

# Felled Forests and Fallowed Fields: Establishing a Narrative of Ecological and Climate Change in Mongol-Era Goryeo\*

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Goryeo (918–1392) was a politically and commercially integrated part of the wider Mongol Empire (1206–1368), while also temporally situated in the difficult transition from the Medieval Warm Period (MWP) to the Little Ice Age (LIA). Yet narratives of Goryeo's incorporation into the Mongol world remain overwhelmingly focused on politics, economics, and culture. Since Alfred Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism*, scholars have increasingly been sensitive to the ecological impacts of imperialism and colonialism, while Geoffrey Parker has highlighted the integral role of climate in human history. This study seeks to combine these two approaches and argues that the confluence of Mongol imperialism and climate change was profoundly impactful on Goryeo's environment and ecologies. Invasion and incorporation into the Mongol Empire spurred processes of deforestation and agro-ecological transformation, as armies traversed the peninsula, populations were displaced, and capitals were (re)built. Therein, an arguably drier, cooler, and less stable climate compounded anthropocentric agro-ecological dislocation and sylvan ecological disruption. Consequently, political transitions, as in the 1258 fall of the Choe dictatorship and the end of Goryeo itself in 1392, cannot be separated from the climate destabilization of the MWP-LIA transition.

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