

The Secret of the Cigar Box: Carl Lumholtz and the Photographs from His Sonoran Desert Expedition, 1909-1910

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*The Secret of the Cigar Box: Carl Lumholtz
and the Photographs from His Sonoran
Desert Expedition, 1909–1910*

ANN CHRISTINE EEK

Carl Sophus Lumholtz (1851–1922) was born in the vicinity of the Norwegian town of Lillehammer, the host of the Olympic Winter Games in 1994. His father was a military officer who wished his son to become a priest like his own father and grandfather, Bishop Nicolai Lumholtz of Christiania. But young Lumholtz, who grew up in a very close relationship to the beautiful landscape of the region, realized very early in life that it was far more interesting to study plants and animals than Latin or theology. Even as a schoolboy he started collecting plants that he sent to the Botanical Museum of the University of Christiania (the previous name of the capital Oslo), and later his herbarium was presented to Kew Gardens, outside London.

When it was time for young Lumholtz to attend the University of Christiania, he wished to study botany and zoology, but because his father refused to understand there could be any future in such studies, the son gave in to his wishes and started studying theology. As his final exams were approaching, however, Lumholtz pushed himself too hard, and after having passed the exams in 1876, he suffered a nervous breakdown. To recover he resumed collecting plants and animals. While his love of nature and his concern and knowledge about his own sur-

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roundings deepened, he realized one day: “what a misfortune it would be to die without having seen the whole earth” (Lumholtz 1921:226). In this article I wish to tell about Lumholtz’s efforts to see “the whole earth,” particularly in regard to his use of photography and his work in the Sonoran Desert in 1909–1910.

AUSTRALIA

When the Museums of Natural History of the University of Christiania were establishing their collections of zoology and botany in the latter part of the nineteenth century, they sent scholars to different parts of the world to collect exotic specimens. Lumholtz had, through his previous donations and reports, established good contacts with the museums, and thus Professor Robert Collett proposed that Lumholtz, at the age of twenty-nine, should go to Australia to collect animals, birds, and plants. With the help of several grants he was able to stay for four years (1880–1884) in Queensland, in the northeastern part of Australia. Initially, Lumholtz stayed at a cattle station near Rockhampton, but later he extended his expeditions farther into the interior of Queensland and stayed on the Herbert River for almost a year. He himself prepared the collections of plants, birds, and animals from his numerous excursions, before shipping them to Christiania.

Being a European of his time, Lumholtz considered Western culture to be the highest form of living, assuming that the Australian natives had an inferior culture. Until he arrived at the Herbert River he had worked primarily as a zoologist, but the year he spent with the natives there turned him into an explorer. He was fascinated by the landscape, but the people he met impressed him even more, challenging his senses, and after a while he decided to camp and travel alone with the natives. He was convinced they had knowledge and understanding of nature that would help him find animals previously unknown to science. Lumholtz was richly rewarded, for he found new species of mammals, including an unknown tree kangaroo, the *Dendrolagus lumholtzii*. At the same time he gained a profound insight into the lives of people who at that time were considered to be utterly primitive. He was, however, very upset by the way they were treated by the colonists, and gradually his patronizing attitude towards the natives changed.

From Lumholtz’s four-year sojourn in Australia, there do not seem to exist any photographs of his own, but there are sketches in ink and a

selection of exquisite watercolors in shades of gray, considered to have been drawn either by Lumholtz himself or by a professional illustrator from his descriptions. Together with the photographs he had collected, these illustrations were the originals for the woodcuts illustrating his first travelogue, *Among Cannibals* (Copenhagen, 1888; New York, 1889; Hamburg, 1889; Paris, 1890), which aroused a great interest internationally.

By 1886 Lumholtz had already been elected a member of the Society of Science in Christiania, as a result of his zoological and botanical contributions. Even before the book of his Australian studies was published, however, he was sufficiently renowned to be invited to lecture in many countries. It was probably while lecturing in London in 1887 that the self-taught ethnographer became interested in the cliff dwellers of the Sierra Madre in Mexico and decided to study the primitive humans of America (Lumholtz 1921:230). As lanternslide lectures were becoming increasingly popular in attracting public interest, Lumholtz apparently realized the importance of using photography as a means to document and publish his explorations.¹ At the geographic congress in Paris in 1889, however, Lumholtz's Australian experiences were overshadowed by those of his compatriot Fridtjof Nansen, who in the previous year had crossed Greenland on skis.

Later on some scientists and aborigines have been very critical of Lumholtz's book about Australia, for its patronizing views on the natives and descriptions they consider to have contributed to the prejudice about the aborigines as inferior people. In spite of that, land in the vicinity of the Herbert River in Queensland was dedicated as the Lumholtz National Park and was opened by the British TV producer Sir David Attenborough in 1991.

MEXICO

In the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the search for raw materials and markets for growing industries created alliances among adventurers, scientists, and sponsors. When Lumholtz arrived in the United States on his lecture tours in 1889, it was probably the recognition he had received in Europe that helped him finance his field studies. Lumholtz was a man who preferred the solitude of nature and who never married, but with his great social talent and self-confidence, he soon made the acquaintance of scientists, institutions, and philanthro-

pists interested in supporting his expeditions. After intense fundraising and under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History and the American Geographical Society, he left in August 1890 with a huge party consisting of several scientists for his first expedition to the Sierra Madre. This eight-month expedition resulted in several archaeological excavations and the gathering of about five hundred pieces of beautiful pottery, as well as zoological and botanical material. He met no cliff dwellers, but did encounter Indian tribes unknown to the rest of the world and found traces of old cultures.

In 1892–1893 Lumholtz returned to the Sierra Madre to study the Tarahumara Indians, many of whom still lived in caves. This time he traveled with a smaller group, but after six months he decided to gradually dismiss his party for he found it too difficult to make a close study of the Indians with other foreigners present. From then on he usually traveled alone, in the company of only a translator and an indigenous guide, his experiences of living close to the Australian natives being a great asset. In this way Lumholtz somehow anticipated the standard method of later anthropologists in the field: participant observation. Sometimes, however, he had difficulties in establishing contact with the Indians, as they were shy and suspicious of him, a stranger. Skulls and bones collected from an excavation, stored close to his tent, contributed on one occasion to the rumor spreading among the Indians that he was a man-eater: “Wherever I came I was abhorred as the man who subsisted on babies and green corn” (Lumholtz 1902, 1:185). On other occasions he had severe difficulties photographing, for people were afraid of his cameras, fearing he was a conqueror planning to take their land. Gradually, these problems were overcome as he realized the best way to understand the natives was to live with them on their own terms, and treat them as fairly as possible. By interviewing the shamans and learning their songs, the ice was broken. His admiration for the Indians, the Tarahumara in particular, was emphasized by his descriptions of their physical strength and endurance.

The rich collections Lumholtz brought back to New York this time were exhibited at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, and he was also invited to lecture at the International Conference of Anthropologists in 1894. The American Museum of Natural History was very pleased with his work and decided to send him out again, so in 1894–1897 he traveled, without any assistant, to study the Tarahumara, Cora, Tepecan, and Huichol Indians. His work among the Huichol Indians was particularly rewarding as he managed to establish an extraordinary rapport with them, even being allowed to participate in their *bikuli* (peyote) rituals.

His photographs are an exceptional proof of their trust, as he was allowed not only to make numerous portraits of them, but also to photograph the shamans preparing and performing their sacred rituals. He even managed to persuade them to expose their deities to his cameras, the photograph of Te-Te-Wa-Li, the "God of Fire," with some of its custodians being one of Lumholtz's most amazing photographs (page 384).² During this expedition he surpassed his previous collections, and returned with more than three thousand objects. Besides that he had made ethnographic and linguistic studies, and from the Huichol Indians he also collected information about their myths and music. On his return to New York these collections received enthusiastic attention and recognition.

Lumholtz was to make two more expeditions in the Sierra Madre: in 1898 together with the anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka, to supplement his earlier studies of the Tarahumara and Huichol Indians, and in 1905 alone, to visit the Huichol and Tepehuano Indians. In eight years, six of which he spent with the Indians, he covered large parts of western Mexico from the Sierra Madre to west of Mexico City. From his experiences of these years Lumholtz published a now very well-known travelogue called *Unknown Mexico*, in two volumes (New York 1902; London 1903; Christiania 1903), and in the foreword he explicitly states he did most of the photographic work himself. As the American Museum of Natural History was sponsoring most of Lumholtz's work during these years, the greater part of his photographic documentation from Mexico, as well as some from Borneo, is to be found in the archives of that museum in New York. This collection consists of somewhat more than three thousand items in the form of "nitrate negatives, glass plates, copy negatives, interpositives, and some prints."³

"THE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE EXPEDITION"

In 1890 and 1892 Lumholtz did however bring a photographer along and in the collections of the Museum of Cultural History there is a handwritten manuscript full of technical information, called "Experiences in Photographing with a Pack-Train." It is a story from six months in the field, written by someone who called himself "The Photographer of the Expedition." There is no name, no date. The writer reveals that he had brought along his topographic instruments, and he is therefore probably the civil engineer and photographer C. H. Taylor, who traveled with Lumholtz in 1892 but was sent home after six months.

"Experiences" starts with a long description of how the photographer constructed easily accessible boxes for packing photo equipment onto mules. To lift 70 pounds (32 kg) off an animal four feet (120 cm) high every time he wanted "to take a view along the trail" and then load it up again demanded the help of an assistant. With the new boxes he was enabled to do the whole job alone, in half the time. "I found I could get off my mule, take out the instruments, choose a proper sight, set it up, expose the plate and, packing it up, be back in my saddle ready to start on for the next inside of seven minutes from the start." He had also been told that he could not expect to develop the plates until afterwards, but "the advantages to be gained from developing at once while the subject is yet fresh in the mind and the plates have not had time to be spoiled were such that I resolved to make an attempt." And so he explains the equipment he bought to develop up to 2,500 $6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ negatives and the procedure to develop these negatives, sometimes under very difficult circumstances.⁴ He also describes the cameras he brought along, including a 4'' \times 5'' Hawkeye camera, and concludes with the remark that he used "celluloid plates exclusively," preferably of the Allan & Rowell brand, and that his "ratio of spoiled negatives . . . would not average more than 10%."

