

Abstract:

The main aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive account of the development of the institution of slavery in Korea. Slavery was a part of Korean society from its earliest times, and the evidence of this can be found in the penal code of eight provisions enacted by the mythical emperor Kidža, where he for the first time mentioned slavery as a punishment for theft. From this time on it was ceaselessly present in Korean society until its abolition in 1894. The oldest form of slavery as a punishment was gradually supplemented with other ways of how a person could fall into slavery. Individual slavery gradually evolved into hereditary slavery. Despite the fact that slavery was ceaselessly present in Korean society, the character and even the existence of it are still called into question in academic discussions.

In the introductory part of my thesis I focused on the very essence of slavery. Afterwards, I gave a brief overview of the characteristics of three typical slave societies i.e. ancient Greece, ancient Rome and the United States of America. Studying the important characteristics of slavery in other slave societies provided the base for a detailed analysis of the connections with the Korean type of slavery. Some of this information confirms the hypothesis that slavery in Korea was present in the proper sense of the word because it showed a lot of similarities in its basic typological features. In essence, this thesis is based on a description of disputes about the existence of slavery in Korea, and it provides an overview of historical development of Korean society and slavery itself in particular eras. The conclusion of the present thesis is devoted to the description of historical documents dealing with the attitudes of people from different social classes towards slaves.