

The Missionary Image of Africa: Evidence from Sweden 1885-1895

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I: Africa and Swedish Evangelical Missions

Introduction

From about 1880, three Swedish Evangelical missionary societies with activities in Africa emerged as mass movements with tens of thousands of members. What made so many Swedes devote their lives to helping the heathens in the valley of the shadow of death? And why had they not done so before 1880? This paper will address that question through an analysis of the image of Africa from 1885 to 1895 in the magazines of the three missionary societies. The objective is to throw some light on the nature of the Swedish missionary image of Africa in the era of high imperialism and what it can tell us about the relations between Sweden, the colonial powers and Africa. In spite of the absence of formal Swedish colonialism after 1878, I will argue that Sweden was involved in cultural and religious networks that decidedly made Sweden part of Europe and the imperial world. The importance of the colonial world to Sweden was, of course, not at all of the same degree as in Britain, but also the Swedish framework was one of European expansion. This conclusion is based on an analysis of the similarities and differences between the three images. What the three missions shared was a discourse shared by all Evangelical missions. The differences, on the other hand, reveal that the missionary image mediated a new interconnectedness of Sweden, Europe, and Africa. The missionary narratives had an ability to convey both an empowering expression of religion and politics in Sweden AND an appropriate representation of African reality. These refined images of Africa were the

result of a global popular movement with a need to unite Africa and Sweden in one narrative.

In the following I will delineate the leading themes and narratives of the three missionary societies with their very different constituencies in Sweden, and their very different contexts in Africa. In South Africa, and on the conservative side in Sweden, we find the Svenska Kyrkans Mission (SKM), or the Church of Sweden mission which sent its first missionary to Natal in 1876. In central Africa and on the left wing of Church politics, we find the Svenska Missionsförbundet (SMF), a Free Church which sent its first missionaries to the Lower Congo in 1881. In the middle of the Swedish evangelical groups, and in the Northeast of Africa, we find the Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen (EFS), an independent missionary society within the framework of the Established Church. There is not time here to provide any detailed information about the Swedish and African contexts, but there is a summary of important factors in the two tables in the handout.

The missionary movement and their magazines

'The missionaries are merely the representatives of the missionising congregation. The mission supporters are the ones who missionise', an EFS missionary to India proclaimed in 1891. While the missionaries are often portrayed as the protagonists of mission history, the breadth of the movement in Sweden was fundamental not only for fundraising but also for the way the mission was conceptualised. Tens of thousands missionary supporters participated actively through reading, fundraising, and prayer, and an analogy of the body was often used to convey this organic structure:

The mission supporters and ourselves form one body, in which each limb and part has its particular assignment, but at the same time they mutually depend on each other. The mission supporters at home are the central part of the mission body, the trunk, and we missionaries are its arms, legs and mouth.

If the movement was a body, then surely the magazine was its spine or its blood vessel; transferring the vital information between the missionaries in Africa, the Home Boards, and the supporters. The Home Board was the

thalamus, or the heart, through which the flow passed and was coordinated. Through *Missions-Tidningen*, *Svenska Kyrkans Missions-Tidning* and *Missionsförbundet*, the supporters of the EFS, SKM, and SMF respectively could follow the progress or setbacks in the fields every month or fortnight. They found their own names in the list of contributors, followed the development of children or evangelists supported by their local missionary association, or simply lost themselves in fascinating stories of Swedish agency in an exotic world which was coming increasingly close to them. Besides being read individually, the missionary magazines were used at prayer meetings, Sunday schools, sermons, sewing circles and parish catechetical meetings.

What was the attraction of these magazines? In order to find out, I will now move on to an analysis of the way in which the missions imagined Africa and their own place in Africa, beginning with the EFS in Eritrea.

II: True Believers in Search of True Heathens: Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen in Eritrea

True Heathens: Dreaming of a Galla Harvest

The EFS outlook combined two contradictory elements: a Lutheran belief in the legitimacy of the Established Church and a revivalist stress on living faith in congregations of awakened individuals. These perspectives merged in the leading themes of the EFS magazine: the initial, romanticising, imagery of the true heathens of the Galla (or Oromo, as they are called today) people, and the idea, from 1889, to instigate a reformation of the Abyssinian Church. From 1865 up to about 1889 - and in many respect also afterwards - the dream of reaching their chosen people on the highlands of southern Abyssinia - the Galla - dominated the EFS image of Africa. 'I learned to love Galla before I saw it', a missionary candidate wrote from his Swedish deathbed in 1886. The Galla mission was, however, a complete failure. With the exception of a few reconnaissance expeditions, adverse conditions had confined the mission to the barren coastal desert plain near Massawa, far away from the Galla

people. The mission responded to the failure in several ways. The hope of reaching the Galla was sustained by a printing press and a children's home where Galla children liberated from slave traders were maintained by auxiliary missionary societies, and educated by the missionaries. When the arrival of children ceased in the 1880s, the confidence of the mission was seriously threatened.

