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SOURCE THREE

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Extract from a report of 1856 by the explorer Dr Livingstone on his experiences with Africans
(PRO ref: FO 881/657)

Although I appear to give the natives yet uncontaminated by civilized vices a very good character, it is extremely difficult to convey a correct idea of what they are. They have been so variously described, too. Though I have lived among them for fifteen years, the greater part of that time was spent not knowing well what to make of their many wonderfully good actions, and many extraordinarily bad ones. Probably the truth is, that they are neither the guileless, unsophisticated sons of nature of the philosophers, nor the compounds of treachery, sensuality, laziness, and cruelty of other writers, but a strange mixture of good and evil, as man appears to be everywhere else.

How to use this source

Study this source carefully.

1 What impression does this source give of life in the British empire in terms of the following issues:

- the treatment of native peoples in the British empire?
- attitudes towards the native peoples?

2 Explain whether you think this source gives a positive or negative view of the empire.

3 Are you going to use this source in your own [online exhibition](#)?

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