

Contributions To Global Historical Archaeology

Magdalena Naum  
Jonas M. Nordin *Editors*

# Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity

Small Time Agents in a Global Arena

 Springer

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Editors

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# Preface

This book has its origins in the rapid changes within the field of global historical archaeology of the early twenty-first century. Issues that a decade ago were not at all considered are today rapidly accepted and integrated into the main currents of critical anthropology, archaeology and history. The theoretical development of postcolonialism and the awareness of escalating globalisation and its historical roots has been the prime motor of this development.

It is in this context that we started to consider the previously understudied issue of early modern colonialism and its Scandinavian connections. In 2008 Jonas M. Nordin started a postdoctoral project focusing on early modern colonialism, rise of capitalism and mass consumption financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Kungliga Vitterhetsakademien and the National Historical Museum in Stockholm. Thanks to the generous support of the Crafoord Foundation and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Magdalena Naum and her colleagues, Fredrik Ekengren and Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe from Lund University initiated a project re-examining the colony of New Sweden from a historical archaeological perspective. Our contributions in this book present some of the results of our research.

The mushrooming projects sharing our curiosity about Scandinavia's role in early modern global expansion, politics and modes of thinking inspired us to establish a scientific network—GlobArch (supported by Riksbankens jubileumsfond)—and, as a part of the network's activities, to edit this collection of papers summarising current research on Scandinavian colonialism. Some of the chapters in this book have been presented and discussed at several conferences: the 17th EAA meeting in Oslo in 2011, the 45th SHA conference in Baltimore in 2012 and the 18th EAA meeting in Helsinki 2012.

We would like to thank the authors for their contribution to the book. The high standard of their research in the fields of anthropology, archaeology and history contributes to a comprehensive view on the diversity and varieties of Scandinavian colonial efforts and experiences and makes an important addition to the study of European

colonialism. We also want to thank our two anonymous reviewers who supported the project from the beginning and our encouraging editor Teresa Krauss.

Last but not least, our warm thanks goes to Audrey Horning and James Symonds who agreed to stitch these pieces of local and regional studies into a global fabric.

Lund, Sweden  
Stockholm, Sweden

Magdalena Naum  
Jonas M. Nordin

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**Part I**  
**Charting Scandinavian Colonialism**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Situating Scandinavian Colonialism

Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin

### Introduction

In 1647, Nils Matsson Kiöping, a Swedish sailor and employee of the Dutch East India Company, embarked on a 9-year-long journey to Asia. Passing the Cape of Good Hope, he entered the Indian Ocean, stopped at the Danish trading post in Tranquebar and then went further on to Java and Japan. He described his adventures in a book published in 1667. Nils Matsson Kiöping's account provides detailed information about a wide set of localities of the early modern global world. Like many other narratives of exploration produced by European adventurers of the era, its pages contain a blend of amazement of the riches of the world and of pejorative descriptions of the people outside of Europe.

The life, the travels and the writing of Matsson Kiöping encapsulate the essential questions of this book—what was Scandinavia's place in the European exploration and exploitation in the early modern period? How were the far corners of the world and its inhabitants, those known since the antiquity and those newly discovered, perceived and described by Danish, Swedish or Icelandic authors? What were the underpinnings, the nature and the scope of Scandinavian colonialism?

In recent years the involvement of the early modern Scandinavian countries in colonial ventures has been under increasing scrutiny of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists. New projects, academic centres and a growing number of publications start to question and dissect the nature of Scandinavian participation in

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colonial expansion, adaptation and contribution to a Eurocentric worldview and production of racial ideologies. Despite this recent interest, however, the general understanding of Scandinavia's part in colonial expansion is rather ambivalent. A pendulum of awareness of the colonial past swings between gross unfamiliarity with that facet of national history, a denial that Scandinavian kingdoms had anything to do with atrocities caused by colonialism, and the recognition of the participation in the colonial act driven by economic ambitions and want of profit. The perception shifts between national pride of involvement in world politics and expansion associated with the times of foregone political influence and greatness and more reflexive and bitter consideration of human tragedy caused by the hunger of wealth and power (chapter by Jørgensen). Perhaps the most widespread view among academics, the general public and politicians is, however, an opinion that Scandinavian participation in colonial politics was benign and their interactions with the encountered peoples in Africa, Asia and America were gentler and based on collaboration rather than extortion and subjugation (cf. Olwig 2003; Fur and Ipsen 2009; chapters by Fur and Jørgensen).

