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Review Article

THE RARÁMURI RACE AS A METAPHOR OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

The one who does not last does not survive! Says an old principle *rarámuri*, ethnic group located in the Saw Tarahumara, inside the Western Mother Saw of the State Chihuahua in Mexico. Immersed in an ecologically hard environment for the survival, the idea is "to live is necessary to be resistant", and this way to support the lack of water and food provoked by the drought, the intense cold in the winter night or the long voyages for mountain. From hundreds of years, men and women *rarámuri*, as the custom dictates compete running uninterrupted day and night, for stony and abrupt areas, distances that manage to overcome 200 km. In the present article, after doing some observations on the race of long distance in the history of the cultures, like introduction, and a brief ethnographic review on the group in question, there are described the aspects of this singular race, and we immediately afterwards analyze the principal functions that it fulfils as cultural event and to think about one of its principal values: the resistance. Thus, we will try to answer to such questions as: why do they run? Why are such long distances covered? How is the moderate attitude of the runners explained after win or defeat? What roles does it recover the race in the *rarámuri* life? What value has the resistance in their lives? How is it managed to develop? How is *rarámuris* participation assumed in international ultra marathons?

Key words: race *rarámuri*, cultural resistance, symbols, Tarahumara, social fact, ritual sport.

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ETHNOGRAPHIC REVIEW

Karl Lumholtz (1972 [1902]: 297) described the *rarámuri* of ends of the 19th century as the most resistant runners of the world. He speak about a man who in five days crossed approximately 600 miles (960 km) to take a message from Guazáparez up to Chihuahua. Differently he tells also that they were capturing to the race to wild horses, and they were prosecuting to a deer for several days up to capturing it and to give them death.

Karl Diem (1973: 224) refers to the exploit that in 1932 it is said that fulfilled a *rarámuri* crossing to the traditional way (with ball) 560 km uninterrupted for stony and broken area.

Nowadays the *rarámuri* continue running as always have done it, and in addition in the last ten years especially, some of them have been invited to compete in international ultra marathons as 100 miles of Colorado or of Los Angeles, where they manage to win also against professional runners, as it happened in 1993 with V. Churo, in 1994 with J. Herrera, and in 1997 with C. Chacarito.

There exist, so, proofs of the past and of the present that credit the *rarámuri* as a people of runners, which possess a great capacity of resistance and physical hardness, demonstrated and recognized at present, which does that far from the exaggerations the legend does history to itself.

The ethnic group *Rarámuri* nowadays lives to the southwest of Chihuahua's State (Mexico), abrupt territory that adopts the name of Saw Tarahumara inside the mother western Saw. According to the census of 2000, relies on demography of 84.086 persons (INEGI, 2000) that still increase. "The Tarahumara", as it is named commonly, is formed by a mountainous clump composed by peaks, canyons and plateaus, which altitude ranges between the 3.000 and 300 m. (Amador, 1997: 17), spreading over a territory of over 60.000 km² (Sariego, 2000: 13). Generally there are distinguished two ecological and differentiated zones: the High and the Fall Tarahumara, also called Saw and Gully respectively.

Etymologically the word "rarámuri" means "foot runner" or "runner by foot" (Bennett and Zingg, 1935; Amador, 1997: 17) and it is precisely the race one of their cultural peculiarities that they are known internationally, which supports at present full force resisting to the change. Of it we are going to occupy the following pages, on the basis of the fieldwork realized during October and November, 2001 in different communities of the High Tarahumara².

DESCRIPTION OF THE RARÁMURI RACE

The traditional *rarámuri* race possesses two «modalities» named: *rarájipari* or ball race for the men and *rowera* or race of *ariweta* (ring) for the woman. The ball is made of the root of the oak, tree strawberry; it has a diameter of approximately seven or eight cm. and approximately 230 gr. of weight. The hoop or *ariweta* is done by tree rams with a changeable diameter between five and fifteen cm, being threaded double in some zones.

² The communities visited during the stay were: Norogachi, Choguita, Tehuerichi, Panalachi, Sisoguichi, Naracháachi, Basihuare, Rocheachi, Cieneguita, besides the municipalities of Guachochi and Creel.

