

OPINION

concerning the dissertation of **Aneta Rumenova Dimitrova**,
Korean Studies Department
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology,
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

on the topic:

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

(Dissertation Supervisor: Prof. Svetla Karteva – Dancheva)
For obtaining educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) in
professional field 2.1. Philology, Scientific specialty: Languages of the
peoples of Asia, Africa and America
(Korean language and society),

by Assoc. prof. Iskra Gencheva Mandova, PhD
Classical and Eastern Languages Department,
St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo

This opinion is written on the basis of a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology for election of members of the scholarly panel, appointed by Order № ПД 38-125 / 14.03.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University. The opinion was assigned by a decision of the Scholarly Panel – Proceedings № 1 from 24.03.2023

Assessments on the main questions of the requirements are based on an analysis of the materials provided, as well as copies of the required documents.

1. Information about the procedure

Aneta Rumenova Dimitrova was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student at the Korean Studies Department at the Faculty of Classical and

Modern Philology of “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia since 01.02.2020 by order of the rector No. ПД 20-74/ 17.01.2020, and finished her studies with the right of defense on 01.02.2023. From the documents presented it is clear that, in accordance with the approved individual plan, the doctoral student successfully passed 6 exams, including an exam in the specialty, an exam in Western language, etc.

The prepared documentation that I have access to as a scholarly panel member is precise and informative, including both a statement of originality and authenticity and a report from StrikePlagiarism.

The scholarly panel was determined in the necessary order, in compliance with deadlines, quotas and professional competences.

2. Information about the PhD student

Aneta Rumenoova Dimitrova graduated "Korean Studies" major in 2012, and "Society and Culture of Korea" master's degree program in 2018 at "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Sofia. In 2011, she specialized in Hankook Foreign Languages University in Seoul, South Korea.

In the years 2011-2013, the doctoral student worked as a Korean language teacher, and since 2014 she has been a part-time teacher at the Korean Studies Department of Sofia University and delivers lectures in Korean language and culture, modern Korean society, the language of young people in modern Korean society, gender relations and family transformations in the Republic of Korea. At the same time, she teaches practical Korean language and prepares students for language proficiency certificates.

The doctoral student presents more than the required number of publications on the topic of the dissertation.

3. Information about the dissertation and the summary

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, three appendices and a bibliography in Bulgarian, Korean and English.

The total volume of the dissertation is 183 computer pages, of which 150 pages text, 20 pages appendices and 13 pages of bibliography with 164 titles.

In the introduction the topicality and the need to research the problem are commented, the object, subject, aim, objectives and hypothesis of the dissertation are defined. Research methods and approaches are presented.

In the first chapter, entitled “Nature and Features of the Korean family“, family relations and roles, social hierarchy and changes in them are studied.

According to Confucian patriarchal morality and the theory of Yin and Yang, there are certain norms by which society is governed – the ruler (Yang) rules his subordinates (Yin), the father (Yang) guides the son (Yin), and the husband (Yang) guides the wife (Yin). There are four main qualities that a woman should possess: faithfulness, physical appearance – charm, appropriateness in speech and professionalism in needlework. She must obey her father before she marries, her husband after marriage and her sons if she becomes a widow, the so-called "three-fold obedience" (*sancong* in Chinese). A large part of these principles were also adopted in Korea, and Confucianism prevailed as the main ideological doctrine. The Confucian morality of filial honor was also adopted and influenced the relationship between parents and children, and family relationships in general. Changes in the structure of the family, priorities and social status of women are traced.

In the second chapter of the dissertation, "Education and its impact on family relations from the Joseon period to the present", the problem of the role of Confucianism on education in Korea and the determination of education as the highest value is discussed. Along with its positives, the doctoral student also does research on the negative consequences on society and the social problems the great desire for education leads to.

In the third chapter, "Gender relations and the social consequences of Confucianism' clash with modern reality", the conflict between tradition and modernity is analyzed, and as the author herself notes, "the incompatible burden of the traditional with the reality of modernity". The problem of social inequality is discussed, the new trends in society and the orientation towards individualism and independence are followed.

Aneta Dimitrova concludes that Confucian norms are firmly rooted in the modern Korean family and to a large extent still determine the relationships between its members, and that education, on which Confucianism places a strong emphasis, is a major factor in family relations, roles, forms and composition in modern Korea.

In the first appendix the doctoral student provides a dictionary of terms, expressions and neologisms related to family relations and new social trends in the country. Appendix 2 includes proverbs, sayings and expressions related to the family which are very interesting, and the main statistics related to the family as well are illustrated with graphs and tables in Appendix 3, which allows the easy tracking of the development of many of the phenomena and problems discussed.

The dissertation shows Aneta Dimitrova's in-depth knowledge in the field of Korean language and culture, as well as the issues related to Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy and ideology. The sociocultural and sociolinguistic competences of the doctoral student are worth-mentioning as well. The conclusions made are original and motivated.

The dissertation summary (30 computer pages in total) objectively reflects the content of the dissertation work and the contributions of the author.

The topic of the dissertation is attractive, modern, defensible and belongs to the so-called interdisciplinary topics, as it affects various processes and factors that have influenced the formation of modern Korean society. The object and methods of the research are precisely formulated, and the aims and objectives are achieved.

There are some punctuation errors and stylistic inaccuracies that will surely be cleaned up when it is published, which I highly recommend.

4. Scientific contributions

One of the main contributions of the dissertation work is, of course, the multi-layered, broad-spectrum and interdisciplinary research of the problem. It represents the first study in Bulgaria of Korean family relations, and the compiled dictionary of terms, expressions and neologisms relating to family relations and new social trends in the country is a key contributing point. The same applies to appendix 2, where proverbs, sayings and expressions related to the family are collected and which can be the inspiration and object of other scientific research, e.g. the saying "Better near neighbors than distant relatives" exists in Chinese too.

As a contribution, I would also distinguish the presentation of unknown details to the Bulgarian reader, related to the emergence of new social phenomena such as the solo culture, new social problems the modern Korean society faces, viewed through the prism of Confucian and Neo-Confucian values.

The work has a pioneering character and can inspire research in professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences as well.

Of course, the dissertation is a contribution to the development of Korean studies in Bulgaria.

5. Conclusion

The presented doctoral dissertation is an original scientific research that shows the achievements of the doctoral candidate Aneta Dimitrova, her knowledge and skills for a serious comparative and interdisciplinary analysis of the studied topic. The work fully meets the requirements for independent scientific research.

Based on everything that has been said so far, I propose that the dissertation work be evaluated on its merits, and that its author be awarded the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

May 11, 2023

Veliko Tarnovo

Assoc. Prof. ISKRA MANDOVA