

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Pinto, Pedro. Fora do secreto: Um contributo para o conhecimento do tribunal do Santo Ofício em arquivos e bibliotecas de Portugal

James Nelson Novoa

Volume 45, numéro 1, hiver 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094242ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i1.39137>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Novoa, J. (2022). Compte rendu de [Pinto, Pedro. Fora do secreto: Um contributo para o conhecimento do tribunal do Santo Ofício em arquivos e bibliotecas de Portugal]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 45(1), 240–242. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i1.39137>



Pinto, Pedro.

Fora do secreto: Um contributo para o conhecimento do tribunal do Santo Ofício em arquivos e bibliotecas de Portugal.

História religiosa – Fontes e subsídios 15. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2020. Pp. 280. ISBN 978-972-8361-92-1 (paperback) €14.

Pedro Pinto, a seasoned Portuguese historian whose research interests span several centuries of that nation's history, has provided researchers with a valuable tool that may change the way in which historians of the Portuguese Inquisition go about their scholarship. Research into the tribunal of the Holy Office in Portugal, which was initially created in 1536, began in earnest in the nineteenth century with Alexandre Herculano's pioneering study (1846–53) regarding its origins. Since then, this important body of work has grown exponentially. The Portuguese Inquisition, unlike its Spanish counterpart, never made its way to the New World, yet it did manage to reach Asia through the tribunal of Goa, created in 1560 alongside the other tribunals that actively functioned in Continental Portugal. The tribunal as an institution was to function unabated with the exception of some episodic pardons and suspensions, until its definitive abolition in 1821. As scholars of the various tribunals of the Holy Office in Spain and Italy have shown increasingly over the last several decades, the vast holdings of these tribunals are of intrinsic interest for the study of social life, behaviour, and a host of problems in the early modern period.

Portugal is no exception, and Pinto has produced a book that will surely open new avenues to research. The publication's timely appearance, a year before the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the tribunal's extinction, is a much needed addition to the existing scholarship. The author has taken the documents he has painstakingly identified and pulled them out of obscurity, or secrecy, as the title of the book tellingly states. Pinto has unearthed a trove of documents hitherto unknown or misclassified that scholars not only of the tribunal but of early modern Portugal and the Lusophone world will find relevant. The book, which is accompanied by a useful index and detailed entries about the location of documents and their contents, is surely to be a major contribution to this field of scholarship. The research that Pinto has put at the disposal of his readers will give them new inroads and insights into the Portuguese Inquisition, its members, and its victims.

As his concise and erudite introduction explains, after the institution's disappearance, the vast number of documents that it had produced in its four centuries of existence underwent a complicated dispersion. Pinto makes an important contribution in explaining this matter that we have known so little about. In engaging with these documents with the mastery of the seasoned archival sleuth that he is, Pinto brings his readers into the life of the enormously varied documents and their travels. Inquisitorial trials and investigations, receipts, details of the enormous quantity of property owned by the tribunal, internal notes, directives, diplomatic correspondence, and attributions of posts within the tribunal are just some of the types of documents that it produced during its long existence. It is a fascinating read and Pinto is the best man to tell this story. As he indicates, while the bulk of the documents of the defunct tribunals went to the Royal Public Library only to be incorporated years later into the Portuguese National Archive of Torre do Tombo, many more had already left the confines of their respective tribunals even before 1821 for a number of reasons. After the elimination of these tribunals, the documents made their way to private collections, regional libraries, and archives. His introduction and his painstaking work give these documents a life of their own as he recounts their various wanderings, which are often just as fascinating a story as the contents of the documents themselves.

With an eye for minute detail, Pinto has not just rescued these documents from obscurity and the secrecy desired by the very institution that produced them, he has given them a new lease on life. He describes, for example, the marks and comments that some of the possessors of these documents left on them thus accounting for where they ended up, and who may have been interested in them and why. In doing so he has offered us an important glimpse into the production of the Portuguese Inquisition, reading practices in early modern Portugal, and the circulation of texts. The vast holdings of the tribunal, increasingly made available to scholars by the commendable efforts of the National Archive of Torre de Tombo to digitize and provide them to users on its webpage, has made this documentation a well-known resource. As all scholars who have used Inquisitorial documents know, their utility to reconstruct social life and account for interactions in early modern society in Europe and beyond is considerable. Interest in them goes well beyond the study of the tribunal itself and its functioning. This new book will surely have a lasting impact on the way the Portuguese tribunal, which so conditioned Portuguese society in

the early modern period and which is still yet to be understood, is studied and considered in all of its complexity.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA

University of Ottawa

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i1.39137>