From Public to Private: A Curious Chronicle from Nineteenth-century Finland

Anna Kuismin
University of Helsinki

Efraim Lindgren (1834–1909), a modest country tailor from south-western Finland, produced a curious chronicle around 1880. Lindgren started by copying annals from Ajantieto, the list of historical events published as an appendix to the Hymnal of the Finnish Lutheran Church. Yet the closer he came to his own time, the less concerned he was with ‘big’ history. Instead, local events and the chronicler’s own life became his main interests. This article explores the biographical and cultural contexts of Lindgren’s chronicle. It also touches upon sources of historical consciousness among the non-elite and unschooled in nineteenth-century Finland.

From the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth, the Finnish Lutheran Church promoted literacy among the country’s population in accordance with the Protestant idea that people should be able to read the Scriptures for themselves. Yet unlike reading, the skill of writing was not considered necessary for everyone. The fear that schooling would wean rural children from manual labour was often shared by both clergy and common people alike.¹ Nevertheless, before the era of compulsory education there were those from the lower ranks of society who wanted to take up the pen for various purposes.² Texts written by individuals with little or no formal schooling have been the subject of recent multi-disciplinary research focusing on the processes and practices of literacy during the long nineteenth century in the Nordic countries.³ The present article has its background in this research, which emphasises the active role of self-educated people in producing and disseminating written texts.

¹ See Mäkinen 2007.
² The decree for establishing primary schools was given in 1866, but it was not until 1921 that the law for mandatory school attendance was passed in the Finnish Parliament.
³ See e.g. Kuismin & Driscoll 2013.
Both private and public motives induced the Finnish common people to write, and practical and ideological motives were intertwined. In part, the desire to write was spawned by Pietist movements, which emphasised conversion and personal spirituality. Documents published by Matias Akiander and those stored in the archives of the Finnish Society of Church History include hymns, sermons, diaries, memoirs and letters written by farmers, crofters and rural craftsmen, among others. They express various motives for writing: writing down hymn texts to be sung at gatherings, mentoring others, soul searching or recording the course of a revival movement to which one has belonged.

In 1908 Sakari Loimaranta, a student of theology, donated to the Finnish Society of Church History a collection of miscellaneous manuscripts belonging to Efraim Lindgren (1834–1909), a modest tailor from Laitila, some sixty kilometres from Turku, the former capital. The collection mostly consists of texts – most of them religious – copied by Lindgren, but there are also some writings of his own, such as diaries. There is no manuscript in longhand by Lindgren among his papers: he wrote in print style. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind that the writings filling one archival case may well represent only some of the materials Efraim copied and wrote during his lifetime. Lindgren’s archive includes diaries kept from 1888 to 1903; the entries deal with weather, work, prices and purchases. There are frequent entries in which he mentions buying paper and ink. Lindgren had also collected manuscripts written by others. For example, he got hold of a sermon written by Nils Helenius, the chaplain of Laitila, from 1874.

In the archival catalogue of the Finnish Society of Church History Lindgren’s archive is listed as ‘Papers of the Prayerists’. The roots of this Pietist revival movement go back to Liisa Eerikintytär’s conversion in the parish of Santtio, in south-western Finland, in 1756. The ecstatic movement soon spread to parts of Laitila. A new upswing reached the area in the early nineteenth century, and there was another resurgence in the 1840s. The ecstatic form gradually gave way to quiet types of worship. Religious texts were read and home prayer meetings were organised, but the Prayerists usually attended regular Lutheran masses as well. Several texts in Lindgren’s archive point to the Prayerist heritage, such the hand-written copies of *Augsburgin tunnustuksen puolustus* (Philip Melanchthon, *Apologia Confessio Augustanae*, 1531) and the visions of Anna Lagerblad (1745–1811), a well-known religious

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4 Akiander edited seven volumes of *Historiska Upplysningar om Religiösa rörelserna i Finland i äldre och senare tider* from 1857 to 1863.
figure in south-western Finland. However, the description in the archival catalogue refers to the nature of the copied texts, not to Lindgren’s personal faith.

