

Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza, a Life, a Story with the Congo

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ABSTRACT

Savorgnan De Brazza figures prominently .This character marked the history of the Congo through his work which can be summed up in three missions carried out on Congolese soil. To remember the latter, the capital of the Congo bears his name: Brazzaville, the city of De Brazza. Besides this, many other places of memory in the Congo bear his name. This study focuses on the life of Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza, his story in particular, the one that links him with the peoples of the Congo. Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza is the first European to have arrived in the current Congolese Cuvette. It was after the Franceville stage in Gabon that De Brazza took the road to the Congo via the Plateaux which he now knows well to reach the Congo River. From this trip, the elders retain the revelation of the name of the Sovereign Teke, King Makoko whose treaty with De Brazza, later allowed the foundation of Brazzaville. This study is about De Brazza a life, a story. This sends us back to the man, his life and his story.

KEYWORDS

De Brazza; life; history; Congo; Brazzaville

INTRODUCTION

European explorations led to colonization in the 19th century · Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza who represents France is at the center of this activity in Congo, in Central Africa. The action of this character was capital in the taking possession of the Congo by France.

On September 10, 1880, he signed a treaty with King Teke Illo I · which put the Congo under the sovereignty of France. The name of this character has since remained engraved in the annals of the history of the Congo. Subsequently, on October 3, 1880, in the village M'fa, located on the right bank of the Congo, less than two km from the first rapids, in a solemn palaver and in the presence of the representative of *Unko* , Ngaliéma-N'gaon, Savorgnan De Brazza takes possession of the territory of N'couna where, under the name of Brazzaville, the final location of the capital is fixed. Brazzaville was born. To develop this reflection, we have identified a few concerns:

So, who is De Brazza (his life)? What to remember from him? (its history and its heritage in AEF in general and in Congo in particular)? These are the few axes retained to develop this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

De Brazza: His Biography

Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza was born on January 25, 1852 in Castel Gandolfo (Vatican) ¹, Italy. He is the seventh of thirteen children of Count Ascanio Savorgnan di Brazza, a nobleman from Udine, a patrician family from Venice. A traveler and cultured man, he grew up in an environment where he had many French friends.

¹ M. Soret, 1978, *History of the Congo capital Brazzaville* , Paris, Petit et Cie

At sixteen, he entered the Naval Academy of France with the help of Admiral de Montagnac and with the rank of ensign. As soon as he left the training, he embarked for Algeria. Very quickly, he applied for his French naturalization. After taking part in the 1870-1871 war, he set foot on AEF soil for the first time via Gabon and discovered the mouths of the Ogooué. On February 15, 1875, De Montagnac signed his mission order for a mission to explore the great Gabonese river. Pierre S. De Brazza has received numerous distinctions, including:

- The great medal of the Legion of Honor in 1879,
- Knight of the Legion of Honor in 1879,
- Officer of the Legion of Honor,
- Commander of the Legion of Honour.

Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza died during his last trip to Dakar, on September 14, 1905. Indeed, De Brazza became so attached to Ogooué, to the Congo and to the natives of the AEF that he devoted his entire his life. He died on the job in 1095 at the age of 53. He had worked nowhere else but in the Congo: a quarter of a century of hard work. His health ruined, he died in Dakar on his way back to France, which he therefore did not reach ². First buried in Algiers, De Brazza now rests on Congolese soil. Hence this Memorial dedicated to him.

De Brazza and His Action on Congolese Soil (History)

History recognizes the action or the work of Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza in Africa in general and in AEF in particular through his three missions:

The First mission : from October 1875 to December 1878, mission devoted to the preparation of its penetration into Central Africa from Dakar in Senegal. Here, he recruited some African companions including Sergeant Malamine Kamara. After Dakar, PS De Brazza and his companions settle in Libreville to reach after Lambaréné.

This first mission was not successful. But it had enabled De Brazza to reach the Alima ³. For Saragba, the desired objective has not been achieved. However, the explorer had brought back in his suitcase countless information relating to the immense resources with which the country abounded (rubber, ivory, wood, etc.) and he attracted the attention of circles of industrial, economic businessmen, traders, etc.⁴

The second mission : from December 1879 to June 1882. In contrast to the first, De Brazza's second mission was very fruitful. During this mission, he founded Libreville on June 13, 1880, as confirmed by his words: *in the name of France, I plant the flag here. Long live France, long live the Republic* ⁵.

After the Gabon stage, De Brazza arrives on Congolese lands by descending through the Küküa plateaus . On the wealth of the lands of the Küküa countries, Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza who crossed them at the end of the 19th century was struck by its fabulous wealth: The sand is finished. The land is black and fertile and the country flat like the surface of a lake... Extremely dense population, careful cultivation...

