

Kim Groop

Divine Law Enforcement and Mission Transculturality

The Finnish Missionary Society and the emergence
of the first Church Rules in the Ovambo mission field
in South West Africa

Introduction

This article scrutinises the work of the Finnish Missionary Society as regards the creating of a Church Law in the emerging Ovambo Lutheran Church, in what is today the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. The work resulted, in 1924, in the church's first Church Rules. In this endeavour, the Finnish missionaries took as a model the Finnish Church Law of 1869, but also utilised elements from the old Swedish Church Law from 1686. The aim of the missionaries was to create a law that could establish proper foundations for a Lutheran Church of their own preference. In the two last chapters of the article, the issue of transculturality is discussed. It is suggested that the Finnish mission's undertaking in Namibia was not simply characterised by the imposition of a new religion and new rules, but rather that this work was a fitting example of cultural exchange and transfusion. In this cultural exchange, various hybridised groups and individuals interacted in what would eventually result in a Lutheran church built on different cultural traditions, religious practices, and memories.

The Backdrop

The Finnish Missionary Society¹ was founded in 1859. As was the case with most Protestant mission societies, this society was founded in the wake of Pietism and evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It had among its founders and members numerous prominent Lutheran individuals – among them many Lutheran pastors and lay people with connections to various revival movements. The Finnish Missionary Society shared with revival Protestantism at large a Christocentric theology, but also other features characteristic of the revival movements, such as placing the bible above tradition and urging its followers to live a humble, sober lifestyle.²

The coming into existence of the Finnish Missionary Society was conflict-ridden. At the heart of the problem lay the question “what to do with Pietism?”. Pietistic Christianity, for much of the nineteenth century, had been at odds with the Lutheran Church, and the Pietists’ freedom of movement had been effectively restrained through the Conventicle Act prohibiting private meetings outside the services of the Lutheran Church. The church viewed any threat to its predominance with suspicion and, as it was often Pietists who propagated the mission, the mission movement also tended to be mistrusted. What is more, Finland was a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire from 1809 until 1917, when it gained independence, and the Russian Emperors viewed religious activity outside the church as potential seeds of separatism. As a consequence of all this, some of the early initiators of a mission society in Finland, in the early-mid nineteenth century, had

- 1 Since 1985, the Finnish Missionary Society has been known as the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). The name in Finnish and Swedish, however, has remained unchanged: *Suomen Lähetysseura* and *Finska Missionssällskapet* respectively.
- 2 Paunu 1908, 84, 150, 218–221, 231–233; Paunu 1909, 1–4; “Stadgar för Finska missionssällskapet. Stadfästade den 6 Oktober 1863” in Paunu 1909; Groop 2013, 145–153; Groop 2013, 292–295.

either been sentenced for breaking the Conventicle Act or had been re-located (some of them appointed prison chaplains).³

Like many other Protestant missionary societies, the Finnish Missionary Society proclaimed the duty of every Christian to be a witness and to missionise non-Christians.⁴ At the same time as it emphasised humbleness, it was characterised by a certain degree of theological strictness. True Christians were supposed to believe and behave in a certain way. Similar to its peers in revivalist circles and other Protestant mission societies, the Finnish Missionary Society had little understanding of “name-Christians” or “culture-Christians” who, it saw, failed to take their faith seriously.⁵ Nonetheless, whereas many bible- and tract societies attempted to change the situation by engaging in mission work *in* Finland the Finnish Missionary Society did quite the opposite. It departed from this “deprived” Christianity at home in order to find greener pastures abroad. Thus, whereas the Finnish Missionary Society itself saw that it was called by God to carry the Christian gospel to the “pagans”, one could also argue that this society, by its own will, surrendered the fight in Finland. The Finnish Missionary Society was driven by a fascination with the possibilities of starting afresh in foreign parts of the world; establishing proper foundations and creating a Lutheran Church according to its own standards.⁶ It chose as its first mission field Ovamboland (or Amboland as it was referred to by the missionaries) in South West

3 Murtorinne 2000, 93–94, 108–110, 116; Groop 2013a, 138–139; Groop 2013b, 288–289, 293–294.

4 Hirn 1901, 1–6.

5 Groop 2013a, 145–147.

6 Groop 2013a, 156, 168. It could be noted that Emperor Alexander II, as written by Paunu, accepted the proposal of the Governing Senate regarding the foundation of the Finnish Missionary Society on one condition: that its operation “should not be extended to the area of the [Russian] Empire” (Paunu 1908, 221). It is unlikely, however, that this condition was intended to forbid operations inside Finland.

Africa. The first missionaries and mission carpenters were dispatched to this new mission field in 1868/1869.⁷

At the same time as the Finnish Missionary Society was founded, another set of events took place which was of importance to the Lutheran Church in Finland. In 1854, Archbishop Edvard Bergenheim entrusted Professor Frans Ludvig Schauman with the task of writing a proposal for a new Church Law for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. This new law would replace the old Swedish Church Law from 1686.⁸ When the law proposal was published it was met with considerable criticism, especially with regard to the first paragraph, which presented the church's confession. This was because Schauman had attempted to "soften" the statement regarding the church's Lutheran confession. Those criticising this paragraph saw that it was too liberal and undermined the church's confessional position. Among the critics were several pastors with connections to various revival movements (such as the Evangelicals and the Pietists) who felt that the confession of the Lutheran Church in Finland would be diluted should the proposed Church Law be ratified.⁹ Due to the critique, the text in the first paragraph was amended and given a more confessional Lutheran character. Apart from the confession paragraph, questions regarding some other issues were raised. One such issue was the section on church discipline which had undergone considerable changes, and to which we will return later in this article. On the whole, however, Schauman's Church Law was ratified with relatively few changes considering how different it was to its predecessor, and, after amendments in the confession paragraph even the

7 Paunu 1909, 84, 97, 119.

8 Murtorinne 2000, 158. Schauman was also one of the forces behind the founding of the Finnish Missionary Society and its first chairman. He would in 1865 be elected Bishop of Porvoo, one of the three dioceses in Finland (Hirn 1901, 2-4, 9).

9 Murtorinne 2000, 160-161; Suokunnas 2011, 112; Leino 2012, 67-69.

previously critical Evangelical and Pietistic pastors were prepared to stand behind the Church Law.¹⁰

Pietism, Paganism, and the Church Law

What then characterised the Lutheran Christianity which the Finns brought to Africa? Though there were probably at least as many examples as there were missionaries, I believe that three characteristics stand out and should be mentioned. Firstly, most missionaries shared – naturally in varying degrees – the Pietistic or revivalist theology, which we have mentioned above. Secondly, the Finnish missionaries adhered to and leaned on the traditions and laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. Thirdly, many missionaries, at least before WWI, were inspired by German missiological thinking and more directly by its neighbouring ally, the *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*, which had longer experience in work in South West Africa than the Finns.¹¹

For almost four decades, the Finnish missionaries ran their work at the mission stations without any corporate rules or instructions. This was a state that the missionaries grew accustomed to, and probably did not view as too problematical. Rather it gave them freedom and flexibility in their work. When problems arose, these could be discussed with fellow missionaries or be brought to the local missionary conferences. Moreover, as Matti Peltola stresses, the advice of the board of the Finnish Missionary Society, and in particular cases the mission director himself, was of importance to the missionaries in charge of the stations.¹²

10 Schmidt 1948, 241; Suokunnas 2011, 114.

11 Peltola notes that the Finnish missionaries were strongly influenced by Gustav Warneck's *Evangelische Missionslehre*, which was a true and unchallenged authority among the missionaries in Amboland (Peltola 1958, 303, endnote 272).

