

Sevilla.

So famous.
So unknown.

THE ART OF BULLFIGHTING

Introduction

The Art of Bullfighting is rooted in Spain since many centuries ago, as we realize they appear in drawings in prehistoric cave paintings. The art of bullfighting developed with those first contacts with bulls, reaching what we know nowadays as *La Lidia* (The Bullfight) of the Spanish Fighting Bull. This breed of bull evolved from Egyptian bulls and European aurochs, whose genes have made the Spanish Fighting Bull a unique breed, only seen in the Iberian Peninsula, the South of France and Spanish America.

Nowadays, the bullfight dates back to the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. It comes from different bullfight schools, among which those from Seville and Navarre have been some of the most important ones. During the trip of Philip V to take the throne of Spain in 1701, there were held in Navarre a *corrida* (a Spanish-style bullfighting) in his honor. Is here where we can see the firsts *Lances de capa* (Passes of Cape) of ***El diestrísimo estudiante de Falces (The Very Skillful Student of Falces)*** — who would be flawlessly immortalized in an etching by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya —. This are the origins of the contemporary *toreo de capote* (Bullfighting using a cape).

In the first half of the 18th century are born the Three Great Fathers of Bullfighting:

- Joaquín Rodríguez **Costillares**, (born in Seville, the 20th July 1729).
- José Delgado Guerra **Pepe-Hillo**, (born in Seville, the 14th March 1754).
- **Pedro Romero**, (born in Ronda, Málaga, the 19th November 1754).

Since then, this one-of-a-kind performance in which a man risks his own life and raises the excitement/unleashes passions in a ritual of life and death, has been part of the universal knowledge. It has also been a very important part of other manifestations of culture, such as Literature, Painting, Music, Cinema, etc. In the last centuries, prominent artists have focused on bullfighting in order to develop their art; as for example Goya, Mariano Benlliure, José Ortega y Gasset, Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, Orson Welles and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

El Traje de Luces (The Matador's outfit)

It is the traditional garb a matador wears, whose name in Spanish (literally, suit of lights) refers to the brilliance of its ornaments when reflected by light. Until the 18th century, they were made in suede leather, but since then they are made in silk with silver and golden ornaments. They even preserved this style of dress, making it impossible for foreign fashion trends to “trespass” the limits of the bullrings. The Matador's outfit is composed of:

Montera : One of the parts of the outfit which has evolved the most. They used a cocked hat until the 19th century, when they began to use the montera (the current matador's hat), made in a curly fabric,

similar to hair, with plenty of velvet.

Chaquetilla : A golden short jacket which goes just to the hips. It is really a work of art, profusely decorated with silver and golden decorative fastenings, with shoulder reinforcements which have *machos* (see *Machos* below). This jacket is extremely rigid, but it has an overture in the part of the armpit to allow the matador to move freely.

Taleguilla : Short embroidered pants secured with *tirantes* (braces) which extend from the waist to underneath the knee. It is added a decorative sash, and in the lower part it is tightened with *machos*.

Medias : Two pairs of socks. Normally the external ones are pink, and those of underneath are generally white.

Coleta : In the 17th century, the bullfighters had this old habit of securing their hair in a bun, in order to hold the *montera*. Nowadays, they are all hair extensions.

Corbatín : Literally a bow tie. A very thin ribbon, normally in black color, tied as a necktie.

Camisa : A plain white shirt, decorated in the front with *chorreras* (frills).

Capote de Paseo : Shaped as a *capote* (see *El Capote* below), but smaller. It is normally the most luxurious component of the matador's outfit, and has different motifs that may refer to religious characters such as Saints, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Maria, etc.

Machos : Tessels used to adjust the *taleguilla* (see *Taleguilla* above).

Zapatillas : Black slippers with no heels, which have a decorative ribbon on the top and a special sole to prevent slips.

El Capote : Heavy synthetic fabric, shaped as a cape, used to fight and outwit the bull.

La Muleta : A red fabric lighter than that of the *capote*, used by the matador in the *faena* (the performance) to entice and guide the bull to charge.

Estoque : Sword slightly curved in the point used to kill bulls.