The images of Galla was informed by the failure to reach them. In the absence of real contact a romantic images of the Galla as noble savages flourished. At times the imagery was extraordinary, drawing on Swedish history with the Galla as a parallel to the Swedish Vikings - noble and forceful, only not yet refined by the influence of the Gospel. To vindicate the failure of the mission, a wealth of Biblical precedents were invoked. Had not Israel been in the same situation by the Red Sea in Exodus 13-14, the EFS said, and referred to biblical metaphors of cultivation, faith, and patience. The hardships were thought to weed out weak forces - a maturing for the congregation in Sweden as well as for the missionaries in Africa. The Bible promised that great harvests often followed great bloodshed.

Nominal Christians: A Nation without the Gospel

The harvest of true heathened failed to appear, and the EFS gradually abandoned their reluctance to work among the Christians and Muslims in Eritrea. In doing that, they found themselves another preordained task to perform in Africa:

During the 25-year long wait in the patience of love, another land has been taken to heart by the evangelising congregation. It is Abyssinia. Through the centuries its very old Christian Church has been maintained through wonder by God; in the midst of the darkness of the heathen world, and under the fiercest attacks from the Mohammedans. In spite of all unfaithfulness, which has made the country with its kings, priests and parishes like a heathen land in many respects, the power of the Word that was sown has preserved the country from destruction. How shall not the Swedish mission congregation in humility and blessed wonder rejoice and praise the Lord, if he aims at using its service to return the pure and clear Gospel to this Church.[1]

As suggested by the quotation, the image of Abyssinia oscillated between two poles: its Christian promises and qualities; and its Africanness. Abyssinia was a chosen nation, Abyssinia did have a particular place in God's great scheme for Africa. BUT, it was not exempt from the major trope of Africa and the heathen world: degeneration.

The catastrophes befalling northern Abyssinia were interpreted as a just and necessary punishment from God. This theme was elaborated furthest by Markus Germei, a Tigrinya-speaking Ethiopian who had been educated and ordained at the EFS' missionary school in Sweden. Violence, misery, devastation and wicked rulers had come over the Abyssinian nation, with the false prophet Mohammed and his violent followers as the scourge used by the Lord for his judgement. However, after the necessary chastisement the promises made by God in Isa 54: 7-8 were now to come true, and the Swedish mission was to be the catalyst.

Nominal Christians: A Clergy without the Gospel

The Italian occupation of the Eritrean coast in 1885 was followed by expansion into the Hamasen highlands from 1889. Thus, the EFS could embark on the project of instigating a reform of the petrified Orthodox Church. Not surprisingly, the Orthodox clergy emerged as the main antagonists. To the EFS, a clergy which had lost the Gospel was a false clergy. While the Gospel was important to all Evangelical missions, it was of utmost importance to the EFS ambition to provide a living congregational consciousness while adhering to a national Church. A leading priest in Asmara was reported to have confessed that: 'I am a priest by name only, hold the office of a priest and have priestly duties, but I have no light in the Christian truth and can therefore not give it to others.' Furthermore, the missionary claimed, there was discontent in Asmara:

Why do not our priests let us hear about Jesus Christ, as the apostles have written about him, but only talk about angels, saints, fasting and alms?[2]

A prominent feature of the narrative of the EFS expansion to the interior was that the white missionaries were depicted as the main protagonists, while in fact they had very little impact. The spread of evangelicalism in Hamasen after 1889 owed almost everything to African evangelists, but this was a story that the EFS was not able or to conceptualise.

Fallen Christians in the Hands of the False Prophet

The narrative of reformation of the degenerated Ethiopian nation via the Gospel had a logical extension in working among the Tigray- and Tigrinya-speaking Muslims of the Massawa plain and the Hamasen highlands. Their Muslim religiosity was interpreted as the result of a gradual degeneration into susceptibility for the active evil forces of 'the deceptive sleeping draught [of] this Gospel of Satan'.