Efraim Lindgren’s chronicle is a self-stitched booklet (17.7 cm x 22.5 cm), written with print-style letters on ordinary paper. Apart from the title – *Muisto-Kirja merkillisimmistä tapauksista* (*Memorial Book of the Most Remarkable Events*) – the text is set in two columns. There are also some watercolour illustrations. Lindgren’s chronicle is part of a collection of texts that have been bound together, with a leather spine and cardboard covers. The compilation consists of two issues of *Kristillisiä Sanomia* (‘Christian News’) from 1862 and 1863, three leaflets published in the series *Lukemisia kansalle* (‘Reading for the People’), the topics of which are bears, whales and the telegraph, a map of ancient Israel drawn by Lindgren and embellished with references to the Bible, as well as an eleven-page manuscript in Lindgren’s hand, entitled *Ensimmäisen Sunnuntaina Adventissä* (‘On the First Sunday of Advent’). The chronicle is the last text in the compilation, the meaning of which can only be guessed. One thing is evident, however: Lindgren thought that these texts were worth saving.

Lindgren’s ‘Memorial Book’ starts as a more or less faithful copy of a printed popular chronicle called *Ajantieto* (literally ‘Knowledge of Time’), but the model is discarded in the middle of the text: the focus shifts from general history to local events and finally touches upon the chronicler’s own life in retrospective diary-like entries. The overall impression of the text is curious indeed. Why did a country tailor, an unschooled man from south-western Finland, choose the archaic genre of the chronicle in 1880? What were the sources of historical knowledge in a semi-literate society in which Lindgren lived? For whom did Lindgren write?
Efraim Lindgren's Life

To understand Lindgren's chronicle one needs to know more about Efraim's life, as well as about the social and cultural contexts in which his texts were produced. Information on Lindgren can be found in three kinds of sources: parish records, oral lore and the tailor's own texts. Parish records reveal that Efraim's father, Erik Mikkelinpoika, was born in 1792 as a crofter's son in Vahantaka, a village in the municipality of Laitila. He worked as a farmhand at the Ala-Sunila farm in the nearby village of Valko and married one of the farmer's daughters, Liisa Matintytär (b. 1799), who had had an illegitimate child, Eva, in 1818. The marriage took place in November of 1823, and the couple's first child was born in March 1824. Erik and Liisa became crofters at Ala-Sunila. They were good readers, receiving
mostly top marks on their annual examinations. Efraim too became a good reader, and he did well in the confirmation classes in 1849. Because he read well and knew his Catechism, he was given a copy of the New Testament as a prize. According to the parish records, Efraim usually took communion twice a year as was the custom.

As for his writing skills, Lindgren may have sought a teacher from among his relatives, neighbours or the clergy, or perhaps he had simply taught himself to write by copying printed texts. Lindgren’s writing ability was more of an exception than the rule in his surroundings. A rural correspondent for the newspaper *Ilmarinen* wrote in 1878 that Laitila could not boast of citizens with good writing skills. To prove his point, the author quoted poorly written passages from minutes kept at a communal meeting.\(^7\) According to more or less reliable statistics, in 1880 about 17 per cent of the population over ten years of age in the district of Turku and Pori knew how to write.\(^8\) Many self-taught writers were tailors by occupation, which is not surprising as both sewing and writing involve fine motor skills.

According to Akseli Kajantola, an amateur local historian, Efraim lived on the edge of the village of Valko in Laitila. He mostly sewed work clothes and fur-lined coverlets; on his small patch of land he grew flowers and turnips, whose seeds he later sold. Kajantola’s short narrative, based on oral lore, paints a picture of an eccentric individual: Lindgren built himself a tiny church with a pulpit and decorated the walls with his own paintings. In the summertime his church attracted a lively crowd of young and old, to whom the tailor preached and sold his flowers. Rewarded with coins and material goods, he was willing to repeat his sermon if given a drink. Sometimes he was too drunk to preach. Lindgren was not a religious leader, and the life around his church was not always pure in nature.\(^9\)

