

Forgers and Martyrs: Conflicting Histories of the Portuguese Inquisition (1598-1647)

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The lack of historical works on the Portuguese Inquisition (1536-1821) produced by its members might lead us to conclude that the ministers and officials of the tribunal gave no special value to this form of knowledge. On the contrary, by looking back to the first half of the seventeenth century and focusing on two case studies – that of the Dominican António de Sousa and that of Manuel do Vale de Moura – this article shows how the Portuguese inquisitors were often involved in a struggle to define a historical image of the Holy Office. Original documents, kept under lock and key in the archives of the tribunal, were examined quite early on, but actually gave support to opposing views regarding the interests of the Inquisition. In a complex balance, sometimes the executioners took up the arguments and justifications of their victims, revealing unexpected points of agreement between the two.

An Ancien Régime tribunal with no taste for its history?

The Portuguese Holy Office continues to be the least known of the three inquisitions in the early modern period, although in recent years interest has grown in what was the most global of the tribunals of the faith, given the geographical range of its action and the variety of its victims, many of whom were *conversos* of Jewish origin, also known as ‘New Christians’.¹ Not only the general public, but even many

¹ A preliminary draft of this article has been presented at the international workshop ‘The Origins of the Inquisition in Comparative Perspective’, The Tree House, Humanities Research Centre, University of York, 21 May 2015. Francisco Bethencourt, *The Inquisition: A Global History, 1478-1834* (Cambridge; New York:

professional historians, have a blurred idea of the historical outline of this *Ancien Régime* ecclesiastical institution, which was born in the heart of the Renaissance (1536) and suppressed only in the period of the liberal revolutions (1821), after striking down both men and books for the ideas they held or communicated, in Portugal and in its world-wide empire, from its strongholds in North Africa to the possessions and factories of South and East Asia, from the main Atlantic slave trade hubs to Brazil.²

This limited knowledge of the history of the Portuguese Inquisition certainly derives from the tendency to assimilate its essential characteristics to those of its Spanish counterpart, mirroring the general direction of the discussions in Rome that accompanied the pope's difficult decision as to whether to set up a tribunal in the Castilian fashion in the Kingdom of Portugal. In addition, the Portuguese Inquisition itself did very little in the course of its existence to provide a public reconstruction of its history. On the contrary, it was the object of ferocious controversies in an international campaign of printed denigration from the seventeenth century onwards during the emerging debate on religious tolerance.³ It was well after Charles Dellon's famous *History of the Inquisition as it is exercised at Goa*, was first published in French in 1687 that the zealous Portuguese inquisitors thought of defending themselves, leaving it to history to repair the damage to its image. Dellon's work was republished many times, and was later taken up in the attack on the Holy Office in the famous and widely published

Cambridge University Press, 2009). For a general survey of recent historiography see Giuseppe Marcocci, *Toward a History of the Portuguese Inquisition: Trends in Modern Historiography (1974-2009)*. In 'Revue de l'histoire des religions' 227, no. 3 (2010), 355-93.

- 2 See Giuseppe Marcocci and José Pedro Paiva, *História da Inquisição Portuguesa, 1536-1821*, 2nd rev. ed. (Lisbon: Esfera dos Livros, 2016; 1st ed. 2013), to which I refer the reader for a more detailed reconstruction of the episodes and trends mentioned in this article.
- 3 In this connection, the importance has been underlined of the closeness of the Remonstrant Dutch theologian Philipp van Limborch, author of the controversial *Historia Inquisitionis* (1692), full of references to the Portuguese Holy Office, and to Pierre Bayle and John Locke, of whom he was a personal friend. See Bethencourt, *The Inquisition*, 5-8.

Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World by Jean Frédéric Bernard and Bernard Picart, which was first printed in Paris in 1723.⁴ Just one year earlier, a volume had appeared in London attacking the procedures of the Iberian inquisitions, and including a version in Portuguese of a pamphlet defending the *conversos*, published for the first time in English in 1708 with the title, *An Account of the Cruelties Exercised by the Inquisition in Portugal*.⁵

Alongside this new impulse towards historical studies under the patronage of the Portuguese crown through the foundation of the *Academia Real da História Portuguesa* [Royal Academy of Portuguese History] (1720), we need to bear in mind this European context, which preceded the scathing criticisms of the Enlightenment philosophes, if we are to grasp the climate that saw the first serious attempt to publish an official history of the Portuguese Inquisition. In confirmation of the solid ties existing between the Holy Office and his order in Portugal, the man chosen for the task was the Dominican friar Pedro Monteiro (1662-1735), a qualifier (*qualificador*) of the tribunal. The outcome of his efforts is eloquent on the difficult relation between the Portuguese Inquisition and the reconstruction of its history. The *História da Inquisição em Portugal e suas Conquistas* [History of the Inquisition in Portugal and its Conquests] was only published fourteen years after its author's death, between 1749 and 1750, when the two volumes of the first part appeared: it dealt merely with the mediaeval period of the Holy Office, supporting the wrong idea of the existence of an active

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- 4 Charles Amiel and Anne Lima, Étude. In Charles Amiel and Anne Lima, eds., *L'Inquisition de Goa: La relation de Charles Dellon (1687)* (Paris: Chandeigne, 1997), 9-118; Guillaume Calafat, *The Gallican and Jansenist Roots of Jean-Frédéric Bernard and Bernard Picart's Vision of the Inquisition*. In Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt, eds., *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 291-312.
- 5 *Noticias Reconditas y Posthumas del Procedimiento delas Inquisiciones de Espanã y Portugal con sus Presos* (En Villa Franca: 1722). Composed more than thirty years earlier, possibly written by an anonymous official of the tribunal in support of its victims in the period when the Jesuit António Vieira fought hard against the Portuguese Holy Office in Rome.

tribunal in Portugal between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶ It left untouched the question of ‘how the Holy Inquisition was renewed in this kingdom, and how the New Christians opposed it, the inquisitor generals it had from then on, the delegates of the General Council, the inquisitors and delegates of the three inquisitions [*i.e.*, *Coimbra, Évora and Lisbon*] of the kingdom and of the one operating in the city of Goa’, which was left to the second part of the work that was never published (and may never have actually been written either).⁷

The disappointing result of Monteiro’s efforts, like the fact that the first reconstructions of the work of the Portuguese Inquisition, which were based on genuine historical events, were composed by victims or denigrators from inside, might lead us to conclude that the ministers and officials of the tribunal gave no special value to historical knowledge. On the contrary, by looking further back in time – to the first half of the seventeenth century, to be precise – this paper will show how the Portuguese inquisitors were often involved in a struggle to define a historical image of the Holy Office which combined the justifications of both religion and power. We shall also see how the original documents, kept in the archives of the tribunal – under the eloquent title of ‘Secret (*Secreto*)’ – were examined quite early on, but actually gave support to opposing views regarding the interests of the Inquisition. In a complex balance, sometimes the executioners took up the arguments and justifications of their victims, revealing unexpected points of agreement between the two. In particular, the following pages concentrate on two case studies: that of the Dominican friar António de Sousa (c. 1575-1632), an authoritative minister of the Holy Office,

6 On the basis of Monteiro’s position, the possibility that a Portuguese Inquisition existed during the Middle Ages has been recently suggested by François Soyer, *Was There an Inquisition in Portugal before 1536?*. In *‘Iacobus: Revista de Estudos Jacobeos y Medievales’* 19-20 (2005), 177-202.

