In Huesca[[1]](#endnote-1), the Becerril brothers (Paco, Luis and Mariano), until a decade ago, continued making hemp ropes[[2]](#endnote-2) with the same working method that they learned from their father and grandfather. Hemp[[3]](#endnote-3) (cannabis sativa) is an annual plant[[4]](#endnote-4), two to three meters high, that was cultivated in temperate[[5]](#endnote-5) and humid lands[[6]](#endnote-6) for the use of its fibers[[7]](#endnote-7). At the end of September, the growth of the plant that, for fourteen weeks, had occupied an important plot[[8]](#endnote-8) of the family garden[[9]](#endnote-9) came to an end . The long stems were grouped into bundles, braided across each other, on the ground to receive the sun's rays. The dry seed was separated by hitting the stone, and it was cleaned from the leaf with the help of the air in the winnowing. The dry stems rested for several days at the bottom of a pond with running water. A brief drying in the sun left the rotting stems ready for cracking. The "cascadera" or grammer, handled vigorously, separated the wood from the strand in two phases, first from the middle to the root and then from the middle to the tip.

The swording helped to remove the husk that remained between the strand. To do this, with the sword, the long strands of hair were hit against the back of a chair or against the grass. Swording was followed by combing, when it came to obtaining thread for making fine garments such as towels, sheets, shirts... In skeins called "zippers", the fiber was kept to be worked in the heat of the home, or for other purposes. uses. Hemp was one of the plant fibers most used by rope makers. It was normally acquired in the region of Murcia, in the shape of hills, in bundles of one hundred kilos similar to bales of straw. Sometimes, hemp made in the region itself, or in surrounding areas, was worked. The best was the one of the year, and it had to be stored in a high and dry place, because it would spoil in a short time. Another raw material was sisal, whose reduced import made it necessary to recover the waste fibers, generally using those from binding ropes. To untwist the sisal fiber, the ends had to be vigorously soaked in a basin of water. After an hour of draining, it was transferred to swording. By means of continuous tapping, with the blade on the ends of the ropes, held by hand on a fork, the ends were separated and prepared for spinning. Some of these ropes were passed through the rake to break them down into strands, after a rhythmic movement of passing the sworded ropes through the sharp iron spikes. All the strands were left like this, separated and hollow, forming a "copada" or flake, knotted at the ends. The ropemaker's work was done outdoors, and he needed a lot of space, as many meters as the length of rope to be made. The physical distribution of the work environment was longitudinal. One end of the work esplanade was occupied by the wooden wheel. This large one was mounted on an axis support, as a bearing, at the ends of the bell towers embedded in the ground by half a meter, and reinforced with some pins. Next to the wheel was placed the crosshead, which could be of different sizes and composition, depending on the work to be done. It was inserted into the "falcadero", or hole in the ground, reinforced with wedges, to facilitate a quick change. The tension of the crosshead towards the opposite side of the wheel was done with the rope called "garrotera", and towards the rear, with the so-called "rear". The crossheads, depending on their function, had a certain number and size of carriages, topped at the end by a wire or list, which allowed the threads or cords to be hooked. Next to the crosshead, the wooden stake was used to tie the work already prepared. The rakes, separated from each other at a distance of approximately twelve meters, prevented the rubbing of the material, already made, on the ground. A rope called a "pulley" transmitted the driving force from the wheel to the crosshead carriages. The manufacture of a rope began with the elaboration of each of the threads that composed it. To do this, the spinning cross was prepared, introducing it into the falcadero. HE They placed the rope pulleys on the small diameter carts, and, after tensioning the rear rope, the base flanges were tightened for fixation. "Garrote" was called the act of tightening the garrote rope, leaving the torsional motor system prepared. In the process of making the ropes, at least two people were necessary; while one turned the wheel, the other spun. So that the carriages turned well, and did not pitch while working, they were greased with oil on their axles. The rinsing and preparation of the sisal ropes prevented them, due to their great length, from becoming tangled during spinning, stopping the process. The "way" was a woolen cloth that allowed the ends to be moistened, while preventing continuous rubbing of the hand with the strands. Walking. Hooking the end of a rope to the end of the cart, spinning began with the turn of the wheel. Walking backwards, with a continuous and monotonous movement of his hands, the roper held the thread with one hand, while, with the other, he spliced ​​new ends. With a slight movement of his right hand, he entangled some strands of the "copada" in the joint, which allowed the perfect union of the ropes. The carts reached a high turning speed, driven by the continuous movement of the wheel. Boxwood was the best for making carts, because it was very hard and turned very well. The secret of its good manufacturing lay in the perfect centering of the axle so that it did not pitch. The "walker" was the longitudinal work path of the ropemaker. A continuous coming and going, day after day, came to form a small path next to the rakes. The approximate length of the ropes for sale was 90 meters. For a rope to come out of this measurement, it was necessary to spin it at 135 meters, that is, "one and a half times" the measurement, to compensate for the 50% loss it had in twisting. In the 7-guide ropes, which had an additional twist called "retrailing", the threads had to be given twice the length of the rope to be made. The list to sew the espadrilles, the capellar thread or the guanicionero thread, was made at 36 meters or 48 yards, because since it was so fine, if it was made of greater length, it was loaded with turns at the entrance or hook in