On the other hand, in agreement to the language used by the proper *rarámuris* basically we can differ three «types» of race: big, medium and small, taking as essential criteria the duration of the same one and the quantity of the accumulated bets. A great race is usually concerted with weeks or months of anticipation, has a duration of between fifteen and twenty hours for the men and between eight and fifteen hours for the women, covering men distances of between 100 and 200 km and the second ones between 50 and 100 km, they raise many expectation and a high amount of bets. The small race is usually improvised with few anticipation and is proper of children and also of the adults inside the context of the *tesgüinadas* (meetings drinks), in them can be crossed over two and ten km more or less and the bets are not too big. The medians occupy a wide spectrum with very changeable distances. In addition it is necessary to bear in mind the "ceremonial" or "commemorative" race realized on the occasion of the death of some person, had being carried out a symbolic act in which a few hundreds of meters are crossed as honouring to the deceased.

Any «epoch» can be used to organize a race, although the immense majority of they are concentrated between the summer and the autumn (from May to September), that is when does not do so much cold and the environment is more humid for being a time of rains.

The axis of «organizational system» of a great race is the *chokéame* or principal organizer for the own, being able to be two, one for every runner and other for conflicting team. They can be indistinctly man or woman and take charge of manage and negotiate the ends and limits of the race, putting in agreement to the runners, also encharged of bets of the interested people.

As for «preparation and taken care of the runner» before a great race, the *rarámuris* do not practise any special activity, their physical form is based on the natural training that provides the daily life, on having walked very much taking care of herds or visiting people; the children and young men and women move often running, playing with the ball or the *ariweta*, and it will be the natural selection the one that will do as a filter in order that with the time the best of them will take part in the big races and the rest will do it in the medians or small.

Before the challenge of a great race the runners must carry out, a series of corporal cares, must be fed well by their respective families, *chokéames* or neighbors who are going to bet for him or her, avoid big efforts, not take part in the *tesgüinadas*, and rest well a few days before the great day; the *owirúame* or quack will apply to them and to their legs oil or medicinal plants and will administrate tea of cedar.

The day of the meeting, «the development of the race» is abided by a few simple rules. The circuit where they moves along can be circular, although with major frequency it is linear, with going and return on a distance from six to 30 km approximately³, using ways and roads more or less stony that pass for very changeable reliefs (plateau, gully, forest ...). Before giving the exit it is necessary to approve the distance of the tour, the number of returns, the number of runners for team⁴, the number of balls or *ariwetats* of replacement, to use them in case of break or loss. Close to the line of exit, which in

³ On a circuit of six km they can return from 20 to 40 times, whereas on one of 30 km from four to eight times.

⁴ Always they are two the parts confronting, but each group can be composed by one two, four or six runners. In any case the normal thing is that one stands out for team, doing the rest a labour of support.

addition uses as end and occupies a central place in the circuit, a row of stones is placed and will be reduced after one as returns are completed. The apparel does not have anything new for them, the used garment is the normal one of the daily life and this one has changed throughout the time, which is kept is the belt of leather with hoofs of deer hung like rattle, with which some men run, as well as the band of fabric adjusted to the forehead that both, men and women take. The used footwear are *huaraches* (sandals with sole of rubber tied to the foot with a strap of leather).

The normal hour of beginning of the big races places from 14:00 to 15:00 h., passed the half day, they leaves with calm rhythm, conscious that the proof has just begin and still there remains great until it finishes around 11:00 or 12:00 h. of the following day. The race's skills and throwing has as principal purpose stop the less as possible, economizing to the maximum the energy, for it the man with the same inertia provide by the race places the foot close to the ball and he kick strongly forward effecting a parable of 40 or 50 m., to continue running towards the point where it fell down and to repeat the operation again and again until the end, trying to avoid the riverbeds of the way, because they are not able to caught by the hands, any exit supposes loss of time and extra effort. The woman runs with a rod of approximately 70 or 80 cm. Of length curled on a part and with it she will gather the *ariweta* of the soil while she runs, throwing strongly forward 50 or 60 m., always in the sense of the race, avoiding equally that goes out from the margins of the way to follow. The runners apply strategies to demoralize the rival, placing, for example after him without allowing a big separation between both, studying the movements and the opportune moment to pass him.

The *rarámuri* race is a team task, where the group work becomes very important to win, there is indispensable the support of a series of persons who provide water and food (*pinole*)⁵ to the runners, which light them with torches of ocote during the night, and also help them to recover of possible wounds or faints, gives them spirit, keep an eye on the fulfilment of the procedure. Also the public fulfills their role, not only betting but of entertainer, shouting ¡*weriga!* (faster) and following in some sections the tour, keeping an eye on the rules of the game.

Many people have done the bets before giving the begin of the race, but others wait for one or two returns to see how they run and then bet, providing that there has someone who accepts it, always doing of mediator the *chokéame*.

