

Refereed article

Contentious Memory Politics in South Korea: The Seoul National Cemetery

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Summary

This article explores the Seoul National Cemetery's (SNC) characteristics as a memory space that is used to reproduce the official state narrative of South Korea history. A place for mainly commemorating the dead of the Korean War, the SNC would be used to promote an anticommunist Cold War frame. Hence, it has been useful for conservative forces to maintain hegemony in the ideological discourse forming part of the “remembrance war” with progressives in South Korea's increasingly liberal and pluralistic society. This analysis sheds light on discrepancies regarding who and what are remembered, how they are remembered, and why they are remembered. These discrepancies are represented in the contradicting deeds of the dead commemorated at the site, tensions in the symbolic vocabulary and architectural design of the SNC, and in competing deeds of those who are buried there and at other cemeteries.

Keywords: remembrance war, national cemetery, memory culture, political remembrance, memory space, Korea

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