Chapter 1
Toward the Modern Papal Colors
(1800–1825)

Overview

Roman Catholicism is among the world’s chief religions, and its pope enjoys a unique prerogative: civil sovereignty. This is reflected by a temporal state; for the Bishop of Rome must be free from secular rulers for the sake of his ecclesial office, the “Holy See” (official parlance for the seat of the papacy and its offices—i.e., “Holy Roman Apostolic See”). Though not an article of faith, sovereignty protects the papacy from vying or intrusive world powers, and frees it for its sacred mission: to guide the universal church founded by Jesus Christ.

For centuries this spiritual mission has been signified by papal symbols—especially the keys referenced by Jesus when he promised Simon Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). By the Middle Ages, these metaphorical keys appeared in the coats of arms of Peter’s successors, the Bishops of Rome; and the flag with Peter’s keys now flies over the sovereign papal territory where the apostle is buried: Vatican City State.

As the keys reflect the pope’s spiritual mission, a tiara recalls his innate sovereignty. Together they compose the papacy’s longtime heraldic emblem, traditionally rendered in gold and silver (Fig. 1.1). These “tinctures” led to the modern papal colors of yellow and white, for in heraldry, gold equates with yellow and silver with white. In 1808 these colors first appeared in a papal cockade of white and yellow (see Fig. 1.27). These circular cloth badges signified political loyalties in 19th-century Europe; and within two decades, the yellow-white colors adorned Papal States flags (see Chapter 2). These all but vanished as the emerging Kingdom of Italy absorbed the Papal States between 1859 and 1870 (see map, Fig. 1.2); but when the Lateran Treaty established
Figure 1.3. Papal States flags, 1858 (M. A. LeGras): I. Sovereign’s Ensign; II. War/Naval Ensign; III. Fort Flag; IV. State Ensign; V. Civil Ensign; VI. Pilot Ensign; VII. Command Pennant; VIII. Naval Jack; IX. Commissioning Streamer; X. Coast Guard Streamer
Vatican City in 1929, the new state revived a yellow–white flag flown by the papal merchant fleet in the 1800s (see Fig. 1.3, no. V).

Thus 1800 is a fitting year to begin a study of modern “papal flags”—the shorthand designation for Papal States flags and today’s Vatican flag. (In fact, despite this book’s title, the term “Vatican flag” was unknown before 1929.) Earlier flags have already been documented within the constraints of available sources, as has papal heraldry; but the 19th century is a useful starting point for a systematic flag study for two reasons. First, it saw the rise of the modern papacy’s colors and flags, in the wake of the French Revolution (1789) and its ominous implications for papal sovereignty, and second, various records are more available.

However, the research is not always easy. In the first systematic study a century ago, a French flag scholar lamented that “no work exists on pontifical flags at all, and it is also very difficult to deal with this part of the pontifical court, despite its importance.” Although recent authors have fared better, sometimes our knowledge remains incomplete.

Current papal flag studies, written chiefly in Italian, have limitations. Some are based on the era’s flag books and charts, which served as navigation resources. They thus focused on maritime flags (known as ensigns) and vary in their reliability. Other studies treat only land-based papal military colors, treating them as part of the 19th-century Italian Risorgimento, or “revival”—a political and military campaign to unite Italy’s progenitor princely states into one.

By contrast, our present aim is a comprehensive survey of all papal flags used officially from 1800 to the present day, whether on land or at sea. Primary sources are cited as much as possible, including actual flag specimens, government decrees, or eyewitness descriptions and illustrations. But there are several challenges to overcome.

First, the Papal States flew multiple flags for various functions, but not a uniform national flag. This concept, now taken for granted, was still emerging there as elsewhere. Unlike today, the term “papal flag” (bandiera pontificia) conveyed no uniform design, but only a symbolic principle—namely, papal sovereignty—for monarchies associated flags and statehood with the sovereign. Indeed the plural term “papal flags” was also acceptable (as in Fig. 1.4). While several had yellow and white vertical stripes, the term “papal flag” never implied a uniform design until Vatican City was created in 1929 and began using a state flag.
Figure 1.4. “Chart of Naval and Merchant Marine Papal Flags” (Papal States Finance Ministry, ca. 1855–1870)
Consequently there are many different Papal States flags to catalog: civil ensigns (for merchant ships), state ensigns (for customs vessels), war ensigns (for warships), civil flags (for popular use), fort flags (or “war flags”), and military colors for armed units (especially the infantry). Despite similarities, each papal flag served a distinct time period and function, and new discoveries are possible (see charts in Appendices I & II). Nor did 19th-century flag usage equate with that of today. Mass production was unknown then and some customs had yet to evolve, such as flying flags at state offices or schools. Moreover, since state rule was dispersed among differing papal agents, some flags represented papal authority without clearly bearing the title, such as those carried by special militias or the Standard of the Holy Roman Church.

A further challenge is that papal flag artifacts and documents are dispersed among numerous museums and archives in Italy and elsewhere. In some cases these can be corroborated by contemporary vexillological sources like flag books or charts, government decrees, or journalists’ accounts. In other cases, available documentation provides a reasonable footing, but a less sure one. Hence a patient understanding of available sources is necessary.

For 19th-century Papal States ensigns, the principal reputable printed sources (detailed in the Works Cited) include: Pavillons, an 1819 French flag book, with an undated annex from a later edition; an 1825 flag decree by the pope’s cardinal chamberlain; Verzameling, a Dutch manuscript based on a dispatch from the Netherlands’ ambassador in Rome in 1834; a quite reliable French flag book by M. A. LeGras in 1858 (Fig. 1.3); and Quadro, a papal flag chart furnished to foreign powers by the Papal States finance ministry between 1855 and 1870, perhaps no later than 1858 (Fig. 1.4).

For land-based papal flags, valuable information on military colors and standards is furnished by the Piroli Collection (Raccolta Piroli)—a collection of watercolors portraying 19th-century Roman uniforms and flags. Named for its primary artist, it is preserved at the Museo Centrale del Risorgimento in Rome. Also in Rome, the Capitoline Museum and the Vatican Historical Museum at the Lateran Palace preserve several flags of the era, as do public and private collections elsewhere. Appendix III provides an inventory of surviving flag specimens.

