

# Mineralogical Terrains of the Socialist Everyday: Landscapes of North Korean and Russian Geological Prospecting, 1945—1950 in the Captured Documents Collection<sup>1</sup>

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Recent geological prospecting by North Korea's developmental agencies in partnership with Australian companies has been framed as an engagement with the ultimate opaque resource frontier. This paper seeks to challenge/reframe this notion of opacity through continued analysis of a collection of geological and development-focused documentation sourced from the Record Group 242, of the United States National Archives. This material obtained by US Army document gatherers during Pyongyang's occupation in late 1950 provides an extraordinary window into the developmental possibilities conceptualized by North Korea and partners during the brief period from Liberation to the outbreak of the Korean War.

Building upon developmental imperatives of the Government General of Chosen and the legacy of mineralogical colonialism throughout the Korean Peninsula, this paper encounters within the collection a landscape of institutional optimism in the field. Pyongyang, technicians from the Soviet Union and elsewhere where not only tasked with harnessing North Korea's geological capacity, but the creation of a new developmental and social terrain. Analysis of blueprints from the collection reveal in detail new facilities, communities and infrastructure in outline. Previous work on this collection by the author has sought to project forward this infrastructure's productive capacity and connect with current analysis of the Yongju deposit. However this neglects the contemporary "lived reality" of the spaces and places of Soviet and North Korea mineralogical

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interaction, as both nations sought, as evidenced by this collection, a configuration of both nation and society which served the interests of an internationally minded “socialist modern”.

**Keywords:** North Korea, North Korean and Russian exchanges, Mineral Extraction, Archives and Sources.

**Минералогические рельефы социалистической повседневности:  
геологоразведочные ландшафты Северной Кореи и России, 1945—1950 гг.  
из коллекции трофейных документов.**

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Недавние геологические изыскания, проведённые геологоразведочными учреждениями Северной Кореи совместно с Австралийскими компаниями, ранее были представлены как приглашение к сотрудничеству с совершенно непрозрачной картиной сырьевой периферии. В данной статье делается попытка критики/пересмотра данного подхода на основании продолжительного анализа собранной геологической и инженерной документации, полученной из блока записей 242 из Государственного архива США. Данный материал, найденный сборщиками документов армии США во время оккупации Пхеньяна в конце 1950-х гг., позволяет увидеть перспективы развития, намеченные Северной Кореей и её партнёрами во время короткого периода Освобождения и до начала Корейской войны.

На основании императивов промышленного развития, принятых во времена японского генерал-губернаторства, и наследия минералогического колониализма на Корейском полуострове в рамках исследований был выявлен набор ландшафтов, представляющих инфраструктурный потенциал эксплуатационных возможностей. Пхеньян, а также технический персонал из Советского Союза и других стран ставили задачу не только освоить геологический потенциал Северной Кореи, но и создать новый производственный и социальный ландшафт. Анализ чертежей из собранной коллекции позволяет детально представить новые мощности, структуру социальной организации и даже схематично всю инфраструктуру в целом. Предыдущая работа автора над данной коллекцией была направлена на изучение производственного потенциала инфраструктуры в соединении с актуальным анализом месторождения Йонджу. Однако такой подход не учитывает «истинную реальность» пространств и мест советского и северокорейского взаимодействия в сфере минералогии, поскольку обе страны, как показывают данные коллекций, стремились к такой организационной структуре государства и общества, которая отвечала бы их внешнеполитическим интересам, ориентированным на «социалистический модерн».

**Ключевые слова:** Северная Корея, взаимодействие России и Северной Кореи, добыча полезных ископаемых, источниковедение.

## INTRODUCTION

“The REE resource potential of the DPRK [North Korea], while estimated to be massive has only been lightly explored to date. Given the major economic significance of the effective utilisation of these important minerals to the DPRK, we look forward to working in close co-operation with our partner to progress the development of this excellent opportunity” [37].

“...the promise of Kim Jong-il<sup>2</sup> might soon come true and North Korea may become a ‘rich and prosperous state’ — rich in natural resources...” [36].

