ISSUES IN AFRICAN REACTIONS TO THE IMPOSITION OF COLONIAL RULE,
1884 – 1914

PAUL OSIFODUNRIN
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.

Introduction
This paper reopens the debate on the extent to which African reactions to the imposition of colonial rule represented the collective will of the people till 1914. It sheds light on the diverse reactions to European colonial rule, with a view to determining the extent to which local interests and circumstances motivated similar and different reactions to colonialism, and for whose benefit. It contends that the true nature of African reactions to colonialism would be better understood, if the class content of every African society that resisted is considered, irrespective of the form of resistance. The paper starts with a discussion of the concept of resistance. This is followed by an overview of the nature of African and European societies on the eve of conquest, and thereafter an analysis of the nature of African reactions, drawing examples from the different regions of the continent.

Concept of Resistance
Resistance suggests opposition and the unwillingness to surrender one’s inalienable rights to another. The dictionary definition of resistance considers it as “a dislike of, or opposition to a plan or idea [or] refusal to obey”. This definition takes as a fact the inevitability of a cause or the possibility of an action - real or assumed, for resistance to be provoked. In the final analysis, resistance depicts, to a large extent, the preparedness not to accept something, a condition or somebody as the case may be, and the readiness to ensure that such a thing or condition or person remains unaccepted. It should, however, be noted that resistance to a cause, a condition or somebody does not necessarily mean that that thing, condition or person resisted is, negative or wrong. Indeed, human disposition is, for the most part, resistant to change.

In African historiography, ‘resistance’ has been used mostly to analyse the political, rather than religious, social or economic struggle that erupted during