

Election of the Chagra Linda, Chagra del Valle, Chagra del Páramo.

It is an exaltation to the traditions, customs and beauty of the Chagra Huarmi. The event begins with a small parade in which the candidates participate with their delegation. In this occasion the candidates wear the costume composed by the poncho, hat, scarf, zamarro and use the cowboy saddle.

Along the way, a jury is located who will qualify the skill of the chagra to handle the horse and the excitement of his companions.

Some are accompanied by floats with chacarera themes, dance groups, the traditional town band and mounted delegations.

There are chagras huarmis that have stood out in their presentations, some have demonstrated their ability making the horses dance to the rhythm of the band and wearing insignias of each family, such as the puyas, the sow ropes (lajas), they decorate the horse with traditional products such as cheese in straw baskets and the traditional sunfo, they use the bull's horns as a cup to toast the traditional sunfo with piquete and brighten up the ride and above all they are accompanied by their parents and siblings, demonstrating that the chacarería is inherited and transmitted from generation to generation.

In the Coliseo Miguel Angel Albuja, the bars of each candidate are concentrated and joyfully await the presentation of each one on stage.

The qualifying jury composed of people linked to the chacarera culture, is in charge of determining who will be the chagra linda, chagra del valle and chagra del páramo, this based on the performance of each one in presentations such as: "Chagra linda", "chagra del valle" and "chagra del páramo":



Personal presentation



Presentation of the gastronomy with a traditional dish



Question and Answer Session



Dressing of the chagra of the year and description of the attire of the chagra of the year

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On the same day the exaltation of the chagra of the year and the chagra of the memory takes place. The chagra of the year is a character that represents the chagra cari and has been chosen from a group of men who have excelled in chacarera activities during the year.

The chagra of the memory is selected from among the chagras who have contributed throughout their lives to highlighting the image of the chagra, and is usually an elderly man who did not receive recognition in his youth.



The donkey race

This event has been held for approximately 34 years. Traditionally it is held around the Central Park of Machachi. This event involves people who have registered in advance with the organizers and especially those who have their donkey and are good riders; it is an entertaining, fun and humorous act as riders must demonstrate expertise to deal with the limitations and sometimes little desire to obey the donkeys that are animals that walk under pressure; you can see different maromas to herd the animal, additional in recent years, it has been seen that come in costume both riders and animals giving more enhancement to this event.



The horse race



In this event the best horses of each owner are exhibited. Since the horse became part of man's life, the horse race has existed and in the canton of Mejía, particularly in Machachi, this tradition exists because the chagras like to compete and show that each one has the best horse, the fastest, that is why for about 34 years in the area of San Antonio de Arteta, which is an eastern neighborhood of the city of Machachi, the horse races made by the chagras are held every year. The traditional game consists of matching the horses according to their size and participate in pairs, the chagras take their best exponents and those who believe they will make a good role, however, there are people who know that their horse is small but fast and throws the largest then come the bets, then a group bets on a horse another group for the other and begins the race on a street that is not paved or paved but dirt to avoid hurting the horses, more or less run about 200 meters and then the finalists come out. The main rules are that the riders and the horse must be in good condition since most of them compete bareback, that is to say without any kind of saddle, only a rug to lighten the load, which is why the chagra clothing is not used, only light clothing that can withstand the hustle and bustle of the race. The horse race is important because it is a healthy diversion, it is to encourage horse breeding, it is to feed this tradition that comes from many years, it is also a prize for the horse breeding since the horse that has been best bred is winning, so it is important within the chacarera tradition (Gómez de la Torre, 2017).

Chacarera Horseback Riding

By chaquiñanes and roads of second order a cavalcade is realized same that culminates with popular bulls. It is generally carried out to Pedregal or Chaupi, emblematic sites where there is a high presence of chagras. About 50 mounts attend this event that is led by the chagra linda, chagra del valle, chagra del año, chagra del año, chagra del año and chagra del recuerdo.