It is interesting to compare Kajantola’s narrative based on oral lore with Lindgren’s *elämäkerta* (biography) included in his undated manuscript *Saarna Kirja koti hartauden tarpeksi. Mukailut. Efraim Lindgren (A Book of Sermons for Home Use. Modified. By Efraim Lindgren)*. This home-made booklet, made of cardboard, is divided into columns, but the sermons are missing; the booklet contains only the life story of Lindgren, written in the third person and positioned as a preface. It starts with the author’s birth date and the names of his parents. The rest of the text reads like this:

> As a little boy, Efraim was herding his parents’ lambs. Up to the age of 12. And then other Animals. In 1849 he was confirmed. Because his weak and sickly body did not withstand hard work, he became a tailor in 1854 and lived with his parents up to the year 1864. Then with his brothers Samu and Juha he built a croft

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\(^7\) *Ilmarinen*, 10 August 1878.

\(^8\) Leino-Kaukiainen 2007, 432. The first primary school started in Laitila in 1873.

\(^9\) Kajantola 1954, 472–473.
on the land of Tuuna-Väiskä and cultivated a bit of land and called that place Ruodsila. And he established a garden in which he planted apple trees, which he had grown from seeds. He sowed fir tree seeds in 1870, and then he planted saplings around his garden. He also grew oak trees and bird cherry trees by planting saplings.10

Lindgren tells nothing about his religious views in his life story, even though the text is part of a manuscript meant to consist of sermons. The narrative is also silent about his copying and publishing activities. In addition to Kuusi hengellistä laulua (‘Six Spiritual Songs’, 1861) mentioned by Kajantola, Lindgren had given out three other broadsheets, consisting of hymns or songs.11 He might have sold them during his trips to the market in the neighbouring towns or to the villagers – or perhaps someone else did the selling on his behalf.12

The documents in Lindgren’s archive reveal that the tailor had an interest in languages other than Finnish. A line written in Swedish in one of his notebooks reads: ‘Efraim Lindgren Tillhör denna Bok År 1861’ (‘This Book Belongs to Efraim Lindgren in the Year 1861’), and a diary entry in 1899 mentions that Lindgren had bought books in Swedish. His archive also includes a list of ecclesiastical terms in Finnish, Swedish, German and Russian, written in Lindgren’s hand. It is difficult to know why Efraim told so little about himself; perhaps he meant to continue his narrative. As it is, the narrative places emphasis on the garden and the work of growing trees from seeds.13 Needless to say, a preface of this kind in a collection of sermons was extraordinary indeed.

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12 The broadsheets published in the early 1860s were printed in Turku. The fourth broadsheet, released in 1891, was printed in Rauma, a small town in south-west Finland. Efraid Lindgren is mentioned as the writer (signifying a copyist in this case), and the publisher was ‘J. E.’ It is not known for whom the initials stand, or why there was a delay of thirty years in releasing the broadsheet.

13 According to the Laitila parish records for 1867–1876, Lindgren is still listed in his father’s household, and in the records for 1877–1886, his brother Juha (Johan) is not included in the household.
A History of the World in Lindgren’s Chronicle

