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The *Dizionario Storico dell'Inquisizione* and the New Comparative Inquisition History

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

The recent publication of the *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione* marks the establishment of a new equilibrium in the historical study of inquisitions. At once, it demonstrates how this subject has developed into a discrete area of inquiry and how it has stimulated research on a wide variety of other topics. The creation of a reference work of this kind also indicates a sense that critical scholarship on inquisitions has reached a certain maturity. In that manner, Adriano Prospero, Vincenzo Lavenia, John Tedeschi, and their collaborators have offered a reference tool which synthesizes the outpouring of revisionist scholarship – particularly since the 1970s – on the Spanish Inquisition, the Portuguese Inquisition, the Roman Inquisition and its tribunals, as well as medieval inquisitions. In this sense, the *Dizionario* is moved by a similar impulse to synthetic surveys, seeking to distill an increasingly unwieldy body of work into a manageable introduction to the field and signal topics within it¹. This positioning vis-à-vis decades of revisionist publications is explicit both in Prospero's introduction and repeatedly throughout the articles which follow. What is also evident is that the *Dizionario* has been conceptualized and organized in a manner which seeks to point to new directions in research and to reinvigorate an academic field now in its second and even third generations.

¹ This aim has been evident in, *inter alia*, Kamen 1997; Rawlings 2006, 25-26; Pérez 2005; García Carcel-Moreno Martínez 2000; Black 2009. For similar observations, see Marcocci 2010a.

This new basis for study which the *Dizionario* offers to researchers is comparative, probing continuities and discontinuities in inquisitions across time and space. As Prosperi notes – not without humor – the defining of elements of inquisitorial practice in an alphabetically ordered reference work has itself a very long history. Inquisitions were long approached collectively in such fashion in order to show them as a continuous exercise of either divinely ordained justice or fanatical persecution, both in the literature inquisitors composed to authorize and legitimate their office and in the tradition of critique which crystallized in the philosophical dictionaries of the Enlightenment². This comparative approach, however, is one which opposes any such monolithic construction of *The Inquisition*. The *Dizionario* arrives, moreover, at a moment in which this kind of comparative stance is especially plausible. As the editors and contributors are acutely aware, there is now both a critical mass of institutional studies – including a particularly thorough examination of the central administration and regional tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition – and unprecedented access for researchers to archival materials. The latter is the result not only of the opening of archives and initiatives to survey holdings, but also of projects of digitization³.

There are also now sufficient comparative frameworks on which to build. Jean-Pierre Dedieu and René Millar Carvacho, who a decade ago called for more approaches to the study of the Spanish Inquisition which transcended regional divisions, have both contributed significantly to the *Dizionario*, adding to its deliberately international stance in soliciting contributions as in selecting topics [Dedieu-Millar Carvacho 2002]. The studies of Edward Peters have consistently taken a long view of the legal, theological and political histories of the inquisition, bringing a medievalist's perspective to the development of early modern institutions. Andrea Del Col has now drawn on his immense knowledge of the early modern Italian tribunals to craft a broad view of the Italian peninsula's

² These themes are explored throughout a wide variety of entries and make frequent appearance in the *Dizionario's* volumes. See Prosperi 2010b; Arnold 2010; Marcocci 2010b; Prosperi 2010c; López-Vela 2010. Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, for example, begins his entry on Luis de Páramo, who published his universal history of inquisitions, *De Origine et Progressu Sanctae Inquisitionis*, Madrid 1598, with a reference to the inquisitor's place in Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*: Rivero Rodríguez 2010. For further reflections on these topics, see also the essays in Prosperi 2003.

³ There are eight rich entries on diverse *Archivi e serie documentarie*: Prosperi 2010a, I: 81-91. There is attention, for example, to the availability of records on published microfilm in Tedeschi 2010a; and to published catalogs of archival sources in Piazza 2010. Mexico's Archivo General de la Nación has digitized a significant amount of its inquisitorial holdings. The same is underway in Spain's state archives – accessible online at <http://pares.mcu.es> – and at the Archivo Histórico Nacional there has been a particular focus on Inquisition records relating to the Americas; as with the digitizing work in the Archivo General de las Indias in Seville, there is an acute awareness of the potential travel costs for investigators.

