

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This dissertation copy was prepared from a negative microfilm created and inspected by the school granting the degree. We are using this film without further inspection or change. If there are any questions about the content, please write directly to the school. The quality of this reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original material.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. Manuscripts may not always be complete. When it is not possible to obtain missing pages, a note appears to indicate this.
2. When copyrighted materials are removed from the manuscript, a note appears to indicate this.
3. Oversize materials (maps, drawings and charts are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

ProQuest Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600

PREVIEW

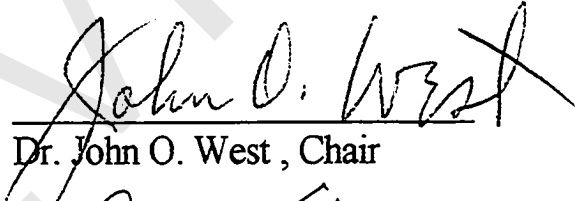
LA CHARREADA: THE TRADITIONS AND FOLKLORE

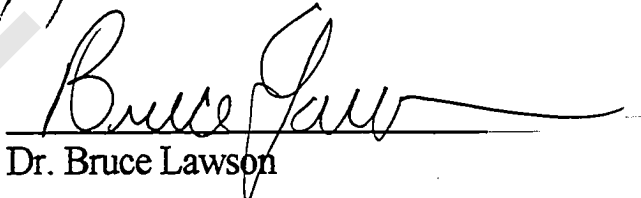
OF THE MEXICAN RODEO

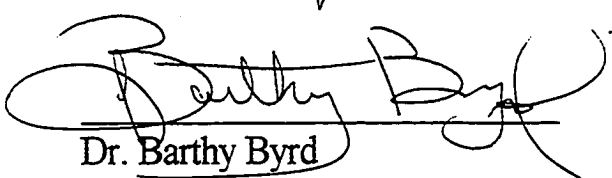
JULIA L. KUMOR

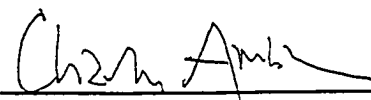
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Approved:

  
Dr. John O. West, Chair

  
Dr. Bruce Lawson

  
Dr. Barth Byrd

  
Associate Vice President  
for Graduate Studies

LA CHARREADA: THE TRADITIONS AND FOLKLORE OF  
THE MEXICAN RODEO

by

JULIA L. KUMOR, B.S. Ed.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

DECEMBER 1998

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The subject of the charreada has intrigued me for almost twenty years when a high school student of mine insisted I attend one. I have never been able to shake the admiration I have for the charro and his family. The discipline, dignity, and honor portrayed by the charro are to be admired, especially in this day and age. Going to a charreada is like stepping back in time when society was a little more tolerant.

I want to thank my husband who attended the charreadas with me and who has stayed by my side through all of the research. I want to thank my brother for sharing his time with me and for always being there when I needed him. I especially want to thank my daughter, Christine, for her patience as she was dragged to many an interview, classes, and libraries over many years. I want to thank my parents for their love and faith in me.

There are many students who have walked into my classroom who don't realize that as I try to teach them, they teach me everyday. Some helped me in putting this paper together. Howard Mason gave of his time and translated for me and Fernie Cenicerros edited and did the sound for the video.

Special recognition needs to go to the University of Texas at El Paso's English Department and the faculty members that have taught me well including Dr. John Dick, Dr. Tony Stafford, and Dr. Bruce Lawson. Most important to me is Dr. John O. West, who in the twenty years I have known him, single-handedly turned my thoughts of "I think I can" to "I know I can."

## THE CREED OF THE CHARREADA

“‘The Charrería,’ the sport of Mexico, symbol of all nations in the world, guardian of the preservation of our customs and traditions that reflect our origin and history, has in the presence of ‘the charro and the charra’ a couple who will sustain the great institution of the family, based on the society of modern Mexico.”