In general, Scandinavian involvement in global and colonial politics and policy-making has not been acknowledged in the decolonising process (Olwig 2003; Folke Ax et al. 2007; Ipsen and Fur 2009; Keskinen et al. 2009). As Karen Fog Olwig has shown, the twentieth-century Danish perception of its national identity was transformed from a multicultural, multi-ethnic seafarers' nation involved in the world's politics into the idea of an agrarian-based and mono-cultural society. In the words of Olwig (2003) and Ulf Hannerz (1996), twentieth-century Denmark was *deglobalised*, i.e. seemingly detached from the ebbs and flows of the colonial and global history. The development in Sweden was rather similar, only here the colonial past and the notion of the colonial history played an even smaller part than in Denmark. The Swedish historic narrative is coloured by methodological nationalism, meaning that the state, nation and history are three aspects of a common whole—one can hardly be separated from the other (Chernilo 2006). The twentieth- and twenty-first-century Swedish archaeologists and historians are to a large extent focused on issues traceable within the current borders of the modern state (Eriksdotter and Nordin 2011).

This whitewashed and keenly reproduced picture of minimal or non-involvement in colonial expansion is, partly also, a result of adopting a narrow definition of colonialism, which reduces it to the possession of colonies in the far corners of the world. Yet, colonialism represented more than territorial claims in the Caribbean and the Americas. It included particular economic strategies, such as participation in triangular transatlantic trade and exploitation of the North with little regard to local agency (chapters by Evans and Rydén; Lindmark; Schnakenbourg) as well as reproduction and production of ideologies of race, difference and rights to conquer and subjugate (chapters by Loftsdóttir and Pálsson; Lucas and Parigoris; Nordin). It involved creation of new categories of people whose agency was defined by colonial settings (chapters by Sebros; Toft and Seiding; Weiss) and appropriation of material culture (chapters by Armstrong, Williamson and Armstrong; De Cunzo; Ekengren, Naum and Zagal-Mach Wolfe; Nordin; Toft and Seiding; Weiss).

Colonial encounter with non-Europeans and non-Christians provoked a mission to reform, educate and civilise the “other” (chapter by Lindmark).

The wide range of case studies presented in this volume is an invitation to rethink the definition of colonialism to include such a broad understanding of this process, one that considers economic strategies and appetites for exotic commodities, political and cultural aspirations and ideologies as a part of colonial politics and imperial mindsets.

## Scandinavian Colonial Ventures: An Overview

Colonial expansion launched by Scandinavian kingdoms was propelled by the same prospects of economic profit and political interests that pushed other European states to explore and exploit territories. Colonies added to the glory and power of the kingdoms and played a role in strengthening national economies providing markets for surplus commodities and supplying valuable raw materials and natural resources. Denmark, Sweden and later Norway were captured by “logics of colonialism”—the colonial ideology and Eurocentrism constituting an important part of the early modern and modern zeitgeist. Colonialism in its many forms was part of the very fabric of the North European societies (Fig. 1.1).

Sweden’s first overseas possessions that can be qualified as colonies were the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Ingria, Karelia and Livonia annexed in the course of the sixteenth to seventeenth century as a result of the Northern Wars. Although not always described as such, the economic and social politics employed in these provinces, such as trade regulations serving the interests of Stockholm, the dominating position of the



**Fig. 1.1** Scandinavian colonies and outposts. Danish possessions are indicated with a triangle and Swedish with a circle (Drawn by the authors)

Swedish land aristocracy and its exclusive position in the administration of land, as well as civilising projects, show similarities to other contemporary colonies (Loit 1984:393–394). Concrete plans of obtaining colonies in further corners of the world followed the expansion in the Baltic and were first coined in the early seventeenth century by Gustav II Adolf and his chancellor Axel Oxenstierna (Loit 1984; Dahlgren 1988). With the help of Dutch entrepreneurs and investors, the choice was made to venture to America, where the colony of New Sweden was established in 1638 (chapters by Ekengren, Naum and Zagal-Mach Wolfe; De Cunzo; Nordin). Simultaneously, the Africa Company, financed by Dutch-born Louis De Geer, established a trading post in Cabo Corso and became involved in trade with gold, ivory and slaves (Nováky 1990; De Corse 1993; Kankepeyeng and De Corse 2004).

