**Chapter II-4**

# Traditional Tack and Apparel

It probably seems odd that in a book about a horse breed there should be a chapter devoted to tack and apparel. However, it is hard to cover the **Chilean Horse** breed and not inform the reader about the unique tack and apparel that is used 90 percent of the time this breed of horse is ridden. It is certainly not a prerequisite that the **Chilean Horse** owner use any of this gear. There is no doubt the **Chilean Horse** could perform in various disciplines under a variety of equipment. However, it is also true that as horsemen become fanatics of the **Chilean Horse** and participants in the Chilean Rodeo sport, a desire will arise to use this horse with its authentic native trappings. In this chapter, we will cover the things used by the Chilean huaso and his horse that are distinctive to the **Chilean Horse** culture.

The two things that would probably best represent the **Chilean Horse** in Chile are two different objects that are coincidentally quite interrelated. Interestingly, in spite of having become undeniably important symbols of Chile, both have a strong influence of the German baroque designs of the Renaissance period. By the colonial period, each of them came to acquire the unique characteristics that denote their identity. This is significant, because most of the tack and apparel that is associated with the contemporary Chilean huaso evolved in the republican period around 100 years later.

Both of these icons are related to the foot of the huaso and as a result, are key elements in communicating with the **Chilean Horse**. One of these symbols is the large-roweled Chilean spur. It is one of the few spurs in the world that is attached to a leather spur holder on the heel of the rider's boot. With one of the longest combined lengths of shank and rowel and an unusual number of points, this uncommon spur offers many means of cueing the horse.

The other popular emblem of this **Chilean Horse** culture is the hand-carved, hollowed out, wooden Chilean stirrup. This is not only the obvious footrest for the front half of the huaso's boot, but in the "a la jineta" style of riding it is also a means of prompting directional movement of the horse. So it seems fitting that I start by giving importance to a part of the rider's apparel, as well as part of the equipment that is used by the horse. After all, what is valued about this culture is really the sum total of both the **Chilean Horse** and rider.

## Spurs

The spur is one of the oldest pieces of horse equipment known to man. Archaeological evidence shows that the Iberians used spurs when they relocated to the Iberian Peninsula. The other Spanish ancestors from the northern part of the peninsula, the Celts, were known to use bits, horseshoes and spurs between 500 and 200 B.C. So, early on in history, the renowned Celtiberian horsemen were well aware of the importance of the spur, and, consequently, it became an important tool in Spanish equestrian schools thereafter.

**Figure II.88** Chilean spurs are arguably one of the most beautiful in the world

When the conquistadors arrived in the Americas, they used a simple, undecorated spur with a medium length shank and a medium rowel that usually had five, and occasionally up to six or seven points. During the era of conquest, the Spanish blacksmiths made crude iron spurs of functional designs. These spurs were not only strapped on by the booted soldiers and landowners, but also by the barefoot Native Americans that became the first cowhands on Chilean ranches. As the colonial period evolved, the metal craftsmen improved, while simultaneously obtaining higher quality raw material. The spurs became a bit more complex, while the rowel increased in size.

By 1712, the rowels had already reached a four-inch (ten centimeters) diameter. Although this is larger than most spurs in other parts of the world, incredibly the rowel continued to increase in size. The need for this enlargement arose because traditionally the **Chilean Horses** used many layers of leather and rug padding under the saddle that distanced the legs of the rider from the sides of the horse. By the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the Chilean spur peaked in a rowel size of 19 cm (7.4 in.) with total spur lengths of up to 35 cm (13.77 in.).

**Figure II.89** Left leg has the leggings, booties, spur and spur holder in place while the right spur is being put in place.

In the first half of the 18th century, the craftsmanship of German Jesuit blacksmiths was responsible for a much more elaborate spur of artistic baroque design. The large rounded "C" that is seen in the Corinthian columns of Athens was repeatedly carved out in the decorations on the shank of the spur. Its presence is considered symbolic of the German baroque style of the Jesuit school and as it practically ceased to be used after the republican period began. After Chile's independence, some other characteristic designs also came about. The shanks were typically made wider on the rowel end than at the base of the fork. It was also typical to angle the shanks down to about 150 degrees in what was known as "cogotes de gallo", or rooster necks.

When the Spanish crown forced the Jesuits to leave the Americas in 1767, German blacksmiths had been contributing to the metalworking trade of Chile for 19 years. Only one blacksmith remained of the seven grand masters who had operated the sophisticated Jesuit craft complex in Calera de Tango. The presence of these artisans was undoubtedly a stroke of luck for the isolated country of Chile. Not only did they strongly influence future Chilean craftsmen through their examples, but they also set high standards of artistry that Chilean metalworkers have strived to maintain ever since.

It is thought that these skilled European craftsmen were sent to the neediest sectors of the Americas. The Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru were full of precious metals and longstanding traditions of metallurgy, so their artisans were in less need of the German guidance. On the other hand, poorer areas like Chile that had no technical metalworking tradition to speak of, seemed the ideal place to take full advantage of the skills of the foreign missionaries.

Although we know that the Jesuits interjected their craftsmanship in other remote areas of the Americas like Paraguay and Argentina, one particular individual was responsible for promoting these skills in an extraordinary manner in Chile. His name was Father Carlos Haymbhausen, and he was a German priest of noble decent. The son of a count and a cousin of both the Emperor of Austria and the Queen of Portugal, he was able to outmaneuver the Spanish Laws of the Indies that forbade the entrance of foreigners in their colonies. By enrolling 38 master tradesmen as "brethren" helpers, he brought into Chile a regiment of skilled workers unlike any seen before. Accompanied by 33 crates of modern tools, Father Haymbhausen was intent on leaving an impact in the Jesuit order he was to command in South America.

Being the distinguished, cultured man that he was, Father Haymbhausen worked hard to raise the level of refinement in the work that came out of the religious providence he was in charge of. It was fortunate that a priest of this background could work so energetically in developing high artistic standards, while counting on the company of an assortment of genuine German masters. This permitted Chile to capitalize the human resources the Jesuits provided in a manner uncommon elsewhere in the Americas. Ironically, this strange twist of fate benefited Chile in giving rise to the most impressive, intricate, artistic, beautiful and largest spur in the Americas.

The contemporary Chilean spur varies from 18 to 22 cm (7 to 8.66 inches) in total length. They can be made of iron, steel, nickel or bronze with insertions of white metals on the outside fork of the stirrup in a variety of designs. The shank is always carved out in various forms, like the Maltese cross, triangles, stars or a four-petal rosette. Small metal dots usually decorate the ends of the fork. In some manner, a representation of the old "clavillos" (small nails) is always included at the base of the shank. This is a carry-over from the time when nail-like protrusions actually came out of a round disk at the union of the shank and the fork. These metal pins had the function of snagging both ends of a small chain that went around the bridge of the boot to prevent the spur from dropping down from the desired position on the heel.

Nowadays, the large spurs are held in position by the use of a "talonera" (spur holder), which is a leather spur support that is buckled on to the boot. This hard sole leather piece has a groove in the back portion that acts as a guide when the spur is placed inside and buckled on over the top of the spur support. This "talonera" not only fixes the spur firmly in place, but it also extends the spur a bit farther back from the heel of the boot.

**Figure II.90** Due to the length of the shank and the diameter of the rowel the rawhide spur holder is required to keep the spur in place

The shank of the Chilean spur now only drops slightly from the fork, at a 170-degree angle. The rowel is one solid piece of steel or blue iron that has been tempered in water so that it makes a characteristic jingle when in use on horseback or on foot. The rowels vary from 6 to 11 cm (2.36 to 4.33 in.) in diameter, but the *Official Rule Book* of the Chilean Rodeo Federation stipulates that spurs used in official rodeos must be at least 3.5 in. (8.89 cm) in diameter. Most Chilean spurs have between 36 and 40 spokes or points. The numerous points help distribute the pressure of the spur over a larger area on the horse, thus making the design more humane for use if the points are kept dull.

The large diameter of the rowel does make it inconvenient to walk with the spurs on, and it is not uncommon for huasos with very large spurs to walk up on the balls of their foot to prevent dragging the spur on the ground. It is especially inconvenient to drag the spur when walking on cement, as this can involuntarily sharpen the points, making the spur much harsher when used on the horse.

**Figure II.91**
In the early colonial days toe hold stirrups were common in the lower social strata.

## Stirrups

Although the Chinese used stirrups in the 4th century and from there the custom probably spread to India and Persia, their discovery in the Iberian Peninsula was probably independent. As far back as the 5th century B.C., bronze statues of horsemen show what look like rope stirrups on saddles that were very similar to present-day Portuguese bullfighting saddles. Although no one knows how old the custom is, the usage of rope stirrups is still seen to this day in many parts of southeastern Asia and Indonesia. Interestingly, rather than loops for the feet to rest in, they use a cord with a knot on the end that acts as a footrest for the ball of the foot when the rope is placed between the big and second toe.

