

Tarahumara Medicine: Ethnobotany and Healing among the Rarámuri of Mexico

By Fructuoso Irigoyen-Rascón

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The Tarahumara, one of North America's oldest surviving aboriginal groups, call themselves Rarámuri, meaning “nimble feet”—and though they live in relative isolation in Chihuahua, Mexico, their agility in long-distance running is famous worldwide. *Tarahumara Medicine* is the first in-depth look into the culture that sustains the “great runners.” Having spent a decade in Tarahumara communities, initially as a medical student and eventually as a physician and cultural observer, author Fructuoso Irigoyen-Rascón is uniquely qualified as a guide to the Rarámuri's approach to medicine and healing.

In developing their healing practices, the Tarahumaras interlaced religious lore, magic, and careful observations of nature. Irigoyen-Rascón thoroughly situates readers in the Rarámuri's environment, describing not only their health and nutrition but also the mountains and rivers surrounding them and key aspects of their culture, from long-distance kick-ball races to corn beer celebrations and religious dances. He describes the Tarahumaras' curing ceremonies, including their ritual use of peyote, and provides a comprehensive description of Tarahumara traditional herbal remedies, including their botanical characteristics, attributed effects, and uses.

To show what these practices—and the underlying concepts of health and disease—might mean to the Rarámuri and to the observer, Irigoyen-Rascón explores his subject from both an outsider and an insider (indigenous) perspective. Through his balanced approach, Irigoyen-Rascón brings to light relationships between the Rarámuri healing system and conventional medicine, and adds significantly to our knowledge of indigenous American therapeutic practices.

As the most complete account of Tarahumara culture ever written, *Tarahumara Medicine* grants readers access to a world rarely seen—at once richly different from and inextricably connected with the ideas and practices of Western medicine.

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Tarahumara Medicine: Ethnobotany and Healing among the Rarámuri of Mexico

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Editorial Review

Review

"Dr. Irigoyen-Rascón's account of his work among the Tarahumaras provides a wealth of information about an indigenous group that has preserved its traditional culture and identity to a remarkable degree. This book will be an invaluable source for all future studies on Rarámuri ethnomedicine and culture."

William Breen Murray

coeditor of Rock Art and Sacred Landscapes

University of Oklahoma Press

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Irigoyen-Rascón, Fructuoso. Tarahumara medicine: ethnobotany and healing among the Rarámuri of Mexico, by Fructuoso Irigoyen-Rascón with Alfonso Paredes. Oklahoma, 2015. 400p biblindex afp ISBN 9780806148281, \$49.95; ISBN 9780806143620 pbk, \$24.95; ISBN 9780806152714 ebook, contact publisher for price.

Having lived and worked as a medical student and physician among the Rarámuri, psychiatrist Irigoyen-Rascón learned the language and recorded the Rarámuri's conceptions of medicine and healing practices, detailing herbal cures, rituals, and conceptions of disease. To contextualize the ethnographic data in this in-depth description of Tarahumara healing practices, the author offers a description of Tarahumara ecological habitat and a historical overview, emphasizing aspects of cultural contact and change. After situating the Tarahumara historically and culturally, Irigoyen-Rascón describes their curing ceremonies and offers a comprehensive ethnographic account of Rarámuri traditional herbal remedies, including their botanical characteristics, properties, attributed effects, and uses. The healing practices are a blend of religious lore, magic, and careful observations of nature. To fully explore healing, the author uses an emic and etic approach to examine the relationship between Tarahumara healing systems and conventional medicine, noting that traditional healing reinforces tribal social cohesion and cultural identity. Irigoyen-Rascón closes with a summary of medical and epidemiological information of current health needs among Tarahumara communities. A powerful piece offering ethnographic data about Rarámuri health conceptions and medicinal plant use.

--G. R. Campbell, *The University of Montana*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries.

"In *Tarahumara Medicine*, Fructuoso Irigoyen-Rascón reveals, for the first time in a single volume, the complex healing system of the Rarámuri of northwestern Mexico. He provides firsthand information on Rarámuri concepts of illness, healing, and the soul, and a comprehensive ethnobotanical guide to medicinal

plant use. This thorough, readable volume belongs in every library and collection devoted to the Rarámuri or to the indigenous peoples of Mexico, American Indians, American Indian medicine, or American Indian ethnobotany.”—**Enrique Salmón**, author of *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity, and Resilience*

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From the Author

Algun día habra una version en castellano. Paciencia!

From the Inside Flap

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Daniel White:

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