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**Author(s):** Särkkä, Timo

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**Timo Särkkä**

**Picturing Colonialism in Rhodesia. C. T. Eriksson's Pictorial Rhetoric and Colonial Reality, 1901–1906**

**Introduction**

In recent studies in the field of visual culture which have a specific focus on the intersection of photography and colonialism, photography has become the subject of analysis of and debate about how colonisers have used photographic practices to construct not merely individual selves, but racial and national histories. The display, circulation, use – and, finally, the discarding – of Rhodesian pictorial rhetoric has been analysed as part of British colonial discourse, while the study of photographers from other European nations, with their own individual relations to non-European societies, has gained significantly lesser attention. This chapter maintains that first-generation immigrants from various European countries were no less involved in the production of Rhodesian pictorial rhetoric than their British counterparts. Using as a case study one particular photographer, Carl Theodor Eriksson (1874–1940), a Finnish-born settler who migrated to Rhodesia in the late 1890s, the chapter analyses photographs attributed to Eriksson, featuring a collection of glass plates taken in North Western Rhodesia and adjoining Katanga between 1901 and 1906. It details what aspects of the colonising process Eriksson's photographs emphasise and how that process shapes the meanings of photographic images. Close reading of Eriksson's photographs shows the potential which a photograph has to drive forward an analysis, especially when it can be embedded in and supported by travel writing.

From the very beginning of the foundation of the colonial polity called ‘Rhodesia’,<sup>1</sup> the photographic process was an arena where the colonisers and the colonised engaged, negotiated and interlinked through their cultural understandings of their encounter in front of the camera. The first imagery of Rhodesia was created by William Ellerton Fry (1846–1930), Official Photographer of the British South Africa Company’s expeditionary force (the Pioneer Column) that crossed the Limpopo River and trekked into the Mashonaland in 1890. Fry’s commissioned photography portrayed some of the usual hazards of veldt life: waggons stuck in drifts, overturned waggons and the loss of oxen.<sup>2</sup> It was also implicitly imperial by nature: it involved the surveying of seemingly empty lands for railways and mining and for the promotion of colonial settlement schemes.

Much of the early Rhodesian pictorial rhetoric was based on photographic postcards aimed at public consumption.<sup>3</sup> The first commercial photographers were expert white men who lugged their cumbersome equipment “around the battlefields of the 1896 Ndebele war”, “to the monumental landscapes of the Mapotos” and “to the banks of the Victoria Falls” “in search of photographic spoil”.<sup>4</sup> Percy Missen Clark (1874–1937) is an illustrious example of an early Rhodesian commercial photographer. Clark had been a manager of a photographic studio in Norwich when he received an offer from a firm of chemists to open a photographic department in Rhodesia.<sup>5</sup> In 1903, Clark established a photographic studio in a simple mud hut on the south bank of the Zambesi River, Livingstone Drift, where his income was from sales of photographic postcards. The business of selling “Souvenirs from the Victoria Falls”

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<sup>1</sup> Following common usage, ‘Rhodesia’ refers here to the territories administrated by the British South Africa Company (incorporated 29 October 1889) in the interior of South-Central Africa, initially called ‘South Zambesia’ and ‘North Zambesia’ (until the name Rhodesia came into use in 1895). Rhodesia was formally divided into the protectorates of Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia in 1911.

<sup>2</sup> Fry’s *The Occupation of Mashonaland* comprises 150 145mm x 195 mm prints. Fry 1891; see also Hannavy 2008, 563–564; Haney 2010, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Postcard printing boomed in South African cities such as Durban until it ceased before the First World War because of shortages of paper and ink. See Smith 2012, 111–112.

<sup>4</sup> Sykes 1897; Quotations from Ranger 2001, 210, note 20.

