

## *From start to finish: the history of the Portuguese Inquisition revisited*

De fio a pavio: a história da Inquisição Portuguesa revisitada

De pe a pa: la historia de la Inquisición Portuguesa revisitada

Du débout à la fin: l'histoire revisitée de l'Inquisition Portugaise

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MARCOCCI, Giuseppe; PAIVA, José Pedro. *História da Inquisição Portuguesa (1536–1821)*. Lisboa: Esfera dos Livros, 2013. 608 p.

Nowadays, few themes of modern history combine so well the interest of academic readers with the taste of general public, as Inquisition does. This is partly because some behaviors condemned by the court in the past are still the target of prejudices and hostilities — although no longer punished by the ordinary justice system — and partly because the historiography devoted to the subject has produced unique and innovative works. Some works were responsible for a real methodological renewal,<sup>1</sup> others for demonstrating the archaism of certain practices and discourses.<sup>2</sup>

The prominence of the Inquisition studies is, however, a recent phenomenon. This is due, of course, to the relationship between the list of demands of the social minorities and the evolution of the historical research, which became more sensitive to racial and ethnic dramas, to moral conflicts, and to gender relations, from the 1980s onwards.<sup>3</sup> This can be observed from the works of the academic circles and from the mainstream Portuguese-Brazilian press at the time, in contrast to the long abstention that started with the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe and Latin America, which inhibited the development of the studies initiated in Portugal, still in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup>The work of Carlo Ginzburg, one of the great exponents of Italian micro-history, contributed decisively to popularize studies on the Inquisition. Cf. *O Queijo e os vermes* – o cotidiano e as idéias de um moleiro perseguido pela Inquisição, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1987 (first edition: Turim, Einaudi, 1976).

<sup>2</sup>This is the case, among others, of the work of Robert Mandrou, *Magistrados e feiteiros na França do século XVII*, São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1979 (first edition: Paris, Librairie Plon, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>In 1986, Laura de Mello e Souza defended at the University of São Paulo her doctoral thesis: *Sabás e Calundus* – feitiçaria, práticas mágicas e religiosidade popular no Brasil Colonial. Published in the following year under the title *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*, the research analyzed the “colonial Catholicism” marked by syncretic practices and customs, of ambivalent character, shared by Portuguese settlers, Africans, Indians and convicts of the Inquisition. In the late 1990s, the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of *O martelo das feiteiras* was published. The manual, composed by German inquisitors, guided the witch-hunt in the beginning of the modern era and became a reference to the treaties of demonology in the following centuries. Cf. Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz* – feitiçaria e religiosidade popular no Brasil Colonial, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1987; Henrich Kramer; James Sprenger, *Malleus maleficarum* (O martelo das feiteiras), Rio de Janeiro, Record; Rosa dos Ventos, 1997 [1484].

When the great Portuguese historian Alexandre Herculano published *História da origem e do estabelecimento da Inquisição Portuguesa (1854-1859)*,<sup>4</sup> the winds of liberalism had blown strong in the lands of Portugal, undermining the values that underpinned the Old Portuguese Regime institutions. Thirty years had passed since the dissolution of the court of the Holy Office, following the Revolução do Porto (Revolution of Porto, 1820), and the certainties of the past proved unable to support studies based on archival sources with a keen documental critique.<sup>5</sup> Devised to oppose the ultramontanism, the papal absolutism, and the entities clinging to their maintenance, the work of Herculano exposed the entrails of the religious politics of the Catholic confessional States to warn on the dangers of a regression. It was also different from the impressionist essays that preceded it because it was the first synthesis on the creation of the Lusitanian Inquisition.

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The competence of Herculano proved, however, insufficient to encourage contemporary scholars to collect and interpret the documental series produced by the religious court. Because they recognized in Inquisition a shameful chapter in the Portuguese history, many researchers closed their eyes to the richness of its files, preferring to push embarrassing acts and opinions into the shadows, condemning them to oblivion.<sup>6</sup> It was necessary to wait until the following century to see the interest over the repressive actions of the Court multiply and to discover the rugged path of the defendants entangled in the meshes of the Inquisition.<sup>7</sup> This emboldened work also found an echo in the Americas,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Alexandre Herculano. *História da origem e do estabelecimento da Inquisição Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Bertrand, 1979 [1854-1859].

