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Socio-Historical Factors Driving Changes in Local Commons in Korea: *Focusing on Common Pastures on Jeju Island*

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Abstract

This study examines the historical and social factors that have been driving the development and transformation of common pastures on Jeju Island since premodern times and categorizes those factors, helping to establish a social theory, change-inspired approach to understanding the commons and their changes in South Korea. This study holds that mainstream approaches that focus on the microeconomic choices of individual commoners—particularly the neoinstitutionalist approach—are too limited in scope to capture and explain the complex changes that have engulfed commons in Korea, a society that has a tumultuous modern and contemporary history involving colonization, civil war, decades of state violence, and a strong drive for development and industrialization. This study traces the history of pastureland in Jeju and particularly focuses on the institutional and policy factors on the state side and the industrial and technological factors on the market side that have driven the transformation of common pastures on the island in modern times.

Keywords: Local commons, common pastures on Jeju Island, social change, local community, state, market

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Introduction

An old community that has existed for a long time at a given location is one that has learned to meet its basic needs by utilizing available natural resources, including forests, pastureland, rivers, ponds, and the sea. The community will also most likely have established practices to ensure the sustainable use and management of such resources. The concept of commons essentially refers to the resources and practices alike that local communities have been using, since premodern times, to ensure their survival and livelihood.

Commons research began somewhat later in South Korea compared to the rest of the world, but grew quickly in the 2010s (Yoon 2022). Jeju Island, off the southern coast of the peninsula and the largest of all Korean islands, has been vital to commons research in Korea. The island is indeed the central subject matter of a series of recent publications on the topic, including *Gongdong jawon-ui seom, Jeju* (Jeju, an Island of Commons) (Choe et al. 2016), *Jeju-ui maeul-gwa gongdong jawon* (*Villages and Commons in Jeju*) (Choe et al. 2017), and *Commons Perspectives in South Korea: Context, Fields, and Alternatives* (Choe et al. 2022).

The conservation and use of commons has for centuries made up an integral part of the lives of ordinary people on Jeju. The volcanic island, featuring the tall Hallasan Mountain in it center along with 368 smaller parasitic volcanoes, has been a natural haven of grassland, fisheries, and forests that require communities to work together to develop and manage. Some of these commons, such as common pastures, still remain in use to this day (J. Kim 2019). Incidentally, the pasture is the central metaphor used in "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin 1968), the seminal study by Garrett Hardin that sparked international discourse on the commons decades ago.

The majority of the common pastures on Jeju Island are found in what locals refer to as the *jungsangan* zone around Hallasan Mountain. The zone contains unique topographical features, such as *oreum*, or small independent volcanoes, *gotjawal*, or forests that have been formed over what was once lava-covered areas of hilly land, and surprisingly vast grassland. The

jungsangan zone specifically refers to the area, some 200 to 600 meters in altitude, between the shoreline and the summit of Hallasan. The coastal area, less than 200 meters in altitude, has been home to major human settlements along with farms. The *jungsangan* zone, featuring a relatively mild and wet climate, has been traditionally used to graze cattle since the first state-owned horse ranches were created on Jeju in the days when the island was under the control of the Yuan Empire. Much of the grassland found in this area is thus a result of human practices that have been cultivated for hundreds of years (Jeju hwangyeong undong yeonhap 2020, 30–32).

The red volcanic ash soil is another quintessential feature of Jeju Island. The soil is less than amenable to farming, as it lacks the ability to retain the nutrients and water necessary for the growth of plants. Locals have thus resorted to *jinap nongbeop*, or the practice of stomping down on the ground after seeding, to enhance productivity of the land. Since the task was impossible for any single farming family to complete, farmers have taken to mobilizing their horses or oxen together to stomp on their seeded plots of land. The centrality of livestock to the actual practices of local farming has been at the basis of the myriad practices Jeju islanders have developed and maintained to manage their common pastures (J. Kim 2021).

Common pastures have also served as sources of the natural fertilizer needed for farming. Cow manure provides soil with much-needed nutrients. Ranchers would leave piles of manure on designated spots on pastureland, which local farmers accessed according to their turns. Locals have been managing pasture associations for the purpose of managing the tie between ranching and farming. These associations have been ruled according to the principle of reciprocity, requiring participants to care for one another's livestock and share the grass fodder and wood for fuel that they obtained from the pastures. An important task for Jeju villages has been to document and enforce these rules to ensure everyone's access to the common pastures. By motivating locals to work together in upholding these rules and the promise of reciprocity they embody, common pastures formed the socioeconomic backdrop against which local villages have been formed and grown (Choe 2013; Jeon et al. 2016; Kim and Kang 2015). Common pastures are vernacular commons in that they are the pivots of unique local

customs and traditions, such as the *baekjungje* 百中祭 ritual that locals perform to express hopes for the fertility of their livestock, and the *hwaip* 火入 practice of proactively burning shrubs down to foster the growth of grass.

The common pastures on Jeju Island have not always been in the care of villages. Throughout the two successive dynasties of Goryeo (918–1392) and Joseon (1392–1896), many of these pastures were property of the national government and were specifically tasked with grazing horses for military purposes. Locals' access to these pastures was strictly controlled. Ironically, these pastures became the commons as we know them today when Korea was occupied by the Japanese, not as a result of locals taking the initiative, but as a result of the Japanese forcing them to take care of the grassland. Since the end of the colonial era, the common pastures have been disappearing and shrinking on Jeju under the Korean government's uncompromising drive to develop the entire island into a tourist destination.

