

## **Capitalist Pigs: International Aid Agencies and Agricultural Development in South Korea, 1945–1961**

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To become a strong, independent nation, what Korea needed most were pigs. And, perhaps, some goats and chickens. This, at least, was the opinion of Thurl Metzger, an agronomist and farmer who in 1951 headed the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency's Heifer Project Committee. Metzger believed that South Korea's road to economic growth, agricultural self-sufficiency, and political stability rested on the backs of livestock and that the best path for South Korea's economic recovery and independence involved adopting western technologies—including western-bred animals and seeds—and developing scientific agricultural practices.

My project examines the role of people like Thurl Metzger, as well as the international aid organizations they worked for, in the transformation of the Republic of Korea's social and natural environments after World War II. It asks how and why agencies like the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) decided that South Korea needed a new ecology for it to succeed economically and politically. It analyzes development projects proposed or implemented by UNKRA and USAID, beginning with the end of Japanese colonization in 1945 and ending in 1961 when President Park Chung-hee introduced his first Five Year Plan. Although they worked separately, both UNKRA and USAID attempted to rationalize South Korea's natural resources through scientific management. Their plans included replacing Korean species—plant and animal, wild and domesticated—with species imported from the US, Europe, Japan, and elsewhere. Efforts concentrated first on agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and later included building power plants, irrigation schemes, and fertilizer factories. Combined, the projects undertaken by UNKRA and USAID, conducted in cooperation with and at the behest of the ROK government, transformed South Korea socially and ecologically.

The central aim of "Capitalist Pigs" is to provide understanding about the ways intensive development transformed South Korea's natural and social systems and how those systems adapted, or not. It is part of a larger research project focused on the ecological transformations across the Korean peninsula during the long twentieth century, from 1894 through to the early 2000s. For most of that time, Korea has been in a state of conflict, either as the object of imperial expansion, embroiled in armed combat, or subject to inter-Korean ideological competition. The larger project, "Conflict in the Land of the Morning Calm," explores broad ecological implications of near-constant struggle on the peninsula.