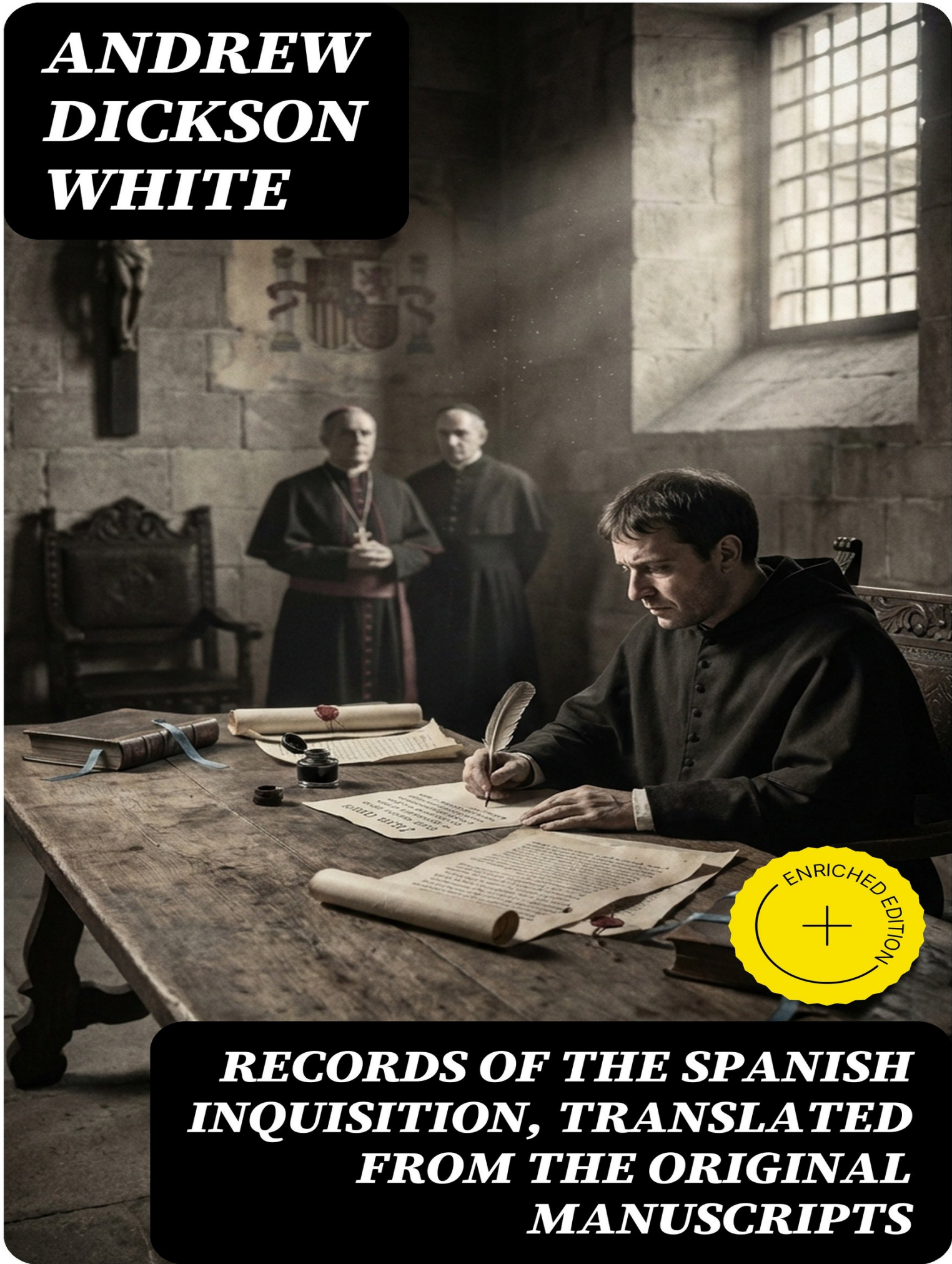


**ANDREW
DICKSON
WHITE**



**RECORDS OF THE SPANISH
INQUISITION, TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL
MANUSCRIPTS**

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Andrew Dickson White

Records of the Spanish Inquisition, Translated from the Original Manuscripts

Enriched edition.

