



# The Spanish inquisition. Current research in perspective

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## The Spanish inquisition. Current research in perspective

This paper is about Spain. I leave aside not only Portugal, but also America, among other reasons because I don't know them well enough. I published some years ago, with René Millar, a paper which included those countries, to which I refer the reader<sup>1</sup>. Although I'll concentrate on current trends, I'll also embed them within a broader chronological and international view of the historiography, so that they make sense. I'll go back to the seventies of the past century. The most recent bibliography about the Spanish inquisition, in fact, still carries the mark of the research of that time and, more in depth, of the presuppositions which were the basis of the same. These presuppositions have been undermined by recent work on the Italian inquisition. Nevertheless, the mainstream of Spanish production does not take these conclusions into account. This dialogue, or lack of dialogue, will be the main theme of this paper.

### I. The past. Scientific practice and implicit presuppositions

These lines about how we worked on the inquisition thirty years ago are also a personal testimony: I was myself an actor of the story<sup>2</sup>. We have now the necessary hindsight to get a fuller view of what was done and of the conditions in which it was done. The break in inquisitorial historiography produced fifteen years ago by Italian research also helped a lot in making things clearer. I'll distinguish three layers: an explicitly scientific practice, implicit scientific presuppositions and social demand.

#### a) *Scientific practice*

At that time, within the scientific core of Spanish inquisitorial studies, two great trends could be singled out. The first one referred to students who used inquisitorial documentation for the knowledge of marginal or minority groups which the tribunal was repressing. The interest for the inquisitorial institutions was second. Four main fields were concerned, although loosely interrelated: Jewish studies, the most prominent "inquisitorial" specialist of which was then Prof. Haim Beinart<sup>3</sup>; Islamic studies in relation to early modern Spain (Louis Cardaillac<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Dedieu (Jean Pierre), Millar Carvacho (René), "Entre histoire et mémoire. L'Inquisition à l'époque moderne: dix ans d'historiographie inquisitoriale", *Annales Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 2002, n° 2, p. 349-373.

<sup>2</sup> See also on these problems: García Cárcel (Ricardo), "Veinte años de historiografía sobre la Inquisición", *Veinte años de historiografía de la Inquisición. Algunas reflexiones*, Valencia, Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, 1996, p. 231-254 and Scholz (Johannes Michael), "Spanisches Inquisition. Zum Stand Historischer Justizforschung", *Jus Commune*, 1991, p. 225-273, this last one very keen on the social, intellectual and political networks which linked the actors. See also: Bujanda (Jesús), "Recent Historiography of the Spanish Inquisition (1977-1988): Balance and Perspective", Perry (Mary Elisabeth) and Cruz (Anne), ed., *Cultural encounters: The impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - Oxford, University of California, 1991, p. 221-247.

<sup>3</sup> Beinart (Haim), *Records of the trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1981, Vol. I: 1483-1485, 1974, XXVII + 638 p., vol. II: 1494-1512, 1977, XIII + 596 p., vol. III: 1512-1527, 1981, X + 768 p.; Beinart (Haim), *Conversos on Trial. The inquisition in Ciudad Real*, Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Cardaillac, Louis, *Morisques et chrétiens. Un affrontement polémique (1492-1640)*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1977, 543 p.

Bartolomé Bennassar<sup>5</sup>); Spanish Illuminism (Alvaro Huerga<sup>6</sup>) and witchcraft studies (Gustav Henningsen)<sup>7</sup>.

The second trend was mainly interested in the working of the inquisition itself. It was divided in various schools, the members of which maintained close personal contacts but, in my view, little true scientific debate. The legal historians were the best organized. They had two leaders, both of them at the same time university teachers and important politicians, Francisco Tomás y Valiente et José Antonio Escudero<sup>8</sup>. The last one created a research centre and a review exclusively dedicated to the history of the Inquisition<sup>9</sup>. They were mainly interested on the legal and institutional aspects of the question. Their approach suffered from an excessive concentration on the legal side not always devoid of anachronism, but the best stuff they produced remains of great value due to their technical quality and to the excellent information of the authors on legal topics which many professional historians did not master<sup>10</sup>.

Another school concentrated on monographs of local inquisitorial courts. I belonged to it. Jaime Contreras and Ricardo García Cárcel were my main partners and companions<sup>11</sup>. We aimed at describing the way the inquisition inserted itself in local societies. This led us to insist on the variability of forms and techniques, on the many accommodations which inquisitorial rules and regulations suffered to meet local demands. We painted a far more flexible, adaptive, even unstable institution than that the ancient historiography or even our friends the legal historian described. Under Gustav Henningsen's guidance, we intensely indulged in a statistical approach of the trials. Numbers were then fashionable in humanistic research. Moreover, and most of all, this approach highlighted the variability of the objectives and practices of the tribunal through different times and places<sup>12</sup>. I am afraid that this statistical apparatus, at one moment so fruitful, apparently so obvious but in fact so tricky, escaped from our control and led many young researchers to loose research strategies and conclusions. We were equally influenced by Bartolomé Bennassar, the supervisor of my own thesis, who insisted on the importance of the inquisitorial activity towards "old Christians",

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<sup>5</sup> Bennassar (Bartolomé), Bennassar (Lucile), *Les chrétiens d'Allah. L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe-XVIIe siècles*, Paris, Perrin, 1989, 493 p.

<sup>6</sup> Huerga (Alvaro), *Historia de los alumbrados (1570-1640)*, Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 1978-1994, 5 t.

<sup>7</sup> Henningsen (Gustav), *The witches' advocate. Basque witchcraft and the Spanish inquisition*, Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1980, XXX + 607 p.

