

Exploring Africa in the Nordic Press. David Livingstone, Henry Stanley and the popular fascination with exploration and adventure in Africa in the late 19th-century

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Abstract

In this article, I will scrutinise two of the most famous explorers of Africa, David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley, and how their adventures were described in the Swedish and Finnish newspapers in the late 19th-century. The intention is to shed light on a chapter in history when ordinary people started to take an interest in Africa and the opportunities and adventures this continent could offer. To the Nordic public Livingstone – the medical missionary and adventurer – became known in the early 1850s. This was soon after his Nile River Expedition started, and, as most of his letters failed to reach the coast, Livingstone was feared dead. Stanley – at that time an unknown journalist – travelled to Africa to find him.

Livingstone's travels and Stanley's fame as Livingstone's rescuer occurred before the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, and before the start of the Scramble for Africa. Nevertheless, they were active at a time of industrial revolution, many new inventions, a political urge in the western world to conquer Africa, and, not least, an increased number of newspapers feeding the population with interesting news about worlds far away.

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