

TOOLS OF WRITING, LITERACY AND MAGIC PRACTICES IN THE SPAIN OF THE XVIIIth CENTURY: JACOME DUPRÉ'S INQUISITORIAL PROCESS.

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Abstract

Magic practices appear as a frequent reason of denunciation to the Court of the Holy Office in the inquisitorial processes of the XVIIIth century. These were led by individuals who acceded to diverse tools and writing supports and who, holding a certain degree of literacy, could use them as a vehicle for their heretical and heterodox practices. This study is about Jacome Dupré's process, soldier of the Royal Walloon Guards in Tarragona, whose process is located at Harvard Divinity School Archive (MA, U.S.A.).

Keywords: Spain, Inquisition, magic practices, XVIIIth Century.

Introduction

This study gives light to the content of an unpublished inquisitorial process that still sleeps today, filed close to other processes, at Harvard Divinity School Archive, waiting for a chance to be explored in its entirety and loading to its back long years of silence and orphanhood. Unlike other inquisitorial texts preserved in American universities, the manuscript including Jacome Dupré's process, purveyor of the Walloon Guards in Tarragona (Alarcón Luque, 2002), in the XVIIIth century, lacks light on its location and movements, at least with regard to what the elder archivist and the university annals could reach. Two boxes congregated under the epigraph "Inquisition Barcelona" are the shelter for diverse pieces in Latin, Catalan, Castilian, manuscript and printed in a temporary period of time of four centuries-XVI/XIX-. They can throw new contents and interests on searching guidelines already established or waiting to be recaptured. The dossier is preceded by a homemade catalogue, in dark letter written by hand in the 1920s, the only evidence of human paleographic work carried out on this unpublished set.

The approach applied to the analysis of this inquisitorial process has been the history of written culture, in its sense of magic tendency in the written text, compilation of supports and writing tools used in religious heterodox practices (Guerra, 1980, pp. 370-374) and degree of literacy in the acting group, in our case the one formed by soldiers belonging to the Walloon Guards. With regard to this last aspect, one lineal relation could add that the graphic types can only seem powerful for those who are not able to interlace them in the ordinary facts of their daily life (Marquilha, 1999, pp.111-128), for those who consider them as unknown. According to this plan, only in a mystic context of restricted literacy would be possible the mystical tendency of graphic signs. It must be then our task in these lines distrusting the simple schematism of this valuation and trying to grant to previous societies the quality of being as complex as the present ones.

Precedents. The Spanish Inquisition and the Court of Barcelona:

The Inquisition Court had a long life in Spain: it was established in 1242 and not abolished formally until 1834, during the Regency of María Cristina, holding its stronger activity between the years 1478 and 1700, with the government of the Catholic Kings and the Austria Dynasty.

The first courts of Inquisition were formed from a provincial council in Tarragona, the city of the processes set out for commentary; they depended on the bishop of the Diocese and, as a rule, their conduct was moderate. With the establishment of the Catholic Kings, The Holy Office would change in a remarkable way. If at the beginning the court was created to restrain heterodoxy between baptized persons (the more frequent reasons were the false converted to Judaism and Islam; shortly after Lutheranism, with centers in Sevilla and Valladolid, and Illuminism, pseudo mystical movement, were added), the blasphemy, in the sense that could reflect heterodoxy, and witchcraft, like by-product of religiosity (Pérez, 2002), were also considered crimes against the faith.

It has been shown that prisons of the Holy Office were better than the secular ones: we know their rules, their certain liberality (life sentence meant not more than seven years, for example), and we know the budgets of their maintenance costs and the diets. Torture, limited by severe restrictions and only after obligatory consultation to the Supreme or the Central Council, was practiced with non-sensationalist methods and was used in the 10% of the processes. On the other hand, the auto-da-fé did not consist of multitudinous celebrations with heretic people being burned: they were solemn public acts in which, after the instructive sermon, the sentences for the criminals were read; then the relaxed ones were given to the secular arm for execution outside the city in the stake, with death by asphyxia to those who had been reconciled (Prado de Moura, 1999). The desire to palliate the possible

arbitrariness, consisting of the fact that the medieval Inquisitor could spontaneously blame an eventual criminal, determined the character of the public prosecutor, but, as this one could not act without the license of the inquiring judge, this abuse was repeated. On the other hand, the history of the Inquisition in Aragón was marked by the popular, official and legalist opposition. All the meetings about this matter throughout the XVI th century were strong protests against the abuses and inquisitional infringements. The existence of codes of laws represented for the Holy Office something similar to a constant self-examination.