<sup>8</sup> Escudero (José Antonio), *Inquisición y derecho. Perfiles jurídicos del Santo Oficio*, Madrid, 1988; Tomás y Valiente (Francisco), Kamen (Henry), Dedieu (Jean Pierre), Contreras (Jaime), "La Inquisició a debat", *Manuscripts*, 1995, p. 31-60.

<sup>9</sup> The Instituto de Historia de la Inquisición and the *Revista de la inquisición*, published with some interruptions since 1991.

<sup>10</sup> Ainsí: Barrios Pintado (Feliciano), "Las competencias privativas del inquisidor general en la normativa regia de los siglos XVI y XVII. Una aproximación al tema", *Revista de la Inquisición*, 1991, I, p. 121-140; Gómez Rivero (Ricardo), "Consejeros de la Suprema de Felipe V", *Revista de la Inquisición*, 1995, IV, pp. 133-175.

<sup>11</sup> Dedieu (Jean Pierre), *L'administration de la foi. L'inquisition de Tolède (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Madrid, Casa de Velazquez, 1989, 406 p.; García Cárcel (Ricardo), *Origenes de la Inquisición española - El tribunal de Valencia, 1478-1530*, Barcelona, Península, 1976, 308 p.; Contreras Contreras (Jaime), *El Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en Galicia (poder, sociedad y cultura)*, Madrid, Akal, 1982, 710 p.

<sup>12</sup> Henningsen (Gustav), ""The Database of the Spanish Inquisition. The "relaciones de causas"-project revisited"", Monhaupt (Heinz), Simon (Dieter), ed., *Vorträge zur Justizforschung. Geschichte und Theorie*, 1993, Band 2, pp. 43-85.

those who had no Jewish nor Islamic, nor clearly heretic ascendancy. All these were fundamental novelties in relation with the traditional frozen, ontological approach of the inquisition. We did not fully understand then their implications.

At the same time, a third school embedded in a complex tradition which mixed literary and cultural studies with a strong touch of institutional history, was establishing the history of the inquisitorial censure on a firm basis<sup>13</sup>.

#### *b) Presuppositions*

Our scientific field was structured by unscientific presuppositions. Our relations to the same were complex. From one side, they informed the vision we had of the court; from another, they were our link with the public opinion: they carried grants and endowments, advancements and fame - I'll tell more of these aspects latter. They also contradicted the implications of our own research. We were unequally conscious of such inconsistencies: foreigners and strangers to the traditional Hispanic studies felt them more keenly than Spaniards – through birth or adoption – and "hispanists". Anyway, these presuppositions formed a highly coherent system from which it was difficult to escape.

Among them, the most properly scientific one was related with the paper of the State. My master Bennassar was the most outspoken advocate of such views<sup>14</sup>. The Spanish Inquisition was fundamentally a State inquisition. Church supplied the juridical matter, but quickly lost any true control over an institution whose agents were designated by the king and which the sovereign used in function of his own needs. To underscore so strongly the paper played by the State was, in a way, a healthy reaction against the obsession which the classical historiography showed for the relation of the tribunal with the Church. It propelled inquisitorial studies from stale anticlericalism or apologetics (what they actually were before in spite of the scholarship of many of their proponents) to a scientific plane. This was a major breakthrough. Our own work on local matters, which necessarily insisted on the paper played by local authorities and local representatives of the central power, made this argument stronger. Nevertheless, even then, we were at times scared by the way our conclusions were used and quoted in some texts which almost totally silenced the ecclesiastical side of the question.

As a royal tribunal, the inquisition was also viewed as a Spanish tribunal, a efficient tool for the unification of the various autonomous kingdoms scattered over the Peninsula. Founded by the king's will, manned by the king's men, it had been fundamentally used by the king as a tool for promoting the unification of Spain in its present geography. The inquisition was the only global institution at the king's disposal in his various kingdoms; it relayed central State institutions when the local *fueros* blocked them (see Antonio Pérez). All that had been known for long and looked good sense. The closer view we were taking of inquisitorial history even brought to light new facts: it was clear that a national Spanish feeling was emerging in mid-XVIth century, based on the peculiar common view of Christianity that Roman Catholicism

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<sup>13</sup> Pinto Crespo (Virgilio), *Inquisición y control ideológico en la España del siglo XVI*, Madrid, Taurus, 1983; Bujanda (Jesús M. de), *Index de l'Inquisition / Index librorum prohibitorum*, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, various volumes, 1984-2002.

<sup>14</sup> Bennassar (Bartolomé), "L'inquisition espagnole au service de l'Etat", *L'Histoire*, 1979, XV, 9, p. 35-46; and the chapters he wrote in: Bennassar (Bartolomé), coord., *L'inquisition espagnole*, Paris, Hachette, 1979 (various reed., the last one in 2003; Spanish, Roumanian and Italian translations). This book was intended for the general public. It still is, nevertheless, the basis of many scientific bibliographies.

was creating at that time; that such feeling was fuelled, if not created, by the inquisition. The link we were establishing in that way between inquisition and Spain led us to forget that there were other inquisitions, even more important than the Spanish one. We forgot Italy and Portugal. We forgot the way France, England, the Netherlands, not to speak of Germany, coped with religious dissent. We even forgot Sardegna and Sicily, which belonged to the Spanish inquisitorial system, and in many ways Spanish America. We exclusively focused on Spain<sup>15</sup>. By doing so we were losing not only geographical scope, but also insight: the extension of the inquisitorial action to the whole catholic world was not incidental; it was a fact which spoke of the essence of the institution, as we'll later see.

