

## ‘Voices’ in the Courtroom. The role of notaries in the ‘Inquisitorial autobiography’

José Luis Lorienté Torres

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid  
e-mail: [loriente@gmail.com](mailto:loriente@gmail.com)  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7178-9622>

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**ABSTRACT:** Little is known about the workings of Inquisitorial notaries during the early modern period, particularly regarding their documentation methods within the courtroom. This paper aims to analyze the procedures they employed in documenting proceedings. Questions arise regarding how they managed to transcribe what was happening in the courtroom, the accuracy of their records, and the mechanisms employed in carrying out this function. An analogy often invoked is whether these sources can convey the ‘voices’ of defendants. Here, it will be argued that the ‘voice’ modern readers ‘hear’ is that of the notary, who lends it to the defendant. Due to the absence of explicit information in any manual or instruction, we will directly examine the Inquisitorial proceedings. Specifically, we will focus on the first hearing, audience, or interrogation, known as ‘Primera Audiencia’, during which all defendants were obligated to declare their life stories or ‘discurso de su vida’ from 1561 onwards. Both the first interrogation and the life narrative were the most formulaic and fixed part of the trial, inviting comparison. Although we have focused on these specific elements, some of our conclusions may apply to the rest of the process. Our methodology will involve studying inks, handwritings, and micro-expressions.

**KEYWORDS:** Early Modern Spanish Inquisition; Inquisitorial notaries; life narratives; legal proceedings.

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**Título traducido:** ‘Voces’ en la sala de audiencias. El papel de los notarios en la ‘Autobiografía inquisitorial’.

**RESUMEN:** Poco se sabe sobre cómo trabajaban los notarios inquisitoriales en su labor de transcritores durante las audiencias. Este artículo analiza cuestiones relacionadas con cómo conseguían capturar lo que estaba sucediendo en la sala, el grado de fidelidad de sus transcripciones, y los distintos mecanismos prácticos empleados para ello. Una analogía frecuentemente usada para afrontar la cuestión ha sido hasta qué punto las fuentes inquisitoriales son capaces de traernos las ‘voces’ de los acusados. Nosotros proponemos que en realidad las ‘voces’ que ‘escuchamos’ son las de los notarios que se las han prestado a los acusados. Debido a la ausencia de información explícita al respecto en alguna instrucción o manual, analizaremos las transcripciones mismas. En concreto, las correspondientes a la Primera Audiencia, y dentro de ella, a las declaraciones autobiográficas que todos los acusados fueron obligados a declarar a partir de 1561. Aunque nos hemos centrado en estos elementos concretos del proceso, algunas de nuestras conclusiones son aplicables al resto de la documentación. Como metodología para ello proponemos llevar a cabo un análisis crítico-textual basado en el estudio de las diferentes tintas empleadas, tipos de escrituras o ‘manos,’ y el uso de micro-expresiones.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Inquisición española; notarios inquisitoriales; historias de vida; procedimientos procesales.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about the workings of Spanish Inquisitorial notaries during the early modern period. Undoubtedly, the most meticulous research on this topic has been carried out by Bárbara Santiago Medina (2016a). However, her focus does not delve into technical matters. In contrast, Rolf Eberenz and Mariela de la Torre (2003) have approached the issue from a historical pragmatics perspective. Despite these contributions, numerous aspects remain unknown. The term ‘technical matters’ in this context refers primarily to the uncertainty surrounding the methods used to document proceedings within the Inquisitorial courtroom. Specifically, questions arise regarding how the notaries managed to transcribe what was happening in the courtroom, the level of accuracy of their records, and the mechanisms they employed in carrying out this function.

An analogy frequently used to address the question is to what extent these sources can convey the ‘voices’ of defendants. John H. Arnold critically points out that “there is little more seductive in social history than the promise of access to the ‘voices’ of those normally absent from the historical record” (Arnold, 1998, p. 380). Inquisitorial sources possess an evocative capacity indirectly linked to this idea. Not without reason, Carlo Ginzburg once stated that “while reading inquisitorial trials, [he] often felt as if [he] was looking over the judges’ shoulders” (Ginzburg, 1989, p. 158). We shall not delve into the discussion regarding how and why this sensation happens, although it is strongly linked to the oral origin of these sources; nor will we discuss matters related to the unequal power relationship between interrogated and interrogators (Arnold, 2001; LaCapra, 1985; Kuehn, 1989). Instead, this paper addresses a significant technical question. Moreover, if we accept the analogy, it will be argued that the ‘voice’ modern readers ‘hear’ is that of the notary, who lends it to the defendant. Given the lack of explicit information in any manual or instruction, we will explore this issue by examining the records of the Inquisitorial proceedings themselves.

More particularly, this study is based on the questions posed during the initial hearing, audience, or interrogation, known as the ‘Primera Audiencia,’ within an Inquisitorial trial or ‘proceso de fe.’ Specifically, it focuses on the so-called ‘discurso de la vida,’ a procedure that became systematic from 1561 onwards. This practice consisted of requiring defendants to provide oral

testimony that constituted a sort of ‘autobiography’ (Kagan and Dyer, 2004; Amelang, 2011; Lorienté Torres, 2023b).<sup>2</sup> It moreover can be regarded as a ‘collaborative autobiography,’ since multiple actors were involved in its composition. Above all, these included the declarant, the inquisitor, and the scribe. Kenneth Plummer has suggested that the most effective approach to analyze such life narratives is by examining the role of these participants in the elaboration of the final document (Plummer, 1995; Plummer, 2001). Another approach could be the one proposed by Herman P. Salomon for the Portuguese inquisitorial documentation consists of treating these sources as if they were ‘literary documents,’ distinguishing between the notion of ‘authentic’ and ‘truthful,’ especially if what concerns us is the ‘truth’ contained in these life narratives (Salomon, 1990, p. 152).

The initial hearing was arguably the most formulaic and least flexible part of the interrogation. Its very lack of flexibility serves our purposes well because it allows us to distinguish the ordinary from the extraordinary while inviting us to make comparisons. During this phase, a series of fixed procedural questions were posed to gather personal details of defendants, such as name, age, address, and employment. They were also required to provide a list of their parents, grandparents, and other relatives, in addition to being asked for the aforementioned ‘discurso de la vida’ and, finally, inquired whether they knew or suspected the reason behind their imprisonment (Valdés, 1561, fol. 29r; García, 1591, fol. 10r). Although we have focused on this part of the process, some of our findings may also apply to the remainder of the more dialogical interrogation, which was based on a series of questions and answers directly related to the specific case.

## THE LITERALNESS OF THE RECORDS

We may begin by discussing the literalness of the records. Legal norms clearly based on their probative value on this quality. The bulk of this regulation is found in the reorganization carried out by the General Inquisitor Fernando Valdés (1561). His instructions regarding content and scope find parallels in the *Regimento do Santo Officio da Inquisição dos reinos de Portugal* promoted by the Inquisitor General Francisco de Castro (1640).<sup>3</sup> They also bear similarity to Francisco Peña’s edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorium* by Nicolau Eymerich (1587) for the Roman Inquisition, although this latter publication cannot be compared with the Spanish and Portuguese re-

<sup>1</sup> The origin of this article is a chapter from my doctoral thesis written in Spanish, titled “Los ‘discursos de la vida’ de la documentación inquisitorial como manifestaciones autobiográficas” (UAM, 2023). This thesis will be published as a book by editorial CSIC, presumably in 2024, under the title *Los ‘discursos de la vida’. Autobiografía e Inquisición en la Edad Moderna*. The version presented here is not merely a translation but an original reworking of that research, written in English to achieve wider dissemination. Abbreviations used include: AHN (Archivo Histórico Nacional); BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España); Inq. (Inquisition section); L. (libro), leg. (legajo). Mss. (manuscrito). All translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> This study has considered 2725 cases corresponding to the ‘procesos de fe’ belonging to the inquisitorial court of Toledo between the years 1561 and 1819, although the last trial incorporating the question took place in 1804. Additionally, a sample of 95 cases between the years 1472 and 1560 has been examined to confirm that, indeed, the ‘discurso’ began to be questioned not before 1561.

<sup>3</sup> Available in Biblioteca Nacional Digital: <https://permalinkbnd.bnportugal.gov.pt/idurl/1/262164>; on this regulation, see Caldeira Cabral Santiago de Faria (2016).

gulations in terms of juridical-normative nature.<sup>4</sup> Returning to the Spanish Inquisitorial regulations, there were some earlier indirect indications by Tomás de Torquemada in 1478, compiled and published together by Gaspar Isidro de Argüello (1630)<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, the instructions that every inquisitorial tribunal should follow, as well as any communication with the *Suprema*, the centralized institution under which they operated, were complemented through the 'cartas acordadas' (González Novalín, 1986; Henningsen, 1989; Torquemada, 1997; Cabezas Fontanilla, 2002; Pérez Fernández-Turégano, 2017; Bederá Bravo, 2018). Their volume is substantial, so in the future, we might find more specific information; but with a few exceptions, particularly regarding notarial work and specifically regarding the accuracy of the records, they mostly reiterate Valdés' instructions.<sup>6</sup>

Torquemada's instructions were quite clear regarding the working day: "All the Officers of the Secret of each Inquisition gather in the Court and work, both in Summer and Winter, for six hours; at least three hours before lunch, and three more after" (Argüello, 1630, fol. 15v). The term 'Officers' or 'Notaries of the Secret' referred to the scribes of the Inquisition, as 'secret' (*el secreto*) denoted the Inquisitorial archive where they stored and managed relevant information. However, according to Bárbara Santiago, they preferred to refer to themselves as 'secretaries.' They did this either to differentiate themselves from notaries and scribes outside the institution, or because the status of a secretary was considered higher than that of a simple notary (Santiago Medina, 2016b, 168). In this paper, we will use all these designations interchangeably.