A similar stopper on a rope toe stirrup was used in South America by tying a pastern bone to the far end. A slice of cannon bone with a smooth hole worn out in the middle was also tied to the end of rope toe stirrup so that the big toe could take hold

through the bone. Small wooden rings were also used in this manner. Perhaps where the "toe grip" has persevered longest is in the llanos of Colombia and Venezuela. The barefoot cowboys of that region spend so many hours in the saddle that the tendon of their big toe is distended and it often points upward when they get off horse and walk around. They are so comfortable with this method of riding that when they are given a horse with metal stirrups they only rest the big toe on the platform or sometimes choose to embrace the sides of the stirrup between their first two toes. All these innovated customs that are still evident today probably indicate that stirrups of some sort have existed long before we recorded the oldest metal footrests for riders.

The metal stirrup seems to have been invented by the Byzantines between 306 and 337 A.D., and they were also responsible for introducing them into the Iberian Peninsula during the 63 years that they ruled the southern sector of the peninsula then known as Bética. The traditional Spanish stock horse stirrup used for "Doma Vaquera" (Spanish reining) and "Acoso y Derribo" (heifer bowling) has been strongly influenced by the northern African design that comprises a square platform with a lateral triangular profile that is open in the front and back. These all-metal stirrups have a wide base where the rider's entire foot is introduced.

Even in the *Haut École* tack used in the 15th and 16th centuries, isosceles triangular sides were evident while having a smaller area of foot support. These stirrups were only meant to support the ball of the foot while the heel of the rider dipped below the back of the platform. Many of these rectangular-based stirrups offered metal corners that were used as a spur-like aid in communicating with the horse.

It is known that the conquistadors all brought simple functional stirrups to the Americas. As a general rule, they did not come with the latest innovations of Europe, as most of them came from smaller towns in Spain. Usually what was sent to the Americas was what was going out of vogue. Having said this, even the most ostentatious Spanish tack between the 13th and the 18th centuries did not exhibit unusually ornate stirrups. The stirrups that have been found in South America, with extended sides, covered metal caged foot guards, leather foot guards (tapaderos) and a multitude of elaborate decorative additions, are most likely creations of the Western Hemisphere in a time when the colonies were trying to outdo the boastful Spanish leaders who were eager to brag about their homeland.

**Figure II.92** Peruvian "perulero" stirrups are still the norm in the Peruvian Paso breed

The Portuguese stirrups were unique in the Iberian Peninsula as they were made of hollowed-out wood that was decorated with metal "frisos". This style of stirrup was called "de Caja" (box), since it looked like a wooden box in the shape of a half cylinder that hung parallel to the horse. A metal frame was slipped into a position halfway up the cylinder. The bottom part of the frame was a support for the stirrup, while the top part of the frame was the attachment for the stirrup leathers. This frame divided the semi-cylindrical box in two. The front portion was solid, while the back portion was hollow to allow for the introduction of the foot.

Whether the Portuguese stirrup played a role in influencing the styles seen in the western coast of South America is not certain. Most of the conquistadors would have been familiar with the tack in Portugal, as many were from neighboring provinces. Surely, the wooden design was a more practical alternative for the conquerors of new lands where iron was scarce. For whatever reason, the Viceroyalty of Peru gave birth to yet another type of wooden box stirrup.

The Peruvian stirrup was a combination of the Spanish and Portuguese designs. Rather than being a half-cylinder, it depicted the Moorish equidistant triangles on a square base that

took the shape of a truncated pyramid. However, like the Portuguese stirrup, it conserved three solid wooden sides. One triangular side was left open, giving way to the hollowed-out portion that received the foot of the rider. These Peruvian stirrups were called "peruleros". Each stirrup weighed an average of 2.35 kg (5.17 pounds), and it usually had flamboyant silver ornaments, including rounded corners that could also be used as a point of contact with the horse. It is known that "peruleros" were also used in Chile until the 18th century, but no traces of them can be found today.

Actually, the first pair of stirrups made in Chile included large, heavy, trapezoidal designs etched in pure gold. One of Chile's conquerors, Pedro Valdivia, had these made up to send back to Peru as bait to try and attract more pioneers to come and settle in "New Toledo", as Chile was known back then. In reality, all types of stirrups came into Chile during the period of the conquest.

The traditional light trapezoidal military stirrup, the Moorish/Spanish cattleman triangular stirrup and the oval German varieties were some of the most common. Silver "bell stirrups" have been found in the southern provinces of Chile. In fact, most of the stirrups that have been found south of the Bio-Bio River that are relics of the Arauco Wars were also made of silver. The "bell stirrup", has also been found in other colonization routes in Argentine Mesopotamia, southern Brazil and eastern Uruguay. Silver was also the metal used in elaborating the "crown stirrups" occasionally found in the old battlefields of southern Chile. This was also a popular style in the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina.

Military stirrups differ from stock horse stirrups in all countries, and Chile was no exception. Initially, the rural Native American population of Chile rode bareback. The first stirrups they used were nothing but hanging wooden rings that were big enough to introduce the big toe of their bare feet, and natives as well as some mestizos continued to use them until the 19th century. The rural criollo workers, on the other hand, opted early on for the convenience of the more traditional stirrup. It is thought that to some degree, stirrups made of bone, stick, leather and iron were all used in the evolution of the rural sectors of Chile.

From the onset of Chile's history, the Viceroyalty of Peru strongly influenced the new territory, so it is not strange that eventually a Chilean stirrup was also made of solid wood. However, it is thought the idea took firmer hold when the population was exposed to stirrups of Asturian (another Spanish province) origin. As early as the 18th century, these stirrups were brought in by foreigners who touted them as being the most suited for keeping the rider's feet dry in river crossings. Regardless of its beginnings, the evolution of the stirrup in Chile is mainly native.

Initially, the first solid wood stirrup was the "trunk ("baúl") stirrup" that imitated a closed stirrup of Europe. They had the same broad, flat base I have mentioned in Moorish, Spanish and Portuguese stirrups that sustained the entire foot. These 17th and 18th century stirrups were practical for the horsemen of the time, who used low-heeled crafted soft leather boots or shoes, sandals, rustic colt hock boots with exposed toes, or no footwear at all.

**Figure II.93** Wooden platform stirrups are also a part of the history of Salamanca, SP

By the 18th century, the trunk stirrup took on more of a Persian slipper shape, having a curled-back toe carved into the pattern. Others point out that, when placed upside down, it looked very much like the altar supports in the Jesuit churches. This stirrup was intricately decorated with baroque designs that originated from the same Jesuit order that had so influenced the Chilean spur. It is interesting to note that to this day the "chagras" cowboys in the highlands of Ecuador use this same style of wooden stirrup only their carved decorations are not nearly as elaborate as the baroque designs made popular in Chile. Some of these Ecuadorian stirrups have animal heads carved into the front portion of the stirrup that substitute for the turned up

Persian slipper shape.

The proof of the Jesuit brethren's role in determining the woodworking patterns of the Chilean stirrup can be found in the designs that were prevalent in the Jesuit churches of the time. These ecclesiastical ornaments have the same rosettes, vegetative figures, convex buttons and eye-pleasing curlicue shapes that decorate most common stirrups. These works of art were the result of an assortment of tools in the Jesuit woodworking shop in Calera de Tango that were unknown in the rest of the country at the time.

The more than 60 stores throughout the nation that sold the goods produced by the Jesuit organization, known as "La Compañía de Jesús" (means The Company of Jesus), facilitated the distribution of all their products and merchandise. So, in spite of the secrecy with which they manufactured their works of art, and the fact that they took in no apprentices to teach their trades to, the effective dissemination of their products assured their introduction into the Chilean culture.

As the stirrups became well known, logically the intent to copy them also flourished. This initiative commenced a rich tradition of wood carvers in Chile. The popularity of the trade readily passed itself along the narrow extensions of connecting valleys between the Andes and the Coastal Mountain range. Eventually, the sheer numbers of craftsmen making intricate patterns that were fit for royalty made luxurious stirrups readily available to anyone. Progressively, they became a part of Chilean folklore.

**Figure II.94**
This collection displays the "trunk" stirrup, the "persian slipper" stirrup and one of the earlier designs of the "pig-snout" stirrup.

