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The 'First Fruit' of Owambo: The Public Story of Nanguroshi/Eva Maria in the Promotion of Finnish Mission Work

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Abstract

This chapter examines how the public story of an Aawambo girl was constructed and used among the Finnish mission community. Nanguroshi, a foster child of a Finnish missionary family, was brought to Finland in 1875, baptised and renamed Eva Maria and sent back to Africa in 1879. The christening marked an important milestone for the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS). It made Nanguroshi a symbol of Finnish efforts in Africa or the 'first fruit of Owambo' as she was called. The chapter focuses on mechanisms by which it was hoped that promotional efforts, closely related to Western colonial worldviews, would be able to generate donations and support for mission work. The process whereby Finnish mission supporters became aware of the girl was not, however, straightforward but quite paradoxical in many ways. The two phases identified here – before and after her departure from Finland – clearly reflect different attitudes as regards her utilisation for publicity purposes. The initial plans to make use of her corporeal presence in Finland to gain attention to the work being carried out in Africa proved challenging from the outset, and she was mostly concealed from the curious gaze of mission friends. With her departure, however, she became a celebrated symbol of the success of Finnish mission work abroad. She became a print product whose story was easily available. The public image of Nanguroshi/Eva Maria was not in her own hands. Her story was told by utilising textual elements and references familiar from colonial contexts. Her voice was taken into use to thank the Finns for their involvement in Africa, convince them of the legitimacy of their deeds and thoughts and encourage them to continue.

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In the 1880s and 1890s, a young Aawambo woman called Eva Maria was often in the minds of the supporters of the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS) as they donated money and a large number of material goods, especially clothes and other textiles, to her. Originally known as Nanguroshi, she was born in the Ombadja Kingdom in present-day southern Angola but, after being separated from her family in slave raids, she lived in the household of King Nuujoma of Uukwambi, in the neighbouring Owambo Kingdom. In 1871, when Nanguroshi was approximately eight years old, the king gave her away as a foster child to the Finnish missionary Pietari Kurvinen and his wife Wilhelmiina who lived in Elim, a mission station established by the FMS near to the homestead of the king.[1]

Taking African foster children from local communities was a common practice among Finnish and other European missionaries. African parents could bring their children to live at mission stations, especially during times of famine, but longer foster relations also developed with mission families. Foster children, and children in general, had a special significance in mission work as representatives of future generations. They seemed to provide a relatively easy section of the local population to approach, and, at times, they were deemed to be a receptive group to Christian teachings and values. They were also expected to be of practical help and to assist in various domestic chores at the stations. The foster children typically maintained a connection with their relatives, and hence it was also hoped that they could potentially act as useful intermediaries in reaching and influencing the local adult population. Understandably, this often caused friction in their lives.[2]

What makes the story of Nanguroshi special is that she accompanied her Finnish foster family to Finland in 1875 after they were forced to return to their homeland due to ill health. She subsequently lived in Finland for over four years before returning to the Owambo region. During her stay in Finland, she was baptised as a Christian and renamed Eva Maria. This made her the first African whom the Finnish mission workers had succeeded in converting to Christianity after having proselytized in Owambo since 1870.[3] As Jacqueline Van Gent suggests, missionaries depended on converts for their survival.[4] The christening of Nanguroshi marked an important milestone also for the FMS: it made her a symbol of Finnish efforts in Africa or the 'first fruit of Owambo', as she was called.

This chapter examines how the public story of this individual was constructed and used among the Finnish mission community. It focuses on mechanisms by which it was hoped that promotional efforts, closely related to Western colonial worldviews, would be able to generate donations and support for mission work. As Claire McLisky and Karen Vallgårda point out, Christian missions were crucial sites for the development of systems of knowledge about recently and soon-to-be colonised

1. Estimations of her age in 1871 vary from six to eight but at the time of the baptism (1876), she was said to be 13 years old. 'Owambo lähetyksemme' 1876, 81; Kurvinen 1879 (Part 3), 63; 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 116. For earlier references in research literature to Nanguroshi, see Paunu 1945, 18; Peltola 1958, 81–84; Kilpeläinen 1958, 235–236; Halén 1986, 236–239; Remes 1993, 218–222; Kyläkoski 2018.
2. Kena 2000, 70–77.
3. The first christenings carried out by the FMS took place in 1881 in Hereroland and 1883 in Owambo.
4. Van Gent 2015, 247.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

people and for personalising the new relationships of Europeans with them.[5] This chapter shows how the processes of formulating knowledge were deeply intertwined with ideas concerning publicity and its timing. It proceeds by showing how first the christening of Nanguroshi and then her departure from Finland changed the way in which she was presented to Finns.

