



# Tarahumara Medicine: Ethnobotany and Healing among the Rarámuri of Mexico

*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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