This regulation gives us an idea of how long a typical statement might be. Moreover, the records indicate whether they were registered in the morning or afternoon session. When the time came, the Inquisitor did not hesitate to interrupt the defendant's statement, even in the middle of it. The interruption sometimes reached the point of frustrating the beginning of the 'discurso' itself. In any case, the initial interrogation concluded with the initial warning or 'Primera monición,' in which the suspect was urged to recall events, unless the life narrative extended to the point that it was not possible to conclude in a single sitting, in which case it continued through as many additional hearings as necessary. However, one can infer from the documentation itself that the Inquisi-

tors somehow manipulated this circumstance, concluding the interrogation before the accused began his or her 'discurso.' This was significant because it provided the defendant with a certain margin of time with which to consider his or her life story.

Nor do we know how notaries distributed the multiple tasks they carried out (Santiago Medina, 2016a). Who attended the hearing, and who, for example, handled notifications? Did they operate in shifts? How did they choose their cases? How many scribes were needed to cover an interrogation? The little that can be deduced from the documentation itself is that a single notary attended the courtroom and documented what happened there. However, if the process unfolded over several hearings, as was normal, other notaries also intervened. Only rarely was a single notary exclusively assigned to a single process.

Concerning the 'Primera Audiencia,' several guidelines are observed regarding the literalness of the records. Valdés' *Instructions* command that "the Notary shall record everything that happens in the hearing;" or "the Notary shall write down everything that the Inquisitor or Inquisitors say to the prisoner, and what the accused responds;" and finally: "...at the end of the hearing, the Inquisitors shall instruct the Notary to read everything he has written down, so that the accused, if he wishes, can add or correct something, and it shall be recorded as it was read to him, and what he responds or amends, so that nothing of what was first written is altered" (Argüello, 1630, fol. 29r). The notary was required to record not only what the witnesses and defendants stated but also "the condition in which [they found themselves], whether they are in custody, and if so what kind; and if they are sick, or if they are in the hearing room, or in the prison in their quarters" (Argüello, 1630, fol. 31r). Finally, Torquemada prescribed a penalty for any irregularity, which may indirectly influence the literalness as well: "...and if any Notary does anything he should not in his office, he shall be condemned as a perjurer and forger and deprived of the office forever" (Argüello, 1630, fol. 16r).

When reading these sources one gets the strong feeling that the notaries have indeed faithfully captured what was happening in the courtroom. This impression arises primarily because the statements retain traces of their oral origins. This is not only because they were declared orally but also because their authors were rooted in an oral culture. According to Walter Ong, this culture possesses several characteristics. For instance, its language is "copious or redundant," resulting in statements filled with illative conjunctions. Additionally, an oral culture is deeply grounded in the material world rather than in metaphysical reflections. This implies that narratives are replete with material, temporal, and visuospatial references, drawing on visual memory to evoke action (Ong, 2012, pp. 39-43; Franceschi, 1991). Finally, one can find elements that elicit "empathy and participation" from readers or listeners (Kryk-Katovsky, 2000), such as rhetorical questions or humorous or moral components that resemble fables and folktales. All these elements were

4 On the *Directorium Inquisitorium*, see Borromeo (1983) and Peters (1974). To the best of my knowledge, except for Francisco Bethencourt's general comparative study (Bethencourt, 1997), to date, there has not been any specific work that has exhaustively compared the regulations of the three inquisitions.

5 On the secretary and his compilation, see Domínguez Nafraía (2006), Cabezas Fontanilla (2004) and Pérez Fernández-Turégano (2001).

6 The following records of 'cartas acordadas' have been consulted: AHN, Inq., leg. 799; AHN, Inq., L. 27; AHN, Inq., L. 231; AHN, Inq., L. 323; AHN, Inq., L. 497; AHN, Inq., L. 498; AHN, Inq., L. 499; AHN, Inq., L. 500; AHN, Inq., L. 1228; AHN, Inq., L. 1298; BNE/Mss. 848; BNE/Mss. 854; BNE/Mss. 12891; and BNE/Mss. 4184.

necessary to frame the narrative because people from an oral culture did not typically tell a story directly; instead, they often took a lengthy narrative path to convey something seemingly simple (Arnold, 2001, p. 86; Cohen, 2015, p. 143). Moreover, some declarants in their statements often reproduced conversations between them and a third party, a rhetorical or narrative element known as ‘direct speech’ (Díez Revenga Torres and Igualada Belchí, 1992). This element aimed to reinforce the argument through the probative force of the direct quotation, while also indirectly contributing to the sensation of witnessing the scene. Not to mention, finally, other paralinguistic elements that occurred in the courtroom and were meticulously recorded by notaries, such as cries, lamentations, and other expressions of remorse, which the Inquisitorial logic regarded as providing fundamental evidence (Dedieu and Knutsen, 2023).

However, orality does not mean fidelity nor literalness. Therefore, the impression that the scene has been faithfully captured is actually false. According to some studies based on similar sources, many of these elements were fabricated, imitated, or ‘reanimated’ by scribes to make the transcription sound authentic for its probative value (Collins, 2001, *passim*; Hiltunen, 1996, p. 96; Doty, 2007, p. 26; Bähr, 2015, p. 132; Culpeper and Kytö, 2000, p. 175). Nevertheless, this does not call into question the authenticity of the records, because it was something done naturally. Not to mention that the proceedings were read to defendants, who were required to confirm or deny their validity. At the same time, people from that period, rooted in an oral culture, had a different understanding of literalness, prioritizing substance over literal accuracy (Ong, 2012, pp. 77-114). It is also impossible to assert their literalness due to the necessary conversion from oral to written language. According to Eberenz and de la Torre (2003, p. 22), Inquisitorial scribes smoothed the oral sequences by eliminating hesitations, pauses, or redundancies, to render the speech acceptable for the reader. This idea aligns with what we know about other early modern judicial records (Cohen, 2015, p. 22), or even applies to current ones (Slembrouck, 1992, p. 104). Finally, we should consider other human factors; and cultural, mechanical, or conventional obstacles (Kryk-Katovsky, 2000, pp. 206-207). All in all, apart from a few probative elements such as conjurations, prayers, or psalms to which notaries paid special attention (Gala Pellicer, 2015); or other textual or idiomatic elements unknown to the scribe, such as foreign words or phrases or localisms (Willumsen, 2015, p. 61), it is not possible to speak of literalness in the strictest sense, at least as we understand it today.

This sense of literalness also aligns with what little we know about the work of professional notaries outside the Inquisitorial institution. To practice their profession, public notaries had to pass an examination in which the aspirant had to demonstrate proficiency in professional knowledge and procedures (Valls Tur, 1985, p. 197). The examination might assess technical skills such as writing speed. In this vein, there was a wealth of literature

on the art of writing, ranging from the use and handling of quills to techniques for “writing quickly, in the Italian manner” (Egido, 1995, p. 70). However, it is more likely that the exam was focused on the knowledge and handling of notarial literature, based on specific books and professional templates. In any case, a notary did not necessarily need a university education; instead, he learned the trade “in a manner similar to common practice in artisan guilds” (Extremera Extremera, 2001, p. 162). This fits with what we know about the working methods of inquisitorial notaries, which involved the handling and knowledge of templates, as demonstrated by manuals such as the one composed by Pablo García (1591). Similarly, these practices matched those that led to obtaining positions within the Inquisition. In fact, according to Bárbara Santiago, many public notaries frequently ended up joining the ranks of the Inquisitorial institution (Santiago Medina, 2016a). Likewise, one of the few references we have found regarding literalness in the work of public notaries states: “The notary must transcribe the statements verbatim, without abbreviations or overly intricate script, without changing a word or clarifying it but as it is spoken, as the law commands.” The text further clarifies: “Nevertheless, despite this legal precept, it is allowed and in practice to express them [the statements] with clear, intelligible, and well-sounding words that do not alter the substance and, on the contrary, make the facts more understandable.” In other words, it was allowed to alter certain words as long as they did not alter (or even made clearer) the ‘substance’ or meaning. Finally, Josep Febrero, the author of this manual, offered an example to illustrate the point: “Otherwise, if the witness is rustic, his or her statement serves not as a declaration but as confusion. It requires much effort to understand some of these, and it is almost necessary to guess and repeat many times what they say so that they understand it and see that they are understood.”<sup>7</sup>

7 “El escribano ha de estender los dichos a la letra, y no en abreviatura, ni la letra muy metida, sin mudar palabra, ni aclararla, sino como la diga, pues así lo manda la ley; pero no obstante este legal precepto, se permite y está en práctica ponerlos con voces claras, inteligibles, y bien sonantes, que no varíen la substancia, y antes bien hagan más perceptibles los hechos, porque de lo contrario, si el testigo es rustico, sirve no de declaración sino de confusión su dicho; cuesta mucho trabajo entender à algunos, y es menester casi adivinarlos, y repetirlos muchas veces lo que dicen, para que lo entiendan, y vean que los entienden”. (Febrero, 1781, pp. 186-187). The work can be consulted in Biblioteca Digital Hispánica <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/CompleteSearch.do?showYearItems=&fileId=todos&advanced=false&exact=on&textH=&completeText=&text=Librería+de+escribanos&pageSize=1&pageSizeAbrv=30&pageNumber=1>. I owe the reference to Dedieu (2022).

## HOW DID INQUISITORIAL NOTARIES MANAGE TO TRANSCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IN THE COURTROOM?

Taking all this into account, how did scribes manage to transcribe what was said or occurred in the courtroom? More importantly, how can we ascertain that these are the original transcriptions and not mere copies? How important is the accuracy of the copies? To answer such questions, a comprehensive methodology is required. Andrea del Col has

proposed the inclusion of a critical-textual apparatus for the study of the records of the Italian Inquisition, which involves studying different handwriting styles, ink compositions, corrections, deletions, additions, and marginal notes within the documents (del Col, 1984; 1990). A similar methodology has been employed in studying the Salem trials of 1692-93 (Hiltunen, 1996; Hiltunen and Peikola, 2007). This approach provides valuable insights into the authenticity and integrity of the transcriptions. To the best of my knowledge, similar methodologies have not been applied to the sources produced by the early modern Spanish Inquisition.