New Sweden and African forts were short-lived endeavours, lost to the Dutch in 1655 and 1663, respectively. But the colonial dreams lived on. In the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century, the royal council discussed several options of funding a settlement in Africa, the Caribbean, South America and Asia and financed few reconnaissance expeditions to Tobago, Guiana, Senegal and Cape Verde (Sprinchorn 1923; Loit 1984, chapter by Schnakenbourg). Finally these efforts materialised and in 1784 Sweden obtained the small and volcanic Caribbean island of Saint Barthélemy (chapter by Schnakenbourg). Gustavia, its capital and large harbour, became a free port and a large slave market supplying a workforce to Caribbean and American plantations (Fig. 1.2).

The attempts to establish trade stations and settlements outside of Europe went hand in hand with the expansion into the northern territory of Lappmarks (Sápmi) and the Arctic Sea. Especially Sámi, who until the sixteenth century were rather loosely connected with the Swedish state, in the course of the seventeenth to nineteenth century became the subject of pejorative “othering”, “civilising” colonial policies, exploitation and displacement (chapter by Lindmark).

Denmark’s attempts to establish overseas colonies and participate in the lucrative Asian trade had a similar background and chronology. Unlike Swedish outposts, however, the Danish trading companies maintained a relatively long presence overseas.

The Crown and private investors focused on three particular areas. The first was the Eastern coast of India and the Bay of Bengal, where the Danish East India Company established trading posts in Tranquebar (1620–1845), Serampore (1755–1845) and Nicobar Islands (1756–1868)<sup>1</sup> serving as the major exporters of spices, cotton and silk textiles (Brøndsted 1967; Fihl and Venkatachalapathy 2009). Caribbean sugar plantations in St. Thomas (1665–1917), St. John (1675–1917) and St. Croix (1733–1917) supplied Denmark and the rest of the Baltic/Nordic region with sugar (Rönnbäck 2009; Fig. 1.3). The enslaved workforce at the plantations came via Danish trading posts located in Africa’s West coast, which besides slaves

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<sup>1</sup> Great Nicobar Island was called New Denmark and the Crown with the help of the staff from the Tranquebar fort tried to establish a settlement colony on the island. Five attempts ended with the same result: majority of settlers died from tropical diseases, the so-called Nicobar fever, within few months after arrival to the island. Colonisation plans were given up in 1847 (Madsen 1983:186–189).





**Fig. 1.2** St. Barthélemy. View from the harbour in Gustavia, undated painting, National Maritime Museums S5482 (Courtesy of National Maritime Museums, Sweden)



**Fig. 1.3** Ruins of windmill tower at the sugar plantation Annaberg in St. John. The estate was established in 1721 by a Huguenot refugee Isaac Constantin who passed it to his son-in-law, a Dane Mads Larsen. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the plantation was sold to a Dutchman Salomon Zeeger and then to an Irishman James Murphy. The history of plantation's ownership testifies to the multi-ethnic character of the Danish West Indies (Photo by Magdalena Naum)

exported gold and smaller amounts of ivory directly to Denmark (Hoxcer Jensen et al. 1983; chapters by Sebro; Weiss). Like Sweden, Denmark strove to control its interests in the North, protecting and limiting foreign access to the rich fisheries and whaling grounds around Iceland and north of the Arctic Circle (Jónson 2009). The union with overseas territories of Iceland, North Atlantic Islands and Greenland, inherited after the fall of Kalmar Union of all Scandinavian kingdoms, had a colonial tint as well (chapters by Loftsdóttir and Pálsson; Lucas and Parigoris; Toft and Seiding). While Iceland remained in an ambivalent position identifying itself with imperial Europe and being treated as a colonial subject, other areas, especially Greenland, were subjected to the full-blown policies of economic exploitation and civilising quests, similar to those practised in Sápmi.

Denmark and particularly Sweden struggled with upholding overseas colonies and recruiting settlers and staff willing to relocate. Sweden's inability to keep the early established holdings in America and Africa is often explained by the country's weak economy and lack of wealthy investors and influential burgher class (Loit 1984:393). The weakness of private investors explains why the Crown was eventually financially involved in all colonial endeavours. Similar situation evolved in Denmark, where the investments of the burghers of Copenhagen were supplemented by the Crown, which became directly or indirectly involved in trade and policymaking in the colonies. The irregular injection of capital and poor management of the overseas stations and settlements demanded elaboration of survival strategies by the settlers and merchants. The people in the colony of New Sweden assumed a position of middlemen in the trade dealings between the Europeans and the Lenape and Susquehannocks while the survival of the trading stations along the Bay of Bengal, especially in the late seventeenth century, hinged on the piracy on Bengali ships practised by the employees of the Danish East India Company (Clausen 1983).

