Korean Nobi and American Black Slavery: An Essay in Comparison

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This paper puts Korean Nobi in international perspective—first—in comparison to the American black slavery, to capture their characteristics fully. Comparing Choson nobi-system prevalent in the 15th to the 17th centuries and the black slavery in the antebellum southern United States, we found common features such that the two kinds of coerced labor had about one-third share in population; both were legally owner’s chattel as subject to sales and inheritance; most black slaves and a part of the nobi were fed and worked by their masters, indicating they were of “true” slave status. On the other hand, although the average size of nobi-holding by Choson yangban (literati) was smaller than that of the American planters, the scale of ownership by some royal families and bureaucrats was beyond comparison. The larger the scale of ownership, the peasant-like enterprising nobi became more independent with property rights, legal entities and civil rights. In cultural aspects, the crucial difference lay in the origin of the two institutions. The fact that they were recruited from the alien land, together with religious and secular prejudices against their unerasable skin color, isolated black slaves from the free people to the last. Choson nobi were internally expelled, obscure in origin or in collective memory, and intermingled with the free people other than yangban without a clear dividing line. These differences, in turn, dictated the process of emancipation. While the moral and the religious reform was important in recognition of the ‘pure soul’ of black slaves in the United States, in Choson, there was no substantial change in the perception of human nature. The disruption in the political structure of yangban society, which counterbalanced the power of king, was a key factor. Balancing overall similarities and differences, we conclude that it is inappropriate to call the Choson nobi slaves in general sense.

Keywords: Korean Nobi, Black slavery, Comparative analysis, Chosan nobi system, Korea, United States.

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1. Introduction

Orlando Patterson has listed about one hundred regions or nations which have historical experience of the ‘large-scale slave systems,’ being ‘those in which the social structure was decisively dependent on the institution of slavery,’ in an appendix of his book *Slavery and Social Death* (Patterson 1982: 353-364) Among them is included 7-19th century Korea *i.e.* from the Unified Silla to the Choson dynasty. Korea seems a bit odd on the list. First of all, the history of slavery spans as long as 12 centuries, which is by far longer than any other region. Next, it existed alone at the far end of the Asian continent with almost no connection with the other slave-holding societies. If we look at the distribution of the one hundred regions, the Mediterranean of Greco-Roman period, Africa since the 4th century, and the New World after the 16th century comprise three centers. In Asia, there were 10 of them located around the Indian Ocean, but for Korea.

The Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean were historically connected by a chain of slave trade. Slavery and slave trade showed a rather exceptional persistence in world history (Davis 1966: 29-61). After the demise of the Greco-Roman slavery, international trade in black slaves continued: from Africa via the Sahara or the Indian Ocean to destinations in Islamic regions. It was as an extension of this that the trans-Atlantic slave trade by western European merchants unfolded. Slavery met its golden age not in the ancient world but in the New World after 16th century amid the so-called capitalist world system. Over half of Patterson’s one hundred regions are accounted for by the New World such as West Indies, American South and Brazil. In sum, whereas such is the mainstream of slavery in world history, Korea is an almost unique exception outside this mainstream, to establish a ‘large-scale slave system’, and that too the longest one.

In a series of lectures in Korea in autumn 1997, Professor James Palais, then of the Washington University, defines Korean history from the 12th to the 18th century when slaves (*nobi* in Korean) constituted around 30 per cent of the population as a ‘slave society’ (Palais 1996, 1998).

We would like to argue that such interpretations of Korean *nobi* were based on incorrect understanding of the historical facts and invite the readers to a new approach. To this end, we plan to go beyond the abstract arguments around the definition of slave and serf, and analyze all the features of the *nobi* system, legal, economic, social, political, and moral, in comparison to the slave systems of other regions. The reason behind taking the slavery of American history as a standard for the comparative study is that it is one of the last typical models in the long history of slavery. In this respect, it is natural to consider black slaves in the antebellum United States as the subject of comparison when approaching the debate whether the Korean *nobi* were slaves. And this comparative study seems rather long overdue.
The rest of the paper is organized as follows:

Section 2 describes the magnitude and the distribution of the coerced labor in the two countries. Section 3 deals with their legal status and pricing. Section 4 compares conditions of work and wages. Section 5 investigates the origins and nature of the respective ‘slave’ systems. The last section discusses the process of emancipation, which is followed by a short epilogue.

2. Magnitude and Distribution

In 1790, the year when the first census was taken in the U.S., there were about 650,000 black slaves in southern states, which constituted 33.5 per cent of the population. In 1860, just before the Civil War, the number of the black slaves increased to a total of 3,830,000. But their share in the population was unchanged at 34 per cent. There were significant interstate differences. In 1860, they comprised as much as 57 per cent of the population in South Carolina, while in the small Delaware, the ratio was a tiny 1.5 per cent. Major slave states, which had above average slave share were Virginia (40 per cent), South Carolina (57 per cent), North Carolina (33 per cent), Georgia (44 per cent), Mississippi (55 per cent), Alabama (45 per cent), and Louisiana (47 per cent). The development of slave plantations in the New South such as Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana did not take place until the 1810s. Some of the big demands for slaves in the New South were met by supply from the Old South. For example, Virginia exported about 300,000 slaves to other states during 1830-1860. As a result of this interregional migration, there were 2,310,000 slaves in the New South in 1860, much more than in the Old South.

Natural increase accounts for the bulk of rapid rise in the slave population up to 1860. We don’t know the exact magnitude of the slave trade from Africa to the American South, but approximate estimates range from 400,000-500,000. Smuggling went on after the ban on the trade in 1808. However, even then, the slave population increased from 1,100,000 to 3,830,000 during 1810-1860. Allowing for the number of slaves who resided in territories annexed to the U.S. during the period, the main source for this expansion can be found in natural increase. The American South had relatively favorable conditions for reproduction of slaves, with moderate climate, and the absence of sugar plantations which demanded intensive labor as in the Caribbeans.

Since there was no census in Choson comparable to that in the United States, we cannot get precise estimates of the nobi population. The first national survey was done in 1467, from which we can obtain two pieces of information. First, there were 450,000 public nobi belonging to government bodies, among whom 100,000 were runaways. Second, counting public and private together, a sum of 1,000,000 nobi were runaways. Under the assumption that the fleeing rate of public nobi (22 per cent) applies to private nobi, we can estimate the number of nobi, who
did not flee to have been 3,500,000. If we accept the estimate of total population at that time to be around 9,000,000 (Kwon and Shin 1977), then the population share of the nobi was 39 per cent.

From the 17th century onwards, fragments of hojok (household registers) in prefecture or district level were handed down. From those sources, we know that the population share of nobi was 47 per cent in 1609 Ulsan, 42 per cent in 1606 Saneum, 64 per cent in the same year Dansung, 35 per cent in 1630 Saneum, 43 per cent in 1690 Taegu, (all belong to Kyongsang-Do), 75 per cent in 1662 northern part of Seoul. But owing to serious incompleteness of household survey of Choson, these numbers may not reflect real population shares of the nobi. To protect their property, masters registered their nobi rather accurately. In contrast, general freemen tried to evade the registration to escape from the duty of corvee labor service. For example, the last population census of Choson dynasty in 1940, whose return came to 5,910 thousands, is estimated to have had around 35 per cent of the total. Accounting for these factors, the actual share of nobi is generally estimated among researchers at around 30 per cent in Seoul and regions south of Seoul. In the northern region of Pyung’an-do and Hamkyung-do, it was far smaller.

One of the most obvious differences from the United States is the well-known decrease of nobi in the 18th century both in absolute and relative terms. The case of Taegu is widely known, where the nobi share of population decreased from 43 per cent in 1690 to 16 per cent in 1789. But in the 19th century, their population increased again. In Taegu, their share was as much as 31 per cent in 1858. Strange to say, we know less about the 19th century than the 17th century. The national share of hired labor ‘ko-nong’ was 6 per cent of the total agricultural households in 1910 census (Government General of Chosen 1941). It is likely that their ancestors were nobi, so we presume their share in the 19th century to have been about the same.

We have found that the population share was almost the same at the peak – American South: 1790-1860, Choson: 15-17th century – in the two countries. Then what was the size of black slaves and nobi belonging to an individual master? In 1860, among 1,516 thousand households of free whites in the American South, 385 thousands owned slaves. Add to this 3,830 thousand of slaves at that time, and we get about 10 slaves in each slave-owning household on an average. But, the picture of the southern economy based on this small-sized slave ownership is incorrect. Most slave owners owned only a few slaves; most slaves did not live on petty farms. More than half of the slaves belonged to ‘planter aristocrats’ with more than 50 slaves.

To be called a planter, one had to own at least 20 slaves. And such planters were only 12 per cent of the total slave owners. 88 per cent of slave owners had less than 20 slaves, 72 per cent under 10, and about 50 per cent were petty slave owners possessing less than 5 slaves. A typical planter owned 20-50 slaves. The
planter aristocracy was limited to some 10,000 families who lived off the labor of gangs of more than 50 slaves. The extremely wealthy families who owned more than 100 slaves numbered less than 3,000 (Stampp 1956: 29-31). Anyhow, a majority of slaves belonged to small group of planters who led the prosperity of the cotton belt in the South.