Among general histories of the Inquisition, H. Lea (1906-1907) contributed with a great amount of data on the Court of Barcelona, as also H. Kamen (2005) did, and the different collaborators of the work directed by J. Pérez Villanueva and B. Escandell (2000), although with a smaller volume. Authors as J. Blázquez tend to think that the Court of Barcelona was really peculiar and point out that “the history of the Holy Office of Barcelona could almost be described like history of a jurisdictional conflict between Catalan authorities and it”, as H. Lea had already done it when pointing the change represented by the Decreto de Nueva Planta (1716), and he wrote: “as all the liberties and privileges of Cataluña were abolished by the conquerors, their subsequent relations with the Inquisition did not show special features”, what means, logically, that it previously had them. On the other hand, J. Martínez Millán has underlined that the Court of Cataluña was, without any doubt, the one that experimented more alterations throughout its history, specially during the period (1640-1700) before the general crisis of the institution in the XVIII th century.

The Inquisition in Cataluña is implanted in 1487, after a long resistance, and its first period lasts until the death of Philip the Second (1598), with two clear divisions: 1487-1505, dominated by an action against cryptojudaism; and 1539-1598, ruled by the suppression of Protestantism. Opposed to the Inquisition, the kingdoms of the Corona de Aragón had a different situation from Castilla: the inquisitorial experience was not new for them. In the case of Barcelona, moreover, there was an addition: the fact of counting, city and Diocese, with an own inquisitor, apart from the general inquisitor. There was a papal and completely Roman Inquisition that enjoyed a clear and pacific atony. The desire of independence from the Crown and link with Rome will be shown in the Pacts of Peronne in 1641, which would sustain Inquisition in Cataluña.

The economy of the Court of Barcelona was always very precarious. Their payments used to be inferior to those ones from the other courts and, when the privileges and exemptions on bread and meat went away reducing, this compensation was delayed. The entrances, as well, also offered serious difficulties. Pablo IV, to avoid the court living on confiscation, with the

possible abuse from the Court, ratified a previous papal concession consisting of giving to each court a benefit coming from the cathedrals and collegiate churches located in the inquisitorial district. For Barcelona, they were the cathedrals of Tarragona, Barcelona, Gerona, Urgel, Vich and Elna, and the collegiate churches of Santa Ana in Barcelona, Guisona, Organyá and Tremp.

The location of the district of the Court of Barcelona determines part of its activity: being border zone with France, the number of French judged by the Court will be notable and, as the border implies a lot of military movements in the XVII th century, the prosecuted soldiers will also be a lot. Being seaport, the surveillance of books will also be another one of the remarkable activities (Bada i Elias, 1992, p. 109).

The judgments against witchcraft. Magic practices and the use of writing tools:

In Spain there were few cases of witchcraft in comparison with the rest of Europe; it was a more outstanding phenomenon among the baptized population of American territories, by the attachment to secular rites and traditions. In the Peninsula, the process against the witches of Zugarramurdi (Navarra), condemned in 1610 (Uribe, 1987), reached great diffusion. Inquisition preferred to consider these witches as hallucinated or ill people. In the processes of courts like the one of Cartagena de Indias, the accusations because of witchcraft are remarkable; among them, they are specifically mentioned throwing the rods to discover treasures (modern “guaquería” was persecuted like a devilish thing) or to use beans to become invisible, etc.... According to the inquisitors, the wizards had the ability to become small and to be transported by the air; they were transported in dogs, cats and other animals; they made dusts and poisons from toads, snakes, lizards, snails and farts of wolf. They used these dusts to destroy the harvests and to damn the people and the cattle; and their god, called devil, was adored with perfectly defined rites. Indeed, the first case of witchcraft inquisitorially processed in Spain occurred in Zaragoza, in 1498; there were seven more until 1532. It was abundant the number of the superstitions in Aragón in those centuries, as well as the number of the attached processes. In 1585 María Gracia Melero was punished by conserving a finger belonging to a hanged person and thinking that it would give good luck to her (Alcalá Galve, 1984).

