

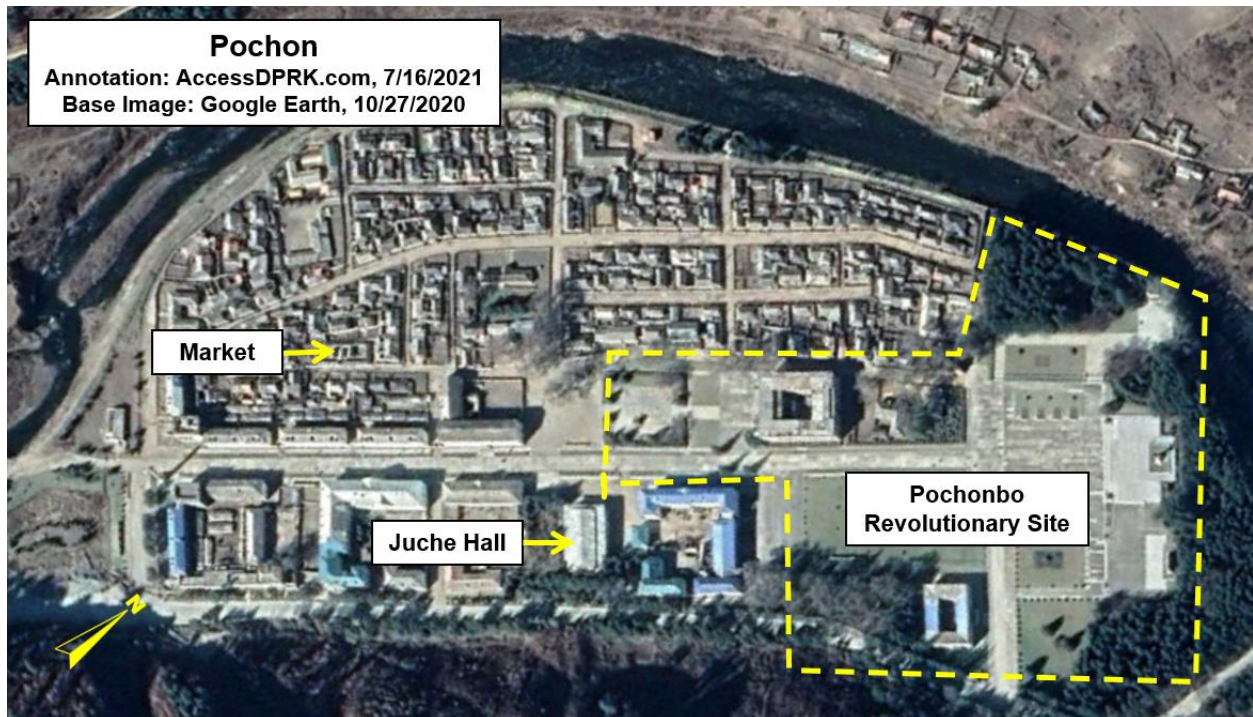
Pochon is a county seat in Ryanggang Province and shares a border with China. Its 2021 estimated population is 41,321.

As with most of the province, Pochon was initially tribal lands controlled by Imperial China that were later annexed into Goryeo Korea in the 13th and 14th centuries as a vassal state of Yuan China. Prior to that, it had been ruled by another Korean kingdom, Balhae (698-926) and the Liao Dynasty afterwards.

From the Goryeo era onwards, it remained in unified Korean control. I have not been able to find any visible historic ruins in Pochon.

In the modern era, the [Battle of Pochonbo](#) occurred on June 4, 1937 with Kim Il Sung leading around 200 men to fight against a smaller Japanese force. Their victory has been immortalized in North Korean propaganda and it is commemorated by the large Pochonbo Revolutionary Site located in the center of town.

The county was first established in 1952 with its final border and administrative changes occurring in 1979.



Economy

Pochon's primary economic activity is in timber. The amount of commercially viable woodlands left has shrunk dramatically over the decades, replaced by farmland as well as shrublands with no real use. Potatoes is the primary local crop, something that is common for all of northern Ryanggang Province. However, the economic value of agriculture remains less than that of timber. It's unclear if the region can sustain itself based solely on timber and agriculture (due to the limited growing season) without newer logging practices and proper agriculture techniques.

Pochon receives some additional economic activity due to its proximity to Mt. Paektu and Samjiyon. In 2003-2004 a new road was built connecting Hyesan with the Samjiyon area and it passes through Pochon. Additionally, the railway to Samjiyon was renovated in 2017 and a new train station was built (called Kasan) which is closer to the town of Pochon than the older station. This has all been related to the [reconstruction](#) of Samjiyon and the regime's attempt to improve tourism to the Mt. Paektu region, and to create an economic anchor in the north. Pochon's position along these transportation routes should result in both direct and indirect economic activity from such changes.

In 2017 ten apartment blocks were constructed and the Pochon County forestry management station was upgraded in 2016. Housing construction has also been noted in other villages within the county in the early 2020s.

Pochon is also home to a hot springs resort (41.531521° 128.397704°), a small hydroelectric dam, and was connected to the country's cellular network sometime prior to 2012. Its market is ~450 sq. m. and hasn't grown since at least 2003.

Military

There is only one identified military base in the county. Located at 41.631011° 128.345201°, it is just a small garrison, but the munitions storage bunker is clearly visible and protected by two rows of fencing. The base was constructed sometime between 2003 and 2013.

While not technically part of the military, border security has been increased under Kim Jong Un's rule and new fencing, guard huts, and cameras have been installed. A lot of the border security was realigned to fit the rebuilt railway from Hyesan, as it follows the Yalu River (the border with China).

Some of the border security changes in the last 2 years can be read about [here](#).

***Originally created for An AccessDPRK Patreon supporter. Free online access has been granted by the patron. This city brief has been edited for tone, context, and added references when needed.**

Jacob Bogle, July 2021 (updated October 2023)

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