<sup>5</sup> Clark 1936, 31–32; 38–39; 41.

was boosted by the construction of a North-Western direction extension line from Bulawayo to the Falls. The railway brought ever-increasing number of hunters, missionaries, prospectors, labour recruiters and casual visitors to marvel at pristine African nature controlled by and for Europeans.<sup>6</sup>

A less known aspect of the early Rhodesian pictorial rhetoric is the work of amateur photographers, who adopted the new technology, often alongside travel writing, for recording their experiences in the new colony.<sup>7</sup> Whilst the impetus of the present study emerges from a need to examine the work of a long-neglected photographer and his thus far little consulted photographs, the purpose is to study what aspects of the colonising process Eriksson's photographs emphasise and how they shape new meanings in understanding the process of colonisation. The main focus of attention will be the circumstances of production, physical form and aesthetic appearance, as well as the circulation and reception by audiences past and present.

### **Eriksson's African Diaries and Photographs**

Before discussing the varieties of concerns which Eriksson's photographs address, it is useful first to unpack the historical context in which the photographic collection was produced. The collection stand apart from what constitutes Eriksson's broader assemblage of photographs, some of which took on another documentary function in 1932 in his published diaries *Mitt Afrika* (in Swedish, hereafter cited as *African diary*).<sup>8</sup> The photographically illustrated book contains ninety-seven prints, which can be mostly attributed to Eriksson but it also includes

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Heath and Clark 1907.

<sup>7</sup> See Smith 2012, 33.

<sup>8</sup> Eriksson 1932. All translations by the author.

reproductions from commercial photographers and even hand-drawn pictures when suitable photographs have not been available.

The diary commences with Eriksson's arrival at Cape Town as a deck boy on the barque *Record* in October 1895. Like many tenderfoots of the time, Eriksson first settled in Johannesburg. Two years later, in 1897, drawn by a combination of popularised myths of easy riches, hopes and imprecise information, Eriksson had made his way to Bulawayo, which had been declared open to settlers three years earlier. Eriksson, born on 19 March 1874 in Helsinki into a Swedish-speaking working-class family,<sup>9</sup> was by background and outlook largely undistinguishable from representative Rhodesian settlers. The country's new immigrants were predominantly young bachelors, who made precarious livings from raiding, prospecting, trading and dealing in mining stocks. Beyond little differences between them in age, marital status and gender, it was the contrast between black and white interactions that most defined them. These interactions were governed by a strict racial division coupled with the conventional bourgeois taboos about race, class and gender that Europeans brought with them.<sup>10</sup>

In April 1901, Eriksson undertook a position as a prospector in a mine-exploring expedition organised by a London-based company Tanganyika Concessions Limited. The Tanganyika Concessions' expedition had a dramatic impact on the human and physical environments in parts of North Western Rhodesia and Katanga. It was responsible for the first successful effort to set up a mining industry in the mineral-rich region that later became popularly and loosely known as the Copperbelt.<sup>11</sup> In Rhodesia, the prospectors of the expedition were

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<sup>9</sup> The National Archives of Finland, Helsinki Evangelical-Lutheran Church Records, Records of Baptisms.

<sup>10</sup> On the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century settler society in Bulawayo, see Ranger 2010; on Eriksson's early years in Bulawayo, see Särkkä 2015, 75–99.

<sup>11</sup> Särkkä 2016, 318–341; see also Katzenellenbogen 1973.

cherished for their part in the location and pegging of copper workings, especially at Kansanshi, which has been known since 1901 as the centre for non-ferrous metal mining in Rhodesia. In this context, Eriksson was nostalgically referred as "the pioneer smelter man" for his experiments in smelting copper ore.<sup>12</sup> The present approach highlights the need to break with this colonial logic and reframes Eriksson's photographs in the light of changed discourses over identity and power.

How, then, did photography shape Eriksson's practice of travel and observation? The only written references to Eriksson's photographic activities come from his diary, which contains occasional entries on taking photographs and developing pictures. His first camera, bought at auction in Bulawayo in the late 1890s, was "a second-hand troublesome gadget which stood on a tripod". During the first two years of his service with Tanganyika Concessions (1901–1902), Eriksson carried a Kodak box camera, the benefits of which included reliability and portability, but it also had the advantage of separating the taking of photographs from the laborious task of processing the negatives. A real improvement in the quality of his images took place around 1903 when he purchased a 4" x 5" Sanderson field camera from George Houghton & Son at 89 High Holborn, London (following his visit to the Tanganyika Concessions' headquarters at 30-31 Clements Lane, off Lombard Street in the City).<sup>13</sup> This Sanderson, the original model of which appeared in 1895, was considered at the time a first-rate piece of equipment among photographers in Africa. Its features included a brass-reinforced mahogany frame, which was much better suited to tropical conditions than the frames of Eriksson's earlier cameras. The double extension model was especially useful. With its long-focus objective lens and the use of struts, it was effectively possible to achieve a triple extension, allowing wide-angle shots that had not been possible before. To the best of

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Eriksson – Pioneer smelter man 1959, 24–26.

