

MARE REGULA



Céline Minkyung Park

This project investigates how invisible social rules can be materialized through speculative design and ethnographic research.

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JEJU ISLAND IN KOREA

Jeju has historically been a resource-scarce region due to its volcanic geography, infertile soil, low agricultural productivity, and long-standing limitations in transportation to the mainland.



This image shows the soil conditions of Jeju Island. In this area, the ground consists mostly of solid rock, with only small amounts of soil mixed in.

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Under these conditions, residents developed strong self-sufficient ways of living, and haenyeo in particular made and used tools for their daily lives and labor from materials found in their surroundings, such as stone, wood, and seaweed. This practice was not merely a result of poverty, but can be understood as an important body of ecological and practical knowledge embedded within haenyeo culture.

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UNESCO-recognized haenyeo culture—the centuries-old tradition of Jeju Island's women divers—is globally celebrated for its solidarity, mutual care, and matriarchal resilience. Documentary films show haenyeo sharing their catch, helping elderly divers, singing work songs. Museum exhibitions highlight their economic contribution and environmental stewardship. This narrative is not false, but it is incomplete.

Through two weeks of immersive fieldwork living in Hado-ri village alongside haenyeo, sleeping in their homes, helping sort their catch, and sitting through hours of bulteok (communal changing hut) conversations, I began to perceive what external observers miss: beneath the surface of communal harmony lay sophisticated systems of surveillance, punishment, and bodily discipline that kept this community functioning across generations of dangerous ocean labor, crushing economic precarity, and patriarchal social structures that denied women education, autonomy, and choice.

The haenyeo community is notoriously guarded. As one elder told me: "We don't easily open our hearts to outsiders." It took weeks before conversations moved beyond pleasantries to testimonies like this, from haenyeo Yoon Mi-ja: "When we were young, the senior haenyeo were fierce. If three of us went in the water, they'd scream: 'Why only three when it must be five?' We had to come out immediately. Then they'd lock us in the changing room. 'You fucking bastards, come out now!' they'd yell. The next day, even if we brought our gear, they'd send us home. Sometimes we couldn't dive for days."

This wasn't trivial inconvenience—it was economic annihilation. In a context where haenyeo were sole breadwinners (Jeju saying: "When you birth a daughter, you've birthed money; a son, a mouth to feed"), one day without diving meant a household going hungry. Yet this history exists nowhere in museums, archives, or official records. Like many marginalized communities, haenyeo history lives in oral memory, passed grandmother to granddaughter in liminal spaces. As Yoon Mi-ja said: "When one haenyeo passes, an entire museum disappears."

With the haenyeo population declining from 30,000 in the 1960s to under 4,000 today—90% over age 60, average age 75—these memories are vanishing.

Methodology: Co-Design as Ethical Imperative

I worked intimately with three haenyeo: Lee Chu-bong (81), Kim Soon-deok (76), and Kim Hyun-soon (73). Building trust required more than interviews—it required becoming temporarily part of their world, eating at their tables, learning their jokes, understanding their silences. The testimonies I collected weren't extracted through formal ethnographic methods but emerged organically during what felt like casual gossip sessions in their homes, one-on-one conversations where they felt safe.

Every design decision was collaborative. I would sketch initial concepts, return to their homes, present the ideas, listen to their corrections and memories, revise, and repeat. Some memories were too painful; those we didn't use. Some testimonies they felt protective of; those remained private. Critically, the haenyeo themselves chose to participate in the final photo documentation—wearing these objects despite the shame and trauma they represented. This level of consent wasn't just ethical; it was epistemological. Without their full comprehension and agency at every stage, these objects would be extractive anthropology, not collaborative truth-telling.

The material choice was equally collaborative. Historically, haenyeo families were too poor to purchase tools. They gathered stones from beaches for diving weights, carved driftwood for tool handles, repurposed rope from discarded fishing nets. Following this tradition, we used ocean waste the haenyeo themselves had retrieved: plastic bottles, fishing line, buoys, netting. This wasn't aesthetic choice—it was conceptual collapse. These materials transformed symbols of contemporary ecological crisis into archives of historical social violence, making visible how multiple forms of harm accumulate in the same bodies, the same waters.