The announcement of any economic or diplomatic interaction with Pyongyang or agencies of the North Korean state tends to produce an extraordinary outburst of hostile or anxious comment from the global commentators. SRE Mineral’s, an Australia mining company, press release that it had in 2013 formed a joint-stock company with the North Korean ministry of Mining to exploit a seemingly enormous deposit of rare earth minerals in the north of the Korean peninsula was no different. These were enormous, dramatic claims, capable, if true of having a direct impact on the field of regional and geo-politics. North Korea would instantly (at least on paper), have become one of the wealthiest governmental regimes in the world, replete with the global leverage that would entail, geo-politically, secure with such valuable assets in hand. “Becoming a strong and prosperous nation” of course for North Korea has been difficult and lengthy process [41] and veracity of the interested parties statistical analysis aside, those interested in extracting the surplus value and exchange benefits from Pyongyang’s contemporary Rare Earth resources would have to tread carefully. The Egyptian engineering firm, Orascom’s recent experience with building a very profitable mobile phone network under Pyongyang’s remit (in exchange for refurbishing the Ryugyong Hotel), and then suffering extreme difficulties in extracting that profit is a case in point [34].

While it is easy to dismiss statistics and analysis derived from North Korean, easy to assert incredulity or disbelief, it is much more difficult to make rigorous or empirical counterfactual statements or analysis. There have been interesting and robust attempts in recent years, such in general statistical analysis Daniel Schwekendiek’s “Socioeconomic History of North Korea” and the work of Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland [16], and more specifically within the field of mineral resources the valuable and considered reports

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<sup>2</sup> Romanization strategies are considerably different between the two Korean nations. For ease of use and objectivity, the author uses the current North Korean Romanization style when referring to quotations and places sourced from within North Korea. The author also uses the current South Korean Romanization style when it used in direct quotation by other authors. However this paper both makes quotations from documents generated in North Korea between 1945 and 1950, before the current North Korean style was formulated and from documents translated by US Army document gatherers in 1950 and later which may not conform to either North Korean style or contemporary/historical style. For the purposes of authenticity and objectivity the author retains these variations when used in direct quotation.

from the United States Geological Survey (2013 as an example). However there have been no works who derive their material directly from the history and locality of North Korea and its mineralogical spaces. Which is essentially the starting point for the project behind this paper.

It is not that there has never been consideration into the geological and mineralogical inheritance and terrain of North Korea; there has historically, but that the work done before Japanese colonisation, during the colonial period or immediately after Liberation by the engagement of the Soviet Union in its initial period of support for a young North Korea is now imagined by most scholars as unobtainable, lost or disregarded. While this paper certainly will concede that historical analysis is difficult to access or difficult to extract conventional data from, it is not true that it is entirely inaccessible. This paper thus suggests that if readers wish to encounter such material then a journey in both a temporary and geographical sense will be necessary. In particular this paper derives much of its empirical grounding from resources collected from the United States National Archives [46], or the Captured North Korean Documents Collection is an extraordinary body of material which underpins much interesting work on North Korea in recent years. Captured by US Army document gatherers during the occupation of Pyongyang in October and November 1950 the collection provides a unique insight into the narrative and textual basis for North Korean governance and institutional development during its early years as a separate sovereign nation. This paper is particularly concerned with the boxes of documents and cartographic materials contained in the collection which were sourced from Pyongyang's Ministry of Mining and from other institutions tasked with managing North Korea's geological development and mineral resources following Liberation from Japanese colonisation in 1945. It is the author of this paper's assertion that through an examination of these materials a fascinating glimpse may be gathered of developmental interaction between Russian and Soviet technicians and North Korean institutions and workers. The spaces and terrains conceived of in this collaboration, demonstrate something more than simply industrial infrastructure and architecture. Accordingly in this developmental vision and the documents through which it is demonstrated, the reader can discern not just the productive spaces of mineral exploration, but the social and lived spaces of the everyday; of imagined leisure spaces, schools and living quarters, a coherent "socialist modernity".

## NORTH KOREAN MINERAL HISTORIES

North Korea's developmental and mineralogical terrains of course do not emerge fully formed from the will and mind of Kim Il Sung. Accordingly a brief historical overview of mineralogical and geological exploration in the Northern half of the Korean peninsula is necessary. This paper will arrive in temporal and geographic terms near to sites such as the Ch'olsan Uranium mine

where Russian and Soviet technicians and geologists worked with North Korean counterparts from 1947 to extract monazite and engage in survey and assessment work [40, p. 26]. However this moment was by no means the first time the Korean Peninsula was considered from the mineralogical, geological or geodesic perspective.