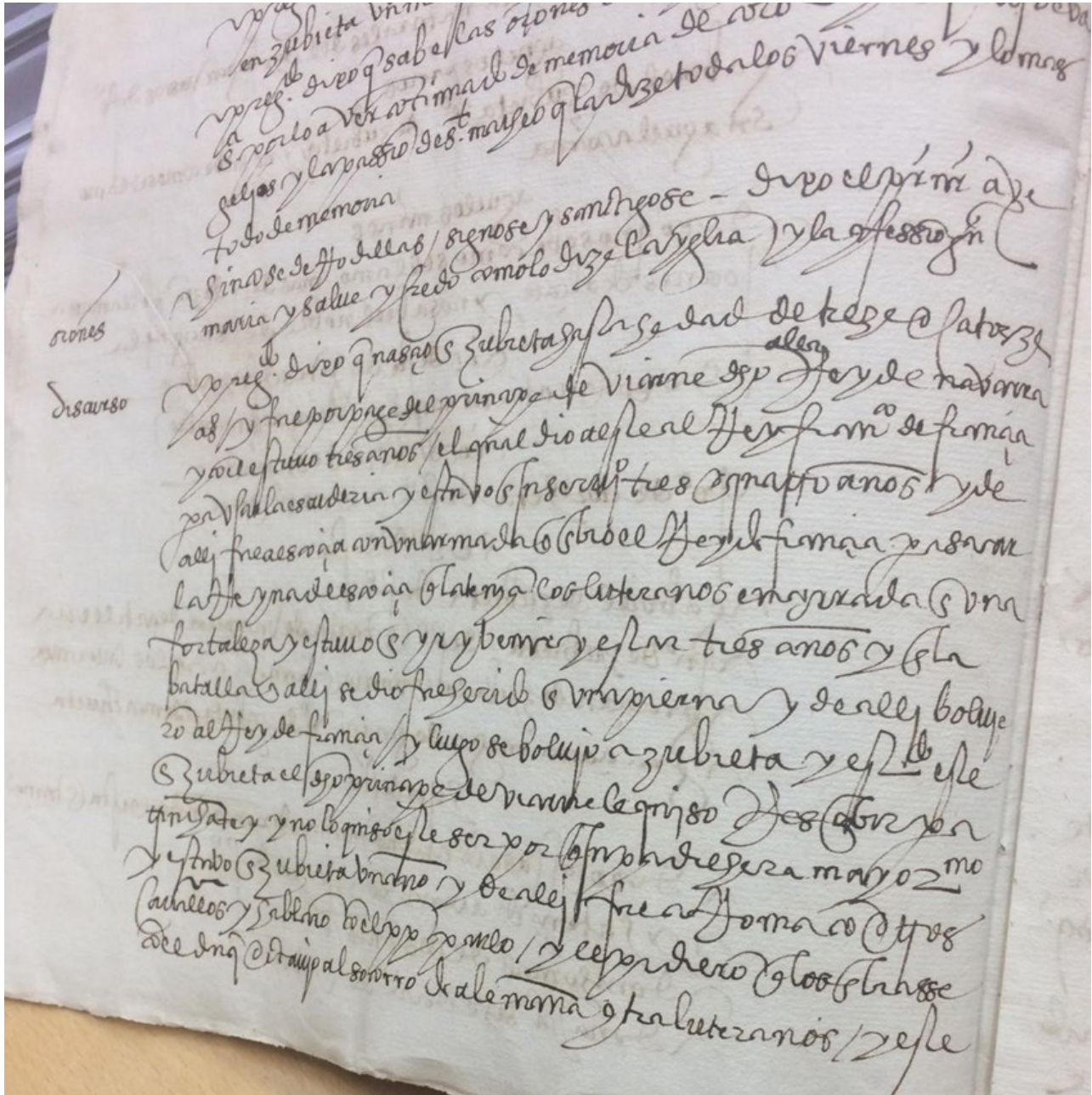


FIGURE 1. Detail of difficult-to-understand cursive calligraphy by Secretary Juan de Vergara. Trial of Pedro de Zubiaeta, AHN, Inq. leg. 211, exp. 32, n.d. (PARES).

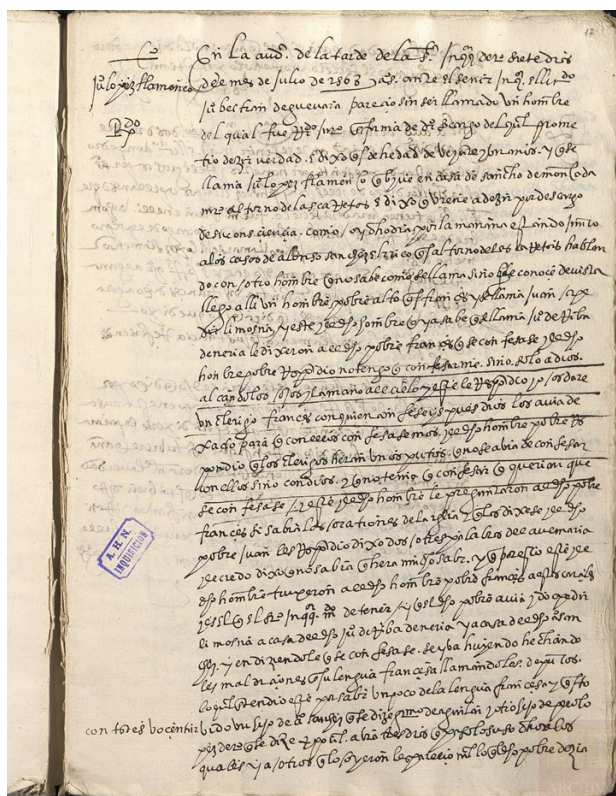


FIGURE 2. Detail of the same handwriting as the ‘discurso de la vida’ of Pedro de Zubiaeta, carried out by the same notary (Juan de Vergara) but with a lower degree of cursiveness. Trial against Juan Francés, AHN, Inq., leg. 38, exp. 41, fol. 17r. (PARES).

After analyzing these elements in our documentation, we have reached a series of preliminary conclusions about the work of notaries. To begin with, the majority of the preserved records appear to be original transcriptions made on the spot by scribes. However, to ensure this with certainty, each case would require individual examination. Three key elements should be observed for this purpose. Firstly, it should be noted whether such circumstances are explicitly indicated in the document itself. Within the Inquisitorial files, certain documents are explicitly labeled as transfers (‘traslados’) or clean copies. For example, some witness statements are marked as having been transferred from the so-called ‘libro de testigos’ or witnesses’ book (Pulido Serrano and Childers, 2020). That seems not to be the case with the audiences, or at least we have not found many examples of it. Secondly, we might examine the number of errors, corrections, strikeouts, or amendments in the transcriptions. Although these elements could also occur during the copying process, a fair copy would eliminate most of them. Instead, what we often find is that some mistakes are acknowledged as valid in the margins or at the end of the document. Therefore, the definitive factor in determining whether we are dealing with the original transcript or not is the degree of cursiveness in its handwriting.

As is known, this characteristic distinguishes fast writing from slower handwriting. Consequently, instances with a high degree of cursivity would suggest that they are the original transcriptions made on the spot. For example, Pedro Zubieta’s first interrogation exhibits highly cursive handwriting (Fig. 1). This contrasts with the calligraphy of the same notary, Juan de Vergara, which is much clearer and less cursive, as observed in the trial against Juan Francés (Fig. 2). This suggests that the latter might be a copy made from a rough draft. Nevertheless, it is difficult to be certain or to generalize here, since it is not always indicated, as in the previous case, whether a fair copy or a transcription has been made. Even those that are not explicitly labeled as such exhibit both a suspiciously slight degree of cursiveness and so few amendments that clearly suggest they are fair copies. Thus, a case-by-case approach is necessary. Furthermore, there is no explicit instruction or norm specifying which documents were supposed to be transcribed, under what circumstances the originals should be preserved, or if these decisions were left entirely at the discretion of the notary. That said, the fact that we are dealing with the original transcriptions is a noteworthy element that helps dispel doubts about their authenticity and whether any form of subsequent manipulation has taken place.

Upon examination of the different inks and handwriting styles, it appears also that some minutes were partially prepared in advance. This could have been facilitated by the repetitive or formulaic nature of the initial interrogation, especially in the wake of the Valdés’ reformation. This allows us to discern a series of amendments and corrections in cases where defendants did not follow the usual order, which required the scribe to revise the pre-prepared form. The documentation provides many examples of this. For instance, in the case of Felipe Rafacón, prosecuted as a ‘Morisco’ in 1591<sup>8</sup>, when he was asked about the ‘discurso de su vida’, the word ‘discurso’ is written down but instead of the expected response, we find the heading of another typical question (“if he knows or presumes the cause”), which remains unanswered. Following this, the term ‘dixo’ (he said) is crossed out, and instead, we encounter the phrase: “and asked about the discourse...,” returning to the initial question (Fig. 3). Another example is found in the case of María Ruiz, accused of bigamy in 1634. When questioned about her ‘genealogy’, the text initially records “husband and children...,” but instead of continuing with this information, it states: “She said that she understands that she has been arrested because she has been married twice...,” with the notary adding “she confesses” in the margin of the page (Fig. 4). Furthermore, another detail supporting the hypothesis of partial preparation is evident in María Ruiz’s trial. Later in the same document, her declaration refers to “Preguntado por el discurso de su vida” (Asked about his life story) in the masculine form, despite her being a woman (Fig. 5); although the rest of the questions are

8 AHN, Inq. leg. 196, exp. 24.



formulated in the feminine, except for the genealogy, which is initially in the masculine and later amended. While isolated instances of errors might be attributed to on-the-spot mistakes, the frequency of such amendments and corrections suggests that notaries often attended hearings with partially prepared minutes.

