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The Global Reach of the Inquisition and the Global Reach of the *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*

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Dibattiti - *L'Inquisizione
in una prospettiva globaliz-
zante: il Dizionario storico
dell'Inquisizione*

Given the central role of the Inquisition in shaping early modern European cultures, and the persistence, well into the present, of the Black Legend of the Inquisition, it is curious to note that general comparative histories of the Inquisition are both very few and very recent. A call for such a comparative study, and an early systematic attempt to demarcate the methods and methodologies to be employed in such a vast enterprise, were first presented in a conference in Copenhagen in 1978. The proceedings were published in the collection *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods*, edited by the Danish historian of the Spanish Inquisition Gustav Henningsen and the American historian of the Roman Inquisition John A. Tedeschi [Henningsen-Tedeschi 1986]. In 1987, Charles Amiel authored a short comparative study of the modern traits of the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese Inquisitions, and he was followed in 1994 by Francisco Bethencourt, another historian of Portugal, who wrote the first systematic book-length comparison [Amiel 1987; Bethencourt 1994].

All the while, historians have totally transformed our knowledge of the medieval, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Inquisitions, using new social history/sciences and statistical methods as well as prosopographic and administrative approaches to the study of institutions. Other historians have focused on the victims of the Inquisitions, investigating and transforming the histories of the persecution of witches, Jews (real and imaginary), Protestants and other heretics (again, both real and imaginary), *beatas*, *Sante vive*, and other suspected lay women, Humanists, scientists, philosophers, and even political enemies of powerful prelates.

All of these works together have coalesced into a number of coherent national or otherwise geographically-focused narratives. The opening, in 1998, of the Archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which contains both the archives of the Index and of the Holy Office, revolutionized our view of the Roman Inquisition itself while also shedding new light on the working mechanism and economic structures of the Spanish and Portuguese organizations and on the interactions between center and periphery in the Catholic judicial universe. It has also revealed the crucial role internal conflicts and rivalries between the Congregation and its local tribunals and between it and other organs of the church and the state played in shaping its functioning in different places at different times. This, too, was just as true for the Iberian Inquisitions as it was for the Italian ones. The ogre of yesteryear has been unveiled to be human after all: cruel and bloodthirsty often, obsessed with imaginary (and, more rarely, real) enemies, racist and misogynistic to be sure, but also petty, conflicted, and confused, meticulous in its adherence to its own standards of truth and fairness, and, at times, even capable of being benevolent and forgiving.

So much new work on such a vast topic calls for a synthesis. The recently published *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione* is both such a synthesis of the existing knowledge and a mandatory research guide for future historians. The *Dizionario*, edited by Adriano Prospero, John A. Tedeschi, and Vincenzo Lavenia, and published in both a four-volume printed edition and a searchable C.D., offers the most comprehensive comparative history of the Inquisitions to date [Prospero 2010a]. Both Prospero and Tedeschi have long been recognized as doyens of the study of the Roman Inquisition. In a series of articles published in the 1970s and '80s, Tedeschi was the first to question the Black Legend of the Roman Inquisition and to offer a more nuanced view of its operations [1991], while Prospero published in 1996 the first comprehensive new history of the Roman Inquisition, emphasizing especially its important role in the shaping of modern Italy (for good but mostly for bad) [1996]. In addition to his work on confession [2004], Lavenia has published a very large number of studies on demonic possession, witchcraft, occultism, and other aspects of early modern Italian Catholicism. The volumes they edited offer, for the first time, histories of both the medieval [Arnold 2010a] and the early modern Inquisitions, the latter including three (and, in fact, four) Inquisitions: the editors did not neglect the sixteenth-century Inquisition of the Sea (*Inquisición de la Mar*), and an entry on it by G. Civalè is probably the first time most people will get to learn about its existence [2010]. But, obviously, the Spanish, the Italian, and the Portuguese Inquisitions of the early modern era are

the main focus of the *Dizionario*, and some of major topics are divided into three sections, each dealing with one of these geographical/political units.

In addition, each of the three major Inquisitions merited an entry. R. López-Vela on Spain, E. Cunha de Azevedo Mea on Portugal, and Prosperi himself on the Roman Inquisition offer the latest summaries of the research carried out on each of these institutions. These entries are, in fact, small booklets, and each comes with an excellent bibliography [López-Vela 2010; Mea 2010a; Prosperi 2010b]. (Indeed, one of the major contributions of the *Dizionario* as a whole is its bibliographical apparatus both in individual entries and in its fourth volume, devoted to indices and to a 338 page bibliography (!), which brings up to date Emile van der Vekene's *Bibliotheca Bibliographica Historiae Sanctae Inquisitionis* [1982-1992]. The excellent articles on the three Inquisitions are supplemented by long and detailed separate entries on the economic and administrative structures of the three institutions [López-Salazar Codes-Marcocci 2010; Lavenia 2010a; Martínez Millán 2010].