Before examining the flags attested in these varied sources, a brief retrospective on papal temporal sovereignty is needed for context.
The History of Papal Sovereignty

As the Roman Empire dissolved in the early Middle Ages, the Roman popes assumed civil rule over substantial land tracts in Europe, especially on the Italian peninsula (which became a patchwork of princely states). Known in Italian as *lo Stato Pontificio* (the Pontifical State) or *lo Stato della Chiesa* (the Church State), the country is commonly rendered in English as “the Papal States”, “the States of the Church”, or even “the Roman States”.

With its capital at Rome, the Papal States in the 1800s comprised the Italian regions of Lazio, Umbria, The Marches, and Romagna, including the cities of Rome, Perugia, Ancona, Bologna, and Ravenna. Though small in area—roughly the size of the Netherlands (ca. 16,000 square miles)—its impact on Italian history was significant due to Italian Catholicism and the consequent role of its popes.

These included Pius VI and Pius VII, both of whom were taken prisoner during French invasions; Leo XII and Pius VIII, both of whom reigned briefly; and Gregory XVI and Pius IX, both of whom contended with the challenges of modernity and internal rebellions stemming from the *Risorgimento*. (See Appendix VII for their reigns.)

The *Risorgimento* was a movement for pan-Italian unity akin to other European revolutions of the era. It ended in 1870 with the peninsula’s unification under an Italian king—the last holdout being papal Rome. Its roots lay in the French Revolution (1789), after which France expanded its reach into the Italian peninsula and soon seized the Papal States, declared a Roman Republic (1796), and exiled Pius VI to France, where he died in 1799.

That year, compelled to withdraw, France surrendered the Papal States, minus some territory. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (i.e., Naples) administered Rome until 1800 when it was turned over to a new pope, Pius VII. He was deported in 1808 when France again occupied the Papal States, at the instigation of Napoleon (who likewise aided the previous invasion). After Napoleon’s defeat in 1814, the Congress of Vienna revived the Papal States; but because he had successfully united the peninsula for a time, pan-Italian nationalism was born—stoking local uprisings which eventually climaxed in Italy’s unification. The cause was led by the House of Savoy in the Kingdom of Sardinia, which ruled that island and the region around Turin known as Piedmont.
Political uprisings in the Papal States erupted in 1831, 1848–1849, and 1859–1860. In the last one Piedmont seized two-thirds of papal lands when the pope’s Austrian protectors withdrew. His northern cities (Bologna, Ravenna) fell in 1859, while outlying cities (Ancona, Perugia) fell in 1860 after a decisive loss at Castelfidardo. Thereafter his territory was reduced to Rome and the surrounding region of Lazio, defended by French troops. Soon that too would be lost.

In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy was formed by Victor Emmanuel II of the House of Savoy, uniting the entire peninsula except San Marino (which remains independent today), Venice (which joined Italy in 1866), and papal Rome. He established his capital at Florence in 1865, and pledged not to attack Rome, but this fueled a rivalry between Italian royalists and republicans. The latter included firebrands like Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose militia tried to seize Rome in 1867. Franco-Papal forces defeated him at Mentana. But when France withdrew its Roman garrison to fight Prussia, Italian forces seized the city on 20 September 1870, and declared it the nation’s capital.

Statistics clearly show the decline of the Papal States in the 1800s. Its population approached 3 million before territorial losses in 1859–1860 reduced it to 1 million. Its 17th-century army of 50,000 diminished sharply by the time of the French Revolution. During civil unrest in 1843, it stood at 20,000, and by 1870 it had declined again by half. In the 1800s it also relied on foreign volunteers, as well as native garrisons from France and Austria. Papal Rome, the capital and “city of the apostles”, held 160,000 souls at mid-century; and its loss in 1870 proved irreversible.

The seizure of papal Rome resulted in the sixty-year “Roman Question” period, during which successive popes styled themselves “prisoners of the Vatican” and remained cloistered behind its walls. They rejected the Italian “Law of Guarantees” which gave them practical jurisdiction over Vatican palaces—but not full sovereignty.

The matter was resolved in 1929 by the Lateran Accords (Patti Lateranensi) between Italy and the Holy See. These comprised a concordat regularizing the church’s role in Italy and the Lateran Treaty. In the treaty, the pope abandoned his claims to the former Papal States and recognized the Kingdom of Italy. The Holy See in turn acquired a financial indemnity, sovereignty over the new “Vatican City State”, and extraterritorial immunity for papal offices and shrines elsewhere in Rome. The logic presumes the Holy See to
Figure 1.5. Standard of the Church, 1571 (Ship Replica, Admiral of the Fleet, detail)
be a sovereign international power entitled to the legal attributes of such status, currently understood as statehood. Tiny by design, the Vatican state thus enshrines and guarantees the Holy See’s sovereign rights.

Thus fared the sovereignty of the popes, whose flag designs formed two categories in the 1800s. At first white flags bearing papal emblems were flown—flags inherited from previous centuries. These are examined in Chapter 1, concluding with a new yellow-and-white papal cockade (1808). The latter in turn inspired yellow-and-white flags, first at sea primarily, and then on land. These are examined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 treats flags of the Roman Question period (1870–1929), the Vatican flag itself (since 1929), and the laws and customs surrounding papal flags today. Finally, several Appendices provide summary flag charts by pontificate; a roster of actual Papal States flag specimens and dimensions; official decrees; and other details.

**White Flags and Ensigns**

Well before the 19th century, Papal States flags were characterized by white fields. These had long replaced older, red papal banners known since the Middle Ages. The latter deserve a brief word since they were the progenitors of papal flags reviewed in the present study.

Recorded papal flags were first typified by the “Standard of the Holy Roman Church” (whose 19th-century form will be examined later). Conveying church authority, these banners came to be identified with the pope as the church’s head, and became de facto papal flags. From the Middle Ages, they flew from papal installations, or were consigned to Christian princes or military commanders as a sacred augury and a sign of papal favor. They had various designs, were often red (until the 1600s or so) with tails or other appendages, and bore various religious charges.