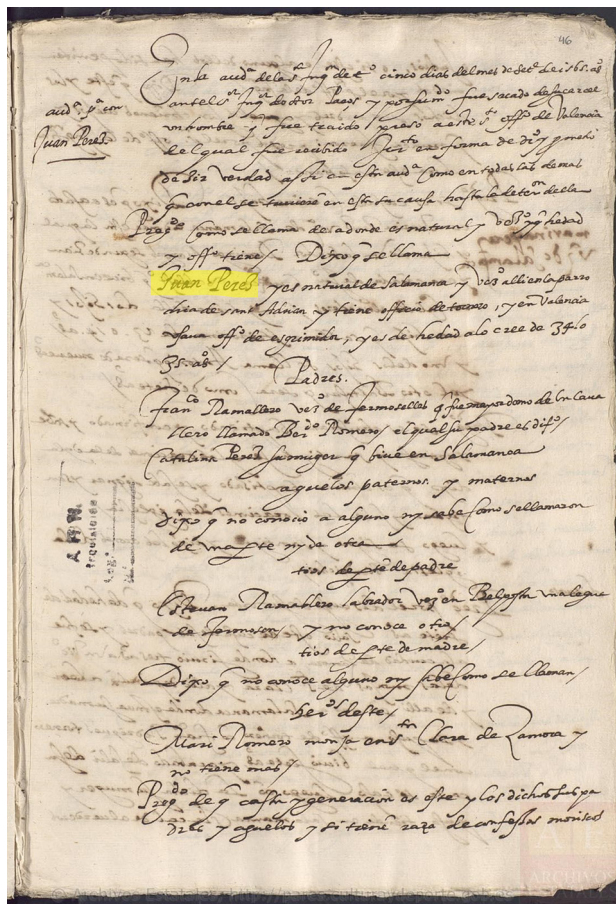


FIGURE 6. Example of a sort of handwritten form. Trial against Juan Pérez Tornero, AHN, Inq., leg. 28, exp. 5, fol. 46r (PARES).

The previous-partial-preparation hypothesis can also be supported by the presence of gaps or spaces left blank to fill in specific information for each case (such as name, age, etc.), resembling current forms. These instances can be identified because they have been later filled in with different ink or handwriting. Similar practices have been observed in other judicial records, such as the Salem trials (Hiltunen and Peikola, 2007, pp. 61-62), or in the minutes of the Roman Inquisition (Firpo, 1993, p. 5). An example from our documentation is the first interrogation of Juan Pérez, prosecuted for ‘heretical propositions’ in 1563, where his name is clearly written with a different handwriting, slightly larger and less cursive than the rest of the record (Fig. 6). Another instance is the case of Antonio Rubin, prosecuted for ‘blasphemies’ in 1600, who began

the audience by stating his name and place of residence, “and that he resides in Madrid, in the service of Francisco Jacome de Oria...”. Subsequently, in what appears to be the same handwriting but added later, as if trying to fit the sentence into the gap between that question and the next one, one reads: “and that he is about thirty-four years old, more or less” (Fig. 7). Although this scenario might suggest that the notary forgot to ask that question, in either case, it implies a modification made later.

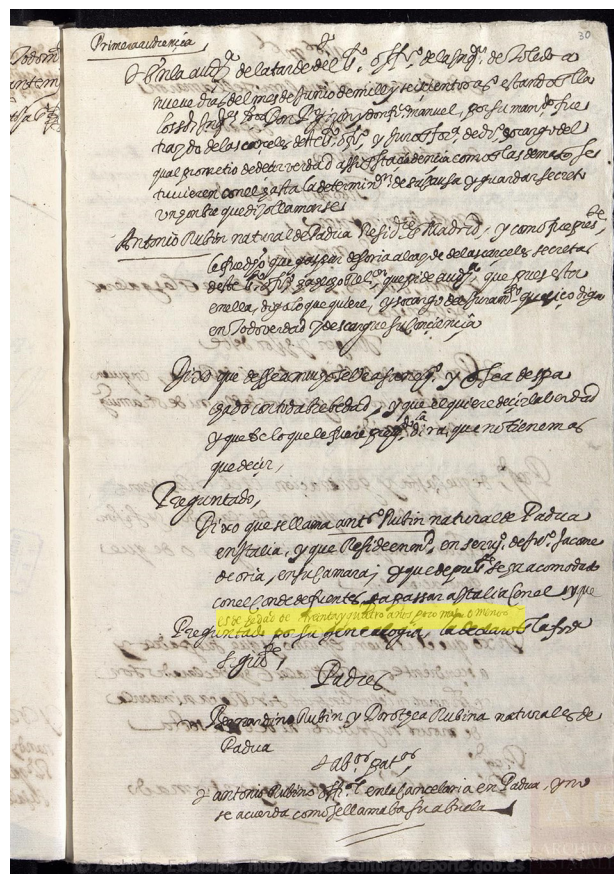


FIGURE 7. Detail of a proceeding where the accused’s age has been added a posteriori. Trial against Antonio Rubin, AHN, Inq., leg. 46, exp. 17, fol. 30r. (PARES).

On the other hand, some audiences appear to have been transcribed on the spot but left incomplete, to be finished later. This corresponds with one of the few explicit references we have found regarding the work of notaries, which states, “some secretaries often begin some audiences and leave them blank to fill them in later. This cannot be done, as it lacks formality, and the secretary may forget and leave it blank<sup>9</sup>.” Examples of leaving

9 “Suelen algunos secretarios empear algunas audiencias, y dejarlas en blanco para llenarlas después: esto no se puede hacer, porque se falta a la formalidad, se puede olvidar el secretario y quedarse en blanco”. In “Advertencias a un secretario del Santo Oficio desseoso de cumplir a sus obligaciones”, AHN, Inq.,

audiences incomplete to be finished later can be found within the documentation. For instance, Felipe Díez Gutiérrez, a Portuguese accused of Judaizing in 1636<sup>10</sup>, at the end of his first interrogation seems to have been “asked if he knows or presumes the cause for which the Holy Office has him imprisoned”. However, the notary either failed to transcribe the answer or it was not provided, resulting in a blank space instead, followed by the next comment: “Admonition 1. Missing admonition and sign the nco [sic] and notary” (Fig. 8)<sup>11</sup>.

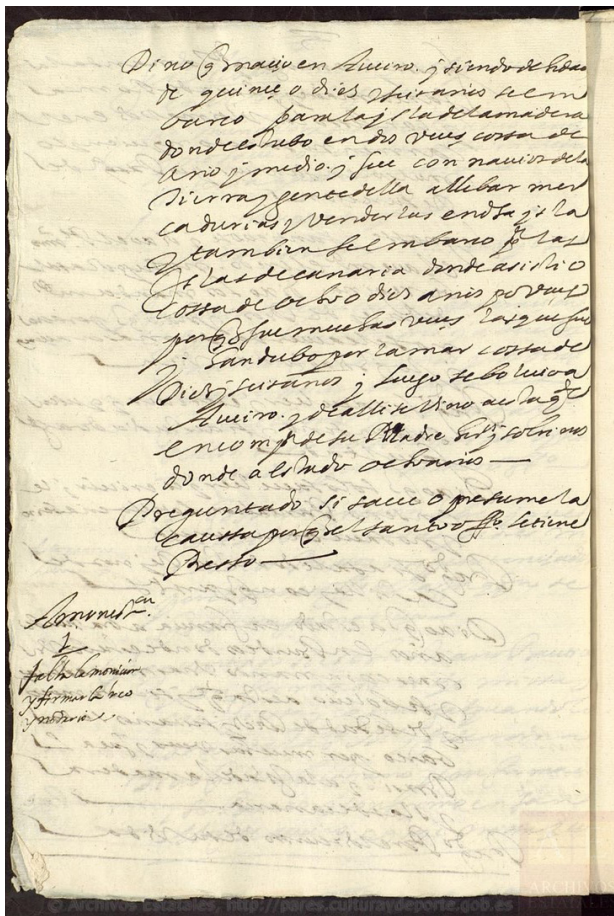


FIGURE 8. Detail where a space is left blank where the response should have been. AHN, Inq., leg. 142, exp. 2, n.d. (PARES).

L. 27, fol. 183r. “I owe this reference to Professor Gunnar Knutsen (University of Bergen), who generously provided it to me. The same instruction is copied exactly in “Libro quarto cartas acordadas y instrumentos. Año 1713”, AHN, Inq., L. 500, fol. 84v. I owe this reference to the kindness of Professor Gunnar Knutsen from the University of Bergen in personal communication.

10 AHN, Inq., leg. 142, exp. 2.

11 “Preguntado si sabe o presume la causa por que el Santo Oficio le tiene preso”. “Admonición 1. Falta la monición y firmar la nco [sic] y notario”, AHN, Inq., leg. 142, exp. 2, s.f.

## THE CASE OF JUAN FRANÇÉS

The case of Juan Françés, prosecuted for ‘palabras escandalosas’ in 1566<sup>12</sup>, provides deeper insights into how Inquisitorial scribes operated, as his case did not follow the ordinary order procedure. First, different inks and handwritings are present in the record. His record begins: “He did not have a certificate saying that he did not confess except to God, and that he had not sinned but asked for a piece of bread, and that he did not have to confess about that”. In the upper right corner of the page, in different hand and ink color, it reads: “Against Juan Françés de Buenaventura, a Frenchman sent by the authorities of Moçejón” (Fig. 9). It is difficult to determine the authors of different inks and handwriting found in this documentation. In most of the examples proposed so far, they likely belong to the notary. However, in other cases, such as this one, they can be attributed to the Inquisitor or possibly to the prosecutor (known as ‘promotor fiscal’ in Inquisitorial terminology), who underlines and adds marginal annotations as part of his work in gathering information with which to support the accusation. We have reached this conclusion after observing the handwriting of Pedro Soto Cameno, a public prosecutor who worked for the Inquisitorial Court of Toledo for four decades. His burial site and statue can currently be located in the Convento de San Pedro Mártir in Toledo (Andrés Martínez, 1988, p. 172). His handwriting, along with the ink he normally uses, is easily identifiable. Nevertheless, distinguishing this aspect is not always straightforward.

