



Bullring: Culture, Tradition and Differences between Spain and Portugal

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Abstract

Bullrings are emblematic places of the culture and tradition of each country where bullfights have been held for centuries. These events have been very popular in many parts of the world and have attracted thousands of fans over the years. Bullrings are considered by many to be cultural heritage and an important part of the history and tradition of many countries. Bullfighting celebrations continue to be important in the culture and tradition of the towns. In many bullrings, bullfights have been prohibited, but in other parts of the world, bullfights continue to be very popular and successful. However, in recent times, bullrings have been regarded by some as an inconvenient heritage site due to growing opposition to bullfighting and the banning of these events in some places. The comparative analysis between Spain and Portugal, a country with a bullfighting tradition influenced by Spain, shows that Spain is the country with the most bullrings in the world today. At the same time, Portugal has more than 200 bullrings throughout its territory. There are cultural differences in bullfighting between Spain and Portugal, but, as a tradition, bullfighting has deep roots in both countries. Although they share similarities in terms of the practice itself, there are significant cultural differences in both countries. These distinctions can be established from the style of the bullfight, the death of the bull, the clothing of the bullfighters, the use of the horses, the music performed during the festival and the posture or attitude towards the bullfighting activity. The importance of the resignification of bullfighting as cultural heritage is an integral part of the identity of many regions of Spain and Portugal and, protecting them, guarantees that this tradition is preserved and transmitted to future generations.

Keywords: Resignification, Cultural Heritage, National Identity, bull

1. Introduction

As a social practice, bullfighting in Portugal has particularities that make it unique in relation to Spain and other Western European contexts. Considered an institution, its origins are distant from religious celebrations and are more connected to a formal dynamic, in which specialized officiants intervene who attend to a spectacular nature and a scheme of values. According to Barreiros (2010), this celebration was originally conducted by the noble class for their entertainment, which included spearing bulls on horseback and the people caught the bull after the bullfight “in what today is a unique ending and absolute original for the classic Portuguese bullfight, with the riders wearing a tricorn hat, a French jacket and a peninsular saddle with its box stirrups” (p.10) [1].

Around its execution, the distinction that Saumade (1996) pointed out as geographical determinism or cultural imperialism, becomes evident, where the presence of the bull in the ring and the ritual around the bullfight were projected according to the cultural parameters of the place in which the festival took place, being in the case of Spain the national holiday and in the southwest of France the festival in the region of the Landes [2].

In the case of Portugal, it is estimated that this practice was basically adopted in the areas of Ribatejo and Alentejo, in the Centre and South of Portugal, reaching better levels between the 18th and 19th centuries with the participation of courtiers supported by regions, which gave it the character of an elite sport, carried out mainly by aristocrats and wealthy people who enjoyed bullfighting on horseback. “In addition to celebrating events during the monarchy, bullfights were also customary to give gifts to the saints (...) Saint Anthony was one of the most favored in Lisbon” [3].

It is worth noting that, in Portugal, as in Spain, transformations were also gradually experienced that left aside the character of nobility of this festivity and turned towards business issues that were taken advantage of by politicians and religious sectors that sought to raise resources for their activities. Particularly in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, the municipal authorities reserved the management of spaces for this type of events, deploying a box office marketing scheme and the management of bullfighting and theatrical events.

Such is the case of the rents that were granted to carpenters in the 17th century, who built the so-called palisades; By the 18th century, this benefit belonged to the well-known bullfighting “assentistas”, responsible for renting land and negotiating the manufacture of bullring components, as well as the purchase of bulls. The differences in bullfighting practice between Spain and Portugal, are, namely: the traditional approach based on the cultural impact it represents in both nations from the point of view of Heritage, and the types of bullfights: in Spain, bullfights, the “corrida de rejonés” and the “novillada” are carried out. In Portugal, the bullfights include the use of horses and the participation of “forcados”, a group of men that performs a special show of catching the bull.

For this work, the general objective is to establish the differences between bullfighting in Portugal and Spain, more specifically

to establish the differences between the bullfighting practices of Spain and Portugal at a cultural and traditional level, as well as to identify the first and second category bullrings in Spain and Portugal and to prepare detailed study sheets for the first and second category bullrings in Spain and Portugal.

