Guide to the Robert J. Squier Olmec Collection 1946-1957

Author: SPK 04/29/2015

Encoder:

Creator of Collection: Robert J. Squier

Collection Dates: 1946-1959

Accession Number: 654.1959

Repository:

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Abstract:

In 1953, a three year Olmec archaeological project spanning 1953-1955 began in Veracruz and Tabasco, Mexico. As early as 1952, Philip Drucker began submitting requests for Grant-in-Aid to the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) at the Smithsonian Institute. The research design ultimately evolved into a partnership of Philip Drucker from the BAE and Robert F. Heizer from the University of California at Berkeley. The aims and scope of the project was two fold in 1) defining the structural and architectural patterns of the major Olmec center at La Venta, and 2) surveying the southern and western boundaries of the Olmec culture in Tabasco and Veracruz, Mexico. The Wenner-Gren Foundation approved the Grant-in-Aid for the project and the research culminated into a BAE report of the excavations at La Venta in 1955. At this time, Robert J. Squier was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. He was hired as a researcher for the 1955 project at La Venta and was the junior author of the 1959 BAE report alongside Drucker and Heizer. In 1957, Heizer led investigations at the archaeological site of Cuicuilco in the Valley of Mexico. Robert J. Squier was a crew member. In 1959, Robert J. Squier took a faculty position at the University of Kansas and brought documents pertaining to the 1953-1955 Olmec project and the 1957 Cuicuilco project with him. In addition, Robert J. Squier had requested documents and ceramic materials from Drucker’s Rio Chiquito (San Lorenzo) Expedition in 1946, from the Smithsonian Institute. Documents and Materials pertaining to Drucker’s Rio Chiquito project and 1953 Olmec survey were brought to
KU by Squier or shipped to him by the University of California at Berkeley. Upon request by the Smithsonian Institution, Squier shipped 33 boxes of the Rio Chiquito (San Lorenzo) material to Michael D. Coe at Yale University in 1966.

**Access Restrictions:** Prior notification to ARC staff is required.

**Use Restrictions:**
ARC staff may determine use restrictions dependent upon the physical condition of the document. Researchers may be required to either purchase or use photocopies of fragile documents.

**Extent:** 4 Linear Feet

**Dimensions:** Eight 5”x12”x11” Boxes

**Associated Records:**
Field Notes / Site Descriptions / Catalogs / Grant Applications / Financial Information / Correspondence / Published Manuscripts / Unpublished Manuscripts / Photograph logs / Sketches / Maps / Artifact Data / Media / Miscellaneous Notes

**Biographical Name:** Robert J. Squier

**Biographical Note:**
Robert Squier was born in 1918 in Decatur, Michigan. He received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley where he trained under Robert F. Heizer and John. H. Rowe, and was initially exposed to California and Mesoamerican archaeology. He joined the University of Kansas faculty in 1958 as an instructor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and research associate with the Natural History Museum. He became an assistant professor of anthropology when the discipline was formed into a separate department in 1962, and advanced to professor of anthropology by 1968. He held the position of department chair numerous times between 1964 and 1982. Robert Squier’s research interests focused on the formative period of Mesoamerica, dynamics of cultural growth in the archaic civilizations of the new world, cultural ecology, and history of anthropology. His fieldwork spanned 1949 to 1971 and included investigations in northern California, Nevada, and eastern Kansas in the United States, and Tabasco, Cuicui, and Veracruz in Mexico. Robert Squier’s fieldwork and research significantly added to the body of knowledge on Olmec archaeology in Mesoamerica and he frequently corresponded with other renowned Mesoamerican archaeologists such as, Matthew W. Sterling, Phillip Drucker, Michael D. Coe, and Tatiana Proskouriakoff. Additionally, his research added to the collections and created a legacy in Mesoamerican archaeological research at KU that continues today.

**Scope and Contents:**
This collection is divided into four series based on unique projects spanning different years and documents related to material collections loaned to Robert J. Squier.