7 Pedro Monteiro, *História da Santa Inquisição do Reyno de Portugal e suas conquistas: Primeira parte*, vol. 1 (Lisbon: Regia Officina Sylviana, 1749), prologue: ‘o como se renovou a Santa Inquisição neste Reyno, e o como os Christãos Novos a encontrarão, os Inquisidores Geraes, que depois do referido tempo tem havido, como tambem os Deputados do Conselho Geral, Inquisidores, e Deputados das tres Inquisições do reyno, e da que ha na Cidade de Goa’.

known for writing the *Aphorismi Inquisitorum* [Inquisitors' Aphorisms] (1630), where we can read a remarkable reply to Luis de Páramo's *De Origine et Progressu Officii Sanctae Inquisitionis* [On the Origin and Progress of the Holy Inquisition's Office] (1598); and that of Manuel do Vale de Moura (1563/4-1650), a delegate of the Inquisition of Évora and author of a treatise against sorcery and superstition, the *De Ensalmis seu Incantationibus* [On Prayers or Enchantments] (1620), as well as a surprising memoir written in old age, which remained in manuscript and has not so far received scholarly attention.

The legend of a forger and the aims of the Inquisition of Castile

Thanks to an exceptional ability in forging writings and documents, in 1539 a young Andalusian by the name of Saavedra succeeded in passing himself off as a cardinal. The following year, a meeting with two Jesuits on their way to Portugal to found the first house of the Society of Jesus there led Saavedra to devise the trick of turning up in the kingdom as a papal legate tasked with transmitting to the sovereign the papal bulls authorizing the foundation of a tribunal of the Inquisition along the lines of the Spanish one. Once the initial doubts of King John III of Portugal (1521-57) had been overcome, Saavedra proceeded to open the tribunals of Lisbon and Coimbra, nominating as the first inquisitors three men in his entourage, Pedro Alvarez Bexerra, Alonso Vázquez and Luis de Cárdena, who had already been inquisitors in Seville and Llerena. He seized the goods of the first *conversos* to be condemned for Judaizing, and was also present at the first *auto-da-fé*, held in Lisbon in September 1540. When the truth emerged, he fled to Castile, where, in January 1541, he was arrested. Condemned to prison by the Spanish Inquisition, Saavedra was finally freed thanks to the intercession of Pope Paul IV (r. 1555-9), who took an indulgent view of a deception that had made it possible to transplant the Inquisition to Portugal. Saavedra's extraordinary adventure ended with a generous

compensation from King Philip II of Spain (r. 1556-98).

These are the essential features of the story of the forger Saavedra, a legend that was embellished in Castilian circles during the second half of the sixteenth century, perhaps starting from the materials collected and circulated in a document prepared in a *converso* milieu and presented to the Roman Curia around 1545 in the context of a series of protests against the Portuguese Inquisition and the concession of a general pardon (which was actually obtained in 1547).⁸ Using careful criteria of verisimilitude (titles and names, for example, including that of Saavedra, are those of real people), the tale of the false nuncio enjoyed a new lease of life in the late sixteenth century. This was not unconnected with the hegemonic designs of the House of Castile on the Portuguese Inquisition, which became stronger than ever after King Philip II succeeded to the Portuguese throne (1580), to the point that various ways of subjecting the Inquisition to the Spanish control were considered.⁹ Although no manuscript copy survives from before the seventeenth century, already in the late sixteenth century there began to be regular references to a report by Saavedra, a first Latin version of which was published in the monumental history of the inquisitions by Luis de Páramo.¹⁰

In describing the origin of the Inquisition's tribunals then active, Páramo included Portugal, giving surprising credit to the legend of Saavedra, which led to an eloquent interpretation: the introduction of the Inquisition to Portugal was the work of a Castilian, and even though

8 See Giuseppe Marcocci and François Soyer, *Saavedra, Juan Pérez de*. In Adriano Proserpi, ed., in collaboration with Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, 4 vols. (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), vol. 3, 1354-5. For the theory of the *converso* origin of the legend, see Giuseppe Marcocci, *A fundação da Inquisição em Portugal: Um novo olhar*. In *'Lusitania Sacra'*, s. 2, 23 (2011), 17-40, esp. 39-40.

9 Ana Isabel López-Salazar Codes, *Inquisición y política: El gobierno del Santo Oficio en el Portugal de los Austrias, 1578-1653* (Lisbon: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2011).

