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Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources


This document was the text of the Berlin Conference General Act, which was made at the end of the Berlin Conference. It provided us with insight as to the specifics of what was discussed at the Berlin Conference, such as trade in the Congo. Certain articles in the Berlin Conference General Act also allowed us to understand why the Scramble for Africa that followed the Berlin Conference was so rapid and brutal. Overall, this resource was very helpful in providing us with information about the discussions in the Berlin Conference.


Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, the Secretary of State of the United States of America in 1884, represented the United States in being the first country to acknowledge Leopold’s claim to the Congo. In this report that Frelinghuysen sent to the President of the United States, Frelinghuysen relayed the issue of European rights in Africa and of the Congo. He explained the basic concepts that the Europeans were discussing at the Berlin Conference, such as trade zones and free trade, as well as proposals made by the various European countries at the conference. This report allowed us to obtain a view into what was discussed at the Berlin Conference.


In this letter, readers get a different viewpoint on how King Leopold justified his conquering the Congo. He pens a letter to the Minister Beernaert and talks about how he just wants the best for Belgium like all good kings do. This letter gives a good insight as to how most nations probably justified their taking over Africa and lets the reader see things from both points of view.

This is an article written by Sir Henry Stanley about his finding of British explorer Dr. Livingstone, who had disappeared years before searching for the source of the Nile. Stanley, a journalist, was sent to find Dr. Livingstone, whom was feared dead, by the New York Herald. The events in the article explain how the people of the village reacted to Henry Stanley’s appearance and quest to find Dr. Livingstone.


This resource was a letter sent to King Leopold II of Belgium in 1890 by the American politician George Washington Williams, complaining about the treatment and condition of the people and state of The Congo, which was a personal state of King Leopold II at the time. It called for an international investigation and tribunal into the happenings in The Congo. George Washington Williams also warned King Leopold about Henry Stanley, an American under the employment of the Belgium Government, who was tricking the African people by using technology, such as focused sunlight, batteries and guns to scare the African people into obeying him.

Secondary Sources


This source was a recording of a lecture by Professor Patrick N. Allitt, the Cahoon Family Professor of American History at Emory University. It explained the motivations behind the European conquest of Africa and provided information about the various brutal methods that were used during the conquest. The resource also described the territories in Africa that each European power acquired following the Berlin Conference and discussed the exploitation of the Congo by King Leopold II. Our group extracted several segments from this lecture and placed them in our website to further our analysis of the Berlin Conference.


This source was extremely helpful in expanding our knowledge on the Berlin Conference. By first elaborating on past European conflicts for African territory, it provided context and background information about why the Berlin Conference took place. The article then went on to present details about the actual conference: when the conference was held, which countries attended, and what questions were discussed. Lastly, as a conclusion, the results and consequences of the Berlin Conference were described; the article spoke of which European countries ended up controlling which African territories, as well as how the Berlin Conference
was detrimental to the welfare of Africa in several ways. Overall, this article was useful by providing us with a basic overview of the Berlin Conference.


Although this resource was very short in length, it provided us with a relatively thorough understanding of the outcome of the Berlin Conference. At the Berlin Conference, European territory rights of Africa were discussed. This article addressed which geographical territories each participating country acquired, as well as how conditions of Africa changed due to European conquest. According to the article, European powers often abused African natives and used force to gain their consent. Therefore, Africa itself was in worse condition after the Berlin Conference than it was in before.


This resource described some of the immediate consequences of the Berlin Conference. It mostly focused on the German conquests in South West Africa, explaining how the Germans either drove out various indigenous tribes by forceful means or obtained their land through trickery. The Herero and Nama tribes were two of most effective African tribes in resisting German colonization, but even they were eventually overpowered. The Germans were at an advantage because they possessed modern war technology, and any African natives who opposed them were cruelly treated or brutally killed.


From this source, we could see long term effects that the over-farming and over-mining of African land during the “Scramble for Africa” led to. This source goes into detail about effects of soil erosion and how it happens, including causes and effects. This source was created by the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology of University of the Western Cape.


