



**HAL**  
open science

## Inchon

César Ducruet

► **To cite this version:**

César Ducruet. Inchon. Oxford University Press. The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History, Oxford University Press, pp.186-187 (Vol. 2), 2007. <halshs-00458076>

**HAL Id: halshs-00458076**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00458076v1>**

Submitted on 22 Feb 2010

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



HAL Authorization

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MARITIME HISTORY

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

## 8. Social History/Ports and Labor

### C. Port Cities

#### “INCHEON, PORT CITY OF SOUTH KOREA”

Other entries: INCHON, CHEMULP’O

*César DUCRUET, PhD in Geography, Le Havre University*

Located along muddy marshes and modest rice fields between surrounding hills, Incheon’s first encounters with the outside world were somewhat painful: the Korean court there executed nine French priests (1866) as Christians were persecuted in Korea, and American ships twice attacked this harbor to avenge the General Sherman incident near Pyongyang (1871). At the opening of its port by the “Pyongja Treaty of Amity” (1883), which allowed the entry of Westerners into Korea, Incheon (before called Chemulp’o) was a small fishing village of 4,700 dwellers. Before and during Japan’ invasion of Korea (1910-1945), Incheon was planned as a new town and a gateway to Seoul, the country’s capital city, mainly by foreign settlers (mostly Japanese, but also Chinese, American and European). Its lack of land infrastructures was improved with the Kyongin Road (1899), which marked the origin of land transport in Korea, and the Kyonginson Railway (1900) which finally crossed the Han River (1917). Japanese pressures on Korean Government focused on developing load center function between Southern and Northern peninsula, through land reclamation (30% of Incheon’s current territory has been reclaimed from the sea), waterfront and port development (bridge to Wolmi Island in 1904; five-year plan 1906-1912 to secure and

enlarge the port). Related economic developments were based on rice cleaning and brewery (1883-1910), weaving and milling (1911-1930), heavy industry and ammunitions (1931-1945), reconstruction of manufacturing industries (1945-1960). The “Open Port Traffic Act” (1961) and completion of the 29.5 km Kyongin Expressway (1968) confirmed its role as Seoul’s gateway, along a development corridor called ‘Kyongin Industrial Region’. However Incheon, the leading Korean port until 1945, located at the edge of the country’s half population and wealth, will not fully profit from this exceptional situation, and is rapidly facing decline as a port for a number of reasons. Some of them are purely technical: officials from Ports of the world (1962) reported that “at low water the coastline becomes a mud bank, and small tugs or loaded lighters are unable to approach landing stages. It is necessary for many vessels themselves to be anchored approx. 3 miles offshore”. Moreover, its physical disadvantages (9m draught, 10.2m tidal range), combined to high congestion rates and low capacity potential that lead to saturation, anchor Incheon far under Pusan (respectively 7.5 and 90% of Korea’s containerized throughput in 2000). Above all it suffers from being too close to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel: invasion threats avoid the concentration of flows and infrastructures that could be captured by North Korean forces. This helps to explain the spectacular development of Pusan, away from Seoul but closer to global regular shipping lines. As a city and until the 1990s, Incheon enjoys the highest growth of industrial employment and rural immigration but, despite a population of approximately 2.5 million inhabitants (2004), fails to diversify its economy given the proximity of Seoul, which centralizes the nation’s core businesses and tertiary activities. Incheon remains centered on iron, steel, coke, light metals, plate-glass, textiles, chemicals, and lumber, most of them being small and medium sized companies. Korea’s compressed and selective growth has led to disjointed land-use problems and environmental degradation in Korean port cities. The extensive use of available and somewhat recent quays (a majority was destroyed during the Korean War, 1950-1953) prevents any Europe-

oriented waterfront redevelopment. Recent projects aim at reinforcing its hub function in the Yellow Sea Region, with ‘North Incheon Port’ (1995-2011), ‘Incheon Container Terminal’ (2004) by Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) to sustain Sino-Korean trading and ‘Kyongin Canal’ (1997-2011) to reduce trucking with Seoul. Ongoing projects like Incheon International Airport (2001), Songdo Inpia (2006) and Incheon Free Zone (2020) are shaping Incheon’s ‘Penta-Port’ identity, supporting Korea’s ambition to become North-East Asia’s logistic and economic hub. Incheon case also reflects the increasing role of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in current Korean development as a mean to sustain and improve modernity (93% of Incheon’s project are foreign-funded). With the recent opening of North Korea, and some shortsea feedering with Nampo since 2004, Incheon may fully go back to its traditional gateway function at the center of a possible unified peninsula.