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Michael
Wellesley*

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[Synopsis \(Selection\)](#)

[Records of the Spanish Inquisition, Translated from the Original Manuscripts](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

This collection, *Records of the Spanish Inquisition, Translated from the Original Manuscripts*, presents a carefully assembled body of primary materials under the editorship of Andrew Dickson White. Its scope is documentary, not narrative: the volume gathers translated records and related matter to illuminate procedures, beliefs, and conflicts within the Spanish tribunals. Rather than offering a continuous history or a dramatic reconstruction, it makes accessible the words and structures found in official papers. The purpose is clarity through evidence—placing readers in direct contact with archival voices while providing a coherent path through them, so the documents can inform study, judgment, and responsible remembrance.

The book comprises several complementary text types. A preface establishes the rationale for selection and translation. A historical sketch sets the institutional scene in essay form. The core sections reproduce records: formal accusations, interrogatory proceedings, and entries that reflect administrative routine. Three discrete trials offer case files of distinct charges. Extracts from the prison registers preserve terse notes on confinement and custody. A concluding group of miscellaneous documents gathers stray instruments relevant to practice and policy. Together, these essays and archival excerpts demonstrate how legal formulae, theological categories, and bureaucratic habits generated the texture of inquisitorial life on the page.

The preface orients readers to the nature of the materials and to the translation from original manuscripts. It clarifies that the volume's purpose is to present representative documents in accessible form and to define the limits of selection without seeking dramatic effect. By describing how the pieces are arranged and what kinds of evidence they contain, the preface sets expectations for a sober, documentary encounter. It invites readers in history, law, religion, and culture to begin with primary sources and to build interpretations upon them. This brief orientation enables a careful approach to each record that follows.

The historical sketch offers a concise framework for the documents that follow. It surveys the development of inquisitorial authority in Spain, outlines the role of monarchs and ecclesiastical officials, and notes features of jurisdiction and procedure that the records illustrate. Rather than supplanting the sources, the sketch connects institutional patterns to the specific forms preserved here—charges, examinations, and sentences—so that readers can recognize recurring legal phrases and theological classifications. The sketch situates the volume amid broader European currents without distracting from the central evidence, preparing readers to see how policy, doctrine, and administration converged in the everyday operations of the tribunals.

The three trials included—of Juan Duran for blasphemy and witchcraft, of Leonardo Phelipe for Lutheranism, and of Don Antonio Adorno for necromantical practices—demonstrate the range of offenses that drew inquisitorial scrutiny. Each case presents procedural steps as the records

preserve them: formal accusation, examination of statements, and adjudication within the established norms of the period. Their narratives differ in detail and emphasis, but together they show how language, classification, and institutional routine shaped outcomes. The focus remains on the documents themselves, so readers can follow the logic of the proceedings and consider the human circumstances indirectly revealed by formula and testimony.

Supplementing these trials are extracts from the register of the prisons and a final grouping of miscellaneous documents. The register entries trace the cadence of confinement, custody, and administrative attention, while the miscellaneous items record the instruments by which policy was communicated and applied. These terse, practical pieces steady the volume, counterbalancing the drama of accusation with the persistence of routine. Read together, they disclose the rhythms of a system whose history is often told in extremes, but whose continuity is legible in the quiet bookkeeping of names, dates, and acts. The institutional voice becomes audible through its habits of record.

Andrew Dickson White's work is unified by a commitment to evidence and to the civic uses of historical understanding. As an educator and historian, he consistently traced how ideas, institutions, and documents exert force in public life. This collection advances that impulse by foregrounding primary sources over polemic, permitting readers to test interpretations against the record. Its ongoing significance lies in its method as much as in its subject: careful translation, prudent framing, and sustained

attention to genre. Whether approached for research, teaching, or reflection, the volume offers a disciplined encounter with the past, and a reminder that scrutiny begins with the sources.

Historical Context

[Table of Contents](#)

Founded in 1478 under Ferdinand and Isabella with papal authorization from Sixtus IV, the Spanish Inquisition emerged amid efforts to consolidate royal authority after the Reconquista. Early tribunals in Seville and Toledo targeted recent converts from Judaism suspected of judaizing, and by 1483 Tomás de Torquemada centralized procedures through the Suprema. The Alhambra Decree of 1492 expelled unconverted Jews, but the Inquisition continued scrutinizing converso communities. The system's secrecy, confiscations, and public autos-da-fé established a model replicated across the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, shaping a judicial culture that the collection's records expose at the level of individual lives.

