

A Typical African Blank Treaty, 1880's¹

Imperialist treaty making often followed a preconceived pattern. Agents bearing supplies of liquors and tinselled ornaments together with blank treaty forms set out on treaty-making expeditions. The blank treaty reproduced below was used by the Royal Niger Company in its drive to acquire sovereign rights in the valley of the Niger.

We, the undersigned Chiefs of _____, with the view of bettering the condition of our country and people, do this day cede to the Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited), for ever, the whole of our territory extending from _____

We also give to the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) full power to settle all native disputes arising from any cause whatever, and we pledge ourselves not to enter into any war with other tribes without the sanction of the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited).

We understand that the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) have full power to mine, farm, and build in any portion of our country.

We bind ourselves not to have any intercourse with any strangers or foreigners except through the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited).

In consideration of the foregoing, the said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) 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 (Chartered and Limited) agree to pay native owners of land a reasonable amount for any portion they may require.

The said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) bind themselves to protect the said Chiefs from the attacks of any neighbouring aggressive tribes.

The said Royal Niger Company (Chartered and Limited) also agree to pay the said Chiefs _____ measures native value.

We, the undersigned witnesses, do hereby solemnly declare that the _____ Chiefs whose names are placed opposite their respective crosses have in our presence affixed their crosses of their own free will and consent, and that the said _____ has in our presence affixed his signature.

Done in triplicate at _____, this _____ day of _____, 188_____.

Declaration by Interpreter.

I, _____, of _____, do hereby solemnly declare that I am well acquainted with the language of the _____ country, and that of the _____ day of _____, 188_____, I truly and faithfully explained the above Agreement to all the Chiefs present, and that they understood its meaning.

¹ Sir Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty* (London, 1894), I, 467 ff.