Inchon holds the “Landing Operation Memorial Hall” to the memory of General MacArthur, and the “Munhaksanseong Fortress” dating back to the Paekche Kingdom (0-660 A.D.).

[703 words]

Cesar DUCRUET.

## **Bibliography**

Anonymous “Port-City Relations in Korea” 4<sup>th</sup> International Academy of Maritime and Ports Conference, vol. 4, Seoul: International Academy Announcement Conference Theses Collection (1991), 103–123.

Choi, Hoon “Prospective of Developing Logistics System in Yellow Sea Region: Sea & Air Freight Transport from New Incheon Airport” The Proceedings of Yellow Sea Transportation System, Wuxi (China): 4-7 November (1998), 54–72.

Choi, Young-Joon and Ryu Je-Hun. Inchon: Gateway to Seoul. 29<sup>th</sup> International Geographical Congress, Seoul: Korea National University, 2000.

Choo, Myung-Gun “The role of Seoul Port in Strengthening Economic Cooperation Between China and Korea” The Proceedings of Yellow Sea Transportation System, Wuxi (China): 4-7 November (1998), 32–35.

Chung, Doo-Yong and Kato, Akinori “Process of Urbanization in the Reclaimed Land in Incheon City, Korea.” Technology Reports of the Osaka University 48, part. I-II, n° 2312-2313 (1998), 91–106.

Cullinane, Kevin and Song, Dong-Wook “Container Terminals in South Korea: Problems and Panaceas” Maritime Policy and Management 25, n° 1 (1998), 63–80.

Denis, Jacques “Urbanisation et Développement en République de Corée” Annales de Géographie (1980), 703–729.

Frémont, Antoine and Ducruet, César “Logiques Réticulaires et Territoriales au Sein de la Ville Portuaire: le Cas de Busan, Corée du Sud” L’Espace Géographique 33, n° 4 (2004), 190–203.

Frémont, Antoine and Ducruet, César “The Emergence of a Mega-Port, from the Global to the Local: the Case of Busan” Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie (2005, forthcoming).

Gouvernal, Elisabeth. Politiques Maritimes et Développement: Côte d’Ivoire, Corée du Sud, Focal Coop: Ministère de la Coopération et du Développement, 1988.

Hong, Sung-Woong “Seoul: a Global City in a Nation of Rapid Growth” In Emerging World Cities in Pacific Asia, by Fu Chen Lo and Yue-Man Yeung, Tokyo–New-York–Paris: United Nations University Press (1996), pp. 144–178.

Kim, Hak-So “Long-term Policy for the Development of Korean Ports in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Korea Maritime Institute Reports (2000), 275–302.

“Koreas' rail link tipped for reality?” Containerisation International, Friday 1st November (2002).

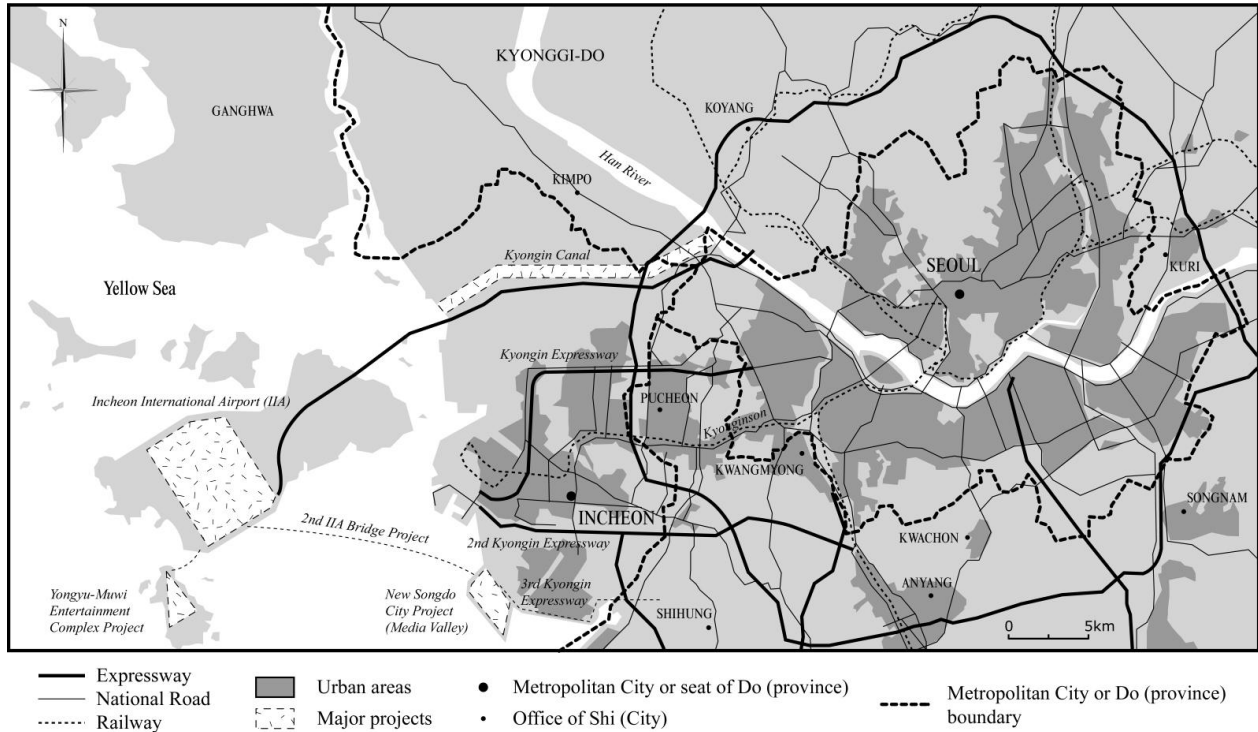
Kwon, Hyuck-Jae and Huh Woo-Kang, eds. Korea, the Land and the People. 29<sup>th</sup> International Geographical Congress, Seoul: Kyohaksa Ltd., 2000.