<sup>5</sup>*História da origem e do estabelecimento da Inquisição Portuguesa* emerged in the wake of the controversy sparked by the publication of *História de Portugal*, also by Herculano, that proposed, according to the assumptions of historicism, a new interpretation for the formation of the kingdom, until then molded in the Miracle of Ourique. To the chagrin of the author, instead of stimulating interest in the innovative character of his approach, the thesis became the target of hostilities, obscuring the contribution it brought to historiography. Cf. Luís Reis Torgal; José Amado Mendes; Fernando Catroga, *História da história em Portugal* (sécs. XIX-XX), Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1996, p. 66-67.

<sup>6</sup>José Ribeiro Guimarães, *Summario de Vária História*, Lisboa, Rolland & Semiond, 1874, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Written in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Episódios dramáticos da Inquisição Portuguesa*, from António Baião, and *História dos cristãos-novos portugueses*, from João Lúcio de Azevedo, are part of the list of classics on the history of the actions of the Portuguese Inquisition. Cf. António Baião, *Episódios dramáticos da Inquisição Portuguesa*, Porto, Edição da Renascença Portuguesa, 1919, 2 v.; João Lúcio de Azevedo, *História dos cristãos-novos portugueses*, Porto, Clássica, 1922.

<sup>8</sup>I refer to the publication of the first visit of the Holy Office to the Portuguese America, organized by Capistrano de Abreu (1922-1925), and to the American edition of *História dos marranos* (1932), by Cecil Roth. Cf. Capistrano de Abreu, *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil pelo Licenciado Heitor Furtado de Mendonça*, Confissões da Bahia (1591-1592), São Paulo, Paulo Prado, 1922; Cecil Roth, *História dos Marranos*, Porto, Civilização, 2001 [1932].

with the publication of documental collections and studies anchored in the Portuguese classics.

However, the emergence of the Estado Novo (New State, 1933–1974) weakened the sprouts of this reflection, inhibiting the publication of new monographs on the subject. The censorship imposed by the Salazar dictatorship and the political exile of great masters of the Portuguese historiography refrained researches that manifested any criticism of the repressive machinery of the Portuguese State. By contrast, the investigations on the discoveries and the restoration, which glorified the pioneer drive, the spirit of leadership and of conquest of the Portuguese, gained ground to appraise the colonialist policy of Salazar.

In these dark years, the silence imposed by the dictatorship hushed many voices in the Lusitanian homeland. The interest in the persecution and oppressive action of the Holy Office found, however, its place beyond the Pyrenees and sparked controversy over the authenticity of the Crypto-Judaism of the new Christians, putting back the inquisitorial studies in the academic agenda.<sup>9</sup> But the Portuguese historiography of the Inquisition only advanced, and in great strides, in the decade following the Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution, 1974), even with the collaboration of Brazilian historians.

Until then, scholars focused in the intricacies of the establishment of the Court, in the censorship imposed on the luminaries of the Renaissance, and in the persecution against the new Christians of Jewish origins. Thenceforth, they began to look into other faiths and practices criminalized by the Holy Office.<sup>10</sup> They started to investigate the formation and increase of its staff, wondered about the rootedness of its ideas and values,<sup>11</sup> and presented major considerations on the links between the ecclesiastical and inquisitorial powers.<sup>12</sup>

The critical assessment of this vigorous production and the controversies caused by the actions of the Holy Office in Portugal are subject to analysis in the *História da Inquisição Portuguesa (1536–1821)*, by Giuseppe Marcocci and José Pedro Paiva, released in Portugal in 2013. The book is indeed the first synthesis on the role of the religious court in the domains of the maritime Portuguese

<sup>9</sup>The controversy between the Portuguese scholar José Antônio Saraiva and the linguist and historian of German origin who lives in France, Israel Salvator Révah, made the pages of the *Diário de Lisboa* and had international repercussions. The heated debate between the Lusitanian intellectual and the Professor at the *Collège de France* was published in Antônio José Saraiva, *Inquisição e cristãos-novos*, Lisboa, Estampa, 1985 [1969], p. 213-291.

<sup>10</sup>In Portugal, Francisco Bethencourt made history with the *Imaginário da magia – feiticeiros, adivinhos e curandeiros em Portugal no século XVI*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2004 [1987]; in Brazil, the books by Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1986, and Ronaldo Vainfas, *Tropico dos pecados*, Rio de Janeiro, Campus, 1989, became major publishing successes then and are, today, classics of the national historiography.

<sup>11</sup>A sample of the new generation of Brazilian historians devoted to the subject is in Ronaldo Vainfas; Bruno Feitler; Lana Lage (orgs.), *Inquisição em xeque: temas, controvérsias e estudos de caso*, Rio de Janeiro, EdUERJ, 2006.