12 Peltola 1958, 213. This was the case for instance in the tobacco struggle where Missionary Liljeblad decided not to allow tobacco or trading in

The first printed missionary instructions only emerged in 1906. These *Guidelines for Missionaries of the Finnish Missionary Society* were to serve as a set of rules and regulations for the Finnish missionaries and missionary workers in their work in German West Africa.¹³ Parts of the text in this 32 page manual resembled the text in the Finnish Church Law of 1869. Most striking, and of particular interest here, is the section on church discipline. As in the 1869 Finnish Church Law, the 1906 missionary guidelines dealt with the issue of church discipline quite briefly. Church discipline for a Christian who had been found guilty of wrongdoing followed a line of action starting with a warning by the head of the parish (the missionary), followed by a warning in the company of two or three witnesses, then a warning in front of the congregation. Finally, in intransigent cases, it led to the exclusion of the person from Holy Communion and some other church rights. As in the Finnish Church Law, it was emphasised that that the individual excluded from Holy Communion was to be prayed for. He or she was furthermore to be allowed to attend ordinary church services to listen to God's word and he or she was to be forgiven and returned full church rights, seemingly without further due, after repenting his or her sins.¹⁴ The missionary guidelines describe church discipline as follows:

tobacco on his station, whereas most missionaries saw that it was unwise to take a strong position on an issue which could endanger the relationship with the kings and chiefs who wanted tobacco (Peltola 1996, 220–225).

- 13 Ohjeita Suomen Lähetyssseuran lähettejä varten 1906, 26–27. I have had the opportunity of studying a few different copies of these instructions in Namibia and in Finland. Based on the many notes and comments in the margins it can be assumed that the missionaries did not approve of all parts of the instruction manual, but that the instructions were rather seen as something dictated "from above" from the leadership in Helsinki without full knowledge of the situation and needs in Africa.
- 14 Ohjeita Suomen Lähetyssseuran lähettejä varten 1906, XVI, 26–27; Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870, 25–26.

If someone is caught fallen into public sin and evil, like drunkenness, theft, adultery, fornication, paganism, contempt of God's word and godly exercises, dissension in marriage and so on or otherwise commits public offence, he or she shall be subject to Church Discipline.¹⁵

Though the paragraphs on church discipline followed the Finnish Church Law of 1869, it is apparent that in part it was more congruent with pre-1869 praxis in Finland and Sweden as regulated by the 1686 Church Law and subsequent regulations. Both the 1686 and 1869 laws singled out certain offences, which were to be forbidden but, out of the two, the latter was less detailed and rigid. The offences singled out in the 1869 Church Law were: §102: refusal to have one's child baptised or to provide Christian instruction to one's children or other dependants; §103: showing contempt for God's word and godly exercise; disunity in marriage, or harshness against children, domestic servants or other dependants; disobedience towards parents or irreconcilability; §104: practicing heresy; §105: failure to attend catechetical meetings or hindering dependants from attending the same, as well as bringing about disorder during a church service.¹⁶ Whereas the Lutheran Church under the Church Law of 1686 had lived in symbiosis with the state – with the legal systems of the church and state intermingling and supporting each other – the 1869 Church Law brought considerable change in the sense that it concerned only the Lutheran Church and not all citizens. Although the church and the state continued to exist with some measure of interdependence, the 1869 Church Law was, at least in theory, to be concerned only with crimes pertaining

15 Ohjeita Suomen Lähetysseuran lähettejä varten 1906, XVI, 26. My translation.

16 Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870, 26. See also § 30 on page 9. In §33 the arranging of conventicles during the Sunday service and without the consent of the vicar [kyrkoherde] was also declined.

to Christian life within the Lutheran Church.¹⁷ Drunkenness, for instance, was not forbidden (and in fact it had not been forbidden as such even in the 1686 Church Law). Rather it was causing disorder in a church during Sunday Service (and in the case of the 1686 Church Law: “being drunk in church during a Sunday Service”) which was prohibited and subject to penalty.¹⁸ Theft, adultery, and fornication were not mentioned at all in the 1869 Church Law. Yet, heresy was listed as prohibited and subject to church discipline.¹⁹

Instead of directly applying the Finnish Church Law to the Ovambo mission work, the paragraphs on church discipline in the 1906 missionary guidelines were tailored to meet the needs and demands of the Finnish Missionary Society. On the one hand, the guidelines went beyond what would, at that time in Finland, be considered churchly domains as they touched upon what could be regarded as secular laws. However, when the guidelines were printed in 1906, Ovamboland was an isolated part of a German colony which knew very little of European secular laws. This explains why the guidelines also dealt with ways of being and behaving outside of the church’s domain. On the other hand, the missionary guidelines also touched upon issues pertaining to culture, as they took as a point of departure that *paganism* and *pagan practices* were in essence sinful.²⁰ The guidelines demonstrate the encounter between different cultures: put simply between the Pietistic Finnish Missionary Society on the one hand and the Ovambo ethnic groups on the other. The guidelines can be viewed as an early and sketchy display of an encounter between a Pietistic mission with different cultures; cultures which had little

17 Murtorinne 2000, 158–162.

18 Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870, 26; Sveriges kyrkolag af år 1686, 106–107, 735–736.

19 Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870, 26.

20 Ohjeita Suomen Lähetyssseuran lähettejä varten 1906, XVI, 11, 22.

exposure to Christianity prior to the arrival of the Finns in South West Africa, and where no western legal system had yet been implemented. It would soon become evident that the missionaries found the paragraphs on church discipline insufficient.

The issue of church discipline was discussed at the missionary annual conference in Ovamboland in 1918. Missionary Heikki Saari had prepared a briefing which provided a basis for discussion at the meeting. This briefing dealt with theological issues of church discipline. Saari highlighted the need for a humble stance, warning that the “white teachers” should not consider themselves any better than the “black parishioners”. Church discipline was for all Christians and the purpose was “only and exclusively ... salvation of the human soul from the fire of hell and for him/her to remain in Christ”.²¹ Saari’s briefing also dealt with the sensitive issue of excommunication, which had been practiced as a last resort from the early years of Finnish work in Ovamboland, but which was not mentioned in the missionary instructions from 1906.²² Towards the end of the document, Saari made three remarks that are of particular interest for this article. *Firstly*, he pointed out that in cases where a transgressor was to be excluded from the parish through excommunication or re-admitted into the parish this decision should be made by the missionaries jointly at a missionary conference. *Secondly*, all parishes were to be informed about cases of excommunication and the Christians were to be “instructed not to treat those under discipline as Christian brothers or sisters, but to hold them as worse than a pagan”.²³ *Thirdly*, according to Saari those already confirmed who were subject to church discipline

21 Saari 1917, 1–3. My translation.

22 Saari 1917, 3–6; Peltola 1958, 112; Ohjeita Suomen Lähetyseuran lähetejä varten 1906. Varis believes that church discipline, including excommunication, was introduced into the Finnish work in Ovamboland in the mid-1880s (Varis 1988, 173).

23 Saari 1917, 6. Saari made references to 1 Cor. 5:11 and 2 John 1:10.

were to re-attend confirmation education before being admitted back into the parish.²⁴

Based on the minutes, it is difficult to discern how divided or united the missionaries were over these or other issues, because one missionary, Emil Liljeblad, seems to have aired his opinions more than all the other missionaries together. What Liljeblad appears to have opposed was above all two things: strict rules guiding how the missionaries were to make their judgements and Saari's suggestion that all issues concerning excommunication were to be dealt with *jointly* at the missionary conferences.²⁵ It is probable that Liljeblad resisted the suggested policy not because he wanted to protect the members of his congregation, but because he wanted freedom and flexibility to decide on a course-of-action in his own parish.²⁶ According to Peltola, Liljeblad had a stricter approach in various matters, such as drinking *omagongo* (the local brew) and smoking and chewing tobacco, than the other missionaries.²⁷ Though various opinions were aired it seems

24 Saari 1917, 6.

25 Pöytäkirja 1918, §5.

26 One of Liljeblad's arguments against the suggestion for a joint decision in all cases touching upon excommunication was that he feared that if such a centralisation materialised "neighbouring parishes through their teachers would come interfering in another parish's business" (Pöytäkirja 1918, §5).