Scholars have mainly attributed the decline of commons to two historical factors: the so-called *first enclosure*, when common pastures were turned into privatized ranches for exclusive ownership, and the *second enclosure*, accelerated by a conscious legislative act that accelerated privatization of the commons as a way to enhance agricultural productivity in response to the soaring demand for food from rapidly growing populations. For our purposes of understanding the history and practices of commons in Korea, however, we need to look for historical and social factors unique to the evolution of Korean society. Even if we limit the temporal scope of our research to the 20th century, we will find a far more varied list of socio-historical factors that have prompted changes in Korean commons. This list would include the official land surveys organized by the Japanese colonial government, introduction of the modern concept of property rights accompanying forest surveys, the collapse of local communities amid the Korean War, the introduction of waterworks and modern farming machinery as well as chemical fertilizers, the diverse pressures toward modernization (including the Saemaeul Movement), the reign of developmentalism and the commoditization/privatization of natural resources, and the decades-long exodus of population from rural villages to cities that has forced changes in the organization and properties of local communities.

The common pastures of Jeju, studied extensively by Korean commons researchers as a quintessentially Korean example of the local commons, were formed during the Japanese occupation of Korea, but were abandoned and forgotten after Korea's emancipation, as events like the Jeju Uprising of 1948–1949 and the Korean War, which broke out in 1950, led to the extinction of many local communities. The heavy-handed developmental drive of military dictatorship (1960s through the 1980s), which was inherited by elected governments even after Korea's democratization in the 1990s and beyond, continued to shrink remaining common pastures, depriving them of their socioeconomic importance to local communities. It is therefore impossible to comprehend how these common pastures of Jeju have changed over the decades through the common-pool resource (CPR) theory alone, as this particular approach focuses on how communities *succeed* in sustaining and managing their common resources. This study shall instead focus on identifying and categorizing the socio-historical factors that have shaped and affected common pastures in Jeju since premodern times in the hopes of helping to establish a perspective, rooted in social change theory, on how the commons have changed in Korea.

Literature Review

Neoinstitutionalist Approach and its Limits

The commons became an important topic of international discourse when Garrett Hardin published his now seminal article, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in *Science* in 1968. Hardin specifically used the example of a common pasture to argue that, without external constraints on the use of the common grassland, the grassland will ultimately fall into disuse as individuals graze their cattle on such common land as much as they can as the principle of maximizing self-interest would dictate. Hardin concludes that, in order to prevent such a tragedy, the commons should either be divided up and sold to private proprietors who have a natural interest in managing the commons they own or be placed directly under the control of

the centralized administration (Hardin 1968).

Hardin's study soon generated much buzz in various disciplines of the social sciences, with scholars of demographics, anthropology, jurisprudence, political science, sociology, and public administration widely citing his essay and multiple scholars questioning or affirming the theoretical and empirical validity of Hardin's model of the commons (McCay and Acheson 1987).

Elinor Ostrom emerged particularly prominent among these scholars by uncovering actual examples from around the world of how local communities successfully maintain commons like pastures, fisheries, forests, and water for irrigation without resorting to either privatization or external (administrative) control. Ostrom regarded such commons as economic goods that are contestable and non-exclusive. She thus renames them "common-pool resources" or CPRs. Ostrom dedicated the rest of her career to determining the principles or mechanisms by which users of certain CPRs readjust and coordinate their relations to ensure the continued reproduction of such resources (Ostrom 1990), thus laying the basis for modern international commons research.

The neoinstitutionalist school of commons research led by Ostrom thus focuses on the internal characteristics and dynamics of commons, seeking to develop general theories of collective behaviors involved in their management (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom et al. 1994; Poteete et al. 2010). Scholars of the Ostromian leaning have been continuing her lifetime work of clarifying the "institutional design principles" of the commons (Baggio et al. 2016; Cox et al. 2010).

The international commons research community, on the whole, tends to focus on examples of successful commons or certain practices that have succeeded in conserving the commons with a view to understanding the factors and mechanisms of such success (National Research Council et al. 2002; Armitage 2005; Cox et al. 2010). *The Drama of the Commons* (National Research Council et al. 2002) is a good example in which multiple commons researchers explore what would make it possible to ensure the sustainable use and stable management of the commons, examining the internal rules for cooperation and coordination and against overuse and freeriding.

The neoinstitutionalist approach that focuses on individual users'

choices at the microeconomic level, however, is unsuited to explaining the change and evolution of the commons in many non-western societies, like Korea, that have undergone colonization, compressed modernization, state violence, and civil war and where macro-structural powers have affected the commons far more before individuals had a choice. The speed and intensity of social changes that have swept through Korean society have constantly exposed the commons of rural communities to new and varied threats. The management of commons in societies like this cannot rely solely upon the contestability and non-exclusivity of the resources at hand.

International and Korean Studies on Common Pastures

The majority of studies conducted outside Korea dealing with common pastures can be largely divided into two types: First, those which examine how the practices of managing common pastures vary by region, and second, those assessing and analyzing why common pastures are under-used.

Salzer et al. (2020) and Tadie and Fischer (2017) are examples of the first group of studies. Salzer et al. examines differences in pasture-tending practices between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Tadie and Fischer reviews differences in how two villages, Hamar and Bashada, both found in the lower Omo region of south Ethiopia, manage their common pastures. The former attributes the difference in use of common pastures to the difference in local abilities to cooperate in the aftermath of the collapse of socialism. The authors, who demonstrate their theory with a field experiment, conclude that active communication is key to the successful management of common pastures. The latter reveals that cooperation needed to manage CPRs does not always follow established internal rules of resource management, as governance can also occur depending on the results of negotiations and the general rule of reciprocity. Tadie and Fisher compare the residents of Hamar and Bashada in how they each govern their common pastures, now that those pastures continue to contract in size, and examine how the different villages adapt to changing institutions. The authors conclude that negotiations and reciprocity between individual users are more important to

effective governance of the commons than are rigid internal rules. These two studies reveal how the management of CPRs differs by region, while also underscoring the gap between categorical rules of management and actual practices of governance.

