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A black and white portrait of a middle-aged man with a full, dark beard and mustache. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt with a dark cravat or necktie. The background is dark and indistinct.

[illegible][illegible]

1

it is, without being broken up. Although I would be indecisive if one were to offer me 200,000 francs for it, that is, 40,000 U.S. dollars, I believe that would let it go, despite wrenching my paternal guts. I would still rather see it safely in the United States than exposed to the follies of our so-called Republicans.

I send you the enclosed pages from the *Arte chiapaneca* that my nephew has just finished copying, under my supervision. If you see Mr. Squier please tell him that I would be very pleased to have a copy of *L'histoire tolteca* by Mr. Aubin that he always promised me. If he finds an opportunity he might send it to me via a bookseller. My compliments to friends in New York and Mérida and to you, my most sincere and affectionate wishes.

Yours,
Brasseur de Bourbourg

When citing me in your writings, please always mention me as Brasseur de Bourbourg; there are three monks named Brasseur who are authors, and a fourth, who is a journal editor, with the name Charles, like me. I always sign with the name of my mother, which is not acquired by right.

How is little Sabino?

The author of the note, Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, was born in 1814 in the town of Bourbourg in northern France and, after a career as a journalist and romantic novelist, was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1845. For a short time he served as a professor of ecclesiastical history in Quebec, later vicar-general of the Boston diocese, and afterwards returned to Europe where he spent two winters searching archives in Rome for documents relative to Spanish America. In 1848 he arrived in Mexico and became chaplain of the French Legation at that city. In 1851 he returned to Paris until 1854, when he sailed for New York and from there to the Isthmus and Central America, visiting Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. He arrived in Guatemala City in February, 1855, and was made ecclesiastical administrator of Rabinal. In 1857 he was again in France, and the years 1859 and 1860 were spent in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Chiapas, also parts of Guatemala. In 1864 he became attached to Commission Scientifique du Mexique, the French scientific mission to Mexico, but political events drove him back to Guatemala in 1865, and he returned to Europe. He died in Nice in January, 1873.



Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg

Brasseur de Bourbourg was an indefatigable student of Mesoamerica. The many and protracted travels in Mexico and Central America, his lengthy visits among Indian groups, and his frequent visits to Europe were often made for the purpose of examining local archives for ethnographic, linguistic, and historic material. He collected a large number of early manuscripts and prints from Central America, and improved his apostolic labors among the Indians for ethnographic purposes. His publications embrace the period from 1857 to 1871, and the value of these publications is still significant. His main works are *Histoire des Nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique centrale* (Paris, 1857-1859, 4 v.); *Cartas para servir de Introducción á la Historia primitiva de las Naciones civilizadas de la América septentrional* (Mexico, 1851); *Voyage sur l'Isthme de Tehuantepec dans l'état de Chiapas et la République de Guatémala, 1859 et 1860* (Paris, 1861); *Popol Vuh, le Livre sacré des Quichés, &c.* (Paris, 1861); *Grammaire Quich:ée et le drame de Rabinal Achí* (Paris, 1862); *Relation des choses du Yucatan* (Paris, 1864); *Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique* (Paris, 1868); *Monuments anciens du Mexique* (Paris, 1866); *Manuscrit Troano* (Paris, 1869-1870); and *Bibliothèque mexico-guatémaliennne* (Paris, 1871). Brasseur

also discovered and translated important documents such as the Ximénez translation of the *Popol Vuh*; the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* (now at the University of Pennsylvania Library); Landa's *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*; the *Rabinal Achi*; and the so-called *Codex Troano*, now part of the Codex Madrid. Towards the end of his career Brasseur was convinced that indigenous writings were allegorical, and he gradually turned to spiritualism. His *Quatre Lettres* ruined his reputation for serious scholarship when he proposed that Atlantis explained similarities between Egypt and Mexico, and argued that an Atlantean race was responsible for ancient American civilization. He also claimed that Mayan hieroglyphs recorded a colossal cataclysm that had engulfed a large island in the Atlantic in 9937 BC; this island supposed to be Plato's Atlantis.

