

Chapter I-5

Nothing Brings Colonial Chile more Fame than its Horses

In 1610 the 200-year colonial period of Chile began. Unlike the early years of the conquest, when only one viceroyalty had been established in Hispaniola, the colonial period of Spanish America saw a subdivided definition of power. In the 16th century, three strong viceroyalties would arise in the regions where Spain had been allocated the greatest amount of wealth.

In reading about Chilean history, one cannot help but be confused with the status of this land that in different instances is referred to as a territory, a province, a governorship, a captain generalship, a colony and even a kingdom! In reality, when Diego de Almagro explored the region in 1535, he was assigned one of four latitudinal splits of what is now Chile. More importantly, these divisions were made all the way across the continent from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts.

The northern part of Chile was part of the governorship of New Castile that had been granted to Francisco Pizarro in 1529. It may surprise the reader to see these dates that precede the actual moment of conquest of these lands. Experience advised the conquistadors to assure the paperwork that stipulated their land rights and bounties be drawn up well before handing over the goods to the crown.

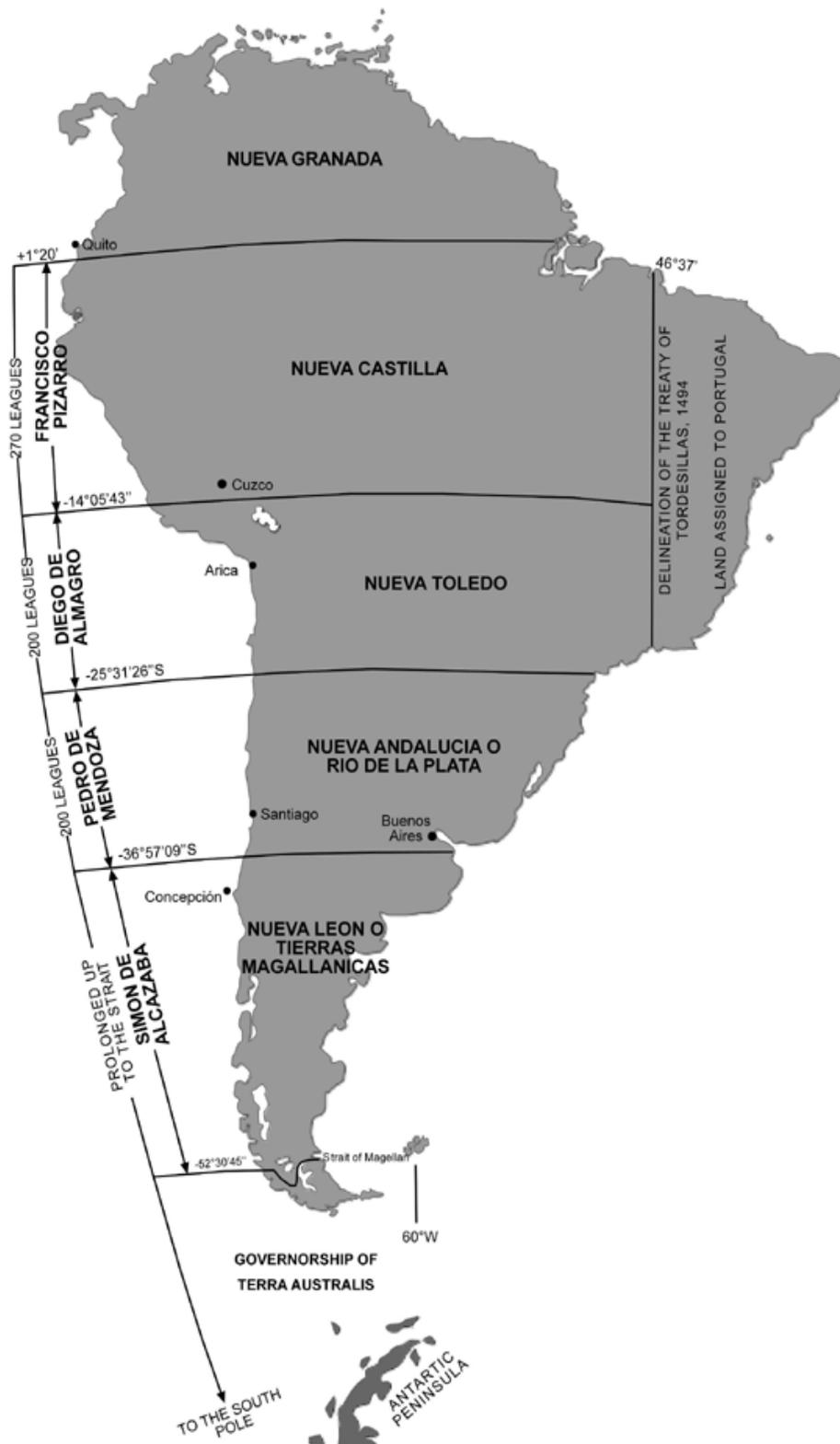
The sector that followed as far south as what is now Tal Tal (the 23rd parallel that is slightly south of Antofagasta) was named New Toledo. This was Diego de Almagro's legal claim since 1534. Interestingly, if these decrees had have been enforced, the "discoverer of Chile" would have been restricted to what is now land in the Republics of Peru and Bolivia, as modern Chile only gained access to the lands above this parallel after the War of the Pacific in 1879.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Diego de Almagro had clear intentions of reaching the Straits of Magellan, thus claiming rights to territories to the south that he had not been assigned. In fact, his travels did penetrate well in to New Andalucia, a governorship that had been designated to Pedro de Mendoza in 1534. He also tread into New León, in which lay most of the Magellanic lands further south that had been allotted to Simón de Alacazaba in the same year. The tip of South America on the southern portion of the Straits of Magellan was considered Australis Lands to be governed by Pedro Sanchez de Hoz.

When Pedro de Valdivia left an impressive collection of assets in New Castile (Peru) and inexplicably set out to settle the lands that de Almagro had been so disillusioned with, the partition of the lands to the south was still the same. However, in 1543, the Viceroyalty of New Castile was formed, putting the captainships to the south under its jurisdiction. Valdivia was named Chile's first governor and captain general after founding the city of "Santiago del Nuevo Extremo" and declaring the surrounding region as "Nueva Extremadura" (New Extremity) in honor of his place of birth in Spain. However, his captain generalship actually extended itself to the lands he had explored on the southern boundary of New Andalucia, due to the fact that Pedro de Mendoza had abandoned his settlement in "Buen Ayre". As Latin America became more developed, it would be the established viceroyalties that would define the immediate spheres of power throughout the continent.

After Hernán Cortés defeated the magnanimous Empire of the Aztecs, the governorship of New Spain was established in 1522 and the discoverer himself was named governor. It was not until 1535 that Antonio de Mendoza was named viceroy of the newly pronounced Viceroyalty of New Spain in what now comprises Mexico. Over the following three centuries it would expand to the north including the areas that presently make up northern Mexico and the states of California, Texas, Arizona and New Mexico and to the south over the lands that would become the captainship of Guatemala which was divided in eight provinces that included what is today Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras (Higueras), Nicaragua (New Valladolid) and Costa Rica. This added a tremendous potential for cattle production that would provide Spain with the valuable commodities of leather and tallow to complement the sources of mineral wealth that were already being mined in the name of the crown.

Figure I.111
Latitudinal Divisions of Major Territories in South America as Defined by Spain for Designated Conquistadors



Farther south, Pizarro's capture of the Incan Empire gave rise to another great viceroyalty. In 1542 it became known as the Viceroyalty of New Castile, this region provided Spain with a seemingly never-ending source of mineral wealth. Ironically, as the conquest of the mineral rich mountainous lands of "The Audience of Santa Fe de Bogotá (Colombia), "The Presidency of Quito" (Ecuador) and "The Royal Audience of Lima" expanded southward towards "The Audience of Chárkas" (Bolivia), "The Governorship of Paraguay" (Paraguay), "La Plata" (Argentina) and "The Governorship of Chile (Chile), this viceroyalty took on the famous "cattle territories" that provided a very different resource from the metallurgic wealth of the Inca domain.

In 1718, the third principal American viceroyalty was assigned to New Granada, which covered the lands that today comprise Venezuela (New Granada and New Andalusia -- a name that was reused when the abandoned claims of Pedro de Mendoza were incorporated into the Chilean territories), Panama (Veraguas), Colombia (Golden Castile), and Ecuador as well as the Peruvian districts of Catamarca and Piura. Although much of the Andes highlands provided a varied mineral wealth, the llanos of Venezuela and Colombia as well as the flatlands of Panama provided fertile areas for cattle production.