The chapter investigates articles and missionary correspondence published on the pages of the Finnish and Swedish language periodicals of the FMS.[6] Booklets and photographs of Nanguroshi that were sold separately will also be analysed. Archival material, especially unpublished letters and minutes of board meetings, are also crucial in examining the public story of Nanguroshi. These materials will be scrutinised and analysed side-by-side, with special attention being paid to mission bias and its effects on the emerging image of an individual.

It is important to emphasise that the chosen focus in this chapter, the public story of Nanguroshi, helps to shed light on her as she was represented by the FMS. Needless to say, this is not the whole truth: she had thoughts, opinions and agency of her own that cannot be known from the analysed material, but which I hope can one day be traced in other ways. I have decided to use the name Nanguroshi[7] when describing events before the baptism and Eva Maria[8] after it. This is in line with the chosen focus in the present chapter but does not necessarily correspond to how she identified herself. It is beyond the scope of this study to give a full picture of the protagonist's life after her return to Owambo. This part of her life deserves further, collaborative research with Namibian scholars.

Limited Publicity as a Precaution

With the arrival of the Kurvinens in Finland in July 1875, Nanguroshi became one of the first Africans to set foot in the grand duchy and most likely the first to stay for a considerable time. While the early history of the presence of people of African descent in Finland remains to be written, we know that people of African origin, especially itinerant artists, entertainers and seamen, occasionally visited coastal towns from the

5. McLisky and Vallgårda 2015, 1–3.
6. References are made primarily to the Finnish-language publication entitled *Suomen Lähetyssanomia* since the Swedish-language *Missionstidning för Finland* was almost identical and included the same articles. On the similarity of periodicals, see Remes 1993, 236, 238.
7. This is how her name was written in Finnish publications and unpublished materials. It follows the way in which the name was pronounced in the Uukwambi region (Otshikwambi dialect). Other Owambo dialects spelled it differently, without the 'r'. In her native dialect of Oshimbadja, the name was pronounced as Nangulohi and in the neighbouring Oshikwanyama dialect as Nanguloshi. It means the one who was born in the evening. There is no written standard for Otshikwambi, so the name Nanguroshi does not appear in written form. Due to the focus of this chapter, I use the Finnish spelling of the name. In his book, Noa Ndeutapo (2014, 146) mentions that her surname was Haikali. I wish to thank Joel Haikali, Petrus Mbenzi and Martti Eirola for their help in this issue.
8. I use the Swedish spelling of the name (Eva) which was commonly used in both Finnish and Swedish material that was published in Finland even though the Finnish spelling (Eeva) was occasionally used. As was customary at the time, it was often spelled with a 'w' (Ewa/Eewa).

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

1880s.[9] Moreover, we know that a number of other Aawambo foster children were also brought to Finland after Nanguroshi's visit.[10]

As being able to see an African girl in Finland was an unprecedented event, Nanguroshi's movements and activities were closely observed. In fact, the publicity around Nanguroshi began in a manner that was neither planned by the Kurvinens nor was very flattering to them: very soon after settling in the town of Vyborg, Pietari Kurvinen was forced to publicly explain Nanguroshi's behaviour. A local newspaper published a letter, with the writer using the pseudonym 'Antislafverist' (antislaverist), which described how a young black girl had been seen carrying heavy loads on the top of her head on the streets of Vyborg dressed in clothes that were far too light for the season. The writer went on to suggest that many knew that the poor girl was not being treated in an acceptable manner in her current home and hinted that the local ladies' association could solve the issue with those concerned.[11] Kurvinen's response was published the following day. In it, he distanced himself and the family from Nanguroshi by stating that she had acted against their will and instructions and his wife was too ill to keep an eye on her. He wrote that anyone who thought they would be able to raise her as a decent Christian should contact the Missionary Society so that the Kurvinens could be released from this responsibility – and they would be happy to do so.[12]

These harsh words raise the question of why Nanguroshi was brought to Finland in the first place. Pietari Kurvinen explained this decision to the director of the FMS in a letter he had written during the sea voyage from Cape Colony to England. He stated that he could neither leave the orphan girl in the Cape nor send her back to Owambo without a guardian. Thus, after consulting German missionaries, he had decided to bring her to Finland with the hope that she could be baptised. He further wished that the Finnish mission friends would like to see a living Aawambo and were willing to assist in paying the extra travel costs.[13] Kurvinen later stressed that Nanguroshi had followed the family of her own free will,[14] but it seems evident that neither she, being approximately 12 years old at the time, nor her foster family had much choice.

