

EVALUATION REPORT

on the PhD thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

of

Aneta Dimitrova

FAMILY RELATIONS AND THE FACTOR "EDUCATION" IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA – BETWEEN THE CONFUCIAN TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY

from

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Aneta Dimitrova's PhD thesis is on perhaps the most pressing issue in the Republic of Korea – the success and its price. The set topic is comprehensive, multi-layered and taboo, and its research requires not only intensive of work and knowledge (general and specific), but also courage. Courage to pose questions that are not openly talked about in Korea. The PhD student did a difficult research, looking at the problem both from a bird's eye view and in detail. Aneta's long-term and constant interest in this field, the teaching of disciplines on the subject, as well as the participation in seminars, conferences and projects contribute to the successful achievement of this goal.

The PhD thesis consists of an Introduction, three chapters, three appendices and a Bibliography with a total volume of 184 pages. The construction of the text is balanced, logical and follows the natural order of development of the theme. The tasks and hypotheses are clearly stated and fulfilled/proven. The language meets all the requirements for academic work, is polished, easy to read and does not need corrections. Terms and neologisms are spelled out precisely and follow established rules and transcription. The literature used ranges from classic works to the latest sources and statistics, and the sources are authoritative and adequately selected. Appendices are definitely a contribution to the dissertation and useful material for researchers and students.

Regarding the content, it can be said that the complex problem that Aneta has chosen as the topic of her dissertation has been examined in its entirety and at the same time in detail. The dissertation begins with an in-depth review of the traditions that define the framework of the Korean family (Chapter One). These traditions were reinforced by Confucianism during the Joseon Dynasty and included strict rules on relationships between spouses, parents and children, and daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. The process of transformation from traditional to modern, the evolution of family roles and the structure of the modern Korean family are examined. The part of the text on the new family forms in South Korean society is particularly helpful. Unmarried couples, *kireogi kajeok* (families living separately "for the benefit" of providing for the children's education), weekend couples and families with brides "imported" (or in many cases bought) from abroad are dynamically developing trends in Korean society that deserve research. Divorce and remarriage are also new to Korea and Aneta manages to convey these complex social, cultural and economic transformations in the best way.

A second chapter is on education and its influence on family relations from the Joseon period to the present day. The excessive pursuit of education in South Korea is a complex issue that takes on different aspects depending on one's perspective. On the one hand, South Korea, as a country deprived of natural resources and other natural endowments, relies on the education of the population as the only driver of its success. This policy has been followed by all governments for decades as well as members of society and is bearing its fruits as measured by economic indicators. On the other hand, however, the pursuit of success at any cost leaves a number of important needs for the individual and the family in the background. Chapter Two successfully unravels this complex socio-economic problem and sheds light on many of its aspects.

Chapter Three examines gender relations and the social consequences of the collision of Confucianism with modern reality. In recent years in South Korea, two completely opposite realities meet, or literally "collide" – the traditional Confucian social order, placing women completely in the shadow of men, and the new global trend of complete equality between the sexes, opposite to the Korean tradition formed over centuries. These two opposing forces have crashed with terrible force on the territory of South Korea in recent years, and today we are

witnessing a period of extreme excesses, striking changes, as well as quiet and hidden transformations – in short, the creation of a new social order. Aneta Dimitrova examines economic and social factors, as well as political measures to achieve gender equality, thus shedding light on the general aspect of the problem. In particular, the issues of motherhood, feminism, new ideas about masculinity are considered – details that bring additional clarity to the general picture. Solo culture and the *sampo* generation are also a modern trend that is in complete opposition to traditional Confucian values, and detailed attention to this latest problem in Korean society can be also listed as a thesis contribution.

The appendices to the main text are the result of Anetta's many years of experience as a teacher and her good knowledge of Korean culture. The explanations necessary for the Bulgarian reader are well selected in the appendices, and the explanation to them is adequate, targeted and clear. The Dictionary of Terms, Expressions, and Neologisms Related to Family Relations and New Phenomena in Korea (Appendix 1) lists and explains phrases that provide additional information about Korean society, culture, and spirituality. The dictionary is a useful material and can be used by learners and professionals outside the context of the dissertation. Proverbs, proverbs and expressions related to family (Appendix 2) are also selected thematically and appropriately and can serve the aforementioned educational and academic purposes. Appendix 3 contains graphics and tables of statistics relating to the family. The data included are from reliable, authoritative and latest sources, and the collection and summarization of this information – a rather laborious task – should also be noted as a contributing moment in Aneta Dimitrova's work.

As a conclusion, I would say that the dissertation is the result of long-term and constant interest and work, as well as accumulated knowledge and professional experience. I wish that the text, in which the Phd student student has put so much *jeong* (see appendix I, pages 155-156), reaches the maximum number of readers, and I unreservedly recommend that Aneta Dimitrova be awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

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