

Refereed article

National Loss and the Politics of Mourning in North Korea

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Summary

The main objective of the paper is to approach the politics of mourning in North Korea following the experiencing of the loss of the country's two leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. Building on theoretical considerations regarding the concepts of "pastoral power" as well as the "theater state," the study analyzes some of the performances, symbols, and rituals connected to the loss of the founder of the state and nation Kim Il Sung and of his successor Kim Jong Il. By so doing, the paper provides a fresh perspective for thinking about national loss — and the ways of remembering linked to it — both as inherently political and at the same time as constitutive of social relations. In order to approach the politics of mourning in North Korea, a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and the leader(s), as well as of the subsequent process of subjectivation, is required. As such, the study draws on the concept of "the sociopolitical organism" and the notion of "political life and the nontemporality of loss," as these understandings help explain a set of particular aspects linked to the politics of mourning in the country.

Keywords: North Korea, Pastoral Power, National Mourning, Subject(ivation), Socio-Political Organism, Political Life

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