Kurvinen ended his response to 'Antislafverist' by stating that he would not continue to discuss this issue in public.[15] Thus, contrary to his earlier idea in regards to how the curiosity aroused by Nanguroshi in Finland could somehow be utilised, he was now clearly unwilling to present her to the townspeople of Vyborg or to a broader audience of mission friends. Kurvinen's earlier descriptions and later reminiscences of Nanguroshi reveal an ambivalence that might help explain his attitude. On the one hand, she was said to be interested in God's words, as well as responsive to Christianity,

9. See Hirn 1986; Leitzinger 2008.
10. The story of Rosa (Emilia) Clay, who arrived in Finland in 1888 and became the first African to gain Finnish citizenship, has received the particular attention of scholars. See, for example, Rastas 2019; Namhila and Hillebrecht 2019.
11. 'Antislafverist' 1875.
12. P[ietari] K[urvinen] 1875.
13. Kurvinen to the director, July 1875, Ec 281, Collection of the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS), National Archives of Finland (NAF). See also the minutes of the brothers' meeting, 8 December 1874 §1, Hb 763, FMS, NAF.
14. 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 42.
15. P[ietari] K[urvinen] 1875.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

and was deemed to be capable of learning quickly, but, on the other, her behaviour was described as bad and unpredictable.[16] Thus, Kurvinen saw potential in her but remained guarded about her future development.

A private letter from Kurvinen to the director of the FMS sheds further light on the events that led to the embarrassing public discussion. He revealed how some unspecified upper-class town dwellers, presumably women, kept an eye on the strange girl as she was doing her daily chores. These individuals tempted her into their houses, offered food, money and pieces of clothing and paid a horse cab to bring her home. Kurvinen was furious and considered this kind of sentiment of pity and extravagant pampering harmful to Nanguroshi. He emphasised that the family had a Finnish maid to do the housework and explained that the daily life of Nanguroshi mainly consisted of reading Catechism and biblical stories, as well as practicing writing, sewing and singing.[17] However, since Kurvinen worked as a travelling preacher in Finland and was mainly absent from home and his wife was severely ill, Nanguroshi must have played a significant role in running the household and taking care of the children of the family.[18] This did not differ from what was expected of foster children at mission stations in Owambo. Yet, in the eyes of Finnish observers, her position resembled that of an unpaid housemaid more than a family member. This ambivalence can also be seen in a family portrait (1876) in which Nanguroshi was included but depicted as a nanny rather than as an older daughter (Figure 5.1.).[19]

To prevent further criticism that might damage the reputation of the Kurvinens and Finnish mission work more generally – and perhaps also to protect Nanguroshi from outside influences and temptations – she was kept away from public scrutiny until June 1876, when she, now approximately 13 years old, was baptised. This marked an important turning point in the history of Finnish mission work. The significance of the event was emphasised by the fact that the FMS had already worked in the Owambo region, mainly in Ondonga, for years and invested a great deal of money without many visible signs of 'progress'. Instead, missionaries mainly reported on their constant struggles, exhaustion, illnesses and insufficient resources. Suspicion and criticism grew among the Finnish supporters, many of whom regarded the work as completely fruitless and thus not worthy of further funding. In this challenging economic situation, the FMS was forced to cut all extra expenses and to stop training future mission workers for an undefined period of time.[20]

In this situation, news about the first baptism of an African child was more than welcome. Indeed, a cynic might think that it was especially calculated by the board to provide anxious mission friends with some positive news. Yet, the initiative came from Kurvinen. As mentioned, he had already referred to this possibility when explaining why he brought Nanguroshi to Finland. After the 'Antislafverist' episode, Kurvinen