Historical consciousness among the unschooled in nineteenth-century Finland drew on both oral and written sources. Traditional lore transmitted information about the origins of place names, the rulers of the country and the times of persecution, among other topics.\textsuperscript{14} Natural disasters and wars, news of which circulated both orally and on printed broadsheets, were among the subjects of songs, which generally dealt with current events, yet the passage of time turned the content into history. The image of the past was also shaped by the Bible. The Scriptures had a beginning and an end: the vicissitudes of the first generations, the wanderings of the people of Israel, the passion of Christ and the phases of his disciples. Newspapers included articles on history, but they did not reach the Finnish-speaking masses until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The most important source of historical knowledge for underprivileged people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was \textit{Ajantieto} (‘Knowledge/Information about Time’), a chronicle published as an appendix to the Hymnal of the Lutheran Church, a book found in the majority of Finnish households.\textsuperscript{15} The chronicle, along with the \textit{Kalendarium Perpetuum}, was first included in the Hymnal in 1701 and updated in various editions up to the last version published in 1885. \textit{Ajantieto} grew in length over time, but the first remarkable event remained the same: the flood that took place in 1656 after the Creation of the world. The chronicle served a meaningful role because of the scarcity of history books in Finnish until the last decades of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} The annals – recorded events of specific years – in the earliest editions were rather laconic, but over the years the style became more verbose, and some entries expanded into short narratives.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Lehtipuro 1982.
\textsuperscript{15} Kauranen & Kuismin 2011, 284.
\textsuperscript{16} The word \textit{ajantieto} was occasionally used as a synonym for history. Kauranen & Kuismin 2011, 284. See also Neovius 1911.
\textsuperscript{17} Melander 1957, 40.
Efraim Lindgren’s chronicle starts as a more or less freely copied version of the early editions of *Ajantieto*, but the title of his text, *Muisto-Kirja merkillisimmistä tapauksista* (Memorial Book of the Most Remarkable Events), refers to *Ajantieto*’s subtitle, which was included in many of its later editions: *Muisto Kirja Tapauksista Uuden Testamentin aikana* (Memorial Book of the Events from the Time of the New Testament). Lindgren’s orthography is typical of unschooled writers. For example, the punctuation is idiosyncratic and there are traces of the local dialect in the text.

‘As we know, Christ was born 4,000 years after the Creation of the world’, writes Lindgren at the beginning of his chronicle. The first annals record the execution of the disciples Peter and Paul by Emperor Nero (in the year 68 AD) and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem two years later. The third entry concerns the death of John the Apostle, and the fourth leaps to the year 622, recounting the arrival of the ‘false prophet Mahomet in Arabia’. Lindgren notes down the birth of the Russian Empire, the founding of Moscow, Stockholm and the Turkish Empire. He also mentions the inventions
of the compass, gunpowder and the printing press, the Club War and the birth of Luther, among other things. Lindgren’s annals of the seventeenth century mainly concern crop failures, epidemics and extraordinary celestial events:

1601. Growing season in Finland was disrupted by severe frosts.
1603. The plague spread through Finland.
1618. A huge comet appeared in the winter. Then the Emperor began the German war.
1621. A total eclipse of the sun.
1650s. In those times there were years of crop failure in Finland.
1657. The plague was in Sweden, Finland and Estonia.
1665. A bright comet was seen.
1680. A huge comet was seen. For nearly four months. Throughout all of Europe.
1682. Fire in Rauma [Finland]. The church, courthouse and school were burnt down.
1696 and 1697. Hard years of crop failures in Sweden, Finland and Estonia. In the Turku Diocese more than 62,000 people miserably starved to death.

‘Terrible Signs were seen in the sky at night on Good Friday’, wrote Lindgren in 1859. The entry Lindgren dedicated to Isoviha (‘The Great Wrath’), the Russian invasion and subsequent military occupation of Finland during the last years of the Great Northern War, differs from the account in Ajantieto. Lindgren’s version is longer than most of his other annals, and the tone of the narrative is emotional. In naming the period of oppression Lindgren refers to oral tradition:

In 1714 the whole of Finland was taken by Russia. But in 1721 Sweden drove the Russians out of the land of Finland. They [the Russians] angrily burned and robbed the land of Finland, tortured and killed many people, and took the best men with them. It was with such an angry hand that the Russian left the land of Finland, and thus our fore-fathers called it the Big Ryssä. Finland was left with hardly any people. There were only two hundred thousand people. And they were mostly the old or helpless children. For the Russians took the men away....

18 In 1596 the peasants, mostly from Ostrobothnia, rose up in rebellion (see e.g. Lavery 2006, 42).
20 ‘Kauhiat Merkit nähtiin taivalla Pitkäperjantaita vastaan yöllä.’
Laitila, like many other places, had suffered from the Russian occupation. According to the history of Laitila there had been torture, and some people had been captured by the Russians.\textsuperscript{22}

Lindgren’s annals do not always follow chronological order. For example, some eighteenth-century events – an eclipse of the sun, the building of the fortress in Helsinki and the practice of growing potatoes in Finland – are listed among the nineteenth-century entries. Also the brief mention of Finland’s changed position from being part of the kingdom of Sweden to becoming an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1808–09 has been added later.

