

International Politics of Cultural Heritage (RIS special issue)

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Despite the widespread and creative use of heritage politics by a range of international actors, such as multilateral institutions and states, the field of International Relations (IR) has paid insufficient attention to the topic. To the extent that these politics have entered the field's attention, it has been primarily through instances of highly publicized cultural heritage destruction during armed conflict. This special issue of RIS brings together eight research articles, as well as a framing introduction and a conclusion, with the aim of launching international heritage politics as an important IR research agenda. Moving beyond destruction to the productive politics of heritage, these contributions show the range of these politics from the construction of international cultural status to forging contemporary international alliances along themes of cultural and historical familiarity. Further, they show heritage politics at work in international institutions, from UNESCO to the ICC, in bilateral and multilateral relations, and as moving between international and domestic politics. In these broad deployments, heritage politics are attached to museum collections, traveling exhibits, archeological digs, DNA tests, restitution demands, and debates on international land swaps.

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