

# MÁLAGA SEMANA SANTA



*the majesty,  
the pageantry of*  
**Holy Week**  
*in old Spain*

floats  
the chants  
the parades  
flamenco singing  
the cathedral service  
the 14 stations of the cross

recorded on-the-scene during Semana Santa in Malaga

by Sam Eskin



# Castle in Spain

Some miles east of Gibraltar, along the shores of a wide bay in southern Spain, Málaga lies soaking in the Mediterranean sun. The curving sweep of rugged Sierra Nevada foothills seals the city around a pocket of the bay. To the west the Gibraltar road and to the east the road from Valencia and Motril twist sharply along the corrugated shoreline.

During centuries of intermittent strife and guerrilla fighting, Málaga was always easy to defend. Today the tourist invasion is even less noticeable here than in many other cities of Spain.

When important festivals come around, every Spaniard in Málaga stops and turns his face toward the past. For a sensitive observer during Semana Santa the back of the neck prickles as night falls and the celebration commences. Somewhere up along the tightly packed street a signal bell stabs through the tumult, and a hundred men heave erect an enormous float bedecked with flowers and wax tapers. In a trice the present is gone, and in its stead the grandeur and sorrow, the majesty and suffering, the mysterious ineffable whispering romance of old Spain breathes again. As the *paso* draws close, beautiful lifesize sculptured images portraying episodes in The Passion Story emerge. The crowd roars *ole* as the stately *paso* moves slowly by. Women weep. A cordon of drummers advances and forges ahead, rolling that majestic inexorable dirge heard only from the Spanish. Now come the huge trumpet bands with long straight unkeyed brass *trompetas* of varying lengths, each trompetero playing only certain notes. With their maddening and princely music they raise to sublime pitch the temper of the night. The Spanish Army band passes. Then in a moment of quiet everyone stops to listen. From far away, a lone flamenco singer pierces the darkness with his *saeta*, song of sorrow and repentance.

On Friday midnight, the church bells silent since Holy Thursday peal the Resurrection tidings, the black veil shrouding the sanctuary is torn aside and the altar is revealed in a blaze of light. In Cathedral Square, the Bishop recites from a balcony the Fourteen Stations of the Cross. All of Málaga is in that square, chanting the *Amens*. It is now that Málaga discards its mourning for gaily colored clothes, cabarets and bullfights open, gypsies dance, and rich foods and wine break the Lenten fast.



on the *paso* — Maria Santisima de la Esperanza

recorded in the streets of Malaga

by Sam Eskin

edited and produced by Emory Cook

1-Hermandad de San Pedro Martir

2-cf. *Cruce-signati*, founded in Italy by Innocent IV following the murder of St. Peter Martyr in 1252.

3-Archivo de Simancas, Inquisicion, Lib. 939, fol. 950

4-Literally: warrant or sentence (of faith) handed down by the Inquisition authority. The first *auto de fe* was celebrated in February 6, 1481, when six men and women were burnt and the sermon was preached by Fray Alonso de Hojeda. He died of the pestilence a few days later.

5-Royal Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition

6-charter

7-Archivo hist. nacional, Inquisicion de Valencia, Leg. 1, n. 6, fol. 444

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

History of the Inquisition of Spain, H. C. Lea, MacMillan 1906, Vols. I-IV.

# The Cofradias

The cover of this album is a fine color lithographic reproduction of an actual Málaga poster. It displays in characteristic attire members of the *cofradías*<sup>1</sup> a religious lay fraternal order dating to at least 1519<sup>2</sup> With a membership comprised mainly of familiars, this brotherhood became elaborately and gradually organized in the inquisitorial centers with a constitution finally printed in 1617. Each branch had as officers a *padre mayor*, a secretary, a *mayordomo mayor*, a *mayordomo menor*, and a *fiscal*, or prosecutor. Entrance fees were stiff, and in his initiation into the *cofradías* each candidate took a solemn oath in the hands of an inquisitor to imperil his life in executing the commands of the Holy Office and to denounce all heretics. After this the inquisitor gave him a cross (see cover) and imparted to him all the privileges and indulgences of the *cruce-signati*.<sup>3</sup>

Marching in procession under the standard of the Holy Office in the Seville *auto de fe* of November 1604, they formed a body 400 strong, and at that of Cordova in 1655 they were reckoned at over 500. At the last of the great autos, celebrated in Madrid in 1680, the Suprema<sup>5</sup> ordered all the familiars of the city to join the Congregation under penalty of forfeiting the *fuero*<sup>6</sup> and each member was required to carry in the procession a two-pound wax candle bearing the insignia of the Inquisition, whereupon it ordered six hundred pounds of candles. By the year 1700, the functions of the *cofradías* may be assumed as purely ornamental, giving luster to the awful solemnities of the *auto de fe* and occasion for the Inquisition to exhibit its strength.

From the start, familiars in general and the *cofradías* in particular were an unruly group. They had the privilege of authority-without-responsibility which characterized the entire organization of the Inquisition. As a rule their frequent crimes and abuses went unpunished, and cognizance over them kept vacillating between secular and Inquisition courts thru the whole three and one half centuries of the New Inquisition. The organization was not always as faithful as it might have been to its oath of obedience. In 1603, 1675 and 1715 there was trouble over the right claimed by members to wear habitually their crosses and habits as insignia of St. Dominic. There was still greater indiscipline in 1634 and 1635 at Valencia, where the *cofradías* excited a popular tumult and refused to obey the orders of the Suprema in the matter of the celebration of the feast of the *Cruz nueva*.<sup>7</sup>

Under the Restoration, Fernando VII tried to revive the somewhat delapidated glories of the Inquisition by elevating the *cofradías* into a Royal Order of Knighthood. By decree of March 17, 1815, the monarch commanded that they wear daily on their outer garments, like other orders of knighthood, the habit and badge of the Inquisition. To set the example, on the feast of St. Peter Martyr (April 29th) he presided over the Congregation in person, accompanied by Princes Don Carlos and Don Antonio, wearing these insignia, a practice which was imitated by the members, so that it henceforth became fashionable in the court.

Today the *cofradías* in habit and mask continue their procession and leadership during the interval of Semana Santa. Once upon the year, in this week before Easter, the visions and shapes of 16th century Spain reappear in the streets, — and resound in this album, — driving Málaga into the passions and pathos of long, long ago.

E. C.

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