27 Peltola 1996, 220–225, 308–309. In 1902 and 1903 Emil Liljeblad had already refused to give tobacco to Ondonga's King Nehale and to the king of the Ongandjera, Tshaanika Tsha Natshilongo, and he had also made one of the teachers believe that smokers were wrong doers and did not go to heaven. When confronted by Rautanen, who was a smoker, Liljeblad refused to give in, despite instructions from the leadership in Helsinki that payment with or the donating of tobacco was not forbidden as such. Payment with tobacco to people suffering from malnutrition or poverty was, however, to end (Peltola 1996, 221–223). Liljeblad also had a more strict attitude towards the custom of the wedding ox, i.e. giving an ox to the parents of the bride, than Rautanen. According to Tuula Varis, Liljeblad criticised it harshly as pagan and immoral because it was a "payment for whoring and removal of virginity". Rautanen, for his part, considered the

that – with the exception of Liljeblad – the missionaries were united behind the idea of creating common and fairly detailed rules where the missionaries would jointly make decisions on excommunication.

The missionary annual meeting in 1918 would eventually lead to a Church Law, or church rules as they would be called by the Finnish Missionary Society. A committee was given the task of preparing these church rules (or the draft which would eventually be approved by the Governing Board of the Finnish Missionary Society), and in 1920 the *Directives for the Amboland Evangelical-Lutheran Church*²⁸ emerged. These directives were introduced for temporary use with immediate effect in the Finnish Ovamboland field, and after nearly four years, the Board of the Finnish Missionary Society in 1924 released the revised instructions under the title *Regulations of the Amboland Evangelical-Lutheran Church*.²⁹ These regulations would provide the next step towards a Church Law for a future Lutheran Church in northern Namibia.

As had been the case with the missionary instructions emerging in 1906, it is obvious that the Finnish Church Law of 1869 provided a basis, or framework, when the committee drafted the directives, which would then be approved in 1924 and printed as the Regulations of the Amboland Evangelical-Lutheran Church. The first 11 (out of 13) sections in the Regulations correspond to sections 1 to 9, 11 and 13 in the Finnish Church Law of 1869, whereas the second to last section constitutes a combination of several sections in the Church Law. The last section lacks a direct correspondence in the Church Law.³⁰

wedding ox to be a folk custom, which involved pagan elements (Varis 1988, 135).

28 Toimintaohjeita Ambomaan Evankelis-Luterilaiselle kirkolle.

29 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt. Peltola 1958, 213.

30 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924; Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870.

This is, however, as far as the similarities go. Though the title headings are similar, the Ovambo Church Regulations are much simpler. For instance, in the first paragraph under the title “The Church’s Confession” the text, instead of defining the actual confession of the church, reads, “Amboland’s Evangelical Lutheran Church is the child of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and adopts its confession.”³¹ Further down in paragraph four under the section “Church Administration” the text reads:

[T]he topmost administration of the Ambo Church is managed by the Board of the Finnish Missionary Society as long as this [Ambo] church needs its support. The local executive government of the Ambo Church is the Church Council and the legislative body is the General Synod.³²

Whereas the Church Council in 1924 still consisted of the missionary in charge as well as four missionaries elected by the missionary conference, the intention was to gradually hand over more responsibility to the local church. Peltola notes that as soon as half of the parishes could provide salaries for their pastors, evangelists, and teachers (and it should be noticed that the first Ovambo pastors were ordained in 1925) two Ovambo members would be elected to the Church Council to replace two of the Finns.³³

31 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt, § 1.

32 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt. My translation.

33 See Peltola 1958, 214. It should also be noted that the major milestone in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, the ordination in 1925, did not come easily. Missionary Perheentupa indicates that the Finnish missionaries had undergone a slow transformation process in their mind-set. Not long ago, Perheentupa notes, many missionaries would have shared the opinion of the Rheinisch missionaries in regarding ideas of the ordination of local pastors as “shocking gullibility” [*kauhistavaa hyväuskoisuutta*] (See Perheentupa 1923, 6–7).

The section on church discipline in the Ovambo Church Regulations introduced in 1924 follows the same pattern as its 1906 predecessor. Nevertheless, it had expanded considerably, from four paragraphs to 11.³⁴ Whereas wrongdoers had previously been warned by the parish leader (i.e. missionary) as a first measure, in 1924 it was made every Christian's duty to warn a brother or sister who did something which was viewed as inappropriate to a Christian. The paragraph consisted of a long list of examples on transgressions:

... enjoying omagongo [brew], pilferage, night running and sleeping with a woman (okuhagela), masturbation [*itsesaastutus*], bestiality, slandering, lying, fraud, pride, contentiousness, ruthlessness against animals, greed, usury, taking for oneself during payment assignments [*maksatusretkillä itselleen anastamisesta*], laziness, disobedience against parents [alternatively older], intentional participation in ohula etc. eating of sacrificial meat, all kinds of other minor magic practices and participating in the same, utilising local quacksalvers, neglecting church service, devotions, [neglecting] keeping the rest day holy, child-raising, helping brothers or sisters etc. spreading a different teaching than God's word and our church's confession, taking God's name and word in vain.³⁵

34 The two sections in the Finnish Church Law of 1869 which were left out of the Ovambo Church Regulations altogether were § 10: "On Churching of Women" [*Om barnaföderskors kyrkogång*] and, perhaps more importantly in this context, § 12: "On Individual Soul Care" [*Om enskild självård*]. The latter was probably found too conciliatory in its tone to fit in a young African church setting and the Finnish Missionary Society instead put emphasis on the church discipline aspects of pastoral care. The text in the Church Regulations was a modification and expansion of § 13: "On Church Discipline" [*Om kyrkotukt*] in the Finnish Church Law.

35 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 47. My translation.

Christians who wronged and failed to mend their ways, despite being warned by fellow Christians, should be reported to the parish leader who would issue a warning to the individual in question. This second step in church discipline in the 1924 Church Regulations would also apply to those who were committing public sins³⁶ such as:

... practicing magic, visiting a seer, assisting in or attending pagan weddings, allowing unchristian behaviour in the household, assaulting ones spouse or other fellowmen and allowing or encouraging fornication [*haureus*].³⁷

Should the transgressor fail to repent he or she was to be warned publicly in front of the parish and he or she should until further notice be withheld from confirmation instruction or from participation in Holy Communion. This third step also applied to those who had committed particular crimes and offenses such as:

... aggravated theft and robbery, demanding a wedding ox, seizing of [another individual's] field, fornication [*salavuoteus*], adultery and sleeping with a man.³⁸

If the transgressor repented and mended his or her ways, and compensated any potential material damage, he or she would be given a chance to confess publicly in front of the whole congregation, after which he or she would be re-awarded full member rights.³⁹ Should the transgressor fail to repent, however, he or she would be

36 In Finnish: *julkista pahennusta*.

37 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 48. My translation.

38 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 49. My translation.

39 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 50.

excommunicated, i.e. excluded from the parish and church. With regard to the discussion above, as to who should make the decision on excommunication, it can be noted (without much knowledge about the work of the committee making preparations for the Law) that the version approved by the Board of the Finnish Missionary Society declared that excommunication would *not* be an issue dealt with by individual missionaries, but by the church council.

