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TRANSPORTATION OF FARM PRODUCTS
BY INLAND WATERWAYS AND CARTS IN MANCHURIA

The three main waterways in Manchuria are the Sungari, the Ussuri, and the Amur. Compared to the railroads, the freight carried is very small; yet, considering various factors, such as geography and scarcity of railroad lines, the farm products carried by river are worth noting.

The navigation season varies with the amount and speed of flow of rivers and the weather. The mean dates for thaw and freeze at Harbin over an 11-year period were 11 April and 10 November, respectively. The navigation season usually lasts from 5 to 6 months.

Data for 1939 lists 40 passenger vessels, 26 passenger and freight vessels, 47 tugs, 130 lighters, and 67 state-owned sailboats, making a total of 310 vessels for the inland waterways in addition to about 3,000 privately owned vessels along the Sungari. The total capacity of the privately owned craft was not less than 100,000 tons. That of passenger and passenger-freight ships was about 230,000 tons. The steamers range from 100 to 1,100 in tonnage.

Of the three river systems, traffic is greatest on the Sungari. Next in amount comes the Amur, with the Ussuri as last. On the Sungari two or three boats are usually towed by the larger ships, but on the Amur and Ussuri usually only one boat is towed by a regular steamer.

A large part of the volume carried on the Sungari consists of farm products, the increase of which is due to the following causes:

1. Government interest and aid in farming since 1911.
2. Influence of Soviet farming improvements on Manchurian farm production.
3. Use of tractors to increase cultivation.
4. Improved local administration in the Sungari valley, which gives the peasants a better environment for work.

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For these reasons, agriculture in the Sungari valley has been increasing, causing a similar growth in river freight. In 1931, a peak of 611,700 tons was reached. But after the coup of 13 September in that year, there was a sudden drop due to natural disasters, concentration of peasants in villages, building of railroads, control of farm products, and similar factors.

Transportation on all rivers in Manchuria reached an all-time high in 1931 with a total of 1,128,267 tons, the average for the period being a little less than 800,000 tons per year. With the building of railroads after that date, river freight declined in relative amount. In 1931, farm products amounted to 611,700 tons, or 54 percent of all water-borne freight; minerals amounted to 245,600 tons, or 22 percent; lumber, 42,200 tons, or 4 percent; and miscellaneous freight, 228,700 or 20 percent. In that year, 84 percent of the farm products carried by water were beans; wheat 15 percent; other grains one percent. In 1943, beans and wheat were relatively less, other grains and processed foods more.

Along the lower Sungari, crops were bought up in the fall, kept by merchants during the winter, and with the opening of navigation, shipped by river to the Harbin market. The Sungari always carried more than the other rivers. The quantity, while not large in proportion to the total for Manchuria, was by no means inconsiderable. The average navigation season, 1932-1943, was 204 days long.

In the Manchukuo free economy period, farm products and processed goods were moved to the railroad by carts and wagons of various types. All such movement of freight was known by the term "small transport." In the past, goods in this category have amounted to 15 million tons per annum, about one third being foodstuffs.

In the free economy period, the cost of "small transport" varied with season, region, distance, packaging, prevailing wages, cost of feed, etc. Under the controlled economy period of Manchukuo, there was a fixed scale of costs and wages. In the latter part of this period, because of the demand for military transport and dwindling of supplies, the "small transport" business diminished.

In the old days, transport flourished in private hands. But government control has stifled the possibility of free development.

In 1944, vehicles of all types, other than railroad cars, transported 4,618,773 tons of cargo plus 297,955 tons of rice, a total of 4,916,728 tons. This figure does not include military transport. The principal types of transportation were the old-style two-wheel carts, which comprise 47.2 percent of the whole; ox-carts, 13.5 percent; other types of carts, 16.7 percent; and wagons, 2.9 percent.

In 1937, the total number of transport vehicles in Manchukuo, including Jehol, was 641,249. By 1943, this number had increased to 817,340. Under the Manchukuo regime, all transportation was nationalized. A portion of the earnings of cart transporters had to be paid to the International Transport Office.

The territory around the railroad centers, for a distance of 10 kilometers on all sides, was graded into half-kilometer sections. A distinction was made between "A" territory, near the large population centers, and "B" territory, further away. The cost of moving one ton in "A" territory ranged from .236 Manchurian currency for a half-kilometer, to .826 for 9½-10 kilometers. For points further from the railroads, the cost was .801 for 11 kilometers in "A" territory, and .851 in "B" territory.

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