**Series 1: Rio Chiquito (San Lorenzo) 1946**

In 1953, the Rio Chiquito (San Lorenzo) collection was loaned to the University of California at Berkeley by Matthew Stirling of the Smithsonian Institute for analysis by Robert J. Squier. This included 35 boxes of material collected by Philip Drucker and documents written by Matthew Stirling describing the Olmec site of San Lorenzo. In addition, the documents contain Smithsonian Institute and National Geographic Society inventories of box numbers and descriptions of contents written by Squier. Other documents include receipts for the shipment of 33 boxes to Michael D. Coe at Yale University in 1966, and correspondence between Robert J. Squier and the Smithsonian Institute, National Geographic Society staff, University of California at Berkeley staff, University of Kansas staff, and Michael D. Coe regarding the collection material.

**Series 2: Definition of Prehistoric Olmec Culture and its Geographic Extension Project – 1953**

Funded by Wenner-Gren, the 1953 Olmec project led by Philip Drucker and Robert F. Heizer, is part of a culmination of work between the years 1953-1955. The work included survey of the eastern and southern portions of Tabasco and Veracruz, Mexico. In 1955, the research team excavated the Olmec center at La Venta. The results of the La Venta excavations were published in the Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 170. For the significant differences between the surveys and the excavations at La Venta, the 1953-1955 project has been divided into two series. Series 2 pertains to documents related mainly to the survey portions of the project, and series 3 to the excavations at La Venta which involved Robert F. Heizer and Robert J. Squier.

The 1953 survey work was conducted by Philip Drucker and Eduardo Contreras. The series includes grant applications, preliminary financial records, survey site lists and descriptions, original notebooks of Philip Drucker, notecards of Robert J. Squier pertaining to the surveyed sites, and documents of Eduardo Contreras. The last including maps, both topographic and hand drawn, and notes. Other documents include catalogs referring to bags in forestry and the 1953 type collection brought to KU by Robert J. Squier in 1959, ceramic complex lists, documents describing widespread Olmec traits, and media clippings. There is correspondence between Drucker, intelligence agencies, and archaeologists including Matthew Stirling, Alfred L. Kroeber, Alfred V. Kidder, Ralph Linton, Anna O. Shepard, and Eduardo Contreras. Published and unpublished manuscripts by Philip Drucker, Eduardo Contreras, and an Olmec paper by an Anthropology student at the University of California at Berkeley conclude the documents in the series.

**Series 3: La Venta Excavations – 1955**

In 1955, Philip Drucker, Robert F. Heizer, and Robert J. Squier conducted excavations at the Olmec center of La Venta in Tabasco, Mexico. Results of this project were published in the Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 170. Significant artifacts and features
labeled as offerings were discovered during this excavation including, serpentine blocks laid down in patterns, jade artifacts, and pottery among other monumental architectural features.

This series includes documents related to the data recovered from this excavation. There are rough drafts of the BAE Bulletin 170, Robert J. Squier field notes and catalogs of offerings, radiocarbon data, and correspondence related to the project. There are copies of publications and papers presented at conferences by Robert F. Heizer, Philip Drucker, Robert J. Squier, William R. Coe, Robert Stuckenrath, and Michael D. Coe. Topics in the publications and papers range in focus on the La Venta excavations, Olmec definitions, post Olmec occupations, and radiocarbon data. One media clipping from a newspaper concludes the documents in this series.

**Series 4: Cuilcuilco Excavation – 1957**

In 1957, Robert F. Heizer and James A. Bennyhoff led excavations at the site of Cuilcuilco in the Valley of Mexico, roughly 25 kilometers from Mexico City. Robert J. Squier was a crew member on this project.

This series includes correspondence between Robert J. Squier and Carmen de Cook Leonard about ceramics from Cuilcuilco, two media documents, and copies of published manuscripts by Heizer and Bennyhoff, and Glenn Housh. A Geological survey report by Dr. H.K. Erben was shared in the correspondence between Squier and Carmen de Cook Leonard and concludes the documents in this series.