This fourth step and last resort was reserved for those who had earlier been withheld from Holy Communion but who had still not repented. However, it also applied to those “who had fallen into paganism” and to those who had committed serious crimes such as

... murder, arson, removing a fetus [i.e. abortion], lending [ones] wife to another [man], acquiring right to marry through [participation in pagan wedding] and conducting pagan weddings, leaving [ones] spouse [i.e. divorce] without legal reason, polygamy and becoming a concubine.⁴⁰

Let us for a while look at what was characteristic of these 1924 Church Regulations in comparison with earlier praxis in Finland as well as on the Finnish missionary field. Quite obviously, one of the characteristics was in itself the introducing of excommunication in the law text. Whereas the 1906 missionary instructions (like the Finnish Church Law of 1869) spoke of exclusion from *Holy Communion* but not from *church membership*, the Ovambo Church Regulations of 1924 introduced excommunication. This does not mean that excommunication had not existed in the Finnish Missionary Society field in Ovamboland prior to 1924, which it had, but rather that it was brought to the fore in the new church document.

40 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 51. My translation.

Excommunication, in the sense of exclusion from the rights of church membership, was no novelty in Finnish church history. The Swedish Church Law of 1686, which was the prevailing law before 1869, dealt with excommunication both as the *smaller* and *larger ban*. A church member subject to the smaller ban was withheld from Holy Communion and possibly also from other churchly rights. Should an individual, however, fail to attend Holy Communion for one year or more he or she “was to be considered and prosecuted as a non-Christian”.⁴¹ The larger ban, on the other hand, implied that an individual was excluded from the church for a certain time. Should the wrongdoer not repent within the first year of excommunication he or she would be exiled from Sweden (and Finland).⁴² The 1869 Church Law had a much more conciliatory tone than its predecessor, and the only instance where the issue of parting with the church was mentioned was when individuals voluntarily left the church as dissenters.⁴³ In fact, Frans Ludvig Schauman who was leading the Church Law committee had also wanted to abolish the smaller ban, but due to resistance in the committee this mode of punishment was retained. What was abolished though, was the public confession which had in certain cases been a prerequisite for absolution.⁴⁴ The Ovambo Church Regulations of 1924 were inspired by the Finnish Church Rules of 1869, but they were also – and perhaps even more – inspired by the previous Swedish Church Rules of 1686. What I am considering here is the introducing of the larger ban, but also the relative humiliation of the “sinner”. Through the introduction of the 1924 Church Regulations on the Finnish mission field, transgressors would be readmitted *only after* a public confession in front of the congregation, and, in the case

41 Halmesmaa 1976, 22.

42 Sveriges kyrkolag af år 1686, 115–119.

43 Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland 1870, 3.

44 Pirinen 1985, 166–169.

of individuals readmitted after excommunication, these individuals had to sit in a particular location during the Sunday service.⁴⁵

Another characteristic of the 1924 Church Regulations as compared to the 1906 instructions and the 1869 Church Law in Finland was that it was very specific as to how certain sins should be treated in the parishes and by the church leadership. These transgressions can be grouped into four categories; a) transgressions connected to local customs, b) transgressions related to sexuality and married life, c) immorality in general, and, d) transgressions which were considered as crimes by secular law in Finland. In the application of this division, we can note that most transgressions highlighted in the 1924 Church Regulations related directly to category a) local customs, and category b) sexuality, procreation, and married life. Also the cases brought to the attention of the parish leadership appear to have concerned predominantly sexuality, procreation and family life, but also immorality in general. Referring to information provided by Missionary Nestori Väänänen, Maija Tuupainen writes that that some 90 per cent of all disciplinary cases treated by the administrative boards before 1939 concerned adultery, divorce, and immorality.⁴⁶ Local practice is not mentioned specifically here. This may suggest some measure of missionary tolerance for local customs, or at least enhanced differentiation between local culture and morals (with or without direct connections to local culture). The overwhelming focus on morality, and in particular on sexual morality in the disciplinary cases, however, can be interpreted as a sign of persistent cultural differences between the Ovambo and the Finns. It can also be interpreted as a demonstration of the Finnish missionaries' bias with regard to morals and sexuality. Chastity, marital fidelity, and morals in general were viewed as particularly important in Christian life, and living a sexually immoral life was feared as a serious threat against salvation.

45 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt, § 50 and § 53.

46 Tuupainen 1970, 118.

Even if it has been argued, as for instance by Missionary Walde Kivinen in the late 1930s, that the Finnish Missionary Society did not oppose culture, but only fought those cultural habits which were based on “savagery, ignorance and heathen superstition” or on “surviving superstitious customs”⁴⁷, it cannot be denied that the Finnish missionaries had a great struggle with Ovambo culture. With hindsight, it can be argued that what the Finnish Missionary Society tried to achieve in Ovamboland through the 1924 Church Regulations appears to be a situation a little short of utopia. This was, as I have discussed in my earlier research, a result of the Finnish missionaries’ aspiration to found a church in Africa according to their preferences.⁴⁸ Yet the rigidity of the rules seems to have been met with resistance. As Tuupainen, who conducted her research in the 1960s, says “most Lutheran Ovambo ministers working in the Ondonga and Uukwanyama tribes” considered that the church discipline had “lost its meaning.” Disciplinary cases became too numerous to handle and, as a result of this, only a fraction of the “guilty” ones were disciplined. Consequently, according to Tuupainen, justice was not served. As a consequence of the missionaries’ strict implementation of the church rules many people grew indifferent to church discipline.⁴⁹

The Transculturality of the Christian Mission

In discussing the preparation of the 1924 Church Regulations and their implementation in northern Namibia, the Finnish Missionary Society easily appears as a rather intolerant, or black and white, Pietistic movement. While this impression may be true, I do not wish to linger on the shortcomings of the Finns – or the Ovambo people – as I would rather reach behind or beyond this perception. One way of

47 Quoted in Miettinen 2005, 120–121.

48 Groop 2014, 85–89.

49 Tuupainen 1970, 118.

doing this is to scrutinise the cultural hybridity and hybridisation of the mission endeavour. What is striking about the encounter between Finns and Ovambo around the turn into the 20th century is its multifacetedness. As I will suggest in the following two chapters, there was much more to this encounter than is obvious in the early documentation and literature about the enterprise. The Finns as well as the Ovambo consisted of a motley crew representing surprisingly different and diverse cultures and traditions.

In an article published in 1999, the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch discusses the concept of transculturality.⁵⁰ Welsch aims critique at the way culture has traditionally been viewed; as a single entity giving meaning to the whole of life for a limited population – a culture of one people. According to Welsch, this “classical model of culture is not only descriptively unserviceable, but also normatively dangerous and untenable.”⁵¹ However, Welsch also criticises the concepts of interculturality – which refers to interaction between diverse cultures – and multiculturalism – which refers to the culturally diverse nature of human society. Both are, in Welsch’s opinion, “almost as inappropriate as the traditional concept [of single cultures] itself, because they still conceptually presuppose it.”⁵² The concept of multiculturalism, according to Welsch, is surprisingly similar to the concept of interculturality as it takes up the problems “which different cultures have living together *within one society*”, and it “proceeds from the existence of clearly distinguished, in themselves homogeneous cultures”.⁵³ Sigurd Bergmann elaborates on Welsch’s criticism of the traditional single entity culture discourse. Bergmann, therefore, disqualifies Samuel Huntington’s acclaimed theory of a “clash of

50 Welsch 1999. The concept transculturality was already used in the 1940s by the Cuban Fernando Ortiz Fernández who coined the word *transculturación* to describe converging cultures (see for instance Jaidka 2010, 2–3).