It would not be until 1776 when the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata (this means "Silver River", but Argentines would amusingly translate it as "River Plate") was established so that a politically specific state for a cattle producing economy would take form. This last Latin American viceroyalty would entail part of present day Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Paraguay, as well as all of what we now consider Uruguay.

Clearly, the scene was set for the colonial development of the Americas as these main viceroyalties were defined and assigned the power to make the crucial decisions for the progress of their respective regions.

The Only Spanish Kingdom in America Gives Rise to an Exceptional Horse

Chile's geographical isolation in the southern part of the continent assured it being a part of the protectorate of the Viceroyalty of New Castile (Peru). Although Chile would eventually produce prudent amounts of leather, tallow and wheat, the eternal conflicts with the Mapuche tribes would give the viceroys more grief than resources. In spite of the fact that Chile was actually the only place in America that the Spanish declared a kingdom, this thin strip of land was so insignificant to the Viceroyalty of New Castile that it would be 225 years before they bothered to remove the title from the official records. Why was Chile dispensed this special privilege?

When Spain and England were the two main military powers in the world, it was obvious that any ties that could be made between the two empires that controlled most of Europe and nearly all of America would be politically advantageous in dividing their interest in the world more amicably. The Spanish King Charles I (simultaneously Charles V in Germany) foresaw the convenience of trying to arrange a marriage between his son and the English Lady Mary of Tudor, as she was a potential heir to the English throne. So, in an effort to improve Prince Phillip II's chances of tying this opportune nuptial knot, after Pedro de Valdivia's passing in 1553, Chile was declared a kingdom so that the ultimate title could accompany the name of the most eligible royal Spanish bachelor.

As it turned out, Mary of Tudor became Queen of England prematurely and a more impressive title than that could not be had. The wedding materialized just the same and any effort to make the Kingdom of Chile overly important was now a moot point for the young couple, who were in command of one of the world's most powerful empires. Nevertheless, the historian Father Diego de Rosales tells us that a court representative from Chile, Gerónimo de Alderete, personally delivered a large number of bars of gold and silver that were included as wedding presents. Phillip II ordered them paraded through the streets of London, in order to promote the idea of the potential riches of his new kingdom. However, the unfolding disappointment in Chile as a source of mineral wealth (the kind that was valued in those days of course, as ironically this has been Chile's greatest natural resource over time) quickly tempered

his interest in these secluded lands and for more than three years the Kingdom of Chile had no official leader within its boundaries.

The kingdom had long been christened, but it would not be until 1581 that the Town Council of Santiago would find the audacity to first use the official title that would remain in place during the rule of 28 consecutive governors. In 1778, King Charles III finally corrected this technicality by designating Chile a general captainship (Capitanía General de Chile), which remained under the protection of the Viceroyalty of New Castile (Peru). Ironically, the rulers thereafter were known as Governors and Captain Generals of the *Kingdom* of Chile. In fact, the term kingdom would be widely used in describing Chile until 1811.

Even if the only “King of Chile” did not proclaim his title, there is no denying that the rulers and citizens of this unique American “kingdom” found a reason to be prouder than they would have been without such a royal designation. This fringe benefit especially befitted the horse breeders of Chile, who rightfully laid claim to some of the best equines on the continent. Certainly knowing superb specimens were coming from the “Kingdom of Chile” did nothing but help them in their marketing efforts abroad.

Superb Horsemen Assigned as Governors Further Promoted Horse Breeding

The one commodity that the Kingdom of Chile produced that all viceroyalties of the Americas were interested in was the **Chilean Horse**. Perhaps the only place in the Americas that had as much fame for horse production was the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico), and the total numbers of their production were so great that they should have easily outshone Chile. No doubt, this speaks highly of the adequacy of the natural conditions in Chile for raising a good horse. However, the reason for the Chilean pursuit of excellence merits a more profound discussion concerning the motivations that were offered by the great horsemen that occupied positions of leadership.

During the colonial period, the settlers of this land continued to explore, settle and combat in the confines of its territory, but a much greater focus was made on the development of a more progressive society. The stability of the established areas north of the Bío Bío River offered a wider range of mobility. The establishment of intricate networks of infrastructure and services promoted a contemporary attitude that substituted the struggle to survive through self-sufficient means. More importantly, this led the way to a more relaxed lifestyle that permitted enjoying the pleasures of life. The people turned to educational opportunities, artistic expression and both passive and active participation in competitive sports.

Nowhere was this change more evident than in the governing bodies. The practicality of resolving the principal needs of its subjects was replaced by regulation of the minutest details. A ceremonial ambiance of the ruling class was most evident, and it was speckled with aristocratic etiquette and, on occasion, arrogance that was commonplace in the motherland.

From this spirit came about the tradition of receiving the new governors with gifts, livestock and the highest caliber horses to ride. The town councils of the main municipalities paid exorbitant prices for parade horses. The royal hearings, the public ceremonies and the celebrations of religious holidays* and ironically, any key victory of the Spanish forces**, gave rise to parades that required new horses that could be displayed proudly in order to please the enthusiastic crowds of onlookers.

As an example, one could cite the gifts received by Francisco Lazo de la Vega, who governed during the 11 years between 1629 and 1639. This military officer obtained a prestigious reputation as a result of his leadership in the war against the Dutch. He became highly touted as just what was required to confront the now very well respected Mapuche forces. Upon his ascendance as new governor and captain general of the armed forces, the Town

* *One such religious holiday was the celebration of Santa Rosa de Lima, the patron saint of the Native Americans.*

** *Ironically, key victories of the Spanish forces were also celebrated when the patron saint was paradoxically unable to protect the many Mapuches that died in battle.*

Council of the city of Santiago sent Lazo de la Vega a gift of 2,634 head of cattle and a beautiful horse called “Juan de Cuevas”. Upon the arrival of the new leader in the port of Concepción, these gifts were awaiting him. Just a year later, the governor received yet another, more expensive, horse from the Town Council as a sign of appreciation for a decisive victory over the Mapuches. This time he was the recipient of “Jusepe León”, a horse that was described as the most magnificent warhorse of the entire kingdom, with a hefty price tag to match.

The payment of record prices by the municipalities continued in an ascending trend, as in 1668 Governor Diego de Ávila Coello y Pacheco, who ruled from 1668-1670, was given a horse that cost almost twice as much as the much-discussed outlay paid for the well-remembered steed of Francisco Lazo. Before leaving the ceremony, Governor de Ávila was also awarded 1,000 horses with which to head off into battle.

Perhaps what best denotes how ingrained this tradition had become in the kingdom was the fact that in 1663 there was a royal order that no Town Council could issue government funds to purchase parade horses and tack for the receiving ceremonies of newly arriving governors. However, in 1671, the Town Council of Santiago handed over to Governor Juan Henríquez a parade horse and tack that had been purchased with donations from personal funds.

Luckily, the recipient of this generosity was precisely the type of individual that made the most of the old tradition. Not since García Hurtado de Mendoza had there been a governor that enjoyed the festive ambiance of public holidays as much. In celebrating his arrival in the capital they illuminated the streets, made bonfires, had bullfights, and performed equestrian war games in which the governor himself participated. Fortunately, he not only enjoyed the parties, but also substantiated by being an excellent leader with proven skills in law and politics. His 13-year rule, from 1670 to 1682, that equaled Pedro Valdivia as the second-longest governing period in Chile, is demonstrative of both the executive efficiency and the popularity of this grand horseman.

What is worth emphasizing is how well the citizens of Chile identified with fun-loving horsemen. When leaders provided opportunities for the public appearance of well-trained horses and able horsemen, the community responded in euphoric masses. More importantly, these events served as great stimuli for the breeders to try even harder to surpass the already world-renowned fame of their horses.

The arrival of General Gabriel Cano de Aponte as the new governor in 1717 complied with the qualities that the Chilean citizens respected. Not only was he an honored military leader in his 33 years of participation in the War of Flanders, but he was also a gallant nobleman, with the imposing presence of a natural leader that who commands respect. True to his nature, he was a bold horseman, always desirous of a challenge and an opportunity to show his admirable skills in public.

Upon arriving in Chile, Governor Cano de Aponte was convinced that the disadvantage that the colony suffered in battle was related to its horsepower. He was determined to increase the equine forces of the kingdom, both in numbers and in quality. As a result, he stimulated many festivities that emphasized the equestrian war games in which he often participated. Several times a week, there were public displays in the streets of Santiago in which parade horses demonstrated their skills in *Haute Ecòle* equitation. Sport horses also participated in events of the famed war games of Spain. The youth became enchanted with their leader, as well as the variety of equine events that became the fad of the times. Breeders strived to out-produce each other as the Chilean horse reached yet new heights.

