



UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE

DOTTORATO IN ASIA AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Schema per redazione progetto di ricerca dottorato

PHD PROGRAMME IN ASIAN, AFRICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

Form for presentation of Research Project

1 - Titolo del Progetto di Ricerca/Title of Research Project

Nationalism and Intangible Cultural Heritage in East Asia – Heritage Conflicts between China and South Korea, a comparison

2 - Settore scientifico-disciplinare a cui si riferisce il progetto/ Academic discipline to which your project is related

Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies – AREA 10 - Scienze dell'antichità / filologico letterarie e storico artistiche (1141) STORIA DELL'ASIA ORIENTALE E SUD-ORIENTALE (13)

3 - Abstract del progetto/Project abstract 5000 caratteri – 5000 characters

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ICH) list is strongly dominated by East Asia countries traditional cultural practices. People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC), South Korea and Japan are the countries with the widest number of ICH elements registered as well as the countries with the strongest national legislation for the safeguarding of ICH. Cultural heritage has become a form of international recognition of one's country's cultural identity. These elements also increased the efficacy of cultural soft power around the world. Despite the possibility of multinational recognition of an IC element, PRC and South Korea never looked for a joint multinational registration, still some elements have arisen tensions between the two countries. This research project objective is to analyze Dano festival and Nongakmu (農樂 or 农乐舞) as the two main objects of tension between PRC and South Korea from an external perspective. Both traditions are analyzed from a historical and anthropological point of view to trace their cultural roots. The research then follows with a study of the symbolic language of governments and public's speech to investigate the cultural nationalism propaganda and public reaction in both countries.

4 - Stato dell'arte/State of the art 5000 caratteri – 5000 characters

The research verges on two main broader concepts: cultural nationalism and intangible cultural heritage.

CULTURAL NATIONALISM:

Cultural nationalism implies nationalism as its main core concept to be analyzed, and in my specific case applied to PRC and South Korea. I start from the assumptions made by the modernist school of nationalism headed by Anderson, Hobsbawm and Gellner who define nationalism as a modern invention, to proceed into the more specific literature study on Korean and Chinese cases. Cultural or ethnic nationalism, as a branch of the general term, is the use and, often, the revival of delimited and selected cultures and cultural traditions

within national communities. My research project follows the idea of the development of cultural nationalism in East Asia due to the pressure put by the rising internationalization and globalization starting from the late 19th century. As for South Korea, the basis of my research is the study conducted by scholar Gi Wook Shin “Ethnic Nationalism in Korea” (2006) and the confronting dualism between pan-Asianists and Nationalists in the shaping of traditional culture and its appropriation. On the other hand, little literature has appeared till now about cultural nationalism in PRC, however an undoubtedly fundamental study is the one carried out by scholar Guo Yingjie on “Cultural Nationalism in contemporary China”.

Another aspect of cultural nationalism, laying as a foundation of my research, is its more international dimension, namely cultural diplomacy. Cummings (2009) describes both sides of cultural diplomacy: its cohering power based on cultural exchanges and mutual understanding, as well as its darker side as an instrument of cultural expansion in a one-way relationship with other external actors, with the use of a clear national narrative.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE:

The discourse on Intangible Cultural Heritage is varied and extensive, especially the one regarding Western countries and the legal aspects concerned. For the purpose of this research, I shall distinguish the first group of scholars investigating the meaning of ICH and its implication in the human rights sphere; whereas, the second group is more concerned about the anthropological approach to ICH. The first group of scholars defines the main syllabus when talking about ICH, which comprises its meaning, its implications in the legal setting, especially in the human rights sphere, and lastly the creation of cultural communities. The most comprehensive definition of ICH is the one provided by 2003 UNESCO Convention, with some criticisms held by scholars such as Janet Blake as well as Peter Seitel, who delve into this topic. For the enlargement of the concept of human rights, a definition of cultural rights is provided by the Fribourg Group and the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights, which is the first declaration to explicitly state the right to identity and cultural heritage. This concept implicitly assumes the presence of a heritage or cultural community in the absence of “societal parameters, national, ethnic, religious, professional or based on class” as Prof. Gabi Doff-Bonekämper (2009) stresses. The concept of community I apply to my research is borderless as well as stateless, in contrast with the idea of imagined communities by Anderson (1983), which sets the basis to justify cultural nationalism and soft power policies by national governments. In this way, I want to convey the idea of a shared and cross-border heritage, not based on Barry Smith’s fiat boundaries, nor created by an “authorized heritage discourse” like Laurajne Smith explains (2006). As for the second group of research, a milestone is represented by Lourdes Arizpe and Cristina Amescua’s book on the “Anthropological perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage”. Prof. Arizpe sustains the idea of the artificial singularity attached to ICH registered in the UNESCO 2003 Convention list, therefore the implicit exclusion of similar cultural practices performed in the neighboring villages or in a micro region. This discourse is then applied to the concept of authenticity and its validation during the registration process, Arizpe sustains the idea of the analysis of authenticity inside the singularity-plurality framework, in order to give more relevance to each local specific cultural event. As for the research methodology in the anthropology field, an important suggestion is made by Anna Tsing who stresses that the anthropological research should extend the study on community to “a wider-ranging scope of (transnational) networks, social movements, state policies, etc.” (2002). In my research I try to make these two above-mentioned approaches cohabit by looking at both local similarities/differences and the official definition of cultural heritage and its authorized authenticity used as a bias to confer validity to one community instead of another, as well as enlarging the definition of community from the very local to the cross-border one.