Wherever the true origins of the Chilean stirrup lie, it is clear that the hollowed-out solid wooden stirrup had a practical significance in crossing the many rivers that this country provided. Over time, the shape of the wooden stirrup would change to a variety of styles. Originally a very heavy piece of equine tack, progressively they found lighter hardwoods that have made the stirrup less of a burden on the horse. After the departure of the Jesuits from Chile, an old "anchor style" that came in a variety of sizes was preferred. This was probably the most common stirrup depicted in paintings of the 18th and 19th century. Eventually, the points of the anchor were eliminated and a narrower teardrop shape evolved. When this stirrup was given a round bulge or angle on the posterior face to facilitate the placement of the point of the shoe, it was called a "capacho" stirrup.

In the mid 19th century, an ankle-high French-styled booty became the popular huaso footwear. Some laced up the front all the way to the ankle, while others had two straps with buckles on the outer side of the boot. The key feature of this boot was the tall, undercut heel that made its use in large platform stirrups impractical. The riding heel was better suited to rest on the edge of the stirrup, permitting the rider's weight to concentrate on the ball of the foot.

As the attractiveness for shorter stirrup leathers took hold in the Chilean Rodeo, it became clear that the Chilean stirrup needed to harbor only the front half of the boot so that the heel could drop enough to prevent losing the stirrups. This gave rise to both a shallower "capacho"

stirrup and the “trompa de chancho” (pig snout) stirrup that is in use to this day. The shape of the latter mirrors the arch and point of the boot, while ending in a small blunt point that is likened to a pig snout, thus explaining its name.

This “pig snout stirrup” is considered the contemporary stirrup of the huaso and has been the dominating style throughout most the 20th century when rodeo tack and apparel were formalized. Like all the Chilean stirrups of the past 300 years, they continue to be artistically decorated with beautiful hand-carved baroque patterns that have no equal in the equine tack world. Recently, there has been a new surge in using a plain smooth finish on the traditional pig snout stirrup. It has yet to be seen whether this will truly catch on or not, but my guess is that, sooner or later, the tendency will be to stay firmly with the baroque style that has been such a representative part of the huaso look.

**Figure II.95**
Contemporary “pig snout” Chilean stirrups are known for their intricate hand carved design.

## Bits

Bits are probably as old as domestication of the *Equus caballus*. The studies at the archaeological sites of Dereivka (in the Ukraine) show at least one stallion that received a ceremonious cult burial may have been held in greater esteem. The reason for the special treatment may have been related to his amicable temperament, since it seems he was one of the first equines to be ridden in the region, more than 6,000 years ago. Amongst the artifacts buried alongside the horse were some antler tines that had holes bored through them in a manner that they probably served as cheek pieces for holding a rope bit in place. Further studies that compared a beveled area in the front edge of the premolar of this horse showed they were consistent with the patterns and microscopic chips that are caused by bit usage in modern horses.

When the Iberians arrived on the Iberian Peninsula between 3,200 and 3,300 years ago, they brought with them the use of the bit *(Jiménez Benítez, Manuel, 1994, pp 35)* and reins. The early southern Iberian horses were referred to as “frenati”, because they were controlled with bits, as opposed to the northern African system of tapping the horses on the neck and shoulder with light sticks to signal the desired commands. The Iberians were also credited with introducing the metal bosal that is still actively used in Spain today, which is referred to as the “serratón”. The use of the bit became so common in the Iberian culture that they mass-produced

them. Studies have shown they used a variety of bits, including bar bits, snaffle bits and spade bits with half and full curb rings.

Surely, a wide variety of bits also found their way into the American land that was known as New Toledo. Still, it seems unusual to see how restricted the selection of bits became for the Chilean huaso as time elapsed. Today, the leather "guatana", the single and multiple articulated snaffle bit ("riendero" which some also refer to as "rendero") and a type of spade bit with a connecting beaded O-ring that acts as a metal chinstrap, make up 99 percent of the mouthpieces used in **Chilean Horses.** The beaded O-ring bit is by far the most widely used and it is known in many other countries as both a Chilean bit and, erroneously, a Moorish bit. The Moorish bit is very similar and no doubt the original of the two, but it possesses long shanks as would be expected in a spade bit of this type. In Argentina this Moorish bit can still be seen in use.

**Figure II.96**
This horse has a "guatana" tied around his jaw which is fastened to the nose band. Reins are attached to the bottom of this leather bit and a standing martingale is attached to the noseband.

The metal "guatana" or "riendero" is used in an intermediate stage between the leather "guatana" and the ring bit. It is a variety of snaffle bit that curves down out of the sides of the mouth where they are united below the chin with a leather cord. In Spanish, the joint of this type of snaffle bit is referred to as "un ocho" (an eight) and these "rienderos" come in a variety of numbers of joints. They start with the traditional snaffle of one joint and if the horse becomes more aggressive they will switch to a two joint ("dos ocho") snaffle. This has three metal pieces attached by two joints. The most severe of the "renderos" has six metal pieces and five joints and it acts more like a chain going over the tongue. In fact, the more joints the "riendero" has, the more pressure it exerts on the tongue and the less pressure is put on the bars. Nonetheless, the contact of the joint over a bar of the mouth would definitely be more severe than the smooth mouthpiece of a traditional snaffle bit. Eventually, the cord chinstrap can be substituted for a semicircular metal beaded hobble that runs under the chin. This metal chinstrap has between seven and 11 metal rollers or beads on it, so that the contact with the lower mandible bone has less friction.

For many years prior to the existence of the Panama Canal, maritime traffic united the Pacific coastlines of North and South America. In the pioneer days of Mexican-owned California, many wealthy land owners opted to ship off their sons to study in Valparaiso, Chile rather than make the long overland trip to Mexico City. When the gold rush erupted out of Sutter's Mill in California, many Chileans joined the flood of fortune seekers. Thereafter the respectable mining reputation of Chile provided more working opportunities on the American west coast once mining developed into a formal industry. The resulting ties between these two countries were responsible for introducing the Chilean bit to California. However, unlike the Spanish culture of California that developed a wide assortment of bits in general and spade bits in particular, the Chilean horsemen depended almost exclusively on their Chilean beaded O-ring bit as the tool for the advanced stock horse.

The Chilean beaded O-ring bit offers a rather plain but unique spade bit design. The mouthpiece itself is a smooth bar that ideally should be no less than half an inch in diameter. Halfway across this mouthpiece there is flat three inch (7.62 cm) long port that is one-inch (2.54 cm) wide. The far end of the port has a hole where the two ends of a pear-shaped ring are loosely fastened to permit a swivel action. The wider curvature on the bottom of the ring is to assure that it does not rub the sides of the jawbones. Around seven to 11 metal rollers are threaded loosely through the ring so that they can rest in the lowest part of the ring. These rotating rollers assure that whenever contact is made behind the chin it will not be too abrasive.

**Figure II.97**
On the left an O-ring bit with a double pull and "pontezuelo", in the middle a plain O-ring bit with a single pull and on the right an O-ring bit with a single pull and a "pontezuelo".

The traditional Chilean beaded O-ring bit has six points of contact. One is the contact that the bit and port have directly on the tongue. The Chilean huasos go to great trouble to assure their horses don't pick up the bad habit of putting their tongue over the bit, as this puts all the weight and bit pressure on the bars of the lower mandible. If need be, the horse is started off with a tongue tie. Many trainers use the tongue tie routinely with all green horses, since at that stage they will be using a tightly tied leather bit ("guatana") that is very easy to get a tongue over. With the Chilean beaded O-ring bit this is possible, but less likely, since the tongue normally goes through the curb ring and under the long port of the bit.

The second point of contact is the effect the mouthpiece has on the bars (gums in the space of the mouth between molars and incisors that have no teeth) of the mouth. This may be greater than in the traditional spade bits from the mother country, since the reins are attached so close to the corner of the bit. The conformation of a horse's mouth may also influence the severity of this pressure.

The third point of contact is the pressure of the port against the palate of the mouth. In the Chilean bit, the possibility of being too severe on the palate is reduced since the port is limited as to how high it can be raised by the curb ring that is looped under the horse's jaw. There are some Chilean bit designs that even go further by incorporating a stopper that limits the extension of the curb ring and, in turn, the pressure against the palate. These bits are referred to as "frena con la pata choca".

A fourth point of contact occurs when the port swivels up towards the palate, since the attached curb ring will also make contact with the upper bars of the mouth. Once again, the "pata choca" designs will limit this type of pressure and assure a more passive contact in the horse's mouth.

