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

“Layers and Connections of the Political”
International APH conference 2020-2021
14-25 June 2021

Author: Ignazio Veca
University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy
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 him 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.
Two popes. Pius IX, religion and the power of objects in Nineteenth-century politics

Author information


Contact Information

ignazio.veca@cfs.unipi.it

**Wednesday, 23 June** - Session 13 - **10,30-12,00 CET (Webex)** - Panel – The political life of things. Material culture and politics in Risorgimento Italy
Two popes. Pius IX, religion and the power of objects in Nineteenth-century politics

Luiss
School of Government

Via di Villa Emiliani, 14
00197 Roma
T +39 06 85225052
sog@luiss.it