The methodological framework of this project was carried out through the synthetic-analytical method of the scientific method, with a free interpretation of the information obtained during the research. The development of this research was carried out in five phases.

First phase was based on the thematic approach and a first bibliographic and documentary review that allowed the writing of the study objectives.

Second phase: the research techniques were selected, as mentioned above. It was carried out through the synthetic-analytical method with free interpretation of the obtained information, and with explanatory techniques that allowed us to know, analyze and correlate the qualitative information of the cultural and traditional aspects of bullfighting in the bullrings of Spain and Portugal.

Third phase, selection of information sources and research: this phase was divided into two sections, a first section that consists of the selection of information and a documentary investigation, for which the virtual databases and Catalog of the Library of the University of Seville, Dialnet databases, Google Scholar and the Virtual Library of Castilla-La Mancha, as well as documents, books, magazines and articles in physical media that were relevant to this study, obtained in the same way from the Library of the University of Seville, and the Rui Salvador Museum, were used. And a second part, which consists of a field investigation, in which a search was carried out for an informant with a specific profile to conduct an interview. It was intended that the interviewee had experience in bullfighting from Spain or Portugal, be a professional in the area, have relevant material for this study at their disposal, physical or virtual, and have time available for the interview. The person who met these requirements was Cavaleiro Rui Salvador, who underwent an interview scheduled on Thursday, March 21 at 11:00 a.m. m. at Quinta do Falcão, Tomar, Portugal, due to the interviewee's time availability. Rui Salvador debuted as a Rider in 1997 and is currently a professional as a "Cavaleiro" (bullfighter on horseback). He also owns a personal collection of documents on bullfighting in Portugal, and a personal museum.

Once the information was obtained, it was analyzed and the authors proceeded to continue with the fourth phase of the study, which consisted of the processing of information according to the proposed objectives, which consisted of the clarification of the cultural and traditional differences of bullfighting between Spain and Portugal. In addition, tables were prepared to classify the bullrings of both countries by first and second category. These tables included the name of the square, municipality, district, year of inauguration and current capacity. And, finally, detailed study sheets were developed for the bullrings mentioned in the tables.

Finally, for the last phase obtained the conclusions were described. This work was developed with a multidisciplinary team of professionals in Architecture from Spain and Civil Engineering from Portugal, emphasizing communication and research based on the principle of knowing the heritage to conserve and protect it.

2. Provision of Bullrings in Portugal and Spain

According to Gomes (2017), in Portugal, bullfighting events can take place in different spaces that are generically known as bullrings [4]. This is also due to the fact that these types of activities are classified as popular or professional. In the case of the latter, they must be carried out in closed venues, with their own morphology that must be respected, taking into account the concept of Heritage that this type of festivities has in their country.

With this foundation, and in light of the legislation in force in Portugal, namely the RET 2014 (Bullfighting Show Regulations), fixed bullrings are classified into 1st, 2nd, or 3rd category, according to their tradition in the town, the capacity and the number of shows held each year (FIGURE 1, FIGURE 2 and FIGURE 3). In the case of portable bullrings, of a less formal nature, they will be equivalent to 3rd category [5].