The fifth point of contact is made when the rollers of the beaded O-ring are pressed against the jawbones behind the chin. It is extremely important that the O-ring fit the individual horses adequately. When the ring is too narrow, or too short, the normal swivel motion the ring should have when the head is bobbing up and down can rub raw spots under or to the sides of the jawbone.

The sixth point of contact is the product of an abusive use of the Chilean bit. It's an acute scissor grip between the combined forces of the bit and the curb ring. This puts an acute pressure on the tongue, the gums and the jaw, and produces an intolerable pain. Extreme care

should be taken to not pull too harshly on the Chilean bit and, for this reason, much of the initial training is done using a leather “guatana”.

**Figure II.98** A variety of working bits for Chilean Horses in the tack room of Gonzalo Vial C.

Typically, most bits have the attachment to the headstall a couple of inches above the mouthpiece. In the Chilean bit, the attachments to the headstall are small rings that are connected directly to the mouthpiece. This design limits the amount of movement of the spade bit in the mouth. A higher headstall attachment with a longer purchase (the “purchase” is the section between the mouthpiece and the attachment to the headstall) offers a greater axis of rotation, since the pull down and back on the shanks will tend to push the purchase up and forward. The lack of an elongated purchase in the Chilean bit is best understood by looking at their shanks (these are the metal extensions from the corner of the mouthpiece that are attached to the reins in order to give more leverage in applying pressure to the contact points of the bit).

The Chilean bit has no shanks to speak of, as these would promote undesired pressure on the corralero horse’s mouth when positioning the head over the top line of the steer. All Chilean bits have a ring at the end of the mouthpiece, which is attached directly to the reins. When this is the only option, they are called “de un solo tiro” (single pull), since this refers to having just one possible attachment for the reins. There are other bits that are referred to as “de dos tiros” (double pull), as they offer two possible placements for the reins. These have an additional one-inch pin that dangles from the ends of the mouthpiece with a small ring where the reins can also be attached. This minimal extension offers a little leverage that can be used on the port of the Chilean spade bit.

In harder-mouthed horses, both reins may be attached to these extensions. It is not uncommon that some horses are less flexible when turning their neck to one side or the other. In such cases, one rein may be attached to the end of the mouthpiece and the stiffer side of the neck would have the reins attached to the extension.

The absence, or minimal expression, of shanks is another unique feature of the Chilean O-ring bit. Most Spanish and Californian spade bits use long shanks. The precise advantage of the leverage provided in spade bits with long shanks is how little rein pressure is needed to be in contact with the horse’s mouth. However, in the Chilean Rodeo, the horses run “into the bit” and thus over-sensitive bits would be counterproductive to the style of horsemanship that has been long associated with the performing corraleros.

The previous paragraphs describe the great majority of Chilean bits that are used in their country of origin. In some instances (very rare today, although often in the past) an additional 21-link curb chain is connected from the corners of the bit down to the lowest point of the curb ring. This forms a rather unusual triangular curb chain that works on the sides of the jawbones, as opposed to directly on the bottom of them.

Another supplement that can be seen is called the “pontezuelo”. This is a one-inch (2.54 cm), flat arch that is fixed on both ends of the mouthpiece and curves around the front of the horse’s muzzle. In Chile, the bits that have pontezuelos are termed “frenos” (masculine) where as those that don’t use these appendages are known as “frenas” (feminine). Perhaps this distinction is due to the fact that it is more common to see the pontezuelo on stallions, since nowadays its use is meant to prevent horses from biting.

Originally, when bovines were pinned in a willow wickerwork "quincha" (pinning zone) that was perfectly vertical; the pinning horse could easily ram his muzzle into the wall or supporting posts behind the steer. Erroneously, it was thought that the pontezuelo would protect the horse. In fact, it probably did offer protection from abrasions to the lips and incisor teeth. What was not realized at the time was that the brunt of the impact was conveyed to other more delicate internal parts of the mouth. This danger has now been eliminated by the thick padded quincha that actually tilts back at an angle to allow ample space for the head placement of the horse. Many well-designed medialunas even have the back wall cut away flush with the height of the padded pinning cushion.

Oftentimes, the pontezuelo is displayed as a piece of fine art, as the artisans make them with intricate patterns carved into the shiny metal. Its aesthetic appeal no doubt has given it more use than is merited, since any contact the horse makes with the pontezuelo is transmitted through the bit directly to the bars of the mouth. Still, one must recognize that horses are all individuals and no doubt this apparatus has been useful for horses that are unduly aggressive with the cattle or the horses they work closely with. The pain that must be felt when making contact with the pontezuelo may be acute enough to deter some of these individuals from initiating similar acts of aggression in the future.

**Figure II.99**
Juan Carlos Castro's rendition of the stallion "Espejo" shows the "pontezuleo" on the front of the bit.

It is worthy of note that in very old bits, the pontezuelo often had the option of having reins attached to it. This would offer a 7.5-10 cm (3-4 in.) shank for the Chilean O-ring bit in a more erect shank angle than is traditional in spade bits. Still, it is fascinating that there was a time when the potential sensitivity of the high port mouthpiece could be complemented with a shank length that permitted the rider to maximize the sensitive communication with the horse.

It is interesting that the Chilean huaso tradition has determined that the physical makeup of the bars of the mouth have a great deal to do with the sensitivity of a horse's mouth. If the bars of the mouth are too low, the tongue will act as a cushion between the bars and the bit, deterring a desirable degree of sensitivity. If, on the other hand, the bars of the mouth are tall and thin, they are usually accompanied by a thin tongue that lodges well within the inter-mandible space. This will coincide with horses that are hypersensitive to the bit, as the small area the bit rests on could easily be mistreated. It is preferable that horses with tall gums have wide and rounded bars, as these will distribute the weight of the bit better, even when receiving no complementary support from the tongue.

The ideal mouth should have medium-sized bars that are semi-rounded and a tongue that is at more or less the same height. This permits the bit to have good placement on the bars of the mouth while receiving partial support from the tongue. The importance that **Chilean Horse** breeders have given these features explains, in part, the high proportion of horses that have good mouths and perhaps why one basic type of bit design has been effective in such a high proportion of the horses in this breed. Nonetheless, the horseman in me tells me that so few bit alternatives force many horses to carry bits that probably do not maximize their potential performance.

## Saddles

The Scythians were probably the first to use saddles that were pillows stuffed with deer hair or grass what was held in place by a leather band. In time, most horse societies had something similar, but the Sarmatians were the first to invent the use of a solid cantle in order to help take the brunt of impact when using the lance. This concept was probably brought to the Iberian Peninsula by the Alans as they were an offshoot of the Sarmatians that entered the peninsula with the Barbarian invasion. Riding in saddles without stirrups made the idea of an enwrapping saddle popular and thus curved cantles and protruding forks were incorporated into the designs.

The Iberians came to Spain using the saddle known as "epihippion", which was a leather or woolen saddle pad that was tied down with a cinch. Sometimes, a small cushion was placed in front as a type of pommel where the reins could be rested. A breast strap was sometimes used to prevent slippage. Varieties of the epihippion can still be seen in the Middle Eastern countries to this day.

The original Spanish military saddles that arrived in Chile were typical of those that were used in the Iberian Peninsula at that time. The metal-framed tree unions had bars of tightly stuffed straw that were covered by a sheepskin or smooth leather. These saddles had erect forks and cantles that closely confined the rider in the seat.

From the beginning in Chile, there were Spanish saddle makers that helped provide the needs of the conquistadors. However, by 1582, General Lorenzo Bernal del Mercado was having local craftsmen make leather tack when the need arose. Another officer, Lorenzo de Rivera, went further and made specific full-time trade shops in which saddle makers were included.

As the stock saddle evolved in Chile, the high fork (front portion of the seat of the saddle) and cantle (back portion of the seat of the saddle) were maintained, as they helped prevent the rider from going over the front or the back of the saddle in unpredictable working conditions. In old Chilean stock saddles, the profile of the fork was straighter, as it sustained the thigh in a more vertical leg position. The high cantle was also straight in its setting. However, the contemporary Chilean corralero styles have developed a flared fork that slants back to help sustain the thighs of the rider who carries his stirrups well in front of him.

Conversely, the cantle has remained high, but now is more bowl-shaped in its configuration to offer the needed support to the rider's lower back while obligating him to sit firmly in the seat of the saddle. Newer versions of the saddle now have cantles that curve around the sides of the rider's buttocks, creating an even more contained position. These more modern extensions have included leather coils under the lip of the cantle that act as a type of suspension system for portions of the cantle that are not firmly attached to the foundation of the tree (the "tree" is the frame or chasse of the saddle and it can be made of other materials like fiberglass).