Often the big races conclude before all laps are covered, due to the difference between the contenders. When a runner thinks that he or she will not be able to reach other one chooses to retire and everything ends, provided that to win not always is necessary to cross the finish the first, is enough to stay ahead of other one in case of abandon. In any case, concluded the race, the runners rest, feed, sleep together with their families and followers, feeling a few happy (the winners) and other sad (the losers) for the happened but without exaggeration. It is normal also that the losers justify the classification aiming at motives of enchantment, feeling victims of the damaging action worked by someone⁶, even in extraordinary cases manage to hint that the race has been faked on

⁴ Ground corn that is dissolved in water.

⁶ Of undemonstrated way there refer cases in which someone has placed dead man's bones in the point where a runner passes in order that this one loses strength. The presence sometimes of a person indicated life *sukurúame* (wizard), that proves to be partial to a decree can do that other one stars feeling defeated.

having been thought that the runner that has lost has done it with premeditation to make to win on whom they have bet for other one.

The *chokéame* or *chokéames*, without having anything written down, distributes the content of the bets (money, animals) between the winners. The winner, who also has bet, receives what corresponds to him or her and in addition the voluntary gratification (*barata*) of the persons who estimate so, after so they all return to their origin places.

FUNCTIONS OF THE RARAMURI RACE

The sports competition

The first function derives from the most immediate sense that has the action of run. Why do they run? Which is the final result of the race? What does support so many expectations in the public? The competition is a basic component of the structure and dynamics of the *rarámuri* race, installed not only at the level of the runners but also of whom support them.

The race contains a hard competition where there is no truce, both contenders try to win and they will finish with exhaustion to obtain it, but it doesn't say that it should lose the playful component. It is a hard, sacrificed competition but also pleasant, where it is possible to speak about different degrees of amusement and rivalry.

The race turns into an entertained act in the sense that it is accompanied of the activity of throwing an object, having to pay attention to a ball of wood or to a plant hoop to lead them in the suitable direction. It constitutes an entertainment that breaks with the monotony of the race, providing it of a playful component, it would not have logical sense to run without ball, although some of them do it in big competitions to rival with the *chabochis*⁷ in their area as they can do it, the ball or the *ariweta* are indispensable elements in order that the race *rarámuri* is thought and felt as a playful and entertaining activity, without these elements it would lose interest.

Amusement and suffering are not exposed here in an inverse relation. Not because the race is long and contains very much sacrifice it has to be less entertained for the runner, especially if this one feels that can win. In the small races of children or in those who occurs in the *tesgüinadas* the investment of effort is not too big and the amusement is totally complete for runners as well as for the public who promotes them, but not less entertained can be a great race where the pain because of the physical wear is compensated by the achievements that can be obtained. The difference rests on that as the degree of intensity or interest of the competition increases, the entertaining character of the race tends to place in one of the conflicting parts, the one which wins; whereas to a minor rivalry is more widespread a merriment, because those who have not won, at the end have not lost very much in the bets either, and "other time they will have more luck".

In any case, independently of the pleasant character that this practice contains for the runners and public, because of treating itself about a cultural very valued custom, a distinctive note of the competition is the temperance of the runners once finished the proof. The one that wins is satisfied to have obtained it but he or she does not manage to

⁶ Term that it means "bearded" and there is assigned to the white and half-caste man.

be exultant, does not jump of happiness or he/she demonstrates arrogant or conceitedly, far from it, assumes the victory with normality, as fruit of personal effort, of the support of his/her people and of the luck of not having had any mishap, the duty and the desire was fulfilled and the runners enjoys without exaggeration, so "only a race has been gained", one of so many, although they are exceptionally long races. The one that loses will not give major importance in the minor fully playful challenges, but he will not also prove to be depressed if it is a question of a great challenge in a major race, "simply a race losted", it is not necessary to give major transcendency, it was possible to lose (as well as winning) and it has happened, it can dislike because the expectations hasn't be fulfilling but it is not an obsession for the runner. In the sports competition the fact of winning or losing does not suppose a deep change in the state of mind of the runners, supermen or superwomen nor feel, they nor sink in the affliction and in the frustration either, the contentment or dissatisfaction takes place without exaggeration⁸.