Royal and national, our inquisition was also spectacular. We described with fruition and detail the *autodafé*; we insisted on the "pedagogy of fear" (Bennassar and many others); we focused on torture – with more or less accuracy: some of us forgot it was then an accepted, regulated and formalized judicial practice. Some even went so far as to describe the inquisition as a super secret police, only to be compared to the East-german Stasi, whose information networks embraced the whole Spanish society in a comprehensive spying system; in spite of what the inquisitorial papers themselves said of the random working of the machine, in spite also of the obvious scarcity of observable inquisitorial interventions from the XVIth century onwards.

Spanish inquisition, last but not least, was an exceptional and foreign institution. It had not been generated by Spain. It had been imposed on it and had consequently distorted the whole course of Spanish history. Imposed by whom? Opinions varied: Ferdinand the Catholic was a likely candidate; "power", "the State" being time-independent concepts, had the advantage of a chronological vagueness which made them difficult to counter. "Counterreformation" enjoyed a high degree of political correctness, without losing the necessary elasticity which enabled it to cover almost everything: anticlerical activists as well as catholic or protestant liberals, even catholic conservatives, could assume it, just changing its negative connotations to positive ones, or the other way round. The exceptional character of the Inquisition, when understood in such a way, matched quite well in its vagueness the then dominant paradigm of Spanish history: decline. Somewhere between the end of XVth and the middle of XVIIth century Spain (Spain as a nation did not exist then, but that did not matter) had been unnerved by: Indian plate and/or political dictatorship and/or clerical obscurantism and/or religious dissent and/or the inquisition. The inquisition had the unique advantage of having been imposed from outside (see above), a fact which preserved national pride, and of being rather consensual in the paper of the villain in the 70's, even in clerical surroundings. This link of the inquisitorial studies with a global view of Spanish history reflects the existence of a third and more global conceptual layer as a component of the context in which court was viewed at that time.

### *c) A global social and political context*

Historiography of the Spanish inquisition was highly conditioned by Spain's transition to democracy. The congress of Cuenca, held on inquisitorial themes in 1978, was probably the most important single event in this story. It was explicitly defined by the person who organized it, don Joaquin Pérez Villanueva, a right wing liberal politician and professor of History at Alcala University, as a big celebration intended to reconcile Spain with its own

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<sup>15</sup> The first true global history of modern inquisition was written by a Portuguese (Bethencourt (Francisco), *L'Inquisition à l'époque moderne. Espagne, Portugal, Italie - XVe-XIXe siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 1995).

historical memory. Inquisition was, in his view, a central piece of the game, central enough to be considered as a strategic node of the whole memorial system. The effect was devastating. At the end of my own conference, a young man came to me weeping all the tears of his soul: "You made me a Spaniard!". He never had believed that having sexual intercourse with a consenting and unmarried woman was such a sin; but he had been convinced by his educators that, being the teaching of the Catholic Church other, this belief made him a heretic; and that heresy was highly unspanish (I remind the reader of the date of such and exotic remark: second half of XXth century). My conference dealt with problems of sexual moral from an inquisitorial point of view. It made clear to him that in the middle of the XVIth century, when Spain was a world power and a model of Christianity – so at least he believed – everybody thought the way he did. The last page of the next Sunday edition of *El País*, which already was a major national newspaper, was entirely devoted to an interview of Jaime Contreras, then a young researcher who not even had defended his thesis, who found himself in charge of explaining to the nation what Inquisition had been; and at mass, that same Sunday, the vicar of my parish – I then lived in Madrid – let aside the comment on the Gospel of the day he had prepared to improvise on Contreras' paper. The Congress papers were immediately published, with great editorial success, by the Catholic press, the BAC<sup>16</sup>. The same publisher decided to launch a big general book on those matters<sup>17</sup>, something which would replace Lea's standard work<sup>18</sup>, so dangerous and unspanish, being Lea as he was a foreigner and a protestant. The book was to be entirely written by Spaniards. For the making of it don Joaquín Pérez Villanueva created a Centre for Inquisitorial Studies (*Centro de Estudios Inquisitoriales*) which, at the beginning of the 80's was quite a noteworthy institution. Like Contreras we were half a dozen young men who knew. Politicians and intellectuals had to resort to us to show up the scientific side so essential to their memorial operation. We only understood part of the play we were playing in and we often did not agree to the way newspaper and TV men described our conclusions. But social recognition was so grateful that our protest was bland enough not to impair our future careers, which, from a mere academic point of view, were unusually brilliant<sup>19</sup>.

Such memorial surgery was made possible because it played on some general ideas about the inquisitorial courts, on which the whole European intellectual community – may be even the world intellectual community – agreed. I'll call this system of representation the ontology of the inquisition, for its global, fixist and unhistorical nature. Its most important element was the fact it placed the inquisition at the exact point where religious life met social life, within a context which meant a passage to the limit in which life and death were involved. Historians agree on the fact that the question of the relationship between Church and civil society was, from the fall of the Roman Empire onwards, the major problem posed to occidental thought. It means that the Inquisition, the social institution which better embodies the question, is situated, implicitly at least, at the core of all personal and collective political and social

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<sup>16</sup> Pérez Villanueva (Joaquín), ed., *La Inquisición española. Nueva visión, nuevos horizontes*, Madrid, BAC, 1980.

<sup>17</sup> Pérez Villanueva (Joaquín), Escandell Bonet (Bartolomé), dir., *Historia de la Inquisición en España y América. I. Historia de la Inquisición en España y América; II. Las estructuras del Santo Oficio; III. Temas y problemas.*, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1984 - 1993 - 2000, XXV + 1181 p. + XXVI + 1181 p. + XLIV + 1256 p.

<sup>18</sup> Lea (Herny Charles), *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, New York, American Scholar Publications, 1966 [1906-1907], 4 vol., 4 vol. (XII+620 + XII+610 + XII+576 + XII+619 p.

