

Jamae Nobi: Climate Crises, Forced Migrations, and Self-Sale into Slavery during the Joseon Dynasty*

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During the second half of the Joseon dynasty (1660–1897), climate disasters such as droughts and floods severely affected the population, especially the lower classes. Many *yumin*, or forced migrants, were compelled to leave their land and relatives in search of food and safety. In this context, some families ended up selling themselves or their kin as *jamae nobi*, that is, debt slaves. This article examines a selected group of self-sale contracts to explore the relationship between displacement and debt slavery, with particular attention to cases in which displacement and economic hardship are explicitly recorded in the contracts. This study draws on primary sources, including self-sale contracts and petitions preserved in the archives of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and the Archives of Korean History and legal materials such as the *Chugwanji*. Slave sale contracts provide information about the places of origin of the individuals sold—some identified as vagrants—and illustrate how internal migration intensified as a response to environmental and economic crises. These findings show how self-sale contracts can illuminate the relationship between mobility, crisis, and debt slavery in late Joseon-period society.

Keywords: *Nobi* system, *jamae nobi*, *yumin*, Korea, East Asia

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