According to Cristóbal de Chaves, an author informed by means of being solicitor, in his *Relación de la cárcel de Sevilla*, written between 1591 and 1592, there were many prisoners who lived on writing letters and love notes for people outside the prison; and, in relation to the prisoners of the Holy Office, the dispositions and rules referred were limitative, in the sense of general incomunication among the prisoners, although reality was another

one. Indeed, the inquisitorial rationing of the paper, moreover the long hours inverted in their own allegations and confessions, are the arguments used by Ángel Alcalá (1984) to question the fact that fray Luis de León wrote *De los nombres de Cristo o Exposición del libro de Job* in the prison at Valladolid.

Antonio Castillo points out that the talent, in this situation, was born in prisoners like Luis Carvajal el Mozo, son of Luis Carvajal el Viejo, governor of the New Kingdom of León, whose origin was portuguese and lived in Méjico, being processed and sentenced by the Mexican Inquisition, accused of judaism. In one of the letters to his sister Leonor, he shows his hope of returning to have in his hands the same banana that, without any doubt, he had used to send one of his messages. Also a bone of avocado, wrapped in a piece of taffeta, was the vehicle for some letters difficult to be red, but beginning saying “patient like Job”. These examples were the exponent of the necessity to stay united to the relatives and friends throughout the writing thread. The pen could be replaced by a needle and sheets of paper by some avocado bone, the skin of a pear or a piece of any weave (Castillo Gómez, 2003).

The young Leonardo Álvarez Valdés, from Cuzco, was denounced because of invoking the devil. A document had been found, signed by him, in which it was written: “I say..., that I will give my soul to the devil as soon as it leaves my body; and that I do and will do an obvious pact with who appears to me; and I sign it with my name...”. And he added in a note: “I will give this document to the devil who will appear to me and remove the problem from my soul”. At the beginning he denied being the author of the writing, although soon confessed that he made it with the intention of betting, due to his desperate economical situation.

If we consider the punishments contained in the Law, the Holy Office was benign with these delinquents. We have the opinion that they considered those poor criminals as victims of a cheat, social consequence of their ignorance and difficult circumstances. The most frequent punishment consisted of 100 or 200 lashes, exile or fines that they never paid (Castañeda Delgado, Hernández Aparicio, 1995, p. 9).

The clairvoyants, who had the gift to see throughout the things, were required to find hidden treasures, using also instruments related to the world of culture and writing. For example, we can name the architect Melchor Pérez de Soto, who was masterful greater of works in the cathedral of Méjico in 1650. He was accused of being in possession of forbidden books and having used judicial astrology to make judgments of birth and prediction to discover thefts, to guess elections, etc...

Necromancers, by means of printed writings or manuscripts (called “grimorios”) imposed their will to the demons to find hidden treasures, to guess the future or to overcome the resistance of women (Pedraza Gracia,

2007). However, necromancers were very far from knowing well their art: many of them were simple cheaters. This was the case of Diego de la Rosa, embroiderer, who, in 1580, was accused of necromancy before the Inquisition of Lima. At the moment of his arrest, they found in his pocket a note “written by his hand with many features, Greek and Jewish letters and other bad things”. The book included rituals and spells to attract women, power to fly by the air with the demons, to make a skull speak, to become invisible; but, mainly, instructions to find hidden treasures, where candles of wax, incense and four rods of cattle were used for the ceremony (Henningsen, 1994, p. 9).

But, as M. Jesús Torquemada points out, it would have to be questioned how many of these characters were convinced of the veracity of their procedures and how many of them operated picaresque on their neighbours to, simply, live on it. Because of that reason it is often difficult to discern whether, when they assumed that their practices were disappointing, they did it sincerely or to finish their inquisitorial processes sooner (Torquemada, 2000).

Jacome Dupré’s process, soldier of the Walloon Guard. Chronicle of an event:

The following text is a free transcription and translation into English of the content in the process located at Harvard Divinity School Archive (HDSA, Inquisition. Spain. Catalonia. Records, ca. 1553-1770).

