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## The Spanish Inquisition: A Dark Chapter in History

In the late 15th century, Spain was a nation undergoing profound changes. It had recently emerged from centuries of warfare against Muslim rule, and Catholicism had become the dominant religion. During this time, a religious tribunal known as the Spanish Inquisition was established, marking one of the darkest chapters in Spain's history.

### The Reconquista and Religious Unity

The 15th century saw the completion of the Reconquista, a series of campaigns to reclaim Spain from Muslim rule.

With the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, at the helm, Spain had achieved religious unity under Christianity.

### The Spanish Inquisition is Born

In 1478, Pope Sixtus IV granted the Spanish monarchy the authority to establish the Spanish Inquisition. Its primary purpose was to identify and persecute heretics—those who did not adhere to Catholicism—and root out any remnants of Islamic or Jewish faiths. Tomas de Torquemada, a Dominican friar, became its first Grand Inquisitor.

### Methods of Persecution

The Spanish Inquisition employed ruthless tactics to maintain religious purity. Accused heretics faced trials that often led to confessions extracted through torture. Those found guilty faced severe punishments, including imprisonment, expulsion, or execution.

### Targeting Conversos and Moriscos

The Inquisition particularly targeted conversos, Jews who had converted to Christianity, and moriscos, Muslims who had done the same. Many were accused of secretly practicing their original faiths or of being insincere in their conversions.

### The Expulsion and Legacy

In 1492, the same year Columbus set sail for the New World, Spain issued the Alhambra Decree, which ordered the expulsion of all Jews who refused to convert to Christianity. This marked a tragic exodus from Spain. Later, in 1609, the moriscos were also expelled.

### The End of the Inquisition

By the 19th century, the Spanish Inquisition had lost much of its power. It was formally disbanded in 1834. Its legacy, however, remained a painful reminder of religious intolerance and persecution.