Then there are studies focusing on how and why existing common pastures are ignored and under-used by members of local communities. Common pastures on Jeju are a good example in this case, with more and more villages opting to sell their common grassland to developers because the pastures remain largely underused by locals. Brossette et al. (2022) and Shimada (2015) examine similar cases outside Korea. The former applies Ostrom's institutional design principles to German pastures. The latter seeks to identify ways to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources that have secondarily been formed by local traditions of using local pastures even when those resources no longer hold as much direct value to locals. These two studies exemplify how mainstream commons researchers apply the CPR approach to understand even the under-use of common resources.

Some Korean researchers have attempted to examine and understand how existing common pastures in Korea have been turned into new common resources for local communities to utilize or capitalize upon (J. Kim 2019; Choe and Kim 2016; Y. Jeong 2018). These studies explore how locals have used their common pastures to revitalize and rebuild their communities through alternative use of the plots of land now that locals are raising less and less livestock.

The present study bears certain similarities to the aforementioned Korean studies in that it, too, examines the historical evolution of common pastures over and beyond the framework provided by the CPR approach. However, this study differs in that its main focus is on identifying a comprehensive range of social, political, economic, and institutional factors that have effected such evolution through a multifaceted and retrospective examination of common pastures on Jeju.

Common Pastures on Jeju before Korea's Liberation from Japan

Let us begin surveying the history of common pastures on Jeju. The first official record specifically noting the existence of common pastures maintained by local villages appeared in the 1930s when the Japanese surveyed the land of Korea that they had come to occupy. The birth of these pastures, however, dates far back in time.

Goryeo Period: The Yuan Dynasty Develops Large-Scale Pastures on Jeju

An independent kingdom known as Tamna had existed on Jeju Island since ancient times, but the island ultimately merged with the rest of Korea under the Goryeo dynasty in 1105 CE. Horse and ox farming had been prevalent across Jeju since the early days of the Goryeo dynasty when the Tamna practices still held sway in the region. After Jeju became part of Goryeo, local farmers generally used oxen to help with farming (I. Kim 2005, 82).

After establishing the largest empire on earth under Kublai Khan's rule in the 13th century, the Yuan dynasty of China went on to make Goryeo its tributary state and to establish the Tamna Government General on Jeju, which ruled the island in effect for over a century (1275 to 1384). The pastures that had been developed in Jeju under Goryeo rule thus became nationalized as the Yuan dynasty's assets specifically tasked with producing horses for Yuan soldiers. The first-ever horse ranch installed by the Yuan dynasty on Jeju was Tamna mokjang (Tamna Ranch), created by the Mongols themselves in 1276 on the Susan prairie, between Gujwa and Seongsan, for the purpose of raising the horses needed for the conquest of the Southern Song and Japan. This installation marked the beginning of horse ranching in the *jungsangan* zone of Jeju (Kang 2013). For a century afterward, Jeju served as a base for military horse production for the Yuan empire (Kim and Kang 2015, 36–38).

Joseon Period: Managing National Pastures Known as Sipsojang

The Joseon dynasty was established in 1392 after toppling the Goryeo

dynasty. Throughout the Joseon period (1392–1896), the Joseon government divided the entire *jungsangan* zone encircling Hallasan Mountain into 10 districts and in each ran a national pasture known as a *sipsojang*. The Joseon government maintained tight control over operation of these pastures as they were used mainly to raise military hoses. Gyeongguk Daejeon (Great Code for State Administration), the constitution of Joseon, had specific provisions pertaining to the management of *sipsojang* (Nam 1969, 674) and they were strictly off-limits to Jeju farmers. The Joseon government enforced laws to keep the grass growing on these plots of land by prohibiting locals from farming on or near them.

Mokmajang, as these official ranches were known to locals during the Goryeo and Joseon periods, were a source of local grievances, as Jeju islanders were regularly conscripted into building the *jatseong* (the stone fences demarcating the pastures) or raising horses on behalf of the government. Jeju Island naturally lacked fertile farmland due to the prevalence of rough volcanic soil rife with rocks and pebbles. The existence of government pastures all across the island further limited the amount of available land, exposing Jeju islanders to the danger of frequent famine. In fact, hunger often forced locals to poach on government pastures. Joseon's King Sejong opened up some of the government pastureland to locals for farming in the 24th year of his reign (1442), only to take the privilege away shortly afterward (Nam 2003, 498). The only reward Jeju islanders could reap from having these government pastures and being forced to raise horses for the state was an exemption from military conscription. These government-owned pastures disappeared in 1895.

There is a report that locals in Ojo-ri, Seongsan-eup, Jeju, had established an *umagye*, or pasture association, of their own, in the 1860s when the Joseon dynasty was in its final phases (Hanguk munhwawon yeonhaphoe jeju teukbyeol jachidohoe 2010, 156). An *umagye* is a voluntary local organization in which members work together to take turns performing certain duties that are necessary for raising livestock. The record suggests that, by the late Joseon period, Jeju residents were able to raise their livestock on pastures other than *sipsojang*. The *jungsangan* zone became no man's land amid the collapse of the Joseon dynasty and dawn of the Korean Empire (1897–1910). The

umagye that had begun to crop up in the late Joseon period likely became the central organizations through which locals managed their pastures and livestock.

Colonial Period: The Institutionalization of Common Pastures

In 1910, Japan forcibly annexed Joseon, officially ending the short-lived Korean Empire and colonizing all of Korea. In March 1912, the Japanese promulgated the Edict of Civil Affairs and the Edict of Real Estate Registration for Korea, institutionalizing the private ownership of land. In August the same year, the Japanese launched detailed land surveys across Korea, establishing the modern relations of ownership on land and the basis for levying landholding taxes. Having selected Jeju as a sample survey region, the Japanese surveyed the island from 1913 to 1917, establishing borders between villages. The Japanese also assigned the *sipsojang* to the care of different villages during this period.