51 Welsch 1999, 195.

52 Welsch 1999, 196. See also UNESCO 2006, 17.

53 Welsch 1999, 196 (emphasis in original).

civilisations” as “controversial and untrue” as it is “founded on the idea of clearly identifiable civilisations.”⁵⁴

Welsch’s idea of transculturality challenges this notion of culture as a single entity. Culture today, he argues, (and, as I will argue later, also in the Finnish missionary past) is characterised by pluralism, inter-change, and hybridisation instead of by social homogenisation, ethnic consolidation, and delimitation. In Welsch’s words it “*passes through* classical cultural boundaries.”⁵⁵ According to Bergmann:

Cultures today are much more externally connected than the single culture concept shows. The modern society is complex and highly differentiated, also in the economic silent zones of the world. Migration processes do not any longer make you belonging to a single territory. Mobility makes people more or less global or regional. Cultures are in late modernity characterized by hybridization. ... Also individuals construe their cultural identity in processes of selective mixtures. More and more of us are becoming cultural hybrids. This dimension of hybridization makes it extremely difficult to define national identity today.⁵⁶

Astrid Erll discusses Welsch’s notion of transculturality from a memory studies perspective. She goes as far as suggesting that the transcultural dimension can be viewed as a *third phase* of memory studies. Erll views Maurice Halbwachs’s *mémoire collective* from the 1920s as the *first phase* and Pierre Nora’s as well as Jan and Aleida Assmann’s studies on “large mnemonic formations, such as nations and religious groups” as representing a *second phase*.⁵⁷ According to Erll’s understanding, the third phase is a phase in which scholars, “increasingly

54 Bergmann 2010, 142.

55 Welsch 1999, 197 (emphasis in original).

56 Bergmann 2010, 143–144.

57 Erll 2010, 306–309.

substitute notions of national culture and national remembrance with more complex models of transcultural memory”.⁵⁸ She understands transcultural memory as a:

... certain *research perspective*, a focus of attention, which is directed towards mnemonic processes unfolding *across* and *beyond* cultures. It means transcending the borders of traditional ‘cultural memory studies’ by looking beyond established research assumptions, objects and methodologies.⁵⁹

This view is also shared and further elaborated on by Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson who in their introduction to *The Transcultural Turn* write about transcultural memory as follows:

Building upon Welsch’s definition of transculturality, we suggest that *transcultural memory* might best be regarded as describing two separate dynamics in contemporary commemorative practice: firstly, the travelling of memory *within* and *between* national, ethnic and religious collectives; secondly, forums of remembrance that aim to move *beyond* the idea of political, ethnic, linguistic, or religious borders as containers for our understanding of the past.⁶⁰

Though the discussion on transculturality often takes as the example the globalising world of today, I would claim that the missionary movement – all the way from 17th century German Pietism and the Danish-Halle Tranquebar Mission in the 18th century until today – can and should be viewed through the lens of transculturality.⁶¹

58 Erl 2010, 306.

59 Erl 2011, 9 (emphasis in original).

60 Bond and Rapson 2014, 19.

61 I thus share Antje Flüchter’s and Jivanta Schöttli’s analysis as regards Welsch’s focus on today in his discussion on transculturality, that whilst they “... do not deny that there was a profound shift in the nineteenth

Very little attention has so far been paid to studying the history of the Christian missionary movement from a transcultural perspective.⁶² An increased emphasis on the hybridity of the missionary movement as well as on the memories surrounding this hybridised and hybridising movement could open new theoretical perspectives beyond the focus on globalisation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and thus be of benefit to the scholarly debate on transculturality and transcultural memory. In addition, such a shift of research perspective would enable historians and other scholars dealing with the (legacy of) the Christian mission to reach beyond enduring and simplified conceptions – or misconceptions – one of which being that the Christian mission destroyed local culture. This misapprehension, I would claim, departs from an obsolete notion that once upon a time (before the arrival of the missionaries) there were authentic but vulnerable cultures that the forceful but intolerant missionaries were in a position to, wanted to, and managed to destroy. Much of the scholarly debate has tended to be tied to two slightly simplified perceptions of the Christian mission in action. One side has emphasised processes of including, where the mission endeavour has been understood through the concept of *missio Dei* – as God’s mission – where the missionaries

century towards a more tightly connected world, we [they] also understand this to have been a shift in quantitative rather than qualitative terms. Transculturality in our [their] understanding, occurs not only everywhere but also at all times and in all human cultures and societies. It is not bound to a certain time, but represents a timeless, structural element in all human societies, practices, and institutions.” (Flüchter & Schöttli 2015, 3) For a recent study on German Pietism from a transcultural perspective, see Groop 2015.

- 62 Two quite recent studies could here be mentioned; *Remembering Africa: The Rediscovering of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature* by Dirk Göttsche and Judith Becker’s edited volume *Missionaries in Contact Zones: Transformation through Interaction in a (post-)Colonial World*. These are, from different perspectives, dealing with cultural encounters and transformation in foreign mission and colonialism.

have been seen as being within a divine effort aiming at embracing all mankind with God's salvific grace.⁶³ The other side has focused on processes of excluding, portraying the agents of the mission as predominantly intolerant, disdainful, and destructive for the local cultures it served.⁶⁴ Whereas the former may struggle to make itself heard in secular academia if taken too far in a church theological direction, the latter, in my opinion, runs the risk of making itself irrelevant if it fails to go beyond a mere state of disappointment and disapproval.

I am aware of the often unequal and sometimes stormy relationship between the mission and the receivers of the mission, and I have myself touched upon some of this relationship in the previous chapter. Yet, and this is my point, in the numerous encounters between missionaries and missionised we find individuals and communities who came from or identified with various constantly changing traditions and cultures. However, these cultures, have so often failed to be recognised as the transcultural individuals and groups *they in fact were*, and have so often instead been grouped, in sources as well as in studies, according to various comprehensions of who they *were or were supposed to be*.

In 1917, Elin Silén wrote very vividly about the Christian mission as standing between different worlds and being a blessing to them all. "The mission stands on the border between the world of the pagans and [the world] of the Christians – it stands there mild and warm and gives with full hands in each direction."⁶⁵ Though Silén, with her words, describes a Pietistic rather dualistic missionary standpoint she also points to the very characteristic of at least the Protestant mission: namely to cross borders and enter the "world of the pagans". In my understanding, there can hardly be any movement which fits better as an example of transculturality than the Christian mission. The very

63 See for instance Imberg 2008.

64 See for instance Miettinen 2005.

65 Silén 1917, 5.

essence of the Christian mission was (and still is) to belong to, move between, and reach beyond different worlds and cultures. Scrutinising the mission and missionary movement through the lens of transculturality, in my opinion, makes sense. Let me give three examples from the Finnish Missionary Society.

Firstly, *the Finnish Missionary Society and its missionaries were cultural hybrids*. What was most characteristic of this society around the turn of the 20th century was *not* that it was a Finnish or a Lutheran society; rather, as much as it was a Finnish mission society it was a *European* one and as much as it was a Lutheran society it was a revivalist movement. Like the missionary movement at large, it was established in the wake of German Pietism and the evangelical revival and it drew the bulk of its support and supporters from various revivalist movements within, or bordering, the Lutheran Church. Theologically, the Finnish Missionary Society adhered to the Lutheran confession, but with an inclination towards Pietism and revivalist thinking, which is noticeable in the articles published in the society's two journals: the Finnish-language *Suomen Lähetys-Sanomia* and the Swedish-language *Missions-Tidning för Finland*.⁶⁶ However, the Finnish Missionary Society also related to other Lutheran and non-Lutheran Protestant mission societies – not least in Sweden, Germany, and Great Britain – and frequently reported about their work in the society's two journals. Furthermore, the German evangelical theologian Gustav Warneck was considered as both an authority and an inspiration to the Finnish Missionary Society and the Pietist minded Warneck did not view Western culture as a crucial part of Christianity.⁶⁷ He saw it as far more important that the missionaries “[fulfil] their ‘holy duty’ of proclaiming the gospel” than that they aligned with nationality and national interests.⁶⁸ In line with this, the Finnish Missionary Society