After Brasseur de Bourbourg's death his collection of manuscripts and printed books was scattered. The largest part was acquired by Alphonse Pinart, once husband of the famous Mexicanist Zelia Nuttall. Daniel G. Brinton bought part of the library, including the original manuscript of the *Memorial de Tecpán-Atitlán*, which he published in 1885 under the title, *The Annals of the Chakchiquels*, and other documents relating to the languages of Guatemala, which after his death passed to the library of the museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Bancroft bought another part of the collection which is now in the library of manuscripts which bears his name at the University of California in Berkeley. When Pinart's collection was put on sale in 1884, the largest part of it remained in France at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Another part was acquired by Count H. de Charencey, and upon his death the collection went to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.



Karl Hermann Berendt

The recipient of Brasseur's note was Karl Hermann Berendt, a lesser known but still an important figure in the development of Mesoamerican studies. Berendt was born in Danzig (Gdansk) in 1817, and studied at various German universities before receiving his medical degree at the University of Königsberg (Kalingrad) in 1842. He began a medical practice in Breslau (Wrocław) in 1843, and in 1848 he was a member of the *Vor-Parlament* at Frankfurt-am-Main. His liberal political views resulted in his dismissal from the University and, in 1851, went to the Americas. Berendt, like so many other Europeans at this time, probably saw in the free institutions of America a democratic model that suited his political philosophy. He proceeded from New York to Nicaragua, where he spent two years conducting a range of natural historical and anthropological investigations. He later moved to Orizaba, Mexico, and then to Vera Cruz, where he remained from 1855 to 1862. He soon abandoned the practice of medicine and devoted himself to natural science, linguistics, and ethnology. Much of his time was spent traveling throughout the southern Mexican states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Yucatan, collecting natural history specimens for the Smithsonian Institution. Between December, 1865, and xxxx he planned to undertake geographical and anthropological studies within a transect extending from the Caribbean Sea, through Belize, the Petén region of Guatemala, the state of Chiapas in southwestern Mexico, to the Pacific Ocean (Berendt 1868). Berendt left Belize City in January, 1866, traveling by dugout canoe on the Belize River, to San Pedro Buenavista, where he waited for mules and muleteers to be sent from Guatemala. He then rode to the Petén region of northern Guatemala; he noted that rest stations where water, food, and palms for camp building were available stood at 20 km intervals along the way. He departed the main trail at one of these stations for a road to Lake Macanché, and then proceeded to El Remate on the northern part of Lake Petén. Here Berendt was met by four canoes and then paddled for 12 hours along the northern shore of the lake, to Flores. He describes Flores at that time as consisting of "about 900 inhabitants, who live, crowded together, in miserable huts built of sticks covered with mud and roofed with palm leaves" (Berendt 1868). Berendt spent a month at Flores collecting specimens and examining archaeological ruins. Berendt relocated to Sacluc, a mahogany logging settlement in a large savanna 30 km southwest of