Now, look at the comparable situations in Choson, first, through household registers of some prefectures and districts in the 17th century Kyungsang-do. In 1606, 95 yangban households owned 4.2 nobi on average at Dansung. In 1630 at Saneum, 95 yangban households owned 3.7 nobi on average. Here we have information on the distribution of nobi holding comparable to American South. 52 households owned one-two nobi, 30 owned three-five, 11 owned six-twenty, and two households owned more than 21. In 1690 at Taegu, 218 yangban households owned 5.8 nobi on an average, and at Ulsan in 1729, 165 households owned 3.4 on an average. Besides, we know the situation at Keumhwa in Kangwon-do in 1672, where 26 out of 34 yangban had ‘at least one’ nobi, and most households had ‘only one-two’ nobi (Shin 1974).

Thus, the absolute majority of nobi-owning yangban in the 17th and early 18th century agricultural society possessed less than five nobi. And among the cited household registers, we do not find equivalents of ‘Planter aristocrats’ who owned more than 50 or 100 nobi. But some caution is necessary for the following reasons. First, the household registers count in principle only those nobi who live with or live close to their masters. A nobi who lived outside of a certain distance to his/her master was registered as an independent household. Second, royal families or bureaucrats, who were large-scale nobi owners, were not accounted for in the household registers. And most yangban who were referred to above were not of high status.

The household registers can be complemented by inheritance documents of influential yangban families. Out of the available 36 cases of the 15th-16th centuries, handed down in regions of Kyungpuk-do such as Andong, Younghae, where influential yangban families clustered, households with less than 20 nobi were only three, having 40-100 nobi were 19, 100-200 were seven, 200-400 were six, and 700-800 was one. Seven instances with more than 200 nobi were all incumbent bureaucrats or their sons and grandsons. The biggest was with 757 nobi, whose owner was Lee Maenghyun, the deputy head of the Hongmun’gwan, Chong-samp’um (Office of Special Advisers, full 3rd rank) in 1494. Considering that this was a case of upper-middle bureaucrat whose post was rather clean, the records of Wang-jo-sillok (Veritable Records of Individual Kings, Annals of the Dynasty), which mentioned cases of more than thousands or ten thousands of nobi owned by royal families, the powerful and the rich and by higher bureaucrats, may have been no exaggeration.

This is a major difference from the American South where this ultra large-
scale ownership did not exist. If the extremely wealthy families owning more than 100 slaves were less than 3,000, then among them, those with over 250 slaves were only 125 (Fogel 1989: 185). But, this exceptional case was common in Choson even in the lower-order bureaucrats. In 1414, early part of the Yi Dynasty, Taejong set the maximum of no (male nobi) ownership at 90 to 150 according to the official rank, with the purpose of limiting the size of nobi-holding by bureaucrats. But because the regulation was not realistic, it failed. That is, the size of 180-300 nobi, which takes into account the same number of bi (female nobi), was too small to be the upper limit. In sum, the nobi ownership in Choson society took an extremely dispersed form. Upon the widespread petty ownership of rural yangban with less than five nobi, existed the ultra-large-scale ownership. All the differences between the two countries that will be discussed below are closely connected with this distributional pattern.

3. Legal Status and Pricing of Slave Labor

All Choson nobi were property of their masters, as Palais (1996, 1998) pointed out, but never more than the slaves in the American South. The legal status of black slaves in the American South is summarized simply as ‘human chattel’. In 1852, the state law of Alabama recognized the dual character of the slave in two juxtaposed clauses. The first clause confirmed his status as property, the right of the owner to his “time, labor, and services”. The second clause acknowledged the slave’s status as a person. The law required that masters be humane to their slaves, furnish them adequate food and clothing, and provide care for them during sickness and in old age (Stampp 1956: 192). Slave laws in other southern states were almost the same in this respect, though there were minor exceptions such as in Louisiana (and Kentucky before 1852) where slaves had the attributes of real estate.

That they were the personal property of their masters is most manifest in the fact that they were the subject of exchange, transfer, bequest, attachment, and auction. They could not change residence without a deed of the master, nor assemble without permission (Davis 1966: 57).

The other side of the slave law which intended to acknowledge the humanness of the slave, ruled the murder of slaves illegal. In the colonial period, the punishment for killing a slave was rather lenient. The sentence was a light fine or acquittal. In 1699, the Virginia state congress passed a law which prescribed that the master was not guilty of murder if he killed during correcting his slave, “since it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice should induce any man to destroy his own estate”(Morgan 1975: 312). After independence, these clauses were revised in the direction of more severe punishment. By the 1850s, most southern states provided heavy fines for even the cruel treatment of slaves (Davis 1966: 58). Of course, few southerners suffered the penalties of these laws since juries were reluctant to convict and slaves, who were often the only witnesses to
such crimes, were barred from testifying against white men. The development of humanism, which forbids the murder of slaves and the strengthening of the inhuman slave laws, mentioned in the previous paragraphs do not contradict each other. Legal humanism by itself was not for the human rights of slaves, its original purpose lay in preventing the moral degradation of the white community.

Facing the difficulties and disputes arising from the contradiction of slave laws which define human beings as personal property, the Congress and the courts of the American South have produced huge amount of statutes comparable in size to the Britannica. In contrast, the Taejonhoetong, which integrated all previous law codes of Choson dynasty up to the 1860s, contained a meagre 20 pages dealing with nobi. In Choson, customary rights and conceptual justification took the role played by sophisticated property rights and legislation in the American South. Thus the bondage relation of Choson nobi was ambiguous or loose to that extent. But the legal status of nobi as personal property of their masters was never less clear than that of black slaves in the American South. The statute book of the dynasty prescribed the price of nobi and the procedures of transactions. It also stipulated the formula of inheritance down to the minute details of different succession shares according to the status of heirs. Inheritance documents from 15th to 17th centuries clearly show how keenly the bequeathers were aware of the property value of their nobi. As is well known, the inheritance followed the rule of equal division among siblings. And it was not just numerical allocation which makes only the numbers equal, but an effective equal division which took sex and age of nobi i.e. their labor productivity into consideration. Even the foetus of pregnant female bi was designated as patrimony and succeeded to different heirs, if it was needed for equal division. And such cases were not infrequent.

Since nobi were private property of their masters, murder or maltreatment of nobi was virtually not punished for, like in the American South. The icings of Choson frequently prohibited the killing of nobi claiming that only the sovereign on behalf of Providence, reserves the rights over the life and death of a human being. But in reality it was seldom obeyed. The first prohibition was by Sejong in 1444, which became ineffective in 1470s by being omitted in the compilation of Kyongguk Taejon (Great Code of 1469). In 1524, Chungjong issued the same prohibition, again to little effect. In 1597, a yangban named O Huimoon punished a nobi called Hanbok, who had been caught trying to flee with a bi, with flogging in the sole 70 times, and the nobi died the next day. That day, O Huimoon wrote in his diary, “It’s already four years since he came to my house and what he did was not such a heinous crime to be punished to death. His unexpected death made me very uneasy, and I could not sleep a wink”(Swaemirok, 188). Killing a nobi entailed just this kind of compunction. Effectual regulation of the murder of nobi began during the Youngjo period, the mid-18th century.

The law of 1422, which illegalized the lawsuit of nobi against their masters,
was the most important step in denying nobi their legal rights. Choson chose death by hanging, emphasizing that the master-nobi relation belonged to the sacred human morality. But, it is doubtful whether the denial of nobi's legal rights was as comprehensive as in the American South. For one thing, black slaves were not treated as human beings in relation to free whites in general, not to mention their masters. It is on that account that they were barred from testifying in court trials involving free whites. In Choson dynasty, nobi seem to have remained eligible to testify or to accuse people other than their masters. In 1461, a public no named Hwaman, belonging to Asan-hyun in Chungchong-do, accused Hwangsuhsin, a vassal of merit and Chwach'ansong (Depute General Councilor), to Sahonbu (Office of the Inspector General). He complained that he had illegally seized Kwandunjon (civil official colony land) which had been Yongopchon (permanent land grant) of his father (Sejo-sillok (Annals of King Sejo), yr 7, May, Sinhae). The following impeachment of Hwangsuhsin by Sahonbu and the great disturbance in the royal cabinet could not have happened without the legal recognition of the nobi. In 1599, Ryangdong, a famous yangban village in Kyungju-bu, Kyungsang-do, got involved in a dispute over water rights with an adjacent village. A petition attached with the signature of 52 villagers was presented to the local magistrate. Among those 52, 14 were yangban nobi-owners and most of the remaining 38 were nobi with humble names (Kyongbuk chibang Komunso jipsong: 581-582). It is evident nobi were also people of the king, with legal rights. In that, in cases of treason, nobi were allowed to accuse their masters or encouraged to do so.

The legal status of Choson nobi was also relatively superior in the realm of property rights. The Kyoungguk Taegon maintained that the property of a nobi who died without children reverted to its master. As the previously mentioned case, where a public no in Asan, Chungchong-do has sued a top-class bureaucrat for land, typically showed, legitimate property of nobi was an object of legal protection. In the American South, this kind of court precedent did exist. In 1845, the supreme court of North Carolina ruled that adding cotton, which the slave was allowed to grow for himself by the farm owner, to the list of patrimony after the death of the farm owner was not lawful. Ruffin, the judge, insisted that although slaves could not legally own property, their right to the product had received the sanction of custom and public sentiment (Waddill V. Martin 1845: Genovese 1974: 539). Just like in this case, the minimum property rights of black slaves were granted not by law but by custom and public sentiment, and that for only moveables. The blacks who succeeded in business and became richer than their masters on this scanty ground sometimes embarrassed the whites. But such cases were truly exceptional. In comparison, the property rights of Choson nobi were supported by law to a far greater extent.