Throughout the sixteenth century, anxieties over religious purity broadened from conversos to include Muslims converted under pressure after the conquest of Granada (1492) and subsequent edicts of 1502 and 1526. Suspicion of crypto-Islam among Moriscos, coupled with *limpieza de sangre* statutes in civic and ecclesiastical institutions, entrenched social hierarchies policed by inquisitorial inquiry. The eventual expulsion of the Moriscos (1609–1614) capped decades of surveillance and prosecutions for dietary, ritual, and linguistic practices. Prison registers and confessional interrogatories in the collection reflect this milieu, showing how quotidian customs

could be construed as proof of heresy, even as punishments ranged from penance to exile.

The Reformation's spread into Iberia, though limited, provoked decisive action under Charles V and especially Philip II. Secret circles in Seville and Valladolid reading Erasmus, Luther, or Valdés were dismantled in the 1550s, culminating in spectacular autos-da-fé in 1559. Trials for Lutheranism, like those translated here, foreground the Crown's determination to block links with northern Europe, policing books, correspondence, and foreign merchants. The Suprema standardized questionnaires on doctrine, justification, and sacramental theology. These proceedings, while fewer than in Germany or the Low Countries, signaled Spain's confessional consolidation, and they reveal the Inquisition's capacity to adapt its medieval apparatus to modern ideological threats.

Prosecutions for blasphemy, witchcraft, and necromancy formed a parallel stream, reflecting broader European anxieties about magic and speech. Spain's tribunals, especially after the Basque-Navarre witch panic reviewed at Logroño in 1609–1611 and the auto-da-fé of 1610, gradually favored skepticism under inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frías, whose 1614 reports urged restraint. Nevertheless, accusations of pact-making, divination, and ritual malefice persisted, often intertwined with social conflict. Cases like those of Juan Duran or Don Antonio Adorno reveal how superstition, illicit healing, or irreverent utterance could trigger incarceration, abjuration, or banishment, illustrating a penal spectrum that increasingly emphasized correction over execution.

Central to these materials is the Inquisition's procedural architecture: the Edicts of Faith soliciting denunciations, the secret witness system, meticulous procesos, and the ritualized auto-da-fé. Carceral practice—dungeons, common wards, and hospitals—was overseen by local tribunals but supervised by the Suprema, producing registers that tracked rations, illnesses, and transfers. Confiscation inventories detailed property loss; reconciliation formulas codified penance. The documents' formulaic Spanish and Latin permit close comparison across cities such as Toledo, Zaragoza, Valencia, and Mexico City, revealing an empire-wide bureaucracy. The collection's extracts from prison records and miscellaneous orders make visible quotidian routines otherwise obscured by sensational narratives of heresy.

The survival and accessibility of these manuscripts owe much to nineteenth-century disruptions. After the Napoleonic invasion (1808) first abolished the Inquisition, restorations and suppressions followed until final abolition in 1834 under the regency of María Cristina. Ecclesiastical seizures and liberal desamortización policies transferred archives to state custody; by mid-century, holdings of the Consejo de la Suprema and provincial tribunals were centralized, notably in Madrid's Archivo Histórico Nacional and Simancas. This archival consolidation, coupled with the Rankean turn to primary sources, enabled scholars to publish transcripts with diplomatic fidelity, a method that underlies the translations presented here and shaped their documentary authority.

Andrew Dickson White, an American educator and diplomat steeped in liberal and Enlightenment historiography, approached these records amid contemporary debates on church-state relations and the authority of science. His and George Lincoln Burr's collecting for Cornell's libraries paralleled broader Protestant and secular interest in exposing the mechanics of persecution without relying on polemic. In the Anglo-American world of the late nineteenth century—marked by controversies over parochial schooling and ultramontanism—such editions were read as cautionary evidence. Yet White's emphasis on verbatim processual detail also aligned with professionalizing historical practice, encouraging readers to weigh testimony, procedure, and sanction on their own merits.