<sup>13</sup> Eriksson 1932, 76–77. Quotation from page 76.

our knowledge, most of the surviving pictures in Eriksson's collection were taken with the Sanderson, including a number of reproductions of pre-1903 images (originally shot by Eriksson with his earlier cameras or by unknown photographers).

Instead of the boxes of worn and dog-eared photographs that one would expect to find in discussing the early colonial photography in Rhodesia, Eriksson's photographs are in good condition, though some glass plates show deterioration as a result of the chemical process of photographic emulsion of silver halides suspended in gelatine. They are in stark contrast with narratives of decay and loss that accompany the presence of colonial photographs in many archives. There is no commentary accompanying them, and only few photographs are captioned by the photographer. The plates are stored in Kodak-boxes in what appears to be random order. At first sight it seems that besides a bundle number and few keywords assigned to the collection by the archival depository,<sup>14</sup> there is not much information to work with. However, the history of colonial encounters revealed here by reading these photographs minutely shows the potential which a photograph has to drive forward an analysis, especially when it can be analysed in conjunction with travel writing.

There is a wide range of subject matter depicted in Eriksson's collection, ranging from various aspects of the early colonial economy (including the organisation and processes of the early mining work, modes of communication and relations between the mining company's white management and the African labour) to scenes of daily life in the colony, to documentation of 'natives' and 'wildlife' to portraiture and to hunting scenes. The pictures are taken from different distances, including either expansive, close-up or full-length views now made possible by the newly available photographic technology combined with the

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<sup>14</sup> The Finnish Heritage Agency (hereafter FHA), The Picture Collections (hereafter PC), VKK871. The examples in this chapter are reproduced, where possible, with their original Swedish captions followed by English translations in brackets. All translations by the author.

photographer's skills. The five photographs selected for this chapter cannot represent the full range of the entire collection, but their particularity in style and subject matter, as well as the engagement with photographic practice that they demonstrate, nonetheless allow us to draw conclusions about what the generic categories of 'pioneer' and 'natives' represented to Eriksson in Rhodesia. They also provide the means by which to analyse theoretical and conceptual definitions of the categories 'coloniser' and 'colonised' more generally.

### **Eriksson's Pictorial Rhetoric...**

In the wake of theories of race, photography established itself as a tool with which to analyse the visual aspects of human bodies. The presumed relationship between outward facial characteristics or expressions and mental capacity relied on the notion of photography as an objective and transparent record of the real.<sup>15</sup> Collecting and documenting of ethnographic information for personal and academic purposes was a part of the expected behaviour of learned white men. Some pictured 'progress', attributable to missionary activity, while others used ethnographic information as a means of advocating colonial expansion. For instance, Harry Hamilton Johnston (1858–1927), Commissioner for the British Central Africa Protectorate (1891–1896), used photography extensively as a tool of scientific research and as a means of advocating colonial expansion.<sup>16</sup> The problems related to the use of photography as a scientific medium were however evident: the photograph portrays individuals and not general categories. It also captures all aspects of the picture on the same level of significance. Furthermore, there was no generally agreed understanding of what features to focus on when explaining racial or national characteristics: physiognomy, such as,

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<sup>15</sup> du Plessis 2014, 18; 23.