the alarba, and the resulting thread was "curved." "Going long" is said to leave the thread tied to the bar longer, which then had to be spliced ​​with the next one. To group the twisted threads, when the "half-string" was reached, the cords were made. To do this, the component threads of each cord were hooked to each carriage . In this process, the two carriages had to rotate at the same revolution, and if one of them skidded or got stuck, the cord did not twist and was longer. Just as for spinning, the direction of rotation of the carts was to the right, to "overtwist" or make cords, the direction was to the left. Each time threads were joined into cords, the rotation of the carriages had to be changed, crossing the rope pulleys. "Mediacord", as its name indicates, was the name given to the set of threads that formed half of the component cords of the rope. Once half of the cords were finished, the rotation of the carriages was reversed again, to twist the component threads of the other "half-cord." Regardless of the traditional wheel, some ropers, in recent years, have incorporated a motor into the wheel. This was powered by a start and stop device, directed by two ropes called "shots", which ran along the "walker" next to the rakes. At the will of the spinner the spinning of the wheel was stopped or activated, thus eliminating the service of a person. The itinerant ropemakers replaced the heavy wooden wheel with a light bicycle wheel, more comfortable for their movements, and which was only useful for spinning. The cords were made with tackle called "andas". When harvesters did not exist, these ropes were made of thread, from the ropes of the binders, which were much shorter and thinner. Then it was spun much more slowly. "Have a heavy hand," it was said when they had been spinning for several hours, and the sensitivity in their hands was lost, letting out the irregular and thicker thread in some parts. By twisting the groups of threads, joined at the "butt" of the rope, the length was progressively reduced. The quilting crosshead was made up of four larger carriages than the previous ones, reducing the rotation speed. The rope pulley was placed in such a way that the four carts could rotate at the same speed as each other. The direction of rotation in "quilting" was like in spinning, that is, to the right. The "quilting" process consisted of joining all the cords. In this phase three people were necessary, because, while one turned the wheel, another held the hook or "cerrete", so called because of its function of closing the rope. The third, with the "trunk" or "gabia", of different sizes, and with as many channels as cords, made the guides converge in rotation, at a central point forming the rope. Normally, the hook was held by the ropemakers' wives, when the ropes were not excessively heavy, since the same inertia of the rotation and the side of the rope took a lot of force. For larger ropes, a rig called a "carriage" was used. Once the rope was finished, the quilting cart was changed for the cart, and it was twisted again to finish it. The strings that had to work with a lot of friction needed greater hardness, so another twist called "retallado" was given. However, the threads to sew the espadrilles and saddlebags had to be "lasos", that is, slightly twisted, because this way they had much more strength. The hemp ropes required a new process before being folded, polishing consisted of removing the "lystra" or wood from the hemp after having soaked the rope. The mesh was used to polish the list and the ropes and the hull for the hemp. This is a mesh which is used to polish sand. And this is a hull that is for the stronger ropes, with all the "lyestra" let's call it wood that the hemp of origin carries, it is eliminated by having wet the rope before and with this, to explain more clearly so that it is understood , as if it were filing it and behind this comes a cloth that is simply a wet bag, which is passed through the rope and left to dry. The plain was a burlap cloth that was passed through a half-dry rope to flatten the hair. Once dry, a "rete" was applied, which was a knotted mesh of twine that allowed the surface to shine. This rigging made with ropes was made by the same ropemaker, with a mesh made of cane and wound with rope, it formed a network of knots, which depending on its size could have different functions. The "jabegas" or large meshes for carrying straw in the carts, were the product of the ropemakers' patient work of making mesh. The wooden mold was used to fold the rope, which was wound on its surface, in layers called "panas". The rope was measured for sale by kilos, and was normally weighed with a weighing scale. Coils of thick rope for the navy weighed up to ninety kilos. The destination of the ropes was for use in cars, trucks, galleys, construction, marine... Today, the mechanization of work, and the use of artificial fibers as raw material in the manufacture of ropes, has definitively ended. with this archaic profession. I am Eugenio Monesma, director and producer of the documentary you just watched. If you liked it, I encourage you to subscribe to the channel by activating notifications from the bell and so you can enjoy the hundreds of documentaries that I already have on the channel and which I will be uploading weekly.

1. [Huesca](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00008) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [hemp rope](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00003) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. [hemp](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00001) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. [annual plant](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00010) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. [temperate land](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00018) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. [humid land](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00019) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. [fiber](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00006) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. [plot](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00012) [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. [garden](http://www.govontology.com/EM/rope-making/EM\_00020) [↑](#endnote-ref-9)