It is true that [the Bedouin] did not want the truth and therefore yielded to the infatuation and curse of God, but just as today mission is carried out among the rejected people of Israel - not without fruit - and just like Luther first thought of the decayed Church and rehabilitated it through the Word of God, and thus only had time to give the heathen mission a praying thought, so should we not, on our way to the heathens, be they in India, Kunama or in Galla, indifferently pass by these unfortunate that have fallen into the hands of merciless robbers from Mekka...[3]

The remedy for this satanic degeneration was once again spelled the divine forces of hardship and the human agency of the missionaries. A succession of calamities from 1887 to 1891 including sacking, rinderpest, lack of seed for sowing and locusts made northern Ethiopia and Eritrea a site of famine and constant epidemics. Medical treatment and poverty relief - financed by a very successful special appeal to the missionary supporters - provided an opportunity to make the Muslims listen and 'leave the gloomy will-o'-the-wisp of the crescent and enter the full and true light of the sun of righteousness.'

Nominal Catholics but True Improvers

As we have seen above, natural disasters were a crucial feature for missionary success and image. But God had more important tools in his

hands. The Galla mission, the Abyssinian mission, and the Tigray mission all depended for their success on the Italian colonisation of Eritrea. As put by Markus Germei:

The way through which the Lord has opened the door to the old soils of Ethiopia, is, humanly spoken, through the Italians. For us Abyssinians, this is certainly not the most pleasant thing, but we can not demand, that the Lord shall take another path with us, than that he has taken with other peoples, God's peculiar people not excluded.[4]

Considering the expected hostilities between a Catholic colonial power and a Protestant mission, the cordial relations that developed were remarkable.

'Noone would ever have believed, that a Catholic power would in some measure be of help to a Protestant mission. However, this happened.

Through this Catholic power the Lord has opened brighter views for us in Abyssinia and, in the future, perhaps even a pathway to Galla'.

The explanation is not too far-fetched. The newly born Italian state was secular and almost anti-clerical. Several of the officers had Protestant connections. From the perspective of the missionaries, the Italian occupation solved a host of practical problems, and when it came to the core, their Italianness was of little concern compared to their providential role for Africa's improvement. This entailed providing protection for the missionaries, once again filling the children's home with liberated slaves, punishing Abyssinia and opening its doors, bringing just government to Hamasen and freedom to preach the Gospel there, bringing peace, material well-being, and progress: railroads, airships, steamers, the telegraph, and electric light. Eventually, the relations with the Italians became rather complicated, but in the early phase the missionaries never doubted that the Italians were a force of light.

Let us now move to Natal and see how the themes unfolded in the case of the Svenska Kyrkans Mission.

III: Svenska Kyrkans Mission and the Rebirth of the Zulu nation

The Self-Righteous Zulu and the fall of his Nation

Like the EFS, the SKM was inspired by revivalist ideas to induce enthusiasm and life into the Church. Unlike the EFS, however, the SKM nurtured a strong, Lutheran, High-Church ideology to unite the people within a territory into the institutions of one single Church. The central concept was an organic notion of the nation in the tradition of the German Volk. Few African people were surrounded by such a nationalist aura as the Zulu, and the choice of field was not surprising.

When engaging with Zulu society, the theme of the nation was in focus, in the shape of a metaphor of national rebirth. The once so mighty Zulu nation must be chastised to humility, disciplined to work, and educated to a Christian life. When the first convert was christened and buried at the Oscarsberg station in 1886, the first SKM missionary, Otto Witt, wrote:

He was the first seed that our Church got to put into the soil of Africa - a seed taken from the middle of Zululand, put into the ground and covered with earth under merry hope for fruit in imperishableness. Yes, he was taken from the midst of the Zulu people; he was one of the invincible warriors of bygone days that Chaka sent out to the horror of his neighbours. His history brings us back to the days of glory of the Zulu nation - from a human point of view - and shows that already then the Lord thought of peace and not sorrow for this people, and that He blessed the word He spoke here through the pioneers of the mission ...
...Therefore, one must assume that this old man already a long time ago in his inner being received a seed of truth, that, imperceptably to himself, has been rankling in his breast and awoken an unknown yearning for atonement... ..In this man, I think I can see some of the history of his people, and I am certain, that the Lord will bring the entire people to rebirth... ..When our Swedish Church sends a mission official, the Lord lets him not only introduce to the congregation the old man with his wife, children and grandchildren, the youngest of which still lie at their mother's breast, but [the Lord] also calls him to take the old man's ashes to the final rest and thus, on behalf of the motherland church, return to the Lord the gift that He had given her.[5]

The haughtiness and hubris of the Zulu kingdom had occasioned its fall. In the Darwinist understanding of the mission director, Henry William Tottie, isolation and martial invincibility had shielded the Zulu from impulses, perpetuated their inherited customs, and stimulated a tremendous national pride. While fighting wild animals and like-minded isolated people their limbs were hardened, and

their lives in half-nakedness and beehive-dwelling in a fertile landscape had made them indolent and unconcerned.