The Japanese Government-General of Korea established the Forest Land Clearing Plan in 1933 to assign common pastureland to different villages. It also amended the Edict of Real Estate Registration so that villages could register village-owned land, or *riyuji* 里有地, which was done in an attempt to increase livestock farming and its productivity. Afraid that increasing pastureland would enable Joseon to enhance its own military capability, the Japanese confiscated all pastures across the Korean Peninsula during the surveys (Nam 1969, 671). Yet they made the decision to retain pastures and local associations in charge of running them on Jeju. In the early 1930s, Jeju islanders saw 22 of their voluntary pasture associations change in legal status to pasture cooperatives (Kim and Kang 2015, 106). The overall size of common pastures grew as villagers were able to add more land that they either bought or received as donations from local individuals (Jeju teukbyeol jachido munhwawon yeonhaphoe 2013, 835). This is the historical reason for the complexity of ownership rights involving common pastures on Jeju today, with some still nationally owned while others have been owned by public or private entities. Privately-owned pastures feature a variety of owners as well, including individuals, village associations, and

pasture cooperatives. The complexity of property rights has prevented the easy sale and disposal of pastureland in Jeju, forcing double decision-making by both village associations and pasture cooperatives in some cases.

The pasture cooperatives set up by the Japanese in Jeju are now commonly referred to as *maeul gongdong mokjang* or "common village pastures." The strict control of the central government (or foreign power, in the case of the Yuan dynasty) over these pastures since the early Goryeo period all but collapsed with the end of the Joseon dynasty. The Japanese then let Jeju islanders reclaim these pastures as their own through pasture cooperatives, done to ensure the efficiency of colonial management. The Japanese also switched horse farming on Jeju to oxen farming so they could obtain the beef, which would then be canned for military foodstuffs (Takano 1996). The establishment of common village pastures and cooperatives, in other words, was part of the Japanese efforts to prepare for the Pacific War.

Socio-Historical Factors Driving Changes in Common Pastures after Korea's Liberation

Jeju Uprising and the Korean War: Accelerating the Decline of Common Pastures

By the time of Korea's liberation in 1945, Jeju villagers had a variety of internal rules, including the treaties governing their pasture cooperatives, that could help them overcome "the tragedy of the commons" when it came to their common pastures. National liberation seemed to occasion new opportunities for villagers to reconfigure and develop these common pastures. Those opportunities, however, never materialized. Common pastures weakened and began to die out with the end of the colonial era. The first and foremost political event driving this change was the Jeju Uprising, lasting from 1947 to 1954. That event was a collective trauma to Jeju islanders, as the Namjoseon nodongdang (Southern Korea Worker's Party), representing socialist sympathizers in South Korea, and right-wing groups clashed with each other both ideologically and physically, leading to dozens of massacres. It is estimated that Jeju lost nearly 30 percent of its population during these years, with hundreds of villages

burned to the ground. As the armed insurgents had their major bases in the mountainous regions and *jungsangan* villages, the right-wing Korean government ordered the destruction of those villages in November 1947, forcibly removing residents to coastal areas and incinerating their homes and property.

The Korean War then broke out on June 25, 1950, adding further to the bloodbath that was already underway on Jeju. The South Korean military and police persecuted left-wing ideologues, activists, and suspected sympathizers without proper trial or due process, labeling them "potential enemies" ready to join forces with the North Koreans. The Korean War came to an end with a ceasefire agreement signed on July 27, 1953. The Jeju police bureau officially ended the Jeju Uprising a year later on September 21, 1954, when it lifted restrictions on access to certain parts of Hallasan. After this police bureau action, the Korean government began supporting the restoration of the incinerated *jungsangan* villages and resettlement of residents, but the majority of those former residents refused to return, haunted as they were by memories of the slaughters there. Some of the *jungsangan* villages thus became "forever lost" (Cho 1998, 18–20).

The common pastures that had belonged to the destroyed villages became ownerless, and some of the wealthy local families and savvy real estate brokers falsified documents to claim the land as their own. With the majority of villagers killed or missing, the remaining few had to pay heavy taxes on their common pastures. Unable to afford those taxes, the remaining villagers in some cases sold their pastures to landowners and developers for little more than a few sacks of rice (S. Yoon 2006; Cho 1998).

Transfer of Village Assets to Municipal Governments and the Commoditization of Landownership

The South Korean state adopted an uncompromising developmentalist stance after the Korean War, spurring the growth of heavy and manufacturing industries at the expense of rural communities and their commons. The series of military dictatorships that ruled Korea from the 1960s to the 1980s forced villages to relinquish their assets and property to local governments,

depriving these villages of ownership and self-governing control over those assets. The military dictatorship that had come to power enacted the Jibang jachi-e gwanhan imsi jochi (Temporary Measures on Local Self-Government) in 1961, naming *gun* (counties) as the basic unit of municipal self-government, placing *eup* and *myeon*, as well as their territory and common wealth, under the control of their respective municipal governments. This meant that villages would lose their common pastures and other such common wealth to municipal governments. The common law in Korea had long recognized villages as legal entities of sorts, but the new local self-government law denied that tradition in making municipal governments the effective overseers of village commons (Yun 1987; Cho 1998) and thereby effectively claiming these village assets as national or public property.