Continuing with the proceedings of Juan Françés, some corrections and erasures are also observed in his file. For instance, when he was asked for his life story, we read:

He was asked about the discourse - he said he was born [crossed out]. Asked where he was born, he said [that] he cannot say it /

he was told to answer what he was asked, or he would be whipped - he said he wants to get up and leave, and they should give his money back and let him go - he said he do not know anything.

He was admonished to answer what he was asked and say where he was born and raised [...], and he refused to answer - The Lord Inquisitor ordered him to be given twenty lashes and returned to his cell -

he was then taken to the courtyard and tied to a post, and given twenty lashes with a cord, and taken back to his cell. Passed before me Joan de Vergara Secretary (Fig. 10).

12 AHN, Inq., leg. 38, exp. 41.

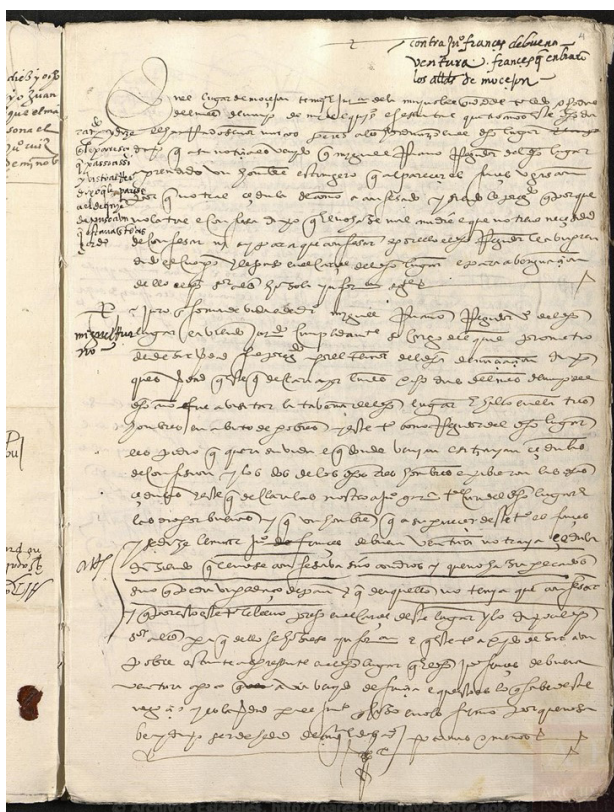


FIGURE 9. Detail where subtly different handwritings and inks are evident. Trial against Juan Franc es. AHN, Inq., leg. 38, exp. 41, fol. 4r. (PARES).

This brief passage indicates that we are dealing with the original transcription of the record. Had it been a fair copy, its erasures and crossings would have been removed by the secretary, leaving a clean document. Moreover, the erasure shows that at the time of writing the sentence "he said [that] he was born....," the notary was ahead of the declarant, either because he had the record partially prepared or simply because that was the usual order. In any event, since the defendant did not answer, the scribe reformulated the question to "ask where he was born...". The accused still did not respond but this time the secretary did not anticipate, so there was no erasure.

Finally, recording that the prosecuted was tied up and received the lashes exemplifies what is known as ‘diegetic summary’ (Pozuelo Yvancos, 1989, p. 255). This narrative mechanism involves, instead of recording the words allegedly spoken by the declarant verbatim, a synthesis of the same. It was used when, for different reasons, notaries were unable to capture the spoken words in a literal manner, or when they deemed literal accuracy to be non-essential. For one reason or another, the trial against Juan Francés is filled with diegetic summaries. For instance, at the beginning of the first interrogation, one reads: “He called himself Juan, and nothing else. When asked where he is from, he said that from all over the world, and he does not know who his father

or mother were, or where he is from, or how old he is; he does not know when or on what day he was born.” Following this, it is written: “And nothing else could be extracted from him even though he was heavily questioned, and it appears from his appearance that he is more than forty years old and Gascon by his strong accent.” Finally, another one can be found a bit further: “Asked who brought him prisoner to this Holy Office and why. He said that some young men brought him [...], that he has not done any wrong [...], and he said *twenty ramblings* (*‘devaneos’*).” The first interrogation ends as follows: “...and seeming insane, this defendant was not further questioned and was ordered to return to his cell.”

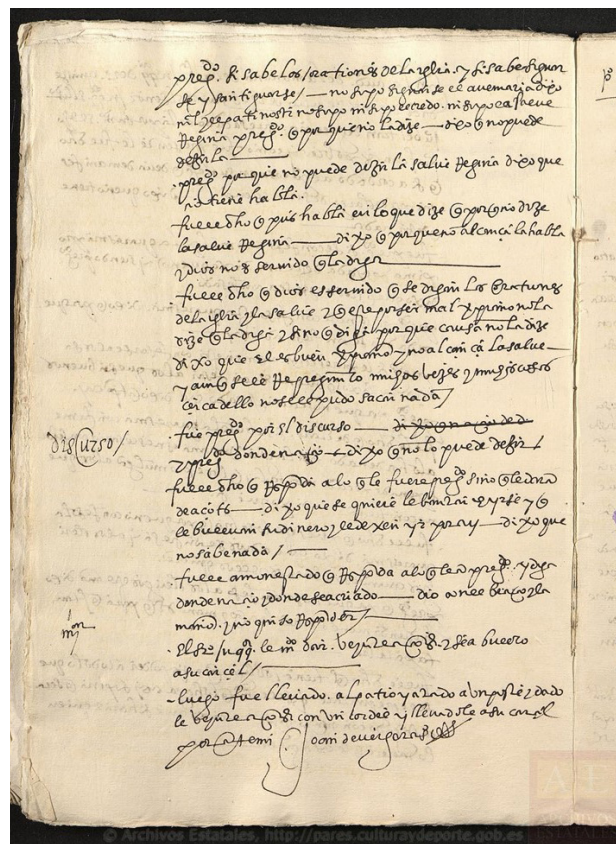


FIGURE 10. Deletion in the trial against Juan Francés, AHN, Inq., leg. 38, exp. 41, fol. 21v. (PARES).

The ‘diegetic summary,’ along with the rest of the judicial formulas, is the mechanism that best allows us to ‘hear’ the voices of different scribes (Hiltunen, 1996). However, it was not frequently used in inquisitorial sources due to the “evidentiary force of the open citation” (Eberenz and De la Torre, 2003, p. 43). The predominant style in Inquisitorial documentation is the indirect style, which is introduced through declarative verbs or ‘*verba dicendi*,’ as in the sentence: “asked such a thing, he said that...” Through this style, the scribe fully assumes the role of narrator, stepping away from the action and yielding the spotlight to the declarant. The scribe conveys

only the content of the original discourse, committing it as truth but remaining aloof from its contents. Hence, the predominant use of the third person.

On the other hand, the use of direct style implies a greater commitment by the narrator, as the literal reproduction, or presumably literal, of the original message, implies that its form is considered to be as important as the content. Through direct style, the notary relinquishes the role of narrator of the story to the deponent. This happens rarely, primarily when the accused reproduce dialogues between themselves and a third party. In the transcription of these verbal exchanges, it was considered pertinent to convey the original intonation, and even the phonetic peculiarities of the speaker whose discourse is being transmitted, which “had as its main motivation the desire for authentication of the testimonies offered” (Díez Revenga Torres and Igualada Belchí, 1992, p. 150).

### SOME SPECULATIONS ON HOW THE INTERACTION OCCURRED IN THE INQUISITORIAL COURTROOM

Returning to the procedural documentation in general, certain clues within them give us glimpses of how interactions in the courtroom occurred. On some occasions, in addition to the questions and answers exchanged between the interrogated and interrogator, notaries also transcribed clarifications made by the Inquisitor. This occurred especially during the more dialogical parts of the interrogation but sometimes it also happened during the initial, more monological first hearing. For instance, Juan Vergara, prosecuted in 1564, was asked “what caste and generation he and his parents and grandparents are.” Instead of answering straightforwardly, he responded that “he does not know more than that they are merchants,” indicating either a lack of understanding of the question or a reluctance to answer. In response, the inquisitor clarified: “he was told that he is not asked what profession they have but if they are old Christians.”<sup>13</sup> In this case, the notary has recorded the clarification but such occurrences are quite rare.

Likewise, we do not know the degree of obligation imposed by the inquisitorial instructions regarding the ‘discurso de la vida.’ That is, we are unsure whether the inquisitorial instructions simply described what this practice entailed or, on the contrary, mandated that the accused deliver their narrative in a specific manner (Loriente Torres, 2023c, p. 198). On one hand, both the instructions and the narratives themselves closely resemble other types of contemporary autobiographical narrations unrelated to the inquisitorial context. On the other, if they were normative, such circumstances would open the possibility that the accused received some form of instruction on how to conduct their autobiographical statements, with such guidance not being recorded in the proceedings. In

other words, the records suggest a sense of spontaneity that may not precisely correspond to reality.