Mass of the adelantado

Religious act that commemorates the Patron Saint James the Apostle and the deceased members of ACOCHA. For this event the Chagra of remembrance is the one who carries the offerings to the Patron Santiago composed of vegetables and products that the chagra harvests, they usually go on a donkey and the rider wears modest clothes as it symbolizes the chagra in the day to day.



Popular bullfighting and lazo contest

Continuing with the agenda planned for Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the roping contest and the popular bulls will be held. This is a sample of the activities that take place in the Chacarero rodeo.



THE CHAGRA CARI, THE CHAGRA HUARMI AND THEIR CLOTHING

Gabriel Pazmiño quoted by (Caiza, 2009) states that the chagra is -man or woman- cautious and observant, he learned the trade from his elders and has been able to maintain the purity of his traditions, typical testimonies of each of the tasks intertwined with the huasca, with the bull and the horse in the middle of the endless grasslands of the moor.

Their clothing is due to the environment in which they live, cold moors where the hat, zamarro, boots, poncho and scarf are essential. With wide skirts, colorful blouses, beautiful embroidered scarves of a thousand colors, linen stockings and elegant hats, the women (huarmis) are faithful companions of the men (caris), who with love and care prepare the cucayo (snack) for the long days of the chagras. (Guía turística cantón Mejía, 2014).

Esteban Serrano quoted by (Corral, 1993) explains the clothing of the chagra as follows:





IMPORTANT DATA

Hat

There are wide-brimmed hats, "capachos", "calavera" hats and the characteristic small-brimmed hats called "aligachos". Chagras hats are generally made of pressed merino wool, and are worn in bright colors... red, green, blue. The hat is worn low, falling forward to protect the eyes; it is often fastened to the jaw with a fastener.

Scarf

Made of woven wool, it is almost two meters long and comes in bright and often combined colors; its use protects the face, ears and neck of the rider; it is very useful to hold the hat against the wind that rages in the Andean páramo.

Poncho:

The chagra allows himself a bit of ostentation that is at odds with his character: he prefers large, thick, brightly colored wool ponchos... red, yellow or striped, called "de castilla" to indicate their good quality rather than their origin.

Poncho of waters

Piece generally made of canvas lined with rubber as a raincoat, whose purpose is to protect the rider from the rain. The poncho de aguas is carried in the "trunk" of the cowboy saddle.

Zamarro:

A type of leather pants that covers the rider's legs. The chagras wear them made of sheep, goat, deer, ocelot and even puma skins; they are used to protect against the Andean cold and also as a defense against the bushes and thorns that the rider brushes against as he walks. The zamarro has a wide leg and falls to the instep, is fastened at the waist and leaves the buttocks free.

Spurs

Characteristic pieces of the horse men from all over the world. Chagra spurs are made of metal and are fastened to the foot with leather straps. They are also called "roncadoras" because of the sound they make when walking.

Leather boots

Of high cane or the oshota of rubber plant also called huagra-face of undoubted indigenous origin.

The clothing of the chagra huarmi consists of a blouse, a skirt or a center as it was formerly known, a petticoat, a scarf or a shawl, also wore a hat especially in the field work and thus protected from the sun, dark colors like black, brown, navy blue, burgundy that did not call attention or were not showy. The hairstyle was generally the collected hair or braids that were collected with some wicks that are dyed cotton threads of black color that served to hold a braid with the other backwards, at present the ribbons are used that give more color and vivacity to the costume of the chagras.

Most of the garments are made of cotton, lamb's wool, cloth, wool, thick textiles that allow protection from the cold, the blouses are made of silk, poplin and mirror fabric. The colorful blouses and the combination of colors seek to attract the attention of people who can admire this costume, the chagras use lace ribbons, ribbons in fretwork, ribbons in guipures, also the contrast of colors between the shawl, blouse and skirt, the long gold earrings with some stones, the candongas in gold, the skirt has some grooves at the bottom that represent the guachos where it is sown, in some cases include some simple linear embroidery and loops of 3 to 4 rows. Also the shigra is a kind of wallet that the chagra huarmi carries to keep their belongings and the bolsicón that has an opening on the side where a pocket is hidden to keep the money.

