

The Vaqueiros & The Cowboys



The Vaqueiros

The vaqueiros or Northeast cowboys work in rough underbrush called caatinga, which affects the style of clothing worn. Their bodies are covered in leather: long sleeved leather jackets, often including chest covering plates. Leather hats with narrow brims, special hand guards, and leather boots are worn to protect them from the thorns and harsh climate. The vaqueiros drive cattle over vast tracts of land and are gone from home months at a time. They must keep their cattle healthy even through the secas, or drought. They perform in rodeos and rather than use a lasso, they run the cows down and grab them by their tails. They are adventurous, proud and tough men.

The Land

The Sertão, is harsh, dry land in the northeast, interior region of Brazil, which is near the equator. It is extremely hot all year long; rainfall is rare. It has been populated by ranchers, fugitives from poverty and enslavement since the 1600s. Secas, or droughts can last for years; extended drought and famine causes "retirantes," or people leaving the Northeast to move south, to Rio de Janeiro. Most of the sertão is not suitable for farming, but some subsistence farming (for a rancher and his family) is done.

U.S. Cowboys

Cowboys drive their cattle over vast expanses of land in the Great Plains and were gone for months keeping watch over their cattle. They wore a muslin shirts, a neck kerchief, a vest, denim or buckskin trousers, chaps made of leather covering the front of their legs, and a wide brimmed felt hat. They use a lasso to catch cows and perform in rodeos. They are heroes, rough riding, proud, adventurous and tough.

The Land

The Great Plains is the area of the U.S. Once known as the Wild West; is west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains. There is a wide range of climates and temperatures on the Great Plains. They are not near the equator; the climate varies. There are cold and harsh winters and hot and humid summers. The area is subject to drought, high winds, and dust storms. It is semi-arid in the south. Rolling hills, short grasses, and prairie cover much of the land. Farming is also a part of this landscape.