The Scandinavian colonies and trading posts were multicultural and multinational creations. Inhabitants of the Danish Virgin Islands included Danish, Dutch, English, French and German plantation owners, administrators and missionaries as well as enslaved Africans from broad territories of West Africa and a growing number of Creole (Hall 1992; chapters by Armstrong, Williamson and Armstrong; Sebro; Fig. 1.3). Similar complexity characterised the Danish and Swedish forts in Africa and in the colonies of New Sweden and St. Barthélemy.

These colonial projects were a product and manifestation of interconnectedness of Scandinavian countries and their close affiliation with contemporary European political culture. Sweden's and Denmark's colonial policies were often guided by the regional competition over the Baltic trade and the control of the Sound. These hostilities and rivalries were transplanted overseas. Conflicts on the Gold Coast between the Danish and Swedish Africa Companies led to the extinction of the Swedish presence in West Africa. Sweden would not return to the transatlantic slave trade until 1784 when it took control of St. Barthélemy in the West Indies. Military conflicts and economic antagonism also coloured the relation between Denmark/Norway and Sweden/Finland along the long border between the countries. Control over the Sámi people, the mining industry and other assets such as fur, game and natural resources was pivotal to the state's administration and expansion.



**Fig. 1.4** Berckentin Palace, Copenhagen. The palace was built in 1751–1755 and bought by Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann in 1761. The Schimmelmanns owned several sugar cane plantations in the Danish West Indies (see chapter by Loftsdóttir and Pálsson) (Photo by Magdalena Naum)

Scandinavian expansion overseas went in accord with developments in Western Europe. The Nordic countries were part of the global world and economy with trade and industrial production intended for international markets (see for example chapter by Evans and Rydén). They reproduced and produced knowledge and view of the “other” through praxis of individual’s travelling and describing. The Swede Nils Matsson Kiöping who journeyed to Tranquebar; the Icelander Jon Olafsson, who in the service of the Danish East India Company visited Africa and India and Ludvig Ferdinand Rømer, Danish factor in Christiansborg in the Gold Coast all printed their journey accounts, which were widely popular in early modern North. Other individuals fully embraced capitalistic and cosmopolitan attitudes of the era. Admiral Ove Gjedde, the founder of the Tranquebar colony and the fort Dansborg, invested most of his capital in the iron and silver mining industry in Kongsberg and Ulefoss in Norway. Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann was a serious participant in the triangular trade. He exchanged alcohol and foodstuffs from his Danish estates and weapons produced at his factory at Hellebæk for African slaves who worked at his sugar plantations in the Danish West Indies. Profits from his ventures allowed him to acquire land and real estate in Denmark, including the Berckentin Palace in Copenhagen (Fig. 1.4). Gjedde and Schimmelmann invested regionally and globally joining a wealthy class of merchants exerting influence on politics, economy and policymaking.

## Colonial Ideologies

Scandinavia's colonial expansion was motivated by and involved particular economic thinking, mercantilist drive for profit (to sell dear and buy cheap) and balancing national economies. Furthermore, it made use of the principles of natural law, which stipulated universal rights to trade, travel, explore and settle in foreign lands and justified violent actions if these rights were denied. Scandinavian mercantilists (including Johan Risingh, Anders Berch and Otto Thott), philosophers active in Scandinavia (e.g. Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf) as well as the ruling circles of Christian IV and Frederick III of Denmark and Queen Christina of Sweden were well familiar with these economic and political discussions and contributed to their further development. Colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean and the trading posts in Africa and Asia were seen as suppliers of gold and exotic commodities sought after in Europe and markets open for cheaply produced European goods. The limited number of overseas possessions did not stop both nations from participating in and profiting from triangular Atlantic trade.