**Separated Material:** Photographs, Slides, Material Collections from Excavations

**Subject Terms:** Mesoamerica / Olmec / Archaeology / San Lorenzo / Rio Chiquito / La Venta / Tres Zapotes / Cuicuilco / Ceramics / Pottery / Radiocarbon Dating

**Geographic Locations:** Mexico / United States / Gulf Coast / Tabasco / Veracruz / Valley of Mexico


**Corporate Names:** The University of Kansas / The University of California, Berkeley / Smithsonian Institute / National Geographic Society / Peabody Museum / Yale University / Wrenner-Gren Foundation / National Institute of Anthropology and History (Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia (INAH))
**Language:** English and Spanish

**Acquisition Information:** Deposited with the University of Kansas on completion of the projects. Materials were donated by the estate of Robert J. Squier.

**Custodial History:** Contents of the home of the late Robert J. Squier.

**Inventory:**

*Series 1: Rio Chiquito (San Lorenzo) 1946*

**SAN LORENZO SITE DESCRIPTIONS / CATALOGS / SHIPPING RECEIPTS**

Box 1

Folder 1  
San Lorenzo Site Description – Matthew W. Sterling notes March, 1946; site description, Group A, Group B, Mounds and Trenches, sketches, typed and hand written notes. (Originals)

Folder 2  
Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.

Folder 3  
San Lorenzo list of photograph or slides numbers with descriptions. Unknown author, could be either Squier, Drucker, or Sterling.

Folder 4  
Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.

Folder 5  
Catalogs – Smithsonian Institute and National Geographic Society box numbers and descriptions of contents from the Rio Chiquito Expedition; Crates in shipment to Robert J. Squier at the University of California at Berkeley; Memo of students who worked with materials; Sante Fe Trail Transportation Co. receipt for the shipment of 33 boxes to Michael D. Coe at the Peabody Museum, Yale University. (Originals)

Folder 6  
Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Box 1

Folder 7  
1958-1966. All correspondence regarding the Rio Chiquito expedition loaned materials to Robert J. Squier. Parties include Smithsonian Staff (Clifford Evans, Waldo R. Wedel, and Richard B. Woodbury); National Geographic Society (Richard H. Stewart); Michael D. Coe; Matthew W. Stirling; University of Kansas (Raymond Nichols, Irvin Youngberg); University of California at Berkeley (Dorothy A. Bennett, Edward P. Lanning). (Originals)
Folder 8  Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

Series 2: Definition of Prehistoric Olmec Culture and its Geographic Extension Project – 1953

PREPATORY AND FINANCIAL

Box 1

Folder 1  Grant Applications to Wenner-Gren Foundation: Applications from Philip Drucker for 1953-1954 seasons, Applications from Philip Drucker and Robert F. Heizer for the 1955 season. (Originals and Original Copies)

Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.

Folder 3  Preliminary expenses and supply lists. Financial breakdowns for each year of the project, 1953, 1954, 1955. (Originals)

Folder 4  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.

SURVEYED SITE DESCRIPTIONS / FIELD NOTES

Box 1

Folder 5  1953-1955 Survey Site list and descriptions. Folder 1 of 3. (Originals)

Folder 6  Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.

Folder 7  1953-1955 Survey Site list and descriptions. Folder 2 of 3. (Originals)

Folder 8  Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

Folder 9  1953-1955 Survey Site list and descriptions. Folder 3 of 3. (Originals)

Folder 10  Photocopies of Folder 9 documents, 1 of 2.

Folder 11  Photocopies of Folder 9 documents, 2 of 2.

Folder 12  Philip Drucker and Eduardo Contreras notes for the 1953 survey of the eastern and southern limits of Olmec territory. (Originals)

Folder 13  Photocopies of Folder 12 documents.

Box 2

Folder 1  1953 Survey Site sequence (tentative). Characteristics of various periods/Sites of certain periods. (Originals)
Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.
Folder 3  Philip Drucker’s original field notebooks number 1 and 2. (Original)
Folder 4  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.
Folder 5  1953 survey sites and sketches, notecards of Robert J. Squier. (Originals)
Folder 6  Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.
Folder 7  Maps, topographic maps, and Eduardo Contreras notes with hand drawn maps. (Originals)
Folder 8  Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