In any case, the agonistic character of the *rarámuri* race, the unviolent confrontation that takes place between the contenders expires with a function generalized in the sport, both ancient and modern, as it is the liberation of aggressiveness. The social tensions take the *tesgüinadas* as a riverbed of exit, in this scene conflicts arise and there come frequently more or less violent acts that break with the quiet and the peace that dominates the life *rarámuri*, but besides the *tesgüinadas* where the aggressiveness becomes explicit in a violent way, the races serve also to liberate such a aggressiveness, to channel it, to direct and to expulse out without need of that demonstrates violently. The runners can spill their accumulated anger, in case of existing, spending energy running, throwing strongly the ball or the *ariweta*, and the rest they can do it accompanying to the runners partly of the distance shouting them, betting; anyhow the race offers an opportunity to detach tensions, may be running or being projected in the runners, working this way like hydraulic valve that regulates in a culturally accepted way the overpressure accumulated in the normal life.

The race is like a playful-competitive motive of manifestation and strongly established in the way of being *rarámuri* that attracts many expectation, not only because of his entertaining character but for the implications that it possesses with other cultural planes that exceed the simple competition between runners.

The economic bet

The bet forms a part of the race and is one of his big inducements, even we can say that for many people is the most valued, if we leave ourselves to listen to the conversations supported with the own *rarámuris*, who were affirming that finished the race all the interest is overturned in the place of the bets and not in the exhausted runners to which one does not give them too many attention, allowing them simply to recover without major receptions.

⁸ For the obtained information, they are the economic consequences of the race those that are left to feel more at the moment of winning or to lose, especially in the public that bet. According to Don Burgess:

"The idea of winning is related with receiving favours. The verb that is used in the language *rálámuli* to express the idea of gaining. God's favour, of gaining a game, and of gaining food to work, is the same, *mépua*, we will win. Also the words to win and to lose have the same root, *me*. The word we lost, *me'tirú* is the passive form and gives the idea of "we were gained" o "they won us" (Mares y Burgess, 1996: 55).

The bet in the race does not suppose a way of life, there do not exist persons who base their sustenance on the benefits obtained of the bets, which it contains is a form of economic transaction, of obtaining resource, especially if one relies on a good runner. The family and still the community that has a talented runner can invert part of their resources to duplicate them, although it is never a sure value to which to fight and the possibility of loss will be always present. Having the society *rarámuri* a subsistence economy, of self-consumption, the bet in the races allows the economic traffic in spheres intra and intercommunal and still interethnic, the goods change of owner, a few times are gained, others get lost, and although it is not known well if those who win are the neediest economically, the system of bets contributes to the redistribution of the richness in the community or in the region. There are some who support that the best runners belong to the most depressed zones, making possible so across them the community recovers the economic penury and obtains entry of surpluses (money, clothes, ridge-tiles, animals, ...) that come from other areas with more resources; these runners usually have more determination in winning on having needed more than others, being more motivated, although we insist that on the victory not having been assured, the risk of losing is always present. Nevertheless, the material benefits obtained of the bets more that to increase the economic differences between the *rarámuris*, they diminish them.

The economic function that stems from the races across the bets adds to the subsistence a certain character of incipient market, on having constituted a modal in the *rarámuri* society to invert material resources, which can get lost at worst or in the best case duplicate the value. The place of bets turns into a space of transactions, where there are brought into play goods of use and consumption, a stock market where the above mentioned are risked in the dilemma of double or nothing.

On the other hand, the great anomaly that sometimes is left to feel in the race and that perverts the confidence of the participants happens precisely because of the bet. The bet is the reason why some runners are left to bribe, they lose with premeditation a race to benefit economically from the same one, as those who induce them to do it, which are, with difference, more beneficiaries. Is the bet the one that increases the sports, economic and social value of the race, which does that it acquires major interest and at the same time the one that contributes in some cases to perversion, when traps are committed.

It is not necessary to lose of sight, nevertheless, that the own runners are equally players, so win or lose the race of which they are protagonists implies gaining or losing the bet, this contributes an added value to the physical competition, an economic value from which they can benefit or not, being precise to be motivated to produce the maximum that allow the forces of each one. The economic bet of the own runner constitutes an important incentive to support the mind of these, because besides the prestige as runner material goods are in game, and a proof of credibility for the rest of the public. It is supposed that every group will do everything possible for winning, on having been verified that the runners have bet important goods on their favour.