Lee, Dong-Bae, Kim, Yong-Ha, Hong, Sepyo, Hori, Tomoyoshi and Ito, Tokiko “A Study on the Development Process of Incheon as Industrial City and Its On-Going Trend of Transformation” 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on City Planning and Environmental Management in Asian Countries, Ujung Pandang: Asian Urban Research Group, 1998.

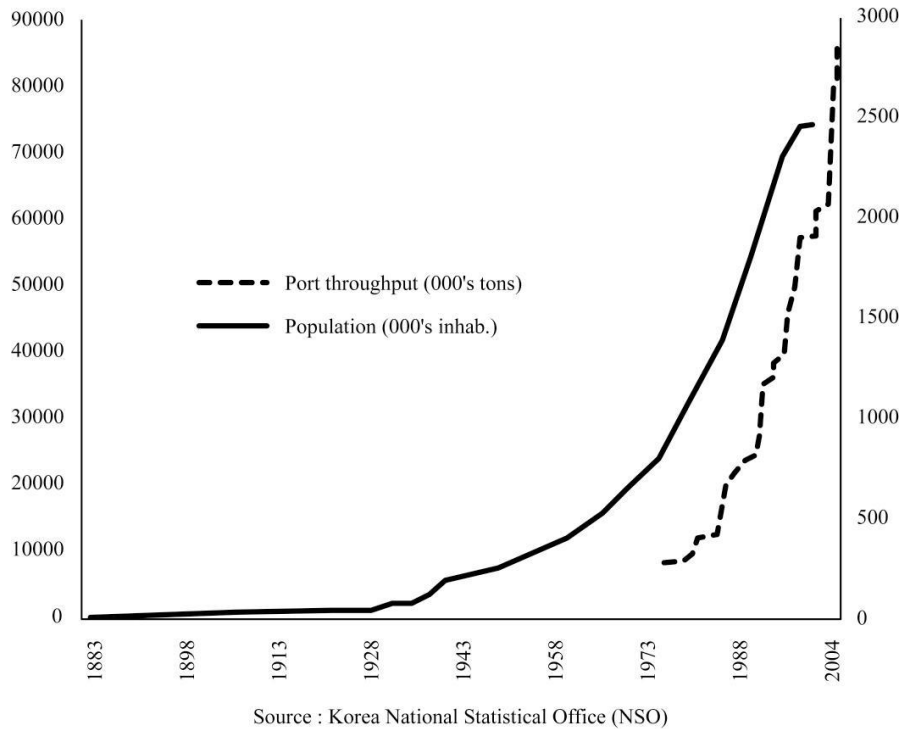
Maxwell, Donald, ed. Ports of the World, 16<sup>th</sup> ed., London: The Shipping World Ltd., 1962.

Park, Young-Han, Lee, Ki-Suk, Lee, Hee-Yul, Son, Ill, Lee, Jeong-Rock. Atlas of Korea. Seoul: Sung Ji Mun Hwa Co., Ltd., 2000.

“South Korean box bonanza” Containerisation International, Friday 1st August (2003).



**Figure 1: The Kyongin region, major projects and infrastructures around 2004.**



**Figure 2: Evolution of population and port throughput in Incheon, 1883-2004.**