The popularity of Governor Cano’s leadership can clearly be seen by his 17-year reign from 1717 until 1733. Most governors averaged terms of only six or seven years, but the effectiveness of Governor Cano in



Figure I.112 Gabriel Cano de Aponte was the most beloved of all the Governor’s of Chile. This expert horseman died a tragic death while carrying out the longest reign of any Royal Governor.

prompting a well-organized government and a general content in the citizens made him, by far, the longest-lasting ruler in the history of Chile. Unfortunately, his time in power was cut short by a regrettable accident.

In 1733, a celebration unlike any ever seen before was thrown for Governor Cano upon his return to the capital. The motive was twofold. Firstly, he was responsible for much of the progress in the now thriving colony. The second justification was related to the fact that he also gained much recognition for the cooperation he offered in the reconstruction of the city of Concepción after its destruction by a terrible earthquake. As always, one of the main attractions in the celebration was the equestrian display.

As was his custom, Governor Cano was on one of the most spirited horses. The governor made various efforts to make one of his spectacular demonstrations of “fencing” his horse into a wall. What he intended to do was to run at full speed at the wall and pin his horse’s hindquarter under him so close to the end of the run that the horse braced his forelegs on the wall, before performing a 180-degree rollback over the hocks. However, his exasperated steed refused to implement the routine being demanded by the insistent rider. He put up such a fight that anyone less capable would have been unseated. The stubborn governor insisted time and again. Eventually, the frustrated horse went over backwards, pinning the governor underneath him. Four months later, the governor died of internal injuries that could not be remedied.

Although the regrettable death of Governor Cano curtailed what was surely to become an unattainable number of years in the governor’s post, one cannot deny that the presence of such a gifted horseman in the ruling seat had a tremendous impact on Chile’s production of higher caliber horses.

The presence of extraordinary horsemen like García Hurtado de Mendoza, Francisco Lazo de la Vega, Juan Henríquez, and Gabriel Cano de Aponte did five crucial things for the development of the horse in Chile:

- 1) It put accomplished horsemen in the post that received the most public attention.
- 2) It established many civic ceremonies which became traditional events in which the governor and many other admirable horsemen could show off their skills publicly.
- 3) It created generations of fanatical youth who devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the equestrian arts in order to imitate their public heroes. These young men grew into adults that later were part of a population that had a great appreciation for horses and horsemanship.
- 4) The fame of the elite horses stimulated breeders to reach new heights of equine quality in their effort to compete for the slots of the most revered animals.
- 5) Having governors that were horseman made the military forces concentrate on having sufficient numbers and quality of warhorses, thus creating a ready market for more common horse breeding. This created a broader underpinning of horses from which outstanding individuals could be discovered.

Equestrian Games Pave the Way for Spectator Sports

As impressive and popular as the public displays of the elite were, the innate passion that Chileans felt for the horse also gave rise to its use as a source of personal entertainment. In fact, during the period of colonization, the citizens were exposed to a growing number of ways in which the horse could be put to use. Their value as an implement of war was well recognized, but as settlements were established, the Spaniards also demonstrated the horse’s utility in clearing fields, planting and harvesting, tending to livestock and a variety of transports and services. As diverse as the uses for the horse were, the quality most revered about the species was its agility and speed. As more competent soldiers found their way to the Western Hemisphere, a new level of horsemanship came with them.

Equestrian games are nearly as old as the relationships that have united horses and men. In many cultures, horses and riders honed their skills for battle by practicing maneuvers that were needed in battle. Oftentimes, these were implemented in the form of competition in order to give motivation for a higher level of competency. The Moors were well known for these

types of equestrian exercises during their seven-century occupation of parts of the Iberian Peninsula. Initially a private discipline, eventually the equestrian games became a popular event for both participants and spectators.

So it seems logical that the Spanish cavalry would also appreciate the value of such competition and that it would be just a matter of time before these equestrian sports would find their way into the Americas. Many of these events offered a degree of danger that put the lives of both the horses and the riders at certain risk. As the societies in Europe became more sophisticated and conscientious, most of these games would be prohibited.

Interestingly enough, long after they ceased to be permitted in the countries of origin, colonies throughout the Americas were still actively taking advantage of their value as spectator sports. In fact, in the Americas, other types of equestrian games were improvised and added to the list of festivities that tested the different kinds of equine aptitudes. The courageous “macho” risk-taking spirit that prevailed in all the cowboy cultures of the Americas made the environment in the rustic and unruly New World much more conducive to equestrian games. In a wild vastness lacking in infrastructure, the American horsemen appreciated the virtues of staring danger in the face. They accepted the “fate” of the consequences with much less melancholy than would be commonplace in more cultured surroundings.

Perhaps one of the oldest games in the world is a type of equestrian rugby whereby some object is confiscated, then prevented from falling into the hands of the mounted pursuers until it was transported past, or into, a specific objective. In Central Asia, the game is still extremely popular. “Buzhaski”, as it is called, is carried out with a freshly killed kid goat, two goal posts a half a mile apart and 40 or more men divided into two teams.

The sport Chileans inherited from the Spanish was called “**pato**” (“**duck**”), since originally a large fowl was killed and placed inside a durable rawhide covering with four handles that was sewn tightly shut. Initially, someone on foot started with the duck and quickly he was charged by all the competitors on horseback that struggled to gain possession of it. Whoever had the duck was fair game for the other riders to attack as they tried to pry the duck away and have their turn at being chased. Usually the objective was to cross the opponent’s line, but the game had no limitations and covered a huge area of land. This game would go on for hours, often having little regard for fences, buildings or anything else that got in the way of the pursuit.

This game was particularly popular on the 24th of June, during the short dry spell of Saint John. It was played on both sides of the Andes from the early 1600’s to the mid 1800’s. However, in 1748 after a Chilean competitor died, the sport of “pato” was banned all together. In Argentina, the sport was banned six times between 1799 and 1899, but its popularity continued regardless. In that country the sport has been reinstated under the rules of the *Argentine Pato Federation* and it is now considered the national sport. It is played in a 90 X 120 yard field with a six-handled leather ball that is pursued by two four-man teams that try to shoot the ball into a 9 ft. tall basket.

The “**cane game**” was another popular sport in the colonial days. The Spanish first introduced the game of “**juego de cañas**” in the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico), and by 1663 it had become known in Chile. This contest of Moorish origin involved two teams that took turns at the offensive and defensive positions. The offensive team had light cane lances with which they all simultaneously charged furiously at the defenders who had to stand their ground protected only by small leather shields called “adargas”. The offender tried to hit the opponent with the weak lances or, at the very least, smash them against the opponent’s shield. The defender tried to catch the symbolic lances in the air, or block and dodge them. Unfortunately, at times the teams were feuding families or enemy bands. Tempers occasionally flared during the games and real lances were then substituted for the inoffensive cane ones. The bloody results led to banning this game in Europe while it was still popular in the Americas.

The “**Rejoneo**” was another sport that was started in Spain and some think the origin goes back to the Roman occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. In the equestrian games of the colonial times, any mention of the cane game went hand-in-hand with “**bullfighting on horseback**”. Although the exact date it commenced in Chile is not known, the fact that it started in Mexico in

1529 would indicate that its inclusion in to the New World culture was not long after the regional dominion.

In Spain the “rejoneo” has developed into an intricate sport with as much formality and regulation as the better-known pedestrian bull fighting. The later actually evolved from “bullfighting on horseback” and it was not until the 18th century that it replaced the classical “rejoneo” that was an exclusive gentlemanly activity.

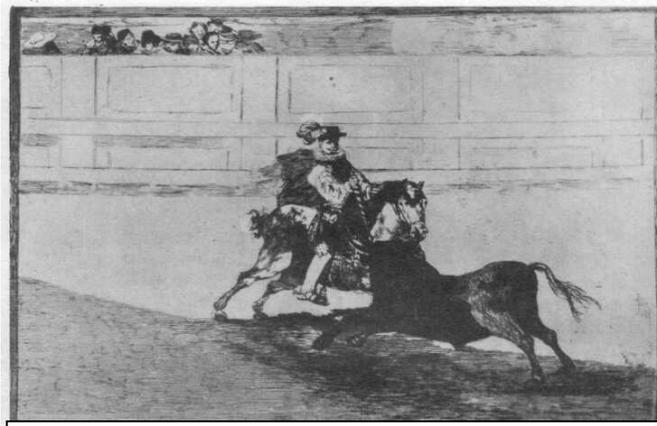


Figure I.113 Francisco Goya depicted scenes of bullfighting on horseback that would have been similar to those in equestrian games in the Americas.

