

When spring comes, Holy Week is celebrated in Spain. Celebrations are well-known in provincial capitals of Andalucía and Castile. But in whichever region of Spain, however small it is, this rituals and processions come from a lot of tradition.

In the land of Castile, near Aragón, the millenary city of Sigüenza raises. Is easy to discern the cathedral and the castle on its profile, both built during the Middle Ages, thanks to them and its people the city has a particular physiognomy. By the side of the mountain where it settles side medieval alleyways, superimposed walls, an area built during the Enlightenment, and a boulevard enduring since the XIX century are displayed. To walk around the seguntina's streets is to enjoy a lesson of history.



When the Holy Week comes, members of a brotherhood work hard to celebrate the Holy Week again as they have been doing since the XVI century. In the 1536 the members of the brotherhood of the *Santa Vera Cruz* of Sigüenza received the papal privileges of the «*oraculo vivae vocis*» papers which allowed them, if they kept the Church's mandates, to enjoy the same prerogatives people that celebrated the Holy Week in Rome had. Years later, in 1549 they organized themselves as a brotherhood, writing up their own statutes and celebrating the Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday processions. In the end of that century, they carried *pasos* with the appearance of Christ and the Virgin.

In 1636 another brotherhood was founded, the *Santo Sepulcro*, to celebrate Christ's burial Good Friday, with a «*descendimiento*» in the Cathedral. This ceremony was banned at the end of the 18th century and recovered by the brotherhood in 2017. The procession has the same itinerary 381 years later.

They had to wait until 1935 for both brotherhoods, whose brothers and abbots were really similar, to join, appearing the *Vera Cruz* and *Santo Sepulcro* Brotherhood.



The primitive brothers were divided in two categories: of candle or accompaniment and blood. These last ones whipped their backs during the processions. When they started to carry big images, the *pasos*, a group of brothers carried the Christ, while the priests moved the Virgin.

In the XVIII century, when the flagellant processions were prohibited for causes that the preserved documents don't show, a group of brothers of burden started to dress on a peculiar way. Their attire was compounded of a white shirt, black corduroy knickers and a jacket, tights and shoes of the same color. Over the «inside» suit they put leather or «*coletos*», nets or breastplate and back cuirass, a red tight-fitting eye-catching sash. The head was covered with a helmet and they held a small lance or halberd. In short, a suit of military features. Because of their particular clothing, this group of brothers that carried the *pasos* on their shoulders started to being called «*armados*», commonly known as *armaos* in Sigüenza. For extension, the singular way they carry the images, scrape the floor, is known as the *armao* step.

Nowadays they keep the same spirit and intention as their ancestors. A tradition that goes from fathers to sons or between brothers and friends. The half hundred of *armaos* carry out a huge effort each day of the Holy Week, they carry the images over their shoulders from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Their big day is Good Friday, when they assemble this particular day the ancient processions: the morning one, the *Vera Cruz* and the evening one, the *Santo Sepulcro*. The first one departs from three different churches and they meet on a square and continue to the end of the boulevard, where the current hermitage is placed. The night one goes around the inside of the cathedral -experience that everybody should watch-to go down to the old hermitage of Saint Lazarus, out of the walls of the city.



On Easter Sunday everything is happiness. In the morning, after the mass, they realize the meeting of the Resurrect Christ, carried by the *armaos*, and the Virgin, carry the weight by the *hermanas de carga*. The procession, which has the name of *La Torrendera* is accompanied with traditional music and rockets. Descends from, the same way it had on the beginning of the XVII century, the cathedral to the *Huertos* church, in the boulevard.



Old-age rituals that highlight the beauty of the medieval rocks of Sigüenza. Without forgetting these day's gastronomy, where the *torrijas* -sweet slices of bread with milk, wine or honey- and the *limonada* -beverage made out of wine, sugar, fruit, and cinnamon- stand out.

Don't hesitate to enjoy Sigüenza in these days and you will get nicely surprised of their ancient traditions, unforgettable processions and the figure of the *armaos*. It isn't more than diverting a few kilometers from the highway that connects Madrid and Barcelona and lodge in its castle, which is a monumental *Parador* or in any of its many cottages.



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A different Holy Week  
Sigüenza and its «*armaos*»