inquisitorial history from – as its subtitle emphasizes – the twelfth century to the twenty-first, a view which also gives substantive consideration of the Spanish Inquisition's operations there. Francisco Bethencourt has, moreover, offered one system for considering the early modern inquisitions, Portuguese, Roman, and Spanish, that brings a wide range of theoretical insights to bear on the inquisitions' procedures, publicity, and institutional structures while also making reference to medieval precedents⁴. The *Dizionario*, then, is both part of the recognition of – as well as the creation of – this renewed comparative approach to the many histories of inquisition. Explicitly and implicitly, its articles insist that inquisitions, as a specific form of ecclesiastical justice, must be both differentiated and compared in their particular iterations in diverse places, epochs, and political constellations. They evince a concern to draw from a wide range of historiography to explain not only the origins of inquisitorial practices but also their afterlives, to suggest the ways in which inquisitorial structures and debates which preoccupied inquisitors have persisted.

Thus the *Dizionario* – in its selection of topics and within the entries themselves – moves between precise details and larger, and often comparative, interpretive frameworks. Consistently, the articles stress the plural character of inquisitions, the contingencies which shaped inquisitorial activities and the variability in procedures, practices, and thought. In this fashion, the coherence of the *Dizionario*'s conceptualization makes it a powerful tool for shaping future research. Simply to peruse the list of entries is to breeze through a survey of inquisition historiography. The topics chart major trends in scholarship. Thus there are entries for places where tribunals were located, on points of procedure, and for the technical terminology of inquisitorial processes. There are articles on archives where sources are now concentrated, on theological and legal problems, and about offenses tried in inquisition courts. Particular emphasis has been given to people, both in the collective – whether stigmatized populations or inquisitorial officials – and as individuals. The *Dizionario* wisely frames itself as complementing the achievements of other substantive reference works, particularly those centered on other elements of European religious history as well as Emil van der Vekene's bibliographic guide to inquisition publications [van der Vekene 1982-1992]. Still, I would venture to say that the *Dizionario* is now an indispensable tool that any researcher in the field should consult. And it offers much to those in related areas

⁴ Peters 1989; a similar stance is taken in Peters 1996, Del Col 2006; Bethencourt 1995. The recent appearance of this last in English translation is also notable along these lines: Bethencourt 2009.

of inquiry, as well, affording insights into a wide range of problems in European religious, legal, political, cultural, social, and intellectual history. The reference apparatus in each of the first three volumes, as well as the indices and bibliography in the fourth, offer a wealth of leads to follow, in identifying sites in which to conduct research, scholarship to consult, or viable topics to pursue. The kind of materials selected for the *Dizionario* point to fertile avenues for investigation, as, for instance, in the inclusion of images of varied types – from paintings to plans to print and even the graffiti of prisoners – in an iconographic insert, along with articles which open up questions of analyzing the visual media both regulated by and deployed by inquisitions⁵. Such material, moreover, will be of great use in the classroom and in preparing lectures. The alphabetical organization, indices, and cross-referencing, not to mention the existence of a searchable electronic version, make the *Dizionario* an efficient reference and research tool. Yet I also found myself thinking that it would be well worth reading these volumes from cover to cover, as a series of suggestive essays. They are filled with ideas for future research and new perspectives through which to read existing scholarship. Within just the first two dozen pages, for example, Prosperi gestures to how incidents in mid-sixteenth-century Florence, Granada, and Mexico might be related to one another, and Dedieu calls for further consideration of the «extrajudicial relationships» which surrounded inquisitorial practice, and which are being uncovered in financial and notarial records⁶.

To my eye, one of the most useful and intriguing elements of the *Dizionario* is its focus on individuals. It supplies biographical entries for figures not previously selected for such collections and, given its concerns, draws together and amplifies what has been available in more nationally focused collections⁷. This emphasis reflects some of the historiographical influences that have been powerful in shaping scholarship on the Inquisition. In turn, it stresses how work based on inquisitorial sources has been so important in the study of European history over the past several decades. It makes this evident through its references to microhistories which have redrawn the contours of various fields of study. Thus

⁵ See both the iconographic insert of the *Dizionario* (vol. V of the electronic version), and Franceschini 2010a; Franceschini 2010b. There is another stimulating approach to some of these problems in Villaseñor Black 2006.

⁶ Here I refer to Prosperi 2010d and Dedieu 2010, although I do injustice to the other entries in those initial pages in mentioning only two.