16. 'Sanomia weljiltämme' 1872, 68; 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 42–43.
17. Kurvinen to the director, 22 December 1875, Ec 281, FMS, NAF.
18. He is known to have visited around sixty Finnish parishes during the first year after his return from Africa. 'Kotimaa' 1876, 104. On the economic situation and arrangements of the Kurvinen family in Finland, see Remes 1993, 218–219.
19. No doubt, her life was also affected by the strict discipline that Mrs. Kurvinen is known to have maintained at home. Kurvinen 1913, 151. See also Tenkanen 1954, 26–27, 116–117.
20. Paunu 1945, 17–19; Remes 1993, 146–153, 276. The mission school was closed between 1872–1880.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

Figure 5.1. A group portrait of Nanguroshi and the Kurvinen family was taken by Charles Riis in Helsinki in 1876. Nanguroshi is holding the newborn Naima. Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY 4.0.

asked the director for permission to baptise Nanguroshi. He referred to her desire to become Christianised and his own evaluations of her development, suggesting that the baptism should take place 'at home, in peace and quiet'.[21] The board soon made a favourable decision.[22]

However, the ceremony did not take place at the Kurvinen home in Vyborg, but in Helsinki and at the time of the annual mission days. These festivities brought a large crowd of mission friends to the city, but the baptism was planned to take place in the presence of a limited group of people.[23] It was explained in *Lähetyssanomia* that this

21. Kurvinen to the director, 22 December 1875, Ec 281. See also Kurvinen to the director, 15 May 1876, Ea 209, FMS, NAF.
22. Minutes of the board meeting, 16 April 1876 §2 (see also June 6, 1876 §2), Ca 53, FMS, NAF.
23. Minutes of the board meeting, 16 April 1876 §2, Ca 53, FMS, NAF. On the ceremony, see 'Owambo-lähetyksemme' 1876, 82–84. Also see 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 43; 'Viisikymmentä vuotta' 1926, 115.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

was considered to be best for the girl.[24] The ceremony was far too significant and symbolic to risk by upsetting Nanguroshi in any way. Later assessments also suggest that exposing the girl to publicity and the 'admiration and pampering' of the audience would have been 'unhealthy' for her.[25]

The advantage of limiting attendance was that the Kurvinens and the FMS could strictly control the publicity surrounding the event. Soon after the christening, the FMS published articles on the front pages of their periodicals that introduced Nanguroshi, now referred to as Eva Maria,[26] to mission friends. These articles told the story of her 'heathen' life and christening, emphasising the broader significance of this 'firstborn' or 'first fruit' to Finnish mission work in Africa.[27] News of the baptism was also circulated by non-religious newspapers in Finland.[28]

Surprisingly, perhaps, news about Eva Maria ceased to be published soon after the ceremony, and, once again, silence fell over her later life in Finland. The Kurvinens are known to have moved to Helsinki, where an African girl was no less exceptional a sight than in Vyborg and must have aroused interest. Yet, the image of the 'first fruit' was protected to such an extent that the FMS did not inform its readers of her subsequent life in Finland.

Eva Maria in the Spotlight

Pietari Kurvinen's frequent enquiries to the FMS show that he and his family planned to return to Owambo as soon as possible. Mrs. Kurvinen's health did not improve, however, and the board decided that the family could not be sent back to Africa.[29] The situation of Eva Maria remained unclear until the decision was made to settle her with another Finnish missionary couple, the Weikkolins, as they embarked for Owambo in September 1879.[30] The reasons given to the mission audience for sending her to Africa were essentially practical: Eva Maria's ability to read and write was foreseen as a useful skill in terms of her being able to assist in teaching small children at the mission stations that lacked Finnish workers.[31] Missionary wives and female mission