One version featured representations of Jesus crucified and/or the apostles buried in Rome, Ss. Peter and Paul. A famous example is held in Gaeta, whose cathedral claims to preserve the standard presented by Pius V to Marcantonio Colonna in 1571 for the naval Battle of Lepanto. It is an ornate reddish vexillum bearing the crucifixion scene, with the apostles on either side, shown here in a replica ship (Fig. 1.5). A second version featured the pontiff’s personal arms and/or the Petrine keys. Early on the keys perhaps appeared alone, but
Figure 1.6. Papal Banner at Castel Sant’Angelo, Rome (watercolor/engraving, detail, ca. 1790 [anachronistic])

Figure 1.7. Papal Flag Patterns: medieval to modern
were later surmounted by the ceremonial umbrella that was carried before the pope, or by his tiara. These flags are attested in contemporary prints of Rome’s major fortress, Castel Sant’Angelo (as in Fig. 1.6, which is anachronistic).

By 1700 or so, these red flags came to have white fields (and after 1825, yellow-and-white fields; see Fig. 1.7)—but the charges upon them remained basically the same, as evidenced by flags illustrated here. The catalyst for white fields was France’s “royal standard”, which was white with various royal charges (or none at all). It originated in the mid-1600s and flew from warships and forts in France and its colonies, influencing the flags of several European monarchies in turn. After the French Revolution and its promotion throughout Europe under the new Tricolore, white flags further symbolized royalty’s resistance to revolution or secular republicanism, including in the Papal States.

Indeed, by the end of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 papal rule and its attendant white flags had twice been restored to Rome after two French occupations involving Napoleon. These flags appear in maritime flag sources such as Pavillons (1819), the Verzameling dispatches (1834), LeGras’ book (1858), and the Papal States government chart, Quadro. Comparisons show slight changes in exact designs or usage. Before 1800 flag sources are unclear on precise flag usage; but Pavillons (1819) clearly distinguishes merchant from naval ensigns. Modern studies suggest either the election of Pius VII (1803) or his return to Rome from exile (1815) occasioned papal flag revival or standardized use, but an explicit papal act has yet to be cited.

Among these white flags, one was the “Reigning Pope’s Flag” and bore in the center his personal arms (i.e., family arms), augmented by the papal tiara and keys and (often) a wreath. The arms were moved toward the hoist to increase visibility. It thus resembled the flags of other European sovereigns whose standards were white with the respective royal arms. It flew at Papal States forts and garrison sites, including major city squares, and was thus a fort flag (Italian, bandiera da fortezza). Indirectly it also represented civil agents nearby, since state flags for such offices do not seem attested in the Papal States. At sea this flag could also be used by merchant ships, until a new design replaced it in 1825. Its maritime use is well-attested from at least the early 17th century.

The 1819 Pavillons labelled this flag as one of two alternate civil ensigns, bearing the arms of Pius VII (Fig. 1.8). An 1822 print shows the same flag flying from the Milvian Bridge watchtowers near Rome (Fig. 1.9). Use at such forts is recorded in 1834 by the Verzameling, where it bears the arms of Gregory
Figure 1.8. Fort flag & alternate Civil Ensign, 1819, Pius VII

Figure 1.9. Fort flag, Milvian Bridge, ca. 1822 (lithograph detail)
Figure 1.10. Fort flag, 1834, Gregory XVI

Figure 1.11. Ceremonial flag, Gregory XVI
Figure 1.12. Fort flag, 1858, Pius IX

Figure 1.13. Militia color, 1847, Pius IX
XVI (Fig. 1.10). An actual flag of this design is held by the Museum of the Risorgimento in Milan (Fig. 1.11). Gregory’s arms are painted upon a plain white field and adorned with an angelic face beneath the tiara. Nearly square and made of silk, it bears yellow and white fringe on three sides. While these elements often typify military colors, its design is different from and larger than those attested in Rome (to be examined later). It may have been a ceremonial fort flag or garrison flag.

An 1835 watercolor shows this flag flying from the foremast of the warship schooner, San Pietro, and another nearby (see Fig. 1.21). LeGras confirmed this (1858) and stated that it was “hoisted on all forts of the States of the Church, and at the mizzenmast of all warships, on high feast days only”. He named it the “Reigning Pontiff’s Ensign”; here it bears the arms of Pius IX (Fig. 1.12). A small ceremonial flag of this design is preserved by the Museo del Risorgimento in Ravenna (Fig. 1.13). Dating from 1847, it is made of silk with a painted emblem, and has yellow and white fringe. Though its precise usage is unclear, it bears a Roman numeral likely alluding to an armed unit, and resembles contemporary flags assigned to civic militias in Rome and Bologna. These will be described later, along with yellow-white fort flags used before papal Rome fell.

A second white flag, bearing the tiara and keys alone, is recorded as an alternate civil ensign in the 1819 Pavillons. Such use was known from at least the 18th century. Later sources also attest it as a harbor service flag and a naval jack (Fig. 1.14). One jack specimen is held by the Vatican Historical Museum (Fig. 1.15), and belonged to the corvette Immacolata Concezione. She was retained at Civitavecchia for several years after papal Rome’s fall in 1870, should the pope opt for exile. The tiara-and-keys emblem is painted slightly hoistward of the flag’s center, doubtless to enhance visibility. Both keys are golden-yellow. At times, this design is also reported at forts, instead of the appointed white flag with the reigning pontiff’s personal arms.

A third white flag served as a war ensign. A simple form dates at the latest to the late 1600s: a white flag bearing images of the apostles Peter (holding a key) and Paul (holding a sword); perhaps merchant ships used it too. After 1800 sources show it as a naval ensign only and add a tiara-and-keys emblem at top-center. The 1819 Pavillons showed golden adornments in the corners, but these might be artistic license and atypical (Fig. 1.16). LeGras showed it without adornments (1858), and with more prominent effigies, each upon his
Figure 1.14. Naval Jack, 1858

Figure 1.15a. Naval Jack, Immacolata Concezione, 1870

Figure 1.15b. Naval Jack, 1870, detail
Figure 1.16. War Ensign, 1819

Figure 1.17. War Ensign, 1858

Figure 1.18. War Ensign, 1860, San Pietro
Figure 1.19a. War Ensign, 1870, Immacolata Concezione

Figure 1.19b. War Ensign, 1870, Immacolata Concezione

Figure 1.20. War Ensign (above stern), 1860, Immacolata Concezione
own mound, (Fig. 1.17). LeGras also describes two naval pennants: a command-pennon and a commissioning-streamer (see Fig. 1.3, nos. VII & IX).

