



Rejoneo Bullfighting on Horseback

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The art of bullfighting on horseback, as currently practiced in Portugal, where it is called **toureio equestre** and in Spain and Mexico, where it is called **rejoneo**, has a more direct and recent origin in the Iberian Peninsula, since it developed from the war exercises of the middle ages.

As it is well known, the Muslims occupied parts of Portugal and Spain, the Iberian peninsula, for over seven centuries, from 711 AD. until 1492. During this time the Iberians were involved in a constant struggle to overthrow the invaders from their land. Horses were the principal war implement and both horses and riders were specifically trained for the martial arts. Out of the war exercises evolved the intricate movements and maneuvers that gave origin to an equestrian science which would eventually influence the creation of several European riding academies in the Renaissance. The modern Spanish Riding School of Vienna and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art are relics of those academies.

Since the origins of the fighting bull are also in the Iberian Peninsula, the Iberians had since Carthaginian times recreated themselves by running bulls from horses in open fields, before lancing them. When the two activities, running of the bulls, and equestrian war exercise were combined within the confines of an enclosed spaces, the equestrian bullfight was born.

Bullfighting bulls in confinement will not run away, but instead will defend themselves and charge the riders. Therefore when facing brave bulls, the cavaliers had to perform intricate maneuvers on their finely tuned war horses in order to avoid being gored by the bulls. When the wars against the Moors ended, and the conquest of America was completed, the cavalrymen were left idle for war. The martial training became more a leisure and competitive activity, and then in the XVII and XVIII centuries, a feast increasingly joyful and polished.

Celebrations of great importance such as the coronation of a king , a royal birth or wedding were opportunities to conduct a bullfight. As the Iberian cultural influence expanded to the Americas, so did equestrian bullfighting and it is said that the festivities associated with the founding of Mexico City and Lima, included bullfights in which Hernan Cortes in Mexico and Francisco Pizarro in Peru were enthusiastic participants.



Rejoneo in Spain had a period of splendor during the reigns of Felipe III (1598-1621) , who built the plaza mayor and Felipe IV(1621-1665)) who converted it in the center of gaiety and social events of his court and thus the center of bullfighting on horse back. In Portugal, there are a many written records dating back to the XIII century, which mention the participation of Kings and other noblemen in equestrian bullfights.

A Portuguese nobleman of the XVIII century, Dom Pedro Alcantara y Meneses, fourth Marquis of Marialva, Master of the Horse to the royal court, emerged as one of the most influential horsemen of post renaissance Europe. His influence in laying down the modern day rules of Portuguese equestrian bullfighting was so great, that this type of bullfighting is also referred as the Art of Marialva.

Rejoneo remained identical in both Portugal and Spain as a nobleman's activity until the end of the XVII century, when Carlos II (1665-1700) of Spain died childless. The throne then passed to a grandson of Louis IV, Felipe V (1700-1748) and in this manner, the Bourbon dynasty entered Spain with their French influence and their dislike for bullfighting. In the mid 1700's, the Bourbons, decreed the prohibition of bullfighting, and most noblemen complied with the royal order, but the common people disdained it.

The disappearance of bullfighting on horse back could have signified the end of bullfighting in Spain, if the masses had not taken ownership to transform it into bullfighting on foot, giving it new life. War which had fomented the equestrian bullfights also gave origin to an auxiliary body of pages, horse trainers and horse grooms who assisted the cavalier and were in the shadow of the horse. When the horseman left the ring, the foot assistant emerged with great importance and has remained so until now.

Spanish rejoneo was then relegated to the cattle ranch work and did not emerge again as a spectator's spectacle until the 1920's. In Portugal on the other hands, and to cite die distinguished Spanish horseman and rejoneador, Don Alvaro Domecq y Diez, "Portuguese equestrian bullfighting was fine tuned and embellished to reach its actual level of specialty."



Charro
In Spain, a **charro** is a native of the province of Salamanca, especially in the area of Alba de Tormes, Vitigudino, Ciudad Rodrigo and Ledesma. It is likely that the Mexican *charro* tradition derived from Spanish horsemen who came from Salamanca and settled in Jalisco.