10 For an introduction to Páramo's treatise see the brilliant article by Kimberly Lynn Hosain, *Was Adam the First Heretic? Diego de Simancas, Luis de Páramo, and the Origins of Inquisitorial Practice*. In *'Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte'* 97 (2006), 184-210.

he was a charlatan, his deception was part of a divine plan as a means of overcoming the opposition of John III (who actually, under pressure from an influential group of court theologians, was keen to ask Rome to concede him an Inquisition); the Spanish claim to control the Holy Office in Portugal thus emerged as historically justified.¹¹ In the first decades of the seventeenth century, there was a brief but significant flowering of inquisitional literature in Portugal published, which aimed above all to support the claims of the tribunal in a series of controversies with some of the principal bishops of the kingdom on *mixti fori* matters like bigamy, polygamy and solicitation to sexual acts in the confessional. This literature culminated in the *Aphorismi Inquisitorum*, an original anthology of procedures in a comparative perspective for the use of judges in the Holy Office, drawn up around 1628 by the Dominican friar António de Sousa, a protégé of the Inquisitor General D. Fernão Martins Mascarenhas, who was also a member of the General Council of the Inquisition since 1626.¹²

Fiercely anti-*converso*, Sousa prefaced the four books with a historical summary, entitled *De Origine Tribunalis S. Officii Inquisitionis in Regnis Lusitaniae* [On the Origin of the Holy Office of Inquisition's Tribunal in the Kingdom of Portugal], in which he shamelessly denied that the Jews had been forcibly baptized in 1497, going so far as to claim that most of them, through the "clemency (*clementiam*)" of King Emanuel I (r. 1495-1521), had been able to leave the Portugal freely, and that the few remaining had made false conversions in the hope of future material benefits, thus laying the foundations for the spread of Judaizing heresy in the kingdom.¹³ But Sousa's first aim was to decry the reconstruction of the foundation of the Portuguese Inquisition that

11 Luis de Páramo, *De Origine et Progressu Officii Sanctae Inquisitionis... libri tres* (Madrid: Typographia Regia, 1598), 228-32.

12 For a synthetic presentation of his biography and work see Giuseppe Marocci, *Sousa, António de*. In Adriano Prosperi, ed., in collaboration with Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, *Dizionario storico dell'Inquisizione*, 4 vols. (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), vol. 3, 1463-4.

13 António de Sousa, *Aphorismi Inquisitorum in quattuor libros distributi* (Lisbon: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1630), ff. 2v-3r.

Páramo had given thirty years before. What irritated Sousa was not so much the fact that the first printed history of the Portuguese Inquisition had been written by a Castilian, but that as a result of ‘a mistake made in Spain (*in Hispania error quidam*)’ the legend of the forger Saavedra had been taken up in Portugal –Vicente da Costa Matos, for example, had repeated it in his extremely violent pamphlet, *Breve Discurso contra a Heretica Perfidia do Judaismo* [Short Discourse against the Heretical Perfidy of Judaism] (1623). Sousa therefore opposed the ‘power of hatred and malice, which works not by reason, but as a disease (*odij ac malitiae vis, quae non iudicio operator, sed morbo*)’ with what he had collected ‘in the apostolic bulls and the royal archives or library, known to all as the Torre do Tombo, as well as in the boxes of the General Council of the Holy Inquisition and that of each tribunal’, proceeding to systematically refute his colleague. His conclusion was scathing, hardly concealing the accusation of political motives: ‘I can only wonder at Páramo. He could, of course, have examined more carefully the origins of the tribunal he was dealing with, especially as he is now a minister of the Inquisition and knows full well the ministers of that period: it would not have been difficult for him to read the bulls of foundation and institution and the other documents which continue in an unbroken series down to the present day’.¹⁴

Exemplary stories of victims: law and martyrologies

António de Sousa’s use of the Inquisition’s original documents in a published historical work was not unprecedented. Anticipating a