While the history of Korean mineralogy prior to the 19th century is not widely documented, it appears that extraction of precious metals such as gold was an important part of Koguryo and Koryo statecraft and development. Edwin Mills' fascinating (and almost unique in English) account suggests the importance of gold to Koguryo's vassalage to Wei dynasty China, even to the extent in 1036 of King Wang-hyung's outlawing of its local usage and therefore diversion of resource away from supplying that demanded by the Chinese [32]. Both the Mongol empire and China's Ming dynasty demanded extensive mineralogical tribute from Korea and the Hideyoshi invasions of the peninsula in the 16th century resulted in extensive loss of gold reserves. Extraction facilities and capacity focused on silver, copper and gold appeared more successful in the later 16th and 17th centuries. Bureaucracy and legal frameworks also developed during this period, private ownership was forbidden and infrastructure and mineral-rights placed under the aegis of the Imperial Household, with responsibility outsourced to provincial institutions [32].

This tightly controlled structure of resource development however was soon exposed, as was the rest of Korea's institutions to the intrusive winds of colonialism. Taking advantage of the diplomatic disruption and ruptures created by Korea's very local 'unequal treaties' beginning with the Treaty of Kanghai in 1874 [19], foreign adventurers soon sought to engage with Korean resource opportunities. Ernst Oppert's attempt to rob the graves of the Imperial Household and pilfer its gold resources through an audacious act of blackmail in 1864 may have been a terrible start to such interactions [24], but there were later more empirically minded examples. Carl Christian Gottsche, a Geologist famous for his research on sedimentary deposits and the geology of Schleswig Holstein, at the behest of Georg Paul Von Mollendorf, then Deputy Foreign Minister for the Choson government was supported in conducting a huge amount of empirical research into the vernacular mineral knowledge of the Korean Peninsula [31]. Gottsche's research and materials collection included vital cartographic materials which provide historical evidence for more contemporary conceptions in South Korea of tradition notions of mountainscape and geology such as the Paektu-taegan [29]. Gottsche himself, through his interviews and exchanges scribed notes into the margins of a number of the maps, notes which suggest the placement of particular sites of mineralogical enterprise and resource, suggesting for example that both Musan and the famous Unsan site, now in North Korea and which this paper will consider in the documentary collections of the RG242 have been known to the general narratives of Korean history. The latter of these spaces was vitally important to James Morse, a Gold Miner from Nebraska and sometime participant in the California Gold Rushes of the 1848–1855 [42]. Morse has it seems

presented a very clear and attractive economic case to the Yi dynasty to support a developmental claim and was granted a highly successful gold concession at Unsan. Morse's American Oriental Mining company there proved a long lived enterprise and was active until 1941, evicted only following Pearl Harbour and the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific [15].

Gottsche and Morse, it is worth remembering were encountering an ancient Korea at the very last gasp of its existence. As history records, following an entirely chaotic and unsuccessful period of confused political and diplomatic triangulation between Imperial China, Imperial Russia and Imperial Japan, King Kojong and his government and essentially what was left of the pre-modern bureaucratic and social status quo on the peninsula were forced to accede to the will of Tokyo [7]. The peninsula was annexed by Imperial Japan 1910 and power passed to the Government General of Chosen, through whom the imperatives of colonial, modernising mineralogical and geological exploration and extraction would run in future.

The history of Korea's colonial period and the policies, procedures and processes of Tokyo's rigorous reconfiguration of the peninsula's society, politics, culture and language are of course heavily researched and academically very well known [17]. The Government General of Chosen first sought to suppress Korean desires for nationhood and independence, second to accommodate them, third to subsume them within an extraordinary process of creating a new Imperial subjectivity and then finally in the headlong rush to conflict in the Pacific to transform the Korean Peninsula into a military site of production and labour [6]. From 1907 the Imperial Resident General Government and later fully from 1910, the Government General of Chosen published an annual series of reports, "The Reports on Reforms and Progresses in Chosen (Korea)", in both Japanese and English which sought to lay out in fairly intricate detail the path and detail of its colonising activity [11]. These Reports are extensive, detailed and fastidious on many issues. They recount great detail in the economic and legal field, but for the purposes of this paper contain an extraordinary level of detail addressing industrial development and exploitation, specifically mining and matters of mineralogical extraction. This detail includes the substantial changes to the legal frameworks through which mining and mineralogical research and exploitation was undertaken and the institutional frames through which this legal framework operated. New Mining Laws were formulated by the Yi dynasty under heavy Japanese influence, just before annexation in 1906 and replaced with a further revision under the Government General in 1916 [12] these new revisions allowed only Japanese institutions or subjects to access and control mineral rights, replacing the Imperial Household Agency as the sole controller and arbiter of these resources. Revisions also increased the range of minerals and elements subjected to the legal framework from 17 to 29, including very interestingly rare elements such as bismuth, molybdenum and quartz sand [12].