⁷ Seen from the vantage point of work on the Spanish Inquisition, it complements the material available in Aldea Vaquero, Marín Martínez 1972-1975 and Sánchez Rivilla 2000 (notably, Sánchez Rivilla is among the contributors to the *Dizionario*).

there are substantive entries in the *Dizionario* for Menocchio and for Alonso de Salazar Frías⁸.

This attention to individuals enables a useful reflection on the historiography. At the same time, it is political in a certain sense. As Prosperi notes in the introduction, in a dictionary of manageable size the choice of which individuals merit entries can never be completely satisfactory; it must be selective rather than definitive, especially as the identities of those tried by inquisitorial courts are continuing to be uncovered. What the *Dizionario* includes are a multitude of biographical entries for individuals who have been involved, in a wide range of ways, in either inquisitorial processes or in studying and writing about them. Earlier historians of inquisitions, the victims of tribunals, polemicists who railed against the institution, inquisitorial theorists, judges, inquisitors general and popes have been put, in some sense, on the same plane. Each has been subsumed to – and identified as essential to advancing – critical historical scholarship on inquisitions.

These entries also point to fruitful directions in research. They encourage a critical engagement with earlier historiography, in thinking about, for instance, the conditions in which Henry Charles Lea shaped his comparative approach to inquisitions, publishing histories of the medieval inquisition, the Spanish Inquisition, and the activities of that institution in the «Spanish dependencies» [Villani 2010]. They encompass a noteworthy cadre of early modern European intellectuals. Opposition to the Inquisition contributed to the formulation of theories of toleration. The inclusion of entries in the *Dizionario* on individuals famous for their polemics against the Inquisition, alongside intellectuals tried and censored by inquisitions, as well as those who contributed in some way to shaping that legal institution, suggests some of the stimulating ways in which inquisitorial activity – and the use of the inquisition as a thought experiment – is now being written into European intellectual history⁹.

To focus on individuals in this way, and to offer a tool which might enable their experiences to be compared more thoroughly, will perhaps stimulate further re-

⁸ Del Col 2010; Lavenia 2010a. Such scholarship includes, of course, the studies which made these figures famous: Ginzburg 1980; Henningsen 1980. Many other microhistorical approaches to inquisitorial records could also be listed, including (for the Spanish Inquisition) Contreras 1992; Kagan 1990; Nalle 2001.

⁹ E.g. Schmidt 2010; Palumbo 2010; Simonutti 2010a; Ricci 2010; Burkardt 2010. See also Simonutti 2010b. The extensive bibliography (commendably up to date) points to another series of leads on that topic, including Valente 2009 and Marshall 2006.

flection on the thin line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the early modern Catholic world, and the ease with which that border could be perceived to have been crossed. The treatment of the sixteenth-century Spanish Cazalla is, for example, intriguing in this way, showing how one clan both gained renown as religious authorities and, later, as heretics. While Agustín de Cazalla (a former imperial preacher burned as a Protestant heretic) was arguably the most famous member of the family in the sixteenth century, it is an interesting reflection on the shape of scholarship on the Spanish Inquisition that – while there is substantial information about him in the dictionary – it is María de Cazalla, the noted alumbrada, who has her own entry¹⁰. This element, one of many in the conceptualization of the *Dizionario*, can be seen as engaging a certain biographical vein of inquisitorial scholarship. Simultaneously, it provides a tool to further interrogate difficult questions about how identities were construed in the early modern world, and about how the individual was balanced against the corporate¹¹.

The wide range of individuals selected also points to how future research might knit together more closely different traditions in the scholarship on inquisitions. By and large, study of the Spanish Inquisition, for example, has been particularly interested to recover the stories of individuals who suffered inquisitorial persecution, or whose lives were perhaps shaped to varying degrees by the presence of that institution in society¹². Scholarship on medieval inquisitions and the Roman Inquisition, while still very interested in those tried in inquisitorial courts, has been more inclined to also explore the careers and writings of individual judges¹³. The articles in the *Dizionario* suggest that there is now sufficient scholarship available to consider more fully both the judges and the accused in a given proceeding. Moreover, the *Dizionario* gives a valuable introduction to who the principal theorists of inquisitions were, how their stances were contested, and to

¹⁰ Mendoza García 2010a. There is also a cross-reference entry for *Cazalla, famiglia* to the entry for María. Agustín makes brief additional appearances, among other places, in Boeglin 2010; López Muñoz 2010a; López Muñoz 2010b.