After an entry for 1709 that mentions a cold, long winter there is a change of focus: the chronicler leaves the general and turns to the particular. ‘Now we travel with history. To Laitila,’ Lindgren declares, shifting his attention to local events. In so doing, he creates a text that does not follow the example of Ajantieto. At this point the chronicler uses the third person plural that had figured in the beginning of the chronicle. This choice emphasises the role of the narrator leading the reader to a new turn in his historical story.

\textbf{History of Laitila}

It is not possible to know whether Lindgren planned to write about local history from the outset or whether the decision occurred in the process of writing. After this change of focus turn, the text first concentrates on Laitila’s church and the clergymen of the parish. ‘Juhan Munttin’ (Johan Montin), whose portrait can be seen in the church vestry, was the vicar of Laitila at the end of the eighteenth century, explains Lindgren. He goes on to state that ‘Hete’ (Nils Hedeen) then succeeded Munttin, and it was during his tenure of office in 1792 that there was a fire at the church. The fire started with a spark blown from the hearth of the Mattila farm; fortunately, the Lord provided yet another snowfall in the spring, which made it easier to find wood in the forest to make the needed repairs on the church.\textsuperscript{23} These pieces of information clearly belong to oral history. There are mistakes in dates: Johan Montin (ca 1680–1745) was not the vicar of Laitila at the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the fire actually took place when Johan Helsingberg (1765–1812) was in office.\textsuperscript{24} Also the following passage seems to stem from stories Lindgren had heard:

\textsuperscript{22} Koivisto 1976, 263–264.  
\textsuperscript{23} Lindgren’s papers include another, shorter chronicle. There is a mention of the fire at the Laitila Church in 1880.  
\textsuperscript{24} Koivisto 1976, 283.
Juhan Helsenberc died in 1813. He was succeeded by Dean and Vicar Jakob Amnell in 1816. And his spouse Brita-Kristina Hästesko. Died in 1818. But he held the office of the vicar in Laitila for almost 27 years. He was also acting as a District Dean for a while. It was during his time that the Churchyard was cleaned up so that the bones were no longer lying around, but had to be hidden in the earth. It was also then that the Church was extended on its eastern side. It was during his time that the Drawings for the Belfry were ordered. But he died on the 23rd of January 1843, and the Building of the Belfry was set aside. His Memorial statue still stands in the Churchyard. He was born in 1764.25

Lindgren occasionally follows the life of clergymen even after they had left the parish, probably using newspapers as his source.26 Some entries dealing with the repairs and construction work on the church are animated by Lindgren's coloured drawings of the Laitila Church and its belfry with appropriate captions. In addition to the portrait of Hedeen, Lindgren mentions the memorial statue of Simon Appelgren in the Laitila cemetery.

Efraim's chronicle occasionally includes yearly statistics: the number of births, deaths and marriages in Laitila. For example, Lindgren records that in 1865, 173 babies were born, 92 male and 81 female. Twenty-four of all the children born were illegitimate. Thirty-seven couples were married, and 133 people died. These kinds of figures were collected by the vicar from parish records and read out from the pulpit during the mass on every New Year's Day. Many rural correspondents included the statistics in their reports to the newspapers. However, the Laitila figures did not appear in Sanomia Turusta, the newspaper read in Laitila, until the 1880s. Either Lindgren had a good memory or he made notes during the church service – or he asked for the information from the parish office.27 Lindgren also mentions individual deaths and their causes: ‘In June, Juhan Samuel’s son of Tuunaväiskä died at the age of 24. He became sick to death after swimming in Peräjärvi. And old Aunt Rikina died in the spring of 1850.’ An entry in 1853 is the most comprehensive, listing all the people who had died in the village.