Two war ensign specimens are held by the Vatican Historical Museum at the Lateran Palace in Rome. One belonged to the papal military steamer *San Pietro* which surrendered with honors to Italian forces at Ancona on 26 September 1860 (Fig. 1.18), and the other to the aforementioned *Immacolata Concezione* (Fig. 1.19). On the latter both Petrine keys are golden-yellow but on the former, one is silver; and the figures are all painted. Contemporary art also attests the war ensign. It flies above the stern of the *Immacolata Concezione* in a rare 1860 photo (Fig. 1.20), while an older watercolor shows it worn by an earlier ship, also named *San Pietro* (Fig. 1.21).

A fourth white flag served as the sovereign’s ensign when a pope was aboard ship. The 1819 *Pavillons* calls it the “Ensign of the Holy Church”, and shows it as a white flag bearing a crucifix flanked by the apostles Peter (flyward with the keys) and Paul (hoistward with the sword), along with floral ornamentations (Fig. 1.22). In 1858 the LeGras illustration featured only the crucifix centered on a white field (Fig. 1.23). (The *Verzameling* recorded a similar flag with a red field for display “in battle”; but the government chart *Quadro* does not confirm this, and the concept likely dates from an earlier era.)

![Figure 1.21. War Ensign & Pontiff’s Ensign, 1835, Papal schooner San Pietro, Civitavecchia (M. Fonda, watercolor)](image-url)
Figure 1.22. Sovereign’s Ensign, 1819

Figure 1.23. Sovereign’s Ensign, 1858
LeGras called this flag a “Papal Ensign” (Pavillon Papal) hoisted “at the mainmast of warships when His Holiness the Pope is aboard”, as well as “on the rowboat that carries His Holiness” or “at a twenty-one-gun salute”.\textsuperscript{48} It thus signified the presence of the church’s temporal head, the “Vicar of Christ”, as illustrated by the crucifix. At least once it also flew at his coastal residence: in 1862 an eyewitness reported it flying above a seaside palace loggia in Anzio, where Pius IX prayed amid his troops, within sight of a warship (which presumably loaned its ensign for display ashore).\textsuperscript{49} By contrast, at inland residences, artists and historians attest only the Swiss Guard’s striped flag (examined later), both at the Quirinal Palace and near the Vatican’s Bronze Doors (Figs. 1.24–25).\textsuperscript{50} 

During a vacant see after a pope died, 19th-century sources report that warships flew a white flag with an umbrella surmounting the keys, probably at the foremast (Fig. 1.26, with a corresponding streamer at the main).\textsuperscript{51} This emblem recalls the ceremonial umbrella once carried before popes in procession and often found today in pontifical basilicas, as an insignia of the Roman church and its temporal power. Since the latter was supervised by the cardinal chamberlain (camerlengo), he has long employed the umbrella-and-keys emblem as his insignia—especially on coins and seals during a vacant see (still true today). His insignia might also appear combined with the pontiff’s personal arms to represent state authority when the see was full.

The umbrella emblem (ombrellino) is also known by other names, such as gonfalon (gonfalone), pavilion (padiglione), and baldachin (baldacchino). For many centuries its hood has been rendered in an alternating pattern of red and yellow (or gold).\textsuperscript{52} As seen previously, these colors featured in past papal and ecclesiastical standards; and from 1800 to 1808 they were the colors of papal Rome’s cockade, as well.

The Papal Cockade

Political loyalties in 19th-century Europe were often signified by a cockade, a cloth badge composed of several colors, often in concentric circles. The “Roman Republic”, sponsored by French forces who exiled Pius VI, first introduced a black, white, and red cockade on 16 February 1798. After papal rule was restored, Pius VII replaced it in July 1800 with the first-ever papal cockade, of red and yellow,\textsuperscript{53} time-honored Roman and ecclesiastical colors. The
Figure 1.24. Swiss Guard Flag, Quirinal Palace, artwork undated

Figure 1.25. Swiss Guard Flag, Piazza S. Pietro, photo ca. 1860
cockade lasted only eight years, but the colors are still preserved in the modern flag of the Commune of Rome—a vertical bicolor of maroon (amaranth-red) and golden-yellow.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1808 France reoccupied the Papal States. In protest Pius VII again adopted a new cockade, this time of yellow and white. The sole surviving specimen is preserved by Spain’s embassy to the Holy See, as pictured in a 1908 Vatican booklet (Fig. 1.27; the seam is splitting).\textsuperscript{55} This yellow-white papal cockade is considered the origin of the modern papal colors, and proved to be of long-lasting significance, since its colors eventually inspired the designs of many papal flags, including today’s Vatican flag.

The French reoccupation began in January 1808 under the guise of temporary passage. However, by February French cannon were aimed at the papal palace on the Quirinal Hill and by March the exile or imprisonment of papal functionaries was commonplace and papal troops were being absorbed into the French army.\textsuperscript{56}

A contemporary diary reports that in protest, the pope issued the yellow-white cockade on 13 March 1808 to the militias still loyal to him: the Noble Guard, the Swiss Guard, the Campidoglio Militia, and the Guardia di Finanza.\textsuperscript{57} In this way, papal loyalists would no longer be wearing the same red-yellow colors as the Roman troops who had acquiesced to the occupation. Three days later the papal secretary of state also asked diplomats in Rome accredited to the Holy See to wear the new cockade:

To Foreign Ministers, from the Halls of the Quirinal, 16 March 1808.

... After such violent incorporation, and the said Troop continuing to carry the same Pontifical Cockade, His Holiness, not having in the current circumstances other means to render public his dissent, and ... deciding not to have any part in the operations of the said incorporated Troop, which he no longer recognizes as his own, has made the decision of changing the Cockade and of having it distributed to the small number of the troop remaining to him in Rome.