The same dictatorial government went on to establish the Imya soyugwon ijeon deunggi teukbyeolbeop (Special Act on Transfer and Registration of Forest Land) on May 21, 1969. This Act was meant to remedy and restore titles to forest land whose ownership had changed hands, via sales, inheritance, or exchange, before January 1, 1960, and that had not been registered due to the death of one or more parties involved in the transaction or other such reasons. This Act effectively allowed real estate brokers to legally claim common pastures of villages destroyed during the Jeju Uprising as their own. Remaining villagers, too poor to afford rents on these large pastures now privatized, were thus denied access. Financiers came in to own these pastures as their private assets. Surviving residents of *jungsangan* villages were too afraid to stand up to the military dictatorship to argue their ownership (Cho 1998).

As these pastures were either privatized or claimed by municipal governments, locals were forced to pay rents to use them. Those unable to pay no longer had access (Yun 1987). Jeju islanders began to organize efforts in the 1980s to reclaim the common pastures they had lost, with some *jungsangan* village taking legal and administrative actions against local governments. The majority of villages, however, could not restore their ownership, as their pastures were either privatized long ago or had first been claimed by municipal governments and later sold to private owners (Cho 1998). Privatized common pastures were then sold again to speculators amid the development boom on Jeju. Even public land under the control of municipal

governments was sold to private developers in the name of development by zealous bureaucrats or leaders of local governments. The decline of traditional agriculture and livestock farming also accelerated the shift of the local paradigm on common pastures from commons to real estate. Nominal owners of remaining pastures sold their commons to developers in the 1980s and afterward, sparking intense legal and political controversies while the rights of traditional and customary users were neglected.

Common Pastures Downsized and Pushed Away under Development Policy

1) The 1960s through the 1980s: Privatization of Common Pastures into Tourist Resources

The military dictatorships in Korea began pushing for development in the 1960s, transforming Jeju into a tourist destination. The common pastures in the *jungsangan* zone were thus repurposed as plots of land supporting primary and tertiary industries. Development of Jeju officially began in 1962 with tourism the center of attention. The Korean state developed numerous golf courses throughout the island with the aim of attracting foreign tourists. In the late 1960s, corporations and wealthy outsiders began to acquire nationally owned land and common pastures on Jeju with the goal of creating corporate ranches so as to benefit from the Korean state's policy of supporting the livestock industry. By the 1970s, non-islanders and businesses began acquiring nearly all remaining plots of land across the island, including not only *jungsangan* pastures but even land in the coastal areas and elsewhere, speculating to profit from the development boom (S. Yoon 2006; G. Lee 1995; S. Lee 2000). The remaining common pastures became the main targets of developers in the 1980s who were eager to develop more golf courses (S. Yoon 2006).

2) The 1990s: Legislative Spurt to Develop Jeju and Accelerate Land Sales

The collapse of common pastures and associated traditions accelerated in the 1990s under the persistent pressure for development that further

prompted the sale of land. The development regime on Jeju incentivized real estate transactions that enabled real estate companies to accumulate ever-growing wealth. The Jeju government effectively served the interest of real estate developers in the process. The land sold during this time included publicly and commonly owned plots. Plots transitioned into exclusive property of corporations, while shorelines were reclaimed and *jungsangan* plots of land that included common pastures were increasingly sold, all toward dramatically reducing the available amount of farmland.

Accelerating these changes were the Jejudo gaebal teukbyeolbeop (Special Act on the Development of Jeju), enacted in 1991, and the Masterplan for Development of Jeju Island based on that Act. These legislative developments spurred the establishment of plans to develop three industrial parks and 20 tourist districts on the island. The Jeju provincial government welcomed these plans for developing tourism as a local specialized industry, mainly by creating golf courses targeting foreign tourists who were expected to spend big money on the island. Common pastures in the *jungsangan* zone, featuring beautiful landscapes and already lush grassland, were sold one by one to large corporations that eagerly turned them into golf clubs and resorts. The introduction of democratic local self-government in 1995 meant that Koreans were now able to elect the heads of their local governments directly. Candidates running for local government positions thus actively pledged to attract more foreign capital to their respective districts by accelerating development. The *jungsangan* zone of Jeju thus became the foremost stage for excessive and poorly thought-out development (Jeju hwangyeong undong yeonhap 2020, 46).

3) Since the 2000s: Establishment of the Jeju Free International City and Foreign Capital

The Jeju Free International City and its development thereof had been the highlight of the Jeju provincial government's policy agenda since the 2000s, with provincial policymakers intent on actively attracting major foreign investors. Corporate developers continued to acquire common pastures during this period to create golf courses, resorts, and other tourist resources,

with the pastures of Seonheul 1-ri, Ongpo, and Sineom sold precisely for that purpose. Pasture cooperatives in Geumak, Jeoji, and Sanyang similarly handed over parts of their common pastureland to developers (S. Kim 2006).

The Jeju provincial government set out to increase external investment in local villages as well in the 2010s. *Maeul boyu toji tuja annae* (Guide on Investing in Village-Owned Land), published by the Jeju government in 2012, introduced the benefits and incentives of investing in Jeju, including recent legislative changes, as well as available plots of land owned by pro-investment village groups, plots of land owned by villages across Jeju, and restricted or forbidden activities on land of each class within preserved areas (Jeju teukbyeol jachido 2012). The Jeju provincial government actively led the process of selling common pastures, particularly to Chinese investors.

Common pastures were the popular target of this process for a number of reasons. First, there was existing and growing pressure toward development in the *jungsangan* zone. The *jungsangan* zone has traditionally been a buffer zone between the more populated coastal areas and Hallasan on which development has been severely limited. As coastal areas had already been urbanized and much of the available land in those areas had been sold, the pressure for development spread into the *jungsangan* zone instead. Second, common pastures were available for very low prices. They provided attractive options for investors as they boasted beautiful landscapes and lower prices than available land in coastal areas. Third, some of the common pastures available were large in size. Being able to acquire large parcels of land at once can significantly reduce the cost of transaction for developers. Fourth, common pastures owned by village cooperatives were also far easier to acquire, with less hassle in negotiations and bargaining, than plots of land owned by individuals.