The missionary recipe for this situation was clear. Just like the old man was converted and reborn, so must his warlike nation, which had now degenerated to the brink of dissolution. 'When kingdoms collapse, as was now the case with the Zulu kingdom, and kings die and are enthroned, that ought to be a reason to seek another Kingdom that lasts, and a king who does not die.'

The rebirth required a prior death of the nation, and the extent to which suffering and humiliation were prescribed the Zulu and became a virtue in missionary discourse is striking. In 1886, Otto Witt expressed his joy at how the Lord was 'melting [the Zulu nation] in the furnace of sorrow'. Their 'gloomy features' and monotonous, mournful' songs were signs of suffering the pain and making the prayers and invocations of Jesus on the cross.

National sins and individual

The central concept for explaining the demise of the Zulu nation was sin. Several national sins were identified, but *indolence*, *savagery*, and *haughtiness* were by far the most important ones, together with a general *indecentness*, which was perhaps more to do with middle-class values than Christian ideals. A somewhat ironic consequence of the preoccupation with the nation was that individual Africans were paid far more attention than in any of the other two missions. Each individual was seen as a mirror of his or her nation, and convincing individual Africans of their sinfulness was a large part of missionary endeavours.

As a consequence of the definition of the Zulu in national terms, individual conversions did not exempt a person from the national predicament.

Numerous comments in *SKMT* refer to 'very frail and weak Christians - how could it be different since they have for the most part grown up in a heathen surrounding'. Or, 'the Zulu Christians are low, and are in many regards worse than the heathens. A real conversion of heart with concomitant power for a holy life is very rarely found among them. That time has not yet come.' African Christians were consistently depicted as erring in their behaviour, not least the

evangelists. Bridewealth, courting girls, or sitting along with beer-drinking heathens were just some of temptations for the converts. The emphasis on the Zulu as a nation thus served a means of upholding the clear boundaries between Europeans and Africans, even when the latter had joined the ranks of the Christians.

The Rejuvenation of Zulu Homes and Gender Relations

In seeking to reform the nation, the SKM directed their efforts to the most fundamental unit of society: the family. The metaphor of rebirth also entailed an ensuing childhood:

My hope rests on the children. That some of them (...) will return to kraal life (...) that is unfortunately possible... ..[But] He and no one else has brought them here, and He allows us to rejoice over what is **now**. And **now** like so far, the children are as kind [, diligent, attentive and quick to learn] as ever at home. Besides, "old love is not soon forgotten"; the impressions received in the years of childhood, are often of far-reaching importance for life... ..The new, young generation is our hope. We can expect nothing from the old.[6]

The children and youth were less marked by "heathen kraal life" and in practice the schools and children's homes were the centres of missionary activity, rather than the churches. In various ways, the missionaries sought to impose the virtues of a middle-class lifestyle on the school-girls with obedience and domesticity as the principal female virtues. The grace of a Christian upbringing was juxtaposed to the Zulu upbringing of girls as merchandise, to be sold for cattle through the system of *lobolo*, or bridewealth. Raising the girls to proper womanhood would also have the benefit of fighting the national sin of indolence, since it would force indolent male Africans to work and thus leave their lethargy.

The attempt to remould everyday Zulu life inevitably led to a clash between irreconcilable ideas of family and gender. The children were seen as the mission's weapon in the assault on the sinful kraal life and its polygyny, bride price, pre-marital sexual activities, and female labour. Family fathers saw their authority, economic standing, and dignity threatened by the attraction of the

mission to the young, particularly the girls. Outdrawn struggles with family fathers filled the missionary magazines, particularly in the 1890s.

The Rebirth of Authority

The need for rebirth went far beyond the family, and the fall of Zulu political institutions was heralded by the SKM. In the glorious days under Shaka, the brutal and savage Zulu kingdom had at least had a degree of statesmanship that had now withered. The Zulu kingdom was a kingdom in brackets, and the authority of its kings, chiefs, and kraal masters was doomed. When Tottie ironically described the "palaces" and "queen dowagers" at the royal kraal of king Dinizulu, the deriding tone served to undermine Zulu authority and strengthen the case of the mission. The feeling Dinizulu inspired in Tottie was pity, not respect. Likewise the chiefs were 'almost without exception are mere steak casseroles and beer barrels' who destroyed 'themselves with gluttony, drunkenness, and unchastity', were 'very insolent and exacting, and [did] not hesitate to ask a visitor to give them his coat, his hat, or his boots.' The chiefs embodied the worst side of the already bad national traits.