The objective of “bullfighting on horseback” in Spain has always been for the rider to kill the bull from atop his horse. Portugal, on the other hand, has cultivated the exact same sport/art with the exception of the kill. In this country “bullfighting on horseback” has never ceased to be performed to the present day.

The “rejoneo” requires a very level-headed and daring equine temperament, as well as a very high level of equestration. It is said that one in 100 Andalusians or Lusitanos are

truly suited for the job in spite of the fact that these breeds are the most highly selected for the sport.

In Chile, where bullfighting on foot never caught on, bullfighting on horseback generally implied playing with the bull in public. The colonial competitors in Chile enticed the bulls to charge and then evaded them, often while the rider purposefully discarded the reins to show off the responsive communication that existed between horse and rider. In the 16th and 17th centuries, this was pretty much the case everywhere, and if the kill was implemented it was generally with a lance rather than the “rejón” (a straight sword that is thrust between the shoulder blades for the kill).

At the time, this was a nobleman’s sport and it is often commented that King Charles I celebrated the birth of his son Phillip by fighting bulls. King Phillip IV was especially responsible for making the sport popular throughout the Spanish empire. Most likely in Chile it was also yet another way in which the rulers could gain respect and backing from the citizens. This tactic would be effective for years to come as the Venezuelan strongman, José Antonio Páez, was adept at taming bulls in public, and the Argentine dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas was known to please the crowds with his skillful demonstrations of “pialar” (dismounting over the top of a horse that has received a foreleg catch).

The skills of bullfighting were well appreciated by the masses of colonial Chile, as the cattle of the colonial Americas were very difficult to handle. We must remember that the Iberian cattle were the predominant bovine types in Chile until the end of the 19th century, when Richard Price, Thomas Gallo and Anacleto Mott imported the first Durham cattle. The Iberian stock was infamous for their very aggressive nature. For this reason the pikes or goads (“garrochas” in Spanish), were considered essential tools in handling cattle. Even in strongly Spanish-influenced California, the pike was used to handle cattle as late as the 19th century.

The “**ring race**”, or “**la sortija**” as it was known in Spanish, was yet another game with numerous variations that have been played around the world. The “ring race” always entailed spearing rings of various diameters with a lance of corresponding size while riding at full speed. It is thought that it became popular in Spain in the 16th century, but like the “cane game” its origins probably go back to the Moors. The manner in which it was first implemented had the riders using a foot-long (30.5 cm) miniature lance to try and skewer a golden ring that was dangling from a thread. The successful rider was able to present the ring to the woman of his choice. Other versions were more war-like in that they used an 11-foot (3.4 meter) lance with

which the rider had to spear wooden rings between ½” to 2” in diameter that were hung from inverted “L” posts that were placed every 25 yards (23m) in a 100 yd. (92 m) course.

As Chilean cattlemen gained more experience in handling livestock, they learned to value the power of their horses as much as their speed. This small-statured type of horse needed to outperform his physique when handling wild “retinto” type cattle on the end of a rope, or pushing them along narrow alleyways. As a result, equine sports often pitted horses to test their brute strength.

The “**cinchada**” (“**the cinch game**”) was a competition in which two horses standing tail-to-tail had their saddles tied together with a rawhide lariat. A tug-of-war commenced and continued until one of the horses was finally able to pull the other backwards past a designated line. A similar event was called “**pull the rooster**” (“**tirar el gallo**”), in which the riders’ wrists were tied together and the competition would persist until one of the riders was pulled out of the saddle.

A particularly violent sport that was known both as “**pechada**” or “**pechando**” (“**chesting**”) developed in the Americas, wherein two horses would separate themselves by as much as 217 yards (200 m). On signal, they would charge towards each other until they crashed in a head-on collision. Usually this resulted in both contestants being downed from the first clash. It was expected that both horse and rider regain their stance and charge their opponent again and again, at continually closer range, until injury or exhaustion caused one of the competitors to give up.

As cruel as this sport surely was, it must be realized that in those days horses were cheap and plentiful. The plains were full of horses for the taking and, as a result, the horsemen placed little sentimental value in any individual that could be easily replaced. This mentality of the early colonial days caused men to be less patient in training methods and more demanding of the workloads they asked of their equine laborers. Lest we forget the society of the time had too many examples of a similar mentality in the manner that slaves and indentured Native Americans servants were treated by fellow human beings in positions of power.

With time, “chesting” took up only the final phases of the original contest and pitted horse against horse starting from head-to-head positions. The contact was less acute in this manner and quickly the match became a shoving contest of two equines that had their shoulders locked into each other. Like two football linemen, they dug in, in an effort to prove dominance until one horse completely stopped trying.

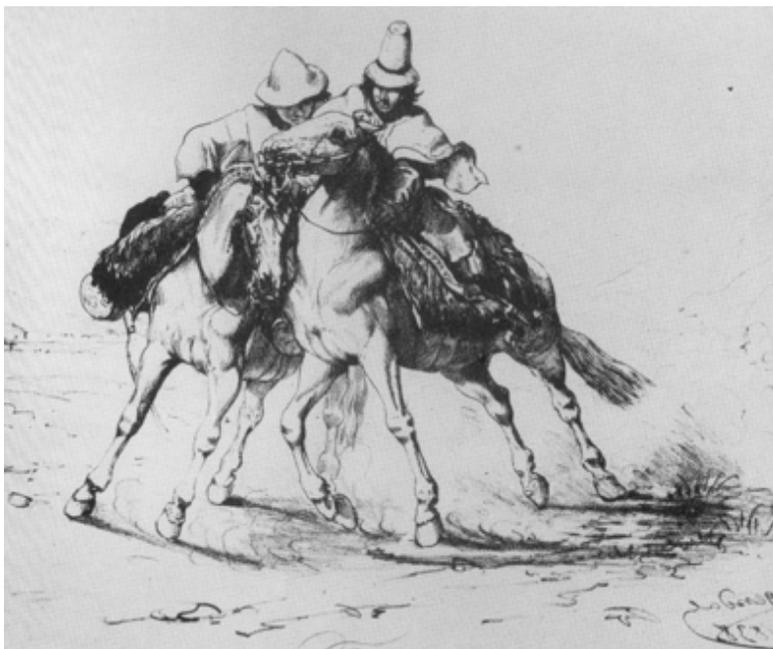


Figure I.114 “Topeando” (bumping) was a popular lateral strength contests that could be carried out in the open or with the horses side by side, perpendicular to a long hitching pole. The winning horse was the one that used his shoulder to shove his competitor off the end.

A similar contest that gave way to the aptitudes needed in the sport of “running the cattle” was known as “**topeando**” (“**bumping**”). While this was another kind of shoving contest, here the horses were pitted side-by-side, facing a long, thick pole that was laid out perpendicular to the equine contestants. The pole was on legs that raised it to the horses’ chest height. The horses would lean into each other with their shoulders, with the objective of pushing the competitor all the way to the end of the pole. This competition strengthened the muscles used in the lateral work of the rodeos. Although formal bets were more apt to be placed on “official” competitions carried out in front of a pole, it was common to see horses testing each other informally in any gathering of stock horses. The famous German custom painter of the 19th century, Juan Mauricio Rugendas (1802-1858) made such scenes a part of Chilean folklore for posterity.

The desire to have a good stop is aspired to by every stock horse ranch hand and the competition of “**lining**” (“**rayar**”) played on the ability of wanting a Chilean horse to stop on a dime. A line was drawn in a designated spot and horses were asked to approach it at a full run and then stop abruptly by sitting on their haunches (“*sentada*”). The horse that came closest to stopping on the line was the winner. As the upcoming chapter on equitation will allude to, the contemporary Chilean Horse is still stopped in a very sudden manner that causes him to sit well back on his haunches and raise his forequarters in the air. Even though equitationally this is not a very polished manner of stopping a horse, the “lining game” of old probably explains in part why this style is embedded in Chilean tradition.

The interest in bush track racing over short distances was as popular in colonial Chile as it was in the 19th century of the Old West of the U.S.A. At times, races were run with a post fence in between the contestants, to simply determine the faster of the two competitors. However, a more popular race was the “**crowding race**” where contestants shared a common path that was either lined or elevated. The object was to be the first past the finish line, but it was fair play to lean into your competitor and try and push him off the path while in the race. This once again added the criteria of strength to the formula of speed, something that has always been appreciated by Chilean horsemen.