The social meeting and the ideological support

With a such dispersed accession, the *rarámuri* life passes in an isolated way, the interfamiliar communication is scanty and in some messes can pass entire weeks

without one has begun relation that goes beyond the domestic group. Before this panorama the Sunday meetings to go to mass and to listen to the sermon or speech of the *siríame*, as well as the meetings drinks or *tesgüinadas* constitute two institutionalized dates to avoid losing the contact, to support the links, to transmit and to acquire knowledges, and makes possible socialization. In this sense, the ball races and *ariweta* propitiate the meeting and the social integration, turning into a time to share experience, to exchange impressions and to go out of the monotonous and independent life. Lots of *rarámuri* testimonies emphasize the social value of the race overall, the most important thing is not to win but to support the communication, as the following statement *rarámuri* relates:

“The bet does not have to do very much, we bet rather for obtaining something, for achieving something, but the spirit in the fund is the competition, of having rivalry with other villages and support the communication, because often some time ago are not seen and is in the races when they return to see and to chat, and there same they arrange new races, then the aim of this is to support the constant communication with other villages. [...]” (Interviews J.M.P.).

The social component of the race is not necessary to circumscribe it, nevertheless, to the moment that this one makes effective, at 24 or 48 hours in which they all meet in the place of meeting in order that takes place. Though the small races, often unexpected, occupy generally a little time of interaction, it's major frequency of accomplishment does that these moments are more numerous, the big races contain an organizational process very elaborated where everyone intergesticulates with others from his/her respective role. The *chokéames* of both crews visit each other to be making concrete diverse ends of the race, simultaneously that promote and incite the people to bet; the runners are taken care well by their supporters, their families, by the *owirúame*, by the *chokéame*, being conscious of the commitment that he/she acquires with them to make everything possible for winning and this way improve a little the economic situation of theirs; the followers of both crews count with several weeks to converse about the race, being this one an important motive for reporting and filling the time. Each one occupy different positions before the announced event and play as best as possible their roles with a high social content.

The race is presented as a social event, which propitiates the collective enjoyment on having possessed a clear recreative component and not only competitively, capably of attract the attention of new persons who have realized tours of several days to come to the appointment, and in addition it supposes an event loaded with stimuli that not only reflects but in addition it reproduces some of the most important values of the group, with the race there is remembered that it is necessary to be skilful, intelligent, solidary and very resistant to obtain the aims that are prosecuted.

But not only in the race is appreciated the recreation of the ethnic identity on there having being reproduced a traditional behaviour that links to the group giving sense of property, the fact of sharing a peculiar way of relating to the pedestrian race is another manifestation to mark the difference between "we" and "others": we run with ball or *ariweta*, others run without it; but it is not necessary to lose of sight that treats itself about a race where two runners or two rival crews face, the *rarámuri* must decant to someone of them being this exercise a differential adscription. In this sense they were

telling us that although it is normal to bet for the runner that is considered to be best prepared, independently of the charm that he/she should cause or the affinity that had with he or she, also occurs the case to bet unconditionally for the one that is kept a major proximity, for that one that is relative or neighbour, which belongs to the same settlement, although also it is necessary to see in them a few minimal guarantees in order that they manage to win. This second circumstance is given more when there face runners of very distant settlements, which does that the assistant public bets for whom or who represents to his/her place of origin: in case of runners of facing Choguita and Panalachi, the residents of Choguita will tend to bet for his runner, whereas those of Panalachi will do it for the other one, without forces nobody to do it⁹. Nevertheless, although the social meeting in a great race divides the supporters of one and another group, creating a festive environment of rivalry, it does not seem that it is an obstacle to generate animadversion between both groups of followers; far from the hostile environment that in the modern society is created between the interests of two sports teams that they face, in the *rarámuri* race everything happens in a calmer way and, until the procedure is violated there are problems with the distribution of bets, the conflict is not in the habit of appearing and less outbreaks of violence. The not transcendentalization of the race, not to see it as a question of honour where the life is in game, not to extract it out of the margins that the physical competition supposes, it does that the rivalry between the crews expresses in the bets and in the differentiated animation on the part of the followers, without it should reduce the social cohesion in general terms.

Clear that any norm has exception and sometimes there are listened anecdotes that speak about the anger of a part of the players when other one withdrew the bet before concluding the race, or the quarrel of someone on having denounced that the winning runner did not fulfill certain norm, nonetheless, the harmed ones they take note of the happened not to trust any more in certain persons, solving problems talking and in pacific ways in front of the competent authority in each case (*chokéame, siríame*)¹⁰.