El Paseillo (The ceremonial entry to the bullring)

It is a kind of parade, a walk made by the *cuadrillas* (the *matadores* teams) around the bullring before the *corrida*, to introduce themselves to the president of the bullring. This *paseillo* is regulated, so those who participate in it have an order of appearance:

- The first line is represented by the three *matadores*: the left side is for the veteran *matador*, the right side is for the second most veteran one, and in the middle is the most inexperienced *matador*. To their side are the *alguacillillos* riding horses. The *alguacillillos* perform the rule of law during the bullfight and transmit the orders from the president to the *matadores*.
- On the second line are the three subordinates of the veteran *matador*.
- On the third line are the three subordinates of the second most experienced *matador*.
- On the fourth line are the three subordinates of the most inexperienced *matador*.
- On the fifth line are two *picadores* (horsemen with spears) of the veteran *matador*.
- On the sixth line are two *picadores* of the second most experienced *matador*.
- On the seventh line are two *picadores* of the most inexperienced *matador*.
- Finally, the *monosabios* (*picador's* assistants) and the staff of the bullring ends the *paseillo*.

El Toreo a Capote (Bullfight using a cape)

The *capote* is used by the *matador* and his subordinates to “welcome” the bull when it enters the bullring. It is used in artistic passes and *Lances de brega* (passes struggling with the bull). Due to the weight of the *capote*, it must be held with both hands. It is used in those types of *suerte* (literally “chances” or “destiny”, referred to moves made by the matador in specific moments, which are very dangerous) in which the matador runs straight to the bull in order to stop, keep in place and *ponerle en suerte* (prepare the bull for the fight).

The matador uses the *capote* in the two first tercios (phases): *Suerte de Varas* (part of lances and goading) and the part of *Banderillas* (two barbed sticks), and also his subordinates use it during all the *corrida*.

The bullfight with a cape is extremely spectacular, and its principal passes are :

- ***La Verónica*** : The name of this *lance* comes from the way Saint Veronica — represented in religious images — held the veil Jesus Christ wiped his forehead with while carrying his cross, in which His face got miraculously printed. This lance is essential when bullfighting with a cape, and also the most usual move when the *matador* “welcomes” the bull. The *matador* holds the cape with both hands, goading the animal with the cape before himself and, behind

would be the opposite leg to the side of the cape. This is how the matador attracts the charge of the bull. When the move ends, the *matador* places before himself the leg he placed behind before, so he is prepared for the next *Verónica*.

- **La Media Verónica** : It is a variation of the *Verónica* in which the *matador* holds the cape by his waist once the bull has just passed at his side, so the bull has no choice but run around him. It is usually the way the matador ends with a series of consecutive *Verónicas*.
- **Largas** : This are *lances* in which the matador holds the cape just with one hand to face the bull. It has a lot of variations.
- **Gaonera** : A *pase* (pass, move) made with the sword inside the cape, with one hand in the hip and the other extended in front of the bull to goad it.
- **Chicuelina** : It was created by the great *matador* Chicuelo, and it is one of the most used *pases*. The matador prepared as when doing a *Verónica*, but when the bull charges the cape, he turns the opposite direction to the bull.
- **Porta Gayola** : The *matador* awaits the bull to go out, kneeling in the middle of the bullring and provoking the animal to attack him. It is a very dangerous but amazing *suerte*.
- **Faroles** : The *matador* passes the cape over the bull and turns his body to be in front of the bull at the end of the move.

Primer Tercio : Suerte de Varas (Fisrt Part: Part of Lances)

In this part the bull tested for ferocity and dosification of its stamina for the rest of the stages of the fight by the *Picador*. He uses his lance to stab the animal and making it bleed in order to check its reaction to the attacks and also decreases the charge of the bull.

