

Commentary on the paper “The Historical Fate of Bulgarian Women during the Ottoman Domination, and the Fate of Korean Women during the Japanese Occupation. Development of Cultural Enlightenment and Education” by Jong Suk Won and Lozinka Jordanova

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The paper is composed in two consecutive texts, each of them written by one of the authors. The first part of the paper, authored by Lozinka Jordanova, is a synopsis of the cultural development, which Bulgarian women underwent during the National Revival period. The review is focused on history of education in Bulgaria since the beginning of 19th century. Lozinka Jordanova points out briefly the names and the deeds of some women, who were among the first female teachers in Bulgaria; there are about ten of them. Special attention is given to three women: Anastasia Dimitrova, acknowledged to be the very first Bulgarian woman-teacher; Nedelia Petkova Karaivanova, popular as “Baba Nedelia”; and Anastasia Zheliazkova, an early pupil of Peter Dunov, an ardent student of spiritualistic and theosophical literature.

The second part of the paper, authored by Jong-Suk Yon is neatly

structured in three sections. At the beginning it makes a brief review of female education in Korea before the country fell under Japanese domination. Until the beginning of 19th century Korean women had no access to public education; the first private school for girls was founded in 1908 under the strong influence of Christian women-missioners. According to the paper early 19th century Korean women were very enthusiastic about the perspective to gain education, they studied very energetically. This fact accelerated women's emancipation, thus enforcing the national autonomy. That might have been the reason behind Japanese occupants efforts to control, restrict, and even suppress Korean education for women. Their main strategy was to lock Korean women back in their homes as prudent mothers and wives only. Many forms of discrimination, which were abolished before the occupation, were revived; women were strictly limited in their endeavor to be active in the national revival movement.

The last section of Jong-Suk Yon' contribution presents the education activities of Korean women contrary to the Japanese strategy. It enlists women's schools, organizations and movements. The Conclusion exhibits ideas, which might be called feminist: gender equality is the only way to achieve high national standards by uniting the forces of all people in a nation.

From two nationally determined points of view the paper expresses a common philosophy: education and cultural enlightenment are basic means of female liberation; female liberation is a prerequisite for general progress of any nation.