The Government General of Chosen established a Geological Investigation Office in 1918, and according to the documents and reports tasked it

with a twenty year long programme of analysis [13]. The reports are not of course simply replete with the Government General's historical interpretation, they are also full of statistics and surveying data in different sectors, and particularly so in the case of mining and mineral resources. Thus extractive expansion during the early colonial period is suggested as having increased the total tonnage of minerals from 6,067,952 to 24,204,510 between 1910 and 1920. Development in the later periods of the colonial period meant that 1933–1934 total tonnage had increased to 48,301,468 tonnes [14]. The reports also name and describe key infrastructural elements and the key mining sites which included Unsan, still managed by James Morse's Oriental Consolidated Mining Company, although Unsan was now jointed by others such as Syozyo and Suian both owned and managed by Nippon Kogyo, one of the colonial Government General's affiliated development and resource management companies [14].

#### POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT: THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

As much as history and the Colonial Government General record the deep empiricism of the colonial period's quest for mineralogical knowledge and resource, the collapse of Japanese power in 1945 and its replacement with altogether different forms of political organisation is also well recorded. The assumption of power of Kim Il Sung and what has been called North Korea's guerrilla dynasty [5], whose authority was rooted in their campaigns of harassment against the forces of Imperial Japan in the wildernesses of northern Korea during the 1930s heralded the final, unexpected arrival of socialist modes of governance to the Peninsula. While these events had long been hoped for and dreamed of by Kim Il Sung and those that accompanied him, it was the rapid collapse of Japanese authority under American nuclear pressure that had hastened Korea's Liberation [17]. Even a brief reading of the documents from this time suggest that the future of the Peninsula had not been given much thought by the allies of World War Two and at Japan's final denouement, the United States and the Soviet Union were forced into an extraordinarily hasty process of compromise to maintain Korea's governmental functionality and integrity as well as to mitigate perceived threats from each other's future aspirations [8]. The transfer of power from one state to another was almost instantaneous, as was it seems the spontaneous rise of People's Committees in the north of the Peninsula [8]. Whereas these were suppressed in what would become South Korea through American and its local allies' virulent anti-Communism, the Soviet Union found such support for alternative modes of governance helpful and something it would certainly be able to build upon in the terrains it was tasked with overseeing for the foreseeable future [2].

Building a new set of socialist territories in the northern half of the Korean Peninsula was really one of the key tasks of new government institutions

in Pyongyang and for its most important in the early years foreign partner, Russia, in the guise of the Soviet Union. Much development had occurred under the Japanese colonial administration, but its more progressive (in terms of technical and developmental approach), policies and projects had been subsumed in the later part of the 1930s by the militarist imperatives [6]. Kim Il Sung and his Russia/Soviet advisers had inherited an institutional and industrial landscape that was most determinedly colonial and unpicking that bequest would be a key focus for the policies of the young North Korea [41].

As readers of this paper might expect the transformation of North Korea's industrial and developmental landscape would need to be as dramatic as Kim Il Sung's conception of ideology would transform the spaces of its politics. While Pyongyang's theoretical and narrative articulation was not as coherent or comprehensive as it became in later years; there was no detailed description of the three revolutions process, T'aean work system or Ch'ollima method [41], it was both dramatic and in some senses practical. Unlike in the early Soviet Union, North Korea's young authorities and their supporters seemingly saw that the radical collectivisation of agricultural landscapes and communities would not be achievable immediately and so while taking care to remove those who had directly supported or collaborated with the Japanese colonial government as landlords or rentiers from that land, Pyongyang supported a mixed agricultural economy and development before 1950 [2]. When it came to Forestry and timber resources, Pyongyang both adopted the developmental methodologies which had been introduced by the Japanese forestry specialists, and sought to negate their memory and influence through campaigns focused on the notional reconfiguration of the Peninsula's forests to become somehow more authentically Korean [41]. Later in North Korea's history, cityscapes and urban landscapes, such as Hamhung would be rebuilt from the ground up by architects and planners from ideologically friendly nations such as East Germany [1], in more dramatic and determined and comprehensive attempts to literally build a new authentically Socialist Korean urban space. There are a number of other examples in North Korea's history in which partners from communist or socialist nations collaborated to reconstruct elements of the nation's economy and terrain for more useful or positivistic ideological purposes [38].