The Equitational Prowess of the Chilean People in the Colonial Period

As examples of the talents of great horsemen were made more commonplace in both the classic and practical worlds of entertainment, the equestrian competency of the average Chilean citizen improved. In a vastly enhanced society of horsemen, more intricate accomplishments were required to impress onlookers.

The historian Father Miguel Gómez gave written testimony to the horsemanship ability of the Chilean people. We must remember that during this time all around the world the horse was the common mode of transport. Thus, impressing a world traveler in matters of horsemanship took great effort. The following is a translation of part of Father Miguel Gomez’s observations in Chile:

“The fortitude and skill that Chileans show in handling their horses is truly marvelous. No other nation, and I include the Tartans and the Arabs, can compare with them, because of three principal factors that are required in perfecting this sort of discipline:

- 1) *commence the discipline as a youth,*
- 2) *continue to practice the rest of your life and*
- 3) *have all the facilities available to practice.”*

“Regarding the first point, the Chilean children at the tender ages in which their blood boils and little consideration is given to how they can have fun, look upon horseback riding as the main source of entertainment. The parents seem to be more confident in them than would seem reasonable, taking into account the risks that are involved in such an endeavor, as well as the unfortunate experiences of accidents that would be much greater in number if it were not for the gentle and generous nature of these horses.”

*“The second point that carries one close to the perfection of any art is continual practice. One can be assured that a great number of the inhabitants of this kingdom, especially those that reside in the countryside, will very rarely get off their horses all day long, and when doing so it is only because it is some kind of necessity or errand which is impossible to do on horseback. Some cattle drivers which are assigned the duty of making nocturnal rounds of the cattle herds have learned to sleep as comfortably in the saddle as they would in their beds.” **

Father Miguel Gomez tells the story of having to cover 12 leagues (48 km or 30 miles) in a rush to make an appointment for a confession. While in a continual gallop, he was accompanied by a guide that was to show him the way. He observed that for over half of the distance, the guide was asleep in the saddle often times so sound asleep that he was snoring!!!

Father Miguel Gomez continues:

“In summary: The Chileans ride horseback so much that of the total distance traveled on roads, it would be but one, one-thousandth of that distance that would be covered on foot”.

“The third point that contributes greatly toward reaching perfection in any endeavor is that many amenities with which to practice exist. Since in this kingdom there are so many excellent horses it is obvious that the raw material is not lacking to become adept in their handling. Certainly the two periods when it is less likely that one would be suitable to handle horses would be the infancy and the old age”.

“Here there seems to be an exception to the rule, as there are thousands of men over seventy years of age that move and maneuver the most spirited of horses without seemingly lacking in ability due to their advanced age. What else do I need to say about the already precocious exposure of Chilean children to their horses? A lot could be said, but it will suffice to say that in formal racing, as well as in match races, the horses are raced by children 10 or less years of age, in order to give the horses the advantage of carrying less weight.”

*“The type of equestrian prowess that is commonly seen in Chile is picking up a spear lying on the ground as they run by on horseback, breaking horses that buck furiously on the first ride, with so much confidence that the rider is not even winded. Generally, two such horses are assigned per worker per day as a part of a normal day’s work. It is common that a worker will hop on a horse that has never been ridden before and ride him out bareback and with no reins, making him run full tilt while steering him with slaps in the side of the head until the horse is as gentle as a lamb. Others ride the bulls that are used in bullfights, testing their patience while playing a musical instrument while riding them out of the ring totally submissive to the rider aboard. As if riding an unbroken horse bareback was not enough, some particularly gifted riders did so while locking their hands behind their back. Other unusual skills that are seen when crossing a deep river, is for the rider to do a headstand on the saddle and maintain his balance until the horse reached the other side”.***

Father Gomez named a couple of riders that repeatedly rode horses at a full run while holding a head stand in the saddle. He also mentions another couple of riders that rode horses at a full run standing in the saddle in front of a large audience of clergy. One of them threw off his shoes one at a time until riding barefoot.

(*) Uldaricio Prado (1914), *El Caballo Chileno, 1541 a 1914, Estudio Zootécnico e Histórico Hípico, Imprenta, Santiago, pp. 244*

(**) Uldaricio Prado (1914), *El Caballo Chileno, 1541 a 1914, Estudio Zootécnico e Histórico Hípico, Imprenta, Santiago, pp. 245-246*

The flexibility of the rider was very much appreciated in judging equestrian proficiency. Grabbing objects on the ground at a standstill or at a full gallop was a common modality that proudly exhibited both agility and commitment to doing as much as possible from the saddle. In the early days, when a number of blankets and hides were used under the saddle, riders exhibited their handiness by un-mantling their multi-layered saddles while running in one direction and then picking these objects off the ground and re-saddling their horses while on the return run.

The respected author Uldaricio Prado mentions that all these skills are abilities that were inherent in the genes of the conquistadors that arrived in Chile. Most of these adventurers had inborn aptitudes for horsemanship. These, in turn, go back to the Nubian horsemanship of northern Africa that undoubtedly influenced the Moorish disciplines in the Iberian Peninsula. By delving so far back in genealogy, it would seem that Mr. Prado overlooks the influence of the Mapuches that is imbedded in the bloodlines of the average Chilean citizen. The Spaniards themselves conceded the Native Americans to be more adept horsemen, and therein surely lies part of the answer of the aptitudes seen in colonial Chile.

Clearly, both ethnicities that in varying proportions made up the human context of the Chilean citizen, contributed a sentimental attachment and a physical aptitude that was required for great horsemanship. It is only logical that great horsemen should strive to have great horses, yet in Chile this fact was a result of much more than a simple fanatical following.

Why Was Chile Able to Produce the Best Horses in Colonial America?

As much as a good horse thrilled all the social levels in Chile, it was the men whose lives were put on the line daily who clearly needed the best possible steed between their legs. The fact that this requirement was repeatedly reinforced over centuries of war, in which the horse was the most crucial military asset, gave Chile all the conditions it needed to create an enviable equine foundation. During much of the colonial period, Chile gained a reputation as a country that produced the best caliber horses in Latin America. We can summarize that the main reason this came about was because:

- 1- The three-and-a-half-century war with the Mapuches depended strongly on mounted warfare, and thus this was a long-term sieve from which only horses with outstanding qualities survived for breeding purposes.
- 2- The great demands for warhorses with which to combat the Mapuches made horse breeding one of the most stable and profitable animal production projects.
- 3- The high mortality in warfare, as well as the excruciating demands of the rugged terrain of Chile, ensured a proving ground for horses with the greatest courage, fortitude, agility, responsiveness and stamina, as well as favoring those with the lowest nutritional requirements.
- 4- The fame that Chile obtained throughout South America for the export of the continent's best horses also reached the European markets. Overseas, exorbitant sums of money were paid for the cream of Chile's production. As a result, there were strong economic incentives to produce elite horses.
- 5- The scarcity of horses during the beginning of the conquest forced the early Spanish troops to ride both stallions and mares. Thus, while the rest of the world was only testing the abilities of their male horses, Chile established the suitability of both genders. Eventually, only stallions would be ridden in war by the Spanish cavalry in Chile. However, the Mapuches were never biased in terms of sex and used both stallions and mares as warhorses for more than three centuries.
- 6- The growing area in wheat production demanded an equally growing number of quality mares for thrashing the wheat. When mares were no longer ridden in the colonial Chile, the ability for wheat thrashing added other selection criteria to the production of fine saddle horses in Chile. Since most cattle production

- took place in the mountains surrounding the wheat fields, the thrashing mares upgraded the Chilean “trotters” types used as war and stock horses.
- 7- The Mapuche Indians became some of the most capable horsemen in the world and thus contributed an example, a tradition and identification with a high level of horsemanship.
 - 8- The Mapuches practiced selective breeding based on recognizing the most capable horses in preparatory exercises for war, as well as the performance during war itself. This contributed an independent gene pool of athletic and courageous horses with the right mental attitude. Problem horses quickly became Mapuche meals.
 - 9- Many of the Spanish immigrants that came to Chile after the initial conquest were of Andalusian origin and they brought with them an expertise and appreciation of horses. These same attributes were ingrained in the Mapuche culture that came to do practically everything on horseback. The descendants of both ethnic groups would become an important part of the drovers, cattlemen and “huasos” that brought out the best in Chilean horses.
 - 10- The necessity to cross mountainous terrain and numerous river valleys made travel on horseback a requirement for the many years that roads were unsuitable for coaches.
 - 11- The mild weather, suitability for lush forages, calciferous soils and intense interaction with man made Chile an ideal horse breeding ground.
 - 12- The primary role of the cattle industry in Chilean agriculture created a strong requirement for an equine that fortified an efficient working relationship between horses and riders that maneuvered bovines throughout most of the country.