Editing a comprehensive encyclopedia on such a major topic necessitates making many editorial decisions. The scope of the project and the quality of many of the entries testify to the editors' success in making choices. This is the only place where a reader can find for first time both histories of individual inquisitors and of their victims. Among the victims, the editors included not merely the usual suspects: *conversos* and New Christians [Dedieu 2010; Mea 2010b], Galileo Galilei [Beretta 2010], and witches (Di Simplicio and others, see below), but also individual Jews and New Christians, among them Shelomo Molcho [Graizbord 2010] and Dona Gracia Nasi, a.k.a. Beatriz de Luna [Santos 2010], individual fraudulent saints, *beatas* and *sante vive* such as Maria Janis [Schutte 2010], Lucia Roveri of Modena [Bottoni 2010], and Paola Antonia Negri [Bacchiddu 2010], Calvinist preachers in Italy, and real and imaginary minuscule groups of heretics in Italian towns in the sixteenth century. One can find here, side by side, both celebrities like Erasmus [Seidel Menchi 2010], Savonarola and Savonarolism [Dall'Aglio 2010; Herzig 2010], and Leonardo Da Vinci [Laurenza 2010], and the more obscure Italian poet Aonio Paleario (Antonio della Paglia) [Ragagli 2010], and an entire parade of Enlightenment and early-Enlightenment thinkers, from Spinoza [Totaro 2010], Locke [Costa 2010], and Leibniz [Palumbo 2010], to Kant [Unterburger 2010], Rousseau [Delpiano 2010], and Voltaire [Burkardt 2010]. But while the list of victims goes on and on, William Monter's entry on capital punishment summarizes the most recent and most accurate numbers of executions, reaffirming Tedeschi and his own original downward revision of the number thirty years ago.

It is to be expected that an Italian dictionary of this nature, edited by two Italians and a scholar of the Roman Inquisition, will be somewhat biased toward Italian history. It is also to be expected that the three editors, all specialists on the sixteenth and seventeenth century, will pay more attention to the early modern period. And, indeed, the entries for the sixteenth century and for Italy are the most numerous and detailed, and there are more Italian names, localities, victims, administrations, and phenomena included than Iberian. But the *Dizionario* goes way beyond the geographical and chronological boundaries of the early modern Italian peninsula. The fact that Spain is covered thoroughly is to be expected. The history of its Inquisition has fascinated scholars since its inception, and it has been totally rewritten over the last thirty years¹. But the relatively-neglected Portuguese Inquisition also receives here the attention it deserves². Some excellent entries on different aspects of the medieval Inquisition include the very short entry *Medieval Inquisition* by Arnold, with additional entries on Franciscan [Lambertini 2010] – but for some reason not the Dominican – inquisitors of the Middle Ages. Entries on individual inquisitors shed new light on the functioning of the institution in a period in which itinerant inquisitors – rather than a bureaucratic structure – embodies the Inquisition. And finally, excellent articles on the prosecutions of Cathars [Pegg 2010], and Templars [Veronese 2010], and other heretics and sectarians complete the picture.

As Proserpi explains in his introduction to this enterprise, the *Dizionario* deals only with papal inquisitorial courts and trials, hence the exclusion from the collection of early modern England and (most) of France. This exclusion makes sense in and of itself, but becomes less self evident when one realizes that Calvin merited an entry [Peyronel Rambaldi 2010], as did Miguel Servetus, whom Calvin executed in non-Catholic Geneva in 1553 [Valente 2010]. The territorial rulers of the numerous kingdom, fiefs, and principalities of the Holy Roman Empire opposed papal interventions in their territories. And yet, the treatment of the Holy Roman Empire in the *Dizionario* is exemplary. The entry on Germany [Burkardt-Schwerhoff 2010] offers a series of portraits of individual inquisitors who carried out specific investigations in the late middle ages throughout the Empire (including Bohemia and Austria), of forbidden books and their circulation in the Habsburg lands, a discussion of requests and letters sent by Catholic German prelates to Rome, and of people originally from the Germanic lands who were

¹ See, most recently (and published too late to be included in the bibliographical section of the *Dizionario*), Rawlings 2006 and the bibliographical essay by Lynn 2007.