5 – Bibliografia/Bibliography 5000 caratteri – 5000 characters

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6 - Descrizione del progetto/Description of the Project 15.000 caratteri 15000 characters

IT Va indicato per quale dei tre curricula si intende concorrere.

EN Please indicate for which curriculum you intend to apply

IT Indicare se, in alternativa, si intende concorrere per una delle 5 borse PNRR DM. N. 351, nel qual caso va indicata la tematica di riferimento, o per 1 borsa nell'ambito del progetto Synergy Dharma (ERC 809994).

Le relative tematiche sono consultabili nell'Allegato A.

EN Please indicate if you intend to apply, rather than for a curriculum, for one of the 5 grants funded by Next Generation EU – National Recovery and Resilience Plan, M.D. 351/2022, in which case you need to indicate for which research topic, or for 1 grant funded by the project Sinergy Grant DHARMA (ERC 809994).

The research topics may be consulted in Attachment A (Allegato A).

This research project is intended to be a continuation of my MA study on the “Living Human Treasures” in the Republic of Korea. My thesis project included the analysis of the South Korean Intangible Cultural Heritage national policy with a particular focus on the state-run aid to practitioners and heritage holders (보유자, 보유 단체). The thesis also included a comparison between other systems (namely: Japan and France), where the governments strongly recognize the importance of communities and individual practitioners also via financial aids. During my research I strongly emphasized the central government-driven force towards cultural recognition and its historical background in nationalism movements and in various political actions. I want to demonstrate how PRC and South Korea national governments use cultural heritage, and here specifically ICH, as a tool for national identity building as well as for international recognition.

Based on Llorenç Prats's theoretical assumption that cultural heritage is a modern socio-cultural construction, as well as Ashworth and Graham's idea of the “selective use of the past for the need and purposes of the present society”, this PhD research project's objective is to analyze the cultural nationalism discourse in PRC and South Korea through conflicts around ICH. The analysis considers internal discussions on cultural properties and how they legitimize nationalism, as well as cross-border conflictual dialogues between the two countries. Kimchi, Hanbok, Samgyetang, Dano festival (Dragon Boat festival), Arirang, Korean wedding ceremony to name just a few examples of contested intangible heritage between PRC and South Korea, these are all considered to be national representative symbols by the wider public in both countries, while on the international ground, they assume the role of contrast agents by stressing differences rather than showing the similarities laying within cross-border cultural communities.

This project investigates two currently discussed conflictual intangible cultural assets from an objective, critical and impartial point of view, to see the reasons behind Chinese and Korean nationalistic propaganda and the historical basis behind the affiliation of a specific cultural practice as a national identity symbol, its control by the central government through its cultural branch, as well as the creation of a collective possession. Nationalistic discourse in both countries emerged from the opposition to external threats, such as the arrival of Catholicism in Korea, by the latter part of the 18th century, and the First Opium War, the acquisition of Hong Kong by the British (1842), and the transfer of Chinese territories to Japan with the Treaty of Versailles for PRC. Nowadays, with the transformation of South Korea into a rampant capitalistic market shaped after the USA, as well as the Chinese open-door policy, together with their participation in various UN agencies at the international level, nationalism has become a mere instrument of cultural affirmation and border control in the region. Officials' discourses on both sides foment national spirit and raise tensions between the two neighboring countries with an increasing upsurge in regionalism in East Asia. The construction of a strong cultural identity both in Korea as well as in China has been the object of the