<sup>16</sup> See Johnston 1897; see also Ryan 2013, 122; 124.



for instance, face, hair and skin colour, skull shape, or body length, or perhaps contextualising factors such as habitats?<sup>17</sup>

There are several photographs in Eriksson's collection that, seen in their apparent attempt to document ethnographic 'types', emulate the theme of ethnographic photography.<sup>18</sup> They appear similar to images that reflect the more perceived scientific gaze: the practice of portraying the subject *en face*, full-frontally or in profile or contextualising the subjects portrayed in various ways. It has not been possible, however, to attribute these portraits to Eriksson himself by direct evidence. Judging from their style and arrangement, they may be studio portraits taken by commercial photographers. Some of these portraits took on a new documentary function in Eriksson's published diary, as they could accommodate the stereotype of the 'noble savage', which was consistent with the ideal colonial relations of the colonised submitting to the coloniser. The 'noble savage' acted in manageable and respectful ways. In contrast, the 'ignoble savage's' resistance to colonial rule was reflected in the trepidations of colonial society.<sup>19</sup>

Image 1 is an illustrative example. It portrays a man, captured full-frontally, decorated and dressed, and set in front of the camera. The man poses as a passive object at the bidding of the photographer in the way he faces the camera. He is not disapproving of the photographic session: the photographer could not have captured the man in a close-up photograph had he been entirely reluctant to cooperate. It is perfectly possible that the subject appropriates the performance of a colonial stereotype in order to achieve his own ends (as for example to earn material inducements of some kind). The title of the image is "a medicine man wearing his dispensary" that might be prompts for a discussion of the content of the photograph. This

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<sup>17</sup> See Kjellman 2014, 594–596; 605.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Ryan 1997, 146–182.

<sup>19</sup> du Plessis 2014, 22.

additional information reveals the problematic role of finding the intended manner in which a photograph can or should be read. In fact, it does not help to identify the individual, other than that he is said to be “a medicine man”, represented in the image. Captions are written in ink and only in Swedish, providing indication of the audience for which the information was intended. This image is one of the pictures that were later pasted on a sheet of cardboard. On the back there is a year “1913”, perhaps indicating a cataloguing or inventory date.



Image 1. Unknown photographer, *En negerdoktor med sitt hela aptek (A medicine man wearing his dispensary)*, gelatine dry plate negative, 1913, FHA, PC, VKK871:235.

Portraiture and self-portraiture deal with Eriksson’s photography in two aspects, as an example of the ‘ethnographic record’ and as expressions of colonial dreams and colonial reality. They are not ‘scientific’ accounts as such, but illustrate the props, poses and aesthetic models adopted from the visual conventions of the colonial world. Image 2 depicts Eriksson

himself in Kasempa, North Western Rhodesia, in 1901. It has not been possible to identify the photographer by direct evidence. The photograph may have been taken by Eriksson himself using a shutter releasing device or by an unknown assistant. Instead of facing the camera in a carefully composed formal pose wearing gentleman-like clothing, Eriksson seems to have chosen to present himself as a paragon of the turn-of-the-century Southern African pioneer-settler. He takes an informal seated pose on a folding camp chair, appears soberly serious-minded and wears a battered prospector's hat with a wide brim and a sturdy pair of veld boots. Despite having immigrated only in the mid-1890s, he anchors himself to a much longer line of European migrants that had been subsumed into Southern Africa since the late-seventeenth century.



Image 2. Unknown photographer, *Fundi-Wa-Kali själv, i Kasempa 1901* (*Fundi-Wa-Kali himself, Kasempa 1901*), gelatine dry plate negative, 1901. FHA, PC, VKK871:48.

Great care has been bestowed upon the photograph. Besides being elaborate aesthetically, the photograph is interesting from a historical and documentary standpoint: it gives us information about Eriksson's perceptions and understandings of the colonial world. The photograph is similar to portraits of the eminent colonialists of the turn-of-the-century, which suggests that its visual arrangement is not accidental. In 1932, the image took on another documentary function in Eriksson's African diary, where it was reproduced as the frontispiece and captioned "Fundi-Wa-Kali" ("he who commands with a firm hand").<sup>20</sup> The caption had a purposefully ideological function: it fixes the meaning of the photograph in advance and excludes the reader drawing his or her own conclusion. The caption also provides further indication of the audience for which the photograph was intended. References to behaving like masters and frustration towards black workmen and personal servants are to be found in a wide range of travel accounts situated in early colonial Rhodesia.<sup>21</sup> Eriksson's travelogue diverges little in this respect: it aims to gratify audiences living the days of imperialism and pioneering. The caption suggests that this image was not primarily a private portrait, an ethnographic illustration or a snapshot taken by a friend. It appears to have been produced for a wider audience, and perhaps planned to illustrate Eriksson's diary.