² See the recent article by Marcocci 2010a.

caught by the Inquisitions in Italy, Spain, and Portugal and put on trial. The article points out, correctly, that even without the physical presence of inquisitors, the papal and Inquisitorial presence was felt through the influence of papal nuncios and through epistolary communications. It also includes a fascinating discussion on the myth of the Inquisition in the German-speaking lands.

The innovative approach pursued by the authors of the entry on Germany highlights some of the shortcomings of other entries. It is indeed the case that no papal Inquisition operated in France in the early modern period with the exception of Avignon, which was not, of course, part of France (and had traditionally formed part of the papal patrimony), Toulouse, and some additional territories conquered by Louis XIV. But A. Tallon's entry on France in the early modern period [2010] adheres to a very narrow definition of its subject matter. It mentions the conquests and the nominal presence of the Papal Inquisition in the recently acquired territories, and rightly points out that the king and the Gallican tradition of the parlements of France blocked the institution's influence within the realm. But, unlike the entry of Germany, it does not address other, indirect, forms of influence, correspondences, censorship of books, or the very intriguing and tension-ridden relations between the Roman Inquisition and the Sorbonne. Obviously, *licentia poetica* determined what is and what is not covered in each individual entry. But the editorial team could have insisted on a set of expectations or, alternatively, commissioned additional entries to fill gaps and to systematize coverage.

The editors should also be congratulated, though, for ensuring entries that demonstrate the global reach of the Inquisition and remind readers of the overlapping chronologies of the Catholic Inquisitions and of the European Imperial expansion. Thus, it includes specific entries on Goa [Amiel 2010], Brazil [Feitler 2010], Mexico [Piazza 2010], and Lima [Millar Carvacho 2010], among others. Less global but of utmost importance are the entries detailing the history of the Inquisitions in specific European localities. Some, of course, are famous for their interactions with a local Inquisition. Thus, there is nothing surprising in having an article devoted to the Basque Country [Ciappetta 2010] or Venice [Barbierato 2010], which is also discussed in an entry on the interdict placed on it by the papacy [Grendler 2010]. But even Padua [Malavasi 2010], Verona [Cavarzere 2010], Lérida [Fernández Terricabras 2010], Franche-Comté [Monter 2010] and even Orán [Pulido Serrano 2010] are all covered.

These entries, as well as articles discussing popes, prelates, and secular rulers of early modern Europe, and the detailed and excellent discussions of the Jesu-

its³ and a fascinating entry [2010] on the Hieronymite Order in Spain, which is probably the best article on the topic, make the *Dizionario* not only a mandatory reference book but also a major new general history of Mediterranean Catholic Europe in the early modern period. One does not need to develop a perverse taste for the bizarre and the cruel to enjoy reading many of the entries as mere fun. Thus, the entry *Sangue* [D'Errico 2010] offers a few lines on the Holy Blood of Christ, on blood as satanic, on menstruation, on Jews and blood, on blood as medicine, and on blood in idolatry – an entire universe of folkloric, learned, medical, and theological concepts, associations, and ideas that circulated in early modern Europe and shaped not only the Inquisition's opinions and ruling but also popular culture. This is only one of the many entries in which the *Dizionario* opens new vistas for research.

Some of the articles in the *Dizionario* offer excellent – if not the best available – historical analyses of the topic they address. Among them suffice it to mention C. Stuczynski's article on Marranism [2010], S. Ricci's article on censorship of different editions of Montaigne's *Essais* [2010], and M.L. Cerrón Puga's discussion of censorship of Petrarch's sonnets [2010]. The last two are, in fact, book-length articles.

The availability of authors also necessarily shaped the final result of a project of this nature. But, as mentioned before, equally important are the editors' choices. These decisions, unavoidably, are shaped not only by professional overview of the topic of research but also by political and ideological stands. Without undermining the editors' achievement, I want to point out some of the choices they made that strike me as problematic. The entries on Montaigne and Petrarch are, as mentioned before, first-rate articles. But it is far from clear that they belong in a historical dictionary of the Inquisition rather than, say, dictionaries of French and Italian literatures respectively. I also doubt whether the *Dizionario* is the place where the average reader or even the professional historian will go to read about pilgrimage [Vismara 2010]. And since «non esiste alcun legame intrinseco tra il ghetto e l'Inquisizione», as Kenneth Stow points out in his learned entry on the *Ghetto* [2010], it is not clear why the latter deserves an entry. Likewise for the entries on *Tolleranza* [Simonutti 2010], a fascinating and very learned article, and on Leonardo Da Vinci [Laurenza 2010].