Inside the ideological function of the *rarámuri* race, we can include also the support to the religious beliefs that are reaffirmed by the participation in the races. To run well is precise to be in harmony with your body, only this way it is possible to trust in the victory, the soul or the souls must be present and in peace, any remorse or bad conscience can be a reason of weakening and loss of the race. According to Don Burgess: "the *rarámuri* do not separate anything from their religious dimension" and as was saying: "they have say me that when they run do it for God" (interviews D.B.). The spiritual motives are present to take part in a race, as was saying to us Rejogochi's *rarámuri*: "One takes part in order that God gives us more life for what he is doing, not

⁹ On the social force of the *rarámuri* race wrote W. Bennett:

"A great race, between peoples, is one of the factors that tend to join to the communities. The great race is accompanied of a party in which both decrees join. The bets, the tireless one to be looking and breathing to the runners and to intermingle with different persons, they play a double function: first, they put in relation to two communities; I come second, they unify to every community. The competition definitively creates a group "we" and a group "they". The fact that, both the runner and their respective peoples that support them, bet, firmly joins to the decree of "our ones". Nevertheless, the big races are not frequent enough to turn into a factor of major importance". (Bennett and Zingg, 1978 [1935]: 503).

¹⁰ The pacific policy always is possible of altering when the alcohol appears, especially revealed of high degree.

to gain money, are also to add desire for the life of other persons also, in order that God is satisfied with us" (interviews M.Ch.).

Besides it, in the races often the belief becomes present in the existence of powerful supernatural forces that can handle or operate in favour or in opposition to other persons, the belief in good realized by the *owirúame* (quack) with the application of medicinal remedies, and in the evil caused by the (magical) *sukurúame* that supposedly has realized some curse, they are very present, as well as the respect and enclosed dread that has to these persons, who are solitary and atypical, supporting with them a cordial but not excessive treatment for anything that could happen, the race tests this way these beliefs and his adhesion to them.

An important aspect of standing out here is the role that possesses the race as vehicle of approximation of the half-caste society to the *rarámuri*¹¹. The Saw Tarahumara has experienced a strong half-caste settling, nevertheless, although the half-caste society occupy in this case the dominant position, it is possible to estimate in them adjustments of some forms of behaviour *rarámuri*, there are many the persons who feel persuaded by the way of being *rarámuri* and adopt certain conducts integrating them in their own way of life, entering a process that we might name like "raramurization of the half-.caste". The race constitutes one of these practices that monopolize the interest of the half-caste, approaching to it not only to bet, but to enjoy estimating it's values; even there are cases of half-caste runners of ball¹² that possessing a good physical form they have competed between themselves and against the *rarámuris*, winning them. A very significant case is the one of Rafael, a man of 60-year-old resident in Creel, which learned to run with ball at the age of 21, accompanying to the runner Tarahumaras friends, helping them in the tour placing the ball in the way to do that his old brother win the bet. This way he was learning and managed to traverse big distances of more than 120 km successfully. Today he, tell us with pleasure and certain melancholy his experience in the races, insisting on the festive environment that was created and in the lessons of honesty that received constant of the *rarámuris* on having run with them, likewise he was indicating the advantage taken by opportunist that have done the *chabochis* (white men), who have used it with the exclusive purpose of extracting money of them.

RESIST TO LIVE

The *rarámuri* race can be analyzed from different points of view, is loaded with values and they infuse different logics. Some of the principal values to standing out are that of the resistance is in wide sense, but why is the capacity of resistance valued so much?

Both men and women have to show endurance not only in the race but in all the orders of the life, it is necessary to resist dancing *mataachines* the whole night, it is necessary to

¹¹ As indicates J. Kennedy (1970), which came to the Tarahumara in November, 1959, a type of opportunity for the interethnic contact happens in the internal races and between peoples that they organize the *rarámuris*.

"The half-caste ones amuse themselves attending them; they take part in the bets and often they take advantage of the opportunity to sell cigars, fruit, or other products. In occasions they take part in the race serving as prompters, that is to say, accompanying to the runners and putting the ball in front to them in order that they stamp on it in the last stages of the race. The interaction in the races is not narrow, since in spite of joking frequently with the Indians, the half-caste ones they tend to train a group separate ". (Kennedy, 1970: 30)

¹² News is not had, nevertheless, of half-caste women who have run with *ariweta*.

support the night cold and the winter with what one wearing in the moment, it is necessary to last the hunger if there is nothing to eat for days, or the thirst if we don't have water in a long voyage, or the natural childbirth, or the pain of a traumatism or of a disease, and in another order of things it is necessary to resist the stakes of the cultural shock.

The resistance possesses, so, an important social value because on it cultural maintenance and ethnic identity depends, of the will to continue being *rarámuri*. Conscious of its importance, we were listening to reflections or native affirmations that they were saying: "it is necessary to resist to live!", "the one who does not last, do not survive, he/she gets lost, dies!" affirmations that refer to the life in general and that have a clear reflection in the race.

