



The Inquisition: A Global History 1478-1834 (Past and Present Publications)

By Francisco Bethencourt

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The Inquisition was the most powerful disciplinary institution in the early modern world, responsible for 300,000 trials and over 1.5 million denunciations. How did it root itself in different social and ethnic environments? Why did it last for three centuries? What cultural, social and political changes led to its abolition? In this first global comparative study, Francisco Bethencourt examines the Inquisition's activities in Spain, Italy, Portugal and overseas Iberian colonies. He demonstrates that the Inquisition played a crucial role in the Catholic Reformation, imposing its own members in papal elections, reshaping ecclesiastical hierarchy, defining orthodoxy, controlling information and knowledge, influencing politics and framing daily life. He challenges both traditionalist and revisionist perceptions of the tribunal. Bethencourt shows the Inquisition as an ever evolving body, eager to enlarge jurisdiction and obtain political support to implement its system of values, but also vulnerable to manipulation by rulers, cardinals, and local social elites.

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Review

"In this important and engaging book originally published in French in 1995, Bethencourt compares and contrasts the activities of the Spanish, Portuguese and Roman Inquisitions. Highly recommended." -Choice

"Bethencourt's scope is undeniably broad: he has worked in archives in Spain, Portugal and Italy, and has an enviable command of the vast secondary literature in several languages... there is also much that is valuable and persuasive in Bethencourt's analysis of the institutional culture of the Inquisition(s)" -Peter Marshall, TLS

"...a valuable synthesis and 'systematic macroanalysis' of three inquisitions, which also manages to engage in quite a bit of careful and detailed analysis." -Jane K. Wickersham, European History Quarterly

"...coverage of the material is exhaustive, and one can find some really nice gems of comparative analysis here and there. The illustrations are very good, and the several charts are insightful..." -Patricia Lopes Don, Journal of World History

About the Author

Francisco Bethencourt is Charles Boxer Professor of History at King's College London. His previous publications include (as co-editor) Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800 (2007) and Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe, Volume 3: Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700 (2007).

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