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Besides *Unknown Mexico* Lumholtz published several articles, as well as extensive and important studies on the Tarahumara, Cora, and Huichol Indians. He documented their use of ritual ornaments on pictographs, on pottery, and in particular on textiles, in the form of pouches, girdles, and ribbons. The illustrations in these publications reveal an amazing richness in beautiful patterns, with stylized serpents, squirrels, eagles, butterflies, double water gourds, and different flowers being very common. Lumholtz's ethnocentric views on indigenous peoples had changed completely by 1902, when he wrote: "We are brought up to look upon primitive people as synonyms of all that is crude, evil and vicious. Nothing could be more erroneous. . . . The Indian's physique is better developed and his senses are better trained than the white man's; his intellect and clearness of thought average higher than the common people's of Europe and America. . . . Though dressed in rags, he is a born gentleman" (Lumholtz 1902, 2:470, 472, 474).

In Mexico Lumholtz's work has been highly esteemed, in particular for publicizing the indigenous peoples to the world. The Instituto

Nacional Indigenista (National Institute of Indigenous Peoples, INI) has contributed several publications of Lumholtz's photographs, and in 1990 it arranged in Sonora a memorial conference and exhibition of Lumholtz's photographs to celebrate the centennial of his first expedition to Mexico. INI also supported a project initiated by the late Norwegian historian Anna Lovise Lundeby in 2002, when approximately 130 Lumholtz photographs from the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo were digitized and a selection was printed for a major exhibition in Mexico City, and later the exhibit toured Mexico. In 2006 the Comisión Nacional el Desarrollo para los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples, CDI) published *Bajo el cielo de los trópicos*, the translation into Spanish of the 1993 book edited by Klausen and Sørum. Further, Lumholtz has a distinguished rank in Mexico's history of photography, and his photographs have appeared in international presentations of Mexican photography.

Lumholtz made one more expedition to Mexico, into the Sonoran Desert in 1909–10, but before looking closer at what he achieved on that occasion, I would like to move ahead a few years in time, to describe what was to become Lumholtz's final adventure, Borneo.

PLANS FOR THE GREATEST EXPLORATION OF ALL

Ever since his experiences in northeast Queensland, Lumholtz had had another dream: to explore what some considered the least known region of the world: New Guinea. He managed to gain financial support for an expedition from the king and queen of Norway; the geographic societies of Norway, Britain, and the Netherlands; and some American and British friends. In 1913 he arrived in Borneo (Kalimantan), to prepare for a huge expedition to penetrate neighboring New Guinea from the north to the south, and to acquire the equipment, provisions and carriers for it. But on his arrival in Batavia (today Jakarta) on Java some months later, news of the outbreak of World War I forced him to change his plans. The Dutch governor-general informed Lumholtz that he could not possibly provide a military escort for the expedition, and he strongly advised Lumholtz not to travel without one.

While awaiting the development of world events Lumholtz decided to go to British India, where he studied Hindu religions, "a fascinating occupation." There he took a series of photographs of very high quality, particularly of yoga students and life along the river Ganges, in images

revealing a remarkable sense for both the aesthetic and documentary values of photography. After eight months Lumholtz decided to return to Borneo and undertake an expedition to the central parts of the island. This time the governor-general gave him a small escort of Javanese soldiers, an excellent native surveyor and, for a while, one of the government's photographers. Lumholtz also included a movie camera in his equipment, and for a period his team was reinforced with the photographer and cameraman Jan Demmini. The majority of the photographs were however taken by Lumholtz, while the photographers were responsible for the development of the films.

BORNEO 1915–17

During 1915 to 1917, Lumholtz made three major expeditions to the inner parts of Borneo, where he penetrated unknown rain forests, documented the populations of indigenous groups of people, generally called Dayaks, and collected a unique selection of ethnographic objects. This time, however, he did not manage to complete his studies, so only the book *Through Central Borneo—Two Years' Travel in the Land of the Head-Hunters* (New York 1920; Christiania 1922) was published before his death in 1922.

Central Borneo is covered by rain forests and dominated by high mountain ranges, the sources of several large rivers. Lumholtz's expeditions were made by boat along these rivers, a dangerous undertaking for a man in his sixties, as he and his party had to negotiate many waterfalls and streams with very strong undertows. His fascination over the skill of the crew of his boats is documented both with the movie camera and in many photographs, for he apparently was using a roll film camera he carried at all times. In the movie footage is a sequence with a group of Dayaks dancing and Lumholtz himself joining the dancing, as was his habit, with a Folding Pocket Kodak on his shoulder. Some years previously, in the Sonoran Desert, he had learned the lesson "appreciated by every one who is interested in photographing . . . to be ever ready at the very moment the opportunity offers itself" (Lumholtz 1912:230).

Lumholtz often expressed his admiration for the beauty of the scenery and the hospitality and honesty of the Dayaks living in villages of "longhouses" along the rivers. This seems to have been a never-ending inspiration which helped him survive the hardships of the heat and humidity during the long periods of rain and the attacks of mosquitoes

and other insects. One of these mosquitoes infected him severely (Lumholtz 1920:203–4), and in the end this attack of filariasis proved fatal, as it was the cause of Lumholtz's death six years later (King in Lumholtz 1991:xvi). The Dayaks lived by hunting and cultivating small crops, with a religion based on the belief in an eternal fight between good and evil spirits living in creatures or objects. Lumholtz deeply admired the artistry of the spiritual objects with their abstract ornaments, the expressive masks used in dances to chase the bad spirits away, and the beautiful basketwork and extraordinary bone carvings that decorated swords and knives. The Malaysians living on the coast considered the Dayaks to be fearful headhunters, but Lumholtz regarded this "very repulsive and extraordinary custom" to be a social and cultural phenomenon "not to be due to particular viciousness" (Lumholtz 1921:238).

Lumholtz had through all his expeditions developed into an exquisitely competent collector of museum objects, and in Borneo he collected the skins of animals and birds and bought numerous weapons, masks, household items, clothes, and other textiles from the different Dayak tribes. But before people parted with their belongings he took the opportunity to photograph the owners, both to portray them and to show the collected items in practical use. He always seems to have been very concerned to ask permission before photographing people, and he was very careful to pay people for their services to help him with his documentation. Among the Dayaks, however, Lumholtz had had difficulty obtaining permission for some photographs. "Women, as usual, were timid about being photographed, for it is a universal belief that such an operation prevents women from bearing children . . . as an exposure to the camera would give the child bad luck or a disease that might kill it" (Lumholtz 1920:75).

In Lumholtz's photographs from Borneo, more than his earlier projects, there are series of images of men and women photographed from the front, the back, and the side. Modern anthropologists react strongly to these photographs, probably because they recognize them as being part of Lumholtz's anthropometrical studies, which he had started conducting in Mexico. In spite of people's resistance in Borneo he managed to collect the "measurements of 227 individuals" to be "worked out by Doctor K. E. [Kristian Emil] Schreiner, Professor at the Institute of Anatomy of the University of Oslo" (Lumholtz 1920:viii), but with no further explanation why. Maybe these data were planned for use in later publications, as only a small part of Lumholtz's ethnographic material from Borneo was used in *Through Central Borneo*.

THE CIGAR BOX

In 1982 I started working as a photographer at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Oslo, which in 1999 was merged with two other museums in the same building, into what today is called the Museum of Cultural History. During the early years I was primarily involved in the production of new permanent exhibitions, as the interior of the Ethnographic Museum had been completely reconstructed a few years earlier. On the top floor was a small room that during this period served as storage for photographs, and in this room collections of old photographs had been carefully packed, temporarily, in plain unmarked boxes. There was however no opportunity to do anything with this material until 1989 and the 150th anniversary of photography, when the museum arranged an exhibition about the Norwegian arctic explorer and national hero Roald Amundsen, who in 1903–1906 explored the Northwest Passage. His collected objects and photographs depicting the Netselik Inuits of King William Land in northeast Canada represent one of the museum's most prized collections. Preparing the exhibition meant emptying one of the boxes of its stored glass plate negatives, reviewing them, and printing them.

A year later I started to investigate the next box, which appeared to contain photographs by Carl Lumholtz, of whom I knew nothing at that time.⁵ The box contained 3" × 4" and 4" × 5" negatives on glass plates packed in envelopes, as well as 3" × 4" and 3¼" × 4¼" nitrate film neatly stored in albums with pockets. Each album had a register with Lumholtz's own handwritten comments about every photograph, in a few words including date and location.

The material proved to be his photographs from India and Borneo in 1913–1917. On top of some cupboards were several additional oblong wooden cases of old lanternslides with ethnographic photographs. Among them was a box that looked almost like a big cigar box. On it was written, in Norwegian, "Photographs from Lumholtz's travels in Mexico," and upon opening it I found 105 nitrate negatives, rolled like cigars, in sizes 3" × 4", 3¼" × 4¼", and 5" × 7". There was no information whatsoever regarding the contents, except for an envelope from a photo lab in Honolulu for the development of one film for Dr. Lumholtz. Nitrate negatives rolled together are highly flammable! For fear of having this potentially destructive material in the museum any longer than

necessary, all the negatives were urgently packed in envelopes and all the nitrate film was sent to the National Library's special lab in northern Norway. There, duplicates of the nitrate negatives were made, the originals were secured in a special safe storage, and the duplicate negatives were returned to the Photography Department of the museum. The 105 negatives in the "cigar box" represent only a small part of the collection of Lumholtz photographs at the Museum of Cultural History, still only partly catalogued and consisting of approximately 1,400 negatives and prints.