14 Sousa, *Aphorismi*, fols. 1r and 2r-v: ‘(...) *illam [veritatem] in Bullis Apostolicis contentam, & a me ex Regijs archivis, seu bibliothecis, vulgo Torre do Tombo nuncupatis, ac etiam ex supremae Sanctae Inquisitionis Tribunalis, & particularium Inquisitionum scrinijs collectam (...). Miror praeterea eundem Paramum, qui unius Inquisitionis, de qua agere instituebat, non accuratius originem investigaverit, cum tamen in ea, etiam hodie minister reperiatur, qui ministros temporis illius novit: non difficile foret, foundationis sive institutionis illius Bullas, reliquasque quibus sine intermission, continua serie ad hodiernum usque diem pervenit, evolvere, ac inspicere*’.

practice that he was later to follow in the legal arguments contained in the four books of his *Aphorismi Inquisitorum*, Manuel do Vale do Moura had made use, a few years earlier, of the papers available to him in the Inquisition of Évora, where he had served since 1603 as a deputy (*deputado*) – a second-rank judge subject to local inquisitors – to reinforce his interpretations in a treatise that discussed the legitimacy of formulas and exorcisms from the psalms, which often accompanied healing rites in Portugal.¹⁵ Through the *De incantationibus*, Moura also intervened in the harsh controversy of 1612 between the archbishop of Lisbon, D. Miguel de Castro (later Vice-Roy of Portugal from 1615) and the Inquisition on the jurisdiction over untrained healers who used prayers to heal, particularly from wounds of animals. By carefully examining the theological and canon-law question, as well as making ‘extensive reliance on exemplary stories’ taken from trials, held in the archives of Évora, Moura insisted on the heretical nature of most of these prayers and healing formulas, and, more generally, of popular magical practices, claiming control for the Inquisition alone, partly on the basis of custom.¹⁶

For the first time in a Portuguese inquisitorial treatise, historical reconstruction became the source of law. Among others, Moura examined the first case of this kind that the Inquisition had dealt with in 1555. It was a trial against Pedro Anes de Maio, a healer from Covão, near Estremoz, in the Upper Alentejo: he had obtained without difficulty two bishop’s licences for healing the bites of rabid dogs, and

15 For a synthetic presentation of his biography and work see José Pedro Paiva, *Moura, Manuel do Vale de (d. 1650)*. In Richard Golden, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), vol. 2, 792-3; Giuseppe Marcocci, *Moura, Manuel do Vale de*. In Adriano Prosperi, ed., in collaboration with Vincenzo Lavenia and John Tedeschi, *Dizionario storico dell’Inquisizione*, 4 vols. (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010), vol. 2, 1084-5. For a discussion of his treatise see José Pedro Paiva, *Bruxaria e Superstição num País sem ‘Caça às Bruxas’, 1600-1774* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1997), 25-33; Armando Maggi, *Satan’s Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 54-95.

16 The quotation is from Anne Jacobson Schütte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 56.

had carried on undisturbed while the Inquisition, in a period that had briefly carried out a vigorous witch-hunt in the region, had shown that he was healing in the name of the devil, with whom he had made a pact. Quoting in detail extracts from Anes' trial, Moura found confirmation of the need to give the Inquisition alone competence over practices of popular magic, declaring null and void any licence from other authorities, whether secular or ecclesiastical, to practise the profession of healer or utter formulas and incantations with therapeutic power.¹⁷

These fragments of writings, intended to be jealously kept absolutely secret, as the trials of the Inquisition were, did receive a certain amount of publicity (though only in a treatise written in Latin), revealing to its readers some of the history of the tribunal, as part of a legal, rather than historiographical, discourse. The same occurred twenty-five years later, when the noctogenarian Moura adopted the same technique for making a severe attack from within on the Inquisition's procedures, which he had served for almost half a century. Now that the political background had changed with the end of the dynastic union between Spain and Portugal (1640), Moura saw John of Braganza become king (as John IV, r. 1640-56), a descendent of the family under whose protection his old career had been possible. A few years later, the new king clashed strongly with the Inquisitor General, D. Francisco de Castro (who had already been accused of plotting against the king after his accession to the throne) over the proposal to exempt from the confiscation of goods, when condemned by the Inquisition, those *conversos* who had invested money in a *Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil* [General company for trade with Brazil], which was to be founded. This manoeuvre, designed to fill the royal coffers in the first difficult years of the return to independence and supported by the Jesuit António Vieira, who was also in contact with the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and other North-European cities, was temporarily