66 For this, see Groop 2013b, 287–296.

67 See for instance Bridges 2008, 58.

68 Ballard 2008, 179.

in Ovamboland at times went beyond, and sometimes against, what could have been expected of them from a national or European colonial perspective. The missionaries chose to distance themselves from the colonial authorities, whom they considered dangerous to their work, both from a political and a religious perspective. This was one of the key reasons why the field leader Martti Rautanen was so keen on keeping the German, and later the British/South African authorities, out of Ovamboland. He feared that the influx of European “decadent Christianity” would destroy the church he and his colleagues were trying to build.⁶⁹ As for the missionaries, the Finns travelling to what is today northern Namibia came from quite different cultural and religious contexts. Just looking at the first seven Finnish missionaries demonstrates this.⁷⁰ Only two of the seven missionaries were what one could today call “ordinary Finnish men”. One – Martti Rautanen – was born near St Petersburg in Russia and came with time to consider himself more African than Finnish.⁷¹ Four⁷² of the missionaries were either Swedish-speaking or came from Swedish families. To add to this, two⁷³ of the first seven missionaries had not received their missionary training at the Finnish missionary school but in Germany, at the Hermannsburg mission seminar, which had a quite different curriculum to the school in Helsinki.⁷⁴ I have no knowledge as to where these seven missionaries stood with regard

69 For this, see Peltola 1996, 164–169, 253–259.

70 Apart from these seven missionaries four carpenters Juho Nissinen, Juho Heinonen, Antti Piirainen and Erkki Juntunen were sent to South West Africa. The two latter had started training to become missionaries but had been unable to fulfil the training (Peltola 1958, 32).

71 Peltola (1996, 5) quotes Rautanen who in 1903 told friends in Tampere in Finland: “I have two home countries, like others. You have heaven and Finland, I have heaven and Amboland.” My translation.

72 Karl Emmanuel Jurvelin, Botolf Bernhard Björklund, Karl August Weikkolin and Alexander Malmström.

73 Jurvelin and Malmström.

74 Peltola 1958, 32; Paunu 1909, 50–51, 57, 59, 68.

to theological tradition, but they were described by Uuno Paunu as either serious and devout Christians or as having been influenced by the “awakening”⁷⁵ or by pious religiosity in general, and they had been recommended to the Finnish Missionary Society by influential Lutherans with connections to the society.⁷⁶ This cultural diversity was typical not only for the first group of missionaries, but the small society continued to draw missionary candidates and supporters from various cultural traditions. This diversity in terms of personalities, age, language, background, theological tradition and so on would naturally enrich the mission enterprise, but would at times also lead to conflicts on issues such as how the work should be developed and how to relate to Ovambo cultural traditions.⁷⁷

Secondly, *the Ovambo were cultural hybrids* and therefore the cultural setting providing the context for the Finnish mission endeavour was in itself highly pluralistic. The Ovambo among whom the Finns tried to establish mission stations in 1870/1871 consisted of nine different tribes or sub tribes with different dialects and a multitude of different customs. These Ovambo groups did not live in isolation from each other but rather in constant interaction, interdependence, and friction. They shared and communicated essentially a mutual belief system and many traditions; they depended on each other’s loyalty and support against outside threats such as the slave trade and colonisation; and sometimes they raided each other. Added to this it should also be mentioned that many Ovambo customs were constantly changing or transforming. One example worth mentioning is the fact that male circumcision, which was widely practiced elsewhere in Africa, had already almost disappeared from the Ndonga kingdom before the missionaries arrived in 1871.⁷⁸ The kings and

75 In Finnish: Herännäisyys.

76 Paunu 1909, 27–28, 95–97.

77 Groop 2014, 97; Peltola 1996, 220–225, 252, 309–310.

78 Tuupainen 1970, 42–45.

chiefs of the various Ovambo ethnic groups reacted rather differently to the arrival of the Finnish messengers. After initial failures in bringing Christianity to the other Ovambo tribes, the Finnish missionaries for many years concentrated their work with the Ndonga. When the work also eventually spread to other kingdoms and chieftains, the missionaries received exposure to new sets of constantly transforming cultures. Nonetheless, those Ovambo men and women who chose to welcome the Finnish missionaries, who went to Finnish mission schools and became Christians and/or who adopted European trends and fashions only *continued* on a path that Ovambo men and women had walked over the past decades, namely that of change and adaptation to new circumstances.

Thirdly, *the encounter between Finns and Ovambo implied hybridisation*. Despite a turbulent start and seemingly unbridgeable cultural differences, the relationship between the Finnish missionaries and Ovambo hosts would lead to an unstoppable transculturation process. In fact, this process started on an individual level at the very instance the first contacts were made after the Finnish arrival in Ovamboland. This is seen in the documentation on how the missionaries acquired local knowledge in order to survive, in order to pursue their work, and out of personal interest. They energetically tried to learn the local languages, dialects, and folklore. In addition, they also acquired local knowledge in the many practical areas that they were in dire need of, such as how to farm, what to eat and what not to, where to find water, building material and so on. This cultural fusion is also seen in missionary reports on pupils, workers, and converts struggling to learn how to live and behave in order to win the approval of the missionaries; or as put by Missionary Frans Hannula, to “understand what *true Christianity* is and what it isn’t.”⁷⁹ Though

79 Hannula 1888, 13 in Kirkollisia Sanomia (my emphasis). Many young men and women were willing to cross the cultural boundaries; sometimes even too willing, for, as Olli Löytty notes, converted “pagans experienced

the missionaries had their own quite specific understanding of what it implied to be a “true Christian” they also – reluctantly or voluntarily – came to accept Ovambo customs which did not fit into their own understanding of this “true” Christianity. In due time, as I have discussed in my earlier research, many customs would be assimilated into local Lutheran Christianity. This was also true vice versa: Finnish missionary Lutheranism would be incorporated into local Ovambo culture. This was the case for instance with regard to Christian weddings. The 1924 Church Rules forbade ceremonies “deriving from paganism” including the demanding of a wedding ox, night time singing, drinking sprees, and extensive celebrations with relatives.⁸⁰ Needless to say these customs would not disappear. With time the church ceremony itself would come to be only a small part of a wedding tradition involving a wide array of old Ovambo customs most of which the missionaries would eventually accept.⁸¹ However, this transculturation process went even further. Some of the Finnish missionaries married local women. This was the case for Rautanen and Björklund. Their wives’ (the sisters Frieda and Katharina) grandmother belonged to the Nama ethnic group.⁸² There are numerous other examples of how Finnish missionary- and Ovambo cultures grew together. There were extraordinary relationships between some missionaries and kings or chiefs. Many missionaries and their wives and children died and were buried on African soil, and many Ovambo Christians took Finnish names to honour these or other missionaries, teachers, or midwives. This is a vivid example of how the memories of the Finnish missionary and Ovambo connection have been cherished in Namibia. It touches

... Christianity differently than people who had lived in western cultural circles” and this would consequently trigger a fear among missionaries that the converts joined the Christian church with the wrong motives (Löytty 2006, 192–193).

80 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt, § 31.

81 Groop 2014, 108–109.

82 Peltola 1958, 47, 66.

upon what Astrid Erll calls *travelling memory*, which points at the mobility of mnemonic practices such as shared images and practices.⁸³ Rather than being something local and isolated memory travels with individuals and collectives across national and cultural boundaries. The Finnish missionaries carried memories – individual as well as collective – which were kept alive and maintained by particular literature, hymns, sacral images, bible quotations and so on. This shows how memory also travels between individuals or collectives on the one hand and written, painted, or crafted mnemonic interpretations on the other, or to use Erll’s words, “between media and minds”.⁸⁴ However, in line with Erll’s notion that cultural memory needs to “travel’, be kept in motion, in order to ‘stay alive’, to have an impact both on individual minds and social formations”⁸⁵, the memories attached to the Finnish Mission Church could not end with the Finnish memories. Old missionary sentiments would soon give way to new local memories and commemorations celebrating the history of an African church, albeit with Finnish missionary connections. Some of these “new memories” would be Ovambo memories of the very beginnings of the Lutheran Church in Ovamboland. These memories would be visible at, and honoured through, national monuments such as the old church, mission houses and missionary graves at Olukonda or the site of the first mission station in Omandongo – or through media such as books, magazines and photographs.⁸⁶ Other “new memories” would celebrate African participation, such as the early encounters

83 Erll 2011, 18.

84 Erll 2011, 18–19.

85 Erll 2011, 17. Erll gives credit to Ann Rigney who uses the metaphor of a swimmer to show how collective memory is constantly “in the works” and like a swimmer keeps moving to stay afloat. See Rigney 2008, 345.