Set against this long arc—from foundation to abolition—the trials and registers illustrate recurring tensions between conscience, community, and sovereignty. Whether confronting suspected Lutherans, supervising penitents for blasphemy, or disciplining occult practices, the tribunals linked doctrinal boundaries to everyday behaviors, with regional variations across Castile, Aragon, and overseas. The collection's historical sketch and preface situate these fragments within institutional change, while the translations humanize policies that reshaped families and trades. Appearing when archives newly opened to scrutiny, the volume offered contemporaries a rare, unvarnished view of inquisitorial governance, inviting modern readers to trace continuities between ideology, law, and lived experience.

Synopsis (Selection)

[Table of Contents](#)

PREFACE.

A brief orientation that states the collection's aim to present primary evidence of inquisitorial practice with minimal embellishment.

The tone is sober and documentary, framing recurring motifs of institutional ritual, moral anxiety, and an evidentiary method that lets records speak for themselves.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE INQUISITION.

A compact overview of the Inquisition's origins, jurisdiction, and procedural evolution that equips readers to read the records in context.

Analytic and unsensational, it traces how theology, law, and politics intertwine, highlighting patterns of surveillance, confession, and control.

RECORDS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

A selection of official acts and formularies that expose the routine vernacular of power—petitions, decrees, interrogatories, and annotations.

Its austere, repetitive language underscores themes of bureaucratic certainty and normalized suspicion that recur throughout the collection.

TRIAL OF JUAN DURAN, FOR BLASPHEMY AND WITCHCRAFT.

Proceedings against an accused blasphemer and alleged practitioner of witchcraft reveal how everyday speech and folk beliefs could be reframed as transgression.

The transcript's measured tone heightens tensions between community testimony and doctrinal scrutiny, emphasizing fear, rumor, and ritualized self-examination.

TRIAL OF LEONARDO PHELIPE, FOR LUTHERANISM.

An inquiry into suspected Lutheran sympathies foregrounds the policing of reading, worship, and speech under confessional uniformity.

Through catechetical questioning and witness networks, the case maps the spread of ideas and the tribunal's methods for containing them.

TRIAL OF DON ANTONIO ADORNO, FOR NECROMANTICAL PRACTICES.

Charges of necromancy against a socially prominent figure show how status intersects with suspicion of learned or occult practices.

Inventories and examinations focus on objects and texts, dramatizing the Inquisition's blend of moral theater and procedural restraint.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REGISTER OF THE PRISONS.

Ledger-like entries on confinement, transfers, and provisions present the carceral system in its most impersonal form.

The dry record-keeping reveals slow pressures—time, deprivation, uncertainty—making institutional routine a central agent in the narrative.

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

A grab-bag of edicts, letters, and notices expands the view from courtroom to bureaucracy, capturing the tribunal's administrative reach.

Varied voices and formats underline a persistent motif of centralized oversight acting through paperwork, from censorship to resource management.

**RECORDS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION,
TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL
MANUSCRIPTS**

[Main Table of Contents](#)

PREFACE.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE INQUISITION.

RECORDS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

TRIAL OF JUAN DURAN, FOR BLASPHEMY AND WITCHCRAFT.

TRIAL OF LEONARDO PHELIPE, FOR LUTHERANISM.

TRIAL OF DON ANTONIO ADORNO, FOR NECROMANTICAL
PRACTICES.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REGISTER OF THE PRISONS.

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

THE manner in which the originals of the following work came into the hands of the translator may be described in a few words. These papers are a part of the Records of the Inquisition of Barcelona, and were obtained during the revolution which broke out at Cadiz in 1819.

The province of Catalonia, of which Barcelona is the capital, was one of the most forward and zealous to embrace the cause of freedom. Its inhabitants have, in all times, been distinguished for their daring and determined spirit, and their ardent love of liberty[1q]. The revolution moved with rapid strides from the Isle of Leon to the Ebro. On the twentyeighth of February, 1820, the governor of Tarragona received a summons to repair immediately to Madrid, and in a few days the insurrection burst out in the former place. On the fourteenth of March, two days after this, it exploded at Barcelona.

The first movement of the revolutionary party was to depose the Captain General of the province. This office was then held by Castañas, a royalist. His predecessor was General Villacampa, an officer of some distinction, who had been deprived of the captain-generalship, and banished to Mataró, a small town on the coast, for his attachment to liberal principles. Castañas was forced to resign, and Villacampa was conducted in triumph from his place of banishment to Barcelona, and reinstated in his dignity by the populace.