On 15 April 1901, the Tanganyika Concessions' expedition party for the Kansanshi mine in North Western Rhodesia (some 850 miles north of Bulawayo) commenced its journey. The expedition party comprised Eriksson himself, three other European members of the expedition, and a group of African escorts together with wagon drivers, *voorloopers*, scouts, translators, escorts, messengers, carriers, 'houseboys' and casual labourers. After spending 32 days out in the open, the expedition party arrived at the Victoria Falls on 17 May 1901.

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<sup>20</sup> Eriksson 1932, frontispiece.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Clark 1936: "I learned lot about natives on that trip, or at least about handling them. They are as inconsistent as monkeys, and a firm hand is always wanted" (158).

Image 3 records their accomplishment. Eriksson (first left) has either entrusted his camera to an unknown assistant or used a shutter releasing device to make a group photograph.



Image 3. Unknown photographer, *untitled*, gelatine dry plate negative, 1901. FHA, PC, VKK871:47.

Most of the information invested in expeditionary photographs stems from cultural assumptions that they are visual records of the explorers' achievements. Since the 'discovery' (or first recorded visit by a European) of the Falls by British missionary-explorer David Livingstone in 1857, several expeditions had struggled to photograph them. A number of early explorers had disappointments with their photography, especially in the developing process. Lacking experience in photography, and beset by malarial fevers and exhausting conditions, Charles Livingstone's struggle with his cumbersome collodion apparatus to document his brother's missionary travels is a notorious example.<sup>22</sup> But soon experience showed that it was possible to obtain negatives in the field that could be as delicately developed there as anywhere else.

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<sup>22</sup> For further examples, see Ryan 2013, 80; 99; 127–129; 152.

The expedition party's equipment was transported by 200 oxen and the same number of donkeys and a few horses and mules. The equipment were taken across the Zambesi at the Old Drift and then to Kalomo, where a further six spans of Barotse oxen (some 120 animals) were ready for transport purposes. The route from Nkala Mission to Kasempa, however, was filled with hardships due to the prevalence of tsetse fly, and by the time they reached Kasempa, the expedition had lost nearly all of its oxen and pack animals. The expedition almost entirely depended upon carriers who were recruited locally as they progressed. While the reception at some villages was seemingly friendly, it was not so elsewhere. In his travelogue Eriksson details an incident with the Ba-Ila, who refused to carry loads on their tall head-dress, *impande*. The problem was resolved with the stereotypical calm rational superiority of the European explorer: the perceived excuse for laziness, *impande*, was cut off.<sup>23</sup>

Image 4 titled "Some of the forced Ba-Ila carriers whose hair-dresses were cut off" records the incident. The photograph depicts a group of Ila carriers, whose loads are put in the ground. The Ba-Ila who wears *impande* and the birds' feathers are easily recognisable. These features are perceived as what makes him a representative 'type' of the Ila man. The photograph does not document the ethnographic type as such, however, but presents the carriers as self-conscious individuals. Eriksson does not discuss the circumstances in which he came to photograph them. We therefore cannot determine whether he asked them to be in his photographs or they asked him to photograph them. This raises important questions about issues of representation.

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<sup>23</sup> Eriksson 1932, 172–173.



Image 4. C. T. Eriksson, *Några av de tvångsrekvirerade Ba-ilabärarna, på vilka håruppsättningen opererades bort* (Some of the forced Ba-Ila carriers whose hair-dresses were cut off), gelatine dry plate negative, 1902. FHA, PC, VKK871:176.

