

State-Building Discourse and the Failed Commemoration of the March First Independence Movement during the Liberation Period in Korea

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The March First Movement was a politically significant event during Korea's liberation period. Left- and right-wing political figures fiercely opposed one another over questions of state-building and aimed to justify their leadership by referencing events of the colonial era. The March First Movement played a crucial symbolic role in this context, and its commemoration subsequently became a key issue that led to violent struggles. During the liberation period, authors who engaged in state-building discourses displayed ambivalent attitudes toward ceremonies commemorating the March First Movement. Various works of literature examining the March First Movement ceremonies during the liberation period question the patriotic figures who devoted themselves to saving the nation. The anxieties of colonial subjects in their works reveal another side of history that cannot be reduced to national sacrifice and instead represents the deaths of the unnamed who participated in the March First Movement. The commemoration of the colonial past failed to stabilize the official history of the newborn nation-state. Consequently, literature regarding the March First Movement written during the liberation period prompts us to reconsider remembrance of the colonial past beyond the state-building discourse.

Keywords: Anti-colonialism, liberation, memory, commemoration, March First Movement

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