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Tribute to Nongak (2024) – Costumes of the Korean Farmers' Traditional Dances and Music Groups

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Costumes of the Korean Farmers' Traditional Dances and
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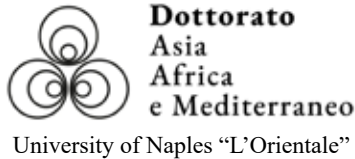


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Tribute to Nongak 2024
Costumes of the Korean Farmers' Traditional
Dances and Music Groups

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Jessica Rossi

Jessica Rossi is a PhD student at the University of Naples L'Orientale's Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies. She holds an MA in Economics and Management of Arts and Cultural Activities from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her current research focuses on Korean Intangible Cultural Heritage management and Korean government public diplomacy.

Jessica has previously served as an intern at the Korean Ministry of Culture, Jeonju-based National Intangible Heritage Centre (NIHC). She actively collaborates with Korean associations and organizations dealing with Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Foreword

Jessica Rossi

University of Naples “L’Orientale”, Naples, Italy

Colorful, playful, and bursting with energy from head to toe: Welcome to the world of Korean Nongak!

So, what exactly is Nongak? Nongak, meaning “Farmers’ music,” is a delightful blend of music, dance, and vibrant costumes. Together with Korean Nongak performers, this book is going to take you on a visual journey through Nongak’s lively attire—clothes, hats, masks, and flags that make the performances so mesmerizing. After all, Nongak’s rhythm wouldn’t be the same without its whimsical and colorful costumes, complete with quirky hats and amusing masks.

2024 marks the 10th anniversary of Nongak’s inclusion in the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Since its designation in 2014 as an intangible heritage of humanity, Nongak remains a cherished tradition, enjoyed by Koreans and visitors to South Korea alike. It’s a living heritage that celebrates agricultural life, nurtures the human-nature connection, and reminds us of our roots.

This book showcases some of the most fascinating costumes worn by Nongak performers across South Korea. As the result of my fieldwork during Spring 2024, it offers a glimpse into the rich variety of costumes, though it cannot encompass every single community. I’ve extensively explored the regions of Jeolla (both North and South) and Gangwon, capturing the essence of at least fifteen communities within the Honam (Udo and Jwado) and Gangwon areas.

This book isn't meant to be a systematic report of all the costumes of Korean Nongak, nor is it an academic deep dive into their meaning, origin, and evolution. Instead, it's a colorful celebration designed to let you savor the sweet and sparkling culture of Korean farmers, who have inhabited the fields and mountains of the peninsula since ancient times.

Just as every member of a Nongak performance is vital to its success, this collection of costumes wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of all those involved in the performances. This is why there's no single author for this book—it's a communal creation made possible by collective effort.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who kindly met with me, listened to my very poor Korean language, and shared their precious time and stories for the world to see.

No more words should keep us from the *kwaeng, kwaeng* and *ttum, ttum* of Nongak's vibrant costumes. I hope you enjoy imagining the scintillating air that soars from the dances, music, and costumes of Nongak just as much as I did.

열씨구...

좋다!







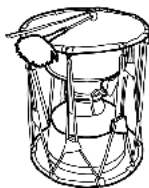




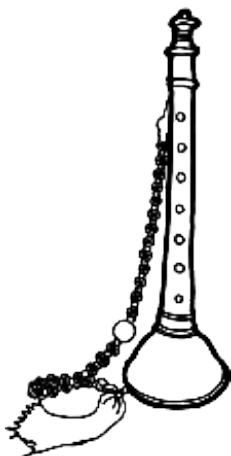




Short Visual Dictionary



Wind instruments



Taepyeongso 태평소

The Taepyeongso is a double-reed wind instrument played by a single musician, accompanying the entire Nongak performance while maintaining its own distinct melody and rhythm. With its military origins, the Taepyeongso produces a strong and deep sound that can sometimes be perceived as harsh, yet it blends perfectly in the ensemble.



Nabal 나발

The Nabal is a 115 cm-long trumpet. Although it is rarely seen in Nongak performances, its presence can add excitement, signaling the beginning and end of the show. This trumpet is made of metal and typically comes in two or three detachable sections. To enhance its appearance, it is sometimes adorned with a flag or traditional Korean knots.

Bupo Sangmo



Gochang Nongak



Jinju Samcheonpo Nongak



Jinju Samcheonpo Nongak



Hwasun Hancheon Nongak

Acknowledgements

This book would not exist without the support and dedication of the communities and members who perform Nongak. It is truly a collective effort, and I am deeply grateful to each community for allowing me to spend time with them during the summer of 2024. They generously opened their doors, shared their stories, allowed me to take pictures, and patiently answered my many questions—even the odd and seemingly unnecessary ones—all while enduring my constant presence with a camera.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Nongak communities, their members, and their representatives. Their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences made it possible for me to understand Nongak more deeply. In particular, I want to express special gratitude to the Nongak communities of Iksan, Gochang, Yeongkwon, Hwasun, Namwon, Gurye, Gangneung, Wonju, and Pyeongchang.

These acknowledgments would be incomplete without recognizing the incredible support of my friend and colleague, Shinwha Hong, from the Center for Intangible Cultural Studies (CICS). Without him and the dedicated staff at CICS, I would never have been able to connect with these extraordinary performers. This book owes much to him and to CICS. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Heera Shin, one of the contributors to this publication, for her invaluable help in connecting me with several Nongak communities and for her wise counsel.

Lastly, I want to extend my thanks to the organizers and volunteers of the Gangneung Danoje Festival, who graciously allowed me to participate in the 2024 Gangneung Danoje volunteering program. Their assistance and the time they gave me to photograph the Nongak communities during the festival were invaluable. This was an inspiring and communal experience that not only enhanced my understanding of Nongak but also allowed me to meet new friends and colleagues.

My heart also goes to AGP, my partner in love and in working crimes. Without his support this book, this idea, these pages won't ever exist. Thank you for always supporting me and my work.

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Photo Credits

This book has been compiled using photographs primarily taken by the editor, **Jessica Rossi**. A complete list of photographers who have generously contributed their work is provided below. Unless otherwise specified, the images are the property of Jessica Rossi.

Each photograph is accompanied by information on the location, the Nongak community, and the photographer. The photographs are presented in the order they appear on the pages.

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