This appears to have been very much true in the case of mineral development and geological exploration. While the Ch'olsan Uranium mine would become the famous site in the minds of opponents of North Korea Russia, in its previous guises had a long history, as recorded by Edwin Mills in the mineralogical resources of the Tumen river region and the northern part of the Korean Peninsula [32]. In 1945 following the emergence of Kim Il Sung and North Korea as a new sovereign partner for the Soviet Union, Russian interest in the geological resources again manifested practically in development and interaction on the Peninsula [40], but this time spurred on by a new set of imperatives, which included those aspirations to make real the socialist modern.



## THE SOCIALIST MODERN AT MUSAN, CHAERYONG AND KAECHON

Moving from the generalist historical record to more specific spaces of North Korea's developmental interaction this paper engages with the documents in the possession of the United States National Archives and Public Records Administration. The collection of material collected from the Mining Ministry in Pyongyang and other industrial installations in November 1950 is representative of a characteristically scatter gun approach to materials collection by the American GIs given this task. Similar to those materials derived from the Ministry of Agriculture which spanned as disparate a collection of documents as the text books and student notes from Agricultural Colleges to the published products of the Ministry's research institutions, there is a wide variety of material focused on mining and mineral research. Within the set of boxes containing the material the author of this paper encountered blueprints and shaft plans for all the mines and mineral exploration sites operating at the time in North Korea. They also collected documents specifying the sectors' goals and targets for the years following Korea's Liberation from Japanese colonialism and extraordinarily telegrams sent weekly by specific mines reporting their weekly output and ore tonnages to the ministry in Pyongyang. Finally there are a set of documents describing North Korea's aspiration to embed a socialist future on mineral and mining sites and infrastructure south of the DMZ. Given Pyongyang's initial success in the war; decisions on how to nationalise South Korean mining corporations and put them to work at the behest of socialism and the people would from Pyongyang's perspective have become very pertinent issues.

Of course given the fact that these documents were collected by American soldiers during an occupation of Pyongyang, South Korean mines were never to be a long term concern for North Korea's Ministry of Mining. However for the purposes of this paper, the building and planning between 1945 and 1950 of a mining infrastructure that was certainly and cogently under Pyongyang's sovereignty and control most certainly was [20]. Accordingly North Korea and Russia/Soviet architects and technicians had been put to work planning what was essentially the future and the physical manifestation of a Socialist Modernity surrounding its mines and mining infrastructure. This paper therefore, in order to support the reader's deeper conception of the future that was planned in these spaces, focuses its analysis on those documents and material which describe and outline the physical reality and future aspirations at two developmental and mining sites in North Korea. No longer were mines and similar spaces of extraction be the resource frontiers known to Mills, Oppert and Gottsche, disparate, diffuse and masculine. Such spaces would in the future be coherently included into the working, educational and leisure infrastructures of North Korean modernity, places of childhood and family as much as they would be of working men. In particular the author here examines what was envisaged for the sites at Kaechon, Chaeryong, Ulliyul and Musan.