Flores. Sacluc was a rough place populated with migrant loggers from Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatan, and runaway Blacks from the British West India regiments. From Sacluc, excursions were made along the Río Pasión and its tributaries and lagoons, where Berendt continued ethnographic and linguistic studies among the Lacandon Maya and, during occasional chance meetings, with Q'eqchi' Maya from the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala. While in Lacandon country he apparently adopted an orphaned Yucatec boy named José Sabino Uc. By October of 1866, his movement further west was postponed by a Maya insurrection that resulted in the abandonment of settlements and cessation of all communications between Belize and the Petén region. In April of 1867, he left Sacluc for Tenosique on the Río Usumacinta and San Juan Bautista, then the capital of Tabasco. Here Berendt revised and completed surveys of the Río Usumacinta and its tributaries, and followed its course some 25 km upriver from Tenosique to the so-called large cataract. On his return he visited the ruins at Palenque, and was able to complete a map of the region and collect vocabularies for several indigenous languages. Afterwards he visited the United States and returned to Central America in December in order to bring back his collections being stored at Flores and Sacluc. The Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, now subsidized Berendt's researches rather than the Smithsonian Institution (Wyman 1868:18; 1871:7). This trip appears to have been reasonably successful since, by 1873, the Museum had received eight crates containing approximately 200 antiquities, human remains, and other objects of archaeological or ethnographic value (Wyman 1871:7; 1872:26; 1873:6; 1874:23–24). By 1869 Berendt had explored the ruins of Centla, located at the drainage of the Río Grijalva and Río Usumacinta on the Gulf of Mexico, where the *conquistador* Hernán Cortés defeated a large force of Maya Indians in 1519. He visited the United States several times between 1869 and 1876, the year of his last visit. By the late 1860s Berendt was experiencing financial difficulties and most of the monographs in his personal library, together with a collection formed by the sinister Agustin Fischer, chaplain to the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, were sold by Puttick and Simpson at auction in London (*Bibliotheca Mejicana* 1869). Through the maneuvers of Fischer, Maximilian was able to obtain the library of the great Mexican collector José Maria Andrade as the basis for a Mexican national library. However, this collection was eventually sold at auction in Leipzig in January of 1869 (Catalogue 1869). Much of the collection was acquired by Hubert Howe Bancroft. Most of 1871 and 1872 were spent in New York, accompanied by his adopted son. In 1874 Berendt settled at Cobán, the center of the German coffee plantations in the Verapaz region of Guatemala. He purchased land with coffee groves, acquired the first printing press in Cobán, and co-founded the local newspaper, *El Quetzal* (Frey 1938; Terga Citrón 1991:8). He visited Philadelphia during the summer of 1876 in order to examine the manuscripts in Central American indigenous languages at the American Philosophical Society. At this time he probably finalized arrangements with Daniel G. Brinton to purchase his valuable collection of manuscripts. While in the United States Berendt was commissioned by Adolf Bastian, director of the Königl. Museen zu Berlin, to supervise the excavation, cutting-up, and transporting of prehispanic monuments from the site of Bilbao (Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa) on the Pacific coastal piedmont of Guatemala. Together with a German engineer from Koblenz named Albert Napp, he began working at the site in February of 1877. Despite many hardships, Berendt evidently kept meticulous records of the progress of the work from January 1877 to March 1878 in a diary to his wife (Parsons 1967–1969: 2:17–18). He imported special saws to remove the carved surfaces of the sculptures from their backs and heavy bases so they could be moved and shipped with less effort and weight. In a little over a year, although ridden with chronic kidney disease and suffering from hardships imposed by local living conditions, he performed a tremendous task, supervising the excavations, mapping, crating, and preparation for shipment of the monuments. It was fortunate that he expedited the work because he became ill and died on April 12, 1878, in Guatemala City. Most of his reports were sent earlier to Bastian in Germany, who saw to their publication (Bastian 1882). The remainder of the diary and his field drawings and maps were preserved by his son who wrote about them to Bastian on April 12, 1878. The present location of the notes is unknown.

After a series of delays, some 30 major stone monuments and a number of minor pieces were placed aboard the German vessel *José Ginebra* in late 1880, arriving at the Prussian Baltic seaport of Stettin (Szczecin), in August of 1881. The monuments were finally put on exhibit by Bastian early in

1883. Lee Parsons (1967–1969) illustrates 29 of the monuments shipped by Berendt at the Königlische Museen zu Berlin in his monograph on the archaeological investigations at Bilbao. These include Monuments 1–9, 13–15, 20, 26, 30–32, 40, 46, 47, 49, 64, 67, 69, 70, and 72–75. By 1892 plaster casts of thirteen of the monuments were prepared for an exhibit in Hamburg to celebrate the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. Several of the casts were exhibited in the Guatemalan pavilion at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. These eventually became part of the collections at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Others were donated by the German government to Spain and shown at Madrid in 1892. Today they are in the Museo de América in Madrid.

As a consequence of the removal of these sculptures to Berlin, the Guatemalan government realized the intrinsic value of its prehispanic heritage. On November 15, 1893, President José Maria Reyna Barrios passed a decree prohibiting the unauthorized excavation of any Maya ruins, vandalism at archaeological sites, and the exportation of archaeological objects.