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26 A rural correspondent for Ilmarinen reported the number of newspapers and magazines subscriptions in Laitila. For Sanomia Turusta there were 57 subscriptions in 1878. One farmer had subscribed to seven different papers and magazines. (Pitäjän Poika, Laitilasta, Ilmarinen, 13 January 1877.)

27 There are similar entries in the diary of Juho Valtonen (1856–1930), a crofter's son from Laitila. For example, Valtonen wrote on the first of January 1880 that more than 200 children were born, more than one hundred people died and marriage banns were read for 68 couples. (Kauranen 2009)
Sometimes there is a short biographical account of the deceased. These passages evoke the *personalia* part of a funeral sermon or an obituary published in a newspaper.

The years 1867 and 1868 were the time of the Great Famine in Finland, during which eight per cent of the population died. In the annal for 1867 Lindgren writes that there were sick people and many deaths in Laitila:

The mistress of the Tuunaväiskä farm died on the 18th of March. On the 24th of April four corpses were transported past Ruotsila, all together. [...] It was a hard winter, then severe frost and lots of snow. And a severe burning disease. 12 people died in our Parish in one week. Miserable hunger and also stealing.

Lindgren also deals with the Great Famine in a separate passage entitled *Muisto Kirja Nälkä* (*Memorial Book of the Years of Famine*). ‘There was Great Hunger in Our Country’, Lindgren writes. There are no local details in this description of the plight; the depiction could have been applied to almost any place in Finland. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the account of the famine years is called *muisto-kirja* – a chronicle is embedded in the chronicle, which emphasises the scope of the misery the famine had caused in people’s lives. In depicting the famine, Lindgren refers to the Old Testament: ‘And it is true that those who eat will not be satisfied, as the Lord’s Prophet foretold.’

There were also many others who shared the belief in God’s punishments. One of the texts Lindgren had copied was a long narrative poem inspired by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and published in 1756 by Abraham Achrenius (1706–1769), a Finnish clergyman. Achrenius saw the catastrophe as a punishment of the Catholic Church, but his text also points out that Lutherans should take the earthquake as a sign to repent – there had been omens of punishment in Finland too: fires and lightning had killed people and animals. Obviously, Lindgren was a man of the old mentality, informed by traditional knowledge and ways of thinking.

Historian Jouko Vahtola has analysed the responses of 14 Finnish peasants to an essay competition on the topic ‘How to prevent crop failures?’ organised by the Finnish Literature Society in 1857–58. According to Vahtola, there were three types of responses, one of which represented a traditional, Bible-

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30 Isaiah 9:19.

31 According to Martyn Lyons, Spanish ‘memory books’ noted miraculous and astounding events, cholera epidemics, floods and storms, fires and earthquakes. ‘Apart from the material damage caused by such destructive events, the litany of disasters often had a religious dimension, as they might be seen as divine punishment for human wickedness.’ (Lyons 2013a, 231–232)
based view. Crop failures were decreed from above: man himself, through his evil ways and breaches of morality, was to blame for the punishment that God inflicted in the form of crop failure, and man was incapable of eliminating the causes other than by returning to a life lived strictly in accordance with Christian virtues. One should treat the temporal authorities and the prevailing social order with respect, as these were ordained by God.32 Efraim Lindgren fits this conservative type of response in Vahtola’s grouping.33

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33 The second type of response was expressed by writers who possessed a firm Christian outlook, but attempted to explain the years of crop failure by appealing to reason and experience, considering it their Christian duty to be industrious and well-informed in trying to eliminate the causes of crop failure and alleviate its consequences. The third attitude represented a liberal view. Man and human reason were viewed as the sole agents able to influence the existing state of affairs in that man was deemed potentially capable of understanding fully the systems operative in nature and calculating in advance the occurrence of crop failure. (Vahtola 1978, 243)
Anna Kuismin

