

*Source: In the following document, an African chief named Mojimba recounts what happened when he led a welcoming party to meet Henry Stanley. Mojimba was interviewed by Joseph Fraessle, a Catholic missionary.*

When we heard that the man with the white flesh was journeying down the Lualaba River we were shocked. All night long the drums announced the strange news - a man with white flesh! That man, we said ourselves, has white skin. He must have got that from the river kingdom. He will be the one of our brothers who was drowned in the river. Now he is coming back to us, he is coming home. We will prepare a feast. We will go to meet our brother and bring him to the village! We put on our ceremonial clothing. We gathered the great canoes. We listened for the gong that would announce our brother's presence on the Lualaba. Soon the cry was heard: He is approaching! Now he enters the river! We swept forward, my canoe leading – the others followed singing and dancing.

But as we drew near his canoes there were loud sounds, bang! Bang! And fire-sticks spat bits of iron at us. We stood still with fright; our mouths hung wide open and we could not shut them. We thought they were evil spirits. Several of my men jumped into the water. Others fell down also, in the canoe. Some screamed terribly – others were silent – they yelled, “Go back!” The canoes sped back to our village with all the strength we had. That was no brother! That was the worst enemy we had ever seen.

And still those bangs went on; the long sticks spat fire, flying pieces of iron whistled around us, fell into the water with a hissing sound, and our brothers continued to fall. We fled our village – they came after us. We fled into the forest and flung ourselves on the ground. When we returned that evening, our eyes saw fearful things; our brothers, dead, dying, bleeding, our village looted and burned, and the water full of dead bodies. The robbers and murderers had disappeared.

Now tell me: has the white man dealt fairly by us? O, do not speak to me of him! You call us wicked men, but you white men are much more wicked! You think because you have guns you can take away our land and our possessions. You have sickness in your heads, for that is not justice.

*Source: In the document below, Henry Stanley describes how his group of explorers was attacked by Africans.*

At 2 p.m., we come out of the shelter of the deeply wooded banks in the presence of a vast river, nearly 2,000 yards across. As soon as we have entered its waters, we see a great group of canoes waiting by some islands in the middle of the stream. The canoe men shout as they see us, and blow their horns louder than ever. Looking up stream we see a sight that sends the blood tingling through every nerve of the body – a group of gigantic canoes coming straight at us! Instead of aiming for the right bank, we form a line, and keep straight down river. After a moment's reflection, as I count the savages, I order the men to drop the anchor.

We have enough time to look at the mighty force coming at us, and to count the number of the war canoes. There are 55 of them! The men in canoes chant and shake their spears. In the front of the canoe are ten young warriors, their heads decorated with feathers. At the back of the boat, eight men with long paddles guide the monster vessel. Two men who appear to be chiefs dance in the canoe. The crashing sound of large drums, a hundred blasts from horns, and loud chant from 2,000 human throats make us more nervous. We have no time to pray or even to breathe a sad farewell to the world.

As the front canoe comes rushing down, I turn to take a last look at our people, and say to them, "Boys, be firm as iron; wait until you see the first spear, and then aim. Don't fire all at once. Keep aiming until you are sure of your man. Don't think of running away." A canoe aims straight for my boat, but then turns to the side. When the boat is across from us, the warriors throw their spears. Soon we cannot hear anything because of the gunshots. For five minutes we are so caught up in firing that we don't notice anything else. Then we notice that the enemy is gathering 200 yards away from us.

Our blood is up now. It is a murderous world, and we feel for the first time that we hate the filthy demons who live in it. We lift our anchors, and chase them up the stream until we see their villages. We make straight for the banks, and continue the fight in the village and hunt them out into the woods. Only then do we sound the retreat.