The Providential British

When responsible government was introduced in Natal in 1893, Ljungqvist hoped for a blow to 'this tribal rule with chiefs who are destroyed by beer and immoralities based on polygamy.' After the quenching of an uprising in 1888 the SKM reaction was hope 'that the judgement and the humiliation truly may bring these people the godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. 7: 10).' The imposition of a hut tax in Zululand in 1888 was met as a well-advised and wise measure that obliged the 'otherwise so indolent Kafirs to take on an income-bringing daily work for at least some part of the year' and thus 'rear the nation to industry and diligence'.

Despite this consistent support for the colonial government, the failure of the colonial regime to meet the expectations of the mission was a constant source of disappointment. The British were accused of laxity and unwillingness to bring Africans to Christ, the Boers of cruelty. Nevertheless, both these nations

were regarded as important in the great scheme; the Boers to chastise the Zulu and the British to punish and govern them. There was never any doubt that the British were the main instrument chosen to execute the divine punishment and uplifting. Colonial law and judicial authority were the providentially appointed instruments to break the power of the chiefs. And there was never any doubt that the Swedish mission and the Swedish people were part of the enterprise. I will end the section on the SKM with a quotation from Fredrik Ljungqvist, the leading missionary, which positions the efforts of the Swedish Church in the contexts of Biblical prophecy, European colonialism and the Swedish history as a seventeenth-century great power:

God shall enlarge Japheth (Gen. 9: 27). How do these words not come true under our very eyes! The European powers compete for the largest share possible in the vast Africa. Germany, England, France, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, nearly all of Europe is captivated by a feverish zeal to enlarge itself in "the dark continent"... ... this comes from the Lord, the sons of Japheth are clearing the way for the King of glory, who wants to be a great light and enlighten those, who sit in "the dark countries"... ...We also want to enlarge ourselves far beyond the borders of Natal and Zululand... ...Among us out here and at home, awake the spirit, that [in the seventeenth-century] enlivened Swedes in Germany and Sweden!

IV: Svenska Missionsförbundet and Moral Contestation in the Lower Congo

The Fraudulent Fetishist

In 1878, the SMF left the EFS to become an independent society of only true believers, where they could go to communion without the non-believing nominal Christians that constituted the congregation of the dead Established Church. The EFS narrative of punishment was impossible both because of the SMF view of the Fall as an issue for humanity alone and not as a consequence of the wrath of God, and the lack of a conception of a history of the Bakongo polity. Upon arrival in the Lower Congo the missionaries encountered a perfect target for missionary effort and a perfect analogy to Swedish religious politics in the pervasive social, cultural, and religious

institution of the *nganga*-system. The *nganga*-system was a way of understanding the world which included the mediation of difficult situation such as disease or conflict by *banganga* or "fetish priests". The SMF saw the *banganga* as fraudsters, deceivers, and swindlers who misled and exploited their people with the help of their useless *nkissi* - fetishes or idols - sold as merchandise to their deluded victims or used by the *banganga* to legitimise their false rituals:

Here we witness the tokens of love that the Congo heathen wastes on his fetishes to persuade them into helpfulness. It grieves us deeply in our hearts to see, how this vile swindler, himself swindled, strokes, caresses and raises, and, under many loathsome gestures and long appealing prayers works so that the sweat is dripping from his body, stinking from dirt and red paint, in order to get this besmeared bunch of rags with the many red, black and white ribbons to help the poor sick people.[7]

To refute the lies and cheat of the *banganga* became the most important item on the agenda. 'Destroy the *nganga*'s power and root out the people's confidence for him, and the strongest bulwark for Satan has doubtlessly been shattered' a missionary wrote in 1893. He then suggested that the best way of doing this was through proving that disease had natural and rational causes and cures and was not due to witchcraft. The *Bakongo* custom of using poison trials to identify the perpetrator of witchcraft was a target for missionary intervention, which sometimes leading to serious conflicts with chiefs and *banganga*. Destroying *nkissi* (idols), or proving their uselessness was another strategy in defeating the *banganga* and Africans handing their *nkissi* for destruction were always big victories for the mission.

The *nganga*-system and SMF ideology

The superstition of the *nganga*-system contradicted a tenet of missionary discourse because it denied reason and rational causation. The production of a rational missionary narrative as an alternative to the folly of the *banganga* quacks was an important ingredient in the discursive struggle for the 'truth'. Also, the identification of the *nganga*-system as an evil moral principle with all-pervasive influence drew on the Old Testament theme of idolatry as

deception. This criticism of idolatry had the side-effect of disparaging Catholicism, and most importantly, Lutheranism. The struggle against the established institutions in Congo - where the fraudulent priest kept their followers from the Gospel - was a powerful analogy to the domestic criticism of the Church of Sweden as an obstacle to a living faith.