- Page 1. Tarragona, 1723. Because of sorcery crimes and superstition. San Juan jail, Jacome Dupré entered on the 16th March 1723, Swiss nationality, and natural from San Mauricio, purveyor in the Walloon Guards. He was taken to hospital on the 28th June 1723, where he died on the 24th July in the same year, as we can see, making an exercise of autobiography (Amelang, 2011).

- Page 2. On the 23th February 1723. Pedro de Copón signs the document in which Jacome Dupré, soldier of the Wallon Guards, is sent to be caught, by sorcery crimes and superstition, in secret jails of the Holy Office, with the confiscation of his goods.

- Pages 4-14. On the 19th November 1722. Maria Dupré, Jacome Dupré’s wife, testifies. It is declared that Jacome had been soldier of the Walloon Guards, but, on that day, he was purveyor in Tarragona. Maria, aged 44, was Jaime Matheu’s daughter. She shows the will of having cleared her conscience before, but she alleges to be threatened by her husband and other persons. The facts took place on the 31th October. Maria’s house was a pension and there were two soldiers of the Walloon Guards there, a captain of arms of Monsieur Castañet’s company, belonging to the Walloon Guards in Tarragona, and the other one, Nicholas Sinsaberze, of German nationality

and soldier of the same company, nicknamed “the Painter”. The third individual is María’s husband, Jacome Dupré, owner of the house where the crimes were committed, located in the street Virgen de Monserrat. Jacome Dupré asked his wife to give him a gold ring and another one silvered, without offering any explanation to her. At two o’clock in the afternoon the three men left house and did not return until six; they brought a wood like the thumb, and put a little of white wax in the end of the wood and, in the middle, a piece of red silk; in the end of the wood, a little of yellow silk.

At eleven at night Maria was in her room and started to watch after the eye of the lock in the room where the three men were. As she was not able to see, she opened the door a little. She saw how the soldier called Nicholas took the wood, tightening it as strongly as he could and walking around the room. Maria saw how the wood inclined towards the Earth and then Nicholas said “here is the money”, and all of them went to their rooms. On the following day, they sang and danced until eleven; then, Jacome Dupré ordered his wife and the servant to go to bed. Jacome and Nicholas showed Maria a paper that the devil had painted; in that paper, he had painted a hand, a soul, a bread, two brackets and one wafer; and Nicholas said that, with that painted paper and all on it, he would find all the money that had been buried in the stairs (where a soul in pain was living) for years.

After two days they met, because Nicholas expressed the desire to speak with the demon. To do it, he used a compass on the paper. The others heard a noise and then he alleged that he had been speaking with the devil. He took the paper and ignited it, and very different letters were seen, by means of which, according to Nicholas, the devil transmitted that, in the stairs, there were doblones that the devil kept. And he added that, without a consecrated wafer, bread and two iron brackets, he could not raise that money, because there were two brackets of silver in the pot of the money.

Jacome Dupré commanded the servant, Margarita, to buy bread, which the three men soon trimmed in wafer form, and asked his woman for the key of the chest. Nicholas told Jacome, at the dawn, to take the wafer to a church and put it under the table cloth in the altar, to consecrate it, and thus he did it in the Cathedral. Then he threatened of death to his woman and her servant, in case they said something or they broke the wafer kept in the coffer.

At eleven the following night they met in the cellar of the house with the paper, bread, the wafer and the two brackets, and Jacome returned to warn Maria not to entrust God; in opposite case, the demons, would take her.

At four o’clock in the morning a great noise was heard. Jacome went up and warned the woman and the servant to say that a doubloon had fallen in the stairs, if the following morning the neighbors asked them about the noise. The day before this declaration, Nicholas had asked Maria if she

wanted to see the demon, and she responded negatively. He returned to ask if she wanted to see the black horse and the white one, and she, angrily, answered in a negative form, adding that God was more powerful than him and all the demons. Nicholas suggests Jacome to bury María and Margarita alive, that night; in opposite case, he would do it by himself.