Property rights and civil rights were connected by the public taxation upon that property. In Choson dynasty, the land tax was levied in two-folds: the field tax chonse, imposed on the produce from the land, and the corvée labor service yok, in
proportion to the area of the land. Nobi who possessed land bore these two, tax
and labor, and to that extent were citizens. As noted above, nobi living away from
their masters were, in principle, recorded in the household registers as independent
households. In relation to the state, one major difference between nobi and common
freemen was the exemption from military service of nobi because their bodies
belonged to their masters. This made Choson nobi a ‘half-citizen’.

Various descriptive sources show that except for a small number of nobi
living inside their masters’ houses, genuine slaves, most had their own land, large
or small. The size of land ownership recorded in sources such as Yang’’an (land
registers) should be interpreted with caution because masters might have registered
the names of their nobi in fraud. A case free of such possibility is Uisung-kun
Kuisan-myun, Kyungsang-do in 1720, where 292 nobi possessed 39 pu2 of land on
an average; 147 yangban of the same village had 57 pu and two sok, and 128
common freemen had 48 pu and three sok on an average (Kim Yongso 1970:
141). This reveals that nobi existed as normal members of rural society different
only in the relative size of landholdings. Though this case may have been limited to
the upper class of nobi, we should pay due attention to the fact that these citizen
nobis were not an exception.

The prices of nobi and slaves are also of significance. The price of slaves
in the American South rose continuously except in a brief spell of recession during
the period from 1837 to mid-1840s, to reach its peak in the prosperous 1850s. For
example, the average price of a slave in Tennessee increased more than two-fold,
from $413.72 to $854.65 between 1846 and 1859. A planter in Louisiana could buy
a young and strong male slave for 600 dollars in 1820s, but in the mid-1850s had
to pay 1,200-1,500 dollars. By 1859, the price went up still higher, a planter who
bought tens of slaves in New Orleans slave market paid $1,600-$1,700 for male
slaves and $1,325-1,400 for female slaves. He also bought a skilled blacksmith,
whose price was as much as $2,500.

The price of slaves reflected the profitability of the slave labor. The high
profitability was due not only because of the high efficiency of the labor system in
plantations, but also due to the sustained improvement of terms of trade in cotton
and other crops. All of these imply that slavery in the American South performed a
good part in a well integrated market economy.

It is unclear, in contrast, how the price of nobi in Choson was determined.
The first known instance of price setting for nobi was in Koryo dynasty in 986,
which put the value of a male no aged between 15 to 60 years be 100 pil of hemp
cloth. This price was unchanged until the end of 14th century. A record in 1391
pointed out that it was equivalent to mere 1/3-1/2 the price of a horse. In 1398,
Choson dynasty sharply raised the price of nobi aged 15-50 to 400 pil of hemp
cloth, the price of a horse, on the ground that human beings cannot be cheaper
than animals. The price later set officially in ‘Kyongguk Taegori’ was 4,000 notes
(paper money) for nobi aged 15-60, which was almost the same price of a head of horse, and amounted to 20 sok\(^2\) of rice. This official price of 4,000 notes prevailed until early 17\(^{th}\) century as confirmed by transactions documents handed down in yangban families. Actual exchange prices, which were recorded in terms of rice, cloth, cattle and horse were too divergent to generalize, but they too did not change much until the end of the 16\(^{th}\) century. Then, with the increase of vagrancy during the Japanese invasion of 1592, the price fell sharply. It rebounded after the war, perhaps because of the decrease in population. In sum, the price of nobi in the heydays of the nobi system was a non-market price set by the government whose economic logic we do not know well yet.

These circumstances are in contrast to the sensitive reaction of slave prices to market in the American South and raise doubts on the actual frequency of nobi transactions as property in Choson. The only data known to this date is the case of Taegu-bu, Kyungsang-do, where in three years from 1688 to 1690, 14 nobi were sold among the total of 1,705.\(^4\) Sale of nobi became more active in the 18\(^{th}\) century. In three years around 1730, 51 among 2,276 nobi were sold, and in three years around 1786, 33 among 1,534 were sold. As of the time point 1690, if we assume that the average life span of nobi was 35 years, and both the total number and sales rate remained constant, then the probability of nobi being sold in his lifetime is 9.6 per cent.

Then, how did the situation in the American South fare? The existence of auction market for slaves is an evidence of far more active transactions of slaves with no similar institution in Choson. Slave breeding was also a profitable business thanks to ever-rising prices. There is no need to exaggerate the number and roles of slave breeders, but they were not very rare especially in Virginia. Aristocratic paternalism of the white society prevented planters, true Southern gentlemen, from selling slaves in the market. In the Guidebook of the Slave Trade corner at the museum of Louisiana, it was written that “Louisianans did not sell their slaves except in the case of division of property owing to inheritance for repayment of debt.” If it was true, then slaves may have been sold mainly by poor farmers. Anyhow, the following circumstantial evidence shows that the probability of being sold in the lifetime of a black slave was far higher than that of the Choson nobi in the peak of the system. According to the interviews with the ex-slaves in 1929 and 1931, from the 742 ex-slaves who were under 13 at the time of emancipation, a third were brought up with one or both of their parents absent. And it is estimated that in about 60 per cent of the cases, the families were broken by the slave trade or by other features of the slave system (Fogel 1989: 178). This means that the probability of adult slaves being sold after marriage and child birth was 1/5(1/3*6/10). And considering that the probability may have been even higher for the unmarried, the lifetime probability might have been well up to a third. This probability is more than three times that of nobi in Choson.
4. Conditions of Work and Wages

In small farms with less than five slaves, it was common for owners to work in the fields with slaves across wide regions of the American South. At least 10 to 30 slaves were needed for the master to be finally exempted from the hard field labor. Farm owners belonging to this category managed the farm in person without employing a white overseer. For the supervision of the field labor, a loyal slave was elected as a foreman. Planters who owned more than 30 slaves generally entrusted white supervisors with the management of the farm, and devoted himself to sales and finance. In the case of a planter aristocrat, a general manager was employed, who directed several overseers.

Not all the slaves of the farm worked in the fields. Some served in the house of the master as cook, gardener, laundress, wet nurse, sick tender, servant, housekeeper, and others labored at the workshops in the farm as carpenter, blacksmith, bricklayer, shoemaker or cooper. Big plantations in the American South often had many profitable workshops inside the farm, like a complex enterprise where many types of business were managed by a single manager (Yang 1987: 139). But absolute majority of blacks worked as field hands for the cultivation of cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice and hemp. Planters organized their slave labor force in the gang system or the task system.

In the gang system, slaves were divided into several gangs of 10 to 20 hands, each of which was headed by a “driver” who bore the responsibility of the assigned task. The basic object of this system was to keep the whole gang members at work until the goal of the day was achieved. Under the task system, each slave is allotted a day’s work. Some cotton planters organized the plough-work into the gang system and the hoe-work into the task system. There were many cases of this mixed system, but on the whole the gang system was the basic form of the slave labor.

There is still considerable moral repulsion toward the econometric evidence of Fogel and Engerman (Fogel and Engerman 1977, 1980) about the productive efficiency of the slave plantations in the American South, but it is hardly deniable. They cite the extremely efficient organization of the slave labor as the most important source of the higher Southern total factor productivity compared to that of the North before the Civil War. Slaves were assigned tasks and put into mutually coordinated respective gangs with the precision of machinery and the strictness of military discipline. Not only were the interdependence and competition among gangs emphasized upon, but an efficient system of division of labor was also established. The parallel lines of slaves who proceed at exact speed, tasks allotted by the hour, and precisely controlled motions of the slaves, which they mentioned, more than sufficiently remind us of the modern industrial workers tending the assembly line of the automobile factory.
We now turn to nobi in the Choson society. Let us begin by examining the obligation of Choson nobi to their masters. The service of a nobi to his master is broadly classified into two categories yok and kong. Yok implies labor service, by nobi who were under direct control and kong relates to nobi paid a certain amount of rice or cloth as a tribute or chevage. Researchers call these two kinds of nobi as ibyok nobi (service nobi) and napkong nobi (tribute-paying nobi). Let us first come to the ibyok nobi. The oldest and also the longest-lasting of ibyok nobi are those who lived inside the master’s house and performed all kinds of household works and chores. Our ancestors have called their hardships as dunan sari (live-in servants). Let’s call them kanae nobi. The next kind of ibyok nobi are those who were put into agricultural labor. In Choson, direct cultivation for the master was called kajak, so let us call them kajak nobi. For example, Cho family of Seoul in 1639 mobilized the total man days of 66 nobi in 14 times at the first weeding from April 17 to May 2 and the total man days of 160 nobi in 22 times at the second weeding May 6-May 30 at their rice field in Mapo Tongmak (Pyongja Ilki: 223-235, 321-335). They were kajak nobi.

Kajak nobi do not seem to have been organized into efficient gang systems as in the United States. Although there were heads of nobi called suno or kanno, they did not supervise their peers with occasional whips like ‘drivers’ in the United States. The diary of the yangban O Huimun who took refuge in Lim-Chun, Chungchong, was filled with the deploration over the sabotage of his nobi. One day, he visited without advance notice and found the nobi whom he had sent for weeding sleeping under the trees. In every case like that, he lashed them on the calves but did not succeed in disciplining their work. In contrast, American planters did not seem to have worried much about the sabotage of their slaves. Their day-to-day anxieties and worries were mainly about the tyranny of nature or the caprice of the market which could spoil the whole harvest (Stampp 1956: 389-390).