The maximum stability in the huaso seat comes from pushing the heels down against the extended stirrups, while pressing the lower back against the cantle. It must be remembered that the allocation of weight in huaso equitation is balancing pressures in front and behind the center of gravity, rather than concentrating all the weight distribution in a column over it. The modern Chilean saddles now offer more support for the body so that the rider can make these opposing pressures that secure his position in the unpredictable clashes with the pinned steer.

Unlike the saddles of North America, none of the traditional stock saddles of South America have saddle horns on the pommel. This is not to say that the lariat was not an important tool in handling cattle. Historically, it was essential when rounding up cattle in the brush or on the steep mountain slopes. Likewise, it was used to catch bovines that needed branding or those that got away from the teams of horsemen that were in charge of dropping the animals with their iron hock scythe. Its usefulness in the past was revered enough that, along with a pair of leather hobbles, the twisted (most traditional) or braided (most popular presently) leather lariat is considered part of the required tack of all rodeo contestants.

This contrivance of Native American origins is neatly coiled and tied behind the right side of the cantle. As in much of the Americas, Chile also saw days when stout saddles were not provided to many of the mestizo ranch hands and ropes were tied to their horse's tails.

However, when put to use in a more modern ranch setting, the end of the lariat is attached to a trapezoidal rotating ring that prevents the rope from kinking. This fixture is permanently adjoined to the cinch ring on the right side of the saddle. The end of the lariat that is opposite to the loop is connected to the trapezoidal ring by a leather strap with an eyehole and braided leather button at its base. The horses are most often asked to work in a position perpendicular to the tension of the rope, so as to reduce the dangers of a taut rope over the rider's leg.

Although the use of the lariat has diminished a great deal in Chile because of the gentler cattle, the small field sizes and the proximity to working chutes, at one time it was an essential tool for all cattlemen. There are still Chileans who are skilled in using a lariat, but most of the public demonstrations are done on foot. Men show their adeptness with the lasso in a corral setting by snagging foreleg catches on broncs that are thrown for removal of bucking rigs after bareback rides. There are no public exhibitions of roping skills on horseback, although in some sectors of Chile the rope is still an important tool.

The Chilean saddle has a simple wooden tree whose bars are made up of two elliptical leather-covered planks of wood that are united by metal or wooden unions (fork and cantle). The bars of the tree are untouched on the side that lie next to the horse, but are tapered on both the upper and lower portions of the outer side. Shaving the upper edge serves to make a flatter saddle seat, while shaving the lower edge provides a narrower gullet that will also promote more leg contact. With most woods, the width of the edge of the tree bar can be taken down to one inch, but when using harder woods they can even be thinner.

Traditionally, the seat of the saddle was covered by two closely shaven sheep hides, but nowadays a variety of hides are used. Perhaps the most prestigious covering is the hide of the carpincho At 0.50 m (19.7 in.) tall, 1.30m (40.3 in.) long and weighing up to 60 kg (132 lbs.) the carpincho (*Hydrochaerus hydrochaeris*) is the world's largest rodent. Most of the raw material used in Chile is imported from Argentina, although this amphibious mammal is also found in lakes and rivers throughout northern South America and Panama. The aquatic habitat of the carpincho makes its leather water resistant while maintaining its soft yet durable characteristics.

**Figure II.100**

**Figure II.101**

The aquatic rodent known as "carpincho" is the source of the most valued leather used for Chilean tack. The speckled pattern of the tanned leather makes it very easy to recognize.

Ideally, the gullet of the seat of the saddle should be wide and flat in order to be close to the back of the horse. Since the **Chilean Horse** does not have protruding withers, this design is well suited to almost all horses of this breed. Some saddle makers have popularized a domed or convex seat. Nevertheless, some respected huasos consider this undesirable, since it distances the rider more from the feel of the horse. This raised seat can also be the result of improperly shaped saddletrees.

The skirts of the Chilean saddle are almost non-existent and a thin felt saddle pad slightly larger than the saddle is the only cushion between the saddle and the horse's back. The leather cover of the seat of the saddle should be thin and narrow so that the leg can mobilize itself in the desired points of contact. These are adjustments in Chilean saddle design that have come about because of the Chilean Rodeo, as the Chilean saddle was traditionally extremely wide in the

colonial days and early days of the republic. This was not only the result of thick and long saddle skirts but, more so, from a pile of hides and rugs that were used as padding under and atop the saddle.

There are reports from the first half of the 19th century that as many as six sheepskins were used under the saddle and an equal number on the top of the saddle. These were not only responsible for an extremely comfortable ride, but when extended on the ground perpendicular to the saddle headrest, they served as a mattress to sleep on. It is clear that due to all these layers of pelts the drovers and cattlemen of days past rode with a very wide stance and this is something that has disappeared from the modern day rodeo scenarios.

The other feature that distinguishes the Chilean saddle from the North American stock saddles is the fact that it uses a superimposed double three-quarters or seven-eighths rigging. A double rigging in the U.S.A. would imply one cinch in front and one behind (also known as the rear billet). In Chile, both cinches go in more or less the same position about three-quarters of the way between the cantle and the fork. One is a loose cinch that wraps around the tree of the saddle but goes under the leather seat cushions at more or less a three-quarter to seven-eighth rigging position.

**Figure II.102** Chilean Rodeo saddle with superimposed double rigging

The second cinch is akin to the "over girth" used in the horse racing industry. This is also an unattached cinch that is made up of a broad leather strap that is united to a traditional cotton or wool cord cinch. The leather strap is placed over the top of the seat of the saddle itself and the traditional cord girth loops below the underside of the horse. Usually, this second cinch overlaps the first cinch but lies slightly farther back. Many saddles have a seven-eighth rigging position with the second cinch tightened in a three quarter rigging position. Traditionally, the cinch latigos are looped once over the tree ring from outside to inside coming out on the right side of the strap. Then they are taken forward across the latigo before being tucked under the strap without implementing a knot. The excess cinch latigo that extends perpendicularly towards the back of the horse is tucked under the seat of the saddle or under the leather suspension coils of the cantle.

## Stirrup Leathers

The stirrup leathers hang directly from metal rings attached to the fork of saddletree, where they are fastened by leather straps. This means the stirrup leathers are always a good 5-7.5 cm (2-3 in.) in front of the cinch. The stirrup leathers are made of thick double strands of approximately one-inch wide leather, and these thin, hard stirrup sustainers do not have fenders to protect the rider's legs from their abrasive qualities. For this reason, leggings have always been a standard piece of huaso attire.

Maintaining the traditional mentality of all-leather tack and only an indispensable amount of metal, there are no convenient buckles to handily alter the stirrup leather length. In fact, buying a personal saddle requires that the choice of stirrup leather be of the proper length for the user. Nowadays, the huaso guideline for that "appropriate" stirrup leather length is one that gives the rider approximately 20 cm (8 in.) of clearance from the saddle seat when standing in the stirrups.

This is not to say that this is the stirrup length that defines the "a la jineta" style of riding; just how much of a "a la jineta" style it is, I will touch on in the upcoming chapter. There are many disciplines that use the "a la jineta" style seat and just how short the stirrups are will depend on the type of saddle used, the main objective of the exercise, the demands of tradition and the personal preference of the rider. Sixteenth century definitions of an "a la jineta" seat would define the stirrup leather length as being a measurement that would permit the pommel of the saddle to fit more or less (more in gala presentations and less in the field) snugly between

the inner thighs and crotch of the rider when standing in the stirrups. The definition of stirrup leather length in the forward seat for hunter jumpers is one that offers around a 10 cm (4 in.) clearance when standing in the stirrups. A polo seat would be closer to 15 cm (6 in.) of clearance. In essence, it does mean that having shorter stirrups permits the rider to stand up on them while balancing with the inner knee in a two-point stance in order to carry out a specific function (mostly jumping and/or extending the body for greater reach).

**Figure II.103** Clearly the stirrup leathers hang in front of the rigging while the rider's seat is well behind it. (photo:Cadejo)

Strangely, this is not at all the justification for the short stirrups in the Chilean Rodeo. In theory, the closer the rigging (where the cinch lies in relation to the space between the fork and cantle) is to the center point (when the cinch is in this position it is known as "center fire rigging"), the more the saddle is suited for functions that require the rider to sit firmly in the seat. The closer the rigging is to the front (when the cinch hangs from the fork itself it is known as "rim fire rigging") of the saddle, the more the saddle is suited for functions that require the rider to stand in the stirrups. So, in theory, it seems confusing that a Chilean Rodeo saddle has a three-quarters to seven-eighths rigging (close to a forward seat) with stirrup leathers that hang directly from the fork of the saddle (definitely a forward seat) when the weight distribution of the rider in the seat of the saddle is behind the rigging (point of balance). Part of the answer lies in the greater leg mobility the forward position of the stirrups offers, but we will see more about this in the coming chapter.