As suggested by the creed, the institution of the charrería is centered around family and family life. For many of these families, the charreada has been with them for generations and is very often passed from father to son and mother to daughter. “It is possible for an outsider to become a charro,” says Socrates Ramírez, secretary of the San Antonio, Texas charro association. “He would most likely to be brought in by a friend who is already a member of the association.” No doubt, the outsider would have to uphold the traditions and honor expected of him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iii

THE CREED OF THE CHARREADA.....iv

CHAPTER I. THE HISTORY BEHIND THE CHARREADA.....1

CHAPTER II. THE ATTIRE OF THE CHARRO AND HORSE.....5

CHAPTER III. THE EVENTS IN THE CHARREADA.....13

CHAPTER IV. PREPARING FOR A CHARREADA.....24

CHAPTER V. LA ESCARAMUZA.....32

CHAPTER VI. THE TRADITIONS, LEDGENDS, AND  
FOLKLORE OF THE CHARREADA.....37

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION.....45

WORK CITED.....47

APPENDIXES

    A. LIENZO.....49

    B. SCORE SHEET FOR CHARREADA.....52

    C. SCORE SHEET FOR ESCARAMUZA.....55

    D. CHARREADA VIDEO SCRIPT.....59

CURRICULUM VITAE.....68.

## Charrería --Past and Present

The current charrería  
That is not a finished race  
It is the essential of the earth  
It is the yell of the cowboy  
It is the symbol of history  
It is the centaur; it is the Charro

Dr. José Valero Silva



## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY BEHIND THE CHARREADA

The word *charro* goes back three hundred years ago to King Philip IV of Spain. King Philip IV was jealous of the sons and grandsons of the conquistadors. He envied their daring life-style and their expertise in horsemanship. He disliked the fact that they ate off gold plates and wore finer clothing than he did. King Philip called the male descendants “charro”; the word “charro” meaning a churl or ill-bred person (Foster 134).

Even today, they are characterized as ugly fellows, oppressors and royalists. For example, revolutionaries such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata were charros and they massacred many helpless men, women, and children (179).

In plays and movies, the charro has been presented as good and bad, clean or mustached, but always very well dressed. He would be dressed with his large sombrero, tight pants, and bolero jacket decorated with silver and braids. In the movies (as early as 1936) the charro was presented in an impossible life style. He always dodged his rival's bullets, was often presented as intoxicated, and often he was presented as a comedic character. This characterization holds true in both the Mexican movies and in American movies.

On the other end of the spectrum, the charro can also be presented as a landowner with a large hacienda in a pastoral setting. He would have loyal workers who are quick with the pistols and rifles, and there would be señoritas near doing the household chores (Páges 89)

In truth, the charro is a middle-class gentleman with a unique talent in horsemanship, which takes an overwhelming amount of patience and discipline.

In the early 1500's, the conquistadors, viceroys, and men holding prestigious positions in the Spanish government showed their position and wealth by the number of horses and ranches they owned throughout Mexico. To break the monotony of ranch life, these men would compete against one another in contests of roping, riding, and death defying acts. This was the birth of the charreada, according to H. D. Foster's article titled "Audacious Horseman."

According to Leovigildo Islas Escárcega, some attribute the founding of the charreada to the Indians in Mexico. When Spain conquered Mexico, the Indians were not allowed to ride horses. In fact, it was against the law. On the 16th of November 1619, the first permits were signed allowing Indians to ride horses. This was done only out of necessity. Cattle had to be driven into remote pasturelands in the summer, and the only way this could be done was by horseback. Not only were the Indians allowed to drive horses and cattle on horseback, they were even given the option to use saddles and spurs (82).

When the horses were widely available to the Indians, their horsemanship skills were challenged. On the haciendas in Mexico, many of the Indians and Spaniards spent their spare time training themselves in various riding, roping, and horse-handling skills. From these exercises, the events as they are known today evolved (Socrates Ramírez, interview).