To explore this possibility, we must delve into the realm of speculation. What if they did not transcribe everything said during the interrogation? What if they manipulated the statements in some way? How would they carry out such manipulation? Matthias Bähr (2015) has analyzed the minutes of the scribes of the Imperial Chamber Court. These notaries would go to the residences of declarants to record their statements, which they would later transcribe and include within the proceedings through another clean copy. Bähr has been able to compare both types of statements, arriving at a series of conclusions about their work, that might be extended to our sources. German secretaries did not accept a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as an answer but invited declarants to elaborate further, although this encouragement was not recorded in the final record. Similarly, it is rare to find a one-word answer in our documentation. The explanation of Rolf Eberenz and Mariela de la Torre is that “it probably violated the rules of courtesy” (Eberenz and De la Torre, 2003, p. 65). We find what Bähr pointed out to be more likely. Analyzing our documentation through this lens, the responses provided by defendants—and by extension, by witnesses as well—are filled with details. What is more, these are not merely limited to stating where they were; they also often included information about who accompanied them and which activities they engaged in. Let us observe, for instance, the beginning of Juan Borgoñón’s ‘discurso de su vida,’ when he was prosecuted as a Lutheran in 1566:

Asked, he said that he was born in Besançon, and his father died, and he stayed there until he was four years old, when his mother went to Gil [sic] to serve as a maid to a lawyer, and there he was raised in the home of the said learned man named Pier Garnia until the age of fourteen, and he learned to read and write. At the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed as a sock maker there and spent two years with a tailor and sock maker. From there, he went to Besançon and spent another two years there with a master learning the trade. He returned to Gil [Gy] and stayed there for about three months with his master. Then, he went to Dola [Dôle] and settled with a soldier with whom he stayed for five months. From there, he came to Flanders, and unable to move on, he stayed in Nancy, in Lorraine, working at his trade with a master artisan in the court...<sup>14</sup>

- 14 “Preguntado, dixo que nació en Bisançon y murió su padre y este estuvo allí hasta ser de quatro años que su madre se fue a Gil a servir a un letrado de ama y allí se crio este en casa del dicho letrado que se llamaba Pier Garvía hasta ser de edad de catorce años, y aprendió a leer y escribir, y de catorce años le pusieron a aprender oficio de calcetero allí, y estuvo dos años con un sastre y calcetero, y de allí fue a Bisançon y estuvo allá otros dos años con un maestro aprendiendo el oficio, y se volvió a Gil y estuvo allí como tres meses con su maestro, y se fue a Dola y asentó con un soldado con el qual estuvo cinco meses, y de allí se vino para Flandes, y no pudo pasar y se quedó en Nançi, en Loregna, trabajando a su oficio con un maestro de la corte...” (AHN, Inq., leg. 111, exp. 5, fol. 23r). On Borgoñón, see Loriente Torres (2023a; 2024).

13 AHN, Inq., leg. 81, exp. 11, n.p.

In every place where he claims to have resided, Borgoñón suspiciously adds with whom he has been, and in almost all cases, what he did there, information which he has not been directly or explicitly asked for. The addition of that information applies to practically all the ‘discursos de la vida’ within inquisitorial documentation. As we have mentioned before, individuals from an oral culture were not limited to just telling a story but often found a long way to convey something relatively simple. If this is so, such additions could be perfectly normal. On the other hand, what if all those details were explicitly required by the Inquisitor or the notary but the latter did not record the request in the proceedings? In this vein, as we have pointed out above, one of Valdés’ *Instructions* might be interpreted: “that he or she [the defendant] always declares specifically the persons with whom he has dealt with in what he confesses, even if he has mentioned them before.”<sup>15</sup> This is probably what Eberenz and de la Torre allude to when they argue that “there are patterns of interaction that are never found in the transcriptions” (Eberenz and De la Torre, 2003, p. 45).

Another feature Bähr points out is that the on-the-spot minutes contained more questions than the final versions. This happened because notaries grouped under the same heading which actually were verbal exchanges between themselves and declarants. Were Inquisitorial notaries to operate in this manner, it would explain the discrepancies between what Inquisitorial literature states regarding the ‘discurso de la vida’ and what is ultimately found within the documentation. Similar to the very first hearing, the obligation to pose this question was meticulously regulated by Valdés’ instructions, which state: “He or she is asked where he or she was raised, with whom, if he or she has studied any profession, if he or she has traveled outside of these kingdoms, and in what company.”<sup>16</sup> The same instruction was elaborated in detail in the more practical manual by Pablo García:

Asked about the discourse of his or her life. He or she said that he or she was born in such a town, etc. He or she should declare where he or she was raised, the places where he or she has resided, and with whom he or she has associated and communicated, all in great detail and very specifically.<sup>17</sup>

Jean-Pierre Dedieu asserts that “these biographies were not spontaneous narratives but answers to a standard questionnaire concerning the location, duration, and activities of the accused at different places” (Dedieu,

1986, p. 165). However, what we find in the documentation is that defendants were directly prompted by the ‘discurso de su vida.’ And they responded to this prompt with a nearly uninterrupted, fluid, and continuous speech, sometimes longer and other times shorter, as seen in the case of Juan Borgoñón mentioned above. There is no indication within the transcriptions that these were separate questions compiled later, nor do they appear to have undergone any manipulation. Instead, we only observe the flow of the defendant’s life narrative. In case they were asked these questions separately and then their answers were put together later by the scribe, that circumstance has not left any trace in the transcriptions. And, as mentioned before, these documents seem to be original.

Although these are not autobiographies in the strict sense of the term, at least from a traditional perspective as conceived by the canonically accepted definition of Philip Lejeune (1975), none of the circumstances mentioned above alter the fact that we are dealing with ‘some form of’ autobiography. In this sense, the period from the concept of ‘egodocument’ coined by Jacques Presser in the 1950s (Baggerman and Dekker, 2018; Dekker, 2002) to the latest gender studies since the 1990s (Smith and Watson, 2001) has given rise to intense research focused on analyzing this type of self-referential sources that do not exactly correspond to the traditional concept of the term. Such research has moreover considered the participation of multiple actors, as well as the coercive context in which these statements were made (Plummer, 1995; 2001). From this perspective, it becomes evident that analysis of these documents presents unique challenges. Not to mention the difficulties involved in distinguishing the ‘truth,’ or following Solomon’s ideas mentioned above the ‘authenticity’ or ‘veracity,’ contained in these statements. But also, such self-referential documentation is worth studying for what it can teach us about autobiography and other life narratives produced in similar circumstances, inviting us to focus on comparison. In this vein, while all the ‘discursos’ are quite repetitive at the beginning, especially regarding birth and upbringing, from a certain point onward a greater thematic ‘freedom’ is observed. Indeed, since the ‘discurso’ was a much more open-ended question than others in the interrogation, many defendants took advantage of this to craft narratives to convince their tribunals of their innocence (Lorienté Torres, 2023c).

## VOICES IN THE INQUISITORIAL COURTROOM. WHOSE ‘VOICE’ WE ARE HEARING THROUGH IDENTIFYING MICRO-EXPRESSIONS

The methodology based on the study of inks and handwriting would also help us recognize micro-expressions. When these expressions can be associated with a specific notary, they suggest that we are hearing his ‘voice,’ following the analogy. A good place to look for them is particularly in the ‘discursos.’ Whether thanks to

15 “Que siempre declare en particular las personas con quien ha tratado lo que confessa, aunque las aya nombrado antes” (Valdés, 1561, fol. 32v).

16 “se le pregunte al reo dónde se ha criado, y con q personas, y si ha estudiado alguna facultad, y si ha salido destos Reynos, y en q compañías traducir” (Valdés, 1561, fol. 29r).

17 “Preguntado por el discurso de su vida. Dixo, que nació en tal pueblo, &c. Declare dónde se ha criado, y las partes donde ha residido, y con quién ha tratado y comunicado, todo muy por estenso, y muy particularmente” (García, 1591, fols 10r-10v).

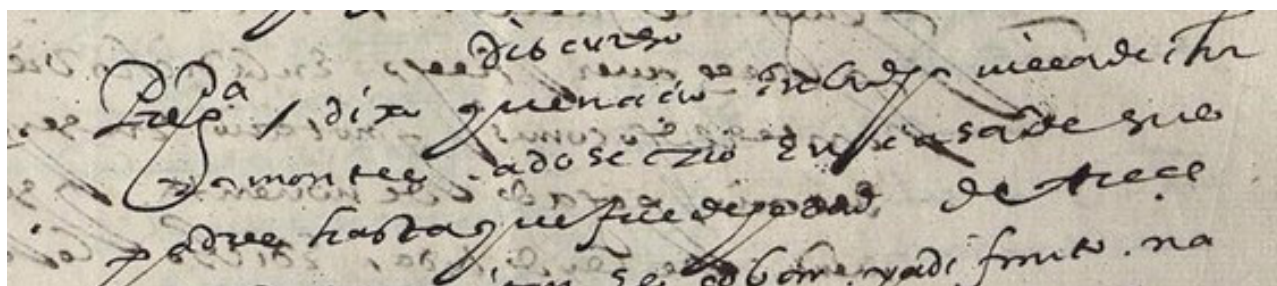


FIGURE 11. Detail of micro-expression ‘a do se crio’ from the ‘discurso de la vida’ of Antonia Vicencia, AHN, Inq., leg. 48, exp. 24, fol. 31r (PARES).

