

Agave fibers species used in Charro (mexican cowboy) ropes in Western Mexico. (Oral Presentation)

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Introduction

A. fourcroydes and *A. lechuguilla* have developed as important fiber industries in Mexico. Sisal (*A. sisalana*) fiber is the most well known commodity in the world in the production of thread, rugs and tapestries. However, sogas (agaves ropes) used in Charro (Mexican cowboy) competitions are still made from wild, yet unrecognized, agave species by traditional artisans.

Objectives

We identify the agave species used to make the sogas (agave ropes) used in charro traditions and research methods and traditional knowledge of agave fiber extraction and handicrafts.

Methods

The study area, the Cerro Viejo mountain range (2900 m elevation), is located at 20° 20' LN and 103° 14' LW. This area is comprised of volcanic soils. Agave specimens used in the production of sogas were collected and prepared for identification between 2002 and 2006. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local artisans, charros and "ixtleros"(agave fibers collectors) in the dry season of 2006 (Feb. to May).

Results

A. inaequidens and *A. hookeri* (Crenatae group, Gentry, 1982) are named "maguey bruto", they are wild and propagated by seeds. Ropes from "maguey bruto" are preferred by Charros because the exceptional quality (flexibility, strenght and color). Jalisco charro ropes have been more demanded, charro competitions also is growing and wild populations of agave are over collected. Other fibers from *A. salmiana* have been imported from central Mexico for charro ropes. Sustainable management of wild agave in Jalisco is needed.

Conclusion

The charro tradition (competitions) helps to conserve traditional knowledge of natural agave fibers, where synthetic fibers, sisal and henequen cannot be used. We recommend the implementation of a sustainable wild agave population management and propagation program in this area.

Keywords: Hard fibers, Agave, traditions, Mexico, Jalisco, charro competition

Selected References

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