Subordinated laborers of both countries were given subsistence provisions as remuneration for their work. In the American South, the diet of the slaves was rather sufficient. Nine liters of corn and three to four pounds of pork by the week were normal, and potatoes, beans, rice and fruits were sometimes supplemented. Blacks were so fond of pork, that although the same nutritional requirements could be met at half the cost, it was over supplied (Fogel 1989: 195). On the other hand, clothing and housing of the slaves were relatively poor. In regions close to the frontier, even the houses of the farm owners were not in good shape, but planters who had palatial mansions didn’t spend much on the dwellings of the slaves. A window or a bed was rarely to be found in the hut of a slave. The narrowness of slave huts has been described by a northerner who visited a plantation in Mississippi: 24 huts for a total of 150 slaves were each measuring 16 by 14 feet (Franklin 1967: 195). That narrow hut was usually for the children and the older slaves who took care of them. For the healthy adult slaves, it was more of a shelter than a dwelling.
Some of kanae, kajak nobi used the same kitchen with their masters, but most prepared meals separately in servant’s quarters in the house or in other dwellings in the village. Fragmentary information from the diaries of yangban families tells us that fixed amount of provisions were supplied every month in the name of wollyo (monthly payment), and clothes were furnished though the regularity of it cannot be confirmed. The previously mentioned O Huimun wrote in his diary that he “gave one and a half tu each to two bi (female nobi) as the wollyo of that month” (Swaemirok, 420) even in the difficult circumstances of refuge. It was far insufficient, considering that one month’s diet for a grown-up female was usually three tu at that time. But as long as their masters were alive and well, nobi did not worry about starving or freezing to death. This social safety net inherent in the nobi system made it persist in agricultural society up to the first part of the 19th century.

Here is an episode from the colonial period: some nobi brothers in the Chinju province of Kyoungnam had found out that their ancestors were yangban. Upon younger brother’s suggestion to take the genealogy of Kim – clan from Ulsan, the elder brother remarked, “Hunger forbids me from becoming yangban.” (Chong, Chinsang 1995: 339).

Following instances of Choson nobi were those with no equivalents in the American South. When the scale of agribusiness expanded beyond the technical limit of kajak, plots were allotted to nobi with their full responsibility of cultivation. It was nothing like an annual task assignment because the labor process was fully delegated to the nobi family from beginning to end. Here, nobi were virtually independent peasants in charge of so-kyong-yong or small scale management. We recount a case recently known in such category: In 1554, a yangban family with the name of An in Seoul, in managing their farm in nearby Paju, Kyonggi-do, allocated to each of their 13 nobi, 10-20 turak of rice paddy for jakkae, four-nine turak of paddy and one-two ilkyong (day’s plough) of patch for sakyong (personal plough, personal plot, precarium). While all production from the jakkae was owner’s share, the sakyong was allotted exclusively to nobi for their living expense in compensation for their labor. At the stage when land was yet abundant relative to population, remuneration for labor took the form of land. Increased population pressure after the last half of the 17th century helped develop in-kind payments for labor, or saekyong in later words, leaving a hint that it originated in sakyong, i.e. personal plot of land. Farm owner An tried to prohibit his nobi in Paju from selling their sakyong without his consent, which indirectly implies that although the land was his legal possession, it was already under the customary occupation of his nobi. The method of jakkae-sakyong combination took root in the late 14th century in suburban Seoul and expanded in the 15th-16th centuries to become the most important managerial pattern of big farms nationwide together with kajak. This finding is one of the vintage products of ongoing researches of Korean Economic History. We call those jakkae nobi.

Black slaves in the United States also were given a few plots, generally
around their huts or in the remote corners of plantation. The ex-slave interviews revealed that about 60 per cent were allowed to have their own patch of land (Fogel 1989: 192). There, slaves worked for themselves and their family. They grew vegetables or corn to supplement rations or to put them in trade for tobacco, sugar and coffee. They raised livestock: hens and swine. Philanthropic planters purchased the production of their slaves and would pay in lump-sum as Christmas presents (Genovese 1974: 535-539). The majority of planters, however, were sufficiently aware of the danger in allowing slaves to act as 'proto-peasants'. In contrast, most U.S. planters usually restricted the usufructs of slaves in numerous ways. Plots were never large, labor was limited to weekends, staple crops were not allowed to grow, direct marketing was not allowed, the proceeds of the sales of slave products were put on master’s account for them to draw on under master’s permission (Fogel 1989: 189-194). Allotment of land to slaves was nothing but an incentive to encourage work effort or to prevent runaways. In sum, it is difficult to find in antebellum Southern slaves any tendency toward 'proto-peasants' or small proprietors, independent so-kyong-yong, which were confirmed in the Choson jakae nobi already in the 16th century.

Pyongjak nobi were the last type of ibyok nobi who supplied their labor to their master’s agriculture. They appeared in place of declining jakae nobi in the late 17th century. Pyongjak is the Korean word for sojak in Japanese, meaning a lease contract sharing the produce of the land half-and-half between the land owner and the operator. Pyongjak dates back to the 15th century, but it is in the late 17th century that it was taken for granted in the agricultural society in Korea. The master-nobi relation caught up the trend of the period and gradually developed towards pyongjak. One yangban family Lee in Kyongsang-do left records of harvest for the period 1685-1787 where share of nobi in pyongjak peasants increased continually. Pyongjak originally developed as an economic contract agreement between a landowner and a peasant. Introduction of such agreement into master-nobi relation implies that the latter was moving towards a contractual relation. Thus, pyongjak nobi prevailed mainly after the 18th century during the disintegration of the nobi system. Equivalents of such higher independence in the American South could be found only after the Civil War, in poor freed black sharecroppers.

If ibyok nobi including kanae, kajak, chakkae and pyongjak, constituted a big part in the Choson nobi system, the other big part was occupied by napkong nobi. They generally resided far from their master’s house and each year paid a certain value of singong, personal tribute, in terms of rice and cloth, which had nothing to with the farming at the master’s. It was known that nobi were subjected to singong, but it was not until the records of inheritance and of tributes received, hidden in yangban families, began to be excavated that the independent category of nobi who only paid annual personal tributes and nothing else, was identified. A typical case of napkong nobi was found in the previously mentioned inheritance records in 1494 of Lee Maenghyon, deputy head of the Office of Special Advisers.
Out of his 757 nobi, 148 lived in Seoul and the suburbs. The remaining 609 nobi were scattered all over the Korean peninsula, in 69 prefectures from Hamkyong-do to Cholla-do. His farm was located only in Chandan near Seoul. Napkong nobi were mainly possessed by royal families and large bureaucrats. It is indicated that the economic provisions for royal chamber were founded on tributes from napkong nobi. (Song 1990) After the Japanese invasion of 1592 when it became impossible to monitor the royal nobi who scattered widely around, estates were newly granted to princes and princesses instead and were called kungbangjon (palace land). This transformation due to historical circumstances was mentioned by an 18th century observer that “in the past nobi were to make for wealth, now land is for wealth.”(Kyunyokchong Pyonggukron) It was because of their punctual, annual payment of tribute to their master for no compensation, that nobi could be regarded as wealth independently of land, that is, of agriculture. Tributes were fixed at 2 pil of cloth per capita for kongnobi (public nobi), a rate commonly extended to sanobi (private nobi). Depending on the geography, other agricultural or marine products substituted cloth. They were independent peasants who usually resided in different prefectures or provinces from their masters and cultivated their own land. They were recorded as separate chuho (main house holders) in the household registers, and were responsible for various taxation and labor services, not distinguishable from common yang'in (freemen).

There were in the American South indeed slaves with similar status as napkong nobi in Choson. Tin 1850, out of 3.11 million slave population in the South, approximately 600 thousand worked outside agriculture in towns or cities. A substantial portion of jobs were filled by black slaves from housekeepers and cooks in urban bourgeois’ homes to unskilled labor in bakery, foundry, shoemaking, laundry, barbershop, and sawmill. Slaves also worked in industrial sectors. For example most of 13,000 laborers in Virginian tobacco factories were slaves. It is a prejudice to think of black slaves as unsuitable to skilled works in manufactures. They showed competence in every occupation, and further, succeeded more often than not as managers in commercial brokerage, real estate, grocery store, tailoring, and money exchange (Yang 1987: 135). A number of them, especially skilled artisans and handicraft workers, were permitted “privilege to hire their own time.” They had to pay regularly to their master a certain amount of tribute. In return, of course within reasonable distance, they could work on their own as they wished (Stampp 1956: 73). Frederic Douglas, a runaway slave famous for his published memoirs, enjoyed such freedom. He had to pay $3 a week to his master while he worked as a calker in the Baltimore shipyard. It was a “hard bargain”, he noted, but in the process he felt a step closer to freedom (Quarles ed. 1960: 139). But there was no guarantee that the money he earned by hard work belonged to him. In South Carolina, a black slave named Sally was given permission by her master to live in town and work independently on the condition that she paid him a stipulated portion of her wages. Sally was industrious and succeeded in saving enough money
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to buy the freedom of her daughter. After being paid, however, the master refused to release the child, on the ground that any money earned by Sally was rightfully his. In 1792 the chief justice of the state ruled that the master had no claim to what Sally earned, over and above the amount agreed upon, and that Sally had a perfect right to purchase her child’s freedom (Davis 1966: 269). However, this kind of ruling was very rare in the South. The cases were concentrated in the cities of Upper South, surrounded by threats of whites who felt displeased at slaves running shops and at becoming partners in business transactions with them.

On the other hand, napkong nobi composed a substantial part in Choson; without them it is impossible to examine the nobi system as a whole. The share in total nobi population, of nobi recorded as independent chuho at the household registers, was as high as 47.8 per cent in 1609 Ulsan, and 71.8 per cent in 1690 Taegu. In 1621 a yangban family of the name Yun in Haenam, Cholla-do possessed 284 nobi, of whom 179 (63 per cent) were napKong nobi. (Komunso jipsong (Collectin of Old Documents). 772-779).