At the Berlin Conference, boundary lines to partition Africa were drawn by European diplomats. This journal article provided us with a view of the conditions in Africa before the partitioning and the impacts that the partitioning had on African society afterwards. The African continent had previously been arranged in organized African tribes and clans. Each African tribe had a unique language and culture, and disagreeable tribes were separated from one another. However, with the sudden insertion of boundary lines by European powers, Africa was thrown into complete turmoil. The boundary lines split up well-organized tribes and brought together those
that loathed each other. Thus, though the Berlin Conference partitioned Africa in ways that satisfied most European powers, it completely threw African life into disorder.


This particular chapter referred to J. D. Hargreaves, a professor of history in the University of Aberdeen, who wrote the *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*. His analysis gave us a new perspective and made us rethink our thesis. His point of view is that the Berlin conference wasn’t what partitioned Africa, which contradicted the rest of our research. However, it was an interesting view on this topic.


This book gave our group great insight as to the reality for the natives at the time when the Congo belonged to King Leopold as a personal property. It was useful to help us further understand the conditions the Africans faced at the time and their responses to it. This is a powerfully written book with multiple helpful maps and pictures, but we understand the bias that is involved, as Adam Hochschild's disapproval of King Leopold is adamant.


This documentary film adapted from the book *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild was extremely helpful in providing us with information about King Leopold II and about his actions concerning the Congo. We extracted many clips from it, especially ones in which professors and scholars spoke, and put it on our website to provide relevant information to our viewers. All video clips on our website are extracted from this film.


Our group took excerpts from this lecture to put as podcasts on our website to further our point and to add credibility to our analysis. The 30-minute lecture contained valuable information about the prelude to the Scramble for Africa, going into detail about various colonial empires and examining the motives that might have launched the Scramble for Africa. This source also goes on to briefly talk about the actual Berlin Conference and the immediate consequences of the new colonial borders in Africa. The speaker in this lecture is a professor with a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and teaches at the University of Tennessee.

This is a magazine article that talked about problems in Africa today and how they related to the colonists back then. It mainly focused on the state that the big countries left Africa in and how that connected to what Africa goes through today. This source was written a while ago but it still makes good connections.


Our group used this source to learn more about the impact colonialism had on Africa and to further our knowledge about how Africa has fared since it gained independence. The book contained many useful photographs and maps that were helpful to our research. Meredith was reporter on the Times of Zambia and witnessed first-hand Zambia’s independence. As a researcher at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and author, he decided to delve deeper into the dynamics of Africa today, and, through his thorough and comprehensive study, he constructed this book.


This source referred constantly to a book by Roel van der Veen, a Dutch civil servant in the policy section of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called “What Went Wrong With Africa?” and commented on arguments made by van der Veen. It made excellent connections to how the scramble for Africa related to the many problems Africa goes through nowadays.


Assa Okoth is a history teacher with much experience and has written a number of published works on history. This book “The Scramble and Partition of Africa” talked about the social, economic, and political sides of African history and focused specifically on the time period of 1800-1914, during the scramble of Africa and the Berlin Conference.


This book gave an insight to one of the most intriguing players of the partition of Africa. It talked about the childhood of King Leopold II and showed how neutral, empire-less Belgium got one of the biggest slices of Africa: the Congo Basin. The rest of the book showed the effort of numerous
people around the world to tell of the horrors that occurred in the Congo Free State. It seemed that the author had an intense dislike of King Leopold II.


This book was an extremely helpful resource. It provided a very detailed and complete explanation of the Scramble for Africa, including information on the context of European imperialism, the actual event of the Berlin Conference, and the consequences of the Scramble. It first addressed the perspectives of several major European powers concerning their interest in colonising Africa, revealing their desires for financial gain. Then, it briefly described the topics discussed at the Berlin Conference, which included trade and the allotment of African territory to participating European powers. Finally, it explained the short and long-term consequences of the Berlin Conference. It detailed the brutal means by which European colonists greedily seized land from indigenous tribes during the Scramble for Africa, but it also mentioned the role of European imperialism in opening up Africa to global trade.