The most representative colors in the skirts are black, chocolate brown, mustard yellow, burgundy, green; as for the blouses the bright colors such as yellow, fuchsia, beige or cream, depending on the combination; in the shawls lemon green, tomato, gold as the bright colors give joy and color.

HORSE BREEDING AND DRESSAGE



For a chagra, the horse is a determining factor, a work tool, a companion in his work, the chagra likes to show off his horse's skills, it is an element of the chagra's sport (rodeo, roping contest), it is his faithful friend, inseparable in all the daily activities that are carried out in the field.

The chagra, the man of the field is dedicated to the breeding of horses because it is a herbivorous animal that shares pastures with cattle. Once the foal is born, it is good to leave it with its mother and it is necessary to make sure that during the first days the foal has a sufficient supply of colostrum that will make it immune to a series of diseases. It is also important to take care of the mother after the birth and so that it does not have placental retentions, it is necessary to provide it with some minerals so that it is reinforced and does not have problems.

The foal is raised with its mother in the field for at least one year, the gestation period of the mares lasts between 10 and 11 months, then it is separated from its mother and is put in a saddle so that it gets used to the man's hand, to his care without riding him and it is kept like this for a year, it is not a question of every day but little by little it gets used to it since it is necessary to make it understand that the man is not its enemy; At two years of age the taming begins, so it is a slow process so that the horse does not have that stress and it consists of little by little giving him reins, putting on the tack, the rug so that he gets used to carrying things, then the saddle, the girths, the retrancas, the grupera. With dedication a colt is tamed in four months, if not six, and in this way he will be docile and will get used to the tasks that his rider demands of him.

The horse is essential, it is not possible to speak of chagra without a horse, the horse and the man form the figure of the chagra because it is indispensable when he has fighting cattle, arisco cattle in the moors, in large extensions and it is not possible to gather cattle in the moors of Chalupas, Yanahurco, del Valle, Tambo if there are no chagras mounted on horseback and good for roping because the bulls get separated, it is necessary to follow them and rope them to gather them again.

SADDLERY, TOOLS AND SADDLING OF HORSES



Saddlery is the art of working in leather and by means of it the horse's implements are elaborated.

The materials used are cattle skins, llamingo, goat that are more durable, since now it is not possible to make deer, lion or bear skins because it is forbidden. He does not use molds because the pieces he makes are handmade and to dress the saddle, the measurements are on the shaft.

He gets the materials in Ambato, Ibarra, everything depends on the preparation; for example in Ambato there is only one person who makes the tanning of the cowhide with guaranga, which is not chemical, that is why in his workshop he has a sample to indicate to the people what is worth and what is not worth, because the factory is purely chemical. In itself, the leather is cooked and burned, while the other is only with natural things, that is why the flower of the leather with chemical is finished quickly and the flower of the one that does not have chemical lasts. He uses the leather of cows, bulls, cows, according to what he is going to work, there is cowhide, cowhide; for example, the thick cowhide is used for the stirrups because there is the weight of the rider.

IMPORTANT DATA

In Mejía we found some saddlers, among them, Don Morales who has worked in this traditional craft technique since school because for him his game was to make these crafts, likewise his father sent to bring the hides to cut them and make the huascas to bind because he did not buy ready-made. Cutting the huasca is different but it is a complement to saddlery, he also learned the trade by taking pictures which he enlarged and used as a model, then he went to his workshop and made the pieces he liked, saddles, bags, trunks, he had no problem because he knows how to cure and cut.

The curing process is different for each element because if it were not made garrote, for example the cowhide has to be washed to remove all the guaranga, then it is dried and finally it is cured. The curing procedure is not exaggerated, it is more the handling but nothing chemical.

The hides must be prepared for different alternatives, that is to say, they can be cured for five or six hours, then in the sun, while others must be cured and the first ones at rest; for example, from a good big hide comes out a huasca and a set of cabezadas, if you need four or five sets, that is four or five hides and if you stop this process, you will run out of material; The same with the cowhides, they must be washed, that is what is important because immediately they are smoothed with some sticks that stretch the leather, then they are cured and ready, in this way the materials are not wasted.