The first charreada exhibition in the United States took place in 1894 in New York City. It was presented as part of "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" act. Traveling with the show was Vicente Oropéza who was billed as "The World's Lariat Champion." Many members of this show continued with the act and traveled to Paris for the Exposition Internationale de Paris in 1900. From there, they traveled to other major cities on the European continent and made the charreada well known.

The skill of the charro was challenged even in the countries famed for their own horseman, such as Spain and Argentina. This led to international competitions between those countries. Some will argue that "competition" is not the correct term to use, but that it is more of an "exhibition" since the events and techniques vary from one country to another. Mexico City is still considered home to the charro and charreada, even though many skilled charros can be found throughout Mexico (especially in the central part of the country), in Central America, and the Southwest region of the United States (Escárcega 83).

Throughout Mexico's history, the charro played a key role in defending his country. A group called "Chinacos" (guerrillas) played an important role during the French Intervention. They were so skillful that they were used to overturn French cannons and to use their roping skills to capture French soldiers.

In 1835, many charros were used at the battle of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. Santa Ana's troops were well trained and led by charros. Their skills helped them to "lasso many soldiers of the Texan army led by General Sam Houston."

There was one battle during Mexico's fight for independence known as the "30 against 400." There were thirty charros who defeated four hundred French soldiers who were on the march to Queretaro. Their team work, riding, roping, and sharpshooting skills were much more than the four hundred were prepared to encounter (84).

During the Mexican Revolution, of 1914-1920, the sport of the charreada was temporarily suspended. Many of the charros were used to train Pancho Villa's men and Emiliano Zapata's troops. The charros were known not only for their roping and riding skills, but also for their bravery and tenacity. The charros formed the Rural Corps that acted as an auxiliary force that tried to keep peace and order primarily in the countryside where it was not uncommon to have a skirmish erupt. The corp was known for its discipline and gallantry, qualities which are characteristic of the charro today

After the Mexican Revolution, the charros regrouped, and in 1921 the "Asociacion Nacional de Charros" was founded in Mexico City. Later, the "Federacion Nacional de Charros" was created and it is now the ruling organization of the charros (Escárcega 83). From it are governed over 250 branches of the organization in various state in Mexico and there are some 65 sanctioned by the federation in the United States. There are 17 in Texas, 2 in New Mexico, 38 in California, and 8 in Illinois (Thelma Castro, interview).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ATTIRE OF BOTH THE CHARRO AND HORSE

The attire of both the charro and horse are outlined in the *Reglamento General De Competencias* (The rules and regulations book produced by the Federacion de Charros). There are five types of attires that the charro may own. They are the working attire, the half gala attire, the gala attire, the grand gala attire, and etiquette attire. The most common is the working uniform. This is reserved for competitions. The half gala, gala, and grand gala attire differ only in the types of material used and the amount of decorations sewn onto the suit, the half gala and gala being less decorated than the gala attire. The grand gala costume will come complete with a felt sombrero with silver and gold embroidery and the jacket and pants would be made of fine cashmere with silver buttons. The horse's saddle and bridle may have silver detailing.

The etiquette attire is worn exclusively for ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The pants and jacket are made from of black wool material and are decorated with silver buttons. The sombrero can be made of white, gray, or black felt and be adorned with silver. A white shirt, tie, black boots, and often a holster and gun complete the attire ("Charrería Today," Online).

The sombrero can be of various colors, the most common being tobacco. The working sombrero is made of straw, while the formal one is made of felt. Both sombreros should be approximately six inches tall from the crown to the brim. The brim should be tilted up and be very stiff in order to help reduce damage should the charro fall. The hatband is often made of

braided animal hair and is decorated appropriately to match the rest of the attire (Jóse Quiñonez, interview). There are three styles of sombreros: there is the San Luis moderado (where the tip of the brim is curved), the Pachuqueño (where the brim is fairly flat), and the Jalisco (where the brim is curved “real high,” according to Thelma Castro (interview).