Existing historiography likes to portray Scandinavians as gentler and more humane colonisers compared to the English, Spanish or the Dutch (chapter by Fur). It is true that the Crown and some of the administrators opted for peaceful coexistence in the colonies and trading posts and sometimes questioned the correctness of racial categories undermining intelligence and skills of native population and African slaves. More often than not, however, this attitude was motivated by the intricate and fragile position on the competitive colonial stage and strategically applied when resources to support and sustain the ventures were limited. Correspondences sent from the colonies as well as travel narratives indicate, that cruelty and strongly pejorative attitudes towards the non-Europeans and non-Christians were a common occurrence in the Swedish and Danish colonies, making them no less oppressive and intolerant as other colonial ventures (Green-Pedersen 1972; Højlund Knap 1983; Sjöström 1999). Until the late eighteenth century, participation in the slave trade and slavery practised in St. Barthélemy and Danish West Indies did not cause any significant moral dilemma. Radical voices, such as that of Reimert Haagensen, plantation owner from St. Croix, who believed that the dark skin and innate wickedness predestined Africans to slavery, point in the opposite direction: slavery was often perceived as a natural state of Africans (Haagensen 1758; cf. Green-Pedersen 1972; Højlund Knap 1983). These discriminating views were also expressed by Swedish planters and colonial administrators (Sjöström 1999). Carl Adolf Carlsson, a pastor and a teacher serving in St. Barthélemy in the 1830s, doubted if African slaves were human beings. To him they appeared as hybrid creatures: half human, half ape and tiger and a sad caricature of the white men (Coleridge 1835). Another colonial citizen, a lawyer, Olof Erik Bergius was of an opinion that "black people were lacking intelligence and to civilize these under humans was in conflict with nature itself" (Bergius 1819 cited in Sjöström 1999:48; see also Loftsdóttir 2008 and chapter by Loftsdóttir and Pálsson).

These ideas found support in the contemporary theories produced in Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe. Erik Pontoppidan, eighteenth-century Lutheran bishop,

**Fig. 1.5** Carl Linnaeus in Sámi dress, portrait painted by Martin Hoffman in 1737. Linnaeus journeyed to Lapland (Sápmi) in 1732. Note the elements of Sámi dress and the drum (cf. Fig. 8.3 in Daniel Lindmark’s chapter in this volume) (Courtesy of Linnémuseet Uppsala)



advocate of pietism and pro-chancellor of the Copenhagen University, wrote extensively in defence of African slavery. For him, as for many other theologians and thinkers, slavery was a natural state for heathens and punishment for their sins. He argued that plantation slavery, while useful and necessary to sustain plantations, was also a step in bettering of slaves’ lives, a relief from the miserable material and spiritual conditions in their African homelands and opportunity to bring them closer to “civilisation”—an opinion shared in the pre-abolitionist intellectual circles in Europe (Green-Pedersen 1972:71–87).

Africans and American Indians were not the only ones subjected to pejorative gaze of Scandinavians. Administrators and travellers visiting Northern Scandinavia and Greenland produced an image of Sámi and Inuit population that essentially did not differ from an early modern portrait of Native Americans or Africans. They were primitive, heathen people, impulsive and childish (Högström 1747; chapters by Lindmark; Toft and Seiding). Their supposedly lower position on the scale of development and faulty character found support in the scientific theories of the time. One of them was a categorisation proposed by Carl Linnaeus (Fig. 1.5) in his 1758 edition of *Systema Naturae*. He distinguished four categories of the human species,

each with inherited biological and cultural characteristics: *Homo Europaeus* with his light-skin, muscular built, inventiveness and governed by laws; *Homo Americanus* was copper-coloured, choleric and regulated by customs; *Homo Asiaticus* was sooty, rigid and dark-eyed and governed by opinions; *Homo Africanus* was black, phlegmatic and indolent and governed by impulse (Linnaeus 1758:20–22). Sámi were placed by Linnaeus in the category of *Homo Monstrosus*, regarded as degenerates and freakish creatures (Koerner 1999).

Pehr Kalm, one of the disciples of Linnaeus who travelled across North America, reproduced stereotypes and convictions of his teacher. While not unsympathetic towards North American Indians whom he viewed in a romantic light (sharing some of Benjamin Franklin's views) he saw them as a doomed race and predicted their rapid cultural and biological disappearance (Hollsten 2010:246).

## Cultural Consequences of Colonialism

When Nils Matsson Kiöping stopped in Tranquebar, he noticed not only the exotic, the strange and almost unimaginable, but he described also the multicultural way of life in the colony. “There were Negroes who spoke Danish well. The Danish priest, called sir Niels had [during the time I was there] a cottage and has taken a heathen wife” (Matsson Kiöping 1667:105). These few lines encapsulate the essence of colonialism: power and contact. Power was executed by the Danish East India Company's officials and employees over the blend of people living in Tranquebar. At the same time people met and mingled, married, confronted each other and contested the official regimes.