<sup>19</sup> Many acute, although not always benevolent, remarks on this subject in Scholz, *art. cit.*

thinking, and that a specific attitude to it commits the whole personality of the subject to a global vision of the world; it means that an attitude towards inquisition is even more central than any religious choice, because inquisition is, in its broadest sense, transreligious: it compels to choose not between one creed or another, not even between atheism and religion, but to determine the status of what one believes in, and everybody believes in something. The constant reference made by the historical literature on inquisitorial matters to the Moscow trials, to Hitlerism and to totalitarian States reflects this feature. I personally believe this representation to be true at its most general level. But I also believe in the convenience of clearly distinguishing the study of such a problem as the relationship between creed and social life from the study of institutional forms in which a specific court was legally erected to perform some tasks in this field. The latter is obviously strongly related to the former, but mixing them up in one is, rigorously speaking, impossible. I must confess that my ideas on the subject were not so clear thirty years ago. Neither were my colleagues'.

Another feature of this global representation system, was the certainty that the inquisition belonged to the past. It had been superseded by progress (better said by modernization, a scientific version of the same word). Some relics still had to be cleared away, and it was a civic duty to do the job. This idea is so strongly embedded in nowadays thinking that, with occasion of a scientific meeting on inquisition held within the Vatican State itself as a part of the great repentance promoted by pope John Paul II<sup>20</sup>, I had the grateful surprise to ascertain it was shared even by many members of the higher circles of the Catholic Church. I am convinced that the obvious reluctance of certain quarters of the Curia about this event was not based on this point, but on the possible confusion of planes I was alluding to before.

Fixism was the last point. Inquisition was viewed from an essential point of view, as an eternal being, equal in its nature and its forms from its beginning to the present time, whose forms and influence varied in a very limited way over times and places where it legally existed. This vision cannot be accepted by a historian without a close examination. I am not sure that, by conviction or convenience, we were careful enough on this matter.

These three points, let me insist on it, were closely related to one another. They were also closely related to the characteristics I highlighted in the other two context levels I described. This well-knit system was undermined by the conclusions which the Italian historiography brought up in the last fifteen years.

## **II. The crisis of the Spanish inquisitorial historiography**

### *a) The impact of Italian historiography*

Systematic research on the Italian inquisition as an institution and not only as a source for the study of religious movements begun at the end of the 80's<sup>21</sup>. It rapidly built up on a tradition quite different from that of the Spanish historiography, a tradition in which papacy was central<sup>22</sup>, in which those whom the inquisition named heretics were not considered as

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<sup>20</sup> Borromeo (Agostino), ed., *L'Inquisizione. Atti del Simposio internazionale Città del Vaticano, 29-31 ottobre 1998*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2003, 790 p.

<sup>21</sup> Del Col (Andrea), Paolin (Giovanna), ed., *L'Inquisizione romana in Italia nell'età moderna. Archivi, problemi di metodo e nuove ricerche*, Roma, Ministero per i beni culturali, 1991, 404 p., and the scientific meeting held in Trieste some years earlier, marked a turning point.

<sup>22</sup> Prodi (Paolo), *Il sovrano pontifice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papele nelle prima età moderna*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982, 422 p.; Firpo (Massimo), Marcatto (Dario), ed., *Il processo inquisitoriale del Cardinal Giovanni Morone - Edizione critica*, Roma, Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età Moderna e

marginal to the main current of national history, but as a dialectical part of it<sup>23</sup>; a tradition at last in which Church history was central in the historian's vision of the country.

The result was a radical upsetting of the presuppositions on which the Spanish historiography was built. The main core of scientific studies remained relatively untouched. It even was considered during some years as a model. Its roots, nevertheless, were for the most part destroyed.

Italian historiography insisted, first of all, on a close relationship between the history of modern inquisition and the history of papacy. It explained that the renewed papal inquisition was the result of a fundamental political decision taken around the middle of XVIth century, a decision to fight a frontal fight against the "reformation" and to defend, by all means, a particular view of Christianity, in many way different from the old one, but different also from the Reformation, a current which, from then on, took the name of Catholicism. This offensive attitude meant an attack, not only against declared schismatics, who openly refused papal authority, but also against all those who, although remaining within papal obedience, advocated for a compromise with the Reformers. The renewed inquisition not only fought Protestantism. Its main task was to make denser the spirit of resistance, so to speak, within the Roman Church<sup>24</sup>. It was easy to draw consequences as to the Spanish inquisition. First of all, although Spanish by the intervention of the King, which meant that the papal commission to the general inquisitor applied only to lands under control of the Spanish monarchy, the tribunal, once replaced in its true context, regained its position as a fundamentally papal institution, a part of the history of global Catholicism, which in no ways could be reduced to the exiguous dimensions of a fragment of the history of Spain. The creation of the court could be seen as part of the global policy of the Popes, who, from the XVth century onwards, allowed the sovereigns to get an always growing influence in the governance of the Church in exchange for buttressing papal authority against conciliarism first, and second against local particularism<sup>25</sup>. The well known resurrection of the Spanish Inquisition in the middle of the XVIth century<sup>26</sup>, which can be seen as a second foundation of the same, was as much part and consequence of the changes introduced in Rome by the recent anti-reformist turning point, than the product of internal Spanish factors<sup>27</sup>. Such remarks placed the "spanishness" of the Spanish inquisition into a new and far less absolute light. A similar change was happening, for the same reasons, to the relationship we thought it maintained with the State. In the view which the Italian historiography took of the problem, States were intermediaries, filters, brakes laid on the inquisition, in some few cases accomplices, very rarely dynamic motors of the action of the court. Could not the same be true of Spain,? Such a view was difficult to maintain for the first twenty years of the history of the Spanish tribunal (1480-1500). But later on? Would it not explain the nature of the strange relationship, made of constant clashes, the

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Contemporanea, 1981-1995, 6 vol.