This website provided a lot of useful information about the context and event of the Berlin Conference. It showed the ambitions of European nations and which parts of Africa they wanted before the conference.


This website gave us a good idea about the end of the slave trade, as it tells which countries ended the slave trade and when they ended it. It also showed why the need for slaves fell and presented reasons why Europeans gave up on the two-hundred-year-old trade.


This resource provided us with a brief and succinct overview of the Berlin Conference. It first provided context for the event by telling of the European colonization race that continued all throughout the 1700s and 1800s. Then, it described how the European powers became interested in African territory and began to have disagreements over territory rights. After that, the event itself was explained, stating which countries were present, where the conference was held, and what some of the countries hoped to gain from the Berlin Conference. Lastly, the consequences were briefly described; the resource discussed the impacts that the Berlin Conference had on Africa and its inhabitants. Overall, this resource was helpful in providing us with general knowledge about the Berlin Conference.
An encyclopedia that organized various events in world history according to chronological order, this resource allowed us to easily identify the events that occurred in the same time range as the Berlin Conference, in particular the Sino-French War, the New Guinea Crisis, the German annexation of New Guinea and of the Bismarck Archipelago, and the Anglo-Russian Crisis. It provided us with context for the Berlin Conference. The source also confirmed that no African delegates were invited to the conference and verified previous knowledge about conference participants and claims to the Congo basin.


This novel by Mark Twain gave a fictional account of the events surrounding the Congo Free State from the supposed perspective of Belgium King Leopold II, who owned the state as his private kingdom. In the book, King Leopold gives a soliloquy that examines hundreds of pamphlets, all criticising his barbarous acts in the Congo. Mark Twain wrote the book in a way to get the reader to hate King Leopold.


This was a recording of a lecture by Professor Kenneth Vickery. It explained the changes that came from the colonization of Africa and went into detail about how the lives of natives were altered. This source mainly spoke about short-term changes that happened as a result of the Berlin Conference and many other events that affected the Africans after colonization began.


This was another recording of a lecture by Professor Kenneth Vickery, an associate professor at North Carolina State University, of the same series. This source mainly talked about the tension that was caused by the Scramble for Africa and how African resistance affected outcomes. It also mentioned possible factors that caused the European powers to desire to colonize Africa, as well as different methods used during the European conquest and how this affected Africa.

As an encyclopedia entry, this resource was quite short and brief, and it provided us with a quick overview of the Berlin Conference. This resource described the conference: who hosted it, which countries were present, and why the conference was held. However, unlike most other sources, this resource stated that the Berlin Conference did not lead to the partitioning of Africa; instead, it merely discussed matters of negotiation and trade in Africa. Because this view is different from most of my other sources, its credibility and accuracy are questionable, so we did not rely on it for information.


This resource took an interesting position concerning the Berlin Conference’s role in the partition of Africa. It claimed that it is merely a myth that the Berlin Conference was directly related to the division of Africa and that the division of Africa was, in fact, not in any way discussed at the Berlin Conference. After stating those assertions, the source provided context for the Berlin Conference by briefly discussing the European colonization race. The author then went on to describe the significance of the Berlin Conference, declaring that the conference was extremely insignificant and played a minor, unimportant role in Africa’s history. Although in certain ways this source provided some insight into the topic, especially concerning the context of the event, we did not come across many other works that shared its point of view, so we did not rely on this source for information.


This article explained that the Netherlands had ties to the Berlin Conference, and even though it gave up its African colonies before 1884, it was a considerable trader in the Congo Basin. The article went into great detail to explain the economical activities that occurred at some of the factories in the Congo. Also, it talked about people with significant influence over the Netherlands activities in the continent, such as Prince Henry and King Leopold II of Belgium, who eventually acquired, through the Berlin Conference, the territory the Dutch were trading in.


This book told about the history of Dr. David Livingstone and Henry M. Stanley before Stanley ‘discovered’ a ‘lost’ Dr. Livingstone. It also was a great source for the development of events right up until the Berlin Conference. It covers David Livingstone's personal life and his exploration of Southern Africa. Also, it shows the man's connection to the great continent of Africa, and explains why he was "lost" for a long time.