24. 'Owambo-lähetyksemme' 1876, 82.
25. In 1945 the then director, Uno Paunu, speculated about how 'a festive celebration of the christening of a heathen girl in front of the Finnish mission community would undoubtedly have had an inspiring effect and raised its sunken spirit'. Paunu 1945, 18. Translation by Leila Koivunen. See also 'Viisikymmentä vuotta' 1926, 115; Remes 1993, 219. A special cantata was composed to be performed during the ceremony. 'Wiisikymmenwuotisjuhlamme' 1909, 51.
26. Eva (Eve) and Maria (Mary) are important biblical names. Eva Maria was also the name of Mrs. Kurvinen's mother. The new name was also explained symbolically: Eva referred to the beginning of time and sin, whereas Maria marked the beginning of grace and blessing. 'Eewa Maria' 1879, 140.
27. 'Owambo-lähetyksemme' 1876, 82; 'Kotimaa' 1876, 104; 'Katsaus Suomalaisen' 1876, 182.
28. 'Finska Missionsällskapets' 1876; 'Suomen Lähestysseuran' 1876; 'Också en frukt' 1876a, 1876b.
29. Minutes of the board meeting, 4 May 1877 §9, September 29, 1877 §6, 3 February 1879 §4, April 28, 1879 §3, Ca 54, FMS, NAF.
30. Minutes of the board meeting, 5 September 1879 §3, Ca 54, FMS, NAF. Her Christian faith was confirmed in a farewell ceremony two days before her departure. 'Afrikaan matkustajamme' 1879, 136–137.
31. 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1878, 122. See also 'Afrika' 1880, 85; 'Weikkolinin kertomus' 1884, 6.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

workers were generally considered to be able communicators of Christian feeling.[32] Moreover, it was clearly hoped that Eva Maria, as an indigenous person, would be able to establish a special relationship with her fellow Aawambo. It was emphasised that the decision to send her to Africa had been made after consulting the foster parents, foreign colleagues and the girl herself. It was now admitted publicly for the first time that she had felt like a stranger in Finland.[33]

While the publicity surrounding Eva Maria was limited during the years she had lived in Finland, the situation changed drastically with her departure. In the next few years, numerous articles and missionary letters were published in the periodicals of the FMS that described her life in Finland and Africa. Copies of her photographs (Figure 5.2.) were printed, circulated in periodicals and sold separately with the hope that 'looking at the image would evoke a feeling of love.'[34] Furthermore, Pietari Kurvinen published his missionary memoirs, including his recollections of Eva Maria's life.[35] The FMS printed both Finnish and Swedish versions of a booklet entitled 'An Aawambo Child' which combined and circulated earlier texts of Eva Maria with the specific goal of 'further disseminating her story in our country.'[36] It went through numerous reprints in the early 1880s and sold at least 30,000 copies.[37]

Figure 5.2. A wood engraving was commissioned of a *carte-de-visite* portrait taken of Eva Maria at Daniel Nyblin's studio in Helsinki. It was used to print her image in the periodicals of the FMS and was sold separately. See 'Owamboflickan Ewa Maria (Nanguroshi)' 1880, 41.

32. McLisky and Vallgårda 2015, 7.
33. 'Afrikaan matkustajamme' 1879, 137; 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 116. See also 'Se ainoa' 1879. See also the minutes of the board meeting, 5 September 1879 §3, Ca 54, FMS, NAF.
34. 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 42. Cf. Halén 1986, 139.
35. Kurvinen 1879–1880 (parts 3–4).
36. *Eräs Owambolapsi* 1881, 5.
37. 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 151; 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1881, 119. This equals the total number of publications produced by the FMS in 1879. 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 151.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

Why was Eva Maria brought into the spotlight at this time? Based on previous events, it seems that the FMS could act more freely after saying farewell in Helsinki and sending her back to Africa. As she was absent, talking about her in public became less risky and did not expose her to any harmful effects. Besides, her public persona became easier to control since observant townspeople – or Eva Maria herself – could not provide conflicting information.

In this situation, the story of Eva Maria became a useful means to inform Finns not only about this individual but also about the challenges and expected results of mission work more generally. It must be emphasised that the board of the FMS did not make any formal decisions concerning how to publicise Eva Maria. Rather, the publications formed their own narrative roadmap. The story of Eva Maria seemed to provide suitable material for creating an identifiable and exemplary case to provide a concrete demonstration that the efforts of the FMS among the Aawambo were worthwhile and deserved support. The articles repeated a narrative where an African king gives a dirty, smelly, miserable girl as a gift to a Finnish missionary family who teaches her new skills and introduces her to the Christian faith. This story goes on to describe her innate, 'heathen' reluctance and foolishness, her 'devilish lies' and her proclivity to steal and to be enticed into all kinds of trouble that caused anguish to her foster family. Yet, everything changed when she humbled herself and came to the decision that she wanted to become a Christian.[38]

This narration provides a classic example of the representation of the relationship between Africans and Europeans of the colonial era.[39] Members of the white Finnish family were portrayed as knowledgeable, benevolent and altruistic saviours who were willing to share their life and home with an African child whom they had encountered by mere accident. The story of Eva Maria became emblematic of a broader development anticipated to occur all over Owambo, Africa and the non-Christian world. Eva Maria was portrayed as living evidence, or proof from God himself, that the work carried out by the FMS had not been wasted. Things could – and would – improve in the future, as the 'seeds' of new 'fruits' had already been planted.