<sup>12</sup>For years, José Pedro Paiva devoted himself to the study of power and/or shared competences between the Inquisition and the Church. As a highlight, I quote here José Pedro Paiva, *Bruxaria e superstição num país sem "caça às bruxas"*, Lisboa, Notícias Editorial, 1997, and \_\_\_\_\_. *Baluartes da fé da disciplina – o enlace entre a Inquisição e os bispos em Portugal (1536–1750)*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2011.

Empire from its origin to its deactivation. Consisting of 18 chapters, divided into 5 parts, the book aims to “undertake a scrupulous reconstruction” of the action of the Court, in order to “provide a reliable information and knowledge reservoir, based on the critical reading of the documents and interpretative contributions from the best international historiography”.<sup>13</sup>

The Part I, “Inquisition and Renaissance — from the genesis to the first major crisis (1536–1605)”, analyzes the first six decades of action of the Inquisition, namely, the interlude between the founding date of the Court and the granting of the general pardon by the pope to new Christians through King Filipe II. In Chapter 1, the authors review the version bequeathed by Herculano on the creation of the Court, showing, without a sliver of doubt, the main role of Cardinal D. Henrique in the formation and consolidation of the financial and organizational apparatus of the institution.

Then, they update the theme of the new Christians, dialoguing with the specialized bibliography and making use of various inquisitorial processes, as well as the documents of the General Council of the Holy Office. They consider that the “anti-Jewish obsession” of the Portuguese Inquisition initially faced resistance from Erasmists, but won the ideological battle against the peaceful evangelism of the Jews launching warnings, performing acts of faith, and deploying the system of cross denunciations, which, in the case of consanguineous, proved crucial.

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Although the focus of the inquisitorial action in Portugal was the repression of Judaism, the Court applied tireless vigilance over practices and conducts of old Christians, as Marcocci and Paiva point out in the chapter dedicated to the matter.

According to historians, between 1536 and 1605, the Inquisition stepped up its attention on Erasmians, Lutherans, Alumbrados, healers, witches and upon all those who had sexual behavior considered sinful, were bigamists, polygamists, concubines, or homosexuals. Performing a task that was first entrusted to the bishops, it began to monitor also printed documents and manuscripts. In the list of genres condemned by the Court were Bibles written in vernacular languages, in Hebrew, books of Muslim origin, as well as the works of Luther, Calvin, and those on the art of necromancy. The program of reading inspection and of writing censorship was based on the control over trade and reproduction

<sup>13</sup>Giuseppe Marcocci; José Pedro Paiva, *História da Inquisição Portuguesa (1536–1821)*, Lisboa, Esfera dos Livros, 2013, p. 13.

of the list of titles banned by the Council of Trent. It included periodic visits to bookstores and, as it is known, dominion over the granting of printing licenses.

The first part of the *História da Inquisição Portuguesa* ends in Chapter 4, with the analysis of the Inquisition presence in the overseas territories of the Empire. According to the authors, the Inquisition managed to spread its presence in the American, African, and Asian continents, despite having installed only the Court of Goa outside Europe, by alternating punishment and mercy in the formal processes, conducting private visits and reconciliations, using a network of family members and commissioners for representation and the collaboration of bishops and missionaries.

The structuring of the inquisitorial apparatus took place, however, in stages. The court developed significantly during the Habsburg dynasty, in which it met its heyday, but also its first big blow. When the Lusitanian sovereignty returned to Portuguese hands, in 1640, the Inquisition machine was a mature institution, with representatives and sympathizers in all segments of society. It is to this period that Marcocci and Paiva devote themselves in the second part of the analyzed work.

“The Holy Office between two dynasties: from the apogee to the suspension (1605–1681)” demonstrates the deep connection between the circumstances of the rise of the Filipines in Portugal and the growth of inquisitorial revenue and staff and the improvement of its internal regulations. Anchored in leading-edge studies and large documentary reference, Marcocci and Paiva reveal that the Holy Office became, at that time, a “hotbed of recruitment”<sup>14</sup> to fill important positions in the Church, in the courts, and in the regal councils. They show the gradual interference of the Inquisition in the investigation of offenses originally under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical justice, such as the prosecution of religious who committed the crime of *solicitação* (to urge a penitent to do immoral or indecent acts) in the confessional box,<sup>15</sup> and its progressive intervention in crimes of mixed jurisdiction, in other words, in cases where the trial jurisdiction belonged to both the royal and the episcopal justices, as in the charges of bigamy and sorcery.

