

CHAPTER
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Section 2

PRIMARY SOURCE **Letter from Menelik II**

From 1889 to 1913, Emperor Menelik II ruled Ethiopia, the only African nation to resist colonization. He wrote the following letter to the caliph of the Sudan to express his opposition to European expansion and his desire to strengthen his alliance with the Sudan. How did Menelik II intend to resist European attempts to colonize his country?

This is to inform you that the Europeans who are present round the White Nile with the English have come out from both the east and the west, and intended to enter between my country and yours and to separate and divide us. And I, when I heard of their plan, dispatched an expedition, sending detachments in five directions. The group [of Europeans] who are near are the English and the French, who are located in the direction from which the Belgians came. And do you remember when I sent to you Kantiba Jiru, you wrote to me by him that you have men in the direction from which the Belgians came?; and I ordered the chiefs of [my] troops that if they met with them, they were to parley with them and explain [my] intention. And now I have ordered my troops to advance towards the White Nile. And perhaps [if] you heard the news from merchants or from others you might misunderstand my action, [so now] I have written to you so that you would understand the object [of this expedition].

And you look to yourself, and do not let the Europeans enter between us. Be strong, lest if the

Europeans enter our midst a great disaster befall us and our children have no rest. And if one of the Europeans comes to you as a traveler, do your utmost to send him away in peace; and do not listen to rumors against me. All my intention is to increase my friendship with you, and that our countries may be protected from [their] enemies.

*from G.N. Sanderson, "The Foreign Policy of Negus Menelik" in the *Journal of African History*, Vol. 5, 1964. Reprinted in Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *The Horizon History of Africa* (New York: American Heritage, 1971), 429.*

Discussion Questions

Summarizing

1. According to Menelik II, what was the Europeans' plan?
2. What steps did Menelik II take in response to the Europeans' plan?
3. **Making Inferences** Based on your reading of this letter, what can you infer about the methods some European countries used to control African land and peoples?