The government of the city being revolutionized, their next thoughts were directed to the Inquisition, the great engine of priestly oppression[2q], and the object of dread and detestation to the friends of liberty, both political and religious. The vast and gloomy piles of this tribunal, which covered a spot of more than ten times the extent of the Massachusetts State Prison, had been too long the terror of the oppressed and restless Catalonians to escape distinguished notice on this occasion. The populace demanded, with loud cries, of the Captain General, that the Inquisitorial Palace should be thrown open. What answer was given by Villacampa to this demand, does not appear. A body of twenty thousand persons rushed to the Inquisition, stormed at the gates, and demanded admittance. Those within told them to wait a few minutes and the gates should be opened. This interval they improved to make their escape, and in a short time the populace, growing impatient, burst the gates and rushed in.

Every part of the premises was immediately filled. The dungeons were broken open; the prisoners released, and the papers cast out at the windows. For several days these were thrown in great numbers about the streets of the city, and a small portion of them, after passing through various hands, came into the possession of a gentleman of this city, who at that period was travelling in Spain. These papers were forwarded to Boston in 1820.

It was thought that a publication of these documents would be received with much interest and satisfaction by the community, as nothing of the kind has ever before seen the light. There are indeed some authentic and well written

compilations relating to this subject, as well as a few narratives given by persons who have been imprisoned in the dungeons of the Holy Office; but a copious and minute detail of the forms and proceedings observed in the trials and investigations of the Inquisitorial Tribunal, such as is afforded in the following pages, has never, till this moment, existed in print. Should the Holy Office again rear its head in Spain, perhaps the Fiscal and Calificadores might do the publisher and Translator of this work the honor to take some notice of their labors. It is to be hoped, however, that these most illustrious and apostolical Señores may not very soon have occasion to obtain for either of us any such notoriety.

Boston, June, 1828.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE INQUISITION.

[Table of Contents](#)

THIS establishment had its origin in the endeavours of the Roman pontiffs for the suppression of heresy. In the year 1184, Pope Lucius II., alarmed at the appearance of the new religious sects in Dauphiny and Provence, called a great council at Verona, where a severe decree was issued against them, and the power of the secular princes called to aid in their discovery and punishment. In this decree we perceive the embryo of the Inquisition, although its proper foundation is commonly fixed some years later.[\[1\]](#)

It was in France, in the year 1208, that it was first established, and took a distinct character under the direction of Pope Innocent III., who despatched legates into

that country, with a power independent of the bishops, to persecute the heretics with the assistance of the secular arm. The unfortunate Albigenses, the objects of this persecution, were extirpated with fire and sword, and the death of thousands by massacres, tortures, and the funeral pile, signalized the commencement of the Inquisition.[2]

This was in the reign of Philip Augustus, during which the Inquisition appears not to have been in exercise beyond the limits of Provence and Languedoc; but in 1255, at the request of Louis IX., it was established by the papal authority throughout the whole kingdom, with the exception of the territories of the Count of Poitiers and Toulouse.[3] It did not however, obtain any permanent footing here, although the exact period of its discontinuance is not easy to ascertain. In 1560, the Cardinal of Lorraine made an effectual attempt to introduce it into France against the Protestants, which is the last time we find it mentioned in connexion with the history of that country.[4]

In 1224, it was established by Pope Honorius II. in all the States of Italy, except Venice and Naples. In 1289, it was established at Venice.[5] It appears to have been in existence in the kingdom of Naples as early as 1269.[6] There is no very frequent mention of it in the histories of that period, and we may conclude that it did not assume that sanguinary character in these countries, which marked its first existence on the other side of the Alps. It disappeared from all these parts, except the Papal States, before completing a long career.

It was in Spain that this terrible tribunal was destined to obtain the firmest footing, and exercise the bloodiest sway.