I would like to emphasize that the stirrup leathers were not always as short as we see them used today. Many people that would like to think that this the case, and that the "chair sitting" position that the huasos have proudly touted in the last half of the 20th century is representative of how horsemen of the past have always ridden in Chile. Moreover, some books on the **Chilean Horse** breed have shown classical paintings of Spanish royalty astride horses they questionably claim to look identical to the **Chilean Horse**. At the same time some authors have erroneously pointed out an "a la jineta" style of riding that supposedly also exemplifies the origins of the modern huaso seat. In fact, some of these examples are ones that show a long stirrup leather that results in a straight leg and an erect, deep posture in the saddle, which embodies the classical "a la brida" seat.

If one studies the documented Chilean photographs and artwork from before the 19th century, there is a notable difference with today's stirrup leather lengths. There is good reason for this, as before the sport of Chilean Rodeo was formalized, the huasos had a variety of objectives they carried out on horseback. At the same time, the **Chilean Horse** was a somewhat taller and leggier version of what is the standard today. As a result, the position in the saddle was much more in tune with other schools of equitation. The stirrup leathers hung long enough so that the slightly bent knee resulted in a stirrup position that was more or less under the hip, shoulders and head.

Confusion should not arise from pictures of cattlemen posing on a still horse. Oftentimes a relaxed position in the saddle depicts a leg that is straightened and stretched forward. Locking the leg in this position is a welcome rest for leg-weary horsemen that have maintained the leg flexed and actively at work while riding. The difference in the stirrup leather length of the huasos that started to compete formally in the specificity of the Chilean Rodeo sport can be best noticed by looking at the knee angle created by the thigh and calf. Modern horsemen specializing as corraleros will have a more closed angle of the knee that is best noted by the more horizontal projection of the thigh. The other indicator is where the stirrup is positioned when the rider has a vertically positioned lower leg. In the horsemen of Chile's yesteryear, the

stirrup was near the girth, over or behind the horse's elbow. In the modern huaso seat, the stirrup will be squarely over the forearm, hugging the shoulders of the horse.

The change in stirrup leather length and subsequently the style of riding in rodeos has been attributed to four huasos from the area of Curicó. In the 60s, Hernán Cardemil, Raúl Cáseres, Hugo Cardemil and Pablo Quiera were two paired teams from the same rodeo club that discovered that the shorter stirrup leather facilitated better performance in the half-moon arena. It was not long before the style caught on and almost all the huaso corraleros were setting their stirrups leathers in a like manner.

Until this day, it is the prevailing seat in the rodeos, although there are a few die hards like Guillermo Barra, who prefers to use the old style of the longer stirrup leather and straighter leg position and does so with much success. I am sure he would find many supporters from other equine disciplines, but then again none of them have ever run and pinned cattle in a Chilean Rodeo. How much of this change is fad and how much is a proven improved method is a topic for debate. Most likely this debate is similar to the differing styles used by jockeys in the Americas and Europe, where outstanding performers can be found representing each technique.

**Figure II.104** One of the author's pupils, Gueñe, displays the contemporary Chilean Rodeo tack

## Bridles and Reins

In the **Chilean Horse** tradition headstalls, tying bosals or thin cavessons can be made from straps of rawhide but they are more commonly made of flat braided stands of leather. Brow bands and throatlatches are commonly used, but not required. Once again, the tendency is to tie them into place, rather than use a buckle for this purpose.

The reins are always long, thick, heavy and round. When riding, typically the excess is coiled in about a four-inch loop that is held in the left hand over the withers. The reins can either be twisted or braided with a varying of number of leather strands. In comparison to most reins used in other equine disciplines, the Chilean reins would be considered thick, weighty and stiff. At the union of the right and left rein, there is a small ring that serves as a point of attachment for a quirt that is made of the same material and craftsmanship as the reins. Most commonly, this has a flat leather popper on its end.

This is a rather distinguishing feature of Chilean tack, as the quirt is a fixed part of the horse's equipment much like the Californian romal reins. This differs from the equine cultures in other areas that continue to make the quirt or crop available to the horseman once he is on the ground. Undoubtedly, this characteristic of Chilean tack has to do with the fact that the huaso rides most of the time with both hands on the reins. Others might conjecture that the huaso is rarely off his horse and does about everything on horseback. Undeniably, this custom always makes the quirt available, as it becomes a permanent fixture when riding. Oddly enough, the quirt is very rarely seen used in Chilean Rodeo competitions. As a result, forward impulse is largely determined by spur pressure and rider bodyweight distribution.

**Figure II.105**
To the left, a headstall and noseband with single pull "frena" (bit without a "pontezuelo") and braided reins. On the right, a headstall and noseband with a double pull "freno" (bit with "pontezuelo") and twisted reins.

## Miscellaneous Tack

It should be pointed out that although breast plates or collars and cruppers were part of the commonly used colonial gear, both disappeared from the traditional paraphernalia as the **Chilean Horse** became more specialized as a corralero horse. The crupper is part of the Spanish stock horse tradition, and in Peru and Ecuador it is still part of the national tack. In the past, when the ridden horse was the main means of transportation over Chile's precipitous topography, both were much more important in maintaining the saddle properly positioned while confronting the sharp gradients. When the lariat was a much more widely used tool, the breast collar served a very useful function in giving an additional bracing point for the pulling efforts of the horse.

There is a revitalized interest in trail riding as backcountry horsemen clubs are popping up throughout the nation. Not only is Chile an exciting country to explore on horseback, due to the large areas of beautiful and varied terrain that are not accessible by motorized vehicles, but the **Chilean Horse** is incredibly well-suited to manage the demands of the mountainous wilderness. The use of breast collars and cruppers will surely be making a comeback outside the medialunas as these pastimes grow.

The Chilean obsession with having horses with quiet mouths and tongues in place usually make the use of the cavesson commonplace in early training. As can be predicted, these are made of leather and they are usually fixed to a given size rather than adjustable in nature. The cavesson is known in Chile as a "bosalillo", "piquera", "jociquera" or "muserola", and it is a piece of equipment that cannot be used in rienda competition but is commonly seen in the corralero horses.

The only other piece of equipment that I should mention is the martingale. Its use is not permitted in rodeos, but it is a very common tool during the training sessions. All the martingales I have seen used in Chile are standing martingales that go from the cavesson

through a slit in a leather collar, down the chest, in between the forelegs and then loop through the cinch of the saddle. For some reason, it is typical that all the material for the standing martingale is made of rawhide with the hair in place.

## Huaso Apparel

**Figure II.106**
The rider is displaying the competitive attire used in Chilean Rodeo while the huaso that is standing models the more elegant combinations used in social gatherings.

**Hat**

Throughout history the manner in which *Homo sapiens* have "crowned" their head has identified social bonds, as well as permitted individualistic expression. During the formative years of Chile, the choice of one's hats was a clear sign of both social level and regional bias. For this reason, the surging stereotype created by a homogeneous huaso dress code became a monumental step in minimizing the separation between social classes, as well as giving origin to a sense of national identity.

Although the trend started in the mid 19th century, it wasn't until after 1920 that the huaso had a strong identification with the traditional garb of the time. The flat-brimmed Cordoban style became the only acceptable hat for a sector of the rural horsemen that for centuries had a wide variety of choices. If one were to look at the cattlemen and drovers of the 18th century and the huaso of the 19th century, the most commonly used hat was the "molino" or "huicano" bonnet. This was a conical hat with a very short brim that was often slightly pointed in the front and back.

Actually, a variety of bonnets existed in the common laborer class of those times. One variety, the "huicano" bonnet, had a short conical crown with a short, flat, thick brim. Similarly styled hats can be seen in Mongolia, the Barbary Coast and even in the "Goyezco" performance costume of the Andalusian Royal School of Equestrian Arts. Other hats had a short, fallen brim all the way around the conical crown, while some seemed to have no brim whatsoever. These felt hats were usually white, black or blue in color and were most representative of southern central Chile.

Most bonnets had a tall 15 cm (6 in.) crown that came to a sharp point, but more subtly pointed examples were also used. At the time, a very common hat in the central region of Chile had a noticeably rounded top on an unusually narrow cylindrical crown that abruptly took on the conical shape at the uppermost point of the head's insertion. It is clear that the choices were many and that regional styles had a strong influence on what options were chosen.