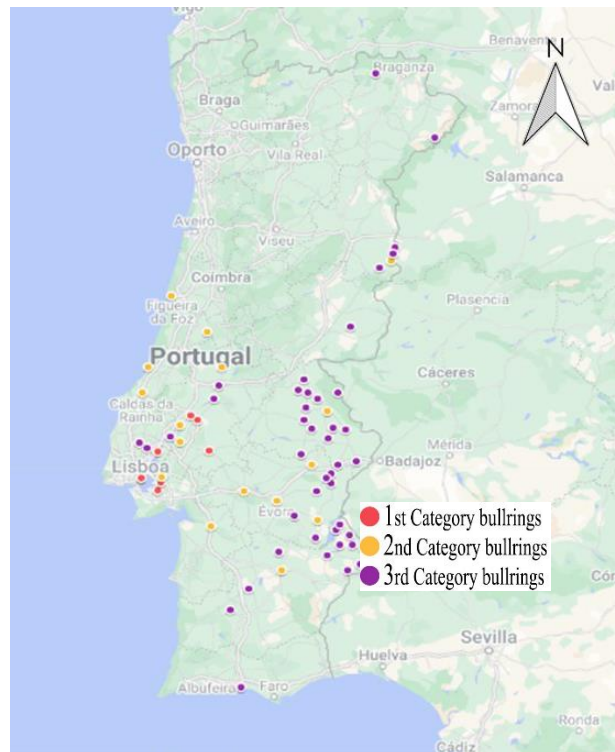


Fig. 1. Map of Portugal with the 1 st, 2nd and 3rd category bullrings (self-elaboration)



Fig. 2. An example of an elaborate worksheet is Campo Pequeno bullring, Lisbon, Portugal 1st category. (self-elaboration)

According to their provision, the 1st category bullrings are those that have the greatest prestige and size in the country, they have considerable capacity, and the best facilities for their audience, as well as for the bullfighters. Major national and international events are held here. For their part, the 2nd category bullrings correspond to those of medium or large size but compared to the first category ones, they do not meet the same parameters. Those in the 3rd category are the smallest, with limited capacity and less modern infrastructures. Due to this, the bullfights held there do not have a greater media impact and their audience is more local.

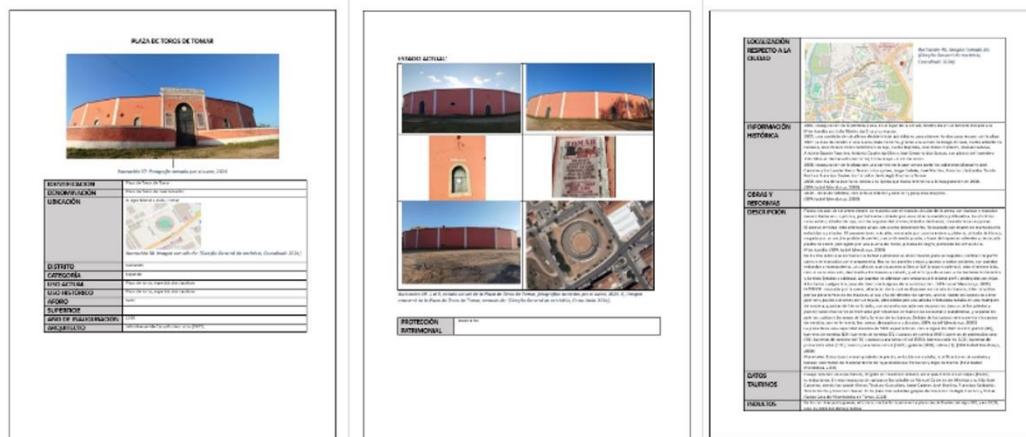


Fig. 3. An example of an elaborate worksheet, José Salvador bullring, Tomar, Portugal 2nd category. (self-elaboration)

For Spain, bullfighting shows are regulated by Royal Decree 145/1996, which classifies the permanent bullrings in Spain according to their tradition, capacity and number and types of bullfighting shows held. We find in the 1st category those with a capacity greater than 10,000 spectators, recognized bullfighting tradition and that hold at least 7 general bullfighting shows per year (6 must be bullfights, "corrida" type) (FIGURE 4 and FIGURE 5). Those in the 2nd category are the ones that have a capacity of more than 5,000 spectators and hold a minimum of 5 general bullfighting shows per year (4 must be bullfights, "corrida" type) (FIGURE 6). In the 3rd category are those bullrings with a capacity of less than 5,000 spectators, in this category there are also portable bullrings (generally built with a metallic structure, which can be installed in any space, are detachable and, traditionally, are used in small cities and villages) [6].

