

Huehuetenango, Guatemala. 12 May 1932

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK, U. S. A.
ETHNOLOGICAL EXPEDITION
TO MIDDLE AMERICA

OLIVER LA FARGE, M. A.
DIRECTOR

Dr. J. Alden Mason,
Pennsylvania University Expedition,
Piedras Negras.

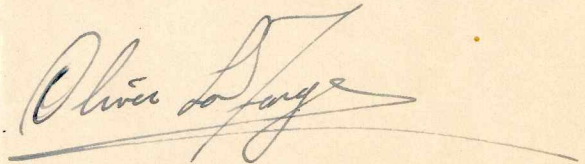
Dear Mason:--

An acquaintance of mine here, Sr. don Ramigio Hernández, has come to me concerning his son, who, I gather, is now working for you. The son is called don Julio César Hernández. It seems that the young man went down to the mahogany camps some years ago, and since then has been unable to get hold of enough money to return to Huehuetenango. His father is most anxious for him to do so, and wants me to ask you to do what you can to facilitate his return. Sr. Hernández senior is an excellent person, and I am anxious to oblige him, hence this note, which I believe he will enclose with a letter of his own.

We are about closing work here, after a fairly successful season. I hope all goes well with you, and your inspector has proved agreeable. I go up through Mexico, and shall be c/o Er R. Mathews, Pine Valley, Colorado Springs, Colo, from July 1st on.

With best regards and best wishes, I remain,

yours cordially,



Tenosique, Tabasco, Mexico
June 16, 1932.

Mr. Oliver La Farge,
C/o E. R. Mathews,
Pine Valley,
Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Dear La Farge:

Julio Hernandez handed me your letter of May 12 from Huehuetenango a few days ago, and just a couple of days after we had come in from Piedras Negras. Julio had been working for us the entire time we were there, and I imagine he could have saved up enough to get back to Huehuetenango if he had wanted to. I understood that he came from the Guatemalan highlands -- one of the few Guatemalans that we had, almost all being Mexicans from Tenosique. I understood he had been working as a clerk for one of the lumber companies farther up river, but for us, of course, he was only a digger, though apparently of a little more culture than most of them. He was hired by our mayordomo, and his especial assignment all season was digging careful holes for Miss Butler's stratigraphical excavations. She told me he came from the highlands; otherwise I would have taken less interest in him. He worked fairly well but apparently was the ringleader, or at any rate the spokesman, for the men when almost all of them struck and quit just a few days before we really intended to quit work. I'd like to help him get back to his home, for his father's sake, but really can't do anything now. He was paid off on May 26 (last payment 70 pesos), and I couldn't do anything now but lend him the money to get back, and you know what chances I'd have of ever getting any returned. He is still here in Tenosique, but there is no work here and I don't know what he will do. If he were really anxious to get back, he could make it up river in a few weeks on foot, and the pay he received would have seen him through all right, but when I spoke to him about returning and told him his father was anxious to have him he said he hadn't the money to do it. I wouldn't make the trip now myself except by water, for it has been raining most of the time for the past two weeks and the trails must be mud to one's knees and over.

We had a fairly successful season; my assistant Satterthwaite, is a most enthusiastic and careful scientific worker and I am enthusiastic about his work; his scientific notes will be of great value. Also he found all three of our most important single finds this year, a new lintel with the oldest date in the city, 9.2.12 something, which had been broken and reused in the masonry of temple #27 and which he pulled out from under my nose; many fragments of a beautiful throne with back screen which is of the same type as that shown in the carving on lintel #3 found last year and which therefore proves that the scene carved on lintel #3 portrays an actual ceremony performed here; and a burial in a very central place in a vault of a personage who must have been of high rank. This was accompanied by many ornaments of very fine jade, one with incised inscription, many shell plaques, for of them with incised hieroglyphic inscriptions, the largest pyrite mosaic mirror known, so far as I know, about 25 cm diameter, and other fine things.

Half the contents of the tomb, the new lintel, and the throne and screen go to Philadelphia, and all but the lintel will come out with me in a few days, being transportable on mule-back. We also had excellent success with our big monuments. There are 15 big boxes with about 30 tons of monuments, the best ones in the ruins, at the end of our road ready to be loaded on lumber rafts as soon as the river rises sufficiently to bring down lumber, and floated down to Frontera where they should be within a month. Stela #12, which was taken over the road last year and down to Frontera in January, left a month ago and is probably now in Philadelphia.

We had one great misfortune in the burning of a part of our camp on ~~August 22~~ April 22. Five buildings went, including the main building with most of our equipment. Fortunately it occurred in the morning while we were at work, so the most essential equipment in use was saved, and no one was even singed, but we lost all photographic equipment as well as all photographs made to date (except the cameras in use and the films in them), and all our drawing equipment, office supplies, etc. Fortunately the bodega with food supplies was saved or we would have had to walk out to Tenosique here. Fortunately, almost all of our field notes were saved and we got more films and carried on as usual, with a little inconvenience.

We arrived here last Saturday and all the rest of the party left on Sunday, but there were the usual official troubles. We have to have our stuff taken through Mexican territory by customs officials, and although I ordered them in plenty of time the new chief of Customs in Frontera refused to send without special instructions from Mexico City, so as our food supplies were exhausted and we could wait no longer, we had to leave the boxes of archeological objects at the camp and I had to remain here to settle the matter. Yesterday word was received that the officials will leave Frontera today, and just while I was writing this another telegram came agreeing to my request to have the boxes brought in here so that they may be here when the officials arrive and we may leave on the return trip of the boat. So I will get to Frontera with the cargo about Tuesday the 21st, and if there is no difficulty about the shipment out, and if I make close connections with a boat home I should be home before the end of the month.

Glad to hear you have had a successful year, but sorry I won't see you in the east until fall. As I think I told you, Jgme insisted that I spend all my time last winter writing up the report on last year's work here, so I was unable to edit your report on the Cholbal K'ih, etc., as I would have preferred. Hope to be allowed to finish that as one of my first jobs when I get back.

With cordial regards to you and to Mrs La Ferge, believe me as ever

Cordially yours,