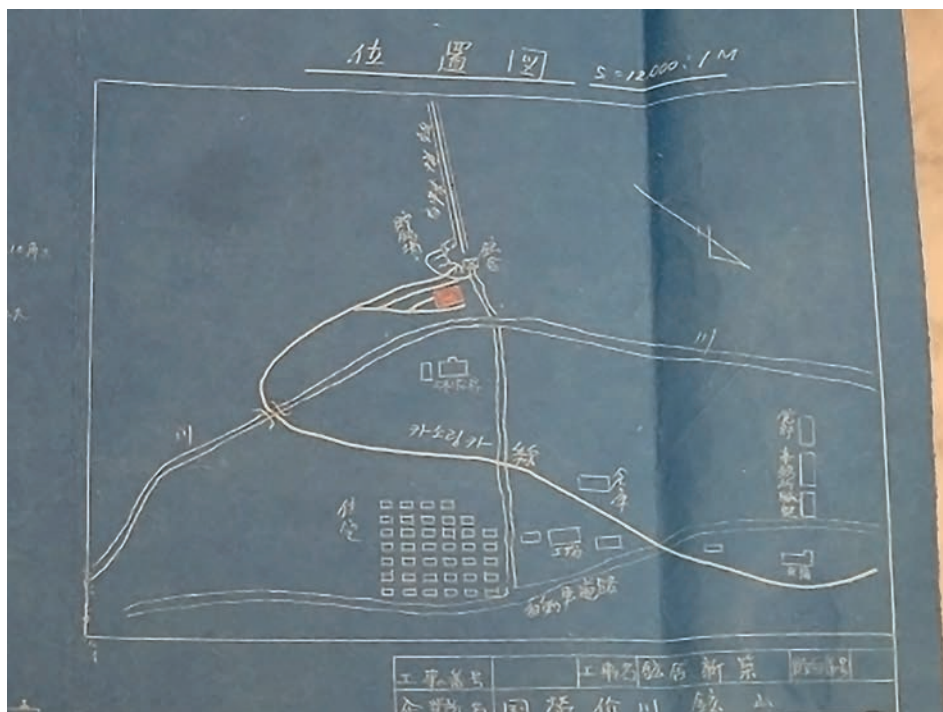


Figure 1. An element of a cartographical landscape at the Kachon graphite mine [46, SA 2009 5/154].

Рис. 1. Элемент картографического ландшафта в графитовом руднике Кэчхон [46, SA 2009 5/154]

In the Record Group 242 documents, recorded as having been captured in the “24th RCT Area” on the 3rd of September, 1950 developmental initiatives and projects between North Korea’s Mining Ministry and technicians from Russian institutions of the Soviet Union’s mining sector are extensively detailed. These documents include enormous shaft and mining face topographic outlines, technical drawings and blueprints, detailed descriptions of tasks and future work to be done. As the author has suggested for any researcher whose focus is North Korea a detailed outline of mining infrastructure and development is certainly interesting, however for this paper the most important information details the terrains and topographies at these sites whose role is not actually the extraction of minerals or ores.

While researchers encountering Record Group 242’s index microfilm file working their way down the items in the box captured on that date will initially not be surprised by its contents. Item 148 for example, a single sheet of paper is recorded as containing “Drawings of section of bridges in Kangwon-Do destroyed by enemy’s attack: Taebaek bridge in Ch’unch’on city, Won-Ch’ang and Cho’Yang bridges in Chunsong-Gun, P’ungchon bridge in Hongch’on-Gun, Hamyang and Pukp’yong bridges in Samchok-Gun, Sangdaewon, Chujin, Sangbangrom, Kasau and Kau bridges in P’yongch’amg-gun, Wonju bridge in

Wonju-Gun, Hoengsong bridge in Hoengsong-gun, showing the length of destroyed parts, dated 13 August 1950, owner unknown [46, SA 2009 5/148]. A record of the bridges destroyed by North Korea's forces as they engaged in combat with the south is no surprise given the context. However such familiar material quickly gives way to the unexpected. Item 154 for instance is recorded as "Blue print file containing distribution diagram of residence, railway for gasoline rail car, ore bin, elementary school, dated 1950, belonging to Kaechon Graphite Mine, P'yonganPukto, NK" [46, SA 2009, 5/154].

The mention of an elementary school in the index at this point is what first focused the attention of this author while examining the documents and index. Kaechon Mine is not an isolated case when it comes to unexpected infrastructure in the collection. The section in the index relating to Chaeryong Mine in Hwanghae-do as well as blueprints for "...draft of 50 horsepower pump...vertical section of pump room and water pipe... erection diagram of railway bridge..." [46, SA 2009, 5/155] also includes the more unexpected "...draft of residence, bathroom attached to residence, extension of elementary school building..." [46, SA 2009, 5/155]. Documents related to Ulyul Mine also in Hwangdae-do make mention of a "...bathroom, storehouse, dispensary, elementary school, residence..." [46, SA 2009, 5/158], those related to Sinpung Mine mention a "...design drawing of residence and elementary school..." [46, SA 2009, 5/159] and Musan appears ready to receive a "...telephone plant, system and exchange..." [46, SA 2009, 5/160].



Figure 2. Infrastructure at the Muzen mine [46, SA 2009, 5/160].