86 One influential book in Namibia is the *History of the Church in Namibia* which was written by Gerhard L. Buys and Shekutaamba Vaino Vaino Nambala. Nambala has since 2012 been the presiding bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

with Finnish missionary Christianity, the first baptism in 1883, and of the ordination of the first seven Ovambo pastors in 1925.⁸⁷

Cultural Hybridity and the 1924 Church Rules

The transcultural character of the Finnish Missionary Society endeavour in Ovamboland is also visible in the Church Rules. Finnish missionary theology was a hybridisation of various theological perspectives. It was thoroughly Lutheran in dogma, but in line with what Douglas H. Shantz writes about as the early Pietists reading of Luther “through the lenses of ... radical Spiritualists”⁸⁸; the Finnish missionaries tended to read Luther through the lenses of Pietism. This is seen for instance in the 1924 Church Rules’ section dealing with baptism. No less than four times the need to renounce paganism is stressed as a prerequisite for baptism. This demonstrates the contrast between paganism and sin on the one hand and baptism and grace on the other. This thought structure can be seen as an example of reading Luther through Pietistic glasses; the Pietistic conception of sin versus penance and rebirth is applied to paganism and baptism.⁸⁹ Finnish Lutheran pastors had little experience in baptising adults and therefore the Lutheran missionaries had, in this respect, more in common with other “heirs of Pietism” such as Baptists and Methodists. However, it is not only in the section on baptism where the transfusion of ideas is seen, as there are a number of other examples of hybridisation in the Church Rules.

First, the Ovambo Church Rules were an *amalgamation between the Swedish Church Law of 1686 and the Finnish Church Law of 1869*. It is not within the scope of this research to assess the reception of the Finnish Church Law of 1869 in revivalist circles in Finland. Yet a

87 Buys and Nambala 2003, 162–163.

88 Shantz 2013, 279.

89 For the Pietist’s conception of sin, see for instance Nordbäck 2004, 345.

small notion may be of relevance. When Schauman's law proposal was discussed in the senate, it was not only handled within, by, and from the point of view of the four estates (nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie, and peasantry); as the liberal and conservative considerations and critique was also visible in the discussion.⁹⁰ This was the case regarding the confession paragraph and the issue of church discipline both of which produced lively discussion in the law committee. A section of the delegates, as reported by Kauko Pirinen, resisted Schauman's suggestion to abolish not only the larger, but also the smaller ban, and the abolishment of the public confession.⁹¹ After this arm wrestling a compromise was reached. The confession paragraph was amended and the smaller ban was retained, but the larger ban as well as the public confession was abolished. Consequently, the revivalist movements were probably relieved, but not thrilled, and it is reasonable to assume that they still considered the 1869 Law a little too liberal. Regarding the applicability of this Church Law on the mission field it seems obvious that the Finnish Missionary Society did not deem this law strict enough in the Ovambo context. In its attempt to found a church of its liking in Ovamboland, the Finnish Missionary Society took "the best" of the two Church Laws it had experience of; simplified it and adapted it to fit both the sending and the hosting context.

Second, the Church Rules were a *result of hybridisation between Lutheranism and revivalist thinking*; or between those expressions found within the Finnish Lutheran Church, on the one hand, and the expressions found within Lutheran revival movements and free churches, on the other. A look at four different paragraphs in the Church Rules supports this thought. In the first paragraph – The Confession of the Church – the text reads "The Amboland Evangelical Lutheran Church is the child of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and adopts

90 Pirinen 1985, 217–220.

91 Pirinen 1985, 166–169.

its confession.”⁹² Given the controversy that the confession paragraph had created in revivalist circles in Finland when the proposal for the 1869 Church Law was made public, it is remarkable that the Finnish Missionary Society, embracing all Lutheran revivalist movements, opted for this quite simple statement. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the society tied the work in South West Africa to the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and not only to the Finnish Missionary Society. In the section on Sunday Service, paragraph 13 emphasises the role of lay people in the Church service stating that “As preacher may be employed also lay people who are known as sincere Christians”.⁹³ This is also emphasised in the section on the spiritual and financial management of the parish where it is stressed that “mature and pious” laymen should be encouraged to serve as evangelists after they “take a degree and perform a preaching demonstration” before the Church Board.⁹⁴ Finally, in the last section and paragraph – Free Christian Activity – the Finnish Missionary Society emphasises the importance of a “diverse free Christian activity” such as “Sunday School, youth-, temperance-, diakonia-, and pagan mission work as well as activity in favour of residing Ambo workers”.⁹⁵ These paragraphs show how the Finnish Missionary Society stood between theological traditions, i.e. adhering to Lutheran theology, but at the same time expressing and

92 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 1.

93 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 13.

94 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 62. This custom had probably been inspired by the Lutheran Churches in Finland and Sweden. The *venia concionandi* was a written permission introduced in the late 19th century by which a lay person could be granted by the chapter or bishop the right to lead a Sunday Service or to preach in a Lutheran church context. The *venia concionandi* can be viewed as having a dual function: that of acknowledging lay preachers derived from the many revivalist movements, whilst also controlling them.

95 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt 1924, § 69.

encouraging some of the characteristics of the revivalist movements, where the Finnish Missionary Society had its roots.

Third, the Church Rules are a *demonstration of an encounter between African and European cultures*. This is maybe most clearly seen in light of the contemporary dualism between paganism and salvation, which in Finnish missionary thinking were considered as opposites. The Church Rules were written as they were with the end result – the complete transformation of humans – in mind. The long list of undesirable habits and customs in the section on Church Discipline is a dramatically visible display of a remarkable and at times rather painful cultural encounter. While many of the paragraphs can be seen as a mixture between the two Church Laws in Finland, some paragraphs can also be viewed as attempts at an adaptation to Ovambo customs. This is the case for instance with the public confession. On the one hand, the public confession had been brought from the 1686 Church Law, while it had disappeared from the succeeding 1869 Church Law. Keeping or introducing this means of church discipline in the Finnish Mission Church could therefore be viewed as an expression of missionary conservatism. On the other hand, this mode of confession can also be viewed as an attempt at preserving, and tying in with, Ovambo customs of settling conflicts.⁹⁶

Fourth, and finally, the Church Rules *make visible the transculturality of the Christian message itself*. What I am considering here is the extraordinary two millennium long journey of the gospel from Jerusalem to Ovamboland. While Christianity has travelled countless routes, what was “remembered” from this journey and brought to Africa by the Finnish Missionary Society could naturally only be a highly limited selection. Naturally also the “memory” or “memories” brought from Finland to Africa from this journey were deeply coloured by some of the routes Christianity had taken. We can take

96 Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestysäännöt 1924, § 26.

as an example the concept of paganism⁹⁷ and the stance on Christian morals. While the notion of the pagans goes back to biblical times, the way it was embraced and understood in the 1924 Church Rules resembled the 18th century German Pietistic understanding of the concept more than anything else. The same applies to morals and Finnish missionary opinions as to what characterised a “true” Christian, which had been highly influenced by Lutheran thinking and even more by Pietistic thinking. This demonstrates both how cultural memory in the history of the Church travels and transforms and how it is connected with theological tradition and domicile. It also demonstrates the limitations of cultural memory. What is “remembered” is just a tiny selection of history. If viewed as an almost two thousand-year journey, the Christian tradition travelled many routes and paths before it came to what is today northern Namibia. Yet, when looking at the written mission sources, such as the 1924 Church Rules it is obvious that the Finnish missionaries working in and for the emerging Ovambo Lutheran Church cherished and remembered certain traditions, historical stages, and events more than others. Clearly or vaguely visible in this document are certain historical chapters such as the early Church, Luther’s reformation, German Pietism, and the Swedish and Finnish Church Laws of 1686 and 1869, whereas countless other stages in the history of the Christian Church have tended to be forgotten.