But, how does one manage to have a capacity of resistance so raised in the race? Which are the trigger factors? They are not precisely the big runners who with their words answer to such questions; characterized by a humble and quiet personality, it is not possible to wait for an explicit and reasoned answer on these questions. Martimiano of Choguita for saying something to us was affirming confused that they were resisting so much because "we eat *pinole* and add oil to the legs", the natural food, without chemistry, which habitually they train the diet *rarámuri*: *pinole*, *kelite*, maguei roasted, they are frequently aimed as factors that help to train a strong and resistant body, but, will principal reasons be this?.

In front of the one that think that to take a life tied to the nature, with a healthy nourishment and physical daily activity it is the key to obtain a good preparation as runner, some of them consider that the key of the success is to have the soul in peace and to speak with God.

The strength of the souls in the runners facilitate the good predisposition to run, the good spirit, the indoctrination to win, the resistance to be an object of some curse, but it does not assure the strength and physical resistance or the victory in the race, which obeys other justifications. As explains Merrill (1992: 149):

[...] the hardness and the force of the souls are not reflected so directly in the body. A young man can have a strong and hard body, which he strengthens with exercise and the exhibition to the elements, without his souls are equally strong and hard. Inversely, a major person can have strong and resistant souls but a weak body.

The most logical explanation to understand the extraordinary resistance developed by the *rarámuri* for the pedestrian race relies on their way of life, on the adjustment to the environment. The long treks along the mount, to take care of the herds of goatees, to hunt or to visit relatives or friends are frequent activities in the life of this people. Both children and girls from very small acquire the responsibility of taking care of the herds of animals, accompany and lead them to the most propitious zones to graze, passing days and days out of house, with the knowledge and sufficient mentality to be able to survive in situations that would not be easy to support for many people. Since they are young they get used to having to bear the disagreeable situations that are coming (cold, heat, hunger, be, pain, etc.), often in an unforeseen way, supporting them as part of the

normality, of a normality where a few times you had and others you don't had, where the times of abundance or balance pass to those of shortage.

The guideline of dispersed accession determined by the limited productive capacity of the land or for the familiar independence, it forces to walk very much and tackle lengths crossed of going and return to support the communication and the exchange between the persons, the only way that the majority of the *rarámuri* have to visit itself for the pleasure of doing it or for satisfying some commercial or sanitary need is walking, for lack of mechanical or animal vehicle it is necessary to do the distance by foot, and is like that how the big distances do not contain dread for the weariness. In the conversations with some major *rarámuris* we were estimating how one was speaking with total normality of the distances of one or two uninterrupted days that some and others were accustomed to do, especially in the past approximately 20 or 30 years ago, without they were giving to him or her the minor importance, still today they are many people, those who must continue covering big distances (by foot) to satisfy their vital needs; there are some children of Norogachi's boarding school who with ten or twelve years have to walk for eight or nine hours to go to their houses every Saturday accompanying their parents who are going to gather them, to return again to the college - boarding school on Monday of dawn of the same way, and nobody complains about such situation, everyone gets used to the circumstances that he/she has had to live.

With a bit more of rhythm the walk turns in running, and if to the action to move by foot is added the throwing of a ball or a hoop, the above mentioned action turns into game, this way the *rarámuri* can bring together in the same action the work and the game, the first dimension characterized by the external aim that prosecutes the action: to come to where it is had been arranged, and the second dimension for the internal aim that stems from it: to amuse itself, to enjoy the action itself. A daily behaviour that at first view, can turn out to be tired, monotonous or boring, with some retouches turns into a game, this way, instead of being travelling during hours from a settlement to other one, lots of children and young men/women are running with ball or with *ariweta*, cutting obviously the used time, with happy spirit and in addition with the illusion of earning something in the bet, this one is a way of making the life more pleasing.

But returning to the capacity of resistance, it would not be rigorous to oversize this characteristic in the *rarámuri* and to raise them to the category of supermen or superwomen. The *rarámuris* are extremely resistant in the race for the process of adjustment in which they are involved since they are born: the dynamics of the daily life, the meteorological inclemencies, the guideline of accession, the agricultural labours, the characteristics of the relief, their nourishing diet, their aptitude to be able to wait, not to get impatient, to last, to resign themselves, shapes a way of being in the world, which contains a sure personality of itself, and with great capacity of suffering. It is the environmental and cultural context, without forgetting the historical one that offers us the keys to understand the reasons of the *rarámuri* race and of the resistance that his actors show. The resistance or capacity of endurance, it is then, a consequence of the adjustment to the environment and a necessary condition in order that the culture *rarámuri* has continuity in the above mentioned environment.

