

Editorial Note

The personal papers of Lieutenant (later Captain) Clément Brasseur (b. Oizy, 1863) were acquired by the Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale (MRAC), Tervuren, Belgium, in 1981, thanks to a donation by a Ms Katchalowsky.¹ The bulk of this composite collection consists of the lengthy letters that Brasseur regularly sent to his elder brother Désiré, a fellow military officer, throughout his two separate stays in the Congo Free State.²

The seventeen letters presented here span the period between September 1893 – the month in which Brasseur took charge of Lofoi, the lone Congo Free State *poste* in Katanga – and 9 November 1897, the day before his death outside the trader Kiwala’s fortified camp on the Luapula River. An extensively annotated English translation of this body of records is G. Macola (ed.), *The Colonial Occupation of Katanga: The Personal Correspondence of Clément Brasseur, 1893-1897*. *Fontes Historiae Africanae, New Series*, 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2018). The French transcriptions made available here are a supplement to – and should be read in conjunction with – the above text. In preparing them for electronic publication, the following editorial principles have been applied.

Brasseur’s original letters are reproduced in their entirety, only discarding a few glaring repetitions and some brief passages relating to the general maps and route maps which Brasseur compulsively worked on, but which are not incorporated in *The Colonial Occupation of Katanga*. On the other hand, *force majeure*, rather than editorial choice, dictated the excision of a handful of undecipherable sentences and of sections rendered illegible by water damage. In all of these cases, readers are alerted to the omissions through the insertion of an appropriate notation – [...] – in the text.

While Brasseur’s minor spelling mistakes have been silently amended, his idiosyncratic punctuation and usage of tenses have, on the contrary, been retained with a view to preserving the colloquial nature of his writing style. Especially egregious errors are signalled by the insertion of ‘[sic]’. Square brackets are always my own and denote the addition of obviously missing words and quotation marks for direct speech. Also placed in quotation marks are the excerpts of official reports and other communications to or from third parties which Brasseur was wont to copy in his personal letters. When reproduced in full, such texts are indented so as to distinguish them from the main body of the letter to which they belong.

When writing to his brother, Brasseur occasionally employed African words, both to establish his ‘old-hand’ credentials and to add local colour. Brasseur’s original spelling of these words has been retained in the transcriptions (but modified and modernized in the English edition). When a translation is not provided by Brasseur himself, the meanings of the African words in question are given in a glossary placed at the end of *The Colonial Occupation of Katanga*. Reference to the glossary is marked by the following symbol: †.

¹ M. Luwel to Ms Katchalowsky, Tervuren, 13 April 1981, Papiers Clément Brasseur, MRAC, RG 768/81.15.

² For a brief description, see P. Van Schuylenbergh, *La mémoire des Belges en Afrique centrale. Inventaire des archives historiques privées du Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale de 1858 à nos jours* (Tervuren, 1997), pp. 6-7.

The Colonial Occupation of Katanga also includes a long onomasticon, which provide additional information about all the most important ethnonyms, personal names and hereditary titles mentioned by Brasseur. An asterisk (*) alerts the reader to the inclusion of the item in question in the onomasticon. Ethnonyms, chiefly titles and even European names are spelled inconsistently by Brasseur. The original spelling has been preserved in the transcriptions, but standardized and modernized in the English version. The onomasticon has been so organized as to give all of the variants of a given name. As in the case of ethnonyms, personal names and titles, Brasseur's original (and often inconsistent) spelling of geographical features has been retained in the French transcriptions but corrected in the English translation.

Marginalia and non-textual matters can be subdivided into three classes: those by the author, those by his primary reader – Désiré Brasseur – and those, clearly added at a later stage, by Brasseur's other brother, Joseph. Since they add little to the contents of his letters, Clément's occasional drawings have not been reproduced here. Brief descriptions, however, are provided in the footnotes. Underscores by Désiré and Joseph have been similarly omitted; Clément's own underlinings (distinguishable from later ones) have instead been retained. One, or possibly both, of the letters' main readers had a habit of adding brief annotations next to select paragraphs. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these served as mere aide-memoires. Because of this, and not to overburden the text unnecessarily, they are not included in this edition. When, however, such annotations contribute to a fuller understanding of the text, they are given in the footnotes and in quotation marks. Clément's own infrequent footnotes are marked by two asterisks — (**)— and are introduced by '(CB)' to indicate their authorship. The few explanatory footnotes in English appended to the transcriptions are my own.

GM
25 Sept. 2018