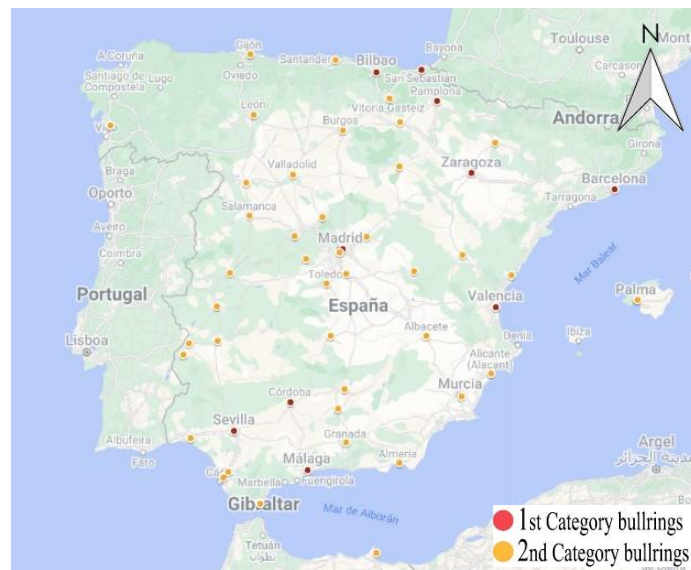


Fig. 4. Map of Spain with the 1 st, and 2nd category bullrings (self-elaboration)

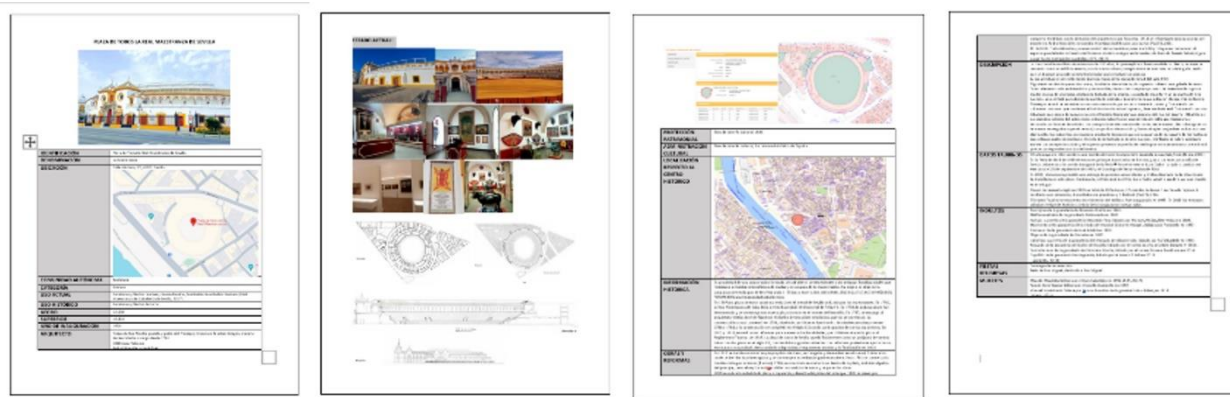


Fig. 5. An example of an elaborate worksheet is Real Maestranza bullring, Seville, Spain, 1st category. (self-elaboration)

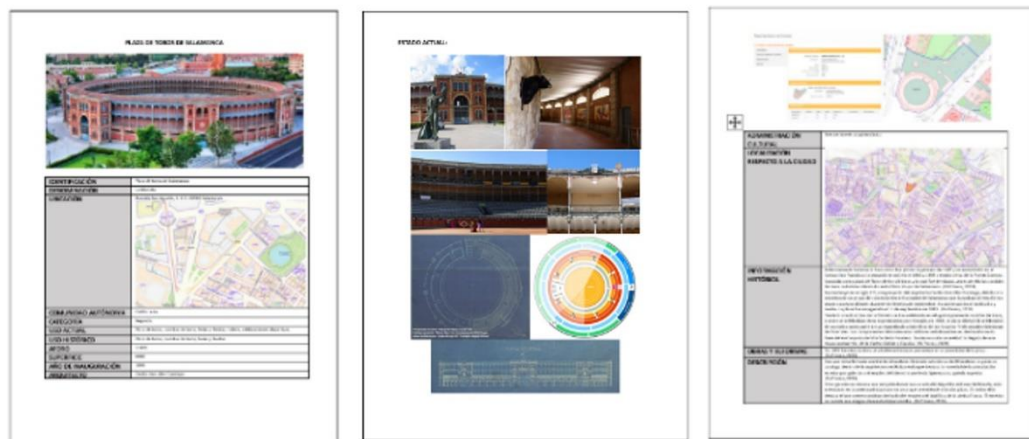


Fig. 6. An example of an elaborate worksheet is Salamanca bullring, Salamanca, Spain, 2nd category. (self-elaboration)