His Holiness, wishing this to be known by Y[our] E[xcellency] in order [that Your Excellency may] be carried
Figure 1.26. Vacant See Ensign, 1834

Figure 1.27. Papal Cockade, 1808

Figure 1.28. Papal Cockade of yellow and white, Civic Guard hat, undated

Figure 1.29. Papal Cockade of gold and silver, Legione Bolognese hat, 1848/1849
unto recognition at his Court, has ordered Cardinal Doria Pamphili, Pro-Secretary of State, to make your own this formal participation, and to enclose a sample of said new cockade ....

France retaliated by assigning the new cockade to its sympathizers in the former papal army. Pius protested this to the French command and his diplomatic corps. Upon learning of Napoleon’s displeasure at the new papal cockade, the French command falsely claimed that Pius himself gave it to his diplomatic community and former army—when in fact the latter received it from the French.

Soon cockades in the Italian and French colors were worn to promote a unified Italy under Napoleon. Protesting orders to abandon the papal cockade, a papal officer in Ancona averred that he would rather die than fail to honor “this flag which waved gloriously yesterday for my return to this city.” (The flag’s design is uncertain.)

The meaning of the new cockade’s yellow-white colors is not documented, but they were likely derived from a longstanding traditional papal emblem, the gold and silver keys of Peter. By heraldic custom and for display on cloth, gold and silver are replaced by yellow and white. This logic is reiterated by the previous Roman colors, red and yellow, which may have stemmed from medieval renditions of the papal keys in gold on a red shield. These colors thus figured in the traditional emblem of the Roman Senate and People (SPQR) as well as the ceremonial pontifical umbrella.

Both keys were often gold or yellow in 19th-century arms and flags, but the tiara’s core was always silver or white, thus retaining dual colors for the composite emblem. It is uncertain when dual-colored keys became the heraldic norm, but literature and art attest the concept early on. Around 1300 Dante described the keys as gold and silver, or as yellow and white; and around 1481 Perugino painted Christ bequeathing a key in each color to St. Peter. By Vatican City’s creation in 1929, dual-colored keys had become fixed in papal arms and flags.

The yellow-white papal cockade was abolished when Napoleon annexed the Papal States. The decree, signed secretly on 17 May 1809, was announced in Rome on 10 June. That morning at Castel Sant’Angelo fortress, the French tricolor replaced the papal flag (or arms—sources vary). In response, Pius VII excommunicated Napoleon, who in turn arrested the pope in July, and exiled him.
Figure 1.30. Bicolor flag atop Castel Sant’Angelo (ca. 1815), painted by C. W. Eckersberg (original, ca. 1815)

Figure 1.31. Bicolor flag atop Castel Sant’Angelo (ca. 1815) (detail of artist’s later reproduction, 1818)
After Napoleon abdicated in 1814, the Papal States were restored in May by a papal legate, in Lazio and Umbria only. Pius VII returned to Rome on 24 May, and the Congress of Vienna reconstituted his remaining Italian lands in June 1815. In consequence the yellow-white cockade was fully restored, but over time was rendered differently. Instead of appearing side-by-side, the colors were usually displayed concentrically—yellow (or gold) on the inside and white (or silver) on the outside (Figs. 1.28–29).

The previous suite of papal flags was likewise restored. Indeed, on 11 May 1814, as the papal legate’s mandate began, the papal flag was ceremoniously hoisted at Castel Sant’Angelo fortress. But its design is uncertain; around 1815, a painting records a new flag atop the fort, a bicolor that may be yellow over white (Fig. 1.30). In the painting by C. W. Eckersberg, held by the National Gallery of Denmark, the yellow stripe appears reddish-orange. Shortly afterward, he reproduced his work, again featuring the fort’s flag (Fig. 1.31, held privately) along with vertical white banners at the bastions. The latter often appear in artwork of the era: a white vexillum bearing the pontiff’s personal arms at one Tiber River bastion, opposite another bearing the umbrella-and-keys emblem of the camerlengo.

If represented accurately, Eckersberg’s work may provide the earliest example of a yellow-and-white papal flag—which may be an anomaly, because further confirmation of such “bicolor” fort flags is lacking until mid-century. In any case, within a decade the Papal States explicitly adopted flags in these colors for use at sea. Their emergence is documented in the next chapter, along with the subsequent migration of bicolor flags ashore.
Notes, Chapter 1

1. This is true even in the flags or arms of several republics: Russia, Hungary, Serbia, San Marino, etc.
6. Neighboring Italian states tended to have more uniform designs despite their varying functions; cf. LeGras.
7. Quadro bears ten different Papal States ensigns designated overall as “Naval and Merchant Marine Papal Flags” (Bandiere pontificie di marina militari e mercantili). Note the plural—as also in the 1825 decree by Pierfrancesco Galleffi adopting new maritime ensigns to establish “uniformity in the colors and forms of the Papal Flags [sic] which are ... hoisted by [Papal] State[s] Ships” (see pp. 37–38 and Appendix IV).
8. See pp. 37–38 and Appendix IV.
9. Verzameling features several Papal States flags in a folio titled “Italie. Romeinische Staat.” documented by the Netherlands ambassador to Rome in his dispatch of 29 April 1834. These include: (10) the fort flag (also for naval use on feast days at the foremost); (11) the war ensign; (12) a battle ensign and streamer (with a red field); (13) the Vacant See flag and pennant; (14) the state ensign and streamer; (15) the harbor service flag (later, the jack) and pennant; (16) the civil ensign; (17) the pilot ensign; and (18) a plain yellow-white vertical bicolor identified as “the Roman signal flag for communication with the shore”.
10. LeGras, pl. 22.
11. Quadro delle Bandiere Pontificie di Marina Militari e Mercantili, bears the stamp of the Secretary General of the Papal States Finance Ministry; black & white photo of an undated chart (between 1855 & 1870) from the pontificate of Pius IX, in the Whitney Smith Flag Research Center Collection archives, University of Texas at Austin, acquired from the archives of Dr. Otfried Neubecker (acquired in turn from the German admiralty). Though undated, it bears several clues: the coat of arms (no. 1) reflects the pontificate of Pius IX (1846–1878); the award flags were adopted in 1855 (nos. 9–10); and since LeGras closely parallels its contents in 1858, it may have been issued before then; perhaps when naval and customs fleets merged (1856). Although identifying text is lost, it clearly shows: (1) fort flag, which also flew from the foremost of warships on feast days; (2) Sovereign’s ensign (with a white field); (3) war ensign surmounted by commissioning pennant; (4) civil ensign; (5) pilot ensign; (6) jack; (7) Vacant See ensign; (8) state ensign; (9) first-class award flag for merchant ship captains; and (10) second-class award flag for merchant ship captains.
12. Located at the Vatican until 1987, the Museo Storico Vaticano is now located at the Lateran Palace in Rome, which is attached to the basilica of the same name. It opened in its new location in 1991.
13. Galbreath, pp. 103–105, details the coats of arms of these popes.
14. Cf. Vigevano 1–45; Andrieux, p. 36f; Donovan, pp. 1012–1015; Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani,” part I, p. 123; Bouquet; Alvarez. Moreover, in 1793 the papal navy had
about twenty armed vessels; but by 1870 had diminished by half, including customs vessels.