From Family History to Personal Life

In addition to general and local history, Lindgren's chronicle concerns family history and some events in Efraim's own life. The entry of 1791 records the birth of Erik Mikkelinpoika, Lindgren's father, and the next annal, for 1799, starts with the birth of Liisa Matintytär, Lindgren's mother. The chronicler records Erik's and Liisa's marriage in 1823 and lists their children, first presenting the seven boys. Efraim, the fifth, is given more attention than his brothers by the mention of the time of his birth:

Boy Adam born in December 1831. **Boy Efraim born on the 1st of May between 3 and 4 p.m. 1834.**
Boy Matias born in July 1838. Boy Abraham born in June 1841.\(^\text{34}\)

After this, Lindgren turned to a sister, Annaliisa, who was born in 1828. She was married in 1855 and died on the 26th of September 1859 at five o'clock in the morning, after having lived 30 years, 11 months and 2 days. Her only child, Maria, was born on the 27th of March 1855. Lindgren must have drawn the information from his parents' record of the births and deaths in the family; this kind of information was often written on the inside covers of the family Hymnal or Bible. Apparently, Annaliisa was the only one of the Lindgren children to have married and borne a child. The list of siblings reveals that two of the youngest children died shortly after birth, another child died at the age of two, and one child was born dead. Juhannes (Juha in Lindgren's life story) died in 1878. Lindgren also writes that his sister was born in December 1818 and died in December 1880. This refers to the child to whom his mother gave birth in her youth. Why does Lindgren not mention her name? Was it because Eva was illegitimate?

The entry of 1864 includes the following mention: “This was the year during which the building of the rooms of Ruodsila was started,”\(^\text{35}\) which refers to the cottage in which Efraim and his brother Samu lived. There are a few instances at the end of the chronicle in which the narration changes from third person to first. This happens first in the entry of 1866:

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\(^\text{35}\) Tänä Wuona Ruvettin Ruodsilan huoneita rakentamaan.
A storehouse by the church was built of stone, then I worked there for 2 days. On the 29th of July I was at the church in Uusikaupunki. On the 1st of August I ate new potatoes. [...] Many people have died of an infectious disease. But I haven't found out how many people had died in Laitila.  

There was not much snow in the winter of 1870; the summer came early and the lake was free of ice on the 21st of April, writes the chronicler. The first person is used again: 'I sowed fir tree seeds for the first time,' mentions Lindgren, and goes on to write that he planted the fir saplings around the garden – a piece of information also included in Lindgren's life story. In addition to oral stories and his own memory, Lindgren must have consulted the volumes of his diary in writing about these details of his life.

The year 1870 saw the death of the chronicler's father, Erik Mikkelinpoika. According to Efraim's chronicle, the father passed away on the 5th of July at the age of 79 years, 5 months and 28 days. The entry includes an excerpt from a hymn of repentance that expresses the chronicler's feelings in thinking about death:

O! Jesus come to my rescue
So that I would repent
And turn to you
Before the Gate of Grace is closed
So that you would find me prepared
To take me with you when you'll return.

The passages in which Efraim reveals something of his life are not numerous. The focus of the latter part of the chronicle is on local events in general. Lindgren's chronicle can hardly be classified as autobiographical writing, unlike some other Finnish nineteenth-century texts. For example, Pietari Västi (1751–1826), a land-owning farmer from western Finland, wrote a chronological list describing important events in his life – when he was born, married, took over his father's farm, was elected a juryman. On several occasions, Västi comments on his choices: he worked on another farm or enlisted as a solder as a young man because he wanted to learn and know more about the ways of the world. Abraham Hjerpe (1766–1833), a churchwarden and former soldier from Ostrobothnia, was another
non-elite writer who presented his life as a chronological list of events, devoid of self-reflexivity. What unites these texts is the fact that they are retrospective – the entries were not written shortly after the events had taken place, as is the case with family chronicles or notebooks in which people wrote down things they wanted to remember. In Sweden these ‘memory books’ were called *minnesböcker* and in Spain, *libros de memoria*.