respective governments, supporting the idea of many international scholars, like Lixinski, Logan, Mountcastle, and Munjeri, who see cultural heritage as a tool of nationalistic construction, or better “a strategic tool for nation-building”. UNESCO Intangible cultural heritage list has thus turned into an international martial arts ring where the three major East Asian countries, namely: PRC, South Korea and Japan are confronting to establish their supremacy by number of IC assets officially registered (PRC: 42; Japan: 22; South Korea: 21). Getting international recognition also means being distinguished from the others, in this way reinforcing the idea of the independent nature, and self-reliant force of one’s own national cultural tradition from the neighboring ones. An important study which demonstrates the politics of nationalism conducted by PRC officials using ICH is the one by Juheon Lee, who carries out a thorough analysis of the Chinese promotion of its majority culture and the objectification of ethnic minorities cultural traditions for political reasons. A double-edge sword action of inheritance/disinheritance is applied, like Bahar Aykan explains in his paper around the politics of constructing “Nevruz”, a mean to create at the same time both a legal as well as an illegal practitioner and user of the ICH concerned, a way to deprive one country of its authority over a particular cultural tradition. Political geographical borders are applied to cultural exchanges, which are by their own nature free from human-based social and political constraints, what Barry Smith calls *fiat* boundaries (or human-demarcation induced).

The two intangible cultural heritage assets from PRC and South Korea which I’m going to analyze in this research project are Korean Dano Festival (단오제), with its Chinese counterpart being the Dragon boat Festival (or Duanwu Jie 端午节), as well as the farmers’ dance of China’s Korean ethnic group, also partially registered in South Korea under the name of Nongak (농악). Both these traditions represent a cultural common ground developed back in the ancient times which passed and lived on from one country to another by developing peculiar local characteristics. This common ground has been perceived as a threat to cultural authenticity and ethnic unity constituting the perfect case of a plurality of cultural expressions regarded as a singularity in the national setting as well as by the cultural administrations of their respective countries. The research will explore their historical and anthropological basis to see what are the common roots which justify the identification under the same cultural event of these traditions; however, the natural evolution of each local reinterpretation with their discrepancies will be stressed as well, to understand the importance of a plurality of expressions, not standardized nor objectified. After a first background analysis on their origins, current social and cultural conflicts are introduced to look at how cultural communities, the general public and governmental institutions react in front of the feeling of “mis-appropriation” of their own culture.

The research methodology applies a historical approach to nationalism rise in both countries, a socio-linguistic analysis of the online discussions on the topics analyzed as well as the analysis of a wide range of online and paper news about the same topics. News and public discourses also include political dialectics, and how these can influence the general public’s reinterpretation of history and of culture, as well as how it can shape the identification of the *alien*. The study of two major conflictual heritages will be conducted from the historical, cultural, and anthropological perspectives to see these practices origins, development over history, and how communities identify with their respective practices, as well as Chinese and Korean communities’ similarities and differences related to the two case studies. International law stands in the foreground, depicting the main legal framework which sustains international recognition of ICH and the resulting conflictual competition arising. The research applies global history approaches to demonstrate how intangible heritage cannot be self-confined inside a modern cultural construct, but it better results from a “web of interactions and exchanges between various groups” (Matsuda, A., 2016).

7 - Risultati attesi e ricadute applicative/ Expected results and application effects (max 3000 caratteri/max 3000 characters)

This research project shall demonstrate how cultural heritage hybridity recognition is perceived as a negative aspect by both PRC as well as South Korea’s preservation institutions and then by the wider public. Where does contrast first generate from? Is it a socially intrinsic national sentiment which naturally generates inside the community or is it the result of legally binding mechanisms? The research results shall first evaluate



these questions in order to answer to the more general anthropological contrast in the formation of communities of practice introduced by Tony Bennett and Zygmunt Baumann, thus between the idea of the field of culture more governmentally organized and constructed or Bauman's more spontaneous process of culture formation and management. The importance of political agenda and its reflections in the cultural sphere are then going to emerge from this comparison. Both PRC and South Korea have strongly increased their efforts in cultural soft power and international dissemination of their respective cultures, ICH and traditional culture are part of the agenda as well. Are the propaganda techniques used by both governments influencing citizens and communities, are these acts fostering cultural division and ethnic contrast? The analysis of cultural nationalism uprisings and development can help to trace the origins of Chinese and Korean communities' conflicts, the historical reasons behind it and what are the future perspectives in the development of cross-cultural relationships. The field of application of the results can range from the anthropological field, to the political and study of international relations ones, for a more comprehensive East Asian perspective on topics such as ICH management, its employment, and its social effects. Thanks to the cross-disciplinary approach this study shall create a bridge between the cultural sector and the diplomatic one. The study also aims to see the positive and negative results of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH and how the approach to immaterial cultural heritage has changed since the increase in international attention.