María goes away and runs to the guard at the Door of San Antonio; she communicated everything to the captain of the guard and he reported it to the lieutenant of the King. They captured the three men. María Dupré declares to clear her bad conscience, swears and, as she does not know to sign, Joseph Vattle does it.

This is a copy of her testimony accorded to the original one; it remains secret.

- Pages. 12-15. María Dupré's deposition, on the 2th December 1722. She appears at 3.30 in the afternoon at the sacristy in Terreros Chapel, located in the convent of the same name. It is added like data that she and the servant were locked up in the quarter the night of the events; other two soldiers of the Walloon Guards also appear, who do not cooperate, but were present in a session, although the main evening they were locked up in their rooms. This ratification of deposition is examined by Joseph Mark, notary of the Holy Office.

- Pages 16-23. Declaration of the servant, Margarita Sarandels. She was natural from Villanueva de Cubellas, which appears as a not ratified deposition. The servant had been serving in the house of Dupré five months. She aims that, the first day of the facts, the three men left the city and returned to house at four or five in the afternoon. She adds like data that "they brought a stick that he removed from his dress coat, and/ both of them said that the so called Nicolás, to take/the wood from the floor, had to bleed/by the knee" (page 17r). The servant, in her declaration, adds more data than María Dupré: before the night in which they were present at the ceremony, Nicholas the soldier locked himself in his room and wrote or painted a paper, without being seen by the others, and took blood from his body and, with this blood, he wrote in that paper. The master and the servant saw a paper where there were different features, with ink and blood. Nicholas said that the letters that were seen when burning the paper were the name of the old inhabitant of the house, who was called Martín and had been buried thirty and eight years. The servant had also been sent to buy two small candles.

Nicholas had put a paper, wide as the hand, with a figure of the devil on each door in the house, not in the one where Margarita and her master were sleeping. That night they caught her master, Jacome Dupré, and the captain of arms, with two more soldiers that there were in the house. Nicholas fled, but he was stopped by the commander of the Wallon Guards

of the city; and the servant thinks that he is imprisoned in one of the castles in the city.

- Pages 30-33. The third witness, Mariano de Abad, appears. He is a soldier who was caught for being some time in Jacome's house, participating in the subject by hearing.

-Pages 34-37. Testimony of the soldier Carlos de la He, companion of the previous one, who also lived at Jacome's house and was also caught and questioned about why he had not denounced it before to the Holy Office (they answer that the three implied men spoke all privately).

-Pages 38-41. Testimony of Mister Luis Ferdinando, lieutenant of the Walloon Guards, natural from Flandes. He was on duty at the Door of San Antonio when Maria Dupré went to denounce.

-Pages 42-43. Testimony of Pedro Juan Pujol, who made the brackets for Jacome Dupré.

-Pages 44-45. Appearance of Pablo Amiguet, bricklayer in Tarragona. He is called to declare so that he can tell what found below the stairs at Jacome's house. There was a white paper in which no longer a wafer appeared, and this was the same paper, according to Maria, in which bread was wrapped in the chest. Some bread with different letters and figures written on it; he also found two iron forckets and a stick which had some white wax and the red silk and the yellow one on the top.

-Pages 46-47. Testimony of Felipe Freyre, lieutenant of the King in Tarragona. He declares about why he sent to catch both soldiers who lived at Jacome Dupré's house.

-Pages 48-50. Testimony of Mister Pedro Alejo, the Earl of Brías, commander of the battalions of the Walloon Guards. Apparently, Nicholas the Painter was reserved in the Cathedral until there were conversations with other ecclesiastical authorities, and he was caught.

-Pages 51-52. Witness number ten. Sergeant Caballero.

-Pages 53-56. Testimony of the Barón de Haën, Captain of the Regiment of the Real Walloon Guards, born in Luxembourg.

-Pages 57-58. Witness number twelve. Mister Pedro Antonio Tacón y Cárdenas, military commissioner of the Armies of His Majesty.