The "Cigar Box." (Photo by Ann Christine Eek. © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.)

With documentary photography and old photographs as my primary interest, I realized that the Lumholtz photographs must be extremely valuable as historical and cultural documents. They were of a much higher quality, both aesthetically and technically, than the average ethnographic material produced in the field by anthropologists. Because plans for a Lumholtz exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum were developing in 1992, under the direction of anthropologists Professor Arne Martin Klausen and Arve Sørum, I was allowed to work with Lumholtz's negatives for almost a year. Darkroom work is very stimulating for the mind, and while studying the prints as they slowly emerged with the help of the chemicals, I started to learn about Lumholtz and his amazing photographs. My awakening interest demanded more information, and Professor Klausen, who made the first ethnographic study of the Dayak basketwork collected by Lumholtz (Klausen 1957), was very helpful in providing me with stories and articles about him. The exhibition plan also included a book, edited by Klausen and Sørum, and my proposal to write about Lumholtz as a photographer was accepted.⁶ The 1993 exhibition concentrated on Lumholtz's expeditions to Australia 1880–1884, Mexico 1890–1898, and Borneo 1914–1917, and it featured Lumholtz's work as an ethnographer, collector, writer, and photographer. Apart from the two Lumholtz exhibitions in Mexico in 2002 and 2006, I had unfortunately no opportunity to study his photographs further. The contents of the "cigar box" remained a secret and were almost forgotten.

THE SONORAN DESERT

Lumholtz's 1909–1910 expedition into the Sonoran Desert on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border is well chronicled in his second travelogue, *New Trails in Mexico* (1912). This was however quite different from his previous work, and he explained why. “During the years 1909 and 1910 I was commissioned by some influential friends to look into certain economical possibilities of the arid and little known country along the upper part of the Gulf of California, east of the Colorado River” (Lumholtz 1912:xxi). Although the book contains many descriptions of the people Lumholtz met, most of them of the Papago Indian tribe—today the Tohono O’odham Nation—the content is dominated by the natural scientist in him rather than the ethnographer, the geographical studies being the most important. Lumholtz took most of the photographs for this book himself, using three cameras “all of the so called Kodak type, made by the Eastman Company, Rochester, New York. The largest carried 5 × 7 films; the other two were Folding Pocket Kodaks” (Lumholtz 1912:xxvii).

When I was asked to write this article about Lumholtz as a photographer and began studying the images of *New Trails in Mexico*, I was overwhelmed to recognize some of the photographs from the “cigar box.” As I started digitizing the negatives, I was soon convinced that all the photographs from the box were in fact from Lumholtz’s 1909–10 expedition. The negatives had probably been discarded by Lumholtz as he prepared his book, as some of the images are not sharp enough and others were duplicates or alternative exposures of images that appear in the book. But then there were photographs I could not identify, having never visited the area. Some photographs seemed to be the originals of images used in *New Trails*, although some are badly cropped in the book, while others are of such a high quality that it is hard to understand why they were not included in the book at all.

Discarded Photographs

Reading *New Trails in Mexico*, it is evident Lumholtz had more on his mind than just studying and photographing people. Beside his very interesting ethnographic discoveries, the descriptions of the beautiful landscape with its great silence, colors, plants, animals, and lovely fragrances in the air are very poetic. When it comes to photographs,

Lumholtz

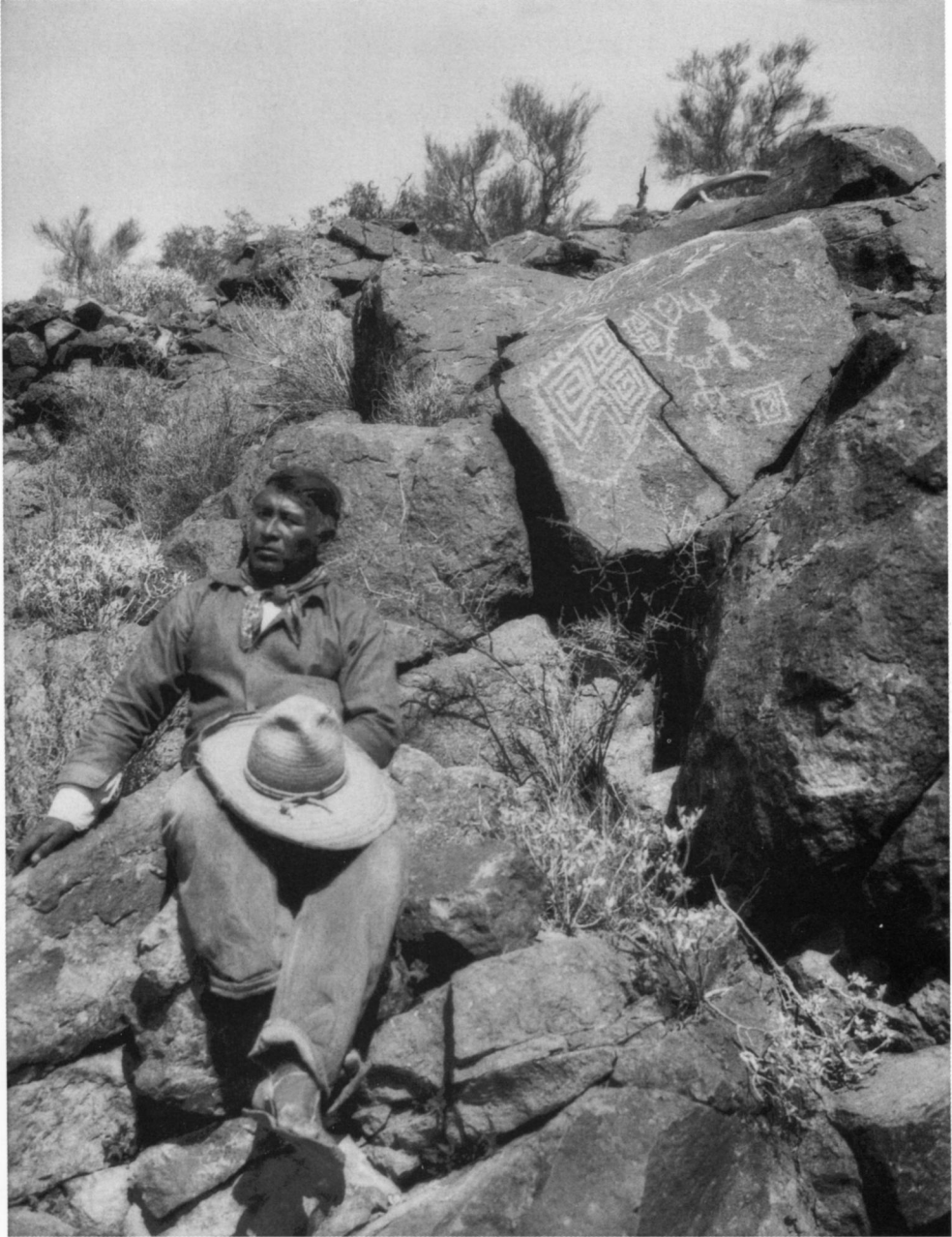
*Photographs from his
Sonoran Desert expedition, 1909–1910*