Рис. 2. Инфраструктура на руднике Мъюзен [46, SA 2009, 5/160]

There are of course many other mentions of similar installations, all of which are surprising enough to find in the index of such a set of documentary evidence. Review of the material mentioned in the index itself reveals the documents and their aspirations for physical manifestation to be as extraordinary as one might imagine. The first thing to say within this text about these blueprints is that the designs contained within them are repeated a number of times within the document sets. Thus Chaeryong Mine and Kaecheon Mine appear not simply to be receiving elementary schools, but in fact an elementary school of exactly the same type and style. This is also true of the dispensaries build at a number of Mines, as well as the family residences and food storehouses. It should be said that this is also true of the more specifically mining related technology in the blueprints, Musan's 'ore treatment plant' is the same design and plan as Wongdok's for example [46, SA 2009, 5/160; 46, SA 2009, 5/157].

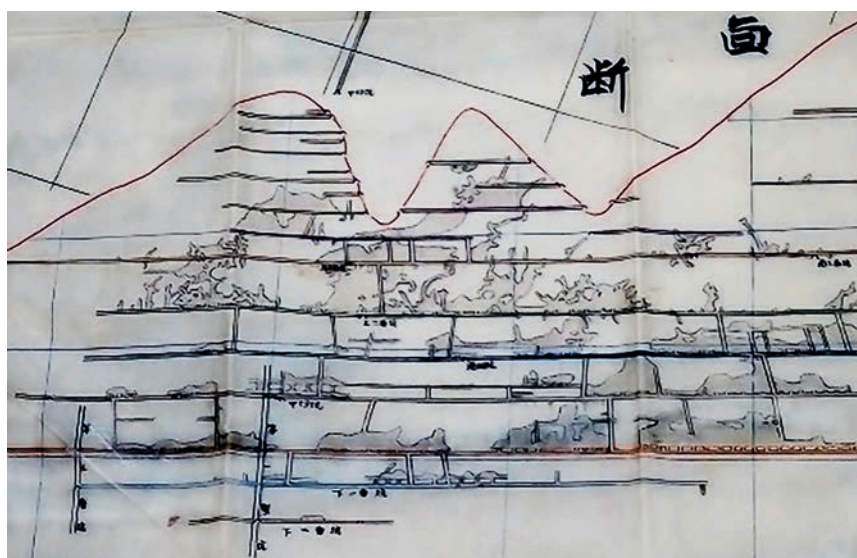


Figure 3. Shaft Plans at Ullyul Mine [46, SA 2009, 5/158].

Рис. 3. Планы шахтных стволов в руднике Уллиул [46, SA 2009, 5/158]

The second thing to comment on with regards to the physical and linguistic form of these documents, is that similar to other texts found with the collection the preponderance of Russian influence on their generation and content. The author of this paper has elsewhere in the Record Group 242 collection come across academic articles on forestry and agricultural matters ostensibly translated into Korean (it is worth remembering also that in North Korea at this time the Korean script was very much in transition from earlier Hanmun form to a form of what is known now as modern Hangeul. North Korea's public statements and government documents made the switch from a mixture of Classical Chinese and Korean Script to pure Korean script abruptly in the middle of 1947), but whose source is very obviously Russian and Cyrillic text forms, as the articles incorporate Korean phonetic spellings of Russian place names, personal names and theoretical concepts. Similar architectur-

al forms underpinning the design and realisation of infrastructural elements at Musan and Kaechon can be found within Russian language text books and content elsewhere in the Record Group material, suggesting that in fact these repeated and common designs, whether for highly technical or industrial elements of the projects, or more prosaic, human elements of the terrain are kits sourced from North Korea's Russian technical and institutional support.

## CONCLUSION

From this paper's brief introduction to the physical content of the material held within Record Group 242, it is hoped that the reader can catch a view of a different sort of mineral history and collaboration between North Korea and its Russian technical and supportive partner at the beginning of Pyongyang's independent sovereignty. Just as Suzy Kim's recent work "Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution" has sought to do for the "lived" experience of women during these brief years prior to the Korean War [25], the collection of blueprints and outline documents suggest at least an aspiration towards the construction of a different form of developmental landscape. The schools, family homes, bathrooms and medical installations present in these documentary materials suggest a terrain very different from the conventional, contemporary understanding of North Korea's developmental spaces, and different still from the historical understanding of Russia and the Soviet Union's interaction with Pyongyang at this time.

