

# **J. Alden Mason linguistic expeditions to Mexico records**

1139

**Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.**

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## Table of Contents

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Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	6
Related Materials .....	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	7
Collection Inventory.....	8
Expedition I 1912-1913.....	8
Expedition II 1936.....	8
Expedition III 1947-1948.....	9
Northern Tepehuan Linguistic Expedition 1951.....	9
Expedition IV 1954.....	9

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Mason, John Alden, 1885-1967
<b>Title</b>	J. Alden Mason linguistic expeditions to Mexico records
<b>Call number</b>	1139
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1912-1936
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1912-1954
<b>Extent</b>	1.4 linear feet (the collection is contained in 20 folders housed in four archival boxes with oversized plates placed in drawer 47-49 of the map case. the first box contains ten folders from expedition i and iii. box two has the remaining folders from expedition iii, and all of expedition iv, the 1951 northern tepehuan linguistic expedition, and the expedition v materials. photographs from expedition ii are contained in 21 folders in boxes three and four. )
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The J.Alden Mason Linguistic Expeditions to Mexico consist of six trips to study the languages of the Northern and Southern Tepehuan Indians of the region around Durango and the Nevome of the lower Pima Bajo area. From 1912 to 1954, Mason gathered information on the languages, ceremonial activities, prayers, and botany of the Piman tribes of northern and southern Mexico. Mason took numerous photographs and his second expedition, financed by Percy C. Madeira who accompanied Mason, consisted entirely of aerial photographs of the area. The 1936 Durango Expedition with Robert M. Merrill produced photographs, plates and

objects from archaeological sites like Chalchihuites and Zape in the Durango region. The photographs and plates were reproduced in a 1937 article, "Late Archaeological Sites in Durango Mexico." During this trip, Mason shot unedited film showing the indigenous people and the countryside around Durango. Two additional expeditions in 1951 and 1954 resulted in reports of the Northern Tepehuan and Nevome languages and cultures.

**Cite as:**

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. J. Alden Mason linguistic expeditions to Mexico records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

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## **Biography/History**

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J. Alden Mason, noted archaeological anthropologist and linguist, was born in Orland, Indiana but moved to the Germantown area of Philadelphia early in his life. He attained his A.B. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1907 and pursued his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley completing his dissertation on the ethnography of the Salinan Indians of California. Following the completion of his Ph.D., Mason was chosen to represent the state of Pennsylvania for two seasons in Mexico at the International School of Archaeology and Ethnology, a joint enterprise between Mexico and the United States.

Mason's linguistic work centered on the Tepecano Indians of Mexico and he traveled to sites near Durango, lower Pima Bajo, Sonora, and Chihuahua in six expeditions beginning in 1911. The languages of this region are part of the Piman family described by Mason as "six slightly differentiated languages for a thousand miles down the Mexican Sierra Madre from Arizona to Jalisco." The initial trip focused on the ceremonialism and prayers of the Tepecano culture, including botany and cosmological notes. Mason published a "short grammar" based on this trip in 1917. He promised a "larger grammar of Papago will soon be published." The second trip in 1930 was an aerial survey of land never before seen from this perspective. The trip was financed by Percy C. Madeira, Jr., nephew of Louis C. Madeira and later elected to the Board of Managers of the Museum. Madeira accompanied Mason in a twin-motor Sikorsky plane flown by two Pan American pilots.

The Durango Expedition, Expedition III, conducted in 1936 is documented in 162 photographs and 8 field notebooks. In 1947-1948, Mason visited the Northern Tepehuan for linguistic and archaeological research. (Expedition IV) He shot a twenty minute film during the trip, "Unedited Pictures of the Southern Tepehuan Indians and the Region of Durango, Mexico" which is part of the Museum collection. A brief trip in 1951 produced photographs of the Northern Tepehuan area in Chihuahua. Mason returned in 1954 for Expedition V to study the Nevome language and culture.

Mason's curatorial career began in 1917 as an Assistant Curator of Mexican and South American Archaeology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. He married Florence Roberts in 1921. Mason remained at the Field Museum until 1924 when he assumed an Assistant Curator position at the American Museum of Natural History. Mason held this position briefly as he moved to The University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania as Curator in 1925. He gave 25 years of service to the Museum, becoming Emeritus Curator of the American Indian Section in 1955.

Mason published regularly in *The Museum Journal*, *Journal of American Folklore*, *International Journal of American Linguistics*, and *American Anthropologist*, serving as editor of *American Anthropologist* from 1945 to 1948. His published works included "The Language of the Papago Indians" and "The Languages of the South American Indians" among others.

When Mason retired from the museum in 1955, he continued his contributions including a dig at Chiapas, Mexico in 1958 while serving as Editor and Archaeological Advisor to the New World Archaeology Foundation. Mason held this post until his death in 1967.

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## Scope and Contents

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J. Alden Mason embarked on at least six trips to Mexico to investigate the languages of the Tepehuan Indians of the Piman region. The Tepehuan languages belong to the Uto-Aztecan group of the Southwestern United States and Mexico. Alden's excursions were conducted in 1912-1913, 1930, 1935-37, 1948, 1951, and 1954 and mark the series titles for the collection.

The collection consists of correspondence, notes, expenses, field notebooks, a catalogue of objects from the 1936 trip, photographs, plates, articles, and publications related to the trips. They are arranged by expedition number with the exception of the 1951 trip which is placed chronologically. Original order is maintained within the expeditions. The material from the earliest expedition is in fragile condition. In addition to the languages, Mason reported on Tepecano botany, prayers and ceremonialism, particularly in the first expedition. Two archival boxes contain the photographs taken while Mason was on an aerial survey of the region with Percy C. Madeira, Jr.. The photographs of the 1936 trip, a "museum set" are located in 27 envelopes and remain with the items from that trip. They depict mostly landscapes with a few pictures of people and objects. Some of these were published in the *Museum Journal*. There are also a group of studio photographs from Evrardo Gamiz with the 1936 expedition materials.