<sup>23</sup> Seidel Menchi (Silvana), *Erasmus in Italia, 1520-1580*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Firpo and Marcatto, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Prodi (Paolo), *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Novalín (José Luis), *El inquisidor general Fernando de Valdés (1483-1568)*, Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo, 1968-1971, 3 vol.

<sup>27</sup> This connection has recently be stressed by Santarelli (Daniele), "A proposito della guerra di Paolo IV contro il Regno di Napoli: le relazioni di papa Carafa con la Repubblica di Venezia e la sua condotta nei confronti di Carlo V e Filippo II", *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici*, 2006, XXI, 69-111.



court maintained with the State in the last two centuries of its history? Could not the cooperation they apparently maintained before be better seen as a way for the State to get a hold on the institution? Two pillars of the Spanish approach were failing at the same time.

A third one was about to fail soon. Spectacular public shows were not an essential feature of inquisition. The Italian inquisition was not such an adept of the market place *autodafe* as the Spanish or the Portuguese ones, even in towns where the State allowed it, as in Rome. In Venetia, heretics condemned were quietly done away by drowning, at night<sup>28</sup>. It was not such an adept of the formal trial, either. A close study of the archives showed that many cases were done through without the apparatus of prison, interrogatories, production of witnesses, counter-proofs and defence witnesses, let alone torture, which the inquisitorial manuals described. An inquisitor was informally informed of a suspected case. He consulted his colleagues, possibly his chiefs; y managed to get informal extra information. After making sure in that way, he called the suspect, or sent him an emissary, to warn him not to do it again, that the court had an eye on him. He managed to get the collaboration of the confessors, of the opinion-leaders, who in turn denounced, but mostly corrected for their own, without even giving the inquisitor the trouble to mix. Such an informality allowed a multiplicity of local and limited actions, little correctives given to conducts, to ideas, to books and manuscripts, many little changes which, put together made great differences, and allowed a "capillary control" of the society. We were far indeed from what the Spanish historiography described. Was the situation in fact so different? Was not the "capillary inquisition" an explanation to the paradox of a Spanish inquisition which during one and a half century started few, if not very few, formal procedures, and was nevertheless feared by the most highly minded intellectuals of the country?

The fourth pillar, the exceptional character of the inquisition, was destroyed by the importation of the concept of confessionalisation. It had been invented by German historiography, in a protestant context, but the Italian historiography helped to implement it successfully in a Catholic context<sup>29</sup>. Within such a frame, the activity of the inquisition was interpreted as the keystone of a broader system of governance which in no way could be seen as exceptional. Confessionalisation, in the view of its proponents, ranked as the mainstream move of European continental societies in the early modern period. It was in fact an intent to knit together, to recast, those societies on the basis of a firm alliance between Church and State. Such an idea broadened and generalized the old concept of counter-reformation which, as we said before, classical historiography saw as an important factor in the history of the inquisition. It threw light on many features of Spanish history, not only on its inquisitorial sides, but also on cultural, social and political history.

The classical scientific interpretation of the Spanish inquisition was obviously outdated. On the social side, it had also exhausted its potentialities.

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<sup>28</sup> Del Col (Andrea), ""Senza effusione di sangue e senza pericolo dei morte". Intorno ad alcune condanne capitali delle inquisizioni di Venezia e di Verona nel Settecento e a quelle veneziane del cinquecento", Rosa (Mario), *Eritici, esuli e indemoniati nell'età moderna*, Florencia, Olschki, 1998, p. 141-196.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhard (Wolfgang), Schilling (Heinz), ed., *Die katolische Konfessionalisierung. Wissenschaftliches Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum und der Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1993*, Heidelberg, Schiften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995, XIII + 472 p.; specially Reinhard (Wolfgang), "Was ist katolische Konfessionalisierung?", p. 419-452. In the same volume Prosperi (Adriano), "Beichväter und Inquisition im 16. Jahrhundert", 1995, p. 125-134, a fundamental piece of work to define capillary inquisition.

### b) Memorial inquisition deflated

Dialnet database records all Spanish historical publications and a large number of foreign ones on Spanish history. We counted those related with the Inquisition<sup>30</sup>.

#### Published books related with the inquisition:

bef. 1978	1978/1982	1983/1987	1988/92	1993/97	1998/02	2003/07
8	22	29	51	41	63	27

Changes before 1997 may be an artefact and reflect the building up of the database. After that, recorded evolutions almost certainly give a true account of the production. The fall of the last period is made the more spectacular by the fact that half the books of the 2003/2007 column were in fact published in 2003. That year is the real turning point in which a growing tide of books sharply came to an end.

Book publishing is very sensitive to the publishers' strategies. It reflects the interest of the society for a subject, as seen through the market. Papers published in scientific reviews and chapters of learned collective works reflect better the interest of the scientific community.

#### Published articles related with the Spanish inquisition

bef. 1978	1978/82	1983/1987	1988/92	1993/97	1998/02	2003/07
40	48	130	140	177	270	243

The fall since 2003 looks smaller. Nevertheless, more than sixty of those 2003/07 243 items come from a single big collective book which collects papers presented in a congress the aims of which were more politics and culture than science<sup>31</sup>. Taking such a fact into account leaves us with a 25% loss.

A quantitative study of the subjects treated in the last five years shows the emergence of a set of new topics and a concentration on specific periods<sup>32</sup>.

#### Published books and papers on the Spanish inquisition, 2003-2007. Period treated:

Mid. ages	XVth C.	XVIth C.	XVIIth C.	XVIIIth C.	XIXth C.	XXth C.	General
10	22	36	36	57	36	7	59

There is obviously a concentration on the final period, the most remarkable for the fact that two thirds of the works on the XVIIIth century study in fact the last thirty years. There is also a renewed interest for the debate on the inquisition which pervades the XIXth century.