17 Manuel do Vale de Moura, *De Incantationibus seu Ensalms* (Évora: Lourenço Craesbeeck, 1620), 294. The trial is held in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), Inquisição de Évora, proc. n° 9895. I have discussed this trial and its use by Moura in my book *I custodi dell'ortodossia: Inquisizione e Chiesa nel Portogallo del Cinquecento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 111-3.

imposed by royal decree in 1649.¹⁸ Very probably, the severe conflict that preceded this decree was the context of a memorial directed to Inquisitor General Castro, written by Moura around 1647.

Though studies on Protestant heresy have always emphasized the anti-Inquisition martyrologies that appeared from the mid-sixteenth century onwards in the various religious contexts of the Reformation, a book by Miriam Bodian reminds us of how this genre, particularly in the second half of the seventeenth century, combined with the literature on the *conversos* martyrs – the term used to describe those Jews who died for their faith in Spain and Portugal and their overseas empires. They were burnt alive at the stake for refusing to repent, that is, as ‘negatives’, according to the inquisition.¹⁹ Even though the first work which presented these victims of the Iberian inquisitions as martyrs is Menasseh ben Israel’s *Esperanças de Israel* [The Hope of Israel] (1650), Bodian does not explore the possibility that its author might be influenced by Vieira’s argument against the Holy Office following their meetings in Amsterdam in the previous years.²⁰ For sure, the association between executed *conversos* and martyrs was circulating in Portugal at that time, as is shown exactly by Moura’s memorial.

Without seeking to establish direct links with this tradition, we cannot fail to note that the long memorial of over 350 pages in 17 chapters, which Moura presented to Inquisitor General Castro, concentrated on the image of the ‘negative innocent (*negativos innocentes*)’, condemned to the flames as ‘martyrs (*martyres*)’: the central thesis was that Judaizing *conversos* could not be condemned

18 Charles R. Boxer, *Padre António Vieira, S.J., and the Institution of the Brazil Company in 1649*. In ‘*Hispanic American Historical Review* 29 (1949), 474-97; I.-S. Révah, *Les Jésuites Portugais contre l’Inquisition: La campagne pour la fondation de la Compagnie Générale du Commerce du Brésil*. In I.-S. Révah, *Études Portugaises* (Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian; Centro Cultural Português, 1975), 155-83.

19 Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007).

20 See Harold Fisch, *The Messianic Politics of Menasseh ben Israel*. In Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *Menasseh ben Israel and His World* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 228-39.

as heretics as they had not received adequate religious instruction, and so were not guilty of any errors they made in interpreting the Christian faith. That a minister of the Inquisition such as Moura should have made this perspective his own is surprising, as is the fact that he drew on a clear assertion of his experience as an inquisitor – ‘the oldest and most useless of all the most worthy ministers (*o mais antigo e o mais inutil de todos os dignissimos ministros*)’ of the Holy Office, as he described himself at the outset of the document, recalling later that he had served the tribunal for ‘more than 44 years (*mais de 44 anos*)’.²¹ It was accompanied by detailed examples taken from the archives of the tribunal of Évora, which contributed to defining the essential features of history of the Portuguese Inquisition as a factory of martyrs – ‘perhaps of those St John saw in his Apocalypse, chap. 6, 9-10 (*porventura alguns daquelles que S. João ja veio no cap. 6. n. 9. et 10. do seu Apocalypse*)’²² – which had little to envy the crudity of the anti-Inquisition literature that was to flourish a few decades later.

Moura’s document was essentially a proposal to attenuate the procedures against the *conversos*, in which history was still a source of law, but this time interpreted against the official position of the Holy Office, claiming that the trials systematically violated the 1640 general Regulations (*Regimento*) for the Inquisition. It is striking both for its argument and for the language with which it addresses the tribunal’s victims: ‘our Jews (*nossos hebreos*). But it is, above all, the selection of the most dreadful and cruel episodes involving the *conversos*, whether in the Inquisition of Évora, or other tribunals in Spain and Portugal, or the Americas, that reveals Moura’s complex personality.