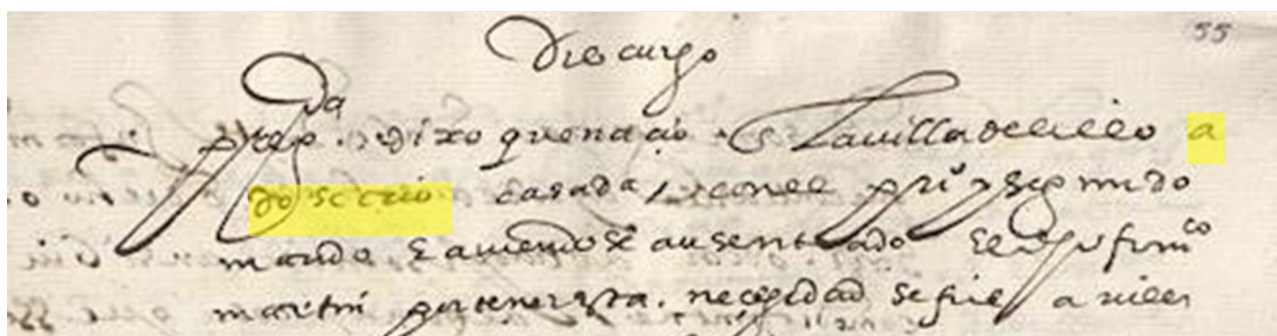


FIGURE 12. Detail of micro-expression ‘a do se crio’ from the ‘discurso de la vida’ of Ana Hernández, AHN, Inq., leg. 26, exp. 1, fol. 55r. (PARES).

a standard questionnaire or because that was the way autobiographies were narrated at that time, these statements are quite repetitive. As mentioned before, they usually begin by stating that the declarant was born in such a town, where he or she was raised in the house of his or her parents until such an age, when they left their homes to become soldiers, move to a neighboring town, pursue higher education, join a religious order, get married, or a myriad of other possibilities. This marked the beginning of a more unrestricted or diverse narrative. In any event, that initial repetitiveness allows us to detect significant differences. For instance, Luis Méndez de Ulloa, thirty years old, prosecuted for ‘blasphemies’ in 1589, declared during his life story that “he was born in the town of Ocaña in the house of his parents, where he was raised, and from there he came to the village of Mascaraque...”<sup>18</sup> Which was a common response. However, in most cases within the documentation, the phrase “where he was raised” is usually expressed as ‘donde se crió.’ Instead, what we find here is the phrase ‘a do se crio.’ In other words, an apocope reduced ‘donde’ to ‘do’. The same expression can be found in the ‘discurso’ of Ana Hernández, a forty-year-old prosecuted for bigamy in 1595<sup>19</sup>; and in those of Antonia Vicencia, also forty years old, a slave accused of blasphemies in 1596;<sup>20</sup> Lucía Hernández, accused in 1596 of practicing Islam, who likely

declared in Arabic through an interpreter;<sup>21</sup> and finally, Miguel Flores, twenty-four years old, accused of ‘scandalous words’ in 1596.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from their use of this expression, what else did they all have in common? They were all roughly the same age, between 30 and 40 years old, and shared a similar geographical origin as natives of the present-day province of Toledo. Additionally, they were prosecuted within a relatively short time frame. However, Antonia Vicencia and Lucía Hernández did not share the same social or cultural origin as the others, and the latter even required an interpreter for her statement. The key element in common to be highlighted is that all their statements were transcribed in the beautifully rounded cursive, yet easily readable, handwriting of the same secretary: Francisco de Arze (Figs. 11, 12, 13, and 14). Therefore, the most logical deduction to be drawn is that the expression ‘a do se crio’ —the only common element in all the statements— originated with him. If so, the voice heard in the statements of the aforementioned defendants would be his. This coincides with findings from another contemporary judicial source studied by Pilar Díez de Revenga and Dolores Igualada, who argue that “the voice that is heard is that of the notary; he is the one who lends it to the different witnesses and ultimately decides whether or not to let them speak in their own words” (Díez Revenga Torres and Igualada Belchí, 1992, p. 136).

18 AHN, Inq., leg. 41, exp. 8, fol. 20v.

19 AHN, Inq., leg. 26, exp. 1, fol. 55r.

20 AHN, Inq., leg. 48, exp. 24, fol. 31r.

21 AHN, Inq., leg. 193, exp. 22, n.p.

22 AHN, Inq., leg. 201, exp. 41, n.p.

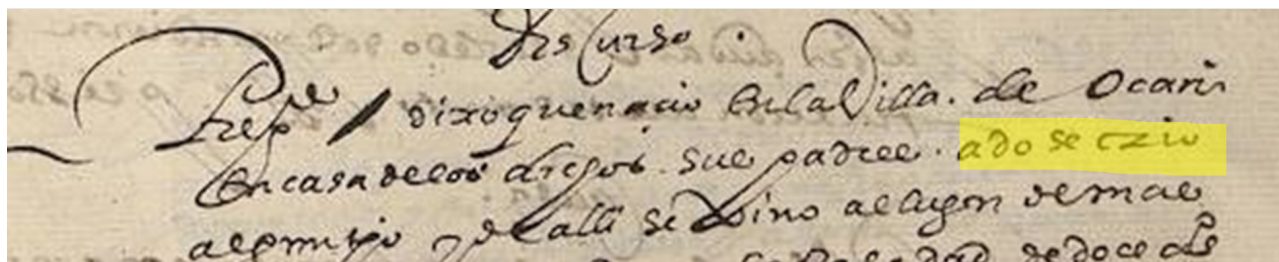


FIGURE 13. Detail of micro-expression 'a do se crio' from 'discurso de la vida' of Luis Méndez de Ulloa, AHN, Inq., leg. 41, exp. 8, fol. 20v. (PARES).

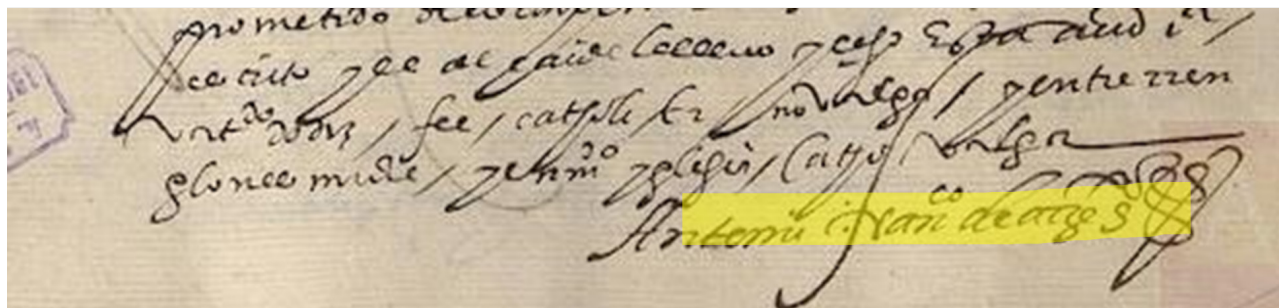


FIGURE 14. Detail of the signature of the secretary Francisco de Arze, Trial against Luis Méndez de Ulloa, AHN, Inq., leg. 41, exp. 8, fol. 21r. (PARES).

## THE CASE OF SALOMON BERGOM

Another example supporting this idea is the case of Salomon Bergom. He voluntarily appeared before the Inquisitorial Court in Toledo in 1792 to reconcile himself in the faith.<sup>23</sup> He made two declarations a couple of days apart. The first was the result of his voluntary appearance. However, instead of confessing his errors through an oral statement, he submitted the following written document in his own handwriting:

Salamon Bergom de mi primier nombre, e aora mi chiamo Carlos Bergamo [...], che essendo de su nacimiento e creado in Ley del testamento Antigo e che de algunos agnos che a tenido veredero deseo de abrazare la lei de gesucRisto, pero che me se traversava unas dudas che me impidiva la esecución e aora che las tiene convencido supp [sic] rendidamente us [Vuestra Señoría], che se dine a dar lordine compatente perche me se batica [bautice] e riciviese in nel gremio della santa eglesia, gracia chespera di ricivir dela pieta de us.

Toledo 1792 a g[iorno] 10 [diciem]ebre.

Salamon Bergom  
natural de Mantua  
in italia. (Fig. 15)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> AHN, Inq., leg. 137, exp. 15, n.p.

<sup>24</sup> "Salamon Bergom by my first name, and now I am called Carlos Bergamo [...], being by birth and upbringing under the Law of the Old Testament and having for some years had a sincere desire to embrace the law of Jesus Christ. However, I was troubled by certain doubts that hindered me from making the decision, and now that I have resolved them, I humbly supplicate Your Lordship to give the corresponding order so

Other defendants submitted statements in their own handwriting and were subsequently orally interrogated; altogether they provide us with one of the rare opportunities that enable us to 'hear' his true 'voice' without the filter imposed by the notary. However, what sets Bergom's case apart is the linguistic differences exhibited in his two statements. With even a basic understanding of both languages, the speech shown in his first written declaration might be described as a mix of Spanish mingled with Italian interferences, or as a blend of Italian and Spanish typical of someone learning the latter language. Not to mention its peculiar phonetic spelling.

Just a couple of days later, Salomon submitted to a first regular audience wherein he declared orally the following statement, set it down in writing by an inquisitorial notary:

Dixo que se llama Salomon Bergom, natural de la ciudad de Mantua en la Lombardía de Ytalia, de quarenta y cinco años de edad poco más o menos, oficio carpintero y hacer bombas; que su padre se llamó Abraam Bergom, y su Madre Nicol ignora su Apellido; que residieron en la dicha ciu[da]d de Mantua; que el dicho su padre ha oído decir ha muerto, su madre lo ignora; Y que le parece profesaron la Religión Mosayca, en la que le criaron hasta la edad de nueve años, en la que se huyó de su casa en la compañía de un cavallero Ginebrino llamado Don Pedro, ignora su

that I may be baptized and received into the bosom of the holy church, hoping to receive your grace and mercy. Toledo, 1792, on the 10th day of December. Salamon Bergom, born in Mantua in Italy" (AHN, Inq., leg. 137, exp. 15, n.p.).

apellido, con que pasó a Viena y otras partes de este Ymperio... (Figs. 16 and 17)<sup>25</sup>

again that the voice we hear in these statements is that of the notaries responsible for transcribing them.

Presentada en la Inq. de Toledo (P. 1.º) to Tribunal de Inquisición de Toledo. A.º de Dic. de 1702.