No doubt as is historically evidenced [40], Moscow was highly interested in leveraging its influence and relationship on North Korea to obtain the production and advantage presented by North Korea's Uranium mines at Ch'olsan and elsewhere and later its Monazite ore and Molybdenum [40, p. 30], and as can be seen from Pyongyang's current obsession with Nuclear capability and capacity this would continue into the present [43]. However the geo-political interests of Moscow and its partners were also served by more diffuse and esoteric aspirations and projections of their contemporary ideological conception, such as those which supported the reconfiguration of economic, cultural and social spaces and infrastructures away from Capitalistic modes of relation and production, to those more coherently fitting the framework of Communist or Socialist modes. These could take on purely practical forms such as new articulations of the legal frameworks which underpin property and land ownership, supporting the collectivisation or co-operatisation of agricultural spaces, as well as industrial and productive terrains. However the mental landscapes of populations newly subject to Socialist or Communist forms of politics also required adaptation and re-moulding, changes that would impact not only on their internal self-perceptions, but on their wider notions of the culturally normative.

Thus just as contemporary analysts of North Korean matters will encounter themes and projects in Pyongyang's developmental strategy focused on obtaining the benefits of harnessing the unitary or cohesive efforts of its population (material from Rodong Sinmun, North Korea's national newspaper for

example reporting new revolutionary speeds such as “the speed of the blizzards of Paektu” [28]), Russia as the Soviet Union sought to support its institutions in the late 1940s in unifying the intentions and aspirations of its population. While this would of course be expressed in the work focused on collectivising agriculture and changing patterns of rural landownership following Liberation from Japanese colonisation [20] and urban or political infrastructures [20], it is this paper’s conclusion that such intentions are at work in North Korea’s terrains of mineral extraction and exploration. In the documentary collection known as Record Group 242, the reader witnesses elements of collaborative efforts to reconfigure these developmental spaces at Kaechon, Chaeryong, Ulliyul, Musan and elsewhere. Historically connected to the mineral histories of the Korean Peninsula, categorised by frameworks of exploitation and organisation undertaken under Pre-Capitalistic and Capitalistic modes of production and organisation and accompanying workforce very much male in character and gender, the NARA documents recount a period of transition, at least in planning or aspirational terms. The future for installations at Musan, Kaechon and others is one of organised utopianism; a Socialist Modernity in which a new Liberated North Korea will be forged by hard working and productive families. These families will live in planned communities surrounding the mineral infrastructures, provided with cultural and social amenities whose focus is individual, national, cultural and political betterment, no longer subject to the whims and desires of a Capitalist class, but the supportive consideration of a rational, considerate government of the people.

As much as a glimpse at contemporary North Korea might tell the reader that the ultimate outcome of all Pyongyang’s development was certainly not such rationality or consideration, the nation continues in its efforts to build what it conceives of as a Socialist modernity. While its contemporary manifestation may seem some distance from the more positive or optimistic communities and terrains represented in the collection of documents held at NARA, and its industrial or developmental infrastructural sites are not well known for any family friendliness or cultural amenity, the reader may still gain some perspective from them. North Korea’s recent developmental spaces such as the Taegyedo Coastal Reclamation Project on the West Sea coast [41] and the Sepho Grassland Reclamation Project in Kangwon Province [26] for example still on occasion make connection to the aspirations of this early period of development. Thus while Sepho and other infrastructural projects though not focused on mineral extraction, and constructed by units of the Korean People’s Army, Workers Party of Korea Shock Brigades and what are termed “Soldier Builders” [3], still make connection with the terrains of family and social life in a manner perhaps explained by this earlier phase of development. Thus when during the construction of the Sepho site for example, the wives of those “Soldier Builders” and Shock Brigades repeatedly arrive on-site to support their husbands and provide encouragement, the cohesiveness and comprehensiveness of North Korea’s aspirations so far as development is concerned is demonstrated. While Russia and North Korea’s interaction and collaboration in the mining sites represented in the documents of the NARA

archive may seem distant in temporal and geo-political terms, in harnessing the collective efforts of its population and in inculcating the needs of politics and development within the familial and the social, for Pyongyang the Socialist Modern glimpsed in these mineral terrains is still in process.

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<sup>3</sup> These articles are no longer online due to North Korea's habit of removing old content from RodongSinmun's online archive. However the author of this piece retains a copy of every RodongSinmun article he uses for reference purposes and will gladly share specific articles with interested parties.