

# **The second life of patriotic objects. Memories and politics from private heritage to the Nation on display**

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## Abstract

This contribution deals with the constitution, preservation, exposition and political use of relics belonged to patriots, heroes and martyres of the Italian Risorgimento, until the first period of 20th century, aiming to highlight the importance of materiality in spreading political messages.

Within the historical-political frame of conflicting memories, seeking consent, nation building and public use of history, this paper analyzes the nature, origins and destinations of particular series of objects that, since the last two decades of XIX century, crowded the first historical and municipal museums' layouts in Italy, between unitarian ambitions and municipalist legitimacy. Before invading the public space and becoming political tools, in fact, objects and collections had moved from private into public frameworks, acquiring different meanings from the original ones.

The focus will then move to the actors, contexts, ways involved in the first attempts of custody and exhibition of political relics; to the communication devices connected to homeland memories; to the master narratives, to the histories and counter-histories of the unification process showed in the Italian growing museums: places that, beyond the need of didacticism and the claim to a neutral, acceptable, authoritative and scientific truth, became the scenography and stage for the performance of cultural and political symbols and for the myths of nationhood.

## Author information

**Silvia Cavicchioli** teaches Contemporary History at the University of Turin. In recent years her research interests have focused on memory studies, the history of gender, the ruling classes in XIX century, on museum collections and art linked to processes of nationalism, and on the political use of human remains. Her publications include *Public Uses of Human Remains and Relics in History* (ed. with L. Provero), Routledge, 2020; *Anita. Storia e mito di Anita Garibaldi*, Einaudi, 2017; *The Translation of the Remains of Martyred Patriots in Risorgimento Italy*, in *The Great Laboratory of Humanity. Collection, Patrimony and the Repatriation of Human Remains*, (M.T. Milicia, ed.), Cleup, 2019.

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**Wednesday, 23 June** - Session 13 - **10,30-12,00 CET (Webex)** - Panel – *The political life of things. Material culture and politics in Risorgimento Italy*

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