

The gaucho is known for his incredible skill with the "boleadoras" (three stones tied together with a rope which, when thrown, tangle with the legs of the cows and immobilize them). Boleadoras are lassos of three balls called "Tres Marías". They consisted of three weights made of stone, iron or other material. One of these units was lighter and the other two were of the same weight so that, when being thrown, they would separate. These balls were covered with leather tied with twisted or plaited thongs of raw leather. The gaucho carried them tied to his waist or on the back or head of the soft leather pads under the saddle of his horse.

A legend of the Querandies Indians says that Gualichú, the evil spirit, pleased himself by causing diseases in the tribes that were decimated by terrible epidemics. They could not do anything to stop him. Finally, after seeing the people suffer so much, the Good Spirit decided to intercede for them. He followed Gualichú along the whole heavens and couldn't catch him. Meanwhile, Gualichú scoffed at them and continued to send diseases to the poor Indians. The Good Spirit took three stars, the Three Marías, tied each one to a long hair of his beard, and threw them from a distance at the legs of the evil spirit. He fell and The Good Spirit was able to catch him and stop his evil acts.

Otra información histórica:

Boleadoras: Es herencia cultural que las tribus autóctonas de la región platense le dejan al gaucho, los españoles desconocían totalmente su uso al iniciar la conquista. Se compone de tres pesas de forma esférica o piriformes, de piedra, madera dura, metal, muchas veces antiguas balas, guampa, marfil, y hasta mármol. Estas tres unidas se equilibran en peso y volumen. La menor llamada "manija", es la que se conserva en la mano, mientras se revolean las otras. Su manejo se consideró propio de quienes eran duchos en las faenas. En las cacerías de avestruces y en las guerras, salían los gauchos llevar dos y hasta tres juegos de boleadoras, a modo de repuesto.

http://www.turismo.gub.uy/gauch11_s.html