The attire and tools used by the *Picador* are :

- **Castoreño (The Picador hat)**: A rigid hat made with beaver hair, the color of the honey. It is decorated with the *moña* (hairbun).
- **Chaquetilla (short jacket)**: A golden short jacket with a protective part, embroidered but with no decorative fastenings.
- **Calzona** : bone-colored short pants made of chamois.
- **Puya (Point)**: Sharp triangular part put in the end of a rod. The size of each triangle is 29 mm. height and 20 mm. at the base. It has a block to prevent the tip to pierce the skin of the bull more than necessary.
- **Peto (chest guard)**: A kind of pad that protects the horse of the *Picador*. It is formed by two waterproof tarpaulins stuffed with cotton.
- **Hierros (iron protections)**: These are protections for the legs of the *Picador*. That for the left one is shorter, and it helps the leg not to be crashed in the grandstands. On the other hand, the right one — whose name is “mona”, protects the leg from the bull’s horns.

The development of the *suerte* has three basic parts : *cita*, *encuentro* and *salida*. When the *Picador* performs the *cita*, the *matadores* and other subordinates are placed to the left of the horse.

1. CITA (THE MEETING): The bull is fooled to charge against the horse. The most artistic way is by picking a short rod and make it slide in the hand, trying to stop the bull with it by placing the rod in front of himself before it hits with the horse’s protection.
2. ENCUESTRO (THE CONVERGENCE): The *Picador* determines the target and charges against the bull. The point of the rod is essential to determine the ferocity of the animal. If the bull is docile it must run away, but if it not, it must charge against the horse three times.
3. SALIDA (THE COMING OUT OF THE SPEAR) : When the bull takes in the spear, the sharp part has also to go out of the animal. Once the bull has escaped — is very important to let the animal out —, the matadors check the bull to confirm if one more assault of the *Picador* it is necessary.

Segundo Tercio (Second Part) : Banderillas

This part is one of the most amazing moments of the *corrida*, which takes place once the *Picadores* are out of the bullring.

If the first part is when it is confirmed how fierce the bull is, in this part the animal is “encouraged” once more, but it does not get tired. The *banderillas* can also be called *alegradores* (tools for cheering up).

The *banderillas* were stabbed no matter the part of the corrida until the middle of the 18th century, but since then, they are only used three specific times.

The *banderillas* are normally used by the assistant bullfighters, also known as *banderilleros*, but the matador himself can also use them. There are three *banderilleros* by *cuadrilla*, and each one of them stabs the bull with a pair of these tools — at the end of the fight, they have used two pairs each. There exists a variety of ways of using the *banderillas*, and the main ones are :

- ***Al Cuarteo (Directed stab)***: This is the most used form of using the *banderillas*. The bull is in the zone of the picadores, and the person with the *banderillas* is in front of the animal. When the bull charges, the person with the *banderillas* runs to the animal, then turns describing a semicircle and reaches the bull and stabs the *banderillas* into the *morrillo* (back of the neck) of the bull.
- ***Al Quiebro (dodge and stab)***: The *banderillero* or matador stays in front of the bull — near the wooden wall of the grandstands or in the middle of the bullring —, then fools the animal to attack while waiting with both feet together. Before the encounter, he will advance his foot to the side he wants the bull to pass by. Just when the animal passes him, he stabs the bull before going back to his original position.
- ***De Frente (Face to face)***: This is a variation of *Al Cuarteo*, in which the person with the *banderillas* goes straight to the bull but just running a little distance.
- ***Al Sesgo (stabbing in the meeting)***: Another variation of *Al Cuarteo*. The man with the *banderillas* meets the animal in the middle of the bullring, but he walks away after stabbing the animal without making a semicircle.
- ***De Dentro a Fuera (from the inside to the outside)***: The *banderillero* or matador stabs the bull between the wooden wall of the grandstands and the bull itself. Is a very dangerous move.

Tercer Tercio (Third Part) : The Supreme Moment

The last part of the corrida, known as *Tercio de Muerte* (part of death) means the preparation of the bull for its death with the *muleta*, and also its death with a *estoque*. It is the most transcendental part of the corrida in which the matador proves his skill and his art.