According to the governing rules of the charreada, the shirt the charro wears must be white or off white in color. The collar should be military style (a flat collar with tapered tips) if the charro is not wearing a jacket. If he chooses to wear a jacket, the collar of the shirt may be civilian style (with a high stand-up collar). If this is the case, the charro should not remove his jacket (*Reglamento General de Competencias* 17). Socrates Ramírez, the secretary of the charro association in San Antonio, Texas, states with contempt that younger charros are wearing shirts with “yokes that are in a variety of colors and this is unacceptable. It’s done just for show.” The shirts must be long sleeved and buttoned at the wrists. Mr. Ramírez proudly displays the silver shell-shaped buttons on his shirt demonstrating that pride and honor of being a charro goes beyond the charreada. Other charros may have horse heads, spurs, or other articles associated with the charreada for buttons on their shirts or jackets (Socrates Ramírez, interview).

The jacket that the charro wears must also meet regulations. It can be made of cashmere, wool, or chamois, and may be plain or decorated with braids. The buttons on the sleeves of the jacket can be of various designs and may be made of bone or silver. The jacket length must be 10 cm. below the waistband of the pants. If the charro should remove his jacket and be wearing a shirt with a civilian collar, he will be disqualified from participating in the charreada (*Reglamento General de Competencias* 18).

The vest is optional. It is made of cashmere, wool, or chamois. Often the vest is gathered with elastic at the waist. It is often lined with a thin layer of foam rubber to prevent perspiration from ruining the material (Gallardo 89). If a charro chooses to wear this, he is not allowed to remove it, for doing so will be grounds for disqualification (*Reglamento General de Competencias* 18).

The pants are custom-made to conform to the charro's leg so that any movement made by the charro will not be endangered by loose material. Like the jacket and vest, the pants are made out of chamois, wool, or another coarse material. Whatever the material, it must be made with the same as the jacket in order to match. The pants for the formal suit may be decorated with silver braids and buttons on both sides of the outer leg from the waist to the pant cuffs. "The silver is difficult to keep. It must be polished often and you don't want to get the polish on the suit" (Jóse Quiñonez, interview).

The chaps are worn over the pants and are either buttoned on or tied around the charro's waist. These are made of chamois and conform to the leg, so like the pants, they will not interfere with the rider's maneuvers (Gallardo 94). The chaps are open on both sides and each side has two straps that are tied to hold them in place (Carmona 85). The main purpose of the chaps is to help prevent the charro from hurting his shinbone during various events.

The boots are made high and straight so that the spurs can fit tightly. The working boots are made out of leather, while the formal boot is usually made out of chamois. The spurs are attached to the boot and are usually used when the horse or the bulls do not want to cooperate in the given task. The charro only lightly taps the animals with the spurs so that he

does not harm the animal (Gallardo 94)

It is permitted for the charros to wear gloves called *manillas* to prevent rope burn. The gloves are made of leather or chamois. The gloves cover only the palm and back of the hand, leaving the fingers free. "As a charro wraps the rope around the horn of the saddle, you can see smoke rising from it ( the saddlehorn)," stated Laura Rodriguez. The need for gloves in some events is obvious.

The tie, often referred to as the butterfly tie, is made of material that complements the suit, often of chamois. It is to be kept tied at all times during the charreada (Jóse Quiñonez, interview). Some ties are made of a satin type of material and are embroidered. The embroidery is usually representative of the owner's favorite event. For instance, young Miguel Castro has one that shows a charro grabbing a bull's tail, representing the *coleadero* (Miguel Castro, interview).

The belt is made of chamois and is expected to match the chaps. It is made so that a strap can be added to it if the charro chooses to carry a pistol (*Reglamento General De Competencias* 19).

The equipment for the horse has to meet specifications just as the charros clothing must. "All equipment on the saddle must be made of natural materials, not man-made such as plastic" (Ludín Rodríguez, interview).

There are primarily two types of saddles that the charro owns: the working saddle and the formal saddle. The working saddle consists of three main parts: the wooden pommel, the leather seat, and the iron trim (Carmona 85) The working saddle has to be very sturdy and made in such a way as to help the charro gain leverage when roping an animal (Sands 7). The working