Modernization of Farming Machinery and Introduction of Chemical Fertilizers

This study does not claim that only macroeconomic, structural, and institutional factors were at play in the decline of common pastures on Jeju. The choices made by individual farmers played an important role as well. The acquisition

of modern farming machinery radically altered the place of human labor and manpower in agricultural production. Prior to the 1960s, common pastures were integral to agriculture in general on Jeju because horses and oxen were needed to stomp on seeded and/or fertilized grounds as local soil was mostly volcanic ash. The introduction of motor-powered farming machinery, on the other hand, forced a major change in the way of life and agricultural practices that crucially depended on cooperation, accelerating the disappearance of *pumasi* culture in which locals exchanged labor in a reciprocal manner (Mun 1980, 113). Mechanized tillers and threshers made their way to Jeju in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, respectively. The introduction of mechanical tractors further diminished the need for village associations for ground-stomping or weeding. The decline of demand for livestock for agriculture dismantled pasture associations and cooperatives, threatening the very existence of common pastures (Mun 1980, 113). The Green Revolution of the 1970s also brought chemical fertilizers and pesticides to Jeju, further diminishing the need for common pastures.

Opening Up to Outside Markets and the Commercialization of Agriculture

The development of roads and communications networks since the 1970s radically increased exchanges between Jeju and the rest of Korea, exposing Jeju's agricultural produce to growing demand elsewhere. Farming, which had been largely subsistence-based until then, thus quickly became commercialized (S. Yoon 2006; G. Lee 1995; S. C Lee 2000). Since the 1970s, Jeju farmers have transitioned to cash crops and livestock products (Yang et al. 1990; S. Yoon 2006).

Cultivation of the *onju* variety of tangerines on Jeju was what really prompted the massive and speedy shift to cash crops. As local farmers began to cultivate more and more tangerines that could sell in the larger Korean market instead of raising livestock or other subsistence crops, common pastures fell further into disuse and neglect. Local farms increasingly came to grow single crops only, such as tangerines and root vegetables (radishes, potatoes and carrots) that experienced growing consumer demand over on the Korean mainland. Single-crop farming on a large scale required the

massive injection of manpower at the same time, further accelerating the mechanization of agriculture and the demise of reciprocity and cooperation in farming practices (S. Yoon 2006).

The expansion of commercial farming of agricultural and livestock produce (e.g., beef and dairy) also supported the transformation of *jungsangan* pastures into farmland or corporate-scale livestock ranches. The growth of capitalist farming came to alter local perceptions of land as well, from a common resource to a commodity to be capitalized upon.

Cattle Price Fluctuations and the Decline of Livestock Farming

There was soaring demand for livestock farming in Korea throughout the 1960s and 1970s, causing cattle prices as well as the number of cows being raised to continually rise. The result was nationwide oversupply by the early and mid-1980s, causing the prices of cattle to plummet in 1984 (G. Jeong 2006, 135–136). The Korean government responded to this crisis by abruptly suspending beef imports from overseas in 1985 without consulting the governments of beef-exporting countries, opening itself up to criticism from the United States and elsewhere as a result. The situation forced Seoul to reopen beef trade negotiations, ultimately resuming beef imports according to fixed quotas by 1988. Only 14,200 tons of beef were imported in 1988, the first year the beef trade returned, but that amount quickly jumped to 50,000 tons in 1989, while the market share of domestically grown beef fell to 62.8 percent (Yu 1998, 18).

The extreme volatility in cattle prices and the radical drop in the market share of domestic beef following resumption of the beef trade caused many livestock farmers to leave the industry. This meant further decline in the status of common pastures in Jeju. As the children of farmers left rural communities in droves for jobs in cities, the likelihood of local communities strengthening their ties with their common pastures nearly disappeared (Choe and Kim 2017, 59–60).

Analysis and Discussion

Common Pastures on Jeju Today

The number of common pastures has more than halved, from 143 in 1945 to 77 in 2024, and of the 77 pastures, 26 are currently abandoned. This disappearance has been accelerating over the years.

Figure 1 shows the overlap of common pastures that were presumed to have gone extinct and major development sites across Jeju as of 2014. The map affirms that the majority of development sites are concentrated in the *jungsangan* zone. Moreover, development projects in this zone were much larger in scale, with a few exceptions, than projects in coastal areas. Most involved creating golf courses, amusement parks, tourist centers, and resorts.

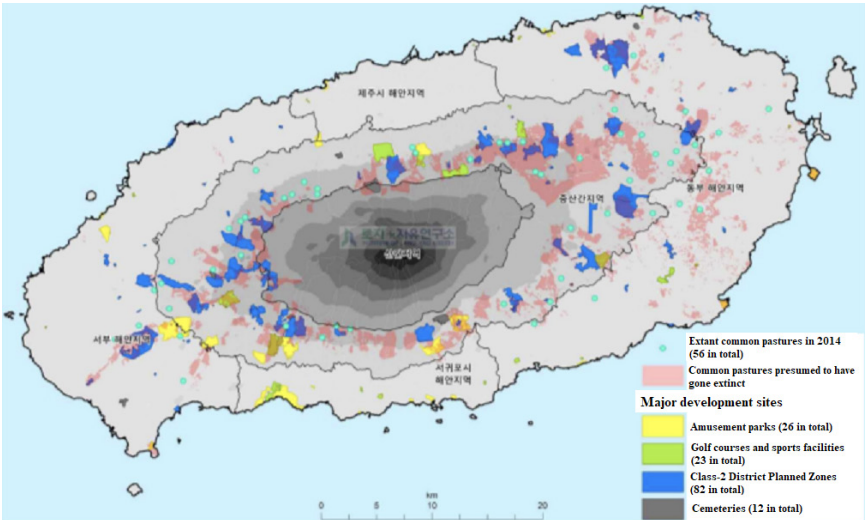

Figure 1. Overlap of disappearing common pastures and major development projects

Source: S. Kim (2016, 16).