-Pages 60-73. Testimony of Nicholas Andrés Fontsigler, nicknamed the Painter, ringleader of the facts, who is in jail and does not understand the Castilian language, reason why there is an interpreter, Ambrosio Valat. Been born in the ducado one of Sajonia, in the capital, he is 20 or 21 years old. His office was painter before serving to the King as a soldier of the Regiment of the Walloon Guards, belonging to Monsieur Castañer's company. Nicholas had been eating and sleeping several days at Jacome Dupré's house - which is designated by him like a cabaret - and he did not have any money to pay to him. Then, as he had heard from Maria Dupré that there was money hidden

in the house, he invented the story to last until he could start off with the troops.

“The paper he invented had paintings and letters that did not say anything...” (page 63). The idea was to entertain the owners of the house until the day of San Martín, so that they opened the money, and that same day he would go away with the troops. ... and also ”in/the paper there were some red letters that he did writing them/ with rust, and later, put below/the light, turned into red” (page 63v). The servant, Jacome Dupré, Maria Dupré and both soldiers ate together and agreed to distribute the money; the other two soldiers in the pension did not know anything. Nicolas points out that the white paper in which the wafer was wrapped was kept by him to make a passport. The pieces of the leftover wafer were eaten among all of them. Whereas the three men dug the stairs, they created so much noise that some neighbors came to ask. They extinguished the lights, moment that Nicholas took advantage of to put all the objects mentioned in the hole, and soon they covered it.

Maria Dupré began to suspect that Nicholas had not paid what ate for many days, but then the husband began to beat her and she escaped. The guards came to catch the Painter, who had shut himself in the Cathedral Church, and they took him as a prisoner to the jail of the quarter. They also caught the other two soldiers, but these ones soon left in freedom. According to which Jacome had commented to him, Maria had taken perforated glass mixed with food to her husband at the jail in Tarragona.

Both men are transferred from the jails in Tarragona to secret jails of the Holy Office. Nicholas the Painter ratifies himself in everything what he has said and does not have more to add. More ahead, new questions are made with the information that the other witnesses have provided. Then he declares as false to have gone to look for the rod of Jesse; he only tried to cheat everyone, because he could not pay the stay at Jacome’s house. The compass served to make a circle in the stairs and to indicate the place. The servant confesses to her master, being in the jail, that she had seen Nicholas writing the paper by the hole of the lock. The criminal declares as false to have said that the hand painted on the paper belonged to the demon. It was rust that, through the heat of a candle, remained red. He admits having requested two candles, because it was dark and he wanted to see, but he denies to have requested a consecrated wafer.

He alleges that he made all the drawings without hiding himself, at sight of all those who entered to buy wine at Jacome Dupré’s house, who was always drunk and did not know that there was certain money underneath the stairs. He admits having ordered to make the two brackets soon to be able to nail them in the wall, to put a wood and go away.

-Pages 101-102. Doctor's report on Jacome Dupré's illness, the 22th May 1723. The doctor of the prisoners, D. Rafael Esteva, says to have noticed temperature in Jacome Dupré, cough and expectoration of blood, reason why he requests him to be transferred to a more extensive jail so that the medicines can be effective.

-Page 106. Vote of prison of Jacome Dupré, the 25th February 1723, from the Palace of the Inquisition in Barcelona.

-Page 112. Maria Dupré, confesses Jacome, had been married before with two or three husbands. Jacome declares that his last Christian confession was eleven months ago, in Tarragona. He answered well all the Christian doctrine questions made by inquisitors. He does not know how to read or write; he has not studied anything. Jacome Dupré claimed that her woman had asked Nicholas the Painter to paint a Virgin of Montserrat and San Antonio. Her wife would have liked to have the Painter as a husband, according to declarations of the aforesaid one. This one asked her if the house was hers, and she answered that it was rented, although she would have desired to be the owner to obtain the money that, during the last wars, the old owner had left buried in it.

Pages 121-122. It is requested again to Jacome Dupré to clear his conscience. Being in the jail in Tarragona, a soldier visited him and communicated that his head and the one of San Juan soldier were painted on the paper that had been underneath the launching slip, and added that they had not given him permission to do it. Nicholas, when travelling with Dupré towards the new jails, said to them that he had written it by heart. And he added to have been in the Inquisition in Rome and to have ground bones within a mortar to mix them with mercury...and added that he would escape.

And Nicholas the soldier, in his way towards the new jail, passing by Martorell, got a sheet of white paper and took a lead pen and a small penknife hidden in the trousers.