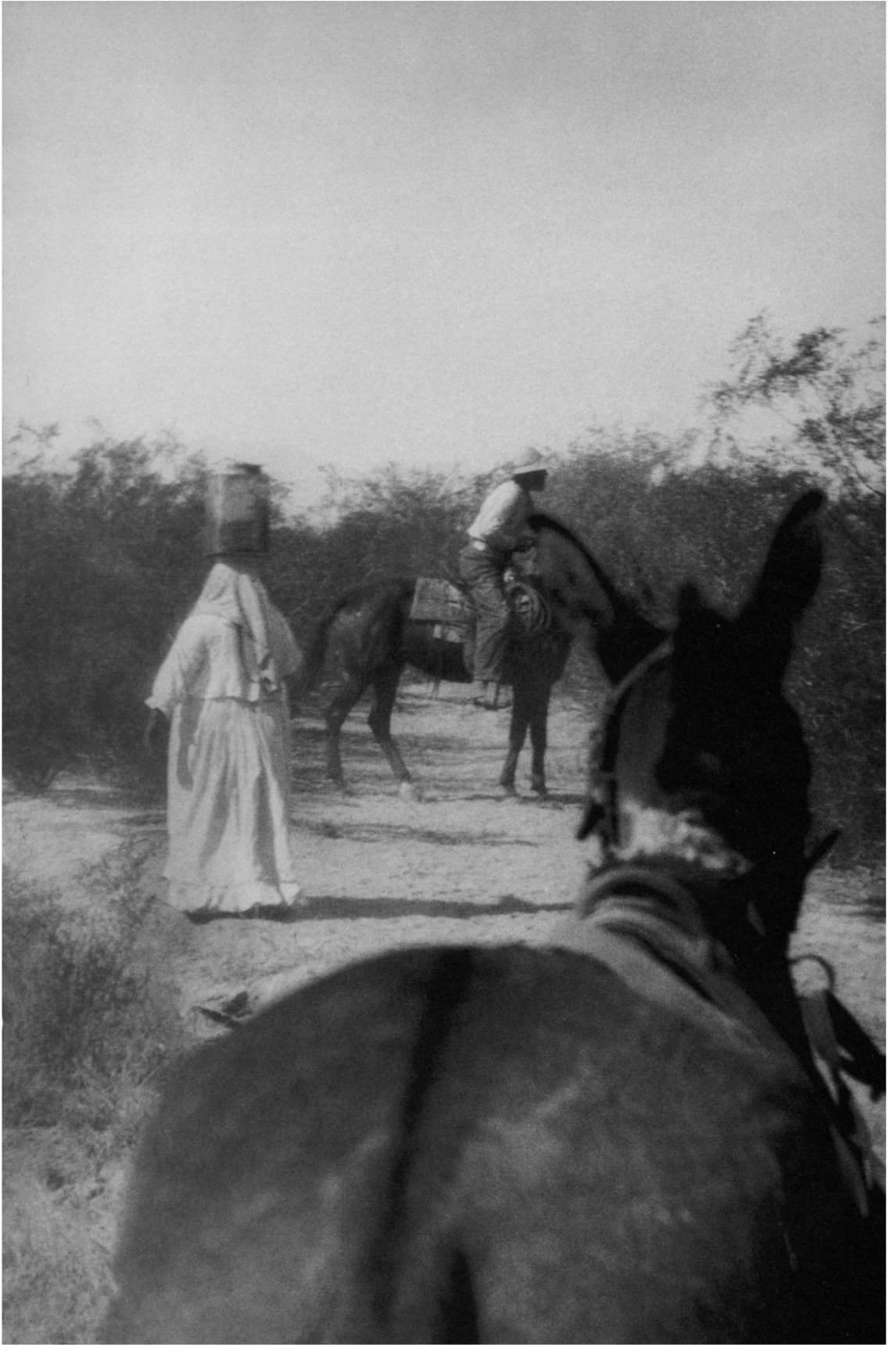










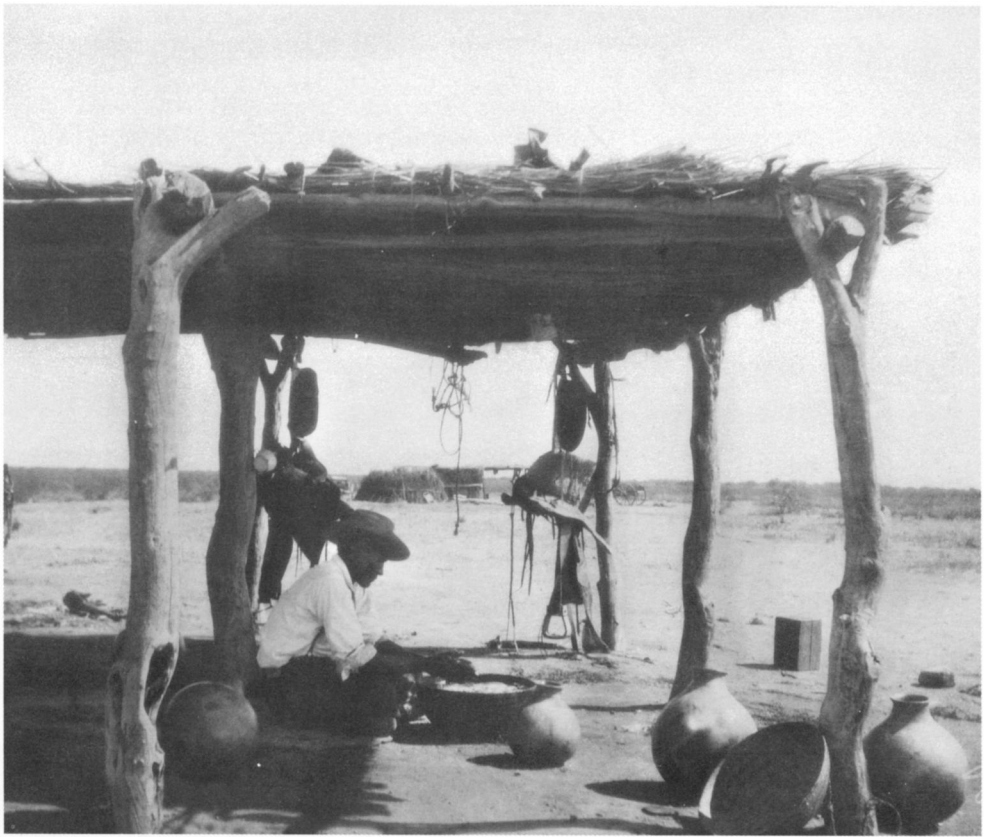




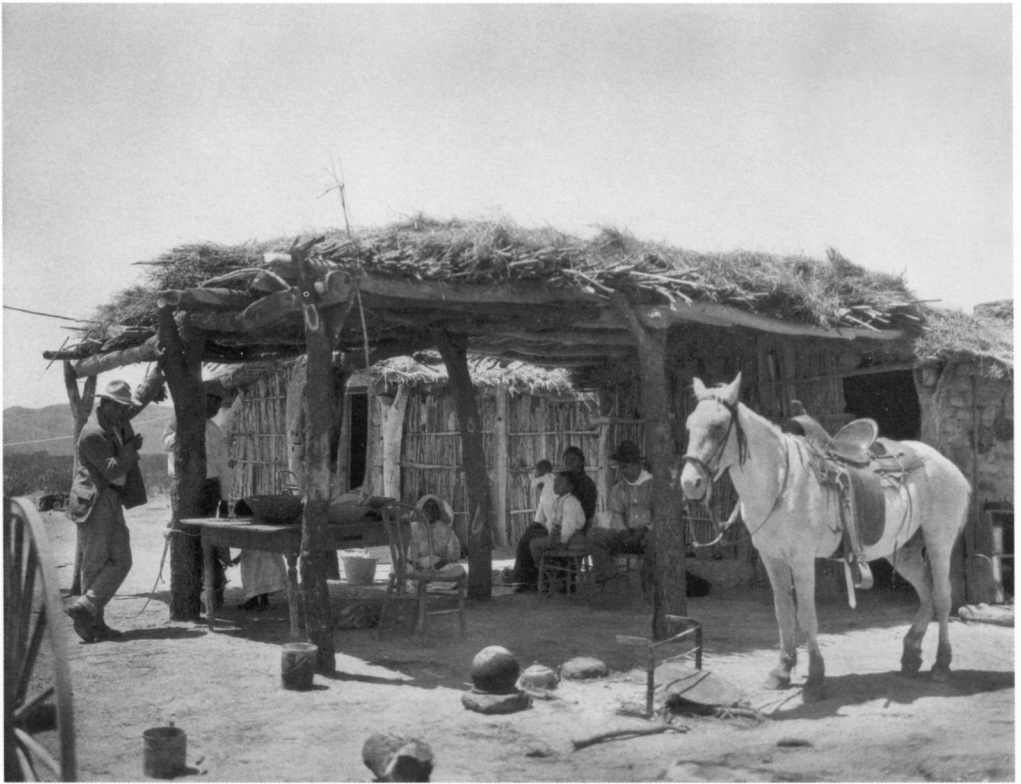




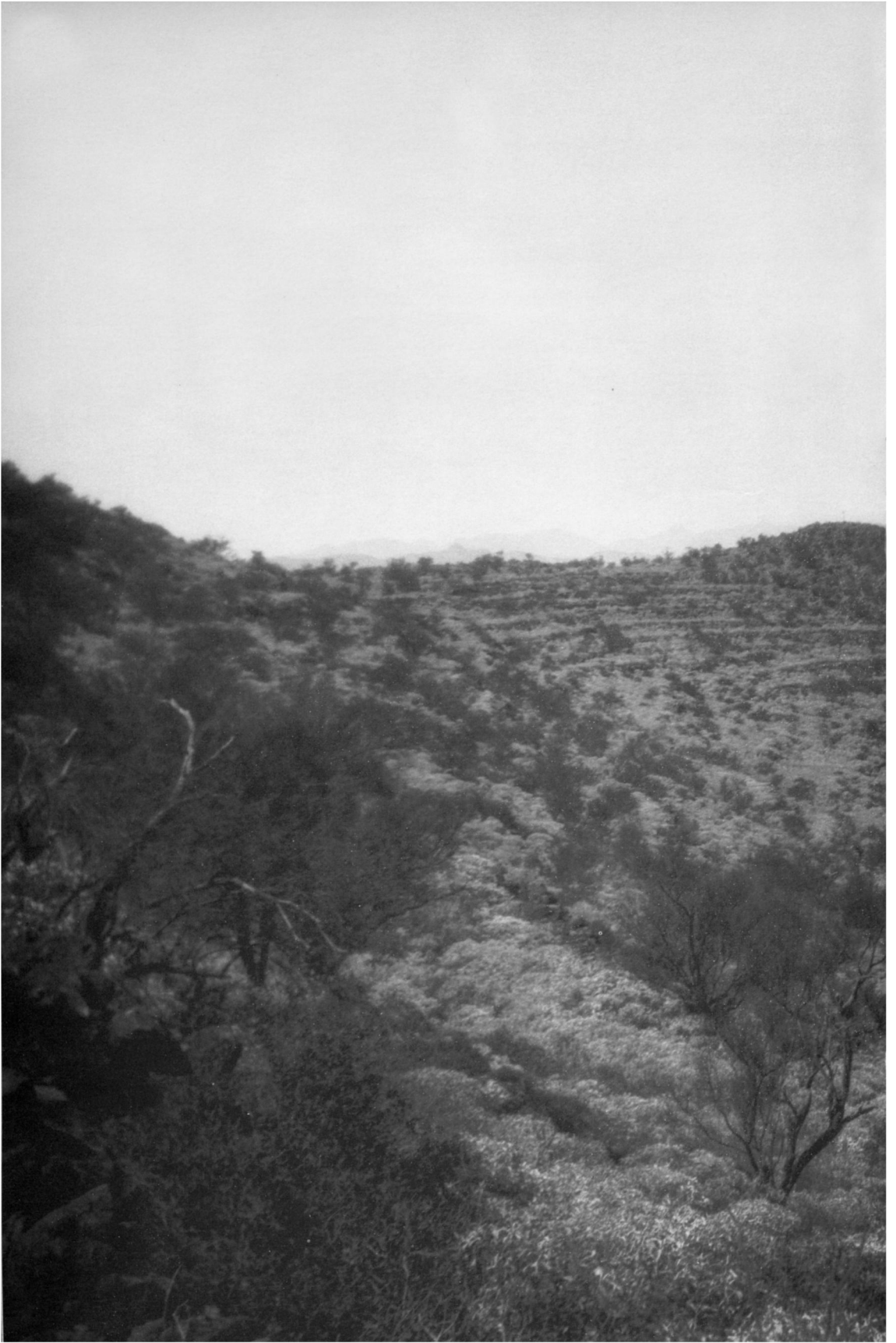


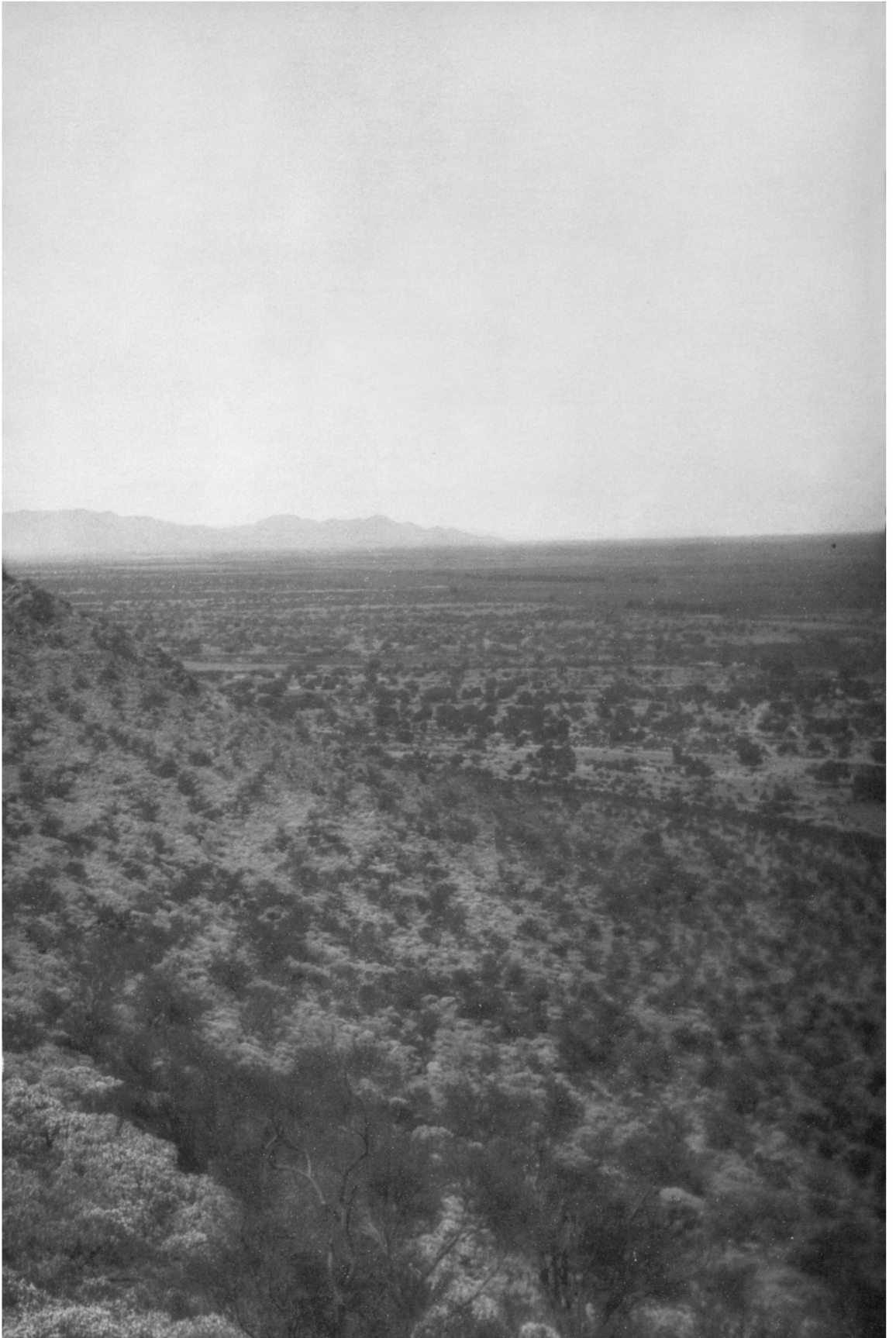




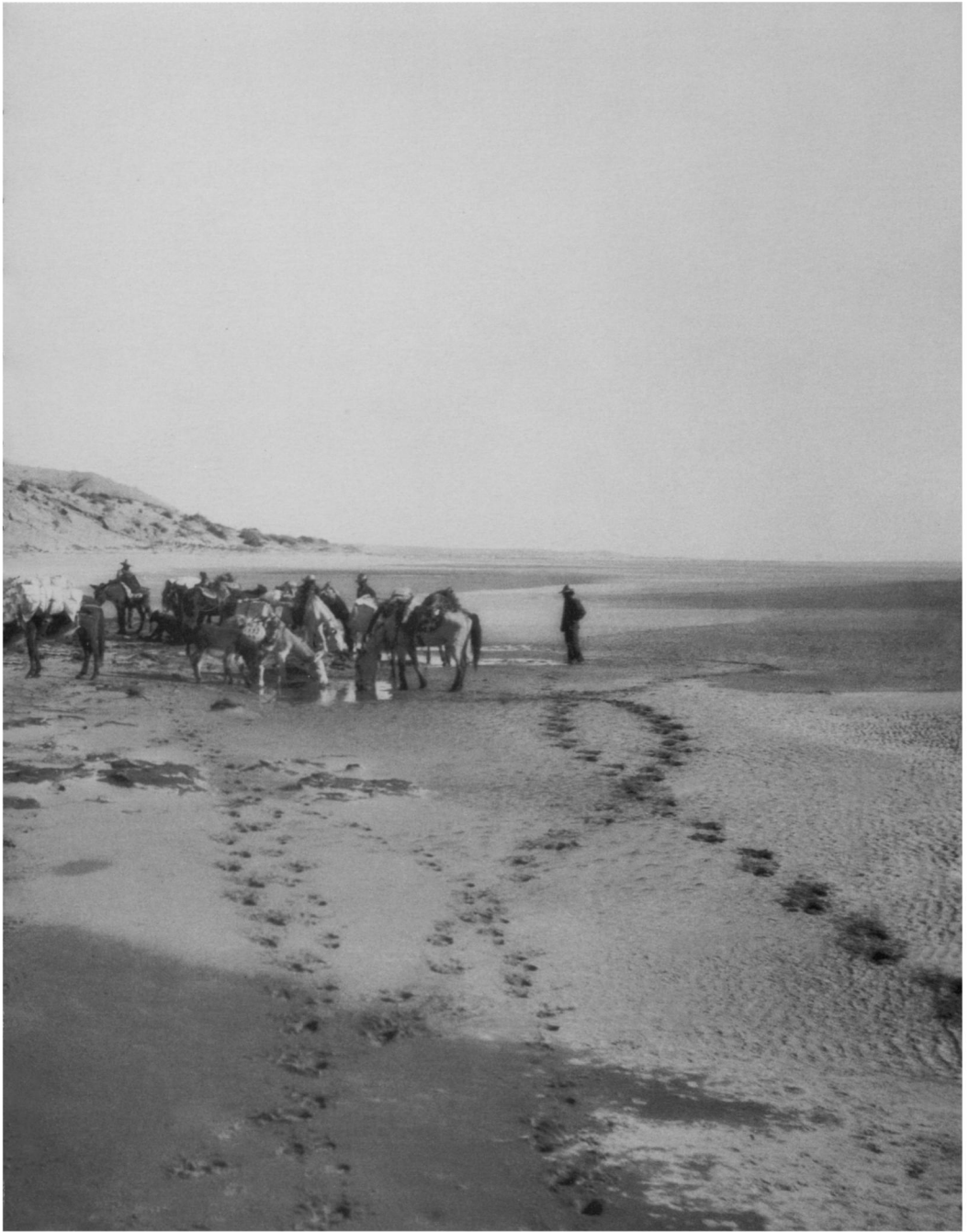


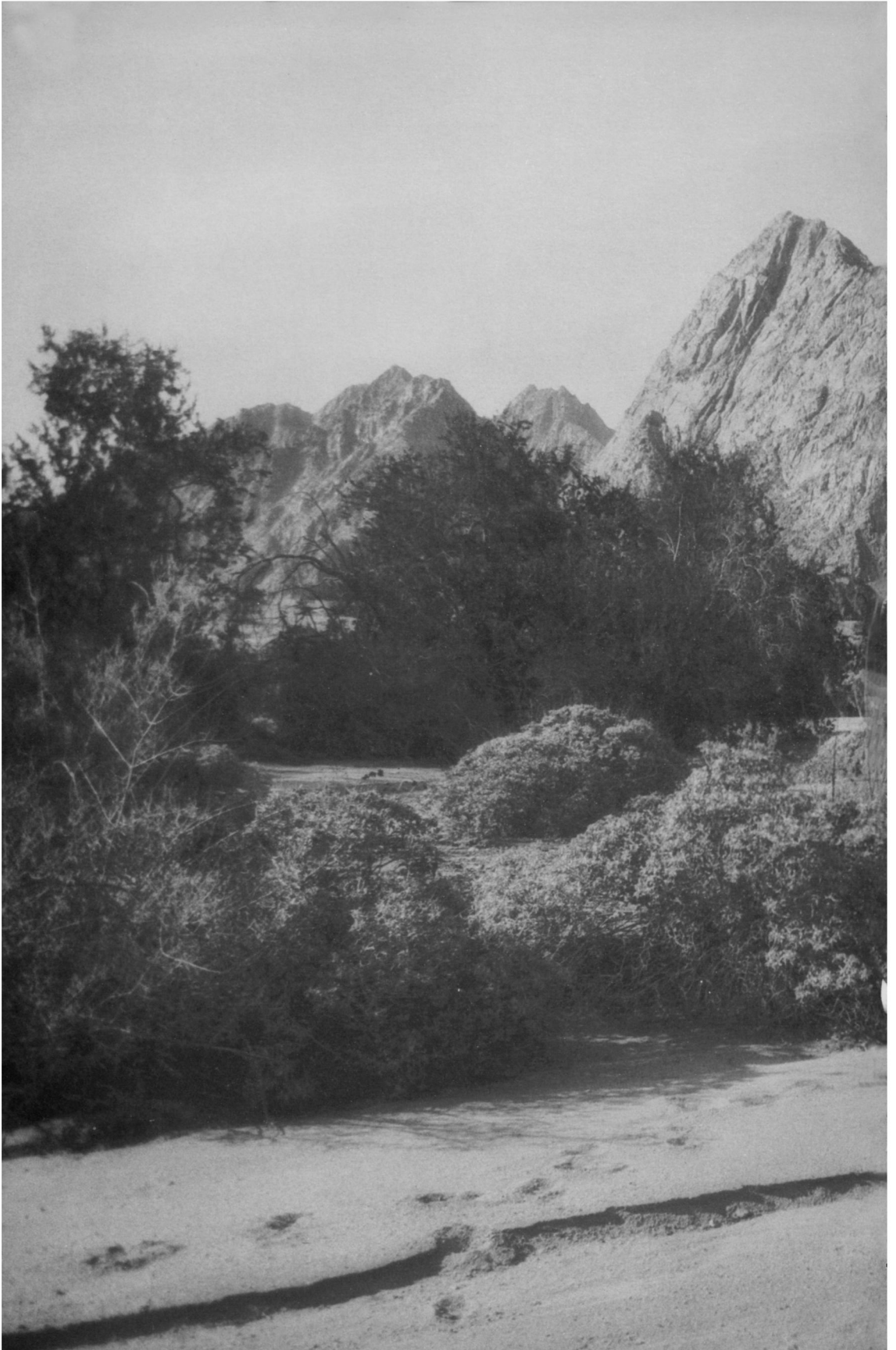






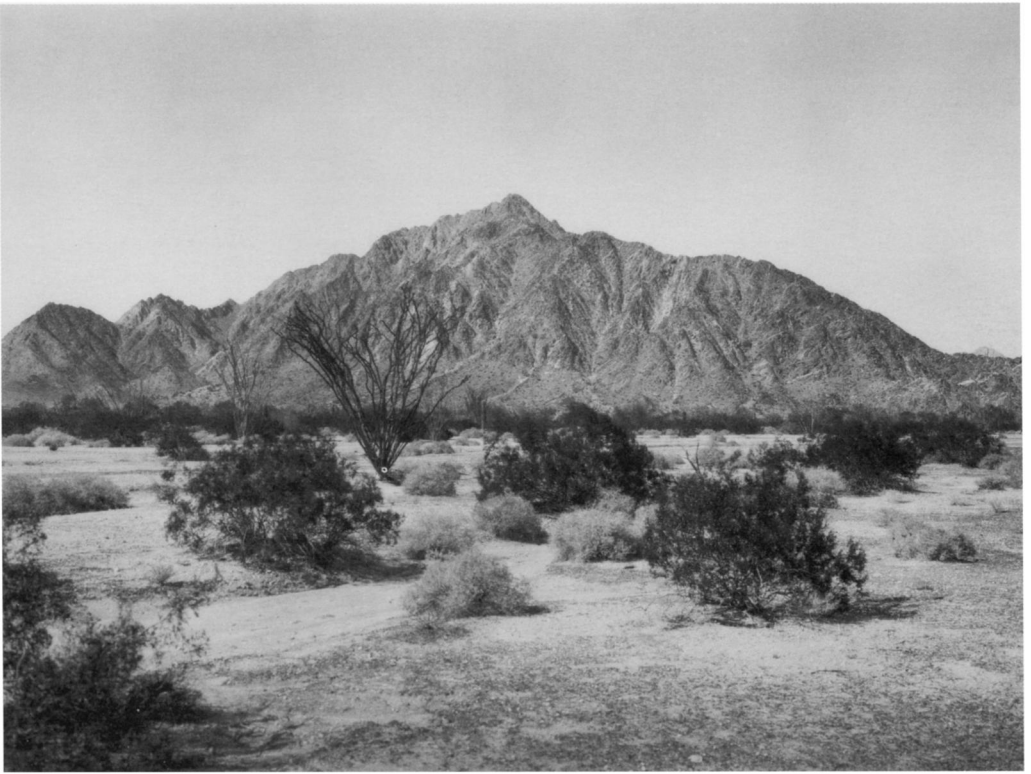


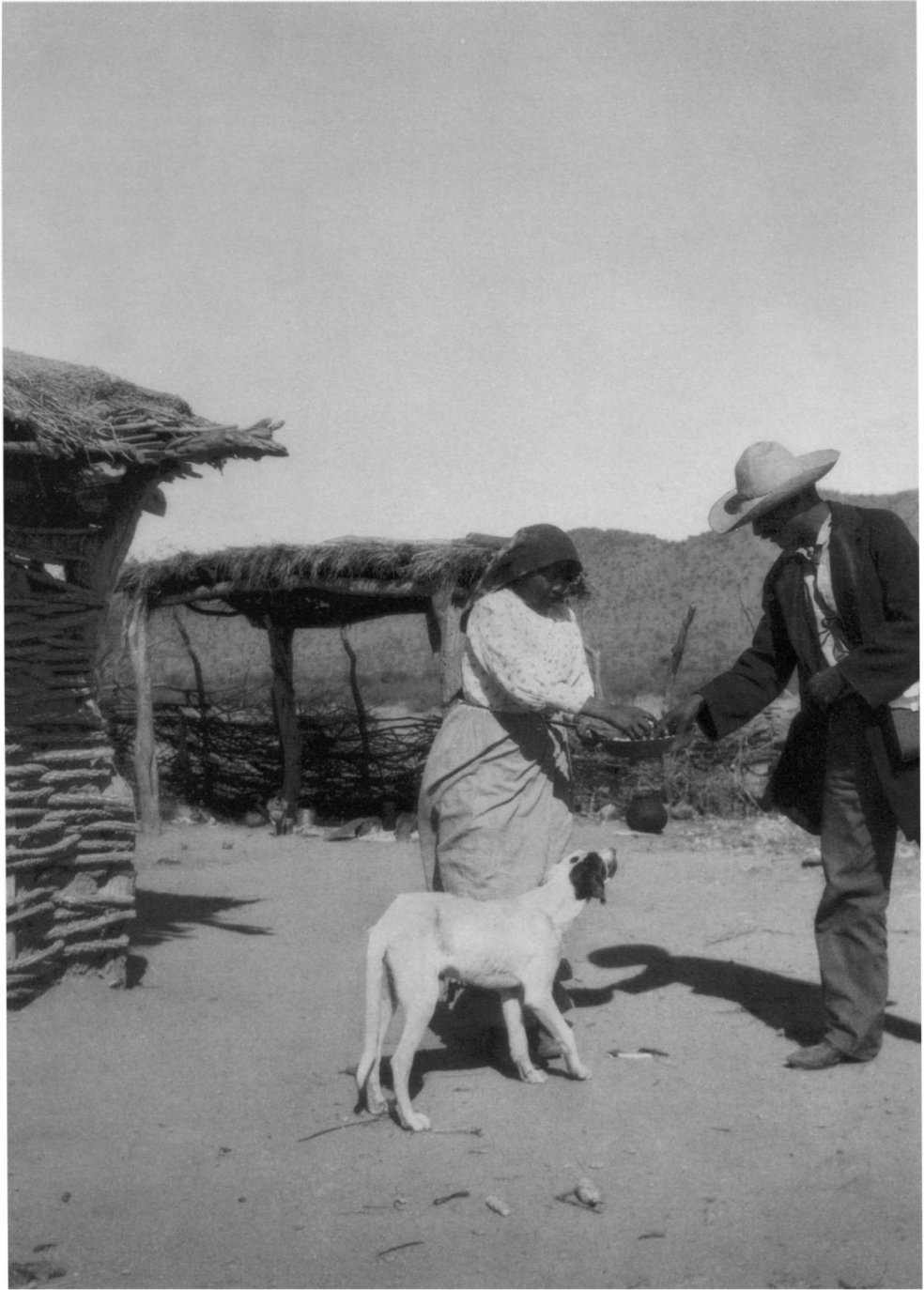












“Shrine of the children’s sacrifice, near Santa Rosa.” Alternate photograph from the “cigar box” of scene in Lumboltz 1912:104. (Museum of Cultural History image no. UEMf03021NBR)



key



Te-Te-Wa-Li, the God of Fire, the oldest of all the gods of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, and some of its guardians. Teacata, Jalisco, December 1895. Labeled “Ancient Statue of the God of Fire” in Lumboltz 1902, 2:173 (UEMf00086_03)

“Pictographs near La Nariz.” Uncropped, alternate image from the “cigar box.” Compare Lumboltz 1912:168, showing a local man, Rainbow, who guided Lumboltz to the site. Rainbow also appears at Lumboltz 1912:350. (UEMf02985NBR)



Tobono O’odham women carrying water. Fuller image of scene “Papago woman carrying water” in Lumboltz 1912:120. (UEMf03013NBR)



to

“Cow showing the vestiges of her favorite feeding grounds.” Full, uncropped image of scene in Lumboltz 1912:152. (UEMf02965NBR)

photographs

“Mother with child in cradle, Aktjin.” (more commonly spelled Ak Chin). A crop of this image appears in Lumboltz 1912:62. The photograph may actually have been taken at Anekam (Anegam), described 1912:109. (UEMf02958NBR)