Three Main Types of Horse Existed in Colonial Chile

It is valid that we question what this revered colonial horse of Chile was like. The **Chilean Horse** breed was still not defined. Although there were more types of Chilean horses in the 17th and 18th century than there are today, it is clear that all of these types had a common ancestry and, as a result, were in some way related to the **Chilean Horse**. Perhaps the most accurate descriptions will come from the historians of the era, many of whom were also clergymen.

Father Felipe Gomez de Vidaurre was a Jesuit historian in the 18th century. Father Felipe noted some slight phenotypic differences between the horses that were raised on the coast, in the central plains and in the mountains. However, the greatest differences were seen in the three basic “types” of horses that existed throughout colonial Chile. The observant historian emphasized how zealously the Chileans guarded the purity of these horses that were selected according to purpose. Even in times when formal registries in Latin America were nonexistent, Chilean breeders were meticulously grouping the genes related to specific functions.

Trotters

By far, the most numerous group was the “trotters”. This referred to the direct ancestor of the **Chilean Horse** that abounded as the stock horse that was most useful to the rural population. These were strong horses that were the most dependable at a run. The ease and speed with which they managed this gait was not only favorable in chasing cattle, but also gave rise to inevitable comparisons that were tested on makeshift racetracks.

Uldaricio Prado makes an interesting point that father Felipe made no mention of a specific racehorse “type”, in spite of the fact that the historian Father Miguel Gómez affirms that racing had become a popular pastime during this era. This leads one to conclude that racerunners indeed came from the largest population of horses that showed the greatest aptitude for this gait. However, it would not be until the 19th century that breeders would begin to select both stallions and mares for speed. This would coincide with the period in Chile’s history when

mares would start to be used under saddle, and, as a result, they would also be seen on the bush tracks throughout the country.



Figure I.115 The colonial period popularized all kinds of racing but the “carreras a la chilena” (Chilean races) came to symbolize sprint races of 200 meters or 217 yards. Without a doubt the Chilean “trotters” were the most successful race horses prior to 1850 when no other breeds were present in Chile. This scene illustrates a race in 1838.

Thus, the colonial period gave rise to a surging interest in horse racing. The inclusion of betting in the sport of racing made this an even more enticing spectacle. People of all backgrounds and sexes participated in the bets, often risking family heirlooms or entire herds of cattle. Few events overlooked ethnic classification or social status, as did racing. Every possible combination of ancestry stood elbow-to-elbow prepared to urge on their choices at race time. Native Americans were also very enthused with the sport and participated not only as spectators, but also with good racehorses. The Spaniards were so fanatical about the sport that one historian makes mention that so many congregated on race day that one could easily think they were in preparation for one of the greatest battles.

The races were run over a variety of distances. Some were so short that they only lasted a city block or two. To this day, sprint horses are called “cuadreros” (“blockers”) as city or town blocks determined their race distances. Other races were as long as three leagues (12.0 km or seven and a half miles), running part of the race in town and part over broken terrain on the outskirts. Either way, the popularity of these events that required more anaerobic performance was important in adding yet another important selection factor to the Chilean colonial horse. Giving speed priority made the Chilean “trotter” a more versatile mount on the range and in battlefields. More importantly, it began to distinguish this American equine from its Spanish ancestors, which gave greater importance to the ability to trot and pace with stylish leg action.

All the qualities associated with the Chilean “trotter” were most appreciated on the ranches where the stock horses were bred, raised and trained. Uldaricio Prado quoted the Jesuit priest Father Miguel Olivares in his invaluable book *El Caballo Chileno*, citing the classical descriptions of the colonial horse made by the observant clergyman in 1730. A translation of a portion of Mr. Prado’s writings follows:

“It is true that the noble qualities of the horses of this kingdom excuse that fanatical enthusiasm that is found for them in the populace. They are excellent racehorses, they show great endurance in carrying out their duties, they confront risks with much spirit, they have much presence in their movements, they quickly gather and show their courage, yet they are docile and obedient as well as gorgeous in form.”

“In breeding these horses, the owners of the haciendas choose the most well-bred mares that have the strongest physique and the tallest height. They then mate these mares with stallions that have proven extraordinary qualities.”

“The progeny are started under saddle at three years of age. They expose them to the hardest tasks on the hacienda, which normally involves working cattle. This includes handling ferocious bulls and steers that not only demand strenuous physical activity, but also instill a great deal of patience in the horses. For most of their uses they have the recourse of an instrument called a lariat, which is a thick rope made of dried, twisted bull hide. One end is tied to the right side of the cinch of the saddle, and the other extreme is used to lasso and contain the less manageable animals. This function not only serves to gentle the horse but also permits you to get to know them: here you will note the proud one, the athletic one, or the one that prematurely runs away from the spurs or the whip, or the one that makes the smoothest spins in obeying the signals of the reins, or any other desirable or undesirable qualities. Once the horses’ aptitudes have been determined, they are distributed to the functions that are most suitable for them.”

*“The gentler, nobler horses are reserved for the owner of the hacienda and these receive a very high level of schooling. The more average individuals are put into the groups that will be used as stock horses. The best horses command incredible prices for a country that has such numbers of extraordinary mounts. Yet, this breed is appreciated so much that individuals are sold for prices that have justified their undeniable quality, later having to travel over long distances over land and sea in order to be given to princes in Europe.” **

Father Felipe Gomez de Vidaurre gave special importance to the hardiness and easy-keeping qualities of the Chilean “trotter”. These features made them the ideal warhorse in a country that was never far from harsh mountainous terrain and whose geographic definition required mobilizing troops over great distances. He mentioned that it was common for Chileans to make trips of 100 or more continuous leagues (400 km or 250 miles) in which the riders stopped only to sleep. These horses not only resisted the demanding pace, but also maintained their corporal weight. Father Felipe Gomez felt that there was probably no other country in the world that so frequently worked its horses to the point of fatigue. Yet, in light of this harsh treatment, this noble type of native horse typically lived vigorously until 30 or 40 years of age.

Likewise, Father Miguel Olivares also attested to the staying power of the Chilean “trotters”. In his written testimony he comments, “However, their humbleness in confronting work assignments and their hardiness borders on the incredible and one can’t help but have doubt of how much faith lies within the readers of this text. For example, there are horses that carrying a robust rider and a heavy saddle are capable of covering fifty leagues (200 km or 125 miles) in twelve hours of travel.”** Such qualities surely were valued by the military, but moreover they were important qualities as a simple means of transportation in the early colonial days when most roads were only fit for horses under saddle.

Aside from the need for warhorses, the growing agricultural production in the territories north of the Bío Bío River demanded the use of horses in processing wheat and tending to the expanding cattle industry. The cow ponies were required to gather and drive horses to the corrals, to inspect the herds during the day, and to cut out and select individuals for treatment. Most Chilean cattlemen in the central valley were known to have very manageable cattle because they had frequent contact with horse and rider. However, the fact that the tillable lands were largely used for wheat production meant that the majority of the stock horses had to maneuver themselves over rough mountainous terrains.

(*) Uldaricio Prado (1914), *El Caballo Chileno, 1541 a 1914, Estudio Zootécnico e Histórico Hípico, Imprenta, Santiago, pp. 242-243*

(**) Uldaricio Prado (1914), *El Caballo Chileno, 1541 a 1914, Estudio Zootécnico e Histórico Hípico, Imprenta, Santiago, pp. 244*

This long narrow country that is crisscrossed by transversal mountains also made communications within the country a task that required rugged horses capable of forging rivers, climbing steep gradients and managing winding rocky trails. All these aspects of the tasks expected of the Chilean horse of the colonial period made for the development of a genetic pool that contributed very tough and hardy traits. Yet these were the days when only male horses were ridden and a legitimate question is how were mares capable of contributing to the objectives of breeders, if they were never ridden?



Figure I.116 The “trilla” (threshing with horses) not only was an agricultural necessity to process the wheat, it was also an excellent means of selecting energetic, durable, surefooted mares that would become the backbone of the stock horse industry in Chile. Since the best stock horses were of the “trotter” type, it was this type that also made up the threshing mares.