The descriptions of Eva Maria were influenced by prevailing European racist attitudes regarding the relationship between Africans and Europeans, but they also included direct references to the role and responsibility of Finns in the colonial world. Especially interesting in this regard is a long poem, published in July 1879, and said to be written by a young mission friend who had had the opportunity to spend time with Eva Maria and learn about her life. In the poem, written from the perspective of Eva Maria, she begs the wonderful Finnish people to accept her lavish thanks for its work in Africa and for bringing light to her miserable people.[40] The readers were thus encouraged to think of themselves as parts of a nation that had an important mission abroad.

Similar discussions continued when readers were asked why they too could not come to love a place in Africa, which God had specially assigned to the Finnish

38. See, for example, 'Afrikaan matkustajamme' 1879, 137; 'Eewa Maria' 1879, 138–140; Kurvinen 1879 (part 3), 63–64; 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 41–44; 'Kotomaa' 1880, 6–8.
39. See, for example, Vallgårda 2016, 876.
40. 'Eewa Maria' 1879, 138–140.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

mission.[41] Thus, leaning on the idea of Christian love,[42] the story of Eva Maria sought to awaken a sense of belonging to a certain section of Finnish people that could supposedly make a difference in Africa.

As Olli Löytty has described, nationalistic rhetoric was frequently used when discussing the founding of the FMS in the 1850s. The mere existence of the society was regarded as evidence or an expression of national strength in a situation in which Finland was still part of the Russian Empire: Finnish people were finally ready to work among other nations to help those in need and to participate in steering the world towards a better future.[43] A similar sense of national pride and responsibility can also be found interwoven in the public story of Eva Maria. Her voice was used to describe Finns as an exemplary people whose efforts in Africa should be acknowledged.

Another striking feature in the story of Eva Maria was that she was presented to Finnish readers as a person whom many already knew well and loved dearly.[44] Her visit to Finland had made her a very special African: in contrast to the mass of unknown Aawambo, who constituted her people, she was a known and named individual. She was thus a useful figure for the FMS to address the mission community and to make the hard-to-define mission field a bit more intelligible. Supporters of the cause were constantly reminded to pray for Eva Maria and not to forget this 'black sister', as she was called.[45]

These descriptions followed a more general Nordic and European pattern where a real or imagined African child was evoked as an example of the character of African children and their potential for change. A contemporary, well-known example was the song *Musta Saara* ('Black Sarah'), which related the story of a black girl whose skin turned white at the moment of her death when she became cleansed of her sins. Originally composed and published in Sweden in 1865, the song also became popular in Finland in the 1870s. Ruut Lemmetyinen has noted how Saara provided the mission friends with a figure whose experiences were relatable and could be empathised with.[46] The story of Eva Maria also became part of this transnational exchange as a Swedish mission periodical published an illustrated article about her in 1881.[47]

Having an identifiable and seemingly familiar person somewhere in Africa made the connection between mission friends and the target population more personal and binding. The FMS nourished this relationship by actively providing news about Eva Maria up to the mid-1880s and periodically thereafter until the 1920s.[48] To deepen this attachment, the FMS's periodical also published letters signed with the name Eva Maria. The origin of these letters remains uncertain, but they closely conform to the conventions of mission correspondence.[49] In this instance, the writer directly

41. *Eräs Owambolapsi* 1881, 3–5. See also 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 116.
42. Haggis and Allen 2008, 694–696; McLisky and Vallgårda 2015 3–5, 9–10.
43. Löytty 2007, 264. See also Huhta 2008.
44. See, for example, 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 41; 'Suomen Lähetysseuran' 1880, 116.
45. 'Afrikaan matkustajamme' 1879, 137.
46. Lemmetyinen 2010, 102–109. Also see Raita Merivirta's and Johanna Skurnik's chapter in this book.
47. 'Ewa Maria' 1881. Thanks to Kim Groop for sharing this information.
48. Nanguroshi died in 1929. Peltola 1958, 232.
49. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse these letters in detail here. On the genre of convert letters, see Acke 2015, 204–206.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

addresses the readers and calls them beloved friends whom she wants to greet and thank. She begs the readers not to forget her and to keep her in their hearts and prayers.[50]

