



**Maifreda, Germano. I denari dell'inquisitore. Affari e giustizia di fede nell'Italia moderna**

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**Maifreda, Germano.**

*I denari dell'inquisitore. Affari e giustizia di fede nell'Italia moderna.*

Turin: Einaudi, 2014. Pp. xx, 364. ISBN 978-8-8062-1305-3 (hardcover) €32.

The opening of the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has stimulated interest in the functioning of the tribunal of the Roman Inquisition, which upon its creation in 1542 gradually extended its sphere of influence throughout the Italian Peninsula. Whereas scholars have examined the procedures and meting out of inquisitorial justice in the early modern period, most have approached the tribunal from the point of view of religious history or the study of justice. Its economic management has been much less studied.

Germano Maifreda's new book, written by a consecrated economic historian, seeks to describe the economic functioning of the tribunal and its evolution from creation in the sixteenth century to gradual dissolution in the eighteenth. He has accomplished the feat of presenting a myriad of facts of obvious interest to economic historians while showing the repercussions of the economic development of the tribunal for early modern Italy, with its ensuing religious and cultural hegemony.

Maifreda takes the reader, slowly but surely, from the early phase of the tribunal in the second half of the sixteenth century—a tribunal that responds directly to the sovereign pontiff—to a period of progressive organization of its patrimony through a variety of strategies that included the granting of ecclesiastical benefices to tribunals throughout the peninsula and all-out investments. Over time, inquisitors became veritable investors, intent on accruing, consolidating, and maintaining the patrimony of tribunals, a fact that was to have a bearing on the administration of inquisitorial justice and procedure. Thus, by the seventeenth century there had emerged a model of an economic and social institution that operated on all material and spiritual levels in early modern Italy.

Divided into two parts, "L'economia del Sant'Ufficio" and "L'inquisizione e la vita economica," *I denari dell'inquisitore* literally lays bare the inner workings of the Inquisition in the various tribunals that existed for centuries in Italy. Maifreda presents a staggering amount of data culled from archival sources as varied as the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vatican Secret Archives, the State Archives of Milan and Venice, the Vatican Library, and the library of Trinity College, Dublin. While the first part of his book is primarily

concerned with the internal functioning of the Holy Office and the management of its finances, the second half deals with the relation of the tribunal and the wider world, and its repercussions for Italian society in the period under consideration.

As an economic historian, Maifreda is in a privileged position—able to analyze the diverse mechanisms and strategies at work in the search, on the part of the tribunal, of the means to sustain its activities through calculated choices that changed throughout the centuries of its long existence. In particular he shows the effect of the tribunal on the economic development of early modern Italy, citing, for example, the adverse effects that the fear of confiscations on account of heresy had on foreign merchants, who sought to pursue commerce in the peninsula, or on Italian merchants who might have wanted to engage in commerce in Protestant lands. While focusing on Italy, Maifreda often refers to the functioning of the tribunals in Spain and Portugal, reliant on the will of their respective sovereigns, in order to identify similarities and differences. The similarities are in fact striking—from an early fledgling period in which the tribunals attempted to gather their bearings to a later period of rational economic decision-making with the acquisition of property and the setting up of facilities linked to the tribunal's activities. Here Maifreda shows a clear command of recent Italian and Iberian scholarship.

The author has provided readers with a readable, richly documented, and informative account of the development of the financial operations of the tribunal of the Holy Office in early modern Italy. Such a book has been needed for some time; Maifreda convincingly crosses the borders of economic and religious history. His book is surely to be hailed as one of the more important and original contributions to the history of the financial operations of the tribunal and its wider implications for the social life of early modern Italy.

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