To saddle the horse, it is first caught on the moors or in the paddocks with a rope, a task that can take a few minutes. To saddle the horse, skilled chagras take about five minutes at most.

The muzzle is placed on the head, then the bridle (together these elements are called cabezadas).

On the body goes the pelero, the rug and the saddle, followed by the breastplate, the girth and the grupera, then the retranca is tied to the tail and finally the stirrups, the pellón and the beta.

All the implements are fundamental in the saddling of the horse, but it is essential to adjust the girth so as not to fall off.

There are different types of saddles: cowboy, American and galapago; however, the one used by the chagra is the cowboy saddle, which differs from the American saddle because it has only one ring to adjust the girth, while the American saddle has two rings. The reins he gets from Mr. Edgar Changoluisa in Pedregal and the saddle he has made from Euclides Tapia in Latacunga (Morales R., 2017).

THE GASTRONOMY

The chacarera gastronomy has been present in the families of Mejía for generations, grandmothers, mothers and daughters, who point out that the great support of the gastronomy is based on the ancestral fundamentals such as cooking with firewood, moderate use of salt in grain, panela and grains as unavoidable elements of the daily table, without discarding those of remote times such as: salt, garlic, onion, meat, milk, cheese, eggs, etc.

The chacarero (farmer's cooked food) stands out, which is made up of:

Tender cheese, beans, potatoes, mellocos, corn and a delicious aji de piedra.



Chacarrera housing (choza)

The hut is the dwelling of the chagra and is located in the Andean highlands. The earth as a construction material has two fundamental forms of application: the first is the use of adobe, which is a mixture of mud and chopped straw that is placed in rectangular boxes called adoberas, and the second is the construction of walls made with large blocks of earth called tapial. In the páramo, the tapial is important because it is waterproof and prevents the cold from entering, also for its manufacture the elements are found in the environment and it is used by the chagra.

Chacarrera Music

What inspires the chagra to perform chacarera music is identity, to have high self-esteem, to know their music, their culture, their origin. The group Sentimientos del Valle is a group that rescues organology, that is, the instruments used in that musical genre guitar, violin, accordion, güiro (Ayol, 2017). Also noteworthy are the Chacareros del Pedregal led by Alberto Gualotuña with the voice of Rodrigo Gutiérrez, who were in charge of promoting the Chagra festivities in the main radio stations of Quito in pure chacarero style.

Rodeo chacarrero

Mr. Reinaldo Villacis, a 65 year old chagra, tells us that the chacarero rodeo is held to mark and vaccinate the animals and to inform the hacienda owners how many head of cattle there are.

As steward of the 4,500 hectare Secas ranch, he has attended each of the rodeos, being the captain who directs and gives the voice of command to some 30, 40 mounted men who attend these tasks, some hired by the ranch and others for the pleasure of going to help and above all to demonstrate the skills of a Chagra.



IMPORTANT DATA

THE GASTRONOMY

The rodeos in these extensive moors last about a week and in some cases more, during this time the rodeantes disperse throughout the moor to search and herd the cattle to the corrals. The hacienda begins with a trench and the owners of the hacienda make the distribution of the Shuyu which is a drink made of sunfo, panela and liquor; then they give the indications about the distribution of the team to different sites and the chagras go out to look for the cattle carrying their cucayos (toast with pieces of meat, cheese, fried food and a drink) which in a pambamesa will be shared by all the rodeantes. They go mainly with their horse with all their implements, they carry a single beta or sometimes two emergency and their own clothing zamarro, poncho, scarf, hat and water poncho because sometimes it rains.

On the last day of the rodeo, the owners of the ranch decide to kill a cow to provide food for all the rodeantes and all the people who have approached. With the viscera of the animal they prepare the 31 broth accompanied by a delicious toast with lemon and a chili made in stone. For the main course, the roasted meat together with potatoes and cooked beans, corn, chili cheese are the food that the chagras will be served.