However, the growth of the inquisitorial power clashed with the interests of the royal power sometimes, as emphasized by the historians. In 1627, to overcome a serious financial crisis, the Crown approved the entry of new Christians in military orders and granted them permission to trade in the East, in exchange for cash loans. Although very significant, the episode did not hold back the persecution of new Christians, which continued relentlessly throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as explained by Marcocci and Paiva. The increasingly broad adoption of the statutes of purity of blood by the civil and ecclesiastical organizations went along with the exclusionary and racist ideology of the Inquisition.

<sup>14</sup>Giuseppe Marcocci; José Pedro Paiva, *História da Inquisição Portuguesa (1536-1821)*, Lisboa, Esfera dos Livros, 2013, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup>*Idem, Ibidem*, p. 145.

Between 1620 and 1674, the most violent period in the history of the Court, not only laic and religious people suspected of “judaizing in secret” were taken to prisons but also those sympathetic to the victims, who disagreed with the inquisitorial methods of repression, like the famous Antonio Vieira, partisan of mixed marriages, defender of the Catholic faith instruction to converts, and critic of the indiscriminate confiscation of their property. The charges against Vieira relied, likewise, on his propositions of messianic inspiration. In sermons to the Court and other audiences, the priest had preached the resurrection of King D. João IV to consummate the “Fifth Portuguese Empire”, as Marcocci and Paiva demonstrate in the great chapter dedicated to the jesuit’s case. The clash between Vieira and the Inquisition is a *motto* for the authors to skillfully examine the suspension of the activities of the Court by the pope, following complaints made by the new Christians to the Roman curia, questioning the procedures adopted by the Holy Office when extracting the confession of the accused and the fairness of the sentences imposed on the convicts.

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The analysis of the mishaps of the Inquisition continues in Chapter 8, which addresses challenges and mistakes of the Holy Office in India and paves the way for the topic of the antepenultimate section: the “Baroque Inquisition: in search of a new path (1681–1755)”. In these chapters, the authors discuss the conditions imposed in the papal brief for the reopening of the Court and its consequences to the pace of the persecutory march of the Inquisition. They emphasize that, despite the reduction in the number of people relaxed to the secular arm, the amount of convicts, and even the adoption of milder forms of torture, the baroque stage of the Court was characterized by the social rooting of the inquisitorial ideology. In other words, the assimilation of racial stratification criteria defined by the Holy Office surpassed the strictly religious concern that had defined the installation of the Court in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Nevertheless, the *motto* of the Inquisition, “mercy and justice”, remained unchanged, as well as the performance of the acts of faith, crowded spectacles that attracted different interests. In the path to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the fight against heresies in the metropolitan territory focused, however, on the repression of Molinosism, Sigilism, and Freemasonry. In the overseas parts, the sentences followed the usual repertoire, as Marcocci and Paiva point out in Chapter 12, “The pressure in the tropics: the attraction to Brazil”. But the increasing polarization between the Atlantic dimension and the eastern portion of the Inquisition, blatant in the reduction of persecutions in Portuguese



America in contrast to the massive repression in India, showed signs of the institutional weakness of the Court.

The progressive decline of the Inquisition is the focus of the historians in Part IV of the reviewed work, “A Court dominated — from the Pombaline reforms to decay”. The use of the inquisitorial machine by the Marquis of Pombal to silence political rivals and opponents explains, according to the authors, the emblematic episodes that marked the last days of the Portuguese Inquisition, including the execution of the Távoras and of the Italian Jesuit Gabriel Malagrida. However, the role of the prime minister of D. José in carrying out the reign’s politics really affected the identity of the Court by suppressing the distinction between new and old Christians in 1773. The new version of the Inquisition regiment, composed a year later, led to the redefinition of the practice of denunciation and criminalization of suspects, since the charge in secret was permanently forbidden. Shaken in its structure, as demonstrated by the historians in the last part of the book, “The decline of the Inquisition, from the extinction to history”, the Holy Office succumbed to the liberal ideas that instigated the Portuguese political scene. As the data brought up by the researchers reveal, it let itself be defeated because it no longer had supporters and sympathizers. Very few wanted to be familiar to and serve the Tribunal on “business of secrecy and importance”, showing the cleanliness of their blood.

In summary, *História da Inquisição Portuguesa* is an essential book for beginners and initiates in the affairs of the religious Court. Along with an excellent image notebook, it has an impressive set of factual, bibliographic, and documental information, critically addressed. Maybe it was enough to say that it has the signatures of Giuseppe Marcocci and José Pedro Paiva, guarantees of quality and competence.