This project emerged from urgent speculation:

What if these unrecorded disciplinary practices had been materially documented? What visual form would they take if we could travel back and make them visible?

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Céline Park and several haenyeos visited an ocean waste site to collect discarded materials, which were later used to create the designed objects in Céline's project.

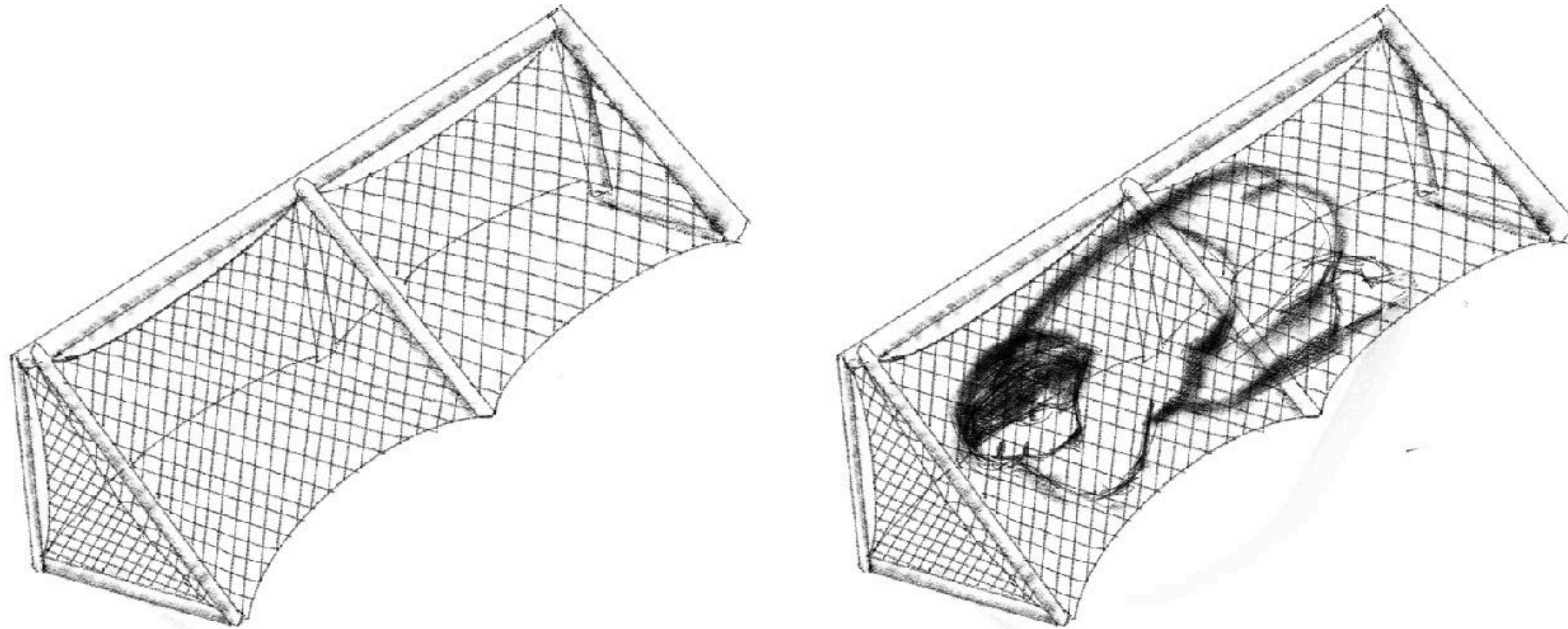
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Céline and the haenyeos washed and cleaned the marine waste collected from the Jeju coast in order to reuse it as materials for the design works.

SEA BAN

Jamgungul



A structure reimagining the bulteok (changing room) as a site of confinement. Testimony from Kim Soon-deok: "If we violated the five-person rule, the elders would lock the door with a metal key. We'd have to stand outside in our wetsuits while others dove. Sometimes for days."