Its establishment in this country may be dated at the year 1232, and it gradually made its way into all the principalities of which this kingdom is composed, though not without a bloody resistance on the part of the inhabitants, who entertained the utmost horror of the Inquisition, and killed many of the Dominican Friars, who were its chief ministers, and the instruments of its establishment.[7] In 1481, upon the union, under Ferdinand and Isabella, of the Kingdom of Castile and Arragon, the inquisitorial constitution was reformed and modified, with respect to its various limits of territorial jurisdiction, and also by the introduction of new and severe statutes and rules. This was called the *modern* Inquisition,[8] and the pretext for its establishment was the persecution of the converted Jews, who were suspected of relapsing to their former faith. It afterwards took under its cognizance other heresies, and some civil offences. It is very clear that the people felt a decided aversion to it, which they manifested in violent tumults. Nevertheless force and terror overcame their resistance, and the domineering spirit of the Pope, the avarice of Ferdinand, and the fanaticism of the monks, succeeded in fastening the iron yoke of the Inquisition upon the necks of the Spaniards. It ran an uninterrupted career until abolished by Napoleon on the fourth of December, 1808.

The circumstances of its introduction into Portugal are too curious to be omitted. About the year 1540, there was in Spain, a monk of the name of Saavedra, who forged apostolic bulls, royal decrees, and bills of exchange, with so much accuracy, that they passed with every one for genuine. He succeeded so well as to pass himself off for a

knight and commander of the military order of St Jago, the income of which, amounting to three thousand ducats, he received for the space of a year and a half. In a short time he acquired, by means of the royal deeds which he counterfeited, three hundred and sixty thousand ducats.

With a little prudence he might have remained undetected through life, but his successes tempted him to undertakings which led to his discovery. He fell in company with a Jesuit travelling to Portugal, with an apostolic brief for the foundation there of a college of that order. These two concerted measures for introducing the Inquisition as well as the Jesuits into Portugal. Saavedra forged letters from Charles V. to the King of Portugal, and a papal bull establishing the Inquisition in that country. This bull appointed Saavedra legate *a latere* for the purpose.

This daring and brazenfaced impostor then took upon him the character and costume of a Roman cardinal. He travelled with litters, silver dishes, and a train of attendants, levying money on his course by forging bonds. He sent his secretary to Lisbon with his bull and papers to prepare for his reception. The king despatched to the frontiers a distinguished nobleman to receive him, and he made his entry into Lisbon, where he spent three months, and was treated with the highest respect. He afterwards travelled through the kingdom, and completed the business for which he had made his visit. He was at last detected by the Inquisitor General of Spain and arrested. After a trial by the Inquisition, he was sentenced to the galleys for ten years. The king added nine years more to the period. Almost all the establishments made by him in Portugal, were retained

under the pretence that the Holy Office was necessary to persecute the Jews.

It has been the endeavour of the Spanish monarchs to extend it to every country under their dominion. The Emperor Charles V., whose zeal for the Inquisition has procured him the title of the Don Quixote of the Faith, established it in the Netherlands in 1522, and vast multitudes, who had embraced the Reformed religion, perished on its funeral piles. This bloody persecution was one of the means of exciting the revolt by which Holland was freed from the Spanish yoke.[9] An attempt was also made by him to introduce it into Naples, but it encountered the most determined opposition. The Neapolitans rose in insurrection, massacred the Spaniards, and obliged the emperor to give over the project. About the time of its appearance in the Netherlands it was also established in the Spanish dominions in America. The first *autos de fe* were celebrated at Lima in 1639.[10] The Portuguese carried it into their East Indian Colonies, fixing it at Goa in 1559.[11] In Brazil, however, it has never existed.

The modern history of the Inquisition must be familiar to every reader. Its abolition by Napoleon in 1808, its reestablishment under Ferdinand VII. and its second overthrow by the Spanish people in 1820, are events too well known to need a recapitulation here.

RECORDS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION.

[Table of Contents](#)

TRIAL OF PEDRO GINESTA, NATIVE OF THE
VILLAGE OF ST QUINTI, IN THE DIOCESE OF ST
FLOR, FOR EATING BACON ON A PROHIBITED DAY

IN the Royal Palace of the Inquisition of Barcelona, on the fourth day of September, one thousand six hundred and thirtyfive, present, the Inquisitor Dr Domingo Abbad y Huerta, officiating alone in his morning audience; having examined the information received against Pedro Ginesta, native of the village of St Quinti, diocese of St Flor, and Joan Mella, of the village of St Maurion, parish of Xauvinar, diocese of Clermont, in the kingdom of France, by occupation both braziers, the same being in custody of the Commissioner of Salas in the prison of Agna Villa,—ordered, that the abovementioned persons be transferred to the secret prison of this palace of the Inquisition,[12] and that their trial be instituted in form; also ordered, that the Commissioner aforesaid be instructed to attest *ad perpetuam* the evidence of the witnesses, ascertain the identity of the persons whom they depose against, and whether the said prisoners be the persons whom they charge with having eaten bacon on St Bartholomew's eve, notwithstanding the prohibition; also that the said prisoners, after the business of the deposition is despatched, be conveyed with care by the hands of the several Familiars, to the prison of this Inquisition.

