



# Doma

text by TuttoArabi Archive ■ photos by Gigi Grasso

**L**egend has it that in the early history of the Iberian Peninsula, on the island of Cartare, that immense herds of red bulls from the great metropolis of Tartessos grazed along the shoreline of the ancient Ligustinus Lake, now the Hinojos Marshes, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River in Andalusia, Spain.

In this place, the son of Osiris (the Egyptian god of the dead), brother and husband of the goddess Isis (the Egyptian virgin), founded the city of Hispalis, now present-day Seville. It is here that Herakles, or Hercules, risked his life to snatch the fierce, red bulls from Geryon, the tyrant of Andalusia. The myth claims that Herakles had to fight the toughest bullfight ever recorded in history and during the violent combat killed Geryon; Eurytion, the shepherd in charge of the herd; and the dog Orthos, the brother of Cerberus, the keeper of the gates of Avernus. Orthos was entrusted to guard the vast herds of Geryon's bulls. When the conflict was over part of the herds were transported overseas, which was a complicated operation given the ferocity of the bulls. Thus, the dominions of the people of Tartessos, as well as their bulls, came under Egyptian control.

Later, during the Middle Ages, these same fierce bulls were lanced for sport, although with some opposition from certain monarchical and ecclesiastical circles. In the 17th century rejoneo, mounted bullfighting with the lance, reached its peak of popularity only to decline during the 18th century. However, it made a strong comeback in the 20th century and continues to thrive today.

Doma Vaquera is an equestrian discipline that is practiced mainly in Spain, although it is currently spreading to other countries. From time immemorial, the mastery of the technique has been transmitted verbally from fathers to sons. It has its origins in the toil of everyday country life. On Spanish cattle farms, the observation of the stock, care and selection of fighting bulls, their females and young, driving the animals – whether to group the fighting bulls together or to take the animals from one place to another, tentaderos (1), acoso y derribo (2), checks and other jobs which occasionally entail a certain element of danger are always carried out by the vaqueros on horseback. This way of working has not changed over the years. The style of the rider's

1.- (Corral or closed ring where the "tienta" or testing of the bulls takes place. This operation, carried out on the farm, is designed to test the ferocity and fighting ability of the bulls)

2.- (An equestrian competition in which those taking part are known as the "collera", consisting of a team of two participants on horseback, one called the "Garrochista" and the other the "Amparador". The object of the exercise is to run and bring down a young bull in a limited area within a certain time)

# Vaquera



# Doma

dress and the horse's tack has remained as it was originally as well.

It was not until around 1970 that Doma Vaquera became a regulated discipline and began to be performed in arenas before a crowd of spectators. This is an equestrian discipline that values the mutual understanding between rider and horse which allows them to carry out the traditional movements. Some of these movements include arreones – a gallop from a standing start, pirouettes and skid stops such as are demonstrated in the sport of reining.

In addition to being fast and agile, the horse's physical structure is important too. Its hindquarters must be muscular and well-developed so as to allow for the engagement of the hind end. Furthermore, the horse must have good balance, control and a combination of character and blind obedience or trust in its rider in order to perform these difficult and demanding exercises and figures.

Traditionally, cross-bred horses with a mixture of English, Spanish and Arabian breeds have been used. However, from the very beginning the Yeguada Ferrero Stud farm has ignored the voices that said purebred Arabians would not be good for this speciality sport. The stud farm has participated in Doma Vaquera competition, and using only purebred Arabians, has achieved amazing results. For many years, the Yeguada Ferrero Stud farm was proclaimed Doma Vaquera Champion and Reserve in the Balearic Championships, thus demonstrating that the Arabian horse is in fact perfect for this discipline because it possesses all the qualities required for the sport.