3. Cultural Differences in Bullfighting between Portugal and Spain

As a tradition, bullfighting has deep roots in Spain and Portugal. Although they share similarities in terms of the practice itself, it presents significant cultural differences in both countries. These distinctions can be established from the style of the bullfight, the clothing of the bullfighters, the music used during the festival and the posture or attitude towards the bullfighting activity, namely:

- Style of the bullfight: In Spain, the bullfight follows a more structured and ritualized format, with three bullfighters facing six bulls in one event. Hunt (2005). In Portugal, the bullfight is carried out in a style called “corrida de touros”, where bullfighters mounted on specially trained horses will deal with the bulls (FIGURE 7), and the “forcados” (FIGURE 8), a group of men on foot, will intervene to carry out the “pega” of the bull (catch of bulls) [7].



Fig. 7. The Portuguese rider Rui Salvador (Postal source from own collection)



Fig. 8. A Portuguese group of “forcados” (Postal source from own collection)

- **Clothing:** Bullfighters’ costumes in Spain are known for their striking and colorful style, with tight-fitting jackets, tight pants, and “monteras” (cap). In Portugal, bullfighters on horseback wear a costume (à la Federica) similar to that of Spanish “rejoneadores, but with some differences in design and ornamentation. The bullfighters on foot in Spain usually wear “trajes de luces” (FIGURE 9), which are tight-fitting and ornate bullfighting suits, with embroidered jackets, tight pants, stockings and “monteras”. These suits are usually very colorful and eye-catching, with shiny details and intricate embroidery. The “rejoneadores” in Spain, who practice bullfighting on horseback, wear costumes similar to bullfighters on foot, but adapted for horseback riding. These suits are also fitted and ornate, with embroidered jackets and eye-catching details, but can vary in design to allow for greater mobility on horseback. In Portugal the “rejoneadores” also wear bullfighting costumes adapted for horse riding, but with some differences in design and ornamentation compared to Spanish costumes. Portuguese suits can have a more sober and less colorful style overall, with less emphasis on bright details. The “forcados” in the Portuguese bullfights, usually dress in a more casual and practical manner compared to bullfighters and “rejoneadores” [8]. They typically wear white shirts, dark pants, and a special type of shoes, without the elaborate ornamentation of bullfighters' costumes (FIGURE 8).



Fig. 9. A Spain, bullfighters, “rejoneador” (Postal source from own collection)