Evolution of Pastures until the End of the Colonial Era

Table 1 provides a summary of the historical evolution of pastures on Jeju Island up to the end of Japanese occupation in 1945. Large-scale pastures on Jeju first came into being under Yuan control during the Goryeo period. The Yuan Empire established state-owned horse ranches in the eastern and western parts of Jeju in 1276 and 1277, respectively, to produce horses for military use. The Joseon era saw the creation of new state-owned horse ranches known as *sipsojang* that likewise served to produce military horses. These *sipsojang* continued operation until the last days of the Joseon dynasty in 1895. During the Korean Empire period (1897 to 1910), Jeju villages are believed to have managed their common pastures through organization of pasture associations of their own. Upon occupying and annexing Korea, the Japanese launched land and forest surveys nationwide in 1910 to establish ownership rights to existing land. Having ordered the dissolution of voluntary *umagye*, or pasture associations, across Jeju in 1933, the Japanese forced locals to form pasture cooperatives instead according to the colonial plan for forest clearing. These cooperatives raised oxen and cows on village pastures until 1945.

Institutional and Policy Factors behind the Changes in Common Pastures on Jeju

The factors that have led to major changes in common pastures across Jeju since Korea's liberation in 1945 can be roughly divided into two groups, as shown in Figure 2: The institutional and policy factors on the state side, on the one hand, and the industrial and technological factors on the market side, on the other.

The first and foremost state-side (institutional/policy) factor is the transfer of ownership and control over village property to municipal governments. Even during the colonial era, villages needed large sums of capital to establish and register their titles to their land. Land whose village ownership had not been registered was thus transferred to municipal governments after Korea's liberation, and was, in time, transferred to the state. The Korean state ordered the transfer of village property, including

Table 1. Pre-liberation Evolution of Pastures on Jeju

Period	Major historical events
Goryeo (918–1392)	– Unification of China by Yuan – Nationally owned horse ranches run (1276–1374). – Horse ranching on Jeju begun with installation of *dongamak* in Susanpyeong in eastern Jeju in 1276. – *Seoamak* installed on Saebyeoloreum Hill in west Jeju in 1277, directly under control of Tamna mokjang for production of military horses. – Uprising by *mokho* (horse ranchers) in 1374
Joseon (1392–1896)	– Development of state horse ranches proposed by Koh Deuk-jong in 1429. – *Mokmajang* (horse ranches) established and begin operation in accordance with Gyeongguk daejeon in 1485. – *Mokmajang* changed to *sipsojang* in 1704. – First-known *umagye* (voluntary livestock ranching associations) spotted in Ojo-ri, Seongsan-eup, in 1860. – Public horse ranching and conscription abolished in 1894. – State-owned horse ranches shut down and pastures slashed and burned to create farmland in 1895. Chronic shortages of farmland were the traditional source of poverty for Jeju, with little progress made in improving efficiency of state-owned horse ranches. *Sipsojang* closed down. – Common village pastures other than *sipsojang* known to have existed for villager use.
Korean Empire (1897–1910)	– Village pastures left as *no man's land*. – Villages presumed to have managed these pastures via pasture associations. – Bang Seong-chil's Uprising, 1898: Triggered by exorbitant taxes levied by bureaucrats on slash-and-burn farmers, who organized an uprising, demanding permission to continue farming on pasture land.
Japanese Occupation (1910–1945)	– Ownership rights established on the basis of land and forest surveys launched in 1910. – 119 village associations determined by Government-General to be in existence on Jeju as of 1926, 98 of which served trade and livelihood purposes. Many of these presumed to be pasture associations. – *Umagye* ordered to dissolve in 1933 (as recorded in local records of Sanghyo-dong). – Village pasture cooperatives formed pursuant to Japanese plan for forest clearing, with systematic participation of Jeju governor and local leaders, and transfer of individually owned plots of land in *sipsojang* and forests as well. – Pasture cooperatives formed in relation to acquired, rented, and donated plots of land, with focus on raising oxen and cows. – 116 village pasture cooperatives known to have been formed by 1943 according to official records. – Villagers unable to pay membership fees to cooperatives barred from access to pastures.

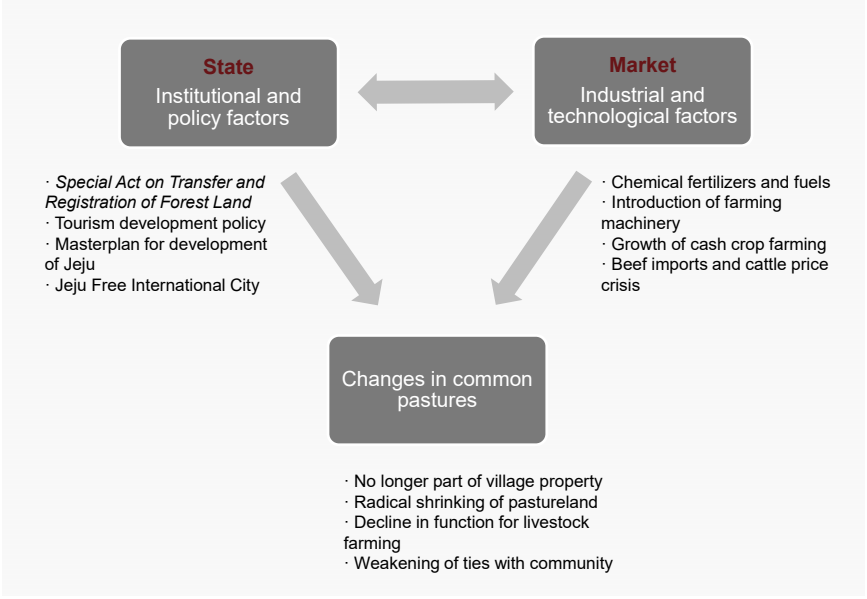

Figure 2. Institutional and policy factors on the state side

Source: Authors.