Although all the passes of bullfight are likely to be dedicated to someone, it is in the *Faena* (the moment when the bull is going to be killed) where the custom is more ingrained. In addition, it is mandatory to provide the death of the first bull of each matador to the president of the corrida, a remnant of the ceremonies of courtesy which impregnates the corridas since the 17th century. When the matador asks for the utensils to kill the bull, he carries the *muleta* and the *estoque* with the left hand, the *montera* on the right, and walks towards the person he wants to make the dedication to. When he is in front the person (usually a woman) with the right arm extended, he throws the *montera* to the bullring from above his shoulder. The tradition tells it is a sign of good luck if the *montera* falls face down and bad luck if it falls face up — when this happens, the torero turns the *montera* himself. Even if nowadays the dedication is not made in verse, it was a spread tradition made in the ceremonial way or depending on the circumstances. The most picturesque ones were those in which the matador used his imagination to recite, normally in a careless and rough way.

Joaquín Rodríguez *Costillares* was the one who began to place great importance to the *Faena*, making it the most important and artistic moment of the corrida. Long ago the tradition said that the *cuadrilla* participated in the *faena*. Nowadays they cannot participate but in a few occasions, and normally the public protests against it.

Is in the middle of the *Faena*, with a *muleta*, when the matador can move the closest to the bull. Is here when he can make the most templated and heartfelt moves in the whole corrida. The main passes with the *muleta* made in the *Faena* are :

- ***El Natural*** : The matador holds the *muleta* with the left hand, without the *estoque*. This move is made in order to be as far from the bull as possible. The animal is fooled before the usual moment, and when it charges, the matador moves one leg to the side to break the trajectory of the bull in a straight line. This move is made always underneath, and the bull runs far from the matador.
- ***El Derechazo*** : It is like *El Natural*, but the *muleta* is held with the right hand and the *estoque* (en alto).
- ***Pase de Pecho*** : After the *Naturales* and *Derechazos*, the bull can have a lot of space to run or have just a little, so the next charge of the animal after that is normally this one. It is made

above the bull, and in the opposite side to the *Natural* or *Derechazo* — it depends in which hand the matador uses.

- **Trinchera** : It is made from the right to the left side, receiving the charge of the bull with the muleta underneath the animal, in order to subdue and stop the animal where the matador wants to.

Once the artistic Faena is made and the bull is tired and weak, is the time to kill the bull once and for all. The act is made by the *matador* (literally, “that who kills”) leading the fight to an end. This part is always made fácil the animal, piercing the skin of it with the estoque, pointing just where it would made the bull die as fast as possible. There are different ways of making this *suerte* :

- **Recibiendo** : Is the most primitive way of putting an end to the bulls. Once the animal uses its strength to charge against the matador, he walks to a cautious distance, just in front of the right horn of the bull. With the *muleta* turned just a little to the side and the hand with the *estoque* next to the chest with the elbow at the same height as the elbows, he awaits the bull to put an end to its life.
- **Volapie** : This suerte is used with bull with have used almost all of its strength. The matador runs to the animal with the *muleta* faced up in the left hand, forcing the bull to pass by his side. At the same time, the matador uses the right hand to insert the sword inside the animal. Is the most common way of doing this *suerte*.
- **Al Encuentro** : Both the matador and the bull charge against each other, and they both arrive to the middle of the path they both have gone through at the same time.

This last moment of the stab can be done in two different ways, depending on where the torero ends once he has pierced the bull with the sword :

- **Suerte Natural (Natural act)**: The matador is between the wall of the grandstands and the bull.
- **Suerte Contraria (Opposite act)**: Here is the bull who is between the wall and the matador.

EL TORO BRAVO (The spanish fighting bull)

Written by "El Niño del Carmen"

There exist evidences of the existence of bovines similar to the contemporary spanish fighting bull grazing in the meadows of the Iberian Peninsula.

Several naturalists think that there were a large number of aurochs in most of Europe, from England to Spain, covering a great part of Central Europe up to Poland and Russia; maybe even farthest to the East. In Poland there are actually a few hundreds of genetically reconstructed European bison, not to be mistaken with the auroch. Even if there are disagreements about the origins of the bull in the Iberian Peninsula, we must not mistake the bison with the bovines, considering that they have very different morphological features. For example, the bison have 14 pairs of ribs while the bulls have only 13 pairs.