**Reflections and Conclusions**

What can we say about Efraim Lindgren, based on his chronicle and other writings? First of all, he was a religious man who respected the Lutheran Church. He noted down in this chronicle the birth of Luther, the Finnish translations of the New Testament and the Bible, as well as the Jubilee celebrated on the anniversary of 700 years of Christianity in Finland. It is also significant that local history begins with the mention of Laitila clergymen and the church buildings. Even though Lindgren had copied Pietist texts, the Prayerist movement does not figure in the chronicle.

In writing about local events, Lindgren envisioned himself as an historian preserving important data for future generations. He chose the form with which he was familiar and adapted it to his own purposes. In writing about local and family history, he could draw on oral tradition, his own memories, family inscriptions and newspapers. The chronicle moves from ‘global’ to local history, and the act of copying changes into the act of producing a text of his own. Lindgren’s case bears out Martyn Lyon’s observation: copying assists textual comprehension and appropriation, and it can also act as a preliminary phase leading to more autonomous literary composition. The emergence of the ‘I’ is visible in Efraim’s chronicle, even though the instances are few and do not reveal much of Lindgren’s thoughts.

*Ajantieto*, the popular chronicle included in the Hymnal, provided a basis or a framework for Lindgren’s text. The choice of genre becomes more understandable with the discovery that Lindgren was not the only nineteenth-century grassroots writer in Finland to have written a chronicle. Kustaa Brask (1829–1906), a crofter from Joroinen, a municipality situated in eastern Finland, produced two

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38 Kuismin 2013, 64–73. See also Liljewall 2002.
40 According to Antonio Castillo Gomez, the ‘Notebooks of Some Curiosities’ by the Canary Islands merchant Betancourt consist of five in-quarto manuscripts written between 1796 and 1807. Betancourt noted down personal and family events as well as events which occurred during those years at Las Palmas, whether related to commercial and maritime affairs, religious questions, festivals, historical notes or social issues. Pedro Santos Fernández, a weaver from Tuy in Galicia, left a similar manuscript in the same format, entitled ‘Memory book and various notes to explain the happenings of days, months and years, as contained within’. The author recorded a host of personal, family or public events in the years 1779 to 1826, preceded by a pair of registers covering 1777. (Castillo Gómez 2011, 620.) On French and Spanish ‘memory books’ see also Lyons 2013a, 222–244.
41 Lyons 2013b.
42 Cf. Lyons 2013a, 236–240.
chronicles. One of them is entitled *Puheita Ihmisen sikijämisen jälkeen kuluneesta, Ajasta* ('Speeches about the Time since the Inception of Man'). Running to 80 folios, it begins with Adam and Eve and ends with the assassination of Nikolai Bobrikoff, the General Governor of Finland, in 1904. From the seventeenth century on, the history of Finland and her neighbouring countries were at the forefront of this chronicle. Unlike Lindgren, Brask did not include details of his life in his text. Even though Lindgren and Brask were contemporaries and had a similar social status, their mental worlds were different in many respects. Brask was influenced by ideas of popular education and nation building, whereas Lindgren was a man of the Bible and the popular tradition.

For whom did Efraim Lindgren write? His activities must have been known to those in his surroundings. He participated in scribal culture – the production, dissemination and consumption of handwritten texts – and had a hand in popular printing culture as well. The oral lore describes him as a person who did not shun contact with other people. Why would he not have shown his chronicle to his visitors? But one can also assume that the most important reader was Lindgren himself – he clearly enjoyed writing and producing book-like texts.

### References

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**Research Literature**


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44 According to Kaisa Kauranen, Brask contributed to newspapers for twenty years (1858–77), but as his sprawling texts began to expand to such a degree that they could not be edited and published, he began to send his manuscripts to the Finnish Literature Society. His contributions – 5,700 pages in all – include religious and philosophical texts as well as deliberations on societal matters, agriculture, popular education and history. Brask’s texts are difficult to classify. The longest of his ‘speeches’ is 294 pages. The material also includes poems and drafts of school textbooks as well as collections of folklore and ethnographic material (Kauranen 2013, 120).
45 Davíð Ólafsson 2013, 40.


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