Like many other amateur photographers, Eriksson seems to have preferred to take photographs that were meaningful to him rather than adopting a more systematic approach. The contrast between the images of Eriksson and the more scientific gaze by Edwin Smith (1876–1957), a missionary of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, who arrived among the Ila a year after Eriksson (in 1902), could not be greater. In Smith’s and Andrew Murray Dale’s (an Ila district officer in the employ of the British South Africa Company from 1904) formative work on Northern Rhodesian ethnography, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (1920), the Ila appropriates the performance of a colonial stereotype. In Smith’s carefully composed image the subject is decorated and dressed, and set in front of the camera in profile. The stereotypic view is present in the photograph and is even more pronounced in the accompanying title: “The superior Ila type”.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Smith and Dale 1920, frontispiece; 59.

### ... and Colonial Reality in Rhodesia

In most of the works on Rhodesia, photographs have typically served as a form of eye witness account: “the photographs finish [the] argument more conclusively than any other form of contemporary data can do”.<sup>25</sup> Photographs have been analysed as any other historical records to extract historical information that offers insight into the context, time, and place of the original production and distribution of images.<sup>26</sup> Photographic evidence has been used to provide support for already drawn conclusions rather for asking such questions as: Who was the photographer? Under what circumstances was the photograph produced? What is the photograph’s material and aesthetic appearance like? In what way was the photograph circulated? What was the photograph’s original title? How was the photograph received? What meanings have been associated with the photograph?<sup>27</sup> These simple questions are difficult to answer. Photographs can push their interpreters to the limits of historical analysis.

In Rhodesia the camera, “a triumph of Euro-American technology”, played many roles in the process of colonialism: it was able to capture and at the same time to rearrange environments and peoples; it created “landscapes”; it constructed the idea of “wildlife”; it produced stereotypical illustrations of “tribe” and “race”; and it gratified colonial desire with soft pornographic postcards of naked African women.<sup>28</sup> This cultural exchange flowed in both directions (from coloniser to colonised and *vice versa*). But the ways in which the subjects of colonisers’ photographs were able to use photography for their own ends (for example

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<sup>25</sup> Prins 1990, 105.

<sup>26</sup> Hunt and Schwartz 2010, 265.

<sup>27</sup> Burke 2001; Thomas 2009, 156–157; Ryan 2013, 16–17.

<sup>28</sup> Quotations from Ranger 2001, 203–204. The body of the black woman was perhaps the most stereotypical white male construct of colonial photography of the time. A large number of images devoted primarily to the aesthetic pleasure of the viewer, while others supposedly devoted to the documentation of the fact and objective recording of physical data. For further information, see Haney 2010, 20; see also Doy 1998, 305–319.



through poses and other choices relating to self-representation) have gained significantly lesser attention.<sup>29</sup>

The question of self-representation is closely related to the hybrid character of truth and identity. The emotive power of photographs, especially when they are aimed at public consumption, is perhaps most telling when disseminated through a museum, “a flagship institution of knowledge dissemination”.<sup>30</sup> Yet there is nothing inevitable about depictions of the colonial world becoming objects of treasured national heritage. In small states such as Finland (unable to attempt to compete in the race for territorial aggrandisement), Eriksson’s photographs may be considered as “just some old photographs”, things of the past, which are not necessarily expressions of colonial power. Nevertheless, since pictorial rhetoric was central to the regulation of truth in the colonial world, our encounters with that world, via the photographic medium, continue to work at shaping colonial relations. Such encounters can take the form of colonial nostalgia, romanticise the thrill of colonial conquest or look back at the scenes of first contact as “love at first sight”.<sup>31</sup>

Carefully composed image 5 captioned “The Victoria Falls as I re-saw them in October 1902. In the forefront is my boy Kenamwata” is a case in point. Eriksson uses a distant and slightly elevated vantage point to capture the vast scale of the Falls. Kenamwata, the gun-bearer or Eriksson’s ‘houseboy’, is said to be a gift from the Ba-Kaonde Chief Mujivanzovu. The rifle entrusted to Kenamwata is Eriksson’s treasured hunting rifle.<sup>32</sup> The photograph could be as

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<sup>29</sup> Gwyn Prins has asserted that the Lozi rulers of the Barotseland in North Western Rhodesia were able to win “the battle for control of the camera” already in the late nineteenth century. See Prins 1990, 97–105; see also Ranger 2001, 206–207.