**Figure II.107**
Bonnets and short brimmed, tall crowned hats were popular head gear up until the end of the 19th century

The main distinction of the gentleman of higher social levels of the time was the use of flat-topped hats with a cylindrical crown of uniform width throughout. Still, they too had a wide array of styles to choose from. Some wore top hats with very short brims. "Pita" straw hats were often imported from Ecuador. Others paid high prices for the stylish Peruvian chalan straw hat, known as "jipijapas" (not to be confused with the same term used for the straw hats of the roaring 20s that became popular much later). These broad-brimmed hats with a medium-height crown were known for their flimsy consistency that never lost their elegant shape. Their appearance reminds one of the feathered felt hats of the Renaissance Period. Respected craftsmen in the area of La Lajuela, Chile, made good imitations. To this day, this style of hat is part of the apparel used by the "chalanes" who train and exhibit the **Peruvian Paso** horses.

Towards the end of the 19th century, more wide flat-brimmed hats with a cylindrical crown were being used. Since the spectator sport of rodeo was budding, it is understandable why the cylindrical-crowned hat was more judicious for the public appearances of the huaso. The future of the sport depended in part on marketing a chivalrous stereotype that was appealing to anyone who wanted to participate. Undoubtedly, the public image of the sport also benefited as the romanticized huaso attire started to consistently denote a unique, yet stylish, gentleman/horseman. In essence, this image was that of a true "caballero" who would always greet those he respected with an elegant hat in hand.

The Cordoban styled hat that has become symbolic of the huaso distinguishes itself from its Spanish counterpart by having a much narrower hatband and a groove along the outer edge of the flattened crown. Interestingly, most of the cylindrical-crowned hats in the Spanish-influenced colonial days of Chile had wide hatbands. Although the shifting fashions of the huaso have given rise to different widths of hatbands, for the most part the narrow hatband has been more prominent over the years.

The Spanish stock horseman secures his hat with an incorporated broad ribbon, which he stretches around the point of his chin. When not in use, he keeps this ribbon tucked into the crown of his hat. In comparison, the huaso uses a narrow cord (also known as a "stampede string" in the U.S.A.) with a slipknot off center to the right side. When not in dire need, this is tightened behind the base of the back of the cranium. When windy conditions or the working speed of the horse require, the hat is taken off and lifted up in front of the head, permitting the cord to hang straight down. The chin is placed through the stampede string before returning the hat to the desired position of the head and tightening the cord snugly under the jaw at the level of the Adam's apple. In lacking the aerodynamic shape common in the North American cowboy hat, the hat cord is a crucial necessity when riding **Chilean Horses** at working speeds.

Certainly, in the 1960's, huasos conscientiously imitated the Cordoban hat of the mother country. This gave rise to a short-brimmed, wide hatband huaso hat that deviated from the more traditional style. However, even in this temporary straying from the roots of huaso fashion, the crown of the Chilean hat did not alter. What has consistently been a clear distinguishing factor of the huaso hat is the perimeter groove on the top of the crown. The fact that the members of Amish and Conservative Mennonite religions have this identical style hat makes one wonder if this may not be another example of German influence in the huaso heritage.

**Figure II.108**
Both the straw " chupalla" and black felt Chilean hats have the groove inside the perimeter of the crown of the hat

Typically, the Cordoban style hat in Spain has a medium brim of 8-9 cm (3-3.5 in.). Although the huaso fads have led to a variation in the width of the brim from 7 cm (2.75 in.) to 15 cm (5.9in.), by and large the huaso hat has more closely resembled the wider brim of the Amish hat than the Cordoban style. It is only fair to also point out that the wider brim of the huaso hat could surely be justified by the "chambergo" or "guarapón" hats used by both the Spanish residents and criollos in the colonial days of Chile.

However, if we add the uniqueness of the huaso and German style crowns to the similarities of brim and hatband size, there is definitely food for thought. The observation could be totally coincidental, but as we have seen with the Chilean spur and stirrup, the resettlement of Germans into Chile did leave their mark. It is interesting to note that precisely in the formative years of the contemporary huaso image there was a new migration of Germans in Chile.

During President Manuel Montt's term, the arrival of German colonists was promoted in order to colonize the areas of Llanquihue, Osorno and Valdivia. This wave of German immigration lasted from 1851 to 1861. Then, in the expansionist era between 1861 and 1891, another 4,000 Germans were actively recruited by Mr. Phillipi to colonize the Lake Region in the south central sectors of the country. Under the guidance of the Chilean explorer Vicente Pérez Rosales, newly discovered land was allotted to German immigrants who cleared forests and established large cattle farms in the area that would become known as Puerto Montt and

Puerto Varas. Today all these districts are considered a very active and influential part of the **Chilean Horse** history, as well as a traditional part of the Chilean Rodeo circuit.

It is impossible to look at the shape of the huaso hat and not accept that its similarity to the Cordoban hat made it a palatable alternative when choosing headgear for the huaso attire. It is also human nature and historical experience that nations that have recently gained their independence look for a source of separate identity from the mother country. It is conceivable that, either through the influence of specific German descendents in the founders of the modern Chilean Rodeo, or simply the happenstance of an interesting new alternative of a similar yet unique hat style within the German community, the birth of the huaso hat took place. Either could have been the result of an ethnic minority that had strongly incorporated themselves into the livestock industry of their adopted country.

**Jacket and Shirt**

The huaso uses a short Andalusian jacket that is closely tailored to the body called a "chaqueta" (pronounced chah-khéh-tah). It hangs no higher than the hipbone, as regulations stipulate that they "should cover the kidneys". This jacket is always used unbuttoned, as the round fasteners that line up in the front of the jacket and on the end of the sleeve are purely of a decorative nature. Under the jacket, a solid-colored shirt with a narrow or non-existent collar is used. White is the most common color shirt, but gray, light blue, pink or pale green are also permitted. The shirt normally has elegant pleats that run down the front. This top can be made of a wide range of fabrics, ranging from the most common of materials to pricey satin. It is always used buttoned all the way to the neck when using any type of poncho over the top of the jacket.

**Chamanto** (pronounced chah-máhn-toe)

One of the most distinctive features of the huaso that can be seen from afar is the use of the "chamanto". One could speculate that this is part of the more modern theatrics of the Chilean Rodeo sport, as no poncho of this dimension was ever used in the real working world of the huaso. Officially this short, navel-to-hip length poncho* has now become a part of the standard costume in the Chilean Rodeo. Practically speaking, it carries on the distinctiveness the huaso always had with the use of a poncho, but established a new style that was short enough to be out of the way for the equitational demands of the sport of "running cattle". Once the huaso is off his horse and relaxing in the festive environment away from the competition, the chamanto is folded neatly and hung over the left shoulder.

To some degree, all chamantos are a work of art. Most good quality chamantos are doublefaced and thus reversible, (referred to as a double-aced chamanto or "chamanto de dos aces") usually bearing different color combinations and designs on each side. They have an incredible elaboration of finely woven patterns that can take an artisan up to six months to make by hand. The designs displayed on both sides of the chamanto are steadfast representations of the huaso or his "collera" (paired team). For the most part, the chamanto is considered an elegant dress poncho that is only used on special occasions. In a recent APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting that united world leaders in Chile, President Lagos gave each of the participants a beautifully elaborated chamanto as the representative memorabilia of Chile.

They can be made of wool, but for the most part, the impressive details in the Flemish gothic-styled artwork make it more desirable that they be made of fine silk thread with brightly colored dies. They come in almost any color combination, but the national tri-color of red, white and blue are undoubtedly the most common. There are areas of Chile that are especially known for their elaboration of quality chamantos, and the proud acquisition of such a variety will require a hefty payment that can reach thousands of dollars.

** - The reader will understand what I mean by this term "poncho", but this is an improper use of the word in Chile and I will touch on that later.*

**Figure II.109**
The manta larga, competitive manta, manta de Castilla and the fine crafted, elegant chamanto are all versions of the poncho that was a Native American innovation that came to identify Chileans in the colonial days.

**Manta and Poncho** (pronounced máhn-tah and póhn-choe)

It is important to take note that the word "poncho" would imply a heavier, mid thigh-to-knee length, rectangular textile made of coarse-woven sheep wool or camelid hair that also has a central orifice that is placed over the head. In Chile when this type of poncho is made of a finer weave of wool or camelid hair, it is better known as a "manta de Castilla". For a time, it was referred to as the "manta larga" (long spread) to distinguish it from the "manta corta" (short spread) that is now a working version of the chamanto.