Tranquebar was in this respect similar to Carolusborg, Christiansborg, Egedesminde, Fort Christina, Charlotte Amalie and Gustavia. All of these settlements were meeting points full of contradictions; they were geographies where the pejorative views of the other took shape and were questioned and where new categories of people and new identities were created. The Creole in Danish outposts in Africa and Caribbean plantations and *blandingar* in Greenland, the Forest Finns in central and northern Sweden and Amina in the Danish St. Thomas were variously defined as liminal groups, go-betweens and mediators but also were treated with suspicion and mistrusted due to their “otherness” and multiple allegiances (chapters by Armstrong, Williamson and Armstrong; Ekengren; Sebros; Toft and Seiding; Weiss).

To turn these and other colonial subjects into less threatening and more familiar in behaviour and way of thinking, colonial administrations put substantial efforts into reforming, civilising and Christianising “the other”. The school system established in Sápmi and described by Lindmark is a good example of the type of educational curriculum, methods and influence the colonial schooling had on Sámi culture and life and its similarity to colonial schooling programmes elsewhere (e.g. Lindmark 2000; Rud 2009).

Colonialism also had consequences for material culture. Material things assumed an essential part in all colonial projects. Early modern trade was built upon the desire of the exotic and sought-after commodities on both of its nodal ends, and when gold, precious stones, spices, tobacco and furs poured into European markets, arms, glass beads, mirrors, hats, colourful textiles, copper and iron tools made their way to Africa, America, Greenland and Sápmi. These artefacts were adopted and appropriated to fit local cultural references and needs. Ivory and rare kinds of woods and stones adorned cabinets produced in Augsburg acquired by European nobles (chapter by De Cunzo). Greenlandic women, daughters and wives of Danish Royal Greenland Trading Department staff members shopped for exclusive porcelain, jewellery and bedding, along more traditional tools, to express their tastes, wealth and connections (chapter by Toft and Seiding). Susquehannocks broke copper kettles obtained from their Swedish neighbours to make arrowheads and other practical objects (chapter by Ekengren, Naum and Zagal-Mach Wolfe). Occasionally, incoming objects became contested and opposed as symbols of foreign power as was the case of alcohol in nineteenth-century Iceland (chapter by Lucas and Parigoris). Perceived as corrupting, the flow of sumptuous goods and foodstuffs was restricted and controlled by colonial administration in Greenland, obsessed with preserving the traditional lifestyle of the Inuit population (chapter by Toft and Seiding). Collected by noble and burgher families, artefacts from far corners of the world enclosed in the cabinets of curiosities objectified the other as exotic and peculiar and projected oneself as learned and cosmopolitan (chapters by De Cunzo; Nordin). Finally, material culture visualised and essentialised difference becoming stereotyped symbols of people, their idolatrous superstition and disobedience (e.g. Sámi drum described by Lindmark) and their supposed conservatism and timelessness (chimneyless cabins of Forest Finns discussed by Ekengren).

Appropriation and exchange of material culture was a central aspect of early modern colonialism. The establishment of manufactures and factories as well as localities facilitating the exchanges of goods can be viewed as yet another effect of colonialism. The rise of long-distance trade and global markets presupposed change in production. Scandinavian colonialists needed something to trade with in order to get their hands on the porcelain, silk, slaves, sugar and tobacco leading to a rapid augmentation in the mining of copper, iron and silver in places such as Kongsberg, Røros and Ulefoss in Norway and Dannemora, Falun and several minor mines in Sápmi and Sweden. This development in trade and manufacture led to a swift change in the modes of production and Scandinavians imported traits from across the Atlantic—the plantation, the immigrant workforce and strictly controlled proto-industrial communities. The geometrically planned industrial towns supplied the Atlantic world with iron and copper and the Asian market with silver. The pious protestant ethics together with the wishes for economic growth attracted Dutch capital and Dutch and German workforce (chapter by Evans and Rydén). Steel and iron production and mining of precious metals in Norway and Sweden brought industrialisation as well as capitalism to Scandinavia.

## Small Agents in a Global Arena

Sweden and Denmark had relatively few and generally short-lived overseas colonies. They remained, however, active players in the transoceanic trade, engaged in