<sup>30</sup> Hoenig 2014, 343–366; see also Cornelis, Moreno & Peffer 2014, 126–134.

<sup>31</sup> Quotations from Buckley 2005, 251; 255–256; 265.

<sup>32</sup> Eriksson 1932, 80; 319. On the Kaonde see the seminal ethnographic study by a Magistrate for the Kasempa District, Northern Rhodesia, 1911–1922, Frank H. Melland, *In Which-Bound Africa* 1923; see also Jaeger 1981.

easily being titled 'A Souvenir from Rhodesia'. It combines two important elements of Eriksson's photography: pristine African nature, and asymmetrical power relations.



Image 5. C. T. Eriksson, *Victoriafallen, sådana jag återsåg dem i oktober 1902. I förgrunden min negerboy Kenamwata (The Victoria Falls as I re-saw them in October 1902. In the forefront is my negro-boy Kenamwata)*, gelatine dry plate negative, 1902. FHA, PC, VKK871:134.

## Conclusions

This chapter has sought to examine Eriksson's migrant identity in Rhodesia as well as to detail what aspects of the colonising process Eriksson's photographs emphasise and how such process shapes the meanings of photographic images. To achieve such an approach, one particular mode of research has been detailed. In works done in the field of visual studies with a specific focus on the intersection of photography and colonialism, photography has

become the site of analysis of how colonisers have used photographic practices to construct not merely individual selves, but racial and national histories.<sup>33</sup>

For a researcher of colonial identities, questions of definition form a perplexing problem.

While individuals might define their identities in particular ways, researchers may impose on them different social variables such as nationality, gender, class, race or occupation.<sup>34</sup> Finns formed a defined nationality group that has been a neglected social variable in the study of colonial identities in general and in Rhodesia in particular.<sup>35</sup> In most works white settlers in Rhodesia have been categorised as ‘Europeans’ partly because of their sense of representing a generalised idea of Western civilisation and partly in order to underline contrasts between black and white experiences in the history of colonialism. In a colonial context, place-based identities tend to blur existing national identities, and place-based identity-building was very much intertwined with empire-building. Eriksson, too, in his various capacities as a prospector and an explorer adapted ideas and identities that cannot easily be disentangled from those of other colonisers.

Yet it is equally important to note that while European settlers in colonial Southern Africa represented a number of nationalities and ethnic minorities, this ethnic diversity is not reflected in the field of scholarly research. The study of colonial photography has frequently centred on photographers of colonial powers, mainly Britain and France, and by and large neglected accounts of the colonial experience by less studied group of nationals. This chapter has addressed a call for historians of visual culture to study photographers and archives from

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Thomas 1996.

<sup>34</sup> For further, see Hall 1996, 4–5.

<sup>35</sup> Until today, no such study exists that would distinguish Finnish ‘colonial identities’ from the more typical trajectories of colonialism (such as British colonialism). The term ‘Nordic colonialism’, from which this concern partly stems, has been employed as a pragmatic analytical tool rather than as a theoretical term per se, and as such it provides a descriptive framework of the various economic motives of Nordic migrants in various colonial contexts. On Norwegians in particular, see Bertelsen 2015, 1–22.

less studied European nations with their own distinctive relations to non-European societies.<sup>36</sup>

By focusing on a smaller and less studied group of nationals, we can discover new sources that have as yet rarely been seen or heard in accounts of the colonial experience.

From this perspective, the photographs taken by Eriksson during his stay in North Western Rhodesia and Katanga are particularly unique in the history of colonial photography owing to the specific individual experiences and the personal relationships he formed there. However, rather than these photographs being considered simply as an exception that provides unusual information about photography in early colonial societies, they in fact yield a particular insight into colonial photography precisely because they are the result of a unique historical situation. The study of Eriksson's photographs therefore provides new analytical perspectives that include a wider field of actors, meanings and possibilities through which one can reappraise other photographs from the early colonial era.

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<sup>36</sup> On this concern, see Gartlan 2013, 130–131.

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