The Berendt Collection, now at the library of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, comprises 183 entries pertaining to more than 40 indigenous Mexican and Central American languages and covers the period from the middle 16th through the late 18th centuries. It includes 40 original manuscripts, 43 transcriptions of original manuscripts, 34 published monographs, 6 transcriptions, either complete or partial, of published monographs, and some 60 unpublished manuscript notes by Berendt. There are also numerous miscellaneous notes, correspondence, and other items of ephemera pasted or inserted in several volumes. Many of these languages are now moribund or extinct, making the collection one of the most important of its kind (Weeks 1998). Alfred M. Tozzer (1921:147), the great Mayanist at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, offered this evaluation of the Berendt collection: "Up to the time when Mr. [William E.] Gates began his photographic reproductions every student of Maya linguistics was absolutely dependent upon his Berendt material."

Brasseur's comment to the Paris commune is a reference to the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. The spark for the war was ignited with the candidature of German Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to be King of Spain after the deposition of Isabela II. Even though this was withdrawn, there was public outrage in France against Germany, and a war party was formed within the government, supported by the Empress Eugénie and the Parisian public. Napoleon III was too ill to resist, and the "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck was also eager for war. The Prussians and their south German allies defeated the French at Sedan, and 100,000 soldiers were taken prisoner. Napoleon III surrendered to avoid a massacre and, following his abdication, a government of National Defence was formed. The Prussians surrounded and besieged Paris during the winter of 1870-1871, resisting French armies raised in the rest of the country. Parisians suffered starvation, bombardments and disease; balloons and pigeon post providing the only contact with the outside. Paris was surrendered and the Prussians entered the city in March, 1871. The new government of passed legislation demanding arrears in rents which had not been paid during the siege by Parisians, and withdrawing the pay of the National Guards. The mood of insurrection in Paris came to a head when the government, established at Versailles, tried to seize cannon being held in Montmartre. Parisians fought off the government troops and kept their cannon. The Commune was proclaimed on 28 March, with its seat in the Hôtel de Ville, and its symbol the red flag. A civil war was fought between the Commune and the troops of the Versailles government until May, 1871, when the Commune was suppressed.

The palace of the Tuileries, situated at the eastern end of the Louvre, the Palais Royal, the Hôtel de Ville, the Palais de Justice, the Finance ministry and police headquarters were burned to the ground. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Communards were killed, and after a further 35,000 arrests, many were deported to New Caledonia in the Pacific. As a result of the Treaty of Frankfurt which ended hostilities between France and Prussia, most of Alsace and part of Lorraine passed from France to the German Empire, and the French inhabitants could only retain their nationality if they left the area. France also had to pay huge war reparations.

The damage to libraries both outside the city and within Paris sustained during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and the subsequent revolutionary commune in 1871 was incalculable, as implied by Brasseur. The library of the Hotel de Ville, begun in 1533 and completed in 1605, was a total loss. Only

100 of 125,000 volumes survived. Also completely destroyed were the libraries of the Council of State, the Court of Accounts, the Court of Appeals, the Legion of Honor, the Society of Advocates, the Ministry of Finance, and the library of the Prefecture of Police. Of the national libraries, the library of the Louvre was completely destroyed when members of the Commune, dressed in the uniform of the National Guard, set fire to the building with the aid of petroleum.

Brasseur also refers to Maximilian. A member of Austria's Imperial Habsburg-Lorraine family, Maximilian was proclaimed Emperor of Mexico on April 10, 1864 with the backing of Napoleon III of France and a group of Mexican conservatives. Many foreign governments refused to recognize his government, especially the United States; this ensured the success of Republican forces led by Benito Juárez, and Maximilian was executed, after his capture by Mexican Republicans, in Querétaro in 1867.

In the final line of the note Brasseur refers to Berendt's son, José Sabino Uc. Sabino, a Yucatec Maya, was born in 1857 and adopted by Berendt in 1869 while he was at Sacluk (La Libertad). Little is known of the boy other than he accompanied Berendt to New York in 1871-1872 (Bolles 2005). There is a portrait of Karl Hermann Berendt with an Indian boy, presumably his son, in the National Anthropological Archives (Glenn 1996), and two drawings by Berendt in his "Apuntes y estudios sobre la lengua zoque." One shows a young girl, probably Zoque, and reads "Juliana Vasquez, Tuxla, feb. 2 de 1870. Ya estas acomodada, muchacha?" The other shows a boy and a girl, with the caption, "Juliana Vasquez lernt von Sabino, Tuxtla, 1869.



José Sabino Uc and Juliana Vasquez, 1869

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