

Iwi'gara, The Kinship of Plants and People: American Indian Ethnobotanical Traditions and Science. By Enrique Salm'on. 2020. Timber Press, Portland, OR. 245 pp.

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According to Rara'muri author Enrique Salm'on, "There is among the Rara'muri a concept called *iwi'gara*, which encompasses many ideas and ways of thinking unique to the place with which the Rara'muri live...*Iwi'gara* is the total interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madres, physical and spiritual...(and) calls on that person to realize life in all its forms:... the beginning of Rara'muri life, origins, and relationships to animals, plants, the place of nurturing, and the entities to which the Rara'muri look for guidance" (Salmon 2000, 1328).

This is an important concept, and when I first heard of this book, I anticipated that Salm'on might be giving us a deep dive into the cultural traditions of his people. The book he has published under this title, reflects only one component of Indigenous knowledge. As its subtitle indicates, it is instead an examination of the way various Indigenous peoples of the Americas, use plants for food, shelter, and ceremonial purposes. Many of these plants are not part of the Rara'muri landscape, therefore this book represents an expansion of the concept of *Iwi'gara*, possibly as a pan-Indian concept.

The book itself is very attractive and well put together, with a brief introductory section on the Indigenous cultures of various parts of North America, followed by accounts of 89 plant groupings (these are not species but mostly genera). Each account includes an anecdotal introduction of

Salm'on's personal experience with the plant in question, followed by short sections on traditional usage by Indigenous peoples, identification and harvesting practices (accompanied by good color images of the species, or tribal use), and health elements, in which basic pharmaceutical information is provided. Some plants, like beans, corn, cotton, cranberry, maple, and pumpkin will be familiar to most readers. Others, like birch, various berries, echinacea, oak, peyote, sage, and sweetgrass, will be familiar to those who have some experience with Indigenous cultures. Many species, however, will be surprising to readers who do not have deeper knowledge of such cultures.

The overall effect of this book is a very interesting glimpse into the cultural plant use practices of a wide range of Indigenous peoples of North America. This book seems ideal for Indigenous readers who have become distanced from their cultural traditions to varying degrees, and who would like to revisit or take-up some traditional practices in their lives. It will also be of interest to non-Indigenous readers who desire guidance into examining and considering expansion of their diets or medicinal practices. The major reservation I have about this is that I would encourage individuals who really want to learn how to use plants to consult tribal healers and knowledge keepers, or at the least, an experienced ethnobotanist.



References Cited

Salm'on, E. 2000. Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human–Nature Relationship. *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), 2000, pp. 1327–1332.