In 1829 the papal merchant marine had 91 vessels for foreign trade, and many coasters and fishing craft; but by 1870, only 271 small boats.

15. The growing association of the Standard with papal authority is shown in 1669 in connection with the Battle of Candia against the Turks: the pope granted a red standard that bore his personal arms between figures of the apostles Peter and Paul. When a courtier observed that the pontiff’s personal arms removed the standard’s status as “of the church,” the papal envoy replied that “his master could not separate himself from the church, and that for this reason it was appropriate that his arms be in the center between the apostles” (“Drapeaux pontificaux”, p. 98).


17. Illustration from “La Galea Ammiraglia della Flotta Pontificia nella Battaglia di Lepanto (1571),” Associazione Culturale “Gaeta e il Mare,” retrieved online (1 August 2010) at <www.gaetaeilmare.it/modelli/Galea/Galea.htm> and available via <archive.org>. Cf. also, “La battaglia di Lepanto, Gaeta e la Confraternità del SS. Rosario”, retrieved online (1 August 2010) at: <www.golfovr.info/home/content/view/984/29/> and available via <archive.org>.


20. Thumbnail illustrations used or adapted from Roberto Breschi, retrieved online (25 June 2018) at: <www.rbvex.it/chiesa.html>.


22. For another interpretation of the white color, cf. Lovell: “as stated by St. Clement of Alexandria, white is ‘tintura veritatis’, (color of truth) and the Pope is the only master of truth in the world.”

23. Secondary sources state that papal flag-restoration orders were issued in 1803 and 1815, but the author was unable to confirm this in the collection of Papal States decrees at the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome. Pagliucchi, ‘Bandiere Pontificie,’ specifies a Notification of the Camerlengo, 22 December 1803, establishing the war ensign and sovereign’s ensign as in Pavillons; along with two civil ensigns—one bearing the tiara-and-keys for “navi di commercio”, and one bearing the umbrella-keys for “bastimenti mercantili” (the latter replaced in Pavillons by one with the pontiff’s personal arms). Cf. Ziggiotto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part I, 113 & 115 (specifies 1803 and again on 7 June 1815—the second return of Pius VII to Rome after a brief refuge in Genoa, his first return having been in May 1814); Ferrari, p. 84; Rangoni-Machiavelli, p. 76; Breschi; Denis-Delacour, p. 402–403.

24. The wreath was perhaps influenced by other sovereign coats of arms of the era, although similar floral decorations around the shield were used at least as early as the reign of Sixtus IV (1471–1484), albeit without any indication that they appeared on a contemporary flag.
26. Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part I, p. 111, lists the flag manuscript by J. Moutton (ca. 1670) as the earliest witness, but notes that the flag portrayed (for “papal galleys”) is older still, carrying the arms of Urban VIII (1623–44). A 1741 Spanish manuscript (cf. Banderas o Pabellones, “Papa”) shows it bearing the arms of Benedict XIV (1740–58). A 1765 Tuscan manuscript (Blasone marittimo, pl. 9, “Papal Ensign [Paviglione Pontificio] with the arms of the Reigning Pope”) shows it with the arms of Clement XIII (1758–69).
27. Illustration from Pavillons, pl. 8, no. 4, identified as “another merchant flag” alongside the “ordinary merchant flag” described below.
28. Illustration from author photo of lithograph held by the Pontifical North American College in Rome: Luigi Rossini, “Veduta del Ponte Molle sul Tevere”, 1822, inscribed in Italian: “Rosini dis. e inc. View of Ponte Molle [Milvian Bridge] on the Tiber. Two nautical miles away from Rome. This bridge was restored, and the triumphal arch constructed, by the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII, [gloriously] reigning. Rome, 1822”. Macadam, p. 257, says of the bridge: “Remodeled in the fifteenth century by Nicholas V, who added the watch towers, it was restored in 1805 by Pius VII, who commissioned Valdier to erect the triumphal arch at the entrance.” Other contemporary prints of the scene likewise show the flag.
29. Illustration from Verzameling, no. 10, titled “Flag of the reigning pope which is hoisted on forts” (“Vlag van de regerende Paus zooals die op de Forten geheschen wordt”).
30. Illustration from Centro Italiano Studi Vessillologici, “Visita al Museo del Risorgimento Milano, 7 novembre 2009”, retrieved online (1 August 2010) at <www.cisv.it/viola/milano2b.html>. Colangeli, fig. 16 (who incorrectly gives the inventory number as 1150—but there is none). Emails to author from the Museo di Milano: Maura Bertoli (9, 16, & 27 April 2009) and Francesco Mereu (9 April 2009).
32. Illustration from LeGras, pl. 22, no. 3, “Pavillon du Pontife régnant”.
33. Illustration from catalog no. 237; cf. “stendardo” entry retrieved online (18 June 2018) via <bbcc.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=55016>.
34. See pp. 51–56, 63–64.
35. Illustration from Le Gras, pl. 22, No. 8: “Proportions 1:1.17 ... One hoists it on the bowsprit of ships of the [Papal] State[s], on feast days only. It can also serve as the command flag.” In 1819 it was called the “ordinary merchant flag” and is pictured along with an alternate design, the fort flag (Pavillons, pl. 8, nos. 3–4). As a harbor service flag, cf. Verzameling, no. 15. As a civil ensign, this flag dates from at least the 18th century (e.g., Smith, Flags Through the Ages, p. 204, the fifth row of the chart—“Pav[illon] de Rome”).
36. Illustration (crop) from author’s photo, 1984; and (full) from “La Marina dello Stato Pontificio”, Marina Militare—Ministero della Difesa [Italiana], retrieved online (18 June 2018) at: <www.marina.difesa.it/storiacultura/storia/storianoval/Pagine/pontificia.aspx>. The same photo appears in Savio, p. 58, who states that the flag was held by the Museo delle Guardie Nobili (in 1970). Brandani et al, pp. 90–91. The jack is no longer on display at the Museo Vaticano Storico (author’s observations, 2009) and is unlisted in its
flag inventory (provided to author). See also below, Chapter 3 (“The Roman Question”): the flag may be that discovered in 1920, as reported by *Roma nelle fotografie della Raccolta Ceccarius*, p. 92.

