbo (January 8, 1996), apart from the Moranbong watch factory, mainly local factories of smaller size exist in Phyongsong. The Moranbong-watch factory was built in the mid-70s (completed in 1978) with plant parts entirely imported from Switzerland, producing watches with mainsprings and also semi-automatic watches (Chosun Ilbo 8.1.1996). This factory employs about 600 people; the annual productivity is 400,000 watches (kdb 2005b, 129).

Training center for professionals in the region

Although the important research and teaching institutions, for which Phyongsong was famous for, are located in Pyongyang now due to territorial reforms, there are still a number of relevant institutions, in particular in the scientific and technical field, left in the city of Phyongsong.

The National Mineral Resources Survey Team is a research institute, which specially engages in the study of mineral deposits. It was built in January 1955 and is according to IPA considered as one of the most important companies of the city. Among important institutions in the field of research and teaching, the city offers next to the Research Institute for Technical Microbiology following universities, the following as well:

- Phyongsong Technical University
- Phyongsong Teacher training College
- Phyongsong School of hard coal mining
- Phyongsong University of Veterinary and Livestock
- Phyongsong Medical University (IPA-3 2003, 53-55)
- Phyongsong University of Arts (KCNA 11.12. 2009)
- Phyongsong College of Education

The provincial capital Phyongsong is considered as a training city for professionals from the entire region, starting from doctors and teachers in the mountain villages in Yangdok and Maengsang to technicians in the large factories of Kaechon and Sunchon (Kümsu-kangsan 2002, 36).

In the north of the city, the revolutionary memorial of Paeksong in Paeksong-ri is located. The Kim Il-Sung University was temporarily moved during the Korean War

from March 1952 to that location. The site is a destination for locals and occasionally also for foreigners (KCNA April 23, 2002). In 2008, a martyr cemetery was completed in Phyongsong, where anti-Japanese fighters, “working class heroes,” local party officials and functionaries are buried (KCNA December 30, 2008). In Phyongsong there is also a newly built stadium where mass gymnastics are demonstrated (KCNA October 20, 2005).

An important cultural and historical site in Phyongsong is the Buddhist temple Anguk-sa in Ponghak-dong, on Pongnin Mountain, in the central west of the municipal area. It was originally founded in 503 at the time of the Koryo dynasty, and rebuilt in 1419 and again in 1785. Most of the surviving buildings date back to the time of the last reconstruction.

Phyongsong as handling site for Chinese goods

With increasing trade activities between North Korea and China, Phyongsong developed into a new handling site for goods of all kinds, which mainly find their way into the country through Sinuiju. An important market for imported goods is the capital Pyongyang. However, in order to have access to the capital, a special travel permit is required, so that many traders are only able to reach Phyongsong, where they resell their goods. However, the trade with other regions of North Korea was often accomplished via Phyongsong as well. Traders from the southern Sariwon, Haeju and Nampho often came to Phyongsong to stock up their goods. It is also technically efficient to transport goods across Phyongsong in the East Sea Cities of Wonsan and Hamhung instead of bringing them directly to the east coast from Sinuiju (Kim, Min Se 2007). Initially the North Korean government had actively supported this market in order to improve the situation of supply in the country. Allegedly, the market of Phyongsong had 30,000 - 40,000 stalls (Korea Herald September 21, 2009).

In connection with the currency reform of 2009, it became public that the central market in Phyongsong, which had factually functioned as a wholesale market, had been closed down. The success of the major markets had probably consequences for the government, which the government assumedly saw as a threat or negative influence. The government feared capitalistic influence and the growing power of the operators of the markets. Thus, the wholesale market in Phyongsong was closed; and supposedly two smaller markets were built in the neighborhood (Korea Herald September 21, 2009). The way and manner of how the market activities in this city develop is considered as a barometer of how far the North Korean authorities generally allow market activities (Pak In-ho 2010).