The construction of the average Bakongo as a helpless victim of devilish forces using false culture and false religion justified the missionary cause. It made the case for an intervention with true religion and true culture as the logical remedy. Through this definition of the Congo as a moral problem, the missionaries avoided the use of race as an organising principle. Firmly grounded in the doctrine of monogenesis, they invariably defended the complete humanness, the intelligence and the ability of the Africans, in contrast to contemporary Swedish soldiers, scientists and travellers in the Congo. Making moral contestation the theme of the Congo did not help the missionaries to avoid a hierarchical worldview, but gave it a milder countenance.

Bula Matadi I: Providential Civiliser and Brutal Oppressor

When the Congo Independent State prohibited poison trials in 1889, it was in accordance with missionary expectations of the State as an ally in the moral contestation. As in Eritrea, the state and its officials symbolised the opening of the African interior, safety for the mission, and European fellowship. However, there was always an ambiguity toward the regime, symbolised in the name Bula Matadi - the Rock Breaker. The name was originally given to Henry Morton Stanley - the man who initially inspired the SMF mission - but was transposed from 1890 to the Congo Independent State. The term Bula Matadi suitably expressed the missionary ambiguity towards colonialism for its double connotations of opening up the Congo, which they supported - and brutality, which they repudiated.

Evidence of depopulation caused by brutal raids for labour by the colonial regime had been apparent from the beginning, but what first raised the mission's resentment, in 1891, was not the treatment of Africans, but the

treatment of the mission itself. A state which put obstacles such as heavy taxes, high fees, and bureaucratic procedures in the way of the mission instead of removing obstacles lost some of the lustre it had previously enjoyed as the predestined pioneer in the Congo.

In 1893 a number of conflicts brought the mission-state relation to a head.

The Mukimbungu station was the site of the so-called Kassi rebellion following the killing of a particularly cruel state official, Rommel. The rebels were in explicit sympathy with the mission but swore death to the men of the state.

And, a missionary wrote, '*who knows the conditions out here can by no means be surprised at this.*' After the suppression of the rebellion, another missionary, C. M. Börrisson concluded:

What one sows, one gets to reap. "B. M." has in actual fact sown the seed to these disturbances. It is strange, that people who are supposed to be civilised, believe they can treat a fellow being - albeit of another skin colour - as they please. The fear of the white created by the slave hunt until 1846 had hardly begun yield for the honesty and self-sacrificing love of missionaries, when "B. M." arrived and from the very beginning aroused hatred for its ruthlessness. And as "B. M." got more and more footing, the poor people felt its iron sceptre. I do not know, perhaps certain brutal authorities are included in his Constitution in order to carry out the troublesome transportation, such as coercing the men to walk and carry loads through imprisoning their women and children, burning their villages, stealing their property etc, but in all other possible instances, I can not believe it is lawful.

Börrisson did not linger there, but went on to assure the readers that the discontent of the people 'was legitimate and did not derive from a raw barbarism' but from Rommel's acts of cruelty, particularly the abduction and imprisonment of women.

At that, can anyone wonder that the dissatisfaction finally has broken out. Nsansu, the leader of the rebellion and the assassin of Mbuzi, only wanted to become the Engelbrekt of the Congo and the Gustaf Wasa of his people. His followers are as faithful to him as the Swedes were to their leaders in their days. In the midst of murder and robbery, consideration has however been manifested, in that they delivered on their own accord the loads of the missionaries that they had stolen, despite that they in actual fact were untouched by the Gospel. It is clear from their field song that despair made them rise: "We are tired of living under this tyranny. We can see our women and children get dragged away and be mistreated by the white savages. We shall fight

with "B. M." We know we shall die, but we want to die. We want to die!"

The comparison of the Congolese leaders with the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century national heroes of Swedish liberation shows a remarkable degree of sympathy with the Congolese cause and an usually far-reaching questioning of the legitimacy of the state.

Binarism diverted

The wrongs of the Congo Independent State broke the conjunction of civilisation and morality - at least for the time being - and the missionary could briefly step out of their binary universe. When another missionary wrote that 'some officers with their soldiers have ravaged badly in the villages and robbed and plundered in a satanic way, captured men and women, the former to sell as slaves and the latter to divert themselves with', the depiction of State forces as satanic is a rather extraordinary inversion of a language initially describing an absolute moral opposition between Western Enlightenment and African heathenism.

