

## Reactions to Imperialism in Africa

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**Using the seven documents, analyze African reactions in response to European imperialism in Africa.**

- 1. If you could cut the documents apart into individual documents which ones would you place in a pile together as being similar? Why did you create these different categories? You can use some of the documents in more than one category of reaction FYI. Was there one that did not fit in any category? Why not?**
- 2. How did responses to European colonialism change over time?**
- 3. There are non-violent reactions and violent reactions. From the documents why do things turn violent typically?**

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**(Doc 1) Source: A standard form presented to African rulers by the British Royal Niger Company, which was commissioned by the British government to administer and develop the Niger River delta and surrounding areas, 1886. The blanks would be filled in by the African rulers.**

We, the undersigned Chiefs of \_\_\_\_\_, with the view to the bettering of our country and people, do this day cede to the Royal Niger Company, forever, the whole of our territory extending \_\_\_\_\_. We pledge ourselves not to enter into any war with other tribes without the sanction of the said Royal Niger Company. . . . The said Royal Niger Company bind themselves not to interfere with any of the native laws or customs of the country, consistently with the maintenance of order and good government. The said Royal Niger Company agree to pay native owners of land a reasonable amount for any portion they may require. . . . and to pay the said Chiefs \_\_\_\_\_ measures native value. The \_\_\_\_\_ chiefs . . . affixed their marks of their own free will and consent. . . . Done in triplicate at \_\_\_\_\_, this \_\_\_\_\_ day, of \_\_\_\_\_, 188 \_\_\_\_.

**(Doc 2) Source: Prempeh I, Ashanti leader, response to a British offer of protectorate status, West Africa, 1891.**

The suggestion that Ashanti in its present state should come and enjoy the protection of Her Majesty the Queen of England and Empress of India is a matter of very serious consideration. I am pleased to announce that we have arrived at the conclusion that my kingdom of Ashanti will never commit itself to any such policy. Ashanti must remain as of old and at the same time remain friendly with all White men.

**(Doc 3) Source: Menelik II, emperor of Ethiopia, letter to Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, 1891.**

I have no intention at all of being an indifferent spectator, if the distant Powers hold onto the idea of dividing up Africa. For the past fourteen centuries Ethiopia has been an island of Christians in a sea of Pagans. Since the All-Powerful has protected Ethiopia up until now, I am hopeful that He will keep and enlarge it also in the future, and I do not think for a moment that He will divide Ethiopia among the distant Powers. In the past, the boundary of Ethiopia was the sea. Without our use of force and without the aid of the Christians, our boundary on the sea fell into the hands of the Muslims. Today we do not pretend to be able to recover our seacoast by force; but we hope that the Christian Powers, advised by our Savior, Jesus Christ, will restore our seacoast boundary to us, or give us at least a few ports along the coast.

**(Doc 4) Source: Ndansi Kumalo, African veteran of the Ndebele Rebellion against British advances in southern Africa, 1896.**

So we surrendered to the White people and were told to go back to our homes and live our usual lives and attend to our crops. We were treated like slaves. They came and were overbearing. We were ordered to carry their clothes and bundles. They harmed our wives and our daughters. How the rebellion started I do not know; there was no organization, it was like a fire that suddenly flames up. I had an old gun. They—the White men—fought us with big guns, machine guns, and rifles. Many of our people were killed in this fight: I saw four of my cousins shot. We made many charges but each time we were defeated. But for the White men's machine guns, it would have been different.

**(Doc 5) Source: Yaa Asantewa, Ashanti queen mother, speech to chiefs, West Africa, 1900.**

Now I have seen that some of you fear to go forward and fight for our King. If it were in the brave days of old, chiefs would not sit down to see their King taken away without firing a shot. No White man could have dared to speak to chiefs of the Ashanti in the way the British governor spoke to you chiefs this morning. Is it true that the bravery of the Ashanti is no more? I cannot believe it. Yea, it cannot be! I must say this; if you the men of Ashanti will not go forward, then we will. We the women will. I shall call upon my fellow women. We will fight the White men. We will fight until the last of us falls on the battlefields.

**(Doc 6) Source: Samuel Maherero, a leader of the Herero people, letter to another African leader, German South-West Africa, 1904.**

All our obedience and patience with the Germans is of little avail, for each day they shoot someone dead for no reason at all. Hence I appeal to you my Brother, not to hold aloof from the uprising, but to make your voice heard so that all Africa may take up arms against the Germans. Let us die fighting rather than die as a result of maltreatment, imprisonment, or some other calamity. Tell all the chiefs down there to rise and do battle.

**(Doc 7) Source: German military officer, account of the 1905 Maji Maji Rebellion in German East Africa, German military weekly newspaper, 1906.**

The chiefs spread it among their people that a spirit, living in the form of a snake, had given a magic medicine to a medicine man. The medicine guaranteed a good harvest, so that in future people would no more need to perform wage labor for foreigners in order to obtain accustomed luxuries. The medicine would also give invulnerability, acting in such a way that enemy bullets would fall from their targets like raindrops from a greased body. It would strengthen women and children for the flight customary in wartime, with the associated hardships and privations, and protect them from being seized by the victorious attackers, who were accustomed to taking women and children with them as war prizes. The medicine consisted of water, maize, and sorghum grains. The water was applied by pouring it over the head and by drinking.