Experts in this subject cannot agree in which is the real ancestor of the spanish fighting bull. Some believe the contemporary spanish fighting bulls preserve most of the features of the Northern bovines, easily recognizable in Spain, Russia or in Northern Germany plains. On the other hand, there are points of view as valid as the latter about the spanish fighting bull origins. They say this animal comes from the North of Africa, mentioned in The Holy Bible. Apparently, Arabs could have spread through Spain a breed of bulls, raised in the whole North of Africa and descendants from bulls raised by Egyptians — a very fierce breed, used in fighting shows. The Arab knights were horsemen well-known for trying to lance the bulls until its death. Over the 800 years of the Reconquista (reconquest) in Spain, they competed with the Christian knights, and maybe it was here where the Arabian breed was introduced in Spain. It seems “El Cid” (11th century) was excellent at bullfighting using a horse. In the

same way, it is possible that the Celts introduced a tamed breed of bulls in the parts of Europe they ruled, giving this animal the name of “auroch”, a big animal larger than the contemporary spanish fighting bull indeed.

The famous chronicler Pascual Millán stated that the bull was formerly chosen between livestock destined for the slaughterhouse, choosing just the most fierce ones. Maybe those bulls and cows chosen for performances (germ of the contemporary bullfighting) were half-wild animals which grazed freely and that luckily we can gaze at nowadays in the mountain chains of Spain. This animals can easily go mad when they are provoked, even if they are just peacefully grazing.

In the 18th century they began to choose the features of bulls which would be characteristic of the contemporary spanish fighting bull, which continues to be a strict selection between all the livestock.

It is normally accepted that the origin of all the fighting bull stockbreeding in Spain, France, Portugal Hispanic America and all those breeds rided in other parts of the world are the herd of livestock from Don José Gijón en Villarubia de los Ojos (Ciudad Real), from the Gallardo brothers in El Puerto de Santa María (Cadiz) and from D. Rafael Cabrera, Don José Vicente Vázquez and the Count of Vistahermosa, this three herds of livestock grazed in Utrera (Seville). All this five herds are the contemporary original stockbreedings in Spain, including lineages from Gijona, Vazqueña, etc.

In 1776, José Daza compiles the features of the herds of each region, which has been very useful for bullfight historians so they can recognize them nowadays. It is a curious detail that the methods used to breed the contemporary spanish fighting bull were the same used nowadays: The rigorous selection of a group of bulls to be forefathers of the breed, whose viability would be checked in the little bullrings of the meadows.

José Vicente Vázquez obtained an animal with unique features very similar to the contemporary spanish fighting bulls, gathering a series of features only noticeable in different livestock in a single animal. For this reason he bought cows and bulls from the stockbreeding of Backer, which belonged to the Marquis of the House of Ulloa, the Count of Vistahermosa and José Cabrera. This people obtained bulls with unique personality and biotechnical features, a task not realized by their contemporaries and later performed by specialists all over Europe with different animals: chickens, pigs, etc.

The spanish fighting bull is a one-of-a-kind animal which stands out thanks to its features, its responses to stimuli and its behaviour — it is an animal which attacks without a need for food, as it is an herbivore. However, it is a very magnanimous animal which always attacks with a combative impulse and never avoiding a fight with another animal, always, facing the menace and never hiding as the buffalos when they are being caught. throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, even later, there were held fights between bulls and other animals as an performance for the people: they fought against lions, bears, wolves, etc, but the bulls always won using their horns, always facing their opponents. This kind of events were held in Spain until the 19th century.

As a final touch, we have here a list with biological information of the spanish fighting bull:

- SPECIES : Vertebrates
- CLASS : Mammal
- SUBCLASS : Placentalia
- GROUP : Ungulates
- SUBGROUP : even-toed ungulates
- SECTION : Ruminants
- FAMILY : Hollow-horned mammals
- SUBFAMILY : Bovines
- GENRE : Bos L.
- SPECIES : Bos Taurus L.
- BREED : Bos Taurus Africanus
- VARIETY : Andaluza, Navarra, etc.