However, what the missionaries questioned was never the authority of the state as such, nor the righteousness of the cause or the necessity of forced labour. But when Bula Matadi, the Congo Independent State so overtly displayed a lack of empathy for fellow human beings, the former allies in the moral crusade appeared as white savages, and the missionaries took the unusual step of publicly criticising the authorities. The peak of this ambiguity, however, seems to have been with the disturbances of 1893-94. Although the stance remained critical afterwards, there was less of the extraordinary violence close at hand that was required for the missionaries to leave the more comfortable belief in the legitimacy of the state. The SMF critique of brutality was a critique of method, not of principle. As the contemporary Congo traveller Joseph Conrad rendered it: 'The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only.'

V: Images of Africa, Empire and Globalisation

The Rebirth of a Religion, a Nation, a Culture: Differing themes in the missionary images

In this survey of the shaping of the images of Africa in three Swedish missions, I have identified three images with different emphases and common patterns. In this concluding chapter I will analyse the implications of these differences and commonalities. All three missions arrived in Africa and diagnosed the predicament of the society they were in. They identified evangelisation as the solution and expected the providential forces of European colonialism to pave the way. So far the images are similar, but then they diverge.

For example, when the magazines evoked historical heroes, the EFS referred to Martin Luther, the reformer; the SKM referred to Gustavus Adolphus, the seventeenth-century warrior king and father of Lutheran Orthodoxy; and the SMF invoked the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century rebels and liberators Engelbrekt and Gustav Vasa who fought against unjust authorities.

The EFS in Eritrea and Sweden wrote about the reformation of a *church*. The SKM in Zululand and Sweden wrote about the rebirth of a *nation*. The SMF in the Congo and Sweden wrote about the rebirth of a *culture* or a *morality*.

These major themes and their subthemes captured the Swedish and African contexts at the same time. The reformation efforts of the EFS mirror their Swedish agenda, but describes an Abyssinian nation and church that was struggling for its authority. The patriarchalism of the SKM reflected their conservatism and rural constituency, but also the landlord-tenant relations shared by all missions in Natal. The moral contestation of the SMF reflected their emphasis on true belief, but also the importance of the *nganga*-system to Bakongo society.

In other words, the stories of a church, a nation, and a culture manage to further the missions' agendas in Sweden and depict the social, political, cultural, and religious reality in Africa at the same time. The images could only ever come into being if they were meaningful and empowering to the

constituency in Sweden. Equally important, it was a necessity for the image to accommodate and describe appropriately the African context in which the mission operated. Thus, the images did not originate in Sweden, nor in Africa. They are the expression of a movement which was rooted in both worlds and attempted to connect them.

An Evangelical Missionary Worldview: Biblicism

Now, having said that both Africa and Sweden were part of the image, it is important to acknowledge the unequal power relations. The Swedishness of the missionaries allowed them the freedom of criticising the method or performance of the colonial powers, but not its legitimacy. The three missionary narratives were situated within one and the same worldview or discourse, an evangelical worldview which moreover stretched beyond national borders. Certain shared features were typically Swedish: a Lutheran heritage reflected in the preoccupation with the relation to the Established Church and its mission. But overall there was an evangelical missionary discourse which did not care much for national boundaries.

Biblical language and narrative structured the evangelical mind. The missionaries were brought to Africa by the perishing heathens of Rom 18-32, the cry for help in Acts 5: 5, the 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations' of Math 28: 19. Metaphors of warfare, punishment, and cultivation; passages referring to faith, patience, and promises for the heathen world to receive the Gospel guided the interpretation of Africa. The fall in Genesis formed the image of degeneration and destitution that was the backbone of the EFS and SKM narratives. Darkness and light were foremost of symbols, as expressed by an EFS missionary to Eritrea about the light-bringing role of the Italians:

May the Lord open in mercy, and make the doors wide, so that Christianity, the infallible panacea for the advancement of a people, gains a footing, even becomes a force in the "dark" Africa, that "the continent of the blacks" may become and for good reason could be called the "light" Africa, enlightened by him, that brought "the heathens to a light".[8]

An Evangelical Missionary Worldview: Enlightenment and global universalism

It is no coincidence that the light-and dark metaphor of the bible coincides with the secular idea of the Enlightenment. To the late nineteenth-century Evangelical, the Bible was not an ultimate paradigm to which reality had to adapt. Rather, the outstanding characteristic of evangelicalism was the fusion of the biblical paradigm with prevailing ideas of progress, of global universalism, and of rational thought. European expansion, technology, and wealth asserted the truth of the Bible and of Western ways, creating an immense self-confidence. Mission was never perceived of as interchange and exchange, but as dissipation and replacement. From its low standpoint, Africa had nothing of value to offer civilisation.

