



**RESEARCH ISSUES** Terrorism may be a relatively modern phenomenon, but the spread and control of dissent is an age-old historical problem. I have investigated these issues from two angles, firstly my initial area of specialisation on the Cathar heresy and birth of the Inquisition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Secondly, I have collaborated with Paul Ormerod of Volterra Consulting on network analysis of the spread and elimination of dissent in both the era of the Cathars and sixteenth century England. Both these approaches have relevance for modern security.

## COUNTER-TERRORISM AND NETWORK THEORY

In my work with Ormerod, we investigated historical examples of policies used to control the spread of 'deviant' ideologies. Both the Cathars in France and the Protestants in England were regarded as 'deviant'. In a modern context, we might think of polices which tried to control spread of support for the IRA, or Islamic militants.

Obviously crucial is the structure of the network, and obtaining an approximation to it. Both the 'tipping point' in the network and the effectiveness of various control strategies are to an extent network-dependent.

The historical examples of Catharism in southern France and Protestantism in sixteenth century England both provide networks which we can approximate as 'scale free', a particular type of network, characterised by a few well connected hubs. The *perfecti*, the spiritual elite were essential to Catharism, and so by implication there were a small number of crucial 'hubs' in the network. Initial attempts at elimination through military action and mass killings were unsuccessful. These are almost always ineffectual in scale-free networks, because if just one hub is missed, the virus springs up again, which is exactly what happened. Only when it was realised that local hosts and guides were crucial to the structure and that these should be targeted that the Church eliminated the problem -essentially, by neutralising the scale-free structure.

In England, under Mary I, the English government seeking to repress Protestantism foolishly 'created' a scale free network by making public martyrs of Protestant dissenters. A textual analysis of the martyrs' writings in prison reveals that the Protestants fully intended to create such a network of influence and hence spread their ideology. The counter example is of the Freewillers, a small, but influential Protestant group who by and large avoided martyrdom to carry on preaching and yet achieved virtually no impact in the population at large.

## THE INQUISITION AS A SECURITY ORGANISATION

The Inquisition was a medieval invention, founded in 1231 and in its first hundred years was probably the most talented group of individuals ever to take on the task of suppressing dissent. They were mostly drawn from the highly educated Dominican order and were mainly lawyers and theologians with at least one future saint and a pope in their ranks. Starting from scratch in facing a well organised and often violent enemy in the Cathar heresy they pooled knowledge in a series of manuals, while enough records remain for us to reconstruct their interrogation technique. Contrary to their reputation, inquisitors' effectiveness depended not on torture, but skilful use of amnesties, light punishment of those willing to confess and name names and solitary confinement for those who would not. They also had a good knowledge of the structures of heretical organisations and provide much of the data for our work on heretical networks.

## PUBLICATIONS

*The Devil's World: Heresy and Society. 1100–1320*, Harlow, Longman (2005).

\*(with Paul Ormerod) 'Emergent Scale-free Social Networks in History: Burning and the Rise of English Protestantism' *Cultural Science* [Vol 1, No 1 \(2008\): Creative Destruction](#) (29 pages)

\*'The Competition for Souls: Sava of Serbia and consumer choice in religion in the thirteenth century Balkans', *Glasnik*, vol. 50 (Skopje, 2006), pp. 141-57.

\*(with Paul Ormerod) 'The medieval inquisition: scale free networks and the suppression of heresy', *Physica A*, No. 339, (2004), pp. 645-52.

\*Entries on 'Censorship and Heresy, 1000 - 1500', 'Dominican Order', 'Bogomils' and 'Waldensians' for *Censorship – a World Encyclopaedia*, ed. Derek Jones, 4 vols., London, Fitzroy Dearborn (2001).