**CATALOGS**

**Box 2**

Folder 9  Survey material Bags in Forestry. List dated February – May 1953. Tabasco Veracruz collection at the University of California at Berkeley Museum of Anthropology. List dated 1960 and lists site numbers found in each box. (Originals)
Folder 10  Photocopies of Folder 9 documents.
Folder 11  1953 Type collection brought to KU in January 1959. Estimated sherd counts from sites of the 1953 survey. Ceramic complexes list for the 1953 material. List of washed sherds from the 1953 survey material. Document describing certain widespread Olmec traits. (Originals)
Folder 12  Photocopies of Folder 11 documents.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Box 2**

Folder 13  1955 Project related: Wenner-Gren Foundation with Robert J. Squier and Philip Drucker. Smithsonian Institute correspondence with United States and Mexico Intelligence authorities related to clearance for project staff. (Originals)
Folder 14  Photocopies of Folder 13 documents.
Folder 15  Correspondence between Philip Drucker and: Matthew W. Stirling, Alfred L. Kroeber, Alfred V. Kidder, Ralph Linton, Anna O. Shepard, and Eduardo Contreras. (Originals)

Folder 16  Photocopies of Folder 15 documents.

MEDIA

Box 3


Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.

PUBLICATIONS / REPORTS WITH NOTES

Box 3


Folder 4  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.

Folder 5  “Archeological Reconnaissance in the Tres Zapotes Region.” Philip Drucker manuscript. (Original)

Folder 6  Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.

Folder 7  Rough draft Plates for Philip Drucker’s “Archeological Reconnaissance in the Tres Zapotes Region” manuscript. Photographs included. Most of which have been cut and attached or arranged to create the plates. Robert J. Squier has occasionally penciled side notes on the documents. (Originals)

Folder 8  Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

Folder 9  Robert J. Squier’s notes on Philip Drucker’s Ceramics from Tres Zapotes. (Originals)
Folder 10       Photocopies of Folder 9 documents.

**MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS**

Box 3

Folder 12       Photocopies of Folder 11 documents.

*Series 3: 1955 Olmec Project – Excavations at La Venta*

**ROUGH DRAFT DOCUMENTS OF BAE BULLETIN 170 / FIELD NOTES**

Box 1

Folder 1       BAE Bulletin 170 La Venta Report. Documents include drafts, notes, raw plates and figures. Folder 1 of 4. (Originals)
Folder 2       Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.
Folder 3       BAE Bulletin 170 La Venta Report. Documents include drafts, notes, raw plates and figures. Folder 2 of 4. (Originals)
Folder 4       Photocopies of Folder 3 documents, 1 of 2.
Folder 5       Photocopies of Folder 3 documents, 2 of 2.
Folder 6       BAE Bulletin 170 La Venta Report. Documents include drafts, notes, raw plates and figures. Folder 3 of 4. (Originals)
Folder 7       Photocopies of Folder 6 documents.
Folder 8       BAE Bulletin 170 La Venta Report. Documents include drafts, notes, raw plates and figures. Folder 4 of 4. (Originals)
Folder 9       Photocopies of Folder 8 documents.
Folder 10      BAE Bulletin 170 La Venta Report. Postscript of the report. (Originals)
Folder 11      Photocopies of Folder 10 documents.

Box 2

Folder 1       Robert J. Squier’s 1955 La Venta Field Notebook. (Original)
Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.
Folder 3  Original copies of Robert J. Squier’s 1955 La Venta Field Notebook.
Folder 4  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.

CATALOGS

Box 2
Folder 5  Field catalog for excavations at La Venta, Tabasco 1955. Includes an inventory of the features labeled as Offerings. An inventory of Offerings recovered from 1940-1943. A list of Offerings numbered 1-19 and an associated C14 sample. (Originals)
Folder 6  Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.

RADIOCARBON DATA

Box 2
Folder 7  Radiocarbon dates from La Venta with typed and hand written notes regarding the samples. Mesoamerican radiocarbon dates from numerous sites with typed and hand written notes regarding the samples. (Originals)
Folder 8  Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 2
Folder 9  Robert J. Squier and Smithsonian staff regarding the appointment of assistant/collaborator on the 1955 Olmec project at La Venta. Robert J. Squier and Matthew W. Stirling/Smithsonian staff regarding Philip Drucker and Eduardo Contreras 1953 survey documents and materials. (Originals)
Folder 10  Photocopies of Folder 9 documents.
Folder 12  Photocopies of Folder 11 documents.