Seven plates relate to the 1937 article, "Late Archaeological Sites in Durango, Mexico". The smaller plates, and a photographic set, are in a folder with the 1936 trip materials. Several oversized plates are placed in drawer M-47-9 in the map case. The larger photos are located with the photo collection boxes CA1, CA2 and CA4.

Expedition I series is contained in 7 folders. It includes correspondence interestingly with Dr. John M. Fogg of the Morris Arboretum regarding the plants of the region and Ida Langman, a botanical expert. The linguistic materials are reflected in a Tepecano Index as well as Mason's notes on "Relationship terms", "Nature of Person Addresses" in the Tepecano dialect. Mason's writings from this time period as well as maps and notes on weaving, ceremonial objects, primitive religions and prayers for various ceremonies and favors are part of this series.

Expedition II, also known as the Durango Expedition, was a jointly sponsored trip by the American Philosophical Society and The University Museum. Mason was accompanied by Robert M. Merrill, an engineer from Grand Rapids, Michigan who completed the survey of the region. The series includes notebooks from Mason and Merrill as well as a catalogue of objects and a compilation of field expenses.

During this trip, Mason retrieved objects from Canon El Molino, Rio Guatinape, Hervideros, Arroyo Chupaderos, Caravito Cave, Zape Chico, Cueva de la Manada, Cueva de Dos Puertas, Pueblito, and Los Remedios for the Museum.

Photographs and plates are also part of this series including photographs of the pictographs and petroglyphs from Zape Chico, Coahuila, Cuevo Covedango, and Cueva del Agua, along with the Gamiz photographs of mummies found in the region. Small photographs, approximately three by six inches and numbered from 1 to 162 are placed in envelopes.

Two folders of correspondence complete the materials from Expedition II. Most are communications with Horace Jayne and the Museum staff and reflect Mason's daily life. They are grouped by date, January to March 1936 and March to June 1936. Included with the letters is a "digest of the Merrill correspondence" regarding expenses and financial "accounts of the Durango Expedition".

Expedition III, a Northern Tepehuan trip, conducted in 1948 for the purpose of, "study the language but all phases of the life of the Indians, including the archaeology of the region". The materials are contained in two folders. A provisional itinerary and a Museum publicity release for the expedition complete the first folder along with receipts and correspondence with Froelich Rainey and the Museum. Photographs from Xoconestle, Durango are in folder two.

Mason traveled to Mexico again from March 8 to April 24, 1951. Noted as the Northern Tepehuan Linguistic Expedition, Mason recorded stories and songs in the Northern Tepehuan language considered to be the "most variant of the languages composing the Piman linguistic family branch of the Utaztecan stock" and tells of this in his "Report on the Northern Tepehuan Linguistic Expedition Baboringame, Chihuahua, Mexico." This report is contained in the single folder with 15 photographs of daily life.

The 1954 Expedition(IV) was conducted from December 26, 1953 to January 13, 1954. Mason traveled to Sonora, Mexico to study the language of the Nevome Indians. A report of the trip along with several letters to the Museum record this expedition in a single folder.

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## Administrative Information

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Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.

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## Related Materials

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## **Related Archival Materials note**

Related materials include an unedited film shot by J.Alden Mason,(#0710), "Durango Mexico, 1948 Unedited Pictures of the Southern Tepehuan Indians and the Region of Durango Mexico." This color film is available at:

Expedition II data can be found in three places. One folder of text is with the main collection. The aerial photographs are with the photography collection. Any work done that was a preliminary to the Piedras Negras expedition has been placed with the Piedras Negras collection.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- Mexico

### **PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Fogg, John M., 1898-1982
- Madeira, Percy C., Jr., 1889-1967
- Mason, John Alden, 1885-1967

### **SUBJECT(S)**

- Anthropological linguistics
- Mexico--Antiquities

## Collection Inventory

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	Box
<b>EXPEDITION I 1912-1913.</b>	1
	Box
Linguistic notes.	1
Unfinished Tepecano manuscript.	1
Tepecano prayers 1918.	1
Perdones Tepecanos.	1
Textile weaving, botany correspondence, ceremonies.	1
Manuscript-"The Ceremonialism of the Tepecan" Undated.	1
Pen and Ink drawings from Mason photographs.	1
	Box
<b>EXPEDITION II 1936.</b>	3, 4
	Box
Field notebooks 1-4.	1
Field notebooks 5-7.	1
Field notebook Robert H. Merrill.	1
Catalogue of objects, lists, expenses.	1

Photographs, Pictography, Petroglyphs.	2
Lists of sites, photographs, objects, notes, correspondence 1943.	2
Durango photographs 1-162.	2
Plates drawn for "Late Archaeological Sites in Durango, Mexico" 1937.	2
Correspondence Jan.-Mar. 1936.	2
Correspondence Mar.-June 1936.	2

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<b>EXPEDITION III 1947-1948.</b>	Box 1, 2 Box
Itinerary, Receipts, Correspondence with F. Rainey.	2
Photographs Southern Tepehuan.	2

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<b>NORTHERN TEPEHUAN LINGUISTIC EXPEDITION 1951.</b>	Box 2 Box
Photographs, report on expedition.	2

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<b>EXPEDITION IV 1954.</b>	Box 2
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Box

Report on expedition, Correspondence Jan.-April 1954.

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