The "minimum 5-person rule" existed for safety—fewer divers meant no one to rescue you if you didn't surface. But its enforcement was economic terrorism. Haenyeo worked without

safety equipment, in freezing water, holding their breath for minutes. Their labor supported entire extended families; men typically stayed home while women earned. One locked-out day didn't just mean lost income—it meant children going hungry, debt accumulating, household shame.

The Sea Ban materializes this double violence: a safety rule enforced through economic punishment, communal care maintained through bodily exclusion.



During this process, Céline visited Guldong, a village in Jeju, and spoke with haenyeos about the historical rules once practiced in the nearby community of Myeonsudong. Building trust with haenyeos is not easy, and many were initially opposed to the idea of recreating these disappeared rules. Some still remembered the older generation of haenyeos as particularly strict, which made them reluctant to revisit such memories. However, through sustained dialogue and the gradual development of relationships, they began to open up. Eventually, some acknowledged that the rules of the past had indeed been harsh. This process revealed a broader discomfort with sharing negative aspects of their community, especially with outsiders.

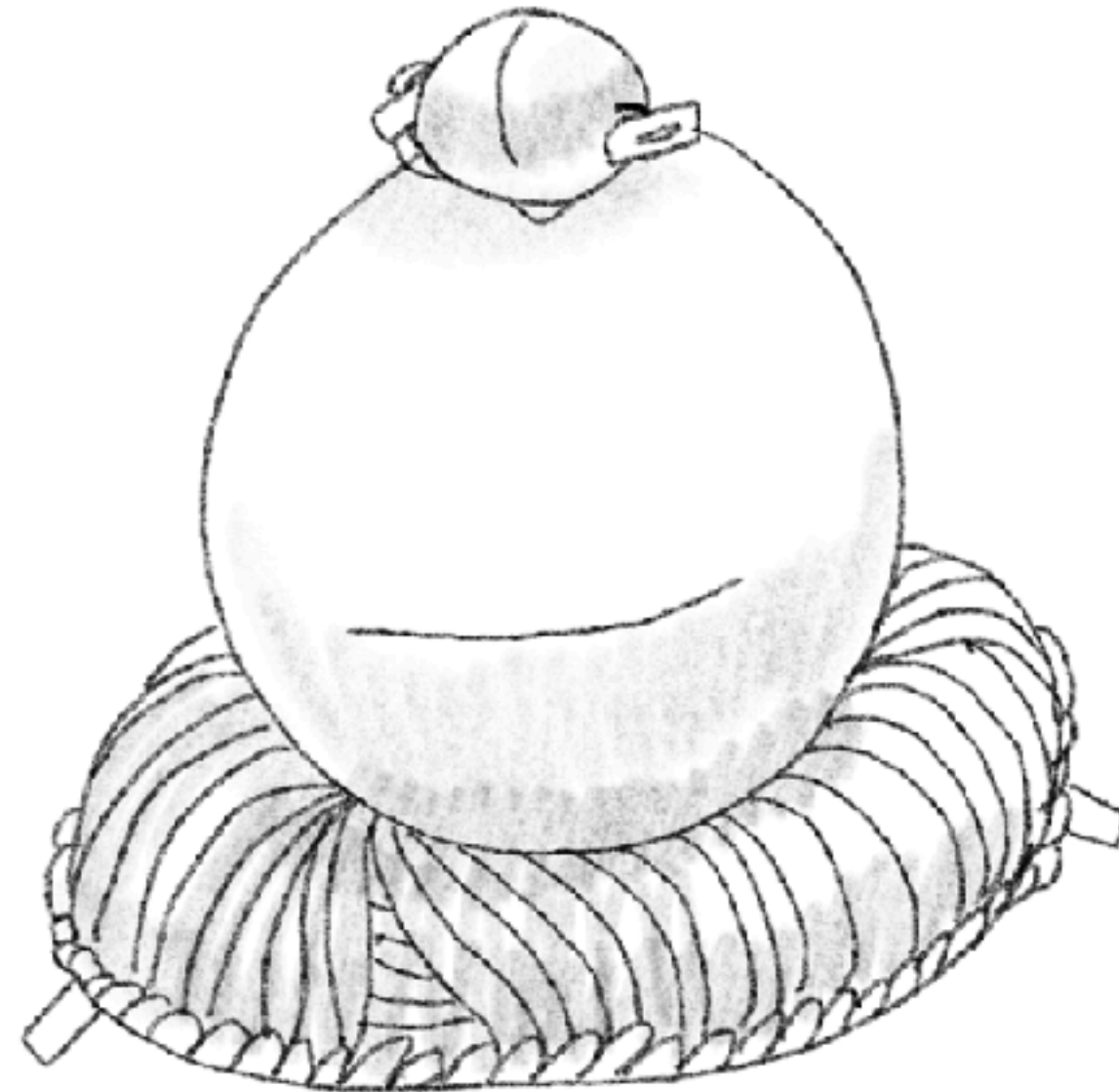
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Final