Folder 13  Thomas Stuart Ferguson to Robert J. Squier requesting a copy of the La Venta report when it becomes available. Robert J. Squier to Charles R. Wicke discussing the 1955 La Venta project in addressing a question about Squier’s work history in Mesoamerica. Eusebio Davalos Hurtado and Eduardo Noguera to Robert J. Squier congratulating him on his work at La Venta in 1955 and the BAE publication (Spanish and English). (Originals)

Folder 14  Photocopies of Folder 13 documents.

Folder 15  Radiocarbon data correspondence. This includes letters between Robert J. Squier and Wallace Broecker at Columbia University regarding experimental attempts to date pottery sherds. Some notes of sherds to request from the Smithsonian Institute are included. Letters between Robert F. Heizer and James B. Griffin regarding radiocarbon dates from Cuicuilco, Tlapacoya and Zacarenco. The remaining correspondence involves presentations at conferences (AAA) and papers submitted to the journal of the Texas Archaeological Society. (Originals)

Folder 16  Photocopies of Folder 15 documents.

MEDIA

Box 3

Folder 1  1957 Mexican newspaper article discussing the La Venta excavations and radiocarbon dates (Spanish). (Originals)

Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.

PUBLICATIONS AND MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS

Box 3

Folder 3  “A Review of La Venta, Tabasco and the Relevance to the Olmec Problem.” William R. Coe, Robert Stuckenwrath. (Originals)

Folder 4  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents, 1 of 2.

Folder 5  Photocopies of Folder 3 documents, 2 of 2.


Folder 7  Photocopies of Folder 6 documents.
Folder 8  Two copies of a review of the BAE Bulletin 170 publication by Michael D. Coe. One is in typed paper form. The other is printed under the book reviews section in the American Journal of Archaeology (1960). (Originals)

Folder 9  Photocopies of Folder 8 documents.

Folder 10  “Evidence of “Post-Olmec” Occupations at La Venta, Tabasco,” Robert J. Squier paper presented at AAA conference (55th) 1956 (with correspondence). “Post-Olmec Occupations at La Venta, Tabasco,” at the time it was in press with the Texas Archaeological Society Bulletin. “An Archaeological Synthesis of Southern Veracruz-Tabasco.” This document has a typed introduction, then stops with a one page bibliography and notes to reference an item from a thesis. There are hand written draft/notes for the title page and citations. This is possibly a Robert J. Squier document, but no author is noted. (Original)

Folder 11  Photocopies of Folder 10 documents.


Folder 13  Photocopies of Folder 12 documents.

PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

Box 3

Folder 14  List of Photographs with descriptions from various sites visited during the 1955 La Venta project.

Folder 15  Photocopies of Folder 14 documents.

Series 4: 1957 Cuicuilco Project

FIELD NOTES

Box 1

Folder 1  Robert J. Squier’s field journal containing notes on Cuicuilco and other sites visited from 1955-1957. Also contains photograph records from sites visited.

Folder 2  Photocopies of Folder 1 documents.
FINANCIAL

Box 1

Folder 3 NGS Grant expenditures and C14 expenses and receipt.

Folder 4 Photocopies of Folder 3 documents.

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 1

Folder 5 Robert J. Squier and Carmen Cook de Leonard about Cuicuilco and other Mesoamerican ceramics. This includes any notes the two shared with one another. (Originals)

Folder 6 Photocopies of Folder 5 documents.

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS

Box 1

Folder 7 “A Geological Survey Report of the Area Southwest and East of Tehuacan Valley,” by Dr. H.K. Erben. This manuscript was shared in the correspondence between Robert J. Squier and Carmen Cook de Leonard. (Originals)

Folder 8 Photocopies of Folder 7 documents.

MEDIA

Box 1

Folder 9 A Mexican newspaper article clipping about Robert F. Heizer’s work at Cuicuilco (Spanish). A printed copy of “Riddles in Stone,” a transcript of a University of California public radio broadcast in 1958. The broadcast discussed the 1957 Cuicuilco project. (Original)

Folder 10 Photocopies of Folder 9 documents.

PUBLICATIONS

Box 1

Folder 12  Photocopies of Folder 11 documents.