Besides the use of the ball or the *ariweta* in the race, the differences of perspectives can make us see as a rarity, from the modern advanced society, the fact of traversing 180 or 200 km in competition without having taken part before of a specific training in relation

with the race, it is a barbarity!, they would say some, it must be dangerous to risk to it, they would think others; and it is that really it would be a recklessness, a danger, if a person accustomed to the urban and sedentary life risks to traverse suddenly such a distance, his/her, health would be traversing surely a serious risk if he/she was pledging in doing and coming until the end; but it is not this case *rarámuri*, not to train or to test specifically the race in the period before a great appointment is not anachronistic, is not inside the plans of the runner, which if he/she proposes, possibly he/she would think that: why to waste energy with essays of race, with what slope to win? It is necessary be mad! The *rarámuri* neither acts with shams, nor thinks necessarily to train the race because always he thinks is prepared in a natural way for it, because it would be a waste of energy (to run only for running) and because to win or to lose is not transcendental at all. The logic of the specific training, systematic and controlled, destined to obtain the record in the modality, the personal and national glory, as well as the fortune, belongs to another very different context, to a context where the race (as sport) transforms for some is a way to earn money for life, where it is not important the waste of energy, where the victory or the defeat are lived often as reason of condition, and where the above mentioned activity is lived by elite runners as a way of obtain the immortality, and is legitimate to try to be remembered in the history, to seek to come out across the excellence in an activity like that, but all that is very far from the *rarámuri* logic. Every situation is explained and understood inside its context, is a dilemma of perspective.

The *rarámuri* race has great force as manifestation of the culture, the *rarámuri* continue traversing big distances although there are no so many good runners as before. Nevertheless, which turns out to be like new for a few decades to this part, is the participation of the *rarámuris* in the pedestrian ultra long races organized by national or international institutions, together with the top athletes come from diverse points of the planet. In these cases, which parts with the *rarámuri* participation in the pedestrian not traditional races is biculturalism, his attitude of placing in the area of other one and speak his language across the race, or even inside his/her own territory.

Historically they have been adopting cultural elements of the peoples with whom they have taken contact, a few times as a lending, others for imposition, but they have resisted in the fundamental thing, in their structure and social dynamics, in their vision of the world. Now they are running like *chabochis*, but without imposition, freely, to be able to measure forces with them, and in spite of not being precisely their style, they are doing well: in the ultra marathon of the cannons celebrated in Guachochi on July 26, 1998, it appears in the front page of the magazine " ... in the races " (1998, 37): "The Tarahumaras dominated", because in the race of 90 km won by Martimiano¹³ (of Chogueta) and where good runners from different states of Mexico participated, specialists in ultra long races, of the ten first ones in coming eight were *rarámuris* (five of Chogueta, two of Panalachi and one of Bocoyma). It tries, so, where the *rarámuri* announced once again their excellence overcoming authentic professionals; nevertheless to see *rarámuris* running without ball for the gully of the Sinforosa will make think that something is changing into the Tarahumara, because, as it is said from the custom: "It is necessary to be mad to run without ball or without *ariweta*". What is happening? It is not a question of madness but is a process of change that indicates across the modern sport, that, in this case in the shape of race, it serves as vehicle of communication between

¹³ Martimiano as first classified with 35' of difference on the second one, he did a record of 8h. 23 ' 39 ", which supposes an average pace of 10.7 km/h., pace seemingly slow but fully justified by the strong slopes of the area.

different cultures, as well as way of acculturation by the dominant society who stimulates it and reaffirms its values. Without losing sight that the *rarámuri* race is replete with values, as we have seen, it is necessary to ask: will they continue the *rarámuri* running to the traditional way? In how much time? They will be able to support in indefinite time the traditional race and the modern one as expression of the double culture *rarámuri*? What change of values can suppose substitutes the traditional race to the modern one? Is *rarámuri* possible to transfer the traditional values to a new way of running? The time will give answers to all these questions, at the moment the *rarámuris* continue running, continue resisting, and continue being conscious that "the one who does not last, dies", that "is necessary to resist to survive". Without consciously they claim it, the *rarámuris* are kept in this conviction and reflect in the race departs from their being, not to treat it only as a corporal skill of displacement but about a social fact and a symbol of resistance in wide senses, understood this way, from a romantic vision of the culture, in the *rarámuri* case we might affirm that it is necessary to run to live!

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