What was the structure of collective memory concerning cultural aspects such as origins, symbols, religions, family and community which people of the two nations respectively inherited from the history of nobi and the black slaves?

In 1619, when the nobi system in Korea reached its peak, a Dutch merchant brought 20 African blacks to Virginia for the first time. They were not slaves from the beginning. People treated them like other white indentured laborers regardless of their skin color, and when the indenture expired they became freemen possessing their own farms. As early as 1640, signs of enslavement began to appear. Punishments for runaway indentured servants were different for blacks and whites. To whites it was just one additional year of servitude, whereas blacks were sentenced to lifetime bondage. The first official slave act was dated 1661. It put indentured blacks to lifetime servitude whatever the nature of their contract. Next year, the rule of the ius gentium was adopted, which dictated that a child born in the colony took the status of the mother. And in 1667, an act was passed, declaring that baptism does not change the status of a slave, which may have reflected uneasiness in their being the same Christians. Thus it was in about 1660s that slavery established its form as a social institution in Virginia.

The most popular explanation to the paradox that slavery has formed in the new world of freedom and opportunity is that labor was always scarce relative to the vast, unoccupied, fertile land. In the early years, poor whites from Europe were a major source of mobilization. Up to the end of the 17th century, major labor force at tobacco, rice and indigo farms were recruited from these white indentured servants. They were always troublesome workers. Quarrels with masters over the contract conditions were frequent, and those who filed lawsuits were not uncommon.
Black slaves as a practical alternative emerged in the mid-17th century. Before that the price of slave was so high that a slave cost twice as much as an indentured servant. Considering that the probability of black slaves dying within five years of arrival was over 50 per cent, it was far more advantageous to exploit five year indentures. For this reason, black population in Virginia was only about 500 until 1660. But in the latter half of the 17th century, social pressure, which had been driving the lower class out of England diminished, and the average residual life span of the newly arrived lengthened, thanks to the improvement of living and medical standards. These changes in labor market conditions made the purchase of black slaves more profitable. The turning point was probably reached by 1660 (Morgan 1975: 297-299). The ratio of male to female black slaves, 3:2, whom the slave merchants had brought, ensured the natural increase of the slave population, another favorable condition hard to find in white indentures. In multifarious aspects, enslavement of blacks was tempting.

Thus, black slaves began to be imported—strictly speaking, kidnapped—from Africa in full scale. Owing to the above mentioned favorable conditions for natural increase, they expanded to a third of the Southern population in 1790. As early as the end of 18th century and the beginning of 19th century, Afro-American culture distinct from the traditions of Africa began to form in black society. For several reasons that follow, however, they remained aliens, ‘intruders’, recruited externally from Africa like their ancestors. Though born from within, still socially expelled, they were, in Patterson’s words, aliens from the foreign land of ‘limbo’ between life and death (Patterson 1982: 45-51). Such collective memories of whites about the origin of black slaves made our companion ask that question.

We yet have much to find out about the historical origin of Choson nobi. The question was first posed by yangban intellectuals in Choson who had come to possess numerous nobi. Modern historians turned their attention to the captives from the war of the Three Kingdoms and the debt peons since the Unified-Silla period. But how can we explain nobi exceeding 30 per cent of total population by prisoners of war and debt-peons from thousand years previously? Following the example of the American South, we may have to look for a turning point of the abrupt rise in land to labor ratio, that is, the circumstances in which new agricultural techniques developed requiring increased amount of labor, big land–owners and agriculturalists like planters settled in the rural society demanding bound labor force, labor supply sources of subordinative community like Africa were found from inside, and legislation and policy–justifying subordination were forthcoming. We have a working hypotheses that these conditions were met by the late 14th century, when yangban started their rural settlement. Choson nobi appeared in earnest on the historical drama through the ‘extrusion’ from within, a process of internal differentiation, a somewhat obscure process.8

The preceding explanation of the origin of slavery in the American South is
incomplete until it answers the question why the source of slave supply came not from nearby native Indians but from far away Africans despite high transport cost. Here, we are already crossing to the domain of symbol in slavery. White colonists regarded the New World as a kind of sacred place, and Indian residents as pure souls not yet contaminated by evil, they could not morally or religiously justify enslavement of pure souls. In contrast, Africans had already been slaves in Africa. “For reasons that can perhaps never be fully explained, it was the African’s color of skin that became his defining characteristic” (Davis 1966: 447).

In the old European civilization, the word black carried connotations of gloom, evil, baseness, wretchedness and misfortune. Negroes, said the Babylonian Talmud, were the children of Ham, who was cursed with blackness because he, on the Ark, had violated God’s command. The old prejudice and accumulated curse have bestowed disgrace and stigma on Africans long before the international slave trade began by western merchants. With the growth of slave trade in the late 17th century, theories of Negro inferiority gained popularity. Scientific journals published research results claiming that Negroes must be a different species from the rest of mankind, anatomically similar to chimpanzees or orangutans (ibid 451, 454).

At a more fundamental level, the legitimacy of enslavement was furnished by the Christian ideal. The Church, though in accommodation to a series of ‘balanced dualism’, saw in slavery a sign of God’s punishment to corrupted pagans, and the Providence aimed at correcting and disciplining the chaotic disorder of the world of sin. The only comfort for slaves was a belief in salvation as equal human beings before God in the other world, and in that sense the secular hardship was bearable. Christianity patronized a code of conduct: benevolent master and loyal servant. In such a Christian world, slave trades from Africa to the New World were a righteous war of crusade, liberating blacks from the land of vice and disease dominated by dark, evil spirit; hardly a moral disgrace, nor a felony (ibid chs. 6-7).

Various forms of marks have developed in slave societies like Greece where masters and slaves belonged to the same race, to identify slaves, in Patterson’s words, the socially dead, such as bald-cut hair, peculiar uniforms, tattoo, and brands. Branding was enforced in the American South in part, but was not common; the skin color would have been sufficient. In case it was ambiguous by the skin color, as mixed-blood mulattos at times accounted for one tenth of the Southern population, the shape of hair was a good alternative criterion. It would have been more complicated if slaves had their hair cut bald. Factors besides skin color, retarding the slave symbols in the American South, include the sophisticated slave codes. Rigorous laws began to be enacted after the first slave rebellion plot in 1687. Slaves were punished by hanging without exception for murder and rape, and by heavy whipping or mutilation, mostly of ears, for even a slight slander at their master. They were forced to carry a lamp when walking at dark not to scare whites. They were banned of possession of arms, and in Mississippi of bugles or
drums in the same spirit. Regular patrol was organized on top of these invincible slave laws, with occasional vigilante gathering for a lynch party of innocent blacks at a rumor of rebellion. The function the slave symbols played in pre–modern slave societies was mostly taken in the United States by thorough slave laws and control mechanism.

In case of Choson, paekchong who took the job of butcher and/or tanner suffered a certain slave symbol. They were discriminated by various marks of inferiority in every feature of life like clothes, hair, cap, wedding and funeral, and dwelling (Kim, Chungsp 1994: 50-51). Actually, they were outcasts collectively alienated from the society because of their occupation. In this respect, they were distinct from nobi whose person was individually possessed by a master.

If something like slave symbols were attached to Choson nobi, it was in their names. While American planters ridiculed their slaves with pompous names like Alexander or Napoleon, Choson nobi were frequently called by very base names after livestock or excrement. It is common to have a suffix ‘kae’ in nobi’s names, which implied a tool of some function as in ‘kulkai’, a drag rope. Change of name was an important ritual of enslavement in many slave societies. Similar occasion was observed in Choson, for example, yangban O Huimun changed the name of his newly–purchased bi from Ajakkae to Nurunkae (Swaemirok, Vol.1, 369). It was a ceremony designed to obliterate her past ill-fated stories connected to the name Ajakkae. A number of public no who had rendered distinguished services in Sejo’s enthronement could change their names to dignified ones combined with last names after they were manumitted. But, in general, nobi were denied last names, which represented blood lineage.

It is difficult to find defining characteristics of Choson nobi other than their names. Rare instances of tattooing and baldheading slaves in Koryo period were found in Koryosa (History of Koryo Dynasty), but not yet confirmed by vast records of Choson. A small population of the nobi in Koryo period may have been indeed genuine slaves. And Choson nobi were of course distinct from their yangban masters in their clothing and social decorum. But it should be noted that the discrimination was the same between yangban and yang’in, and not unique to the nobi.

Confucian view of the nobi-system in Choson can be summarized by a word ‘No-chu-ji-bun,’ which means nobi and master have respective punsu, or standing. Punsu was referred to as a highest moral code that humans do not dare violate, and was embodied in the widely known ‘O-ryun’, five wheels of fundamental conduct, between king and vassal, father and child, husband and wife, elder and younger, and between friends. Choson Confucianism was salient in that, among others, it added another wheel, the code of conduct between master and nobi. It elevated the relation to the same level as the king-vassal relation, arguing, “once the institution of family master and nobi established, ... no serve master as vassal do the king,” adding, “If this justice disrupts, so will the kingdom.” The penal codes
of Choson prescribed extreme punishments for three heinous crimes in violation of fundamental morality, executing the guilty and enslaving the family, ponding the house, degrading the town, firing the magistrate, condemning neighbors for joint responsibility of felony. The three crimes were the murder of father by son, of husband by wife, and of master by nobi. It indicates that the sanctity of human moral between master and nobi ranked with the other two.