Lumboltz's wagon at a rancheria, perhaps Anekam (Anegam). Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf02942NBR)

Lumboltz's wagon at a rancheria. Alternate scene to page 390. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf02973NBR)



Young Tohono O'odham man preparing saguaro wine at Santa Rosa. Unpublished photograph corresponding to description in Lumboltz 1912:119-20. (UEMf02982NBR)



A Tohono O'odham woman and children. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf03038NBR)



"Where peace reigns supreme, San Xavier" (Lumboltz 1912:4). Negative from the "cigar box." (UEMf02944BNBR)



Grain mills, Sonoyta. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box" corresponding to descriptions in Lumboltz 1912:190, 289. "Two of the antiquated mills operated by donkeys were set in motion to supply us with flour, the most necessary of all provisions" (190). (UEMf03027NBR)

"Ancient fortifications near Trincheras, District of Altar, Sonora." Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box;" alternate to photo in Lumholtz 1912:140. (UEMf02956NBR)



West of El Tornillo on the gulf coast, the party's animals drink from a freshwater spring below the high tide line. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box" corresponding to description in Lumholtz 1912:258. (UEMf02941NBR)

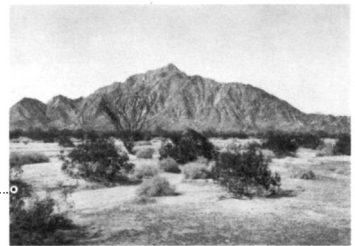


Intriguing landscape near Tinajas Altas. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf02988NBR)

Lumholtz's pack train. Probably in the vicinity of Sierra del Rosario. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf02983NBR)



Sierra del Rosario. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box." (UEMf03046NBR)



Woman with a dog and Lumholtz himself: tall, blond, and carrying a Pocket Folding Kodak. Unpublished photograph from the "cigar box," likely taken at La Nariz. (UEMf02999NBR)

however, he presents only a few portraits of members of his party. One reason might be the Indians' reluctance to be photographed: "as a rule the Papago have the greatest objection to the camera. They . . . are intensely annoyed at the photographer's efforts, because, in their opinion, part of themselves will be taken away and will always remain behind after death, causing much trouble to the departed, who in that way will be, so to speak, only three quarters complete in the other life" (Lumholtz 1912:61–62). Those who consented to be photographed often demanded money.

Part of Lumholtz's commission, however, was to supplement earlier maps as he traveled through areas that appeared simply as white expanses on existing maps, and to describe desert areas perhaps never seen by any white man before, particularly in the volcanic Pinacate region. It also seems he was expected to investigate possibilities for developing farming and industry in the area, and his comments on future prospects of land usage are plainspoken and factual. The hardships of traveling in the desert must have marked him, with the constant search for water and concern over being lost, so it seems he reduced his photography to a minimum, for the book has few images from the Pinacate area. In the second part of the book he mentions using his aneroid more often than the cameras, one reason probably being the weather conditions: "For three days it had not been possible to change film in my cameras on account of the sand that was flying about" (Lumholtz 1912:279). On the whole, however, he encountered people and situations that must have left a very deep impression on him. One such occasion is the visit to the shrine of the children's sacrifice, near Santa Rosa, described on pages 102–7, with its fable about the four children who were sacrificed to prevent water from flooding the world. The photographs used in the book seem to have been made on a cloudy day, which gives the place a rather dull look. One of the photographs in the "cigar box," however, was made upon Lumholtz's arrival the night before, with the last rays of the sun enhancing the mythical tragedy of the place (pages 382–83). It was probably discarded because it was not sharp enough.

The "cigar box" also reveals that Lumholtz suffered the same fate as his colleagues still do today, of his images being "mutilated" in the process of designing the book. The photograph on page 120 of an Indian woman carrying water is only a tiny section of the negative. The narrow crop deprives the viewer of a wider understanding of a typical everyday situation, shot by chance as Lumholtz was passing by on his wagon (pages 386–87).

Another photograph (page 388), of a cow eating cholla, on page 152, was also cropped. The whole image, with the cow having cholla cactus joints pinned to its head and other cows in the vicinity, reveals more of the grim reality of the arid landscape. Moreover, consider the negative of the pictographs photographed near La Nariz (on page 168). In the fuller view “Rainbow,” the guide, looks quite at ease and the space around him allows a much better impression of how the pictographs appear in the landscape (page 385). The apparently universal idea in design, that maximum cropping of a photograph gives a better understanding, again proves to be in error.

The image of the woman with a child in a cradle, from Aktjin, seems to have been put on page 62 only to fill the space (compare to page 389). Based on *New Trails in Mexico* the photograph, very much cropped, seems to correspond better with the situation Lumholtz described on page 109 during his visit to the neighboring rancharía, Anekam. “The days were warm now, hardly . . . less than 100°F [+ 40°C] in the shade, often more . . . here there was an unexpected charm of simplicity and unobtrusive inquisitiveness. . . . A sahuaro feast had been concluded the day before. People from the surrounding country were still lingering and my arrival furnished an excuse for further delay. Crowds of people, fifty or more, kept around me wherever I went.” In the “cigar box,” besides the image of the woman with the child, I found two photographs depicting Lumholtz’s wagon beside a ramada (Spanish for a light roof on poles), with many people around it (page 390). In one of these pictures, taken while people were unaware of being photographed, it is possible to see, however vaguely, what looks like the women from the “Aktjin” picture, sitting to the left, partly behind a thin pole supporting the roof. A photograph of the same scene from another angle also explains why the women were sitting facing the same way, as they probably were part of some kind of gathering, probably singing or talking. In the next image (page 391), when the “intruding photographer” is discovered, people turn around smiling and looking very pleased, the image fitting Lumholtz’s description of the amicable atmosphere of the place.

Images Not Included in the Book

In the “cigar box” there were other superb photographs not included in the book. There is the image of a young man sitting under a *ramada*, with all details fitting the preparation of saguaro wine described on pages 119–20 (page 392). Two images of an old Indian woman with children

outside her home seem, at first glance, impossible to locate (page 393). Studying the wall behind her, however, reveals a striking resemblance between its construction and that of the house in the image “Where peace reigns supreme, San Xavier,” at page 4 (page 394). As there is no description of another similar house in the book, the images were probably taken at San Xavier del Bac, south of Tucson. That might also explain the woman’s relaxed pose, as it perhaps was not the first time she had encountered a camera. Lumholtz also photographed the two flour mills in Sonoyta, operated by donkeys and described on pages 190 and 289, but the four unpublished negatives from the “cigar box” indicate he probably was not pleased with the result (page 395). It seems to have been difficult to make a satisfactory image of the movements of the donkeys inside an enclosure of brush, with the structure of the mills creating distracting shadows. It emphasizes the dilemma photographers constantly face: to see and understand a situation, however simple or complex it might be, and to create a photograph good enough to make others understand what is going on.

Among the discarded photographs there were also landscapes much more interesting than the ones in the book. Lumholtz was intrigued by the ancient fortifications on the mountain near Trincheras, District of Altar (see photo at page 140), and the “cigar box” contained an alternative image of what looks like the lower, western part of the mountain, and its surroundings (pages 396–97). A unique photograph showing “the party stopping at a drinking pool in the Sonoran Desert” (pages 398–99) was taken on the beach west of El Tornillo on the gulf coast, and it is possible to see the stock drinking from a freshwater spring situated below the high tide line. “Nobody would suspect fresh water here, and its discovery by Cipriano was due to the actions of a coyote excavating to reach it” (Lumholtz 1912:258).

Then there is the intriguing image of a landscape with tracks leading toward the hills in the background (pages 400–401), a beautiful and inviting photograph that does not reflect the possibility of imminent danger. It may have been taken close to the Tinajas Altas, and brings one of Lumholtz’s anecdotes to this reader’s mind. On his second expedition to the Pinacate region, when heading toward Tinajas Altas, Lumholtz stopped to photograph and fell fifteen minutes behind the rest of his party. His mule was worn out from lack of water and food, Lumholtz was confused by the tracks of a man with nailed boots, and he felt uncertain whether he would manage to catch up with his men before dark. “I was not lost, for my ‘bump of locality’ is well developed,

and there is nothing to fear under circumstances like these if one keeps one's head cool" (Lumholtz 1912:303). Then follows a description of how he found the right track again. The chapter closes with "there was nothing to depress one in the peaceful landscape, over which the sun sent its wealth of light. . . . One feels in communion with nature, and the silence is beneficial. . . . Could I select the place where I should like best to die, my choice would be one such as this" (Lumholtz 1912:307).

Lumholtz also tried to depict the toil of travel itself in a series of photographs showing the pack train heading toward some distant mountain range (page 402). The images are always shot from behind, typical of the situation where you stop to photograph or study something on the way and the rest of your party disappears in front of you, leaving you behind at risk of a situation like the one described previously.

The most stunning photograph, however, is the image of the picturesque range Lumholtz was so attracted to that he mentioned it on three occasions (page 403). He also named it: "This succession of hilltops is conspicuous even at a great distance: hence the name of *rosario* (rosary), which has been proposed, is appropriate and it should be called Sierra del Rosario" (Lumholtz 1912:311). The photograph has such a striking simplicity that it caught my attention and imagination from the moment I saw it. It is an exceptional portrayal of a mountain range, quite captivating at the same time that it is difficult to gauge the actual size of the mountains. Could this be due to what Lumholtz described as "the clear desert air [which] exaggerates detail . . . and makes distant objects look near" (Lumholtz 1912:300)? The "cigar box" does not seem to contain many other images from the Pinacate area. There are, however, several negatives of dune primroses (*Oenothera deltooides deltooides*, formerly *Oenothera trichocalyx*) laden with flowers, which he also found in abundance on another occasion in the vicinity of Sierra del Rosario (see *New Trails in Mexico* at page 312). The moment was rare and the "cigar box" reveals that he took many photographs of it, with all of his three cameras.