TOKEN OF PUNISHMENT

Meodal



A wearable cone inspired by 18th-century European shame hats, visualizing how punishment operated through total surveillance. Yoon Mi-ja's testimony: "When one haenyeo did something wrong, 30-40 others would rush to her house. 'You did wrong!' they'd shout until I begged on my knees. My whole family knew. Everyone knew."

This surveillance wasn't metaphorical. Jeju villages were (and remain) architecturally dense with low stone walls and gates

barely waist-high. Homes sat meters apart. As haenyeo say: "Everyone knew how many spoons each household owned." Every family had at least one haenyeo, making the community a total information network where workplace violations immediately became domestic shame, where labor discipline couldn't be separated from social reputation.

The Meodal externalizes this invisible panopticon, making wearable the weight of communal gaze.



Céline explored multiple design methods to ensure that the objects would look realistic and closely resemble items traditionally used by haenyeos.



Throughout history, many societies created disciplinary devices—such as shame masks, scold’s bridles, cangues, and dunce caps—that made individual wrongdoing visibly legible to the public. These objects transformed social judgment into material form, ensuring that mistakes could not remain private.

In a similar way, the tightly knit haeyeo communities of Jeju operated within environments where social life was highly transparent; in villages defined by low stone walls and close proximity, one’s actions and transgressions were quickly known by all. Inspired by this condition, the project translates these invisible systems of communal discipline into tangible design forms.

