

Recreating Dongdaemun Stadium in South Korea: Beyond Japanese Colonial Memories and towards a Global City*

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Built in 1925 during the Japanese colonial period, Dongdaemun Stadium was the first modern sports stadium in Seoul, the capital of Korea. During the Japanese colonial occupation and after liberation, especially in the 1960s–80s, Korean sports fans experienced numerous significant victories at Dongdaemun. This article investigates how Dongdaemun Stadium, part of the Japanese colonial legacy, became the Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park (DDP), a landmark of the new Seoul and a social, cultural, and economic hub. From the perspectives of heritage studies, it illuminates how colonial legacies were dealt with in post-colonial Korean society, and how urban heritage sites influence the re-creation of city identities and represent city memory. In particular, it examines memory conflicts between city authorities and a diverse cohort of opponents: civic groups, sports fans, baseball professionals, and small-scale merchants. Analyzing three main conflicts—concerning the site’s history, sporting events, and the surrounding market as a space to live and work—this article scrutinizes how the stadium’s accumulated city memories were negotiated and managed, and how selected memories have been visually represented here as an outcome of these memory conflicts. Finally, considering the controversies regarding the DDP project, this article addresses how new

* This work is based, in part, on the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, “Dealing with ‘difficult heritage’: South Korea’s responses to Japanese colonial occupation architecture” (University of Cambridge, 2015). This is an extension of that work, investigating new research questions in the context of Asian global cities. When Romanizing Korean words, I use ‘the Revised Romanization of Korean’. However, in the case of internationally known proper nouns and terms, such as the names of Korean Presidents, I follow the spelling as internationally used.

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