Topics reflect the same trend. The most frequent, in the last period, is book censure (15% of the items), followed by studies on the image of inquisition in historiography and literature (12%), works on the establishment or the abolition of the court (11%), on new-christians (11%), on specialized law or archive issues (11%). Global works on the Spanish inquisition as a whole account for 7% of all published works (books and articles). Some topics which were the pride of the 80's historiography, such as systematic monographs of local inquisition,

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<sup>30</sup> dialnet.unirioja.es, 7 janvier 2008

<sup>31</sup> Escudero (José Antonio), dir., *Intolerancia e Inquisición. Actas del Congreso Internacional de Intolerancia e Inquisición celebrado en Madrid... y Segovia en... febrero de 2004*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal de Commemoraciones Culturales, 2006, 3 t. 604 + 494 + 584 p.

<sup>32</sup> Various items are mentioned twice as they concern two centuries. "General" refers to works about the whole of Spanish inquisition, whatever be the century.

studies on the geographical distribution of inquisitorial tribunals and of their agents, studies on some religious minorities – moriscos, protestants -, on religious life, even on gender history, which briefly flourished in the inquisitorial field in the 90's, all those almost vanished or were reduced to a state of testimonial relics. Among the authors, the number of historians proper declines, while the number of law and literature specialists grows. I'm afraid many of them do not fully grasp the complexity of the issues they are dealing with.

It is clear that the paper of the inquisition as a critical point of Spanish national memory is vanishing and that scientific interest in the court is fading. This state of things obviously calls for changes in the way the topic is approached.

### III. A limited renewal?

#### a) *The mainstream trend*

For the great majority of the publications concerned, and apart from the shift in topics we just described, little has changed. The reading of Escudero's recent book<sup>33</sup> let one with such a feeling. The most egregious specialists were called in to contribute. They only gave a summary of their past studies or expressed a strong disapproval of the Inquisition as a symbol of intolerance<sup>34</sup>. Various papers examine closely the foundational period, refining on legal and institutional details, somewhat improving our focus, but without any reflection on the basis of the classical historiographical construction<sup>35</sup>. Some papers bring new data and important new ideas, but on topics loosely related with the core of inquisitorial studies<sup>36</sup>. The bulk of the numerous papers on inquisitorial censorship and on inquisition as a literary topic published in Escudero's work<sup>37</sup> as well as in other places<sup>38</sup>, just give a summary of the content of the work they study or of its censorial review, with some comments which don't rise above a strict exposition of the immediate context. The present lack of dynamism of inquisitorial historiography led to near extinction another "genre", the monograph of a local court or of an offence. The few recently published ones are so respectful towards the classics (among them

<sup>33</sup> Escudero, 2006, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Kamen (Henry), "Estrategias de tolerancia y de intolerancia en la Europa moderna", *ibid.*, I/21-27; Mereu (Italo), "Premesse ideologiche e conseguenze istituzionali del concetto di intolleranza nella storia dell'Europa medievale e moderna", *ibid.* I/29-36; Contreras (Jaime), "La intolerancia en debate del conflicto religioso de Europa", *ibid.*, I/37-44. García Cárcel (Ricardo), "De la Inquisición y de la intolerancia", *ibid.*, I/45-57.

<sup>35</sup> See for instance: Martínez Díez (Gonzalo), "Configuración canónica de la Inquisición medieval y de la inquisición española", *ibid.*, I/215-244, with a clear summary of medieval papal dispositions on the inquisition; Escudero (José Antonio), "La introducción de la Inquisición en España", *ibid.*, I/245-292, probably the clearest description of the creation of the Spanish inquisition from a legal point of view; Suárez Fernández (Luis), "Circunstancias que acompañan el nombramiento de Torquemada", *op. cit.*, I/293-304; Aguilera Barchet (Bruno), "La primera etapa de los tribunales en España", *ibid.*, I/305-330, which is fundamentally a summary, with some minor additions, of the data Contreras and myself published thirty years ago; Suárez Bilbao (Fernando), "Los judíos castellanos y la Inquisición de los Reyes Católicos", *ibid.*, I/331-378.

<sup>36</sup> Vallejo García-Hevia (José María), "La inquisición de México y Solorzano Pereira", *ibid.*, t. III, p. 161-295, which is a great contribution to the history of justice.

<sup>37</sup> Torres Aguilar (Manuel), "Control ideológico, control de prensa e inquisición a fines del Antiguo Régimen. Algunos casos de censura en el siglo XIX", *ibid.*, III/425-475; Bolaños Mejías (Carmen), "La controvertida relación entre la Inquisición y la prensa ilustrada", *ibid.*, III/457-477; Pino Abad (Miguel), "Prensa liberal en el exilio y control inquisitorial", *ibid.*, III/479-517.

<sup>38</sup> See the essays on inquisition and literature in the XIXth century collected in a special issue of the *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo* (t. XIII, 2005), and there, for instance, Alba-Lopez Escobar (Miguel de), "Un acercamiento a la novela histórica "Secretos de la inquisición" de Joaquín María Nín", *op.cit.*, p. 201-213, neatly written, informative, but limited in its scope.

the author of the present paper), that they just repeat, in most cases, their approaches and conclusions, without always understanding their full meaning<sup>39</sup>. We'll not bore the reader any longer. We direct him to the already mentioned Dialnet web site for further bibliographical information.