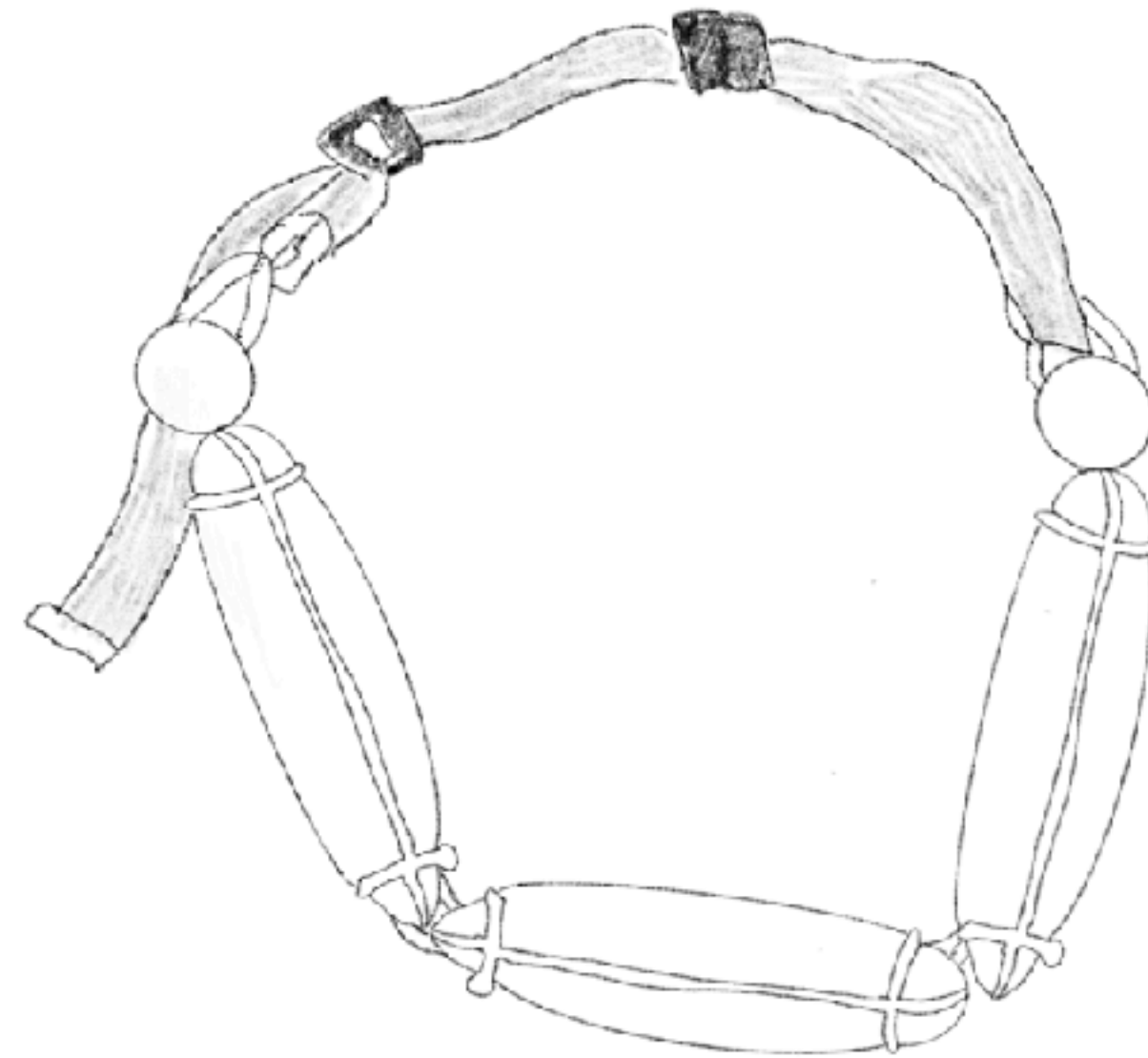
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BIT