In Chilean Rodeo circles, the word "manta" will only have this latter meaning. It is a short poncho of the same dimensions as the chamanto, and both sides are identical. It is also easily distinguished because it has no intricate patterns or designs. It is basically made up of four broad bands divided by three sets of stripes. The "manta" is made up of two or three colors and another heavier band with the same colors is incorporated all around the perimeter to give the "manta" the needed weight so it will hang in place. These rodeo "mantas" can be made out of woven silk, cotton or wool threads.

The longer poncho is more of a ranch tool, although occasionally they will be pulled out in a rodeo that runs into foul weather. Most huasos own a "manta de Castilla", but it will usually only be seen outside of the medialuna as over-clothing when ambient conditions get cold or rainy. In some circles, they even distinguish the quality and thickness of the weave between the "manta de Castilla" and the poncho, the latter being the coarser of the two. Either can be made of sheep wool or fine camelid hair (llama, alpaca or the most valued of all, the vicuña).

The manta was the earliest distinguishing feature of the huasos in the 18$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ centuries, and of all agrarian Chileans long before that. In fact, the ethnological painters of the time gave testimony that this was a very popular piece of attire at all social levels. The long bulky poncho would drape down to the elbows of the user. Often, another piece of fabric of the same weave was also wrapped around the waist.

For years it was the style for rural people to top off the poncho with a loose kerchief that was known as a "corbatín". It was tied in a knot that hung over the collarbone, much like the also largely forgotten custom of the North American cowboy bandana. This is still very much a part of the dress code of the Argentine gauchos and Mexican charros, who have not forgotten the kerchief's other roles in filtering dusty air on cattle drives, tying down a hat in stormy weather or serving as a tourniquet to stop a hemorrhage. Unfortunately, the corbatín and the poncho are no longer a representative part of the huaso attire.

Not too much importance should be given to the differences between the rodeo manta and the chamanto. In essence, they are both modernized versions of the poncho that has always been an inseparable part of the huaso's attire. The chamanto is a dressier version of the rodeo poncho and the manta is a working form of the same article of huaso clothing. Their inclusion in the huaso dress has been done with great beauty and good taste. More importantly, this noticeable garment has a profound symbolism. This most conspicuous feature of the huaso outfit is the only contribution that has its origins exclusively in the Native American heritage. That legacy that comes from the original inhabitants of this continent is an undeniable part of so much of what the huaso spirit has come to represent.

**Pants**

The dark woolen pinstriped pants are of full length and straight legged, so as to be presentable after rodeo competition when the leggings are removed. In the past, it was common to have patches of leather sewn into the portions of the leg that make more contact with the stirrup leathers, as occasionally the huaso rode without the leggings. These long pants replaced the calf-length pants of the 18th and early 19th centuries, which in turn replaced the short mid-thigh bloomers that were introduced by the conquistadors themselves.

**Sash**

Around the waist, a wide sash ("faja", pronounced fáh-hah) of bright red or maroon silk or woolen weave is wrapped tightly about the midsection; much like is the custom of the famous bullfighters in the mother country. Ideally, this sash should be wrapped high enough that it covers an area half way up the front of the Andalusian jacket. This not only gives a trimmer and more athletic appearance, but also offers support for the kidneys and lower back during grueling sessions atop the saddle.

It's important to emphasize that in the sport of Chilean Rodeo, the act of pinning bovines to the quincha is not only a test for the physical attributes of the horse, but also the conditioning of the rider. The sudden surge forward in the pinning impulse of the horse can violently whip the back forward if the rider's timing is not completely in synch with his mount's actions. Even in the best of efforts, there is a lot of forward and backward jarring of the back during the pin and a constant lateral rocking motion while setting up the cattle with side-stepping motions at a full run. All this would indicate that the addition of the reinforcing waistband in the required apparel is both a colorful and a very practical decision.

**Leggings**

The pants are further protected by the use of smooth or tooled black leather leggings that start at the bridge of the foot and end up past the knee in the front, and cut slightly below the knee behind. They can be closed shut by leather straps and buckles, but since the leggings are custom fitted, they are often fastened shut on hook eyes that are hidden under a full-length line of leather fringe. In some cases, two leather buttons are the source of long leather tassels that also disguise the closure of the leggings. In the more expensive leggings, the hook and eyes are made of high quality metals that are more apt to be within view.

The black processed leather "polainas" (pronounced poe-líne-us), or leggings, that are such a typical part of the huaso attire nowadays have not always been associated with the history of the Chilean cattleman. Initially, sleeves of inverted sheep hides or knitted wool hung from the bloomer bottoms at the mid thigh. As the pants became narrower and longer, the sheep

hide or knitted wool sleeve was only high enough to cover the knee. Straps held them in place above the top of the calf muscle. Eventually, it became more practical for ranch work to be carried out with the "bota calzón" (pant boots), which were essentially chaps that totally covered the leg up to the thigh and were held in place by a strap on each leg that attached to the rider's waist belt. These offered the ultimate protection for the thorny "espino" trees (*Acasia cavens*), a mesquite-like knotty hardwood that flourishes in the flat bottoms and rolling hillsides of Chile. Likewise, they protected against the cacti that prevailed only on the shaded sides of mountain ridges where precious moisture was conserved.

As the huaso uniform specialized itself for medialuna competitions, the full length chaps were substituted by the quilted leather leggings with beautiful relief designs. Originally they all covered the knee and lower thigh. A popular modern version only reaches the back of the knee with a frontal flap over that protects the knee. The use of leegings was not seen until the mid to late 19th century. The modern-type of "polaina" is thought to be the result of encouragement by ranchers that were influenced by their attraction to military leggings and "granadero" boots (stiff, high-topped equitation boots used by the cavalry officers). By the early 20th century, this would become the official legwear of the huasos. Certainly, it offered a distinguished aristocratic look unlike anything seen in other stock horsemen wardrobes.

**Figure II.110** Leather leggings are put on top of the booties and over the pants

**Boots**

Below the leggings, the huasos use an ankle-high boot that has a pointed or narrow squared toe and a tall riding heel, ideally made of goat kidskin. Since the leggings overlap the boot of the same color, it is hard to distinguish the fact that the boot and the leggings are two separate artifacts. Officially brown or black boots can be used, but black is almost exclusively the color of choice. The detachable nature of the leggings coincides with the huaso's desire to impact a suave appearance in accordance with all occasions. The leathered ensemble befits the courageous competitor astride his horse, but when removing them a more serene and formal look is provided when on foot after the competition ends.

## The Look of a Huaso

When strolling around the fairgrounds, or during nocturnal activities, the huaso is a sight for sore eyes. His erect posture denotes his self-confidence. His slow paced steps announce that this is a time for relaxation. His frequent laughter with companions points out both his sense of humor and his fidelity to friends. The courteous smiles that accompany his greetings to everyone who crosses his path attest to his sense of humility and unconditioned accessibility.

Away from the rigors of competition, his hat may now be worn with a tilt to one side and his hat cord will surely be drawn tightly behind him. The fitted jacket that is hidden under the chamanto while contending on horseback is now in full view. The sash has been set aside and in its place one can observe a handcrafted, ornamental carpincho leather belt with a matching pocketknife case. The chamanto will be neatly folded over the left shoulder with the huaso's

arm tucked close to his body. His elbow will be bent at a right angle, placing his inner wrist across a trim abdomen. The full length of his pants is now visible, as he projects a statelier demeanor. With each step, his shiny boots extend beyond the pant leg with the Latin elegance that only an angled riding heel can provide.

The huaso has every right to be proud of the fact that he displays such classy garb, both as a rider and as a pedestrian. However, such individualistic ideas cannot penetrate a mentality that concentrates on simply being happy for having the opportunity to do what he loves most, in the company of lifelong companions, who as a whole represent the backbone of the Chilean way of life.

The huaso has every right to flaunt his costly hand-tooled tack of admirable quality and original design. However, comparing materialistic virtues is not his style. It is more likely that the huaso will expand on his appreciation of having maintained the tradition of all-leather gear, or giving public recognition to the artisans that have become synonymous with the specific objects of their trade, or boast about the number of years he has owned the equipment he zealously cares for.

There is only one subject that will consistently make the huaso set his humility aside. That would be in describing his enthusiasm for the breed of horse he passionately defends against all comparisons. He neither cares too much for nor criticizes other types of horses, equitation principles or training methods. He knows what works in the medialuna, and there is not another horse in the world that he would rather be on. All the other notable characteristics about his huaso identity, he simply sees as part of the deserving tribute to the members of this little horse breed that so willingly gives him their all.

**Figure II.111**
Chilean tack and attire are unique in the equine world

**Figure II.111(a)** Chile's best hyper-realist painter ever, Claudio Bravo, did this wonderful study of a Chilean saddle and bridle. It is titled "Montura Chilena".