² AM Aissi, 2006, Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza: the man and his work in Oubangui-Chari in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium "Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza, Founder of the Congo-French: the centenary of his death* , Libreville, Les Cahiers d'Histoire et Archéologie, UOB, p.189.

³ S. Dianzinga, 2010, The foundation of the colony of the French Congo, in *General History of the Congo* , Paris, l'Harmattan, p.117

⁴ M. Saragba, 2006, Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza: the man and his work in Oubangui-Chari in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium "Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza, Founder of the French Congo: The centenary of his death"*, Cahiers d'histoire et of Archaeology, UOB, p.157.

⁵ H. Servien, 1985, *Short history of French colonies and missions*, Paris, PUF, p.52.

Market all day in plantations of cassava and maize not yet formed. Half-harvested pistachios, sorrel, ngiaca, squash. Around the village of Obeme, there are mature maize plantations, cassava plantations that are starting in the village itself. I saw cabbage, real cabbage planted and well cared for in a square. What a fertile country, what a happy country! Not a pebble in the earth, not a stone, not a mound. Everything is flat. Palm and bamboo palm groves and plantations everywhere ⁶.

Then he approaches the banks of the Léfini. He meets *Unko* king of the Teke and signs with him in Mbé, a treaty which places all the Teke territories under his control, on September 10, 1880. Which makes Servien say:

the responsibility of the French is cleared and, once the agreement is concluded, Brazza goes down to N'couna where he receives the homage of the chiefs. On October 1st 1880, the deed of possession was drawn up and signed. Thus, on October 3, 1880, Brazza and his companions erected a hut in N'couna which would house the French flag guarded by Malamine Kamara. As in Libreville in Gabon, it is up to De Brazza to say while implanting it: here is the sign of friendship and protection that I leave you. France is everywhere this emblem of peace floats, and it upholds the rights of all those who cover themselves with it ⁷.

To honor his memory, *M'fa* will later bear the name of Brazzaville.

Because of the good results obtained during this second mission, De Brazza, back in Paris, was welcomed as a hero in learned societies.

The third mission: From March 1883 to November 1885, De Brazza returned to the French Congo on March 21, 1883. From Brazzaville, he launched missions in the direction of several axes of the AEF:

- Albert Dolisie in the Congolese basin, water area and,
- His brother Jacques Dolisie in the Congolese Cuvette area of the highlands,
- Bobichon in Oubangui-Chari,
- Emile Gentil in Chad,
- Liotard in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Sylvain Makosso Makosso tells us the following in this paragraph about the De Brazza-Makoko meeting during his third and last trip to Mbé : *He was at the height of his glory. He entered Mbé in 1884. He gave the king a vigorous and friendly* ⁸*hug* . They looked at each other smiling and exchanging these words: I kept my promise; I bring you back the approved treaty says PS De Brazza. Nothing has changed between us since the first time I saw you, the Makoko answered⁹.

De Brazza's Legacy or Impact of His Work

From the heritage of Pierre S. De Brazza, we can note:

- The foundation of the city of Franceville in Gabon in June 1880,
- The signing of treaties with local chiefs between 1880 and 18821,
- The foundation of Brazzaville, October 3, 1880,
- Participation in the creation of the general governorate in the French Congo,
- Pioneer in the CFCO construction project,

⁶ Z. Sah, 2013, *Traditional medicine and society among the Kiküia (Teke) 18th- 20th century*, Brazzaville, UMNIG history doctoral thesis, p.33. Ron.

⁷ H. Servien, *op.cit* . 136.

⁸ S. Makosso Makosso, *op. quote* . p. 145.

⁹ H. Servien, *ibd.* p.136

- Participation in the establishment of the institutional architecture of the French Congo.

To perpetuate his memory and bequeath his legacy to posterity, many places of remembrance in the Congo and its capital bear his name. We can mention: the Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza memorial in Brazzaville, the Lycée Savorgnan De Brazza in Brazzaville, the monument of PS De Brazza and his companions in Brazzaville

CONCLUSION

The missions of De Brazza constitute an immense work which contributed to the installation of the administrative, political, structural and socioeconomic architecture in AEF in general and in Congo in particular. In November 1885, De Brazza was appointed Commissioner General of the Government in the French Congo. A position he held until 1897. During these years, he worked to organize the colony that he helped to create. However, criticized in this role of administrator, he was laid off in 1898 before resigning in May 1901. A few years later, De Brazza was put to work again. Following the financial scandals, France asked him to go to the Congo and make an inspection trip there. Colonial conditions have deteriorated, slavery is still rampant. While returning to France to report on the situation, Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza died suddenly during his trip to Dakar on September 14, 1905, first buried in Algiers then re-buried in Brazzaville where he rests for eternity. in his memorial.

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