Gadal

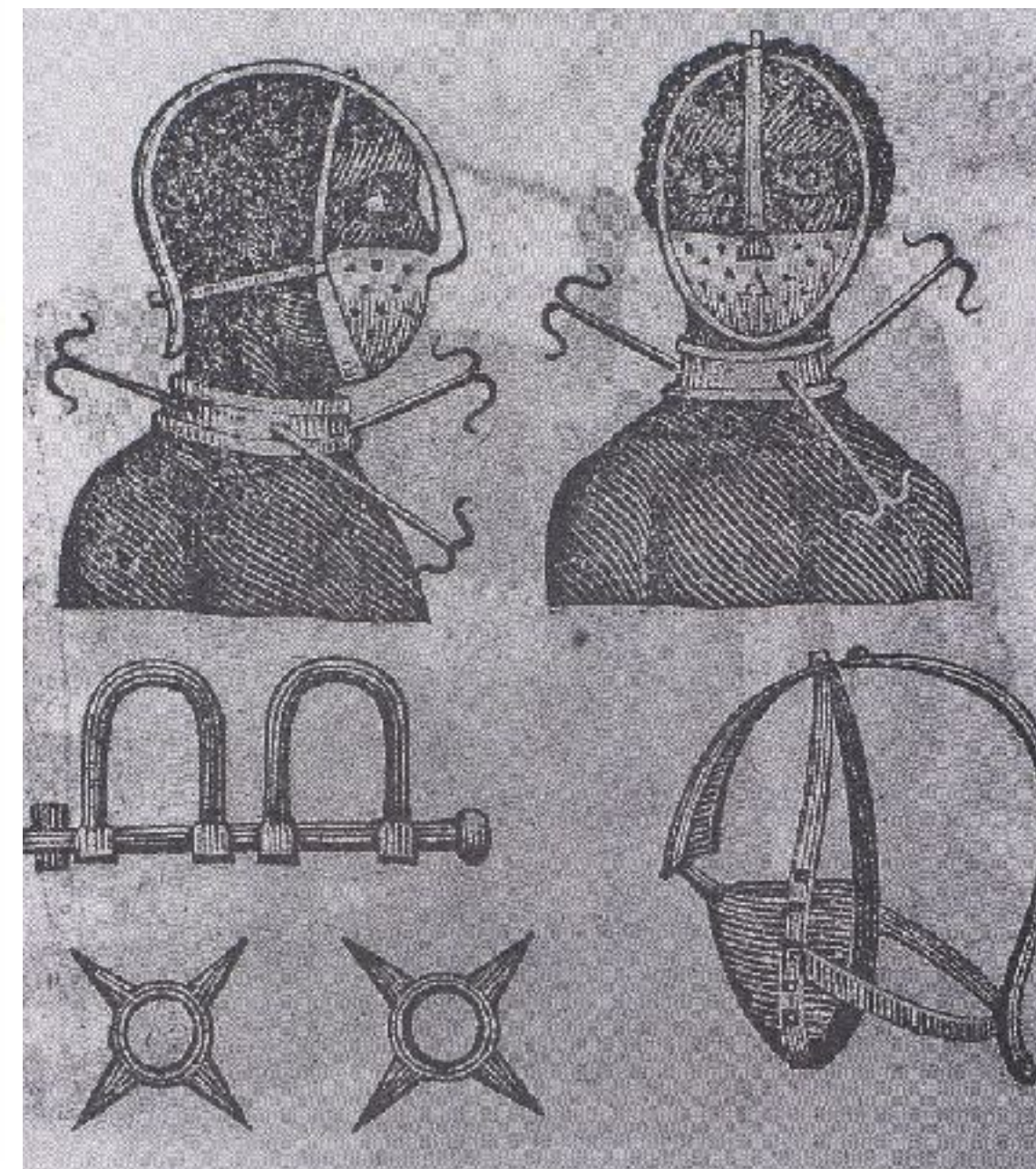


An oral restraint for members whose speech threatened communal order. Testimony from haenyeo Ko Chun-il's sister: "Chun-il talks too much, sticks her nose in everything. Words get twisted. 'She said this, she said that.' People stop trusting her. Then the association president calls me: 'Keep Chun-il's mouth shut.'"

In a community where survival depended on coordinated labor, shared resource distribution, and collective bargaining with merchants, gossip wasn't trivial—it could collapse trust structures overnight, endangering everyone's livelihood. The Bit literalizes how speech itself became a disciplined bodily function, how silence was sometimes enforced through social violence.



Scold's Bridle 1600–1750



Scold's Bridle Variations 17-18th century



Slave Punishment Iron Gag 19 century



The Gossip Bridle 17-18 century

In discussions with haenyeos, Céline discovered that those who spoke too much or relayed information within the community were historically subjected to subtle forms of discipline, including social exclusion and deliberate silence from others. Investigating these unwritten rules of the past became a key source of inspiration for the project.