Generally speaking, the world of Songni-hak, neo-Confucianism, has a structure where everything in nature including human being takes proper standing according to disposition, and, thereby, achieves social harmony. In this world of harmony of the natural law, human hierarchy remains a fixed constant. There comes no way of vassal confronting king, son confronting father. It should be noticed, however, that this hierarchy was not intended the way as might have been for the absolute, permanent, indefinite, subordination of monotheic Christianity. “Proper standing according to disposition” has a dual meaning that for example when a vassal serves loyal to the king, the latter should respect the vassal. It is the basic characteristics of neo-Confucian social order that respective punsu endowed from heaven mutually respond in relative subordination. Harmony of human relations simultaneously fixed and relative, the Providence dictates with impersonal logic. The neo-Confucianism is by itself a distinctly practical philosophy as is often pointed out, not like Christianity.

If we accept the Neo-Confucian characterization of Choson nobi as an indispensable member of the social fabric, Choson nobi were much dissimilar to their subject of comparison, the slaves in the Christian World. The latter had fallen karma for original sin and could only have been rescued by indefinite homage to the absolute single God. Choson Nobi rather resembled medieval West-European serfs. Serfs in their later period succeeded in relativizing and quantifying their burden by means of contracts and customs in the medieval Christian world largely transformed by harmony of natural law.

Family, and its blood relation network, kinship, both as units of creating and intergenerationally transmitting culture, stand in major agenda in the comparative study of subordinated people in the two countries. Research in this area in the United States before the World War a! seemed almost a malicious scandal mongering. Blacks were a race characterized by intemperance and strong sexual desire. The result of a more academic research of the early 1970s, which was joined by black scholars, was not very different. Paternal monogamous families were rare relative to matrilineal expanded families, which were easily disrupted by lack of sexual mores. In plantation, family life of blacks was virtually nonexistent. Since 1970s, however, an important transformation in conception was achieved through careful examination of various plantation records by Herbert Gutman and Eugene Genovese (Gutman 1975, 1976; Genovese 1974). Over 90 per cent of black slaves had formed generally matrilineal families of four to five, and in certain
cases, over 10. Stable family union lasted for long with advanced family moral. Artificial dissolution by planters was not so frequent and faced a strong resistance. Premarital sex was widespread and was generously tolerated, which may have been a rational process of choice aimed at better spouse selection. After marriage, however, faithfulness was strictly demanded on both the sides. Marriage was usually conducted outside of the family and the extended kinship group was connected with a strong sense of blood relations. Gutman argues that black slaves' families and kinships, were not very different from the 16th century English people described by Tawney (Gutman 1976: 36-37).

Slave families were much insecure in small, poor, and frequently partitioned farms. John Blassingame estimated that more than 30 per cent of slave couples were forcefully dissolved by their masters within six years of marriage (Blassingame 1972: 91). His estimate was supported by records of the Freedmen Bureau. The argument that the slave communities usually called slave quarters were independent and autonomous, again does not apply to small farms. Even if slave communities approaching such complexity could have come into being on plantations with 50 slaves, hardly 20 per cent of the total slave populations in 1850 would have belonged to them (Fogel 1989: 186). The trauma of slavery was so great and deep over the spectrum according to the size of plantation that more caution is needed in evaluating the security and autonomy of the slaves' family, kinship and community. This is Fogel's conservative review, which we take to our position.

For the extent and nature of family life of Choson nobi, a case study of 36 inheritance records of Kyongsang-do yangban families for the 15th-16th centuries, which covered 3,308 nobi shows that 29 per cent of them were parentless unmarried brothers or minors without any blood relations (Rhee, 1987). That left 71 per cent who formed families, lower than Gutman's estimate for his black slaves' sample. As expected, the pattern of family formation varied by the size of nobi-holding was small and concentrated on ibyok nobi, while non-family nobi were relatively abundant and if formed, a small family of average four, the couple and children, was dominant. In contrast, in the large holding of mainly napkong nobi by big bureaucrats, most belonged to a family, usually a complex family of average seven encompassing three generations.

It is debatable as to how much resistance was involved against forced dissolution of nobi family by masters. Inheritance records of many yangban families in dispersed regions showed that it was almost a rule to divide any nobi family and allocate to different heirs. In case of far away napkong nobi, however, the division was only in paper, but implied a joint possession of sinkong by the nobi-owning kinship group. Nevertheless, even napkong nobi were not immune to family break down when the intention of masters was stubborn. According to a record of a yangban named So in Unyul, Chunchong-do in the late 17th century, which was studied by Chang, Pilki, 20-odd nobi were always kept in and out of the master's
house, with the vacancies filled by recruitment from distant nobi families (Chang 1993). In circumstances of over breeding left-over nobi families were sent to other regions to become napkong nobi. Thus the nobi population had convection current around the center of master’s house, to which nobi in other prefectures or provinces were generally exempt. In sum, the integrity of nobi family varied by the nature of service they provided to the master’s house. It strengthened as the distance from the master widened, in the order from kanae to kajak, chakkae, pyongjak, and to napkong.

Data sources or studies are too scanty to allow us to look into the inner family life or the principles of family and kin formation or sexual mores. About 10 per cent of black slaves were literate, to leave many letters revealing heartbreaking stories, a privilege our nobi were not allowed. A nobi genealogy compiled by a private academy called Pil’amsowon in the early 18th century Cholla-do shows that the majority of the nobi kinship was formed by maternal line (An 1993). Some names beginning with the same prefix occasionally indicated kinship, but there were no cases of inheriting names from ancestors, which Gutman found in kin groups of black slaves. All in all, it is doubtful whether the records by yangban nobi-holders faithfully represented the daily life of their nobi.

In the realm of cultural category such as independence and autonomy of family or community, simple comparison abstracting from the different historical circumstances of the two subordinated people, may as well be almost meaningless. The tendency of American researchers of master-slave relations to limit their observation within the slave quarters of plantations seems beside the point. If a plantation served as a concentration camp surrounded and watched by antagonistic free whites, what implication could security and autonomy inside the slave quarters have rendered white slave-owners besides a decreased cost of domination? Autonomy in the true sense should have required that slave family or community be recognized substantially and legally as a basic unit of social life vis-à-vis neighboring general white residents’ daily life and in relation to the public authority. In this particular aspect, the position of black slaves was increasingly hopeless.

It is apparently difficult to comprehend that legal codes of Choson dynasty guaranteed, on the one hand, the nobi sharply discriminated from their masters, and, therefore, yangban in general, but on the other hand in equal terms with the rest of the free men yang’in. A dress regulation of 1428 in King Sejong’s reign prohibited commoners and nobi from wearing clothes made of high-quality textile or sable or leather shoes. That is, both yang’in and nobi were treated the same in public propriety. Choson literati sadaebu used to say “decorum do not reach the commons,” which excluded yang’in as well as the nobi from Confucian propriety. A statute in 1554 ruled that if commoners and basemen assaulted a family of literati then the whole kindred of the convict was ousted to the northern frontiers. Thus yang’in and nobi were on equal footing also under the penal codes.
Marriages between nobi and yang’in were not prohibited. It is the most important sign denying nobi’s separation from general freemen in ordinary life. In developed slave societies, sexual intercourse among the slave and free was a taboo. In Rome it was punished by death, although slaves could enjoy drinks and chat with masters. In the American South, whites could not marry black slaves legally. Both in China and Koryo, commoner-base intermarriage was banned, which were lifted in Korea later in the Choson dynasty. The share of nobi marrying yang’in spouse appeared near half in inheritance records of yangban families in the 15-16 centuries, and 74 per cent in the household registers of 1609 Ulsan (Han 1977, 1978). The siblings of nobi on either side were legally designated nobi by birth. This is why yangban nobi-owners were eager to support such intermarriages, considering gains in their property. This brutal, so-called basic Chinese rule of status inheritance was often mentioned to be the key harsh factor peculiar to Choson nobi system. However, practice never conformed exactly to the dictates of law, and we need to pay cautious attention behind the scene circumstances that in the community of working people mixed by blood, free and bond, was emerging a truly anti-subordinative ethos.

Compared to the vivid collective memory of whites that black slaves had been intruded from the foreign land of limbo, the process that nobi arose to be a part of working population in a certain historical stage remains yet very obscure. The nobi were not differentiated or separated from society as were the slaves. On the contrary, it was the minority yangban who isolated themselves from the working people and created the dominating class of Choson society.

6. Towards Emancipation

The contention that the Southern economy was stricken with poverty and stagnation, drowning in the paralyzing toxin of slavery, is merely a propaganda fostered by the North. Thanks to the increase of worldwide cotton demand, the rate of growth of cotton production in the American South reached 18.2 per cent per annum at peak during the boom period of 1806-1860. From 1840 to 1860, the Southern economy grew at yearly average 1.7 per cent, which was quite high vis-a-vis the standards of the history of the capitalist economy up to that time. If we regard the American South as a separate nation, her GDP per person was the fourth in the world. The well-integrated market economy permitted the resources very efficiently allocated in the South. And the lag in industrialization relative to the North was a result of too strong competitive advantage of plantation agriculture (Fogel 1989).