This, unless, of course, there is an agenda at play here. Numerous Catholic luminaries found themselves in conflict with the Vatican over theological matters in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. They include

³ In Portugal [Maccocci 2010b], Italy [Pavone 2010], and Spain [Pastore 2010b].

Hans Küng [Ceci 2010a], George Tyrrell [Biagioli 2010], Alfred Loisy [Arnold 2010b], and Maurice Blondel [Turbanti 2010], among others. These theologians and philosophers were censored, reprimanded, asked to revise this or that paragraph or interpretation in their books, and, in some rare cases, silenced. This is not an insignificant matter, to be sure. Nonetheless, their inclusion in the *Dizionario* is far from self evident, I think, for two reasons. First, the Inquisition as we know it no longer existed when their publications were examined by the *Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede*. One can argue, as I assume the editors do, that the mechanisms of censorship were the same, and as such, the Inquisition continued to survive, at least in spirit. But as is well known, the institution of the Inquisition had been abolished in different states in the Italian peninsula starting in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in Spain in 1834, and in Portugal in 1821. Without its personnel, tribunals, and visits, and without renunciations, investigations, trials, and *autos da fé*, can one really speak of an Inquisition in the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth (see the discussion on Marcel Lefebvre [Buonasorte 2010])? And, secondly, a dictionary devoted to the Inquisition, a body usually associated with the early modern period, is probably not the first place where one would look for information concerning these modern Catholic theologians. For this reader, at least, there was a sense that the editors try, hope against hope, to revive the *Leggenda nera dell'Inquisizione*, the same legend that C. Gilly in his entry [2010], and John Tedeschi himself in his numerous articles over decades, has put to rest. Likewise problematic were the inclusions of the papal encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* of 1907 [Pagano 2010], and the discussions of Modernism [Arnold 2010], Nazism [Wolf 2010], Darwin and Darwinism [Botti 2010], Liberation Theology [Ceci 2010b], and even the Bejlis Trial of 1913 [Caliò 2010].

Lack of qualified scholars, or contacting scholars whose entries do not do justice to the topic they address, unavoidably shape a collection of this nature. Some entries offer very short summaries of current research and are not more useful than Wikipedia. These, for example, are the entries *Negromanzia*, *Patto con il demônio*, *Malleus maleficarum*, *Heinrich Kramer*, and *Tortura* [Di Simplicio 2010a, b, c, d, e]. The recent *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, [Golden 2006] (mentioned in Prospero 2010c) will serve better here. Luckily, P. Dinzelsbacher's discussion of medieval witchcraft [2010] is very thorough (even if it does not offer anything new), and Lavenia, J.P. Paiva, and Di Simplicio himself offer excellent reviews of the state of witchcraft studies in Italy, Portugal, and Spain (with a mention the Low Countries but nothing on Austria, Poland, or the Catholic territories of the Holy Roman Empire). The entry on diabolic possession by Lavenia [2010b], on

the other hand, is not as much an encyclopedic entry as an important scholarly article on the topic, an article that both summarizes current knowledge and significantly advances our understanding. Lavenia also offers a fascinating entry on the mass possession of nuns in the convent of San Plácido in Madrid in 1628-32. But there are no entries for the even more well-known mass possessions in Ursuline convents in France (Aix-en Provence and Loudun). Maybe it is because the Inquisition, as mentioned, was not active in France and therefore was not directly involved in the proceedings in these convents. But questions concerning the reliability of the nuns' testimonies in these cases were sent to Rome, Rome responded, and similar communications with Rome are mentioned in other entries (such as Germany), indicating that there was space for including these dramatic cases. Similarly, sodomy benefits from a good general survey of its legal aspects [Scaramella 2010], and Luiz Mott offers an interesting case study of sodomy trials in Portugal and its empire [2010], but there is no discussion of sodomy in Spain and Italy, not, presumably, because it did not exist in these territories.

My intention in pointing out these reservations is not to question the validity of the choices the editors have made. They have graced us with a major new addition not only to Inquisition studies but to all future histories of Catholicism and of medieval and early modern European history *tout court*. An impressive enterprise of this scope is by its very nature a work in progress. As more and more case studies are being researched and more files are opened to the public, we should hope that the team of editors will continue to revise this major *instrument du travail*. Luckily, modern technology enables us to keep upgrading and updating this type of dictionaries, and later editions, by their very nature, will be more comprehensive, more accurate, and better. Until then, we are very lucky to have this first class collection, which is, as said, both a major research tool and a first rate history book on its own right.

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