

## Example of Stanley's Congo Treaties

Reference: Henry M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*(1885),Vol. II, pp. 195-7

For almost six years during 1879 to 1884, the great explorer Stanley laboured on behalf of King Leopold of Belgium to survey the basin of the Upper Congo River with a view to establishing his own imperial enclave in Central Africa. The 1880s was the heyday of Western imperialism when great powers such as Britain, France and Germany began to lay claim to huge swathes of the African continent in what became known as the 'scramble for Africa'. The ambitious Leopold, through energy, determination and, not least, his own wealth devised his own plan to participate in this scramble. He founded the International African Association which, during Stanley's sojourn in the Congo, became the International Association of the Congo. During the years he spent in Africa, Stanley signed 'treaties', according to his own claim, with over 450 native chiefs, thus acquiring for Leopold sovereignty over their territories in accordance with the general terms of the sample treaty below. These developments were duly endorsed by the [Berlin Conference](#) attended by the great powers that gave approval to Leopold's organization of his African territory as the Congo Free State in 1885.

Henry M. Stanley, Commanding Expedition to the Upper Congo, acting in the name and on behalf of the International African Association, and the king and chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela, having met together in conference at South Manyanga, have, after deliberation, concluded the following treaty, viz.:

- Art. I. The chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela recognize that it is highly desirable that the International African Association should, for the advancement of civilization and trade, be firmly established in their country. They, therefore now, freely of their own accord, for themselves and their heirs and successors for ever, do give up to the said Association the sovereignty and all sovereign and governing rights to all their territories. They also promise to assist the said association in its work of governing and civilizing this country, and to use their influence with all the other inhabitants, with whose unanimous approval they make this treaty, to secure obedience to all laws made by the said association, and to assist by labor or otherwise, any works, improvements, or expeditions which the said association shall cause at any time to be carried out in any part of these territories.
- Art. II. The chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela promise at all times to join their forces with those of the said Association, to resist the forcible intrusion or repulse the attacks of foreigners of any nationality or color.
- Art. III. The chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela solemnly affirm that all this country belongs to them; that they can freely dispose of it; and that they neither have already, nor will on any future occasion, make any treaties, grants, or sales of any parts of these territories to strangers without the permission of the said Association. All roads and waterways running through this country, the right of collecting tolls on the same, and all game, fishing, mining, and forest rights, are to be the absolute property of the said association, together with any unoccupied lands as may at any time hereafter be chosen.
- The International African Association agree to pay to the chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela the following articles of merchandise, namely, one piece of cloth per month to each of the undersigned chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela.; and the said chiefs hereby acknowledge to accept this bounty and monthly subsidy in full settlement of all their claims on the said Association.
- The International African Association promises:
  1. To take from the natives of this ceded country no occupied or cultivated lands, except by mutual agreement.
  2. To promote to its utmost the prosperity of the said country.
  3. To protect its inhabitants from all oppression or foreign intrusion.
  4. It authorizes the chiefs to hoist its flag; to settle all local disputes; and to maintain its [I.A.A.] authority with the natives.

Agreed to, signed and witnessed,.....(etc.)