Bruma. (Solo)

Salomon Bergom de mi primer nombre e a ora me llamo Carlos Bergom Ap.º deus. exponiendo me essendo de su nacimiento e creado in lei del sacramento Amigo e che ee algunos años me a tenido ueradero deseo de abrazare la lei de gesu Christo pero me mase trauersaria unas dudas me me impidiua la seguit e ahora me las tiene conuenido

Paga Bendidamente res. chese Dine a dar - ordine conueniente per me me se Barria e Riciuira in nel gremio de la santa gloria graga che spera di Riciuira de la pienza de us

Salomon Bergom natural de Mantua in Italia

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FIGURE 15. Declaration of Salomón Bergom, presented in writing, AHN, Inq., leg. 137, exp. 15, n.d. (PARES).

As can be seen, his second statement is made in perfect Spanish and differs very little from the hundreds or thousands of life narratives that have been analyzed. The main difference from the previous one is that this has been spoken orally and written down by the inquisitorial notary. So, what else would explain the linguistic miracle of having learned Spanish within a couple of days if not the intervention of the scribe who has written down his orally given statement? This would lead us to think once

25 "He said that his name is Salomon Bergom, born in the city of Mantua in Lombardy, Italy, about forty-five years old, by trade a carpenter and bomb maker. His father was named Abraam Bergom, and his mother, Nicol, he doesn't know her last name. They resided in the said city of Mantua. He heard that his father, Abraam Bergom, has died but his mother is unaware. It appears that they practiced the Mosiac Religion, in which he was raised until the age of nine, when he fled his home in the company of a Genevan knight named Don Pedro, whose last name he doesn't know. Together, they went to Vienna and other parts of this Empire..." (Idem).

Presentada en la Inq. de Toledo (P. 1.º) to Tribunal de Inquisición de Toledo. A.º de Dic. de 1702.

Bruma. (Solo)

En el 5.º oficio de la Inq. de la Audiencia de Toledo a diez y ocho dias del mes de Diciembre entre de mil setecientos noventa y tres estando en su Audiencia de la mañana el Sr. Inquisidor Lic.º D.º Juan Ma.ª de Bruma (p.º ante.º) entro el Sr. D.º Carlos Bergom y Contrajo a D.º Sr. D.º Inquisidor q. en la Porteria de la Audiencia havia un hombre q. pedia Audiencia; y hauiendose mandado entrar D.º Sr. D.º Inquisidor le recuso juramento en forma de decir verdad en toda la que supiere y le fue preguntado, y quando se le preguntó en todo lo que pasare, y con el se tratase

Preguntado como se llama, y donde es natural, que edad y oficio tiene, quienes son sus padres o quienes fueron, y donde residen o mueren, y que Religion profesaron.

Dijo: Que se llama Salomon Bergom

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FIGURE 16. Minutes of the appearance of Salomón Bergom (1<sup>st</sup> part), AHN, Inq., leg. 137, exp. 15, n.d. (PARES).

Speaking of foreigners testifying before the Inquisition, we must indicate one last circumstance that supports the idea that the voice we hear is that of the notary: the use of translators. This circumstance also contributes to the distrust of these sources, although the participation of a translator is usually indicated. For instance, in the next example, the translator was "Father Joseph Cresuelo, of the Society of Jesus, native of the said city of London [...], aged fifty," more commonly known as Joseph Creswell (Allison, 1979; Loomie, 1993).<sup>26</sup> He acted as a translator of one Juan Litel Buth, "...English by nation, native of London, of the profession of a drummer [...], and [who] now resides in this court near to Saint Martin in an inn of a Biscayan woman whose name he does not know because it is closed in his language."<sup>27</sup>

26 Another famous case of a renowned translator was that of El Greco, who acted as a translator in the trial of faith against one of his compatriots, see Andrés Martínez (1988).

27 AHN, Inq., leg. 108, exp. 5, n.p.

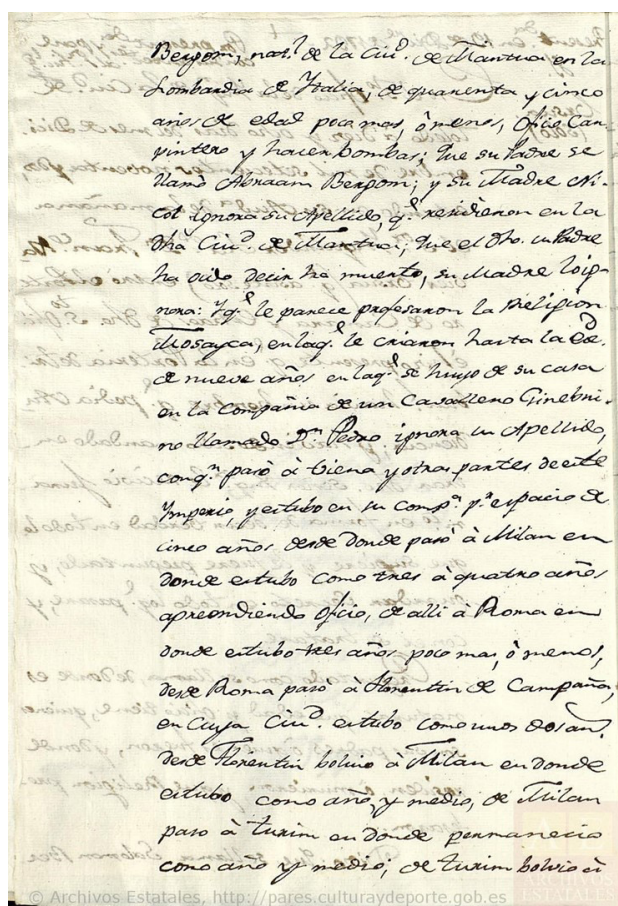


FIGURE 17. Minutes of the appearance of Salomón Bergom (2<sup>nd</sup> part), AHN, Inq., 137, exp. 15, n.d. (PARES).

The spelling of these two names, especially the latter, also confirms the literality in those cases that were challenging to notaries. Despite being ‘closed in his language,’ his statement was uttered in perfect Spanish:

...y que él a bivido siempre en la secta de los protestantes de Ynglaterra como sus padres le enseñaron, y a acudido a las prédicas y oído los salmos que en las yglesias se cantan, y aunque los demás acudían a la cena, él no lo hizo por poca deboçión y porque sus padres no le obligaron a que la tuviesse, y que por el mes de mayo próximo passado este passó a Flandes, y estando en la çiudad de Amberes, viendo allí la devoçión de los cathólicos y los hornatos de las yglesias, se halló movido interiormente a dexar su mala secta y seguir nuestra santa fee cathólica, y entrando un día en un monasterio d monjas y cogiéndole a este en el traxe una monja de naçión inglesa, le llamó y le dixo, después de aver savido que hera de Londres y de los protestantes, que no bolviesse a Inglaterra sino que se fuesse a Roma o a España, y este, pareçiéndole que la dicha monja le aconsejaba bien, se fue a Saboya con ánimo de servir allí y de reduzir-se a la fee cathólica, y que allí unos franceses le robaron y le dieron tres heridas, y que biniéndose a Chamberi, lugar de Saboya, se encontró con un español y se vino con él a

este lugar, donde a çinco días que llegó, y por benir muy enfermo a tardado todo este tiempo desde que luego que llegó a este dicho lugar a tratado de reduzirse a la fee, y que así pide ser reconçiliado a ella y se le de penitencia con misericordia.<sup>28</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, there was a whole engineering behind the minutes whose traces are difficult to grasp. Sometimes, notaries came with the minutes pre-filled, in other cases, they were finished later. Likewise, most of the preserved proceedings appear to be the original ones taken on the spot, although there always remains a shadow of doubt to make a rotund generalization. Were they the originals, it would diminish the possibility of later manipulation. Finally, the proceedings do not faithfully reflect what happened during the hearings as if they were modern magnetic tape or digital recordings. The main difference lies not only in the technology involved but more importantly in the different sense of literality back then. Moreover, it is likely that notaries or inquisitors encouraged declarants to include some kind of information or develop a certain storyline, or even that what were verbal exchanges between interrogator and interrogated were transformed into a misleading monologic statement. Which did not impede, on the other hand, some sort of life narrative, call it ‘autobiography,’ ‘egodocument’ or what we may.

In any event, the often-overlooked Image orchestrating these interventions was the notary, whose role extended to lending a voice to defendants, yet their contribution remains largely unnoticed. While this paper has unearthed some clues through the examination of records, there remains much to uncover about their work. I hope that someday a ‘carta acordada’ or some form of explicit instruction will be found, shedding

28 “...and that he has always lived in the Protestant sect of England as his parents taught him, and attended the preachings and heard the psalms sung in the churches, and although the others attended dinner, he did not for lack of devotion and because his parents did not oblige him to have it, and that in the past month of May he went to Flanders, and while in the city of Antwerp, seeing there the devotion of the Catholics and the ornaments of the churches, he felt inwardly moved to leave his bad sect and follow our holy Catholic faith, and entering one day into a convent of nuns and being caught in the habit by a nun of English nationality, she called him and told him, after finding out that he was from London and of the Protestants, not to return to England but to go to Rome or Spain, and he, thinking that the said nun was advising him well, went to Savoy with the intention of serving there and converting to the Catholic faith, and that there some Frenchmen robbed him and gave him three wounds, and that coming to Chamberi, a place in Savoy, he met a Spaniard and came with him to this place, where upon arriving five days ago, and because he came very sick, it has taken all this time since he arrived at this said place to try to convert to the faith, and thus he asks to be reconciled to it and to be given penance with mercy” (AHN, Inq., leg. 108, exp. 5, n.p.). About these cases, see Doty (2007) and Fosi (2013).

light on the role of notaries in the collective life narrative of ‘discursos de la vida,’ or more broadly, in the composition of inquisitorial sources. Until such a discovery materializes, we must rely on speculation derived from observation. Should this revelation be delayed, I trust that the proposed methodology will be subject to discussion, application, or rejection; and that more researchers join in the pursuit of understanding the work of Inquisitorial notaries.

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## AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

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