



Contesting Memorial Spaces in the Asia-Pacific

Asia Week Spin Off Event, Kyushu University Border Studies

History and memory are particularly sensitive topics in and among the states of East Asia, with antagonistic assertions of sovereign memory recently leading to domestic political scandals, heritage disagreements, territorial disputes, and history wars. What unites these issues is that they constitute overt assertions of national identity made at and through particular sites. Such sites of heritage and memory—ranging from disputed islands to the national museums celebrating them, controversial sculptures outside embassies in Seoul, and information centers for UNESCO-listed sites in Tokyo—all serve as symbolic repositories for social assertions of history and identity. They are therefore open to deployment both within and between political communities.

On 6-7 November 2020, Kyushu University will host an international conference devoted to the operation and conceptualization of such contested memorial spaces. Building upon two earlier events, “Borders of Memory” in December 2016, and “Heritage, conflicted sites and bordered memories in Asia” in July 2020, this inter-disciplinary event aims to bring insights from recent work on the politics of heritage and the social construction of territorial disputes into explicit dialogue.

The aims of this event are threefold:

- To consider the ways in which the significance of sites of memory operates across political scales, from the intensely local to the national, international, and global;
- To understand how these spaces provide a point of contact at which understandings and expressions of collective memory, as well as competing political claims, meet; and
- To reflect on whether it is possible for such sites to be transformed from places of antagonistic memorial contestation into spaces able to accommodate political difference.

In so doing, attention will be drawn to the tensions inherent to these sites as spaces through which national identity is able to be affirmed and contested.

The Conference invites scholars conducting theoretical and empirical work both within and beyond the confines of the Asia-Pacific to contribute to the discussion.

The event will consist of a series of joint online/onsite events, whose exact configuration will be determined nearer the time. We invite interested scholars to first submit abstracts (of up to 250 words) to the organizers by August 31, 2020, at boyle@law.kyushu-u.ac.jp.

Full drafts of papers should be submitted by October 15; these will be shared within sessions to facilitate discussion. A selection of papers will be subsequently developed for publication.

Thanks to the generosity of the British Association of Japanese Studies, there will be three awards (of 25,000 JPY each) available to support the in-person attendance of early career scholars from Japan or, potentially, East Asia (hopefully!). Please indicate if you wish to be considered for one of these awards when submitting your abstract.

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