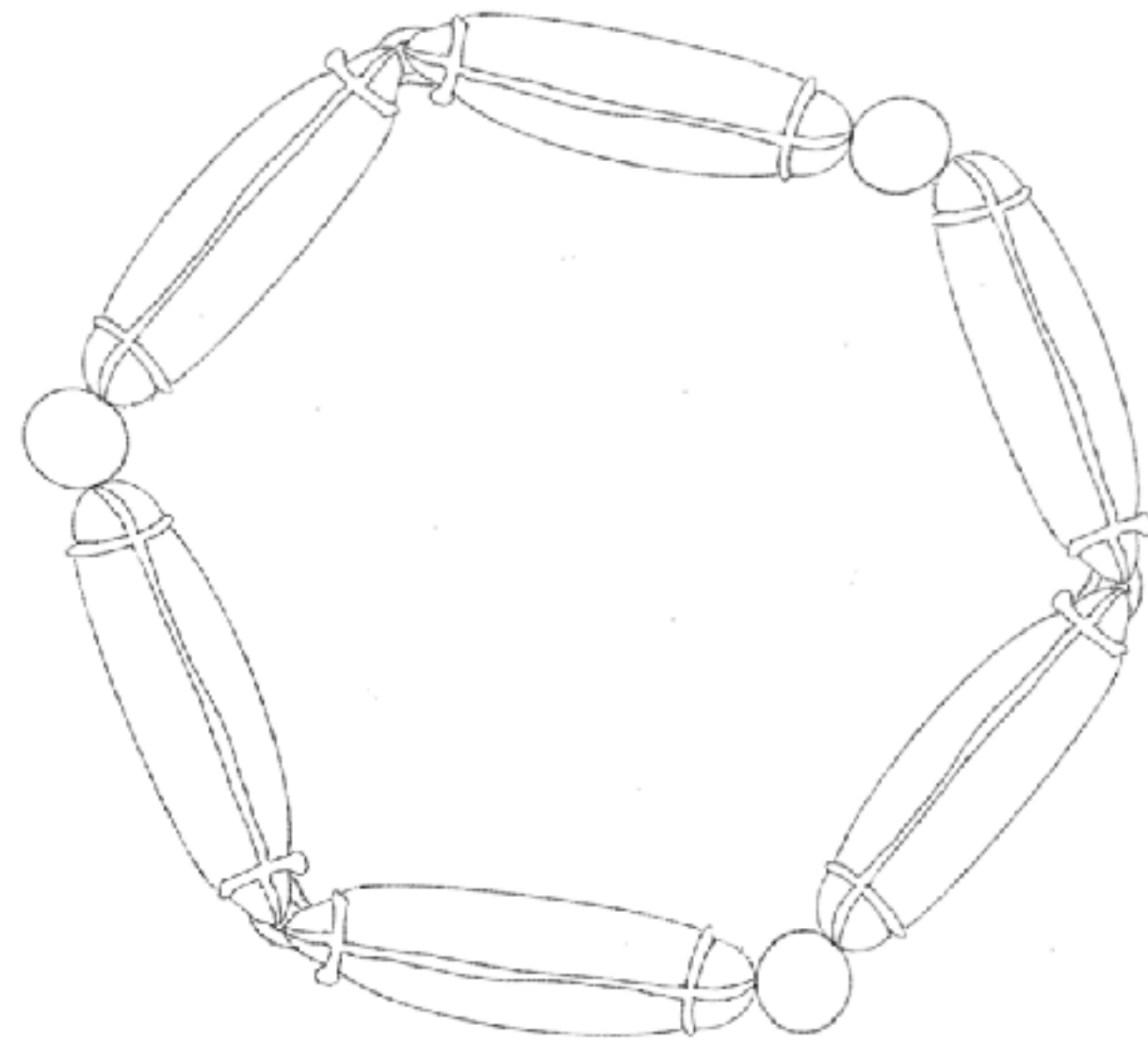


In Jeju haenyeo communities, the circulation of speech was tightly controlled in order to preserve collective stability. Those who carried or spread words were often ostracized or silenced by senior divers. Inspired by this condition, the project speculatively reimagines a gag—an object traditionally used on animals—as a design form that materializes the social discipline imposed on speech within the community.