21 Manuel do Vale de Moura, *Proposta ao Ill.mo e Rev.mo Senhor Bispo Inquisidor mor nesta Monarquia de Portugal*, in Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), Conselho Geral do Santo Ofício, Livro no. 320, fols. 3r, 1r, 8r, respectively.

22 Moura, *Proposta*, fol. 3v. The reference is to a meaningful passage of the New Testament (‘When he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar of souls of those who had been killed for the Word of God, and for the testimony of the Lamb which they had. They cried with a loud voice saying: *How long, Master, the holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*’), prefiguring the possibility of integrating the *conversos*’ sufferings in an eschatological view.

He has set down the names of many victims still unknown to historians. We might mention here Francisco Nunes, from Faro, a simple man who was a professed Jew, burnt alive at the stake at Évora in 1637, merely because ‘he withdrew into a deep and stubborn silence’, claiming to be unable to discuss matters of faith with learned men (‘and I was one of them’ says Moura, concluding: ‘with the same external obstinacy our martyrs for the true faith let themselves be burnt alive’).²³

It seems that Moura was able to serve as a willing judge of the Holy Office for almost half a century while at the same time not only understanding, but also demonstrating through historical knowledge from his studies in the secret archives and a vast and scattered literature – including such striking examples as the eschatological work *De Temporibus Novissimis* [On the End Times] (1590) by the Jesuit José de Acosta – the absolute injustice of the way the tribunal of the faith worked.

Conclusion

I will limit myself to some general reflections rather as a provisional conclusion. At first sight, it might seem that the Portuguese Inquisition stood by helplessly as its historical image was slowly redefined from outside by its victims or its ever more numerous critics from the late seventeenth century onwards.

However, more detailed analysis suggests that, as in earlier periods, historical knowledge was a fundamental tool for the Portuguese inquisitors, sometimes to protect the independence of the tribunal from

23 Moura, *Proposta*, fols. 47v-48r: ‘*Aqui queimamos vivo por Judeo pertinaz hum Francisco Nunes de Faro do Algarve no auto de 14 do mês de Junho de 1637, o qual se fêchou com profundo e pertinaz silencio e a todos os letrados que lhe applicarão (e eu fuy hum delles) em substancia e mente respondia que era trabalhar debalde com elle nas taes disputas, e persuasões, porque, dizia elle, não sou letrado, nem sei penetrar ou responder aos seus argumentos; e estou certo que sigo a verdadeira fê, e crença: e elles a falsa e errada e que só trattão de me enganar; a que fim logo os ei de ouvir? E foy razão que não a torrou e com ella se foy vivo e facil ao fogo (...) com a mesma persistencia exterior se deixo queimar vivos os nosso mártires pela fê verdadeira*’.

the hegemonic drives of Castile, which were willing even to bend to their ends legends that distorted the history of the origins of the Portuguese Inquisition, and sometimes to set their legal claims in the face of other powers on more solid foundations. The Portuguese inquisitors knew their way round their own archives fairly well, and, when necessary, they knew how to draw on documents and exemplary stories that suited their case. However, as is partly shown by the possible *converso* origin of the tale of the forger Saavedra, it is not always easy to draw a distinction between the historical image of the tribunal of the faith produced by the inquisitors and by its victims.

Historical knowledge was a fluid heritage, and perhaps more shared than we might think. It sometimes led to a minister of the Holy Office expressing himself in very similar terms to those who condemned his action. The case of Manuel do Vale de Moura's memoir, which still requires more careful examination and more detailed comparison with the martyrologies of the *conversos*, does, however, pose the question of the openness of the Portuguese Inquisition to the external circulation of information, documents and judgments on the history of a tribunal that was much less monolithic than is generally thought. In any case, it is noteworthy that Moura's memoir, which is the only text in Portuguese among those analysed here, remained in manuscript and was unknown until today.