

# **Two popes. Pius IX, religion and the power of objects in Nineteenth-century politics**

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## Abstract

This paper analyses the political and religious twist that permeates the manufacturing and circulation of things of everyday usage linked to the image of pope Pius IX during his pontificate. Since the large amnesty he gave on July 16, 1846, Pius was the centre of an extended and across-the-board mobilisation. Consequently, his image was reproduced and politically exploited making hi the first media pope of contemporary age. The facet of the pope was immediately linked to the act of mercy of amnesty; as time goes by, different subjects exploited the manufacturing and diffusion of objects that incorporated the portrait of the pope as propaganda weapons.

After the failure of 1848 revolutions, these objects apparently disappeared; truthfully they stayed but changed their meaning. From revolutionary tools to devotional and counter-revolutionary gadgets, the objects linked to Pius IX enlighten political stake at work in the new communication era, hence they inform Nineteenth-century political landscape. Compared to the general phenomenon of objects exchange and political mobilization, this case elucidates the intertwining of religious issues and political propaganda at the dawn of mass society. The essay provides a reconstruction of this parabola and suggests a new 'political ethnology' for the study of these objects.

## Author information

**Ignazio Veca** holds a double Ph.D. in History by the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa and the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris). Former fellow at the Scuola Superiore di Studi Storici (San Marino Republic), École Normale Supérieure (Paris), Collège de France and École française de Rome, his main research areas concern Comparative History, Italian Risorgimento, Conspiracy Theories, Religious studies and Politics. Among his recent publications: *Il mito di Pio IX. Storia di un papa liberale e nazionale* (Rome, 2018, winner of “Premio Sissco Opera Prima 2019”); *La congiura immaginata. Opinione pubblica e accuse di complotto nella Roma dell’Ottocento* (Rome, 2019).

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