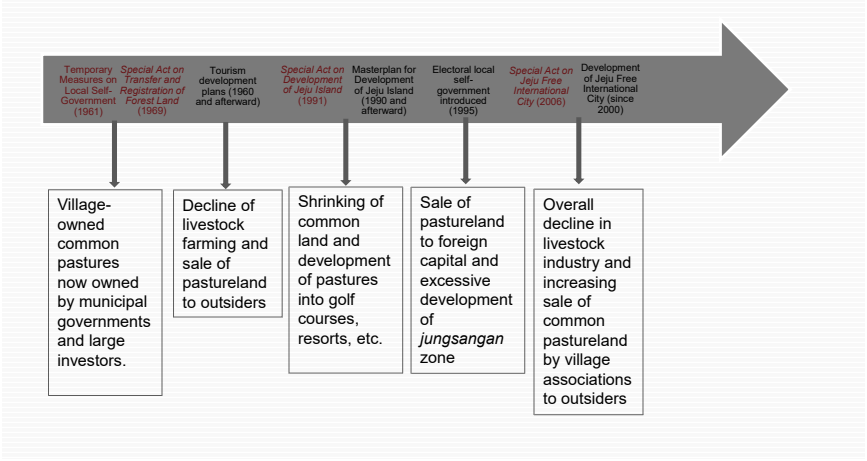

Figure 3. Institutional and policy factors and their effects over time

Source: Authors.

pastureland, to municipal governments under the Temporary Measures on Local Self-Government in the 1960s. Only some of these pastures were returned to village associations on Jeju in 1994. Meanwhile, the developmental policy that sought to make Jeju a tourist destination, coupled with the decline in local livestock farming, further accelerated the privatization of common pastures. Figure 3 shows a time series of how institutional and policy factors at the hands of the Korean state have affected common pastures on Jeju over time since the 1960s.

Industrial and Technological Factors behind the Changes to Common Pastures in Jeju

Second, industrial and technological factors, starting with the introduction of motor-powered farm machinery, have played as indispensable a role in accelerating the demise of common pastures in Jeju. The first mechanic tillers and threshers made their way to the island in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, respectively. As these machines replaced horses and oxen in farming, common pastureland quickly lost its central importance to local agriculture. The larger industrial trends also changed. Opening of the livestock industry in the 1980s caused cattle prices to plummet, significantly depriving the Jeju livestock industry of its competitiveness. Around the same time, Jeju farmers switched to farming lucrative cash crops, starting with the *onju* variety of tangerines, to cater to the national demand elsewhere in Korea. This switch has left common pastures in chronic underuse. Instead of investing capital and labor in managing these pastures, local pasture cooperatives elected to sell their pastureland to outsiders or turned the land into sites for real estate development.

Conclusion

Hardin warned the public of "the tragedy of the commons," viewing the overuse of common resources by greedy individuals as inevitable and therefore advocating private property and administration by the central

state. Ostrom sought to counter that argument by empirically demonstrating the successful use and conservation of local commons and identifying their institutional design principles. The case of common pastures in Jeju, however, defies either characterization. Rather, it illustrates that today's commons face the threat of extinction not from overuse, but from underuse.

This study surveys the socio-historical factors driving the underuse of common pastures on Jeju and affirms that multiple factors, issued by both the state and the market, have been at play. Common pastureland in Jeju is not the only type of commons in Korea facing extinction today. The transformation of agriculture and fisheries and the resulting loss of related profits have increasingly deprived local natural resources of their function and status as local commons. The dissolution of relationships and ties mediated by these commons, in turn, has led to the collapse of local communities as important economic actors.

This study highlights the importance of examining socio-historical factors in understanding how commons have changed in a society like Korea. Few can deny the fact that massive shifts in the nation's social and economic structures have accelerated the decline of common pastures on Jeju since the 20th century. The Japanese colonial government surveyed Korean land and forests in the early part of that century to establish state ownership of land that had long been owned and managed by local communities. The process unfolded in such an oppressive and forcible manner as to preclude any meaningful resistance by communities. The Korean War that followed the end of colonization, and the succession of violent military dictatorships afterward, further exerted profound impacts on local communities and their commons, often leading to their extinction. The land reforms that took place on both sides of the 38th parallel led to the categorical privatization or nationalization of community-owned land. The Jeju Uprising and the ensuing massacres of civilians further accelerated this process, causing numerous communities to collapse amid ideological and military conflict and threatening to eradicate commons that had existed since premodern times. The Korean state's insistence on developing Jeju into a tourist destination completed the transition of common pastures from community resources to mere real estate property to be capitalized upon for

private gain.

The destruction of local commons in Korea, in other words, is not a tragedy of the commons, but a tragedy of the community, as civil war and state violence upended that community, which had existed for millennia. A survey of this history reveals to us the shortcomings of mainstream approaches to commons research—whether neoinstitutionalist or enclosure-centered.

In order to understand and investigate how commons have changed in a society like Korea, it is critical to consider a wider and more complex range of socio-historical factors unique to that society. We need theoretical frameworks like the social change theory to identify historical and social factors that affect the formation, maintenance, collapse, and reconstruction of local commons of various types and to understand how these factors work.

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