- **Music:** In Spain, music plays an important role during the bullfight, especially at the entry and exit of the bullfighters, as well as during the key moments of the confrontation with the bull. In Portugal, music is also present, but to a lesser extent and with a different focus since it is mainly used to accompany certain ceremonial moments of the bullfight.
- **Attitude towards bullfighting:** Although both Spain and Portugal have a long bullfighting tradition, the attitude towards bullfighting can vary between regions and generations. In general, Spain tends to have a more rooted stance in defending bullfighting as part of its cultural heritage, while in Portugal there is more debate and some criticism towards this practice, especially with regard to animal welfare. In the case of Spain, the cultural roots that bullfighting represents stand out; consequently, it is considered by many to be an integral part of the national identity and cultural heritage. Many Spaniards, especially in regions where bullfighting has a long tradition, passionately defend it as an art form and an expression of identity. Likewise, this festivity is of economic and touristic importance, since these are relevant events in economic and touristic terms, especially in cities such as Seville, Madrid, and Pamplona, where bullfights are part of the traditional celebrations. On the other hand, in Portugal there is less cultural consolidation. The practice of bullfighting and other forms of bullfighting are more common in certain regions of the country, such as Ribatejo and Alentejo. Consequently, it has less economic and touristic impact.
- **Duration of the bullfight and number of bulls:** In Spain, a typical bullfight involves six bulls fighting, with three bullfighters facing two bulls each one. The total duration of the event can be quite long due to the number of bulls and the ritualized structure. On the other hand, in Portugal, a bullfight usually includes the fight of four or five bulls, with less time (10 minutes maximum) dedicated to each one.
- **The role of the “forcados”:** In Portugal, the “forcados” play a unique role in the bullfight. These are groups of brave men who directly confront the bull on foot, without weapons, to perform a technique called “pega”, which consists of stopping the bull when it charges at them. In contrast, in Spanish bullfighting, there is no direct equivalent to “forcados”, as the fight is performed primarily by bullfighters mounted on horseback or on foot.
- **Bullfighting lots:** There are some similarities in the bullfighting lots practiced in both countries. In Portugal, the specific lots are more focused on the use of horses and technique of “rejoneo”, while in Spain more emphasis is placed on the interaction between the bullfighter on foot and the bull.
- Finally, other aspects that mark differences in bullfighting practices in Portugal and in Spain are related to the provision of wooden barriers according to Portuguese legal regulation for this type of events, in order not to hurt the horses during the bullfight, since previously they were of concrete. On the other hand, in Spain the bullfighter is rewarded with the tail, one or

two ears of the bull, and the spectators carry the bullfighter on their shoulders. However, in Portugal the bull is not killed in front of the spectators and the decision to kill it or not is made by the owner of the bull, and the way to reward the bullfighter is to go around the ring, receiving an enthusiastic ovation, flowers and pillows being thrown by spectators.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that there are differences between the bullfighting of Spain and Portugal, both culturally and traditionally. Identifying the cultural and traditional differences of bullfighting in Spain and Portugal allows us to understand that not all bullfights are or develop in the same way, as described above. Differences can be observed in the lots, the music, the participants of the bullfights and their clothing. Furthermore, it should be noted that the differences in bullfighting between both countries are not only during the development of bullfights with the so-called bullfighting events, but also in the attitude towards bullfighting itself, the music, the participants of the bullfight and their clothing, which are a reflection of the culture of each country. In this way it can be concluded that these differences are what define the bullfights in each country and are thus a sample of the continuous development of the activity over the years, which, added to the bullrings as an architectural trace of this history, are reason enough to support bullfighting being considered a heritage that must be protected and conserved.

In Portugal, the majority of the bullrings are located in the central area of Alentejo and next to the border with Spain, closely related to the location of the majority of the Portuguese livestock farms (FIGURE 1), and, in Spain, the bullrings are distributed throughout the entire national territory (FIGURE 2). The location of the bullrings in Portugal in relation to its border proximity to Spain demonstrates a close relationship between both countries and reaffirms that Portugal inherited bullfighting from Spain, transforming it, adopting it, and preserving it to the present day.

On the other hand, it can be concluded that the categorization of bullrings allows us to understand their dimension. That is, in Spain, the categories allow us to observe the bullring's capacity, with 1st category being those with a capacity greater than 10,000 spectators, 2nd category being those greater than 5,000 spectators, and 3th category being those less than 5,000 spectators. In addition, tradition is taken into account as well as the number of shows performed per year. In Portugal, these last two characteristics are taken into account by adding the type of construction system of the building.

Finally, it is concluded that the preparation of the study worksheets of the bullrings allows us to know information about the bullring more quickly, since they not only have identification and location information but also allow us to know something about its history, the importance in the architecture with its description and the works or reforms carried out over the years and its importance in bullfighting due to its information on religious festivals, important bullfighting data, the deaths that occurred in it and the pardons made in Spain. Considering that they are detailed studies, they serve to establish the relationship that exists in the bullrings as a closed space, where a tradition, social practices, festive events, and scenic and artistic expressions develop inside, being all of these an integral part of the cultural heritage of the area where the bullring is located, so the work sheets enable the reader to contextualize each bullring in precise aspects.

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