#### Equipment For Horse and Rider:

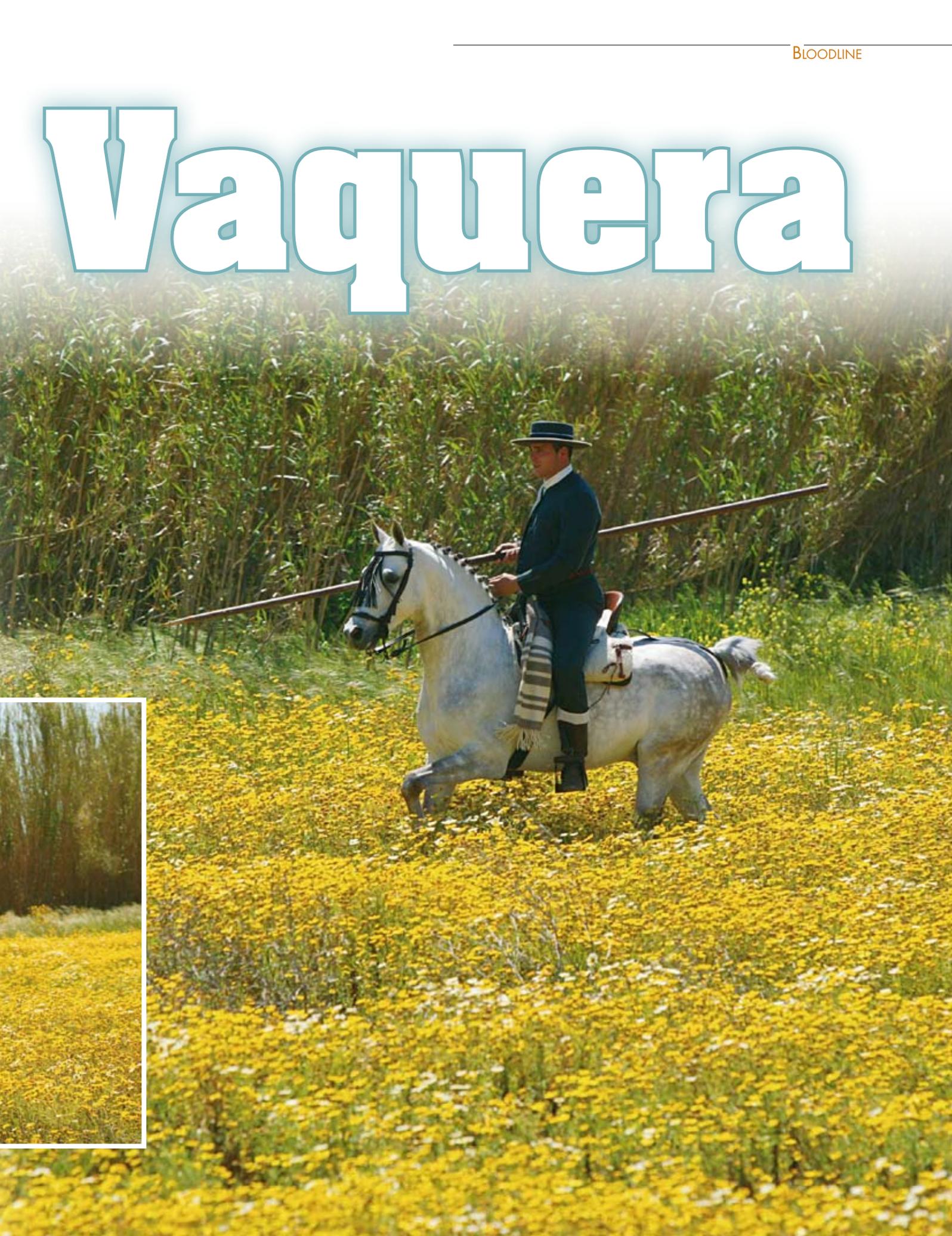
The horse must have its tail knotted in the traditional vaquera knot as this is an old custom. When working on the land the horse's tail repre-

sents a danger because it could get tangled up on the horn of one of the cattle or in a bush in the event of being charged by a fighting bull. Today it is part of the horse's presentation in the ring. The mane must be thinned out and worn short with the forelock cropped. If the horse has a long mane it must be plaited. The ears and pasterns are also groomed to improve the appearance of the horse. All the elements connected with Doma Vaquera must be governed by sobriety and therefore adornments such as ribbons and tassels are always avoided.

Two types of saddle are used in this event. One is the Spanish saddle which is used on young horses and the Vaquera saddle is for experienced horses



# Vaququera



# Doma

that have already been schooled. The bridle has to be of the traditional vaquera type with its corresponding fringe that can be made of leather, bristle or silk. Some of these are authentic jewels of craftsmanship. The reins are made of stitched leather and are knotted at the end. The vaquera iron always has to be blackened and neither chrome nor stainless steel are permitted. With regard to the rider, his dress must not stray from sober colours and the traditional Andalusian suit, or the traje corto, must be worn. This traditional costume includes a wide-brimmed hat and ankle boots with gaiters or cowboy boots depending on the type of trouser worn. The spurs must be vaquera spurs and must also be blackened. Women who participate in Doma Vaquera ride side-saddle and must also wear the appropriate outfit.

The equestrian skills that the demanding and disciplined sport of Doma Vaquera requires are that the rider achieves great intuition, speed, agility, sensitivity and a perfect synchronisation with his mount. To do this, to become one with the horse, is one of man's greatest accomplishments. □



Winckelmann und Sohne Berlin 1840



Victor Adam laSuerteDeVaras Paris 1801

# Vaququera

