

Cylinder Recordings From Carl Lumholtz' "Unknown Mexico"

Between 1890 and 1898, Norwegian explorer Carl Sofus Lumholtz made four expeditions into areas of Mexico "never visited by tourists and foreign even to most Mexicans" (Lumholtz 1902:v.1,xvi) in order to collect anthropological data and archaeological specimens for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, which sponsored much of his work. Lumholtz' most extensive publication on his findings is a two-volume, 1,000-page book titled *Unknown Mexico: A Record of Five Years' Exploration Among the Tribes of the Western Sierra Madre; In the Tierra Caliente of Tepic and Jalisco; and Among the Tarascos of Michoacan*.

In the preface to *Unknown Mexico*, Lumholtz writes, "In 1898 I made my last expedition to Mexico. . . . I revisited the Tarahumares and Huichols in order to supplement the material in hand and to settle doubtful points that had come up in working out my notes. Sixty melodies from these tribes were recorded on the graphophone" (1902:v.1, xiv). He later says, "I am under obligation . . . to Miss Alice Fletcher, of Washington, D.C., and Mr. Edwin S. Tracy for transcribing from

the graphophone three of the songs rendered in this book, and to Mrs. George S. Bixby for aid in transcribing the native music" (1902:v.1, xviii). The cylinder recordings Lumholtz mentions are on deposit at the Archives of Traditional Music.

From the American Museum of Natural History we received forty-two cylinders: eleven of the Tarahumara Indians,* and thirty-one of the Huichol Indians.** Each cylinder plays for approximately three minutes. Most of the cylinders are made of soft tan wax, which is in good condition despite the passage of over eighty-five years since they were recorded. Although there is some surface noise, the sound quality is generally quite acceptable.

Unfortunately, many of the cylinders are not clearly identified. The boxes of the eleven Tarahumara cylinders are labeled simply "Tarah.—C. Lumholtz—1898" in black ink. The Huichol cylinders are better identified, with most of the boxes labeled in Lumholtz' handwriting. Of the thirty-one Huichol cylinders, eighteen rain songs, six *hikuli* songs, and five *tamales de maiz crudo* songs are identified.

Huichol rain songs were performed from the beginning of April to the end of August, including the dry season and the start of the wet season. When rain was needed, an ox was sacrificed, a two-day feast was held, and the shaman sang to the gods of the four quar-

ters of the world. The Indians believed that when the gods were angry with man, they begrudged him everything, particularly the rain. But when they heard the shaman sing of their deeds, they were pleased and gave back the clouds and the rain (Lumholtz 1902:v.2, 9-14).

In their religious life, both the Huichol and Tarahumara used *hikuli*, a species of small cactus (*Anhalonium lewinii*) also called peyote. Each fall *hikuli*-seekers spent forty-three days traveling to the east to gather *hikuli* plants. Upon their return, they spent many weeks hunting deer and then preparing the communal field for sowing corn. The feast was finally held in December or January. During the feast and throughout the months of preparation, the Indians ate slices of fresh *hikuli*, which gave them visions and feelings of exhilaration (Lumholtz 1898:7-10).

Lumholtz also observed the feast of *tamales de maiz crudo* (baked corncakes made from ground whole corn), a religious ceremony held for the underworld after a successful deer hunt. A shaman would dedicate a stack of *tamales* to the gods by uttering incantations while holding a wand and a plume (Lumholtz 1900:17,182).

As Lumholtz ends the preface of *Unknown Mexico*, he writes, "I hope that I shall have rendered [the Mexican Indians] a service by setting them this modest monument" (1902:v.1, xvii). Likewise, the cylinders recorded by Lumholtz and preserved at the Archives of Traditional Music serve as a monument to the music and culture of the Tarahumara and Huichol Indians.

*Archives accession number
Pre'54-092-F

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REFERENCES CITED

- Lumholtz, Carl
1898 "The Huichol Indians of Mexico," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 10:1-14.
1900 "Symbolism of the Huichol Indians," *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History* III:1-228.
1902 *Unknown Mexico; A Record of Five Years' Exploration Among the Tribes of the Western Sierra Madre; In the Tierra Caliente of Tepic and Jalisco; and Among the Tarascos of Michoacan*. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

The steady downpour of the rain, punctuated by fitful flashes of lightning, formed a weird and fantastic accompaniment to the sympathetic singing, which came to me through the pitchy darkness of the night like a voice from fairyland. It sounded different from anything I had ever heard among Mexican Indians or elsewhere, and it was as novel as it was enchanting. I give . . . one stanza of this song.

HUICHOL RAIN-SONG



O' - to Tá - wi me-ma - nó - ti Wa-wat-sá - li me - ma - nó - ti
Deer god of the Northland sprang forth! Deer god of the Southland sprang forth!



Sa-kai - mó-ka me-ma-nó - ti Ko-yo - (yo-)ni me-ma - nó - ti
God of the Setting-sun then sprang forth! God of the north, the north god
sprang forth!



To-la - hú - li-pa me-ma-nó-ti Sa-kai-mó-ka me-ma-nó-ti a-a
Gods began to chase the deer forth! God of the Setting-sun sprang forth!

(Lumholtz 1902:v.2, 9-10)

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