At the end of the displayed accusation, page 129, it is expressed the following thing: I beg this criminal to be put to rigorous torment, which will be repeated until he says all the truth.

The 24 th June 1723, doctors advise the authorities of the Holy Office to transfer Jacome to the Inquisition hospital in Barcelona, because the fevers with threats to become Pshiscio persisted. Between pages 48 and 49 of the dossier a small paper goes inserted; it is Jacome Dupré's death certificate. He went Hospital of Santa Cruz in Barcelona the 25 th June and died in that same hospital the 24th July. The form is in Latin. In this way the dossier is closed.

Conclusion

After this study about the role that tools of writing played in the development of magical practices denounced and condemned by Inquisition, we can outline certain conclusions. Our characters live in the Spanish society in the XVIIIth century, a society decimated by the efforts demanded to the citizens to protect values forbidden a long time ago in the rest of Europe. The intervention of the Holy Office at repressing these manifestations of occultism tried to palliate certain scientific and cultural deficiencies that belonged to the Spain of the XVIII th century.

The inquisitorial apparatus was conscious of the power and effectiveness of the writing used by their criminals, reason why there was paper rationing in the jail at Seville in the XVIth century. Due to the writing-desk paper deficiency, the most improbable channels and communication instruments written on the part of the prisoners were developed (pear needle, skin, pieces of fabric, bone of avocado, etc...). Also the texts with magical direction became serious in recognized documentary models, like the certificate, in the referred case of the cuzqueño Leonardo Alvarez, who in the mentioned document, signed by him, had agreed to the delivery of their soul to the devil. The clairvoyants, who had the gift to see through the matter, were asked to see hidden treasures, using also instruments related to the world of the culture and writing. In this line could be located the action of Nicolás the Painter, soldier of the Real Walloon Guards, who, searching a supposed treasure, uses paper, dyes, compass and other elements related to the world of written culture. The techniques used by these clairvoyants were varied, but in essence all of them were centered in being able to find new owners for wealth hidden to the human eye.

But Nicolás the Painter also makes the other pole participate of these magical relations in the writing process. Thus, the devil paints a paper in which the human and the divine are united -a hand, some bread, a soul and a wafer-; the devil speaks and he communicates through a piece of paper set on fire. On the other hand, blood, as a tincture, is used in this process like vehicle of the notarial act. Later, after being exposed to heat, acquired a reddish tonality.

The detailed relation of the inquisitorial process has allowed us to know that Nicolás the Painter, Walloon soldier, knew the ability of writing (he knows to sign), and he even uses the writing with cloudy aims and in his own benefit, trying to deceive the inhabitants at Dupré's house, using the writing like an instrument of power. He also presents a clear conscience about the importance of possessing writing material like support for official documents, the alluded case of conservating paper to elaborate a passport. However, Jacome Dupré, also Walloon soldier, refers that he doesn't know how to read or write (reason why he is purveyor and belongs to a generation

of Walloon guards where the primitive noble origin of the body had been weakened).

On the other hand, Nicolás the Painter, with an average degree of culture, since it has been demonstrated, had even been surrounded previously by another type of superstitions and magical practices (to grind bones of man skull within a mortar to mix them with mercury), which comes to corroborate the idea exposed in the introduction: not only in a context of restricted literacy a mystical conception of the graphical features is possible (this is Jacome and Maria Dupré's case, or the servant's), performances as the one of Nicholas the Painter demonstrate us that, apart from the dose of clear deceit in the course of the events and the use of the writing like power in front of a group, the belief in magical power of the writing and in elements concerning its universe continued alive at the time.

The Painter demonstrates to be a soldier who is in possession of writing instruments and papers, as it is endorsed by the sheet of white paper requested in Martorell, in the way towards the new jail, and the pen and the small penknife hidden in the trousers. In fact, by the selected sentences of the declarations, he conceived writing and painting papers as a daily activity, attached to his daily existence. All the exposed one leads us to think that the vulgarization of reading and writing processes did not have to entail the cancellation of magical graphical signs or their power to attract and to convince. On the contrary, it is evident that it facilitated its access, arriving finally to insert new lines and written communication channels in the ancestral world of magic.

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