37. Bouquet, pp. 75–76. Alvarez, p. 258. In 1872 the ship was transferred to the French port of Toulon, still under the papal flag, until its sale in 1878.


40. Illustration from *Pavillons*, pl. 8, no. 2. Rangoni-Machiavelli, p. 76. Whitney Smith has noted that the effigies closely resemble those of Plato and Aristotle in Raphael’s fresco, “The School of Athens”, in the Vatican Museums (letter to author, 10 November 1993).

41. Illustration from Le Gras, pl. 22, no. 2. The proportions are given as 3:4 and the citation reads: “This is the ensign of warships. Merchant ships cannot carry it anymore. It is flown from the stern of all ships belonging to the [papal] state, every day, after the rising of the sun and never after its setting.”


45. Illustration from *Pavillons*, pl. 8, no. 1 (“Flag of the Holy Church”).

46. Illustration from Le Gras, pl. 22, no. 1.

47. *Verzameling*, no. 12, shows the flag with a red field set below a red streamer for use “in battle”; but *Quadro* shows it with a white field only.

48. Le Chauff de Kergueneuc, p. 277f, describes the Anzio scene first-hand: “a white flag which bore the image of a Crucifix.” “Drapeaux pontificaux”, p. 99, n. 1, reports the memory as enduring. Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part I, pp. 113–115, describes it as the “flag of the Holy Church,” or the “maritime flag of the Church,” noting that it came to be “raised also on land, on buildings where the pontiff was found, but—so it seems—far from Rome and generally on the coast” (p. 123, note 25). Rangoni-Machiavelli, p. 76 (“flag of the Holy See”).

49. Illustration of the Quirinal Palace bastion from “Guardia Svizzera Pontificia” at facebook.com, 6 July 2014, with no information on the artist, date, or collection; retrieved online
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(18 June 2018) at <www.facebook.com/gsp1506/photos/a.435356976577514.1073741829.22385514394529/593627424083801/?type=1&relevant_count=1>. Various artwork of the period illustrates the flag at the palace similarly. Illustration of Piazza San Pietro (ca. 1860) from Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale, Rome, retrieved online (18 June 2018) at <www.flickr.com/photos/dealvarisis/5529560360>. Krieg, p. 448, reports that the flag flew outside a window near the Bronze Doors and extended into St. Peter’s Square, from the era of Gregory XVI (though artwork attests it much earlier); but inside the window near the Doors, after 1870; For Guard flags, see pp. 114–115.

51. Illustration from *Verzameling*, no. 15, which states its use by naval vessels. Also pictured by *Pavillons*, pl. 9; *Flaggen Almanack*, pl. 15; and *Quadro*, no. 7. Cf. Rangoni-Machiavelli, p. 77. Occasional illustrations of a bicolor bisected by the emblem seem spurious (e.g., Ferrari, p. 84).


54. Gasbarri, p. 198, sees amaranth-red as symbolic of the ecclesiastical legacy, and gold as symbolic of the Roman Empire.

55. Illustration from MacSwiney de Mashanaglass, a single colored plate titled “Fac-simile del campione della coccarda pontificia conservato nell’Archivio dell’Ambasciata di Spagna presso la Santa Sede”; cf. also ibid. pp. 11–12, n. 2. The cockade’s facsimile image is approximately 10 cm (4 in.) in diameter; stitches have come unfastened at one end. Reprinted in black-and-white by Belardo (1956). Cf. “Les couleurs pontificales”.


57. Ceresa reports the date from a contemporary diary by Abbot Luca Antonio Benedetti. Loyalist forces are recorded by MacSwiney de Mashanaglass, pp. 11 & 23; and Belardo. Cf. Vigevano, p. 70.


60. Letter of Major Bonfigli to French General Sémaroís, 11 May 1809, quoted in Pidoux, p. 460.

61. *Verzameling* (1834) shows the flag of Papal Ancona as a horizontal bicolor of red over yellow, and *Flaggen-Almanac* (1844) shows the same flag bisected with the tiara and keys; but these designs may date from an earlier era. Red and yellow were the heraldic colors of Ancona from the Middle Ages; cf. Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part II, p. 102f.

62. Improbable theories include a flag used by Jerusalem’s crusader kings—a gold Jerusalem cross on a white field (cf. Smith, Flags, p. 47). Others appeal to the colors as “heavenly”, or argue that popes are exempt from heraldry’s rules for artistic visibility—i.e., the rule of “metal and tincture”, which specifies that colored emblems (“charges”) should contrast with their background; thus a yellow (or gold) emblem should not be charged upon white (or silver). However, since juxtaposing them is not prohibited, the rule is less applicable in the case of two stripes.