There was no symptom indicating that this prosperous cotton empire would collapse on its own contradiction. The citizens of Charleston in the 1830s believed that they had already built a perfect ideal society. Black slaves who constituted a third of the population were certainly aware that this ideal society meant only perpetual disgrace and submission. No matter how strong and elaborate a ruling
apparatus might have backed up the slave system, it contained violent resistance
as its inherent element. Passive resistance meant suicides, which were not
infrequent. There were desperate mothers who killed their own children not to have
their sad fate inherited to them. The most common type of resistance was fleeing,
and the constant flow of fugitives never ceased. Some of them formed free
communities of their own in forest or swamp. There were more active slaves who
attacked their masters. Franklin points out that if we read newspapers of the South
carefully, there were exceedingly many articles about masters who were killed by
slaves (Franklin 1967: 208-209). Collective revolts organized by the courageous of
the slaves were almost always detected in advance except the insurrection of Nat
Turner at Southampton, Virginia, in 1831. But plots did not cease until 1865, and
rumors were a hidden terror in the white society. However, rulers were too well
organized, and slaves were kept buried in a perfect ruling system. If it were not for
the moral and political siege of the North and Western Europe, the cotton empire
could have certainly enjoyed longer prosperity. As slaves had been recruited from
outside, the cotton empire succumbed to external attacks fell by the attack from
outside.

In contrast, the nobi system of Choson dynasty followed a slow process
of disintegration with its accumulated internal contradiction. There was no hot
political division, not to mention a Civil war, over the nobi system. And to the
disappointment of those who support the view of history from below, there existed
no heroic class struggle of nobi. Koryo dynasty was plagued by uprisings of nobi
organized both in Seoul and in provinces like the well-known rebellion of Manjok.
But we do not find records of such revolts detected or suppressed in the Choson
dynasty. The resistance of Choson nobi basically took the form of escape. As
mentioned previously, the national rate of runaway nobi was 22 per cent in 1467. A
considerable number of nobi freed themselves this way. The size of nobi population
was maintained in spite of the runaways because comparable numbers were
replenished by the cross-marriage of nobi and commoners.

It is around 1690 that the chain of this circle broke and the nobi system
entered a period of disintegration. The relative price of nobi collapsed from 20 sok
of rice to 2.3 sok by some short-term causes we have yet to identify, and then it
did not recover during the 18th century. The primary subject of the nobi trade was bi
whose value as household labor was unchanged, and the trade of no became more
infrequent. The slave population began to diminish from around 1690, precipitating
after 1730. The decrease of the nobi population began with the disappearance of
napkong nobi residing far from the master’s house. Another fact confirmed by the
household registers is the diminution of nobi family size. Shikada, who has found
this phenomenon as early as in the late 1930s, has correctly proposed that nobi
were gradually transformed to hired hands (Shikata Hiroshi 1938: 413). In the 19th
century, an increasing proportion of nobi trade were actually long-term employment
contracts presupposing that the subordination lasted only one generation, i.e. limited
Korean Nobi and American Black Slavery

to the person who was sold. The 19th century nobi system meant the collection of these employee-like nobi who were mostly bi, and comprised only around 6 per cent of the per cent population (as previously stated). This was quite different from the nobi system in its heyday and so we can safely say that the nobi system in Korean history actually ended in the early 19th century. But the official end of this institution had to wait until the Reform of 1894, Kabokyongjang.

Rather than whether the liberation forces originated inside or from outside, the difference in the nature of the forces would have been more of an issue, that is, what kind of economic interests, moral doctrines and political justifications had been provided with the main army of the liberation front. Economic siege upon the American South was very loose, as noted above. Politically, the forging of a victorious anti-slavery coalition in the North came very late in the 1850s. In spite of a devoted participation of blacks in the War of Independence, the American Constitution practically approved slavery by protecting the property right of slave owners after independence. With this Constitution still alive, the anti-slavery front should have been politically frail. Unlike the politics of Britain in which a small number of noble families dominated, United States had a populistic tendency sensitively defined by the disposition of voters. In addition, supported by the economic prosperity of the South, southern politicians held the hegemony in the Congress up to 1850. Under the circumstances, it was only in 1854-1856 that a new anti-slavery coalition was organized in the Republican Party. In 1856-1858 they formed a powerful political bloc in the Congress. It was in 1860 that they seized the administration with the election of Lincoln as President (Fogel 1989: ch. 9).

Thus, while it was retarded in political sphere, the anti-slavery front in the United States was moral or religious from the beginning. If the religious doctrine that blacks were also pure human soul had not been propagated for a long time since the early colonial period, the sudden political coalition of the 1850s would have been impossible. The first major religious turnaround came from the Quakers. Even religious reformers like Calvin believed that sins were deeply rooted in human nature and that these sins could never be purified by history. This concept of sin made the acceptance of slavery easy. Quakers denied such fixed theology and dualistic view of history. The original sin could be overcome and the millennium will soon be realized in this world. They took deep interest in their life with God of Choice and showed absolute trust in human will to become a possessor of a perfect pure soul and in the practice of unconditional love. In this mental attitude of Quakers, all corruption of existing society was based on slavery. Such anti-slavery disposition naturally considered slaves as pure souls who could co-participate in the millennium.14

The revivalist movements since 1730s were another major preacher on the anti-slavery front. They did not conceive sin as a metaphysical correction. All selfishness was the root of evil and through perfect love man could achieve a holy
life. These new denominations of theology, which believed in the highest ideals of purity and benevolence, did not advocate abolition of slavery as their action programme from the beginning. It was in 1774 when the Methodists officially proclaimed that slavery was against the golden rule of God. Many a warrior were brought up in between. John Newton, an Englishman, was the captain of a slave ship. He knew well what was happening in the slave ship, and in West Indian plantations but never had the least scruple about the injustice of the trade. But after surviving a terrifying storm at sea and listening to the preaching of an eminent Methodist, he became increasingly devout and finally chose to denounce the slave trade and became an Evangelical minister. Newton's contribution to anti two words slavery was a public confession, a decision to speak when he knew that further silence would be "criminal". 

In contrast, the force behind the breakdown of the nobi system in Choson was conspicuously political rather than moral. As a background, we briefly look at the more fundamental economic factors which led to the spontaneous and gradual disintegration of the nobi system. The population increase of the 17th century was the most important long-term factor that brought a sharp fall in the price of nobi around 1690. For example, during 1634-1720 the number of land owners, found in the yang'an, land registers, of Choambang, Taegu-bu, Kyongsang-do, increased two and a half fold—from 338 to 833. Such a huge increase was partly due to the suburban location, but rural regions showed the same pattern. In Tandong-myun, Sangju-mok, the number of land owners increased to one and a half times, from 467 to 681, during the same period (Rhee 1996: 80-81). It is well-known in economic history that changes in factor endowment, which made men more numerous and land scarcer, led to the decline of the serfdom. Another cause that contributed to the oversupply of nobi was the development of peasant-style intensive agriculture such as the introduction of the technology of rice transplantation. In this new method, which achieved high land productivity by putting larger quantities of labor, nobi labor was inadequate, for shirking was the innate character of that labor. Yangban landowners came to realize the profitability of leasing their land as pyongjak to the poor but diligent peasants in place of kajak or chakkae nobi which required large enforcement costs. The demand for corvee labor was thus on the decline. Ultimately, the economic historical consequence of the spontaneous disintegration of the nobi system was the emergence of independent peasants and the maturity of the peasant society based upon them.

The first political event which accelerated this economic process took place in 1669, the 10th year of King Hyonjong. Song Si-yool, who was the head of the So-in, then the ruling political faction, and also a great authority of Choson Neo-Confucianism, introduced and passed a bill elevating the status of children to yang'in who were born to a no father but yang'in mother (Chongmo Chongryang). This was an epochal measure diminishing the nobi population by terminating the old way of hereditary transmission of the social status. This decree, surviving a
series of suspensions, was finally settled as a permanent law in 1730, the 6th year of King Youngjo (Chon 1989). Not surprisingly, we can confirm from the household registers of many regions, the steep decline in the number of nobi since the 1730s. The proposal of Song Si-yol was not coming out of humanitarianism but was a part of fiscal campaign to finance the expedition to the northern frontier aimed at securing enough number of taxable commoners. In fact, such policy was in pursuit since 1666, three years previously, with a large-scale census. The basic intent of the census was to count the households of nobi in and outside the fence of yangban family as independent households. Unprecedented harsh punishments were imposed on yangban families who were non–cooperative or resistant. As a result, the total number of households in the country increased from 810 thousands in 1663 to 1,110 thousands in 1666, and in 1669, to 1,310 thousands. On the newly counted nobi, military services were levied, a rare practice in the past. For instance, in 1690, out of the total 1,172 nobi households in 10 myun of Taegu-bu, 63 per cent were under various military duties. Now, nobi were citizens both in name and reality.

With the development of numerous other anti-nobi-system policies, ideologies disapproving the institution began to spread widely. The first earnest criticism seems to be that of Yu Hyongwon, who wrote Pan‘gyesurok in the 1660s. The purport was a sort of pity on the cruelty of the permanent inheritance of the social status. It was followed by writings of many scholars and bureaucrats who negated the moral and historical foundation of the nobi system. The most important justification was that nobi were also the people of the king. The royal message promulgated by King Sunjo in 1801 on the liberation of about 66,000 public nobi has well integrated the logic of criticism. Sunjo declared: “when the King faces his people, all are his bare infants, high and low, within and without alike. Then how can it be the righteous way of loving brethren to separate and divide as no and bi?” (Chungbo Munhonbigo, book 2, 911).