Prayers were welcomed, but it was hoped and expected that the Finnish mission friends would provide financial support too. Descriptions of Eva Maria did not include direct requests for donations, yet in practice the number of financial gifts that were designated to her increased as a result of the publicity. Public requests for financial donations and various goods had been fundamental for the work of the FMS since its establishment,[51] and the mission community was quick to take heed of the unspoken hints and donate to the subjects that were being promoted.

Eva Maria received her first donations when she lived in Finland, and it was suggested that she had returned to Africa with two trunks full of clothes and textiles.[52] However, lists of donations that were regularly published in mission periodicals reveal that she received most of the gifts during the period between her departure in 1879 and the mid-1880s – exactly the time when her life was being actively reported upon in Finland. The number of donations gradually decreased after this and largely ceased by the turn of the twentieth century. Among the donated items were dozens of stockings, shirts, aprons, skirts and other pieces of clothing as well as large amounts of fabric, linen and tablecloths. In addition to everyday textiles, Eva Maria also received dresses and luxury items, such as a silken scarf and a decorated comb. With her marriage to a baptised Aawambo man and the birth of children, donations became increasingly diverse and also included trousers and children's clothing.[53] The predominance of clothes and textiles was related to them being relatively easy to transport, but it also reflects the general significance that was attached to Western-style clothing in mission work.[54] Indeed, donated textiles ensured that Eva Maria and her family stood out from the rest of the community as an exemplary indigenous Christian family in Africa – the first of their kind in Owambo.

Conclusion

Eva Maria became a well-known figure among the Finnish mission community. Many thought about her when knitting a sock in a mission sewing circle or when attending Sunday school. She became a target for material aid and a magnet to attract new supporters both young and old. This public awareness could not have been achieved without her journey to Finland, which, from her point of view, must have been both exciting and frightening, possibly even traumatic. The process whereby Finnish mission supporters became aware of her was not, however, simple and straightforward but in many ways quite paradoxical.

50. See, for example, 'Kirje Ewa Marialta' 1880, 8–9; 'Owambo-tyttö' 1880, 44.
51. Remes 1993, 23.
52. Ida Weikkolin to the director, January 27, 1880, Ec 281, FMS, NAF. See also 'Kesä-, Heinä-' 1881, 7.
53. Lists of donation, *Suomen Lähetyssanomia* and *Missionstidning för Finland* 1879–1901.
54. Huuhka 2019; Koivunen 2018.

https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.28

The two phases identified here – before and after the departure of Eva Maria from Finland – clearly reflect different attitudes and approaches as regards her being utilised for publicity purposes. The Kurvinens had plans to make use of the corporeal presence of Nanguroshi in Finland to gain attention to the work being carried out in Africa. This initially proved challenging, and she was mostly concealed from the prying eyes of mission friends. Indeed, only the key piece of news, her baptism, was reported. Thus, even when she was present in Finland, Nanguroshi was not very easily or broadly exploited for promotional purposes. This differed considerably from how Rosa Clay, who followed Nanguroshi to Finland, was treated and exposed to the public interest.[55]

The publicity around Nanguroshi/Eva Maria was minimal, cautious and controlled during her stay in Finland, but with her departure she became a celebrated symbol of the success of the Finnish mission work abroad. She was turned into a print product whose story became easily available in the form of articles, published letters, portraits and booklets. The FMS controlled this publicity, whereas Eva Maria became increasingly detached and unaware of the material that was being produced and distributed about her.

Nanguroshi/Eva Maria had no control over her public image. Her story informs us about a more general need to bring attention to named African individuals as representatives of their people and the effects of mission work. Mission friends craved concrete examples and certain individuals became instruments of such efforts. The story of Nanguroshi/Eva Maria was told by utilising textual elements and references familiar from colonial contexts. Her voice was taken into use to thank the Finns for their involvement in Africa, convince them of the legitimacy of their deeds and thoughts and encourage them to continue.

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