¹¹ These seem to me questions which are at the heart of numerous entries in the *Dizionario*. They also raise issues about how inquisitions shaped trends in the construction of narratives. For a consideration of these questions via inquisitorial sources, see Kagan 2010; Martin 2004; Kagan-Dyer 2004. For broader consideration of these themes, the work of Natalie Zemon Davis is fundamental; see also, *inter alia*, Amelang 1998, as well as the theory summarized in Caine 2010.

¹² Many examples might be adduced here. To take two, one might consider the chapters in Giles 1999 and Vollendorf 2005.

¹³ Among many others – as the *Dizionario's* bibliography amply attests – this attention has been evident in the work of Silvana Seidel Menchi, Andrea Errera, Stefania Pastore, Massimo Donattini, Vincenzo Lavenia, Giovanni Romeo, Giovanna Paolin, Adriano Prospero, and Andrea Del Col; and, with reference to medieval inquisitors, that of Laurent Albaret, Marina Benedetti, and Peter Biller. Recently, to that list might be added Ames 2009 and Sullivan 2011.

the range of writings which inquisitorial judges produced in a variety of times and places. These entries – many written by a set of scholars who have given consistent attention to these issues – point also to a dynamic field of research. They are part of a strand of scholarship which is exploring the shape of on-going disputes between proponents and opponents of inquisitorial practices. These articles suggest, in their mention of intriguing details drawn from early modern printed works, that there is still much to learn about the argumentative culture which surrounded inquisitorial practice¹⁴.

In sum, the *Dizionario* has set an admirable tone for future investigations. It advances an ideal of international collaboration and scholarly cross-pollination from the outset, with its list of contributors and their wide range of institutional posts. The scope of its topics is impressive. And so it also suggests where there might still be work to be done. Perhaps, for instance, there are insights to be derived by involving the Inquisition tribunals in the Spanish Americas even more fully in new comparative frameworks of research. While the histories of those district courts are touched on in a wide variety of ways in the *Dizionario*, there is less of that biographical attention directed to figures related to the tribunals in Lima, Mexico, and Cartagena de Indias. From that perspective, it could perhaps be fruitful, in some future work, to consider José Toribio Medina, Chilean historian of those American tribunals (among many other subjects), alongside Lea, his near contemporary. Given the multitude of judges and defendants it considers, perhaps there are also new perspectives that the entries in the *Dizionario* might now offer to interpreting the careers of Spanish inquisitors active in the Americas, like the founder of Mexico's tribunal, Pedro Moya de Contreras, or famous trials there, like those for judaizing conducted against Luis de Carvajal (and much of his family) in Mexico at the end of the sixteenth century, or Manuel Bautista Pérez (and many others) in Lima in the 1630s¹⁵. In myriad such ways, the appearance of the *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione* now allows an even wider array of questions to be asked about inquisitions and about inquisitorial sources. By providing precise explanations of the procedures and histories of inquisitions, and by synthe-

¹⁴ There are a wide range of inquisitor-writers, who wrote on varied topics, as well as theorists of inquisitions treated in the *Dizionario*. For early modern figures, see, *inter alia*, Lavenia 2010b; Donattini 2010; Wickersham 2010; Ragagli 2010; Fontana 2010; Rivero Rodríguez 2010; Lavenia 2010c; Tedeschi 2010b; Pastore 2010. See also Errera 2010a and Errera 2010b.

¹⁵ The *Dizionario* contains entries for the three Spanish Inquisition tribunals in the Americas, as it does for other regional courts. There are frameworks for interpreting these trials, for example, in the topical entry Stuczynski 2010. The Carvajal family appears in Piazza 2010. For one entry centered on a noteworthy individual (Juan de Palafox y Mendoza), and which – following the insights of recent scholarship – attends both to peninsular Spain and Mexico, see Mendoza García 2010b.

sizing many of the conclusions of the last several decades of scholarly work, it creates a new starting point for future research. It is in this sense that it offers a solid foundation on which to build a new comparative history of inquisitions, one which attends to the interplay of change and continuity over time and space, and to the importance both of institutional structures and individual actors.

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