For which purpose let the necessary measures be taken.

Before me—

MATTHEO MAGRE, *Sec'y.*

In the town of Tresp, bishopric of Urgel, on the twentyfifth day of August, one thousand six hundred and thirtyfive, in the morning, before the Licenciado Joan Torroella, Presbyter Commissary of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the town of Salas,—appeared according to summons and swore formally to declare the truth, a man who asserted his name to be Joan Compte, a native and resident of the town of Talarn, in the abovementioned bishopric, of age as he stated, fiftyfive years or thereabout.

Questioned, if he knew or conjectured the cause of his being summoned to appear.

Answered, that he neither knew nor conjectured.

Questioned, if he knew or had heard that any person had spoken or done anything which was, or appeared to be, contrary to our holy Catholic Faith, and evangelical doctrine preached and taught by the holy Catholic Roman Church, or against the just and free exercise of the Holy Office.

Answered, that he knew nothing of the matters respecting which he was questioned, except that on the eve of St Bartholomew last, being in the town of Timian in the abovementioned bishopric of Urgel, he went to the tavern of Pitieu, and saw there a man, by occupation a brazier, with a grey beard, which person was well known to the deponent, he having seen and entertained him in the town of Calan, where he exercised his trade and had labored for the deponent. The name of this person deponent did not know, never having heard it mentioned. At the same place was a young man whom the said brazier stated to be his journeyman. These two were sitting at table and eating soup, which, being despatched, deponent saw the said

How do procedural rhythms reveal the Inquisition's bureaucratic logic and its human consequences?

The Historical Sketch outlines a recognizable procedural arc—accusation, sequestration, examination, confession, sentencing—that the trials then instantiate with concrete pacing. Juan Duran's case foregrounds how blasphemy intersects with questions of intent, prompting repeated examinations, while Leonardo Phelipe's doctrinal positions elicit catechetical probes. Don Antonio Adorno's alleged practices activate a different evidentiary logic, seeking objects and witnesses rather than exegesis. Across the Records of the Spanish Inquisition, these steps share a cadence of admonition and record-keeping, turning moral inquiry into administrative sequence. Procedure becomes both narrative engine and institutional habit, shaping what can be said and preserved.

Extracts from the Register of the Prisons surface the tempo of confinement that trials rarely narrate: dates, transfers, medical notes, and compliance markers. The spare entries compress lived time into administrative checkpoints, revealing a procedural rhythm that values predictability over description. Read against the trials' granular dialogues, the registers recalibrate emphasis from persuasion to custody. The bureaucratic logic emerges as a choreography of custody, documentation, and movement, where human circumstances enter the record only when they intersect with procedure. These ledgers give the sequence a metronome, suggesting how cases progress regardless of narrative interest.

The Miscellaneous Documents, with their heterogeneous petitions, clarifications, and jurisdictional notes, illuminate the exceptions that test procedural order. Each irregularity—whether a request, a contested authority, or a practical constraint—reveals how rules are interpreted in motion. Set after the more structured Records, these fragments suggest a bureaucracy that adapts without abandoning its fundamental sequence. The Preface’s organizational choices link these disparate materials to the trials and registers, so procedure appears both designed and improvised. Human consequences emerge in the seams, where policy meets circumstance and where small decisions recalibrate a case’s trajectory.

Question 4

In what ways does language signal shifting identities, risks, and authorities across these records?

Across the Records of the Spanish Inquisition, formulaic accusation and certification language establishes an official register that governs tone and expectation. The Preface underscores a commitment to transmit this diction faithfully, so that clerical phrases and legal cadences retain their constraining force. When the Historical Sketch paraphrases periods and policies, the prose loosens, demonstrating how explanatory narrative and documentary transcription operate differently. This shifting language marks transitions between authority performing itself and authority being described. The contrast helps trace how identities are