The African lagging behind was, however, not because of differences between man and man. Missionaries in Eritrea, Natal, and the Congo frequently pointed out that African school children were just as talented and able as European, and they repudiated all claims that Africans were of a lower race. The Bible defended the monogenesis and promised improvement to all of humanity. And for the first time, all of humanity was within sight for the broader Swedish public. The magazines abound with advanced arithmetic of the number of souls in the world, the conversion of heathens, and the diffusion of the Bible. The world as a whole had become the scene.

Power relations and hierarchies

To say that the missionaries championed the equality of mankind against biological racism is NOT to say that they were egalitarians. Hierarchies were welcomed and adorned by the missionaries. The equality of Africans was a matter of principle and potential, not a suggestion of immediate egalitarianism. In this early phase of the mission, when African congregations and clergy was no threat to missionary authority, the missionaries did not have to rely on the concept of race to represent the subordination of Africans. There was an abundance of other hierarchies to invoke, and the overarching image of

rebirth implied that African heathens were moribund and African converts were children.

The common interpretation of providence and the Bible and the reliance on European superiority and rationality inherent in the Evangelical worldview made the missionary movement part of the imperial world. In their analysis of Africa's plight and its remedies, the agency was always ascribed to Europeans, all of whom had an obligation to participate in the elevation of Africa.

Mission interconnectedness as cultural globalisation

The shared traits of the three images place the Swedish missions within the imperial world, but say little about how the image functioned. The missionary narrative of encounter with Africa, the diagnosis, and the power relations were particular to the early phase of the history of Swedish missions. A similar study conducted on other periods might lead to different conclusions on the image of Africa. What distinguished the images of the late nineteenth-century missionary movement from earlier images of Africa was the intensity and the refinement of the images, and to understand this we must look to the differences between the images. As described above, I see the two-sided appropriateness of the image - to apply to both Sweden and Africa - as the result of a process in which all the parts of the movement - the missionaries, officials in Sweden, and the supporters - struggled to make the images meaningful. For a reason which was not there a couple of decades earlier, they felt that Africa was a concern of theirs, they felt a need for Africa to mean something to them. I believed that the mission supporters had discovered two things. One was that a new need to express their own identity in a rapidly changing society, the second was that in doing so they had to take the entire world into account.

The period from 1870 has not for nothing been called the classic age of globalisation. International flows of capital, goods and people skyrocketed, and for the first time their scale was global. The missionary movement with its dependence on international religious, cultural, and personal networks, and its

purpose to connect the world can be seen as a social, cultural, and religious concomitant - not merely a response. In 1880 Sweden was essentially Christian, and the missionary movement widened the horizon from Lutheran parochialism to global universalism. It was part of a decisive event in Swedish history - the discovery of the world, the rise of a global consciousness, the broadening of the horizons of Swedes of all strata to embrace the globe in its entirety.

This history of the missionary encounter does not only portray the encounters of the missionaries in persons. It is also the history of the encounter with Africa for the supporters

One thousand million people are yet, at the eve of the nineteenth century in this wretched state of spiritual and corporeal destitution. And from the millions of people in Africa, India, and China are heard the heart-rendering cries: Come over and help us.[9]

The Come over and help us of Acts 5:5 had been around as long as the Bible, but for the first time the Swedish missionary supporters were within earshot. In heeding the call, they helped drawing Sweden closer to the rest of the world. They created images of themselves and the world which incorporated Sweden and Africa in one story, and they made Sweden even more part of the imperial world.

Notes:

i[1] 'Den utländska missionen (utdrag ur senaste årsberättelsen)' in MT 1890, p. 90

i[2] Abyssinian opinion as interpreted by O. Månsson from Asmara 27/1 1892 in MT 1892, p. 34.

i[3] K. G. Rodén from Geleb 8/2 1892 in MT 1894, p. 50

i[4] 'Tacksägelse för Guds nåd och trofasthet. Predikan af pastor Markus Germei wid Johannelund under årsmötet' in MT 1890, p. 113

i[5] Otto Witt from Oscarsberg 4/12 1886 in SKMT 1887, p. 3-5.

i[6] Excerpt from Fredrik Ljungqvist till Björkqvist i Gideå in SKMT 1887, p. 179-80

i[7] Henning Skarp from Diadia 28/1 1891 in MF 1891, p. 87-8

i[8] W. Segerberg in MT 1886

i[9] 'Gå äfwen du och gör sammaledes' in SKMT 1890, p. 205