97 For the transformation of the concept, see for instance Forward 2005, 8.

References

ARCHIVES

National Archives (NAF), Helsinki, Finland

Archives of the Finnish Missionary Society, box 796

Ambomaan evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon järjestyssäännöt,
approved by the board of the Finnish Missionary Society 5
March 1924

Archives of the Finnish Missionary Society, Hha:7 Afrikan lähettien
kokousten pöytäkirjat 1914-1919

*Pöytäkirja tehty lähettien vuosikokouksen toisena päivänä 16 pñä
tammik. 1918 Oniipassa.*

Sielunhoidosta eli kirkkokurista, 22.12.1917

PERIODICALS

Kirkollisia Sanomia. Todistuksia ja kertomuksia Jumalan waltakunnan alalta 1888

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ballard, Martin

2008 *White Men's God: The Extraordinary Story of Missionaries in Africa*.
Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing.

Becker, Judith

2015 *European Missions in Contact Zones. Transformation Through Interaction
in a (Post-)Colonial World*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Bergmann, Sigurd

2004 "Transculturality and Tradition: Renewing the Continuous in Late
Modernity". *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 58:2. London:
Routledge.

Bond, Lucy and Rapson, Jessica

2014 *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond
Borders*. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

Bridges, Roy

2008 "The Christian Vision and Secular Imperialism: Missionaries, Geog-
raphy and the Approach to East Africa, c. 1844-1890". *Converting
Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914*. Ed.
Dana L. Robert. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans
Publishing, 43-59.

- Buys, Gerhard L. and Nambala, Shekutaamba V. V.
 2003 *History of the Church in Namibia 1805-1990. An Introduction*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan.
- Erll, Astrid
 2009 "Remembering across Time, Space and Cultures. Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny'". *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Ed. Astrid Erll & Ann Rigney. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 109-138.
- 2010 "Regional integration and (trans)cultural memory". *Asia EVurope Journal* (2010) Volume 8, Issue 3. Heidelberg: Springer, 305-315.
- 2011 "Travelling Memory". *Parallax*, vol. 17, no. 4. London: Routledge, 4-18.
- Flüchter, Antje and Schöttli, Jivanta
 2015 *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion*. Cham, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht and London: Springer.
- Forward, Martin
 2005 "Paganism". *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Vol 4. Ed. Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milič Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan and Lukas Vischer. Leiden: Brill, 7-10.
- Göttsche, Dirk
 2013 *Remembering Africa: The Rediscovery of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature*. Rochester and New York: Camden House.
- Groop, Kim
 2013a "Tolerance Boundaries in Nineteenth Century Swedish and Finnish Mission: An Internal and External Dimension". *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 101, 2 (2013). Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Mission Research, 137-172.
- 2013b "Något om de svenska och de finländska missionstidningarnas särdrag och betydelse". *Historiska perspektiv på kyrka och väckelse. Festskrift till Ingvar Dahlbacka på 60-årsdagen*. Ed. Kim Groop & Birgitta Sarelin. Helsingfors: Finska kyrkohistoriska samfundet. Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia - Finska kyrkohistoriska samfundets handlingar 224, 287-299.
- 2014 "Between Pietistic Heritage and Olufuko Revival: Female Initiation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 150, November 2014. Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu-Natal, 85-111.
- 2015 "August Hermann Francke och det pietistiska minnets transkulturalitet". *Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran vuosikirja - Finska kyrkohistoriska samfundets årsskrift 2015* (105). Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura, 41-61.

- Halmesmaa, Pekka
 1976 *Kirkkokuri murroksen kynnyksellä: Kirkkokuria koskevan säännösten kehityminen Suomessa vuosina 1818–1847 sekä sen soveltaminen Turun tuomiiovastikunnassa*. Helsinki: Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura. Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia – Finska kyrkohistoriska samfundets handlingar 97.
- Imberg, Rune
 2008 *A Door Opened by the Lord: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya*. Göteborg: Församlingsförlaget.
- Jaidka, Manju
 2010 *India is my Country but the World is my Home: Transculturality through Literature*. Proceedings of cAIR, the first Conference on Applied Interculturality Research (Graz, Austria, 7–10 April 2010).
- Leino, Pekka
 2012 *”Endast kyrkans egna angelägenheter”. En kyrkorättslig undersökning av kyrkans egna angelägenheter i kyrkolagstiftningen om Evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.
- Miettinen, Kari
 2005 *On the Way to Whiteness: Christianization, Conflict and Change in Colonial Ovamboland, 1910–1965*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Murtorinne, Eino
 2000 *Finlands kyrkohistoria 3. Autonomins tidevarv 1809–1899*. Skellefteå: Artos.
- Nordbäck, Carola
 2004 *Samvetets röst. Om mötet mellan luthersk ortodoxi och konservativ pietism i 1720-talets Sverige*. Umeå: Institutionen för historiska studier, Umeå universitet.
- Paunu, Uuno
 1908 *Suomen Pakanalähetystöimi I. Lähetysbarrastuksen berääminen ja Suomen Lähetysseuran synty*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
 1909 *Suomen Pakanalähetystöimi II. Suomen Lähetysseura vuosina 1859–1876*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
- Peltola, Matti
 1958 *Sata vuotta suomalaista lähetystyötä 1859–1959. Suomen Lähetysseuran Afrikan työn historia*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
 1996 *Martti Rautanen. Mies ja kaksi isänmaata*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
- Perheentupa, Antti
 1923 *Uusiajanjakso Ambolähetystyössä*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.

- Pirinen, Kauko
 1985 *Schaumannin kirkkolain synty*. Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura.
- Rigney, Ann
 2008 "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing". *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Ed. A. Erll & A. Nünning. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 345–353.
- Rydé, A. J.
 1846 *Sveriges kyrkolag af år 1686 jemte ännu gällande stadganden genom hvilka den blifvit ändrad eller tillökt*. Jönköping: J. Sandwall.
- Schmidt, W. A.
 1948 *Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg. Den evangeliska rörelsens i Finland grundare*. Helsingfors: Förbundet för svenskt församlingsarbete i Finland.
- Shantz, Douglas H.
 2013 *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Silén, Elin
 1917 *Mission och Missionsstudium*. Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag.
- Suokunnas, Seppo
 2011 *Evangelisen liikkeen isä F.G. Hedberg 1811–1893*. Vaasa: Arkmedia. Suomen Lähetysseura
- 1906 *Ohjeita Suomen Lähetysseuran lähettejä varten*.
- Tuupainen, Maija
 1970 *Marriage in a Matrilineal African Tribe. A Social Anthropological Study of Marriage in the Ondonga Tribe in Ovamboland*. Helsinki: Academic Bookstore.
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
 2006 *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Väänänen, Nestori
 1934 *Mustat lampaat*. Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
- 1935 *Kuinka mustasta tulee kristitty?* Helsinki: Suomen Lähetysseura.
- Waenerberg, G. M.
 1870 *Kyrkolag för den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Finland, af Finlands Ständer vid landtdagen år 1867 antagen och af Hans Kejsrerliga Majestäät den 9 December (27 Nowember) 1868 i nåder stadfästad*. Helsingfors: G. W. Edlunds förlag.

Welsch, Wolfgang

1999 "Transculturality. The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today". *Spaces of Culture. City – Nation – World*. Ed. Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash. London: SAGE Publications, 194–213.