For all these authors, obviously, Italian historiography does not exist and nothing happened in the inquisitorial research outside of Spain. Their bibliographical information does not trespass Spanish borders. We disgracefully must conclude that the mainstream of the Spanish inquisitorial historiography is, just now, ruined. Nevertheless, at its margins, symptoms of renewal are coming to light. Although produced for the main part by foreign or marginal authors, they are fraught, so do I believe, with a great potential for a revival. They all have in common to embed the inquisition in a broader social and political context, a conflictive and debating context, in which the inquisition is one of the many tools and arguments the parties use to attain broader objectives. Inquisition is no longer a kind of Unidentified Flying Object coming from nowhere to change the normal course of Spanish history. It has been secreted, exuded, by the Spanish society – or Spanish societies –, not without a debate, not without oppositions, as a conscious political choice to foster a definite kind of social and political organization among many other possible ones. A choice which only makes sense in the light of broader cultural and religious changes which concern Europe as a whole.

#### *b) Symptoms of a renewal*

I'll distinguish three fields, and three approaches, all of them equally promising. The first one is renewing from various sides the classical converso problem. The second one studies the inquisition not as a legally established institution, but as a cultural construction. The third one reconsiders the classical approach to the inquisition in the light of Italian historiography.

#### 1) Jewish converts and purity of blood.

Two are the main currents in this field. The first one is represented by Prof. Juan Gil's six volumes on the Andalusian inquisitions at the end of XVth and beginning of XVIth centuries<sup>40</sup>. The archives of the Seville, Cordoba and Jérez tribunal have been destroyed, so that the author has to rely on indirect sources. He marshals chronicles, paying rolls of capacitations and dispenses sold by the king to condemned conversos, but also municipal and notarial documents. He is able, in such a way, to reconstruct a full chronicle of the inquisitorial activity which, per force, highlights the connexions of the inquisitorial activity with society at large and the social consequences of the same. He shows how the converso milieu had conquered strong positions within municipal governments and merchant activities; how it was weakened, but in no way crushed, by the inquisition, better said by the inquisition and the king. The inquisition, in fact, acted by papal authority and its own logics were conditioned by religious and legal guidelines. But its activity depended in many respects on

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<sup>39</sup> I'm glad to be able to quote two studies of this class as so many exceptions to the strict imitation rule: Boeglin (Michel), *Inquisición y Contrarreforma. El tribunal del Santo Oficio de Sevilla [1560-1700]*, Sevilla, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla / Ediciones Espuela de Plata, 2006, 278 + XXIV p. and Thomas (Werner), *Los protestantes y la inquisición en España en tiempos de Reforma y Contrarreforma.*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2001, XII + 715 p.

<sup>40</sup> Gil (Juan), *Los conversos y la inquisición sevillana*, Sevilla, Fundación El Monte, 2000 - 2003, 6 vol., 452 + 402 + 589 + 549 + 543 + 537 + 590 + 276 p. In the same line, we may also mention Perez (Béatrice), *Inquisition, pouvoir, société. La province de Séville et ses judéoconves sous les Rois Catholiques*, Paris, Champion, 2007, 640 p. The performance disgracefully falls far behind the author's purpose, which makes this book utterly unreliable.

the king's will. Being the recipient of inquisitorial confiscations and fines, the king could renounce them, or reduce them at his will. Being the supreme administrator of civil society, he could dispense from the incapacities which the inquisition pronounced against condemned heretics and their descent. In that way he reshaped a social and political elite in function of his own needs. The inquisition and the State acted jointly, each of them for its own purposes, and each one got what he aimed at: jewish converts, under strong penal and social pressure, turned to a truer christianity and the king built up a local "clientele" which enabled him to govern far more efficiently.

A second current is developing around Raphael Carrasco and a group of young French students he is currently leading. Their main interest lies in the long term integration of the conversos within the municipal power circles. Castilian XVIth century was in fact a period of great social mobility. A new social elite emerged, which took command of the city governments all around the country. At the same time, about 1550, Castilian society selected purity of blood as a major criteria of social respectability. Many newcomers lacked such a quality, and families already in place took advantage of this failure to deny them the social status they claimed. This was a source of conflict. Historiography had already pointed at the complex paper the inquisition played in these matters. Not only was it the main instrument used to define the rejected group, but it contributed also powerfully to its integration, manipulating social and religious symbols to its advantage. All that was done, as it had been a century before, in a mixed perspective of religious objectives – to complete the integration of the newly converted, to build an inquisitorial "clientele" for the defence of the institution – and political pressures from the king, who insisted on a selective integration which would make stronger his hold on local governments<sup>41</sup>. This line of research had little success at first. Carrasco is taking it up through a very detailed local monograph on Cuenca, in central Spain. Once again notarial and municipal archives complement inquisitorial documents. Through a complete reconstruction of the local higher society, he is able to follow step by step how the memory of impurity faded away among the social leaders, at the same time as the demand of purity grew up in the same milieu, leading to the construction of a mythical concept of nobility, the influence of which not only on social representations but also on social practices cannot be overrated<sup>42</sup>.

## 2. The inquisition as an image

This line of research is being developed by Ricardo García Cárcel and his pupils. The inquisition existed, obviously, as an institution; it tried, killed and converted. But the research focuses on another aspect: the image which the actors had of the institution, and the way they tried to built the institution and to influence its relationship with the society so as to keep it in line with this image. As Doris Moreno writes:

"The inquisition existed... It was not a forgery, it existed. Nevertheless it was invented, again and again, by the inquisitors themselves, by the victims..., by curious travellers, by freethinkers of all times who saw it as the perfect counterpart of their defence of ideological

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<sup>41</sup> Contreras (Jaime), *Sotos contra Riquelmes. Regidores, inquisidores y criptojudíos*, Madrid, Muchnik, 1992.