Development of the city of Phyongsong and changes in the urban area

The foundation of Phyongsong proceeded in two stages. In January 1965, initially Phyongsong-kun was formed and in December 1969, the appointment to a city followed. Phyongsong-kun was formed of parts of Sunchon-kun (three *ri*), the Pyongyang-si (parts of one *dong* and one *ri*) and the Sunan-kun (one *ri*).

Between 1967 and 1974, the area of Phyongsong-kun or respectively Phyongsong-si was extended. Starting with the splitting of the science district in 1995, Phyongsong had to cede territory to the capital Pyongyang in the mid-1990s. In the 1960s and 1970s Phyongsong was enlarged three times by a total of 14 *ri* - of them 12 *ri* from Sunchon-kun:

- 1967: four *ri* from Sunchon-kun, and two *ri* from Kangdong-kun,
- 1972: two *ri* from Sunchŏn-kun and
- 1974: again six *ri* from Sunchŏn-kun were added.

To a great extent, Phyongsong can be seen as having emerged from the county of Sunchon.

In 1995, the science district in the south of Phyongsong split off from Phyongsong, together with the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Natural Sciences Academy, when two *dong* (Toksŏn-dong and Paesan-dong) and parts of two other *dong* of Phyongsong formed the new Unjong-kuyok (the “district of benevolent affection”) of the capital Pyongyang.

Afterwards the area of Phyongsong was further reduced, even though not as significant as in 1995:

- In 1999 one *ri* (Kyŏngsin-ri) was added to Kangdong-kun (Pyongyang-si) and
- In 2000, a part of a *dong* (Songryŏng-dong) was added to Unjong-kuyok (IPA 1 2003, 37).

Figure–Phyongsong II shows the outline of the present Phyongsong-si; the small map (on the right) added the boundary lines of Unjong-kuyok (Pyongyangsi), which was part of Phyongsong until 1995, and also the boundary lines of the Kyŏngsin-ri, which was part of Phyongsong until 1999. The smaller map thus shows the outline of Phyongsong between 1974 and 1995. The larger map shows the current *ri* and *dong* (2002). Units that are located in areas that were incorporated after the founding of Phyongsong-kun are characterized by the year of incorporation.

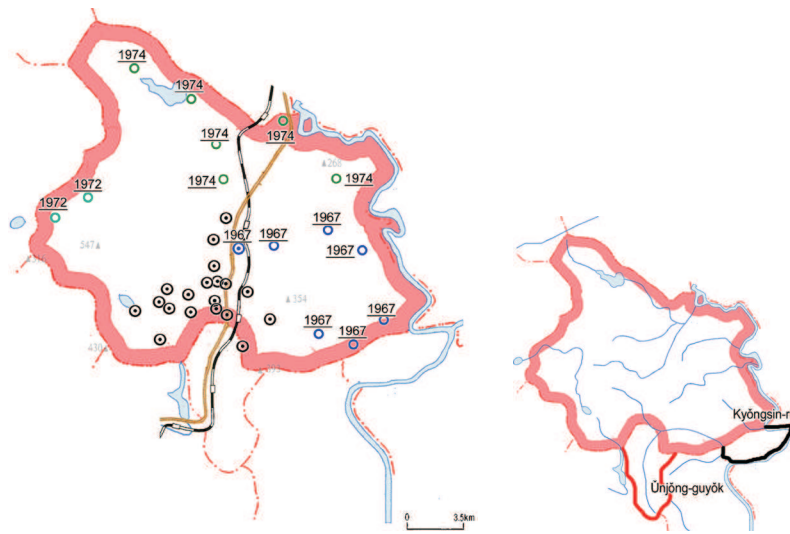


Figure Phyongsong-II. Incorporations

The city center of Phyongsong is located in the old Sain-ri of the Sunchon-kun, and extends to the west from the train station of Phyongsong, directly in the north of the capital Pyongyang.

