

# Catholic Inquisitions

The **Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition** (Spanish: *Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición*), commonly known as the **Spanish Inquisition** (*Inquisición española*), was established in 1478 by [Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon](#) and [Isabella I of Castile](#). It was intended to maintain [Catholic](#) orthodoxy in their kingdoms and to replace the [Medieval Inquisition](#), which was under [Papal control](#). It became the most substantive of the three different manifestations of the wider [Catholic Inquisition](#) along with the [Roman Inquisition](#) and [Portuguese Inquisition](#). The "Spanish Inquisition" may be defined broadly, operating "in Spain and in all Spanish colonies and territories, which included the Canary Islands, the [Spanish Netherlands](#), the [Kingdom of Naples](#), and all Spanish possessions in [North, Central, and South America](#). According to modern estimates, around 150,000 were prosecuted for various offenses during the three centuries of duration of the Spanish Inquisition, out of which between 3,000 and 5,000 were executed.

The Inquisition was originally intended primarily to identify [heretics](#) among those who converted from Judaism and Islam to Catholicism. The regulation of the faith of newly converted Catholics was intensified after the [royal decrees](#) issued in 1492 and 1502 ordering Jews and Muslims to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain.<sup>[1]</sup> The Inquisition was not definitively abolished until 1834, during the reign of [Isabella II](#), after a period of declining influence in the preceding century.

The Spanish Inquisition is often cited in popular literature and history as an example of Catholic intolerance and repression. Various modern historians have questioned whether earlier accounts about the scope and brutality of the Spanish Inquisition were exaggerated during the waves of [anti-Catholicism](#) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Roman Inquisition

The **Roman Inquisition**, formally the **Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition**, was a system of tribunals developed by the [Holy See](#) of the [Roman Catholic Church](#), during the second half of the 16th century, responsible for prosecuting individuals accused of a wide array of crimes relating to religious doctrine or alternate religious [doctrine](#) or alternate religious beliefs. In the period after the [Medieval Inquisition](#), it was one of three different manifestations of the wider [Catholic Inquisition](#) along with the [Spanish](#)

[Inquisition](#) and [Portuguese Inquisition](#)., formally the **Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition**, was a system of tribunals developed by the [Holy See](#) of the [Roman Catholic Church](#), during the second half of the 16th century, responsible for prosecuting individuals accused of a wide array of crimes relating to religious doctrine or alternate religious [doctrine](#) or alternate religious beliefs. In the period after the [Medieval Inquisition](#), it was one of three different manifestations of the wider [Catholic Inquisition](#) along with the [Spanish Inquisition](#) and [Portuguese Inquisition](#).

Like other iterations of the Inquisition, the Roman Inquisition was responsible for [prosecuting](#) individuals accused of committing offenses relating to [heresy](#), including [Protestantism](#), [sorcery](#), [immorality](#), [blasphemy](#), [Judaizing](#) and [witchcraft](#), as well as for [censorship](#) of printed literature. After 1567, with the execution of [Pietro Carnesecchi](#), an allegedly leading heretic, the Holy Office moved to broaden concerns beyond that of theological matters, such as love magic, witchcraft, superstitions, and cultural morality. However, the treatment was more disciplinary than punitive.<sup>[1]</sup> The tribunals of the Roman Inquisition covered most of the [Italian peninsula](#) as well as [Malta](#) and also existed in isolated pockets of [papal jurisdiction](#) in other parts of [Europe](#), including [Avignon](#) in [France](#). The Roman Inquisition, though, was considerably more [bureaucratic](#) and focussed on pre-emptive control in addition to the reactive [judicial](#) prosecution experienced under other iterations.

## Portuguese Inquisition

The **Portuguese Inquisition** ([Portuguese](#): *Inquisição Portuguesa*) was formally established in [Portugal](#) in 1536 at the request of its [king](#), [John III](#). [Manuel I](#) had asked for the installation of the [Inquisition](#) in 1515 to fulfill the commitment of marriage with [Maria of Aragon](#), but it was only after his death that [Pope Paul III](#) acquiesced. In the period after the [Medieval Inquisition](#), it was one of three different manifestations of the wider Christian Inquisition along with the [Spanish Inquisition](#) and [Roman Inquisition](#).

The major target of the Portuguese Inquisition were those who had converted from [Judaism](#) to [Catholicism](#), the [Conversos](#), also known as [New Christians](#), [Conversos](#) or [Marranos](#), who were suspected of secretly

practising [Judaism](#). Many of these were originally [Spanish Jews](#) who had left Spain for Portugal, when Spain forced Jews to convert to Christianity or leave. The number of victims is estimated as around 40,000.<sup>[1]</sup>

As in Spain, the Inquisition was subject to the authority of the King. It was headed by a [Grand Inquisitor](#), or General Inquisitor, named by the [Pope](#) but selected by the king, always from within the [royal family](#). The Grand Inquisitor would later nominate other inquisitors. In Portugal, the first Grand Inquisitor was [D. Diogo da Silva](#), personal confessor of King John III and [Bishop of Ceuta](#). He was followed by [Cardinal Henry](#), brother of [John III](#), who would later become king. There were Courts of the Inquisition in [Lisbon](#), [Coimbra](#), and [Évora](#), and for a short time (1541 until c. 1547) also in [Porto](#), [Tomar](#), and [Lamego](#).

It held its first [auto-da-fé](#) in Portugal in 1540. Like the Spanish Inquisition, it concentrated its efforts on rooting out those who had converted from other faiths (overwhelmingly [Judaism](#)) but did not adhere to the strictures of Catholic orthodoxy.