Finally there is a series of three images from the "cigar box," but not used in the book, of a young woman with a dog, outside a house. The first photograph, as I imagine the order, is taken with the 3" × 4" camera, without a tripod, and the woman is looking somewhat bewildered. The other two images are taken with the 3¼" × 4¼" camera on the tripod. The corner of the house, to the left, shows quite a similarity to Lumholtz's image on page 162 and corresponds to his description of the houses in the Mexican village of La Nariz: "There were only five

families living here in rectangular houses of ocotillo poles laid horizontally and plastered with mud" (Lumholtz 1912:166). The second image shows the woman looking pleased at someone approaching, maybe a visitor, and there is a frying pan on the roof. Could this be the house of Rainbow's family? "His family were also nice and in his house I felt at home" (Lumholtz 1912:168). The third image (page 404) finally shows that a man has entered the scene, most likely Lumholtz himself: tall and blond, carrying a Pocket Folding Kodak. The woman serves him something from the frying pan and the atmosphere is very gentle. Why was this effort at a self-portrait, made in a very friendly environment, not used in the book?

WAS LUMHOLTZ A GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER?

It is not easy to compare Lumholtz's photographs with the works of modern photographers who, almost a hundred years later, have the advantages of much more advanced equipment, either digital or analogue, cameras and lenses of much higher quality and resolution, as well as a much more profound awareness and understanding of photography as a means of expression. Today some photographers explore all possible aspects of color, while others study the surroundings with extreme wide-angle lenses, or their opposite, in attempts to make us see new qualities of the world around us. Lumholtz did not experience any competition in his field and was not dependent on his photography for a livelihood. Thus, he had the opportunity to remain a pure amateur in the real sense of the word, someone in love with nature and photography. Surprisingly, that is much more apparent in *New Trails in Mexico* than in any of his other publications. Lumholtz probably learned photography along the way, without any teacher guiding him and with his public readers and listeners at lectures, as well as editors and designers of his books, being his critics.

Being an amateur Lumholtz was however often put into situations where he had no previous experience in how to capture what he wanted to photograph. What usually saved him was his simple way of looking at his objectives and taking his photographs straight on, without any "professional" tricks or conventions. He also kept the true amateur's love for the natural and unpretentious, verging on being ascetic. On occasion he even refused to photograph something when the motive appeared too cliché-ridden. While passing a river on the way back to

Tucson, “four Mexican cowboys appeared on horse-back against the sky on the embankment. They looked picturesque as they approached the water, but, on perceiving my kodak, they immediately stopped and posed for me, as if from a signal, for Mexicans are immoderately fond of being photographed. There was no interest in such a picture of men posing to look beautiful, so I put my kodak away” (Lumholtz 1912:131–32). Maybe it was this asceticism of his that prevented him from choosing beautiful images over descriptive ones? Maybe he feared the photographs would become too conceited or handsome, which very often can be a risk, particularly when photographing landscapes? Nevertheless, the photographs from *New Trails in Mexico* and the “cigar box” constitute in all their straightforwardness a very important historic and cultural document of the Sonora region a hundred years ago.

Lumholtz was usually very particular and systematic with his photographs, as with all his other documentation. So why, then, have these negatives been lying about for almost eighty years, in complete disorder? Could it be that these negatives had been lost at the publishers, Charles Scribner’s Sons in New York, and later recovered? Or had Lumholtz discarded the negatives himself, and just put them in a box somewhere as a keepsake among his other belongings? Some years after Lumholtz’s death in 1922, the collections became the property of the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo when Professor Ole Solberg, the director from 1917 to 1946, managed to negotiate a special state grant to purchase the material from Lumholtz’s family. Here one can find diaries and clipbooks; photographs from expeditions in Mexico, India, and Borneo; and ethnographic objects, of which the collection from Borneo is the largest and most important. The information about Lumholtz himself is very sparse, the richest source being the article “My Life of Exploration” from 1921. Most of the information about his photographs has to be found in the comments of his books or in the photographs themselves.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Not only was Lumholtz a very courageous man who seemed to fear nothing, but he must also have been very much aware of the possibilities and advantages inherent in the use of modern technology for his work. He started using photographs in Mexico in 1890, and by 1898 he was sufficiently acquainted with the invention of Edison to take a sound recorder with him. For the American Museum of Natural History he

collected songs of the Huichol, Tepic, and Tarahumara Indians. The movie footage Lumholtz and his assistants shot in Borneo in 1915–1917, partly with a French Pathé camera he called a “kinematograph,” are considered the first motion picture ever filmed on the island. Although Lumholtz had become quite an experienced photographer, this film first and foremost appears to have been an experiment, with the movie camera immobile on its tripod and most scenes shot from a greater distance than he used for his photographs. There doesn’t seem to have been a plan behind it either, other than that the film was edited afterwards by Lumholtz himself, with the material that was at hand. He also wrote the commentary introducing the different scenes, and the film was probably released in 1919 or 1920, with the title “In Borneo—The Land of the Head-Hunters.” It has been suggested Lumholtz made the film, now the property of the Royal Geographic Society in London, to raise money for the proposed New Guinea expedition that never seemed to leave his mind. Today, the film is considered to be one of the first documentary films ever, and in importance compares to the works of Robert Flaherty (Iversen 1994:56–57).

On some occasions Lumholtz mentioned the brand of his equipment, and one of Lumholtz’s cameras is in the collections at the National Museum of Photography of Norway, the Preus Museum. The Tropical Una Camera was manufactured in 1910 by James A. Sinclair & Co in London and took 3" × 4" plates. It was purchased privately from the Lumholtz family after his death and in 1992 sold to the Preus Museum. It is rather clumsy to handle but possible to use without a tripod. In the collections of the Museum of Cultural History are forty-seven 3" × 4" glass plates from Borneo, most of them depicting objects or static scenes like group portraits. Apparently the Tropical Una was not the camera he used most on the expedition.

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED EXPLORER

During his lifetime the man who failed as a theologian achieved more recognition than he probably could ever have imagined. Lumholtz reached international fame as a natural scientist, ethnographer, museum collector, writer, and lecturer, and his gift as an entertaining and fascinating storyteller was widely recognized, as his books were translated into several languages. Some of them have even been reappearing in new editions recently, while the originals have become collectors’ items.

Professor Ole Solberg of the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo commented in his obituary of Lumholtz that although *Unknown Mexico* was his most important book, *New Trails in Mexico* was the most beautifully written (Solberg 1922:201).

Lumholtz was however very pessimistic about the fate of the indigenous peoples, and therefore brought warnings to the world, both about our history as well as our future. He remained a Norwegian citizen all his life, although he chose to live in New York. That might be one of the reasons why in Norway his achievements remained overshadowed by the popular adoration of the polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen. Through his extended travels and discoveries in more tropical regions of the globe, however, Lumholtz became recognized alongside explorers like Stanley and Livingstone.

Although Lumholtz's books were richly illustrated, recognition of him as a photographer came later. So far the 1996 publication *Carl Lumholtz—montañas, duendes, adivinos . . .* by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista is the only monograph about Lumholtz as a photographer. The book is based on a superb selection of photographs from the archives of the American Museum of National History in New York. Even though the images only depict the Mexican expeditions in 1890–98, they give an impressive view of the richness of the photographic heritage after Lumholtz. How many photographs he produced in his lifetime is uncertain, but there is still very much to discover among the photographs he took not as a professional but out of necessity. Compared with other contemporary and socially concerned photographers like Edward Curtis, Jacob Riis, Lewis W. Hine, and Eugène Atget, Lumholtz is one of the truly great documentary photographers of his time. ❖

NOTES

All photographs in the folio are by Carl Lumholtz, belong to the Lumholtz Photography Collection, 1890–1917, at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway (www.khm.uio.no), and are copyrighted (©) by the University of Oslo and used here by permission. Except for the first image from Jalisco, 1895, all photographs are from Lumholtz's expedition to Sonora and Arizona in 1909 and 1910.

1. In January 1888 the Danish-American journalist Jacob Riis had presented documentary photographs as a lanternslide lecture in a camera club in New York (Hassner 1977:153).

2. The little stools on which the Huichol idols sit in the photo have considerable antiquity in northwest Mexico. They are called either *taburetes* or *equipales*, and are described in the literature as early as 1673 by Antonio Arias, a Franciscan missionary, who wrote of a “house . . . with a table in it which is surrounded by four dry withered corpses. . . . They are seated on chairs they call *Ycpallia [equipal]*” (McCarty and Matson 1975:204). Such stools and chairs are still being made and can be bought in shops in Nogales and, no doubt, in Tucson as well (Bernard L. Fontana, personal communication). See also Fontana 1977.

3. Personal communication from Phyllis Johnson, who is working with the Lumholtz Collection at the American Museum of Natural History, February 2007.

4. Conversion of film sizes mentioned in the text from inches to approximate equivalents in centimeters: $3'' \times 4'' = 7.6 \times 10.2$ cm; $3\frac{1}{4}'' \times 4\frac{1}{4}'' = 8.5 \times 11.2$ cm; $4'' \times 5'' = 10.2 \times 12.7$ cm; $5'' \times 7'' = 12.7 \times 17.8$ cm; and $6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}'' = 16.5 \times 21.5$ cm.

5. Even today surprisingly few people in Norway know who Lumholtz was.

6. The exhibition *Under Tropenes Himmel* (Under the Skies of the Tropics) opened at the Maihaugen Museum in Lillehammer in October 1993 and at the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo in December 1993. The title, also used for the book edited by Klausen and Sørsum, was borrowed from the Norwegian title of Lumholtz's *Through Central Borneo* (New York, 1920), published in Christiania in 1922. At the same time the Norwegian Broadcasting Company made three sixty-minute documentaries about Lumholtz and his travels in Australia, Mexico, and Borneo.

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