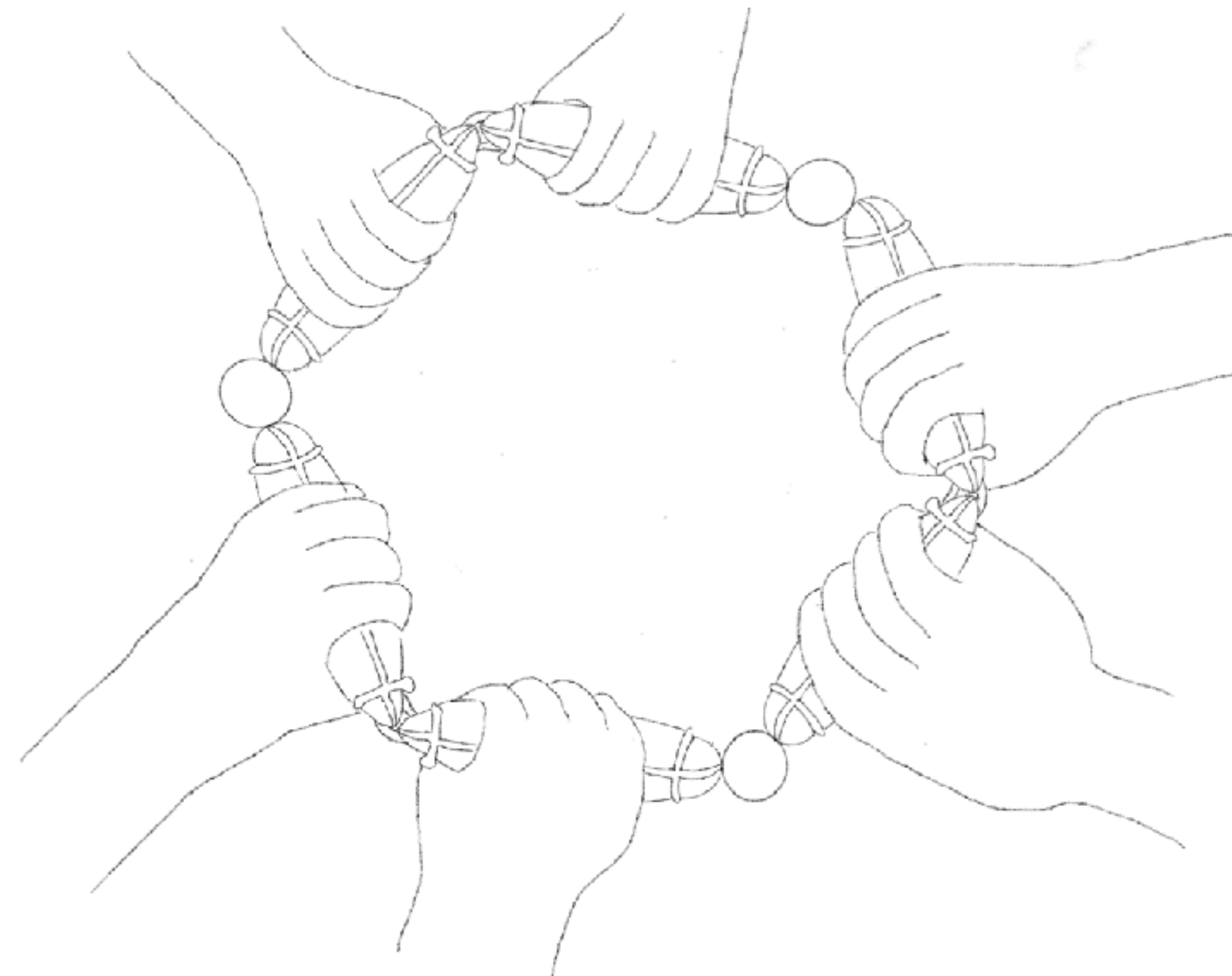
COMMUNAL SANCTION

Sonbul



A three-person binding object representing collective punishment. Lee Chu-bong's testimony: "In old days, if a hagon (junior diver) did wrong, junggun (mid-level) and sanggun (senior) were all punished. None could dive."

This institutionalized distributed surveillance. Senior divers had direct economic stake in policing juniors; juniors knew their mistakes would harm their mentors.



The three-level haenyeo hierarchy (based on diving skill/depth) became a disciplinary apparatus where accountability cascaded through generations.

The Sonbeol—physically requiring three people to hold simultaneously—embodies this coercion, making tangible the invisible threads of mutual responsibility that bound and sometimes strangled the community.

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Process



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Thank you