<sup>42</sup> Carrasco (Raphaël), "Négoce et pouvoir municipal à Cuenca à l'époque de Philippe II", Pérez (Béatrice), Rose (Sonia V.), Clément (Jean Pierre), dir., *Des marchands entre deux mondes. Pratiques et représentations en Espagne et en Amérique (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Paris, Presses de l'Université Paris Sorbonne, 2007, p. 157-177; Carrasco (Raphaël), "L'inquisition espagnole et le "disziplinement": questions et perspectives de recherche", Barbazza (Catherine), *L'Inquisition espagnole et ses réformes au XVIe siècle*, E.T.I.L.A.L. / Université de Montpellier III, Montpellier, 2006, p. 7-24.

tolerance. The Inquisition, in our book, is placed in a mirror chamber. We go deeper and deeper in a world of representations and new creations of an institution which got full advantage of a large-scale manipulation of established powers, but was also in many ways manipulated by them, not only during its institutional life, till 1834, but also and most of all after its death. During its life, it was manipulated by its victims, by the inquisitors themselves, by anonymous citizens who denounced neighbours and foreigners; and after that by many more, till they transformed it into a myth, a paradigmatic symbol of Intolerance, whatever be the colour of the same"<sup>43</sup>.

The focus lies on the process through which such images were elaborated and used. This kind of studies contributes much toward explaining another mystery in the history of the inquisition, the fact that in no moment were so many texts and iconographic documents devoted to the court than after its abolition. It also goes far towards explaining how was elaborated one of the basis of the image that researchers so long had of the tribunal, namely its ontological nature.

### 3) The integration of the concept of confesionalization

The last current is mainly represented by Stefania Pastore's books<sup>44</sup>. Based on the conclusions of the Italian historiography, it provides a new interpretation, better said a new account, of the history of the tribunal. It underscores fundamentally the existence in XVIth century Spain of a complex current in favour of a reformation of the Church and of spiritual life, after the model already known in Italy. Coexisted in the same erasmian reformers who from old drew the attention of the historians; members of the spiritual movements whom the historiography labelled *alumbrados*; a strong section of the *converso* families, and, more surprisingly, elements we today consider as highly catholic, such as the first Jesuits, many bishops as well as various intellectuals who gravitated around the Emperor. All were united by a common mistrust towards the inquisition, in which spiritual incompatibilities got mixed with a desire of preserving the jurisdictions which many of these men embodied, against the encroachments of the inquisitorial courts. They opposed an "inquisitorial party", which pleaded for uniformity, discipline and a collective-minded Christianity. During the first half of the XVIth century the anti-inquisitorial party succeeded in confining the inquisition in a minor paper. The fight was decided in favour of the inquisitorial party by a combination of internal and external factors, the discovery of protestant focuses in Seville and Valladolid, the accession of Philip II, who did not partake of all his father's option in ecclesiastical matters, the great change in Rome meant by the elimination of the spiritual party in the Curia, and also by general inquisitor Valdes' policy. Viewed under such a light, half a century of inquisitorial history, of which we could not till then give any coherent account, the first part of the XVIth in fact, the period most studied by S. Pastore, at last makes sense. It would be easy to extend a similar approach to the second half. The famous trials against religious leaders whose orthodoxy nobody questions nowadays (Carranza, Luis de León, etc.) are the equivalent of the great trials held in Rome against leaders of the Curia, such as Pole and Morone; the creation of a Spanish inquisitorial censorship keeps in line with the creation of the Roman index; the meticulous purification of the intellectual world of every element out of line with the new ecclesiastical orientations, the recruitment of a network of local collaborators, the slow

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<sup>43</sup> Moreno Martínez (Doris), *La invención de la inquisición*, Madrid, Marcial Pons Historia, 2004, on the cover

<sup>44</sup> Pastore (Stefania), *Il vangelo e la spada. L'inquisizione di Castiglia e i suoi critici (1460-1598)*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003, 491 p.; Pastore (Stefania), *Un'eresia spagnola. Spiritualità conversa, alumbradismo e inquisizione (1449-1559)*, Florencia, Leo Oslchki Editore, 2004, XVII + 312 p.

decline of the number of formal trials at a time when much evidence points to a pervasive influence of the inquisition at least among town elites, all that indicates that a capillary inquisition was then being installed in Spain too.

### **Conclusion: Spain and Italy**

S. Pastore's attempt at uniting into a same conceptual frame both inquisitions remains exceptional. We already pointed to the ignorance of foreign trends by the mainstream Spanish historians. Neither have the reformers, Gil, Carrasco and García Cárcel, truly assimilated the contribution of the Italian historiography. García Cárcel's disciples amply quote S. Pastore, but only as a data bank. Carrasco gives the concept of confesionalization a fundamental paper, but does not take into account, for yet, the reinterpretation of the Italian inquisition it led to. He only quotes Prosperi and apparently ignores the rest of them. In one of the most recent synthesis on modern inquisition, the excellent Audisio's *Inquisition et pouvoir*<sup>45</sup>, Spanish historiography is represented by Bennassar, from the old school, Ignaci Terricabras, whose main interests don't lay with the inquisition, and Ignacio Pulido, probably Contreras' best student, the only one among the three of them then active in the field, for a little time still – he now works on Portuguese customs. In the present meeting, the representative of Spanish historiography is French.

Such a paradox shows how much the Spanish historical school needs to open itself and establish contacts with others. Would it not be possible to organize a meeting between a panel of Italian specialist and the leaders of the new Spanish historiography? I am convinced this would be a most important service done to the history of inquisition, which absolutely needs embracing the whole system to give a clear account of the same.

J.P. Dedieu  
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<sup>45</sup> Audisio (Gabriel), dir., *Inquisition et pouvoir*, Aix en Provence, Université de Provence, 2004, 374 p.