68. Illustration crop from “Particoli dell’equipaggiamento della Guardia Civica dello Stato Pontificio,” watercolor on paper showing cockade of yellow surrounded by white, stamped no. 957654, undated, Museo Centrale del Risorgimento Italiano, Rome; reproduced with permission (Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano). Illustration of hat from Museo Civico del Risorgimento, Bologna, inventory no. 1328, showing a captain’s hat of the Legione Bolognese, 1848/1849; retrieved online (27 June 2018) at: <bbcc.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=73755>. Cf. Vigevano, p. 71, and tables portraying uniforms throughout. Piroli consistently shows the colors concentrically rather than juxtaposed—a pattern that gave birth to vulgar epithets dubbing them “toasted eggs” (“uova toste”).


70. Illustration from painting by Christoffer William Eckersberg (1783–1853), “View Across the Tiber towards Castel S. Angelo in Rome”, ca. 1815. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark, no. KMS1346, retrieved online (18 June 2018) at: <cspic.smk.dk/globus/GLOBUS%202006/KMS1346.jpg> with commentary at <www.smk.dk/udforsk-kunsten/soeg-i-smk/#/detail/KMS1346>. Curators report that the top stripe is “red/orange” rather than pure yellow, leaving the composer’s intentions uncertain (A. V. Joergensen, email to author, 12 December 2012). The Danish painter studied in Florence and Rome from 1813–1816, and the painting (composed in Rome) is based on a drawing dated 7–8 May 1815; the latter date was the contemporary feast day of the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel—for whom the fortress was named (which likely explains the festal flag display).

71. Illustration from Brunn-Rasmussen auctioneers, Copenhagen, retrieved online (18 June 2018) at: <www.bruun-rasmussen.dk/img/g/BRFull/Arkiv/Bredgade/795/5002-795.jpg> with explanatory text at: <www.bruun-rasmussen.dk/search.do?mode=detail&iid=300211271&tge=classic>. His own reproduction (sold in 2008), composed in Copenhagen, is slightly larger and later (1818) than the original, with minor embellishments.

72. See engraving by Philippe Benoist (ca. 1870), “Pont et Chateau Saint-Ange—Ponte e Castello Sant’Angelo”, in Champagny et al., vol. 3, p. 64f (second annexed illustration; the author holds a color version obtained in Rome); and p. 65. A vexillum with Pius’s arms at the fort is also shown in an engraving (“La fuga”) in Pinto, between p. 146 & 147. The display of two vexilla at Castel Sant’Angelo is quite old, and in previous centuries they bore red fields: cf. “Drapeaux pontifical”, p. 98.

73. See pp. 51–57. Relatively clear images of the papal flag atop the fort in the 1800s are surprisingly rare. The author is aware of only two; one here, and another in Fig. 2.22 (along with actual fort flag specimens).
NOTIFICAZIONE

PIER FRANCESCO PER LA MISERICORDIA DI DIO VESOVIO DI ALBANO CARDINALE GALLEFFI, DELLA S.R.C. CAMERLUNGO

Esponendo la SANTITÀ DI VOSTRO SIGNORE PAPA LEONE XII, felicemente regnante, venuta nella determinazione di ripristinare gli alberi, usati da coloro naviganti, e di stabilire l'uniformità nei colori e nelle forme delle Bandiere Pontificie, che si seguirono anzidetti dal Legnai dello Stato, e che le commodity di prescrivere, quanto per ascolto della stessa SANTITÀ SUA, in per l'autorità del nostro ufficio di Camerlengo furono ad ordinare.

1° La Bandiera Pontificia, che tutti i Legni dello Stato da commerçio, e da pesca dovranno da qui in avanti innalzarè e farà per la metà attaccata alla stella di color giallo, e alle color sì ch'invece metà nel cui mezzo sarà dipinto il tigre e gialli, a norma dei modelli depositati in tutti gli Uffici di Porto.

2° La Bandiera dall'innalzarìi dei Legni addetti al servizio della Finanza sarà della stessa forma e colori, favorendo in vece del tigre sarà dipinto nella metà bianca il Gonnafone colle chiavi, sopra al quale vi saranno poste le lettere iniziali: "Regencia Camera Apostolica", e nè la metà di color giallo vi sarà servito segno di finanza a norma dei modelli che saranno transessati da Mons. Tesoriere Generale.

3° I Legni mercantili dello Stato dovranno pure essere forniti di una Bandiera di riconoscimento e per chiarire meglio, da innalzarla sempre all'albero di maestra, la quale sarà della stessa forma e colori che la prescritta nell'Art. 1° con il solo pro del di una fascia lunga di color rosso intorno all'estremità della medesima, perche in quella che on 'appartenga all'altra.

4° La dimensione e ampiezza di tali Bandiere saranno determinate da ciascun Proprietario secondo la grandezza e portata del Legno.

5° I Legni sopra poppato, e mastai è colli innalzaranno all'albero, che d'ordinario si colleca a poppa, e in tali gli alberi innalzeranno all'albero di maestra.

6° E' vietato a tutti i Legni sopra detti d'innalzarle sul cima degli alberi veruna fumma di color di stessa stessa Pontificia, ma potranno essi solamente far uso di una lunga striscia di color bianco e senza stemma.

7° In ciascun giorno fisico di prescritto, ogni Legno Pontificio nominato nei Porti dello Stato o Estero, sarà obbligato di tener innalzati li bandi da bandiera dal lato al tramonto del Sole, qualora non lo impedisca un vento griglio e turcassero.

8° Tutti i Proprietari dei Legni da commerçio saranno tenuti di fornirli delle sopraindicato Bandiere sotto il termine di mesi quattro, e questi dei Legni da pesca dentro il termine di mesi due da computarsi dalla pubblicazione della presente Notificazione.

9° Chiunque dentro il prescritto termine non aver provveduto il suo Legno della ordinare Bandiera, se appresso per colpevole negligenza ne mancasse, sarà punito col ritiro del passaporto marittimo.

10° Quell' poi che avessero per il prevedere in avvenire di cambiare in qualche modo le forme, e colori prescritti negli articoli 1°, 2°, 4° e 5° saranno puniti colla nullità in minore di scudi dieci, e non maggiore di scudi trenta.


Dato in Camera Apostolica il 17 Settembre 1825.

P. F. Card. Galleffi Camerlengo di S. Chiesa.

(Rivista Visperin Freggi Stampatore Generale.)

Figure 2.1. Government Notification, 1825, Papal States Maritime Ensigns