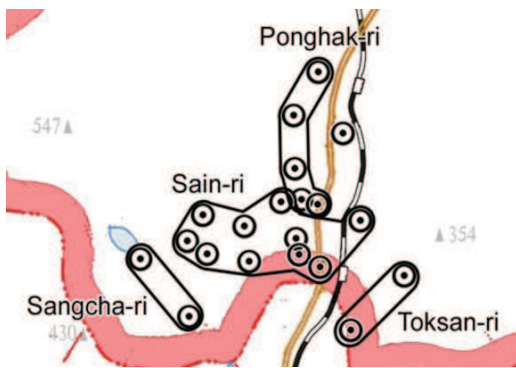


Figure Phyongsong-III. Representation of the *dong* that derive from the same *ri*

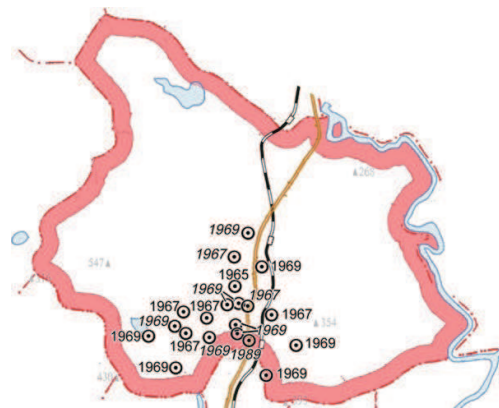


Figure Phyongsong-IV. Origin of *dong*

19 of the 20 *dong* of Phyongsong have already been created in the 1960s. Only Yökjön-dong (“the district before the station”), which had been split off in 1989 from Jungdök-dong, was formed later, which suggests that Phyongsong grew especially in the area around the railway station.

Two settlement guidelines

The urbanized area of Phyongsong is largely situated in the southwest of the city, following two guidelines:

The valley of the Phyongsong-chŏn, which runs from the train station towards the West. Along the banks of the Phyongsong-chŏn, there are residential towers and public buildings located. A special feature of Phyongsong is that the city along the Phyongsong-chŏn has developed between the mountain ranges as an elongated strip (Kŭmsu-kangsan 2002, 36).

The railway and highway, which run from Phyongyang towards Sunchon in a northern direction, including the western valleys. The main road runs, coming from Pyongyang, towards an impressive three-part complex of buildings, leading into a road coming from the Phyongsang Station, which then passes the Kim Jong-suk Middle School No. 1 and the Phyongsong Synthetic Leather Factory in the direction of Ponghak.

Although, no side roads derive from the route between Phyongsong station and Rason, the railway station forecourt is relatively large. Since the entry permit to Pyongyang is controlled at Phyongsong station, many people have to get off here. At the train station of Phyongsong some kind of customs office has therefore developed. While in the east of the station fields are located, in the West a 5 km long line of houses have developed in the valley of Phyongsong-chŏn. The Pyongyang train station is 42.5 km far from Phyongsong station. 6.3 km south of the station Phyongsong a second station exists in the city, the Ponghak Station.

Statistics

Phyongsong consists, according to IPA-3 in 2002, of 20 *dong*³⁹ and 13 *ri*. Ten of the *dong* originated from the fact that a *ri* was appointed to a *dong*. The remaining ten *dong* originated from the fact that existing *dong* had been divided.⁴⁰

	<i>Dong-Formation</i>	<i>Dong-Splitting</i>
1965 (1)	1	-
1967 (7)	4	2
1969 (19)	5	7
1989 (20)	-	1

39 According to the PSC-8 (2009, 395) the number of *dong* became larger with 21, but the number of the 13 *ri* remains the same.

40 Sometimes there are mixed forms. In the below statistics spitted *dong* are treated, which have emerged in the same year only of one or more *ri*, as if *ri* have been appointed to *dong*.

Phyongsong – Provincial capital with educational institutions and little industry

Phyongsong is a satellite city of Pyongyang with its numerous educational institutions. As the capital of the Phyongnam Province, the city provides numerous administrative institutions. Therefore, this city shows, in relation to other North Korean cities with a similar population, less industrial companies. However, there are a number of light industry companies and one large car factory. After the appointment as a city, there are hardly any growth impulses that can be recognized through *dong*-analysis. The development of market activities in Phyongsong is considered as indicator for the opening of the North Korean economy to market economy activities.