The answer is found in a specialized gender selection that became an extraordinary assortment tool in the improvement of the colonial Chilean “trotter”. You see, the threshing mares (“yeguas trilladoras”) used to process wheat were, in large part, the best producers of good “trotter” horses. This was an important input in the development of the Chilean Horse breed, since it wasn’t until 1840 that mares were used under saddle. Had this method of selection not existed to prove the quality of the mares, much slower progress would have been made in the advancement of the breed.

Although using mares for threshing began in the early 17th century, their importance would peak in the following 250 years. The colonial period saw the rising importance of exports from Chile, most of which were agricultural products. The suitability of the central region of Chile for wheat crops made this one of the leading exports. As a result, there was a great emphasis put on the groups of threshing mares that were used to process the wheat.

This was strenuous work where the mares were expected to start in a circular confined area of unprocessed, knee-high wheat. Moving their way through this slippery footing was very demanding on the muscles of the neck, forearms, backs and hindquarters. During centuries of selection, the Chilean stock horse was selected for enough spirit that good groups of threshing mares made their way around the threshing circle energetically of their own accord.

The Spanish tradition that surely was responsible for this innovative idea in Chile, selected mares for a docile, manageable temperament that permitted them to work around their trainer while united by strong ropes latched onto thick leather collars. With “cobras” (groups of threshing mares) of as many as 12 abreast, using only a long whip and voice commands, the

Spanish trainer demanded and controlled the workload of his thrashing mares. The Chileans, on the other hand, worked their thrashing mares loose. If a man ever entered the thrashing circle, it was usually to calm the mares down, so that they would not be overly energetic in initiating their task. Undoubtedly, this strong selection of impetus is largely responsible for the ever-present desire Chilean Horses have to work at any task that is asked of them.



Figure I.117 Due to its versatility the Chilean trotter was the most numerous of the native horse types. This horse type was the means of transport for the populace, the war horse, the stock horse, the race horse, the thrashing horse, the cart horse and the plow horse. During the colonial days only native horses existed in Chile, so all the equine tasks fell on this “master of all trades”.

The mares worked a load, or “a take”, of wheat for 30 to 45 minutes, (depending on the temperature, humidity and breeze of the ambient conditions) before it was ready to be removed and another “take” was put in its place. Most mares were expected to work two shifts of four takes each, or a total of eight takes per day. This meant four to six hours of taxing work per day. Occasionally, 50 or more mares were put in at a time and they would work one continual shift of six takes. This meant three to four-and-a-half hours of continual work, only taking time to rest while they evacuated a finished take and replaced it with the unprocessed one.

It is easy to understand how centuries of selection for the traits that make up a good thrashing mare would contribute a very willing character to the Chilean stock horse. Phenotypically, it served as a tremendous strainer to filter out animals that were not structurally correct enough to withstand the rigors of this exhausting activity. If, due to physical or temperamental limitations, any mares were found unsuitable for thrashing, there were no second thoughts about sending them to slaughter. Tradition demanded unwavering expectations in this regard. Any mare that fell to the ground during thrashing was considered “a goner”. As insensitive as this seems, it laid a very good foundation for several aptitudes that are strong points in the **Chilean Horse** to this day.

Like its **Camargue** and **Barb** ancestors, the **Chilean Horse** is a very fast and spirited walker. On trail rides it is not uncommon for the “**Chileno**” to leave bigger, longer-legged horses far behind. Another strong point that is admired by anyone that has the experience of riding **Chilean Horses** in the mountains is their much-lauded sure-footedness. The same muscles that the thrashing mares needed to excel in their jobs are those that a good mountain horse needs to manage the challenging gradients for hours on end. In summary, the selection of outstanding thrashing mares, which, in turn, were the broodmares for the majority of the good lineages of stock horses, offered a rigorous selection for attributes that made the **Chilean Horse** an even better saddle horse.

Pacers

Although nowadays we look at pacers as a rather exotic horse specialist, it is important that we realize that until the 18th century this was the most coveted type of horse the world over. For a long time about the only reason trotting horses were bred was as war horses or stock horse. In many places even then the ideal warhorse was considered a horse that could walk, amble, and gallop. For thousands of years before the saddle and later the stirrup was invented, having a horse that could amble instead of trot, or even offer the option of doing both gaits, was essential for a more comfortable and relaxing ride between the demands of sport or battle. Even when the stirrup was invented in the 4th century, it would take mankind another 1400 years before he would realize the advantages of “posting” the trot. So realizing that the horse started to be exported to the Americas at the dawn of the era when trotters became the horse of choice, it should not surprise us that so many of the horses that reached the Americas had a strong predisposition to pace.

The Chilean “pacers” surely share the same ancestral genealogy as the **Peruvian Paso**, or **Paso Llano Horse** as it was known then. These were horses that, through years of selection, were born with this innate ability to pace. It was readily seen in newborn foals that paced smoothly beside their dams. As adults, their fluid pace was capable of keeping up with a horse that cantered on a loose rein, yet the pacer offered the rider a wonderfully smooth ride.

In Chile, the pacers were often the chosen horses for women who rode sidesaddle, clergy, handicapped people or the elderly. All these examples benefited from the smoothness of this gait, but since it was only attractive to a specific type of rider, they were produced in limited numbers. Equally true is the fact that most horses that arrived in Chile were trotters and only a small number of pacers were produced, these being throwbacks to the original genes of the Peruvian foundation stock.

In central Chile, they did not have the coastal deserts to traverse, as was the case in Peru. It is said that in the Viceroyalty of New Castile (Peru) the Spaniards actually tried unsuccessfully to resolve transportation needs using camels imported from Morocco. The selection of the **Paso Llano** horse with its broken four-beat pace became the definitive answer to these sandy terrains. But make no mistake that this was a fragile lady’s horse in Peru. The refined horse of the Limeños was able to execute various types of ambling gaits like the paso “llano natural”, the “gateado llano”, the “sobreandando”, “golpeado”, “paso portante” and the “aguillillo”. These feisty pacers were known to cover long distances at remarkable speeds. They were used in war games and were especially revered in the bullfights in Lima where the “rejoneadores” (mounted bull fighters) had first shot at the bull before sending the weakened charger to the “pedestrian” bullfighters.

Swiss scientist J.J. Tschudi traveled through Peru in the early part of the 19th century and described the Peruvian horse as “...medium size, rarely over 14 hands (1.42 m), has a somewhat short body length, with a strong thorax, wide chest, fine legs, thin extremities, a short strong neck, a relatively large head, small pointed ears and a spirited expression” (Tschudi, J.J., 1966). Although written descriptions accompanied by a touch of imagination can be made to fit a large array of horses, this passage definitely highlights some characteristics of the Chilean Horse. This should come as no surprise, as the Chilean Horse largely follows Peruvian horse genealogy. In all fairness, by the 19th century both the Peruvians and the Chileans had molded their horses of identical origin in very different directions for approximately 300 years. This can

more than account for the differences that are equally obvious in this description of the Peruvian horse of that era.

So valued were the pacers that horses in Peru were more appreciated for their gait than for their looks. Trotters were considered extremely cheap commodities that were used basically as carriage horses. I might add that they were also used as mounts for the conquistadors, as once again the horses of little monetary worth were chosen to scout the way into unknown lands full of risks. So, we can be certain that it was Peru's selfish interest in the aptitudes of the broken pace that was responsible for trotters becoming the foundation of the "cattle territories" to the south. It is interesting that this should start a trend of placing greater importance on trotters. That very mentality was also taking place worldwide, as up to this point in history the pacer types were widespread horses of great value throughout the globe.

Although trotting horses were sent to the settlers in Chile due to Peru's preference for the paddling broken pace, the more mountainous terrain in Chile also made the trotting specimens from Chárca a more convenient option. Nothing sealed the preference for trotters more than the growing cattle production in New Extremadura since the best stock horses in the world were all trotting varieties.

As Chile constructed better roads and the comfort-seeking or physically limited traveler showed a preference for horse-drawn coaches and carriages, the need for smooth-riding pacing horses dwindled even more. Slowly but surely the breeders of these horses found such a small demand that the pacing horse disappeared from the Chilean culture.

Parade horses

The third type of horse was the "high-stepping" luxury horse that was used for public display. These were the most elegant horses, with an energetic temperament that was also conducive to the old high-level baroque school of riding. It was said that these horses raised their forelegs so high that they often touched the stirrups with their hooves. In doing so, they plainly exposed their soles to a rider sitting straight in the saddle. These horses also had a genetic predisposition for this type of gait and, when in confinement under the intense care of their famed "picadores", the gait was perfected with more advanced training.

Actually, there were two gaits that were valued in the parade horse. Both required an energetic temperament as well as a predisposition to have a lot of knee action and the resulting high-stepping gaits. Horses with this tendency had long cannon bones and shorter than normal forearms. This leg conformation results in all three natural gaits having more elevation and less reach.



Figure 1.118 El Consuelo was a famous hammer spiking trot parade horse. For centuries these parade horses were selected for their gait, hyperactive temperament and a greater height.

One of the parade horse gaits was known as "de brazo" (paddlers), and these had an outward arch in the trajectory of the foreleg during the suspension phase. Seen from the front, the hooves left the ground and paddled to the outside before coming back down in the line of travel, much like a swimmer would do when executing the crawl. This is similar to the "termino" that is seen in the **Peruvian Paso** pacing breed, except that it was performed by horses that were natural trotters. In the **Andalusian** breed you see a small percentage of representatives that are slightly carpus valgus (knock kneed) that have this type of action. Interestingly, this breed is also known for individuals with a predisposition to have a higher knee action.

The other type of parade horse gait was known as "trote de martillo" (hammer trot), and this was a well-aligned high knee action that was thrust energetically to the ground in a straight trajectory. The foreleg action that comes

to mind in contemporary breeds is the **Hackney Pony**, which is a breed that extends itself very little while making an incredible energetic piston-like action with the forelegs. In fact, the famed Chilean hippologist Uldaricio Prado, who wrote a book about the **Hackney** breed, felt that if the Chilean parade horse would had continued to be bred with a hammer trot, Chile would have had one of the finest high-stepping horse breeds of the world.

A spirited temperament that was appreciated in these horses seemed to be unsuitable for the modern understanding of *haute école*. In all fairness, it was probably as much an effect of the confined, overfed and under-exercised regimen, as it was heritable factors. At any rate, such was the nervous energy of these horses that only top horsemen could maintain astride. This type of equitatorial challenge seemed to be appealing to the riders of the time, as the knowledgeable spectators appreciated the difficulties that were embodied before them.

During the early colonial period, production of the luxurious parade horses was still in full swing. As a result, the breeders that specialized in these types of horses dealt with lineages that were as prestigious as the public figures that were to mount them. The most popular colors were gray and over-pintos. The rustic horses that roamed the wide expanses of abundant forages fended for themselves until it was time to harvest candidates to become warhorses. However, these steeds fated to become a public attraction were pampered. These elite horses received an abundance of barley grain, complemented with a carefully controlled diet of alfalfa, corn leaves and chopped straw. Most of the time they were confined to stalls, where they were meticulously cared for by specialized stable boys known as “picadores”. Most of these horses were produced in the county of Santiago. For the most part, their breeders were very obsessive about their

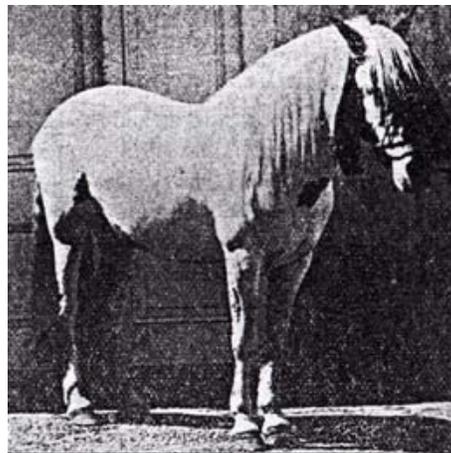


Figure I.119 Another famous Chilean parade horse that belonged to Samuel Lecaros in the middle of the 19th century.

desire to have their progeny chosen for public exhibition.

These parade horses were extremely light-mouthed and excessive pressure on the reins could easily cause them to flip over backward. On the other hand, containing their gait too much, with steady pressure on the reins, caused such an incredible effort that it was capable of resulting in exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage (EIPH). These were the Rolls Royces of their time and they commanded incredible prices for use in public functions throughout the Spanish empire in the Americas. Peru was a particularly strong market for the better horses coming out of colonial Chile.

In time, as the colonies became more sophisticated, the upper echelon of society depended more heavily on horse-powered wheeled vehicles. The need for riding horses was restricted to the rural areas. Consequently, the urban areas that were constantly making up a larger portion of the total population no longer had a good appreciation for high-level horsemanship.

As the policy of the colony was redirected to developing the land north of the Bío Bío River and less energy was devoted to conquering the Mapuches, governors were no longer chosen on the strengths of their military merit. This diminished the influence of key leadership in promoting public equestrian displays. Equestrian war games became a thing of the past, while new leaders were paraded in the more the “civilized” mode of elaborately constructed carriages. This phenomenon that was taking place simultaneously throughout Latin America diminished the international market for parade horses to nearly nothing.

Efforts to continue to systematically produce these incredibly showy animals went by the wayside, along with the art of classical riding and training. Before the Chilean War of Independence materialized, the specialized breeders of parade horses were a thing of the past. The upcoming emancipation would stir a feeling for a Chilean identity and this further

diminished the parade horse market, since they had been very much associated with the dignitaries of the motherland.

Still, for another three-quarter of a century after the end of the colonial period, a minimal number of parade horses were produced simply because **Chilean Horse** breeders occasionally happened upon taller horses with a talent for one of the two highly touted show gaits of the past. As a generation of horsemen that had sufficient knowledge to care and train these particular performers died out, so did the parade horse and the valuable knowledge that once defined Chile as the best horse producer in Latin America.

Slowly the Needs of the Colony Show a Distinct Preference for a Multi-purpose Horse

Father Felipe Gomez mentions certain similarities in all three types of Chilean horses that existed in the early colonial period. Most likely, they had a common ancestry within the generations that evolved in the Americas, with occasional influences from more specialized imported stallions. Still, one must also recognize that enough genetic variation existed in the Spanish stock that found its way to the Americas that breeders in the Western Hemisphere had various options they could choose to develop. It is perfectly viable that a northern **jaca**, a Moorish **jaca**, a pacing **Castellano**, an overo British coach “**hack**”, a **Sorraia** and a more refined **Andalusi** type could all have been part of the “Spanish” genealogy that was taken to the New World.

The great deal of scrutiny in the Chilean selection process firmly established the three distinct types with very different aptitudes by the 17th century. All were known to have beautiful necks and extremely thick forelocks, manes and tails. Father Felipe also emphasized the fact that all Chilean horses had extremely hard, healthy hooves, which were capable of walking on hard, rocky terrain all day long with no need for horseshoes, something practically unheard of at the time (and unimaginable still). It was also very rare to see any of the better-trained of these three types of horses twitching their tails. This reaction was met with punishment, as a horse with a perfectly still tail was considered a sign of “civilized submission”. It is interesting to note that even today in the “rienda” (Chilean reining) competition for the “corralero” a horse is disqualified for twitching his tail.

In spite of the attention generated by the high prices paid for the luxury and comfort horses, by far the greatest part of the equine inventory of the colony was in the stock/military horse that propagated itself in the lush central valley. During the end of the 17th century, the lands near the Bío Bío River suffered great losses due to years of extreme drought followed by years with excessively cold and wet winters. In spite of these setbacks, abundant herds around Santiago met the colony’s needs for warhorses. In 1693, Governor Póveda received 1,000 horses from the Town Council of Santiago. In 1697, once again, another 1,000 horses were conceded to comply with the governor’s petition. There is no doubt that, by and large, the majority of horses produced in colonial Chile were of the “trotter” type.

At the turn of the 18th century, horse production was now one of the main livestock enterprises, as this species was not only crucial for the progress in the rapidly growing urban centers, but also in handling the expanding cattle industry, in meeting the processing needs of a rapidly growing export market for wheat, in meeting the needs of transportation and communications and most of all, in the seemingly endless demand for warhorses in the confrontations with the Mapuches in the south. Of the three types of horses present in Chile during the colonial period, the horse that best filled all these requirements was the “trotter” type. The “trotter” had the instinct and speed for working cattle, he had the energetic step, surefootedness and endurance to thrash wheat and travel long distances over testing roadways, he had the physical fortitude to work the fields and pull carriages and he had the hardiness, low metabolism and courageous temperament that made him a valued warhorse. Chile was clearly establishing which of the three types of horses was best suited to the needs of the country.



Figure I.120

Juan Carlo Castro's portrait of Culatazo exemplifies the modern Chilean Horse breed which has its origins firmly established in the versatile "Chilean trotter" that was the most numerous native horse type of the colonial days.