In this Choson version of the Declaration of Human Rights, only 10-odd years later than the French equivalent, the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity is sought for in the great cause of royal regime. On what ground does the great cause of royal regime declare the equality of people? Because the Heavenly Will that the royal regime represents so dictates. This logic of Heavenly Will and its secular transformation, the logic of royal regime, were the basic momentum which disintegrated the Choson nobi system. As we have mentioned above, in Choson metaphysics people were destined to their due lots, punsu, according to their nature given to them by Providence. And the invariable human code of conduct and the order of the social status have locked around punsu. In this world of Choson Neo-Confucianism, the master-nobi relationship ranked equally with the king-vassal relation. This ideology of the yangban society, which implied the co-ownership of the sovereignty in view of the king, was now denied from the top by the king who took the stronger power by himself, in fact by the establishment of the No-ron one party dictatorship.
Then, what kind of new society was supposed to emerge with the subjects of the king who were now equal constructs? Why did the dictates of the Heavenly Will change with time? We can hardly find traces of philosophical agony from the king or the ruling parties of Choson on these matters. They were political from the beginning, and were only content with the desired political outcomes. Rural yangban estranged from the central political circle still adhered to their traditional Choson Neo-Confucianism. Yoon family of Haenam, belonging to Namin faction and representing Honam province yangban, organized a kye (mutual-aid society) named ‘loyalty-kye’ with seven no who remained as their last hereditary nobi in 1902. Each no contributed two tus of rice and the master contributed two sok to form a fund. Drawing on the interest of the fund they intended to aid mutually in times of financial hardship such as wedding or funeral. Their document of the proposal read as follows: “The title loyalty-kye is truly right. High and low are intimate and obedient, help each other by duty and are not against each other, nor do they get beyond themselves, thus their due lots naturally unfold themselves and everyone gets what they deserve. The family thus takes shape in its true nature. How righteous and beautiful!”

This view on nobi prescribed in the logic of hierarchical unclear at the beginning of the 20th century, had been running almost the same throughout various old writings of this family since the 16th century. On the New Year’s Day in late 1920s, the colonial period, a few remaining nobi visited Yu-clan yangban family of Kurye, Cholla-do for New Year’s greetings. The diary of that day reads as follows: “From high to low, all the world is said to have become equal; odd, why nobi are still as they used to be? Cannot help another laughter.” He was cynical about nobi who were too faithful to their positions regardless of the way of the world. Nevertheless, he, when a no died, who had served his family for several generations, expressed warm condolence, citing each relation the ancestors of the two families had had: “Even between yangban and nobi, these successive relationships of affection and duty make us responsible. Not to mention, they are the only nobi handed down from generation to generation, living with our family for over hundred years helping each other.” He no longer borrowed the logic of moral justification of Choson Neo-Confucianism. But we can see the last generation of yangban in him who sincerely inherited the moral system in which the affection and duty of serving and protection between high and low were justified conventionally.

In short, the forces that liberated Choson nobi originated in the king and the political elites who tried to control the new peasants under the system of one-king-all-subjects, supported by the economic historical trend of the maturity of peasant society as a production system with diminishing social demand for nobi. The break down of the nobi system was political in essence, and was not a result of the moral and religious reform for the fundamentally new type of humanity and mentality. Although the logic of Heaven’s Will was reinterpreted with the declaration of human equality, there was no essential change in the perception of human nature, leaving the distinction between the lots of the honored and the humble.
For more than 3000 years, the legal characteristics of bondage, which regard a slave as chattel property, have changed very little (Davis 1966: 32). From the earliest civilizations where laws governing private property evolved, the slave was defined as such, and accordingly, today’s researchers are accustomed to calling the phenomenon of human beings bought and sold as slavery. It is common in the field of history, however, that actual human relations or economic status substantially varied within the same legal form.

It is certain that slaves are property objects, but proprietary claims and powers are made with respect to many persons who are clearly not slaves. Servants were Virginia’s most valued form of property before the time of the black slavery. It was noted in 1648 that servants were “more advantageous… than any other commodities” for importation from England (Morgan 1975: 175). Medieval West-European jurists, who rediscovered the Roman law regarded serfs as property of landlords, subjected to purchase and sale like slaves. They were immovable, although at the extreme case of the 18th century Russia serfs were legally chattel. As Patterson wittingly pointed out, professional athletes in the contemporary United States are objects of property who are bought and sold, even against their will until 1975. They are not slaves only for the difference in the relative power of the partners concerned and the origins of the relationships between them and the team owners (Patterson 1982: 24-26). More importantly, there were slaves that could not be bought and sold, like those belonging to communities or state before the private property right established. For example, nobi in the Koryo dynasty of Korea, though certainly slaves, were prohibited from sale by the state. It is clear by now that various definitions of a slave converge to the fundamental i.e. lack of civil or communal rights. In that sense, Patterson’s identification of the slave status with the ‘social death’ is of deeper value, beyond being just a rhetoric. Moses I. Finley draws from the historical experience of ancient Greece and Rome three conditions for emergence of a slave society, that is, concentrated private ownership of large land to require a permanent labor force, the development of the commodity production and markets, and the absence of alternative internal labor supply. These conditions were met easiest when civilizations very different in level or type crossed each other through sea, where large scale trade and transport could be carried out with high speed and low cost. Likewise, the large-scale slave systems flourished around the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean in the form of brutal plunder of barbarians by civilization. It was questionable from the beginning whether the Choson dynasty, a self-sufficient agricultural society with little foreign contact for geopolitical reasons, could have been included in the list of slave societies characterized as such by historical backgrounds.
In this comparative study of the Choson nobi system and the black slavery in the American South, we have confirmed several features common to the two institutions, and also some aspects distinctly different in each other. For want of space, we refrain from summarizing our findings. However, all these similarities and differences considered, we come to the conclusion that, generally speaking, it is inappropriate to call nobi of Choson slaves.

One of the difficult questions to be answered before our conclusion could be widely adopted is: if the nobi-system in Choson contained so many different categories of nobi, why were they all called nobi? It might have been the slave characteristics of a certain group of nobi, for example nobi in the Koryo dynasty, kanae and kajak in the Choson dynasty, that compelled the scholars, Korean as well as foreign to translate nobi into slave, instead of leaving the word as it stands, thereby confusing American researchers. It also contrasts with the neighboring Chinese or Japanese cases where their coerced parts of population, who were little different from Korean nobi after the middle ages, were called in their own pronunciation, nobi, fukok, kogong, nobok in China and kenin in Japan. It may look out of order or planless that we selected the farthest away United States as the first subject of comparison but it is not. A general contour is best outlined first from a long distance.

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NOTES

1. For the reason that some level of abstraction is unavoidable in a comparative study and that most facts we will introduce about the subordinated people of the two countries are familiar to the researchers of each nation, we chose not to cite all the historical documents or secondary works. Our major references about the daily life of slaves in the American South are Stampp (1956), Franklin (1967), Genovese (1969, 1974) and Fogel (1989). There are many good studies about the nobi system in Korean history but Rhee (1998) contains almost all the major issues. So, readers can find in that article sources of the most of the facts or arguments set forth in this paper. Below, we annotate only those which do not belong to the references.
mentioned above, or those which need special emphasis.

2. *Pu* is a hundredth of a *kyol*. *Kyol* is a constant measure of crop yield produced by an area that varied from 2.2 to 9.0 acres depending on the fertility of the land. *Sok* is a tenth of *pu*.

3. 1 *sok* is about 50 gallon.

4. Shikata Hiroshi (1938). Shikata did not specify directly the rate of sales. But upon the assumption that nobi who were sold were private nobi residing inside the yangban household, we could calculate the rate of sales using various statistics he provided in his article.

5. 1 *tu* is about a half gallon.

6. *Turak* is the amount of land on which 1 *mal* (about 5 gallon) of seed could be planted.

7. For major studies on *jakkae*, see An, Sungjun (1992) and Kim, Kontae (1993).

8. For the distinction between ‘intrusive’ and ‘extrusive’ modes of enslavement, see Patterson (1982), pp 38-45.

9. This expression may seem to contradict the above statement that the blacks arrived at Virginia in 1619 were not slaves. But, it tries to metaphorize white people’s deep and old prejudice against Africans. For different conceptions of whites toward Africans and native Americans, see Davis (1966), ch 6.

10. Courtesy professor Park Songjong of Korean language department, Kwandong University.

11. For a concise review of bibliography on family and kinship, see Fogel (1989), ch 6.

12. Patterson finds “the most advanced slave system in the Orient and one of the most developed anywhere in the premodern world” in Korea, where rigidly applied the basic rule of *deterior condicio* that the child always takes the status of the lower parent. See Patterson (1982), pp 142-143.

13. This was stated in a pamphlet at the Charleston museum. Regrettably, we do not remember the title of the pamphlet.

14. On the slavery doctrines of Quakers, see Davis (1966), ch 10.

15. On the anti-slavery morals of evangelical revivalist movements, see ibid, ch 12; The story of Newton is based on ibid, pp 388-390.


18. For a recent elaboration in this vein in Korea, see Kim, Kyonghyon (1998).

19. Actually, Finley counted only classical Greece and Rome, the American South and the Caribbean Islands as “genuine” slave societies, while called Egypt, Near East, India and China “slave-owning” societies. See *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, vol 14, p 308ff., s.v. “slavery.”
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**Glossary**

*nobi* : male nobi, *bi* : female nobi

*ibyok* : who serve labo

*kanae* : in–house servants

*kajak* : who till master’s plot

*chakkae* : who cultivate master’s plot in return for allotment of their own land, called *sakyong*

*pyongjak* : sharecroppers

*napkong* : who pay tributes, called *sinkong*

*yangban* : ruling class, literati, hereditary

*yang’in* : common freemen

*chuho* : primary household appeared in the *hojok* (household registers), or *yang’an* (land registers) as a separate, independent family

*jonsa* : land tax

*kyol = 40 turak = 100 pu = 1000 sok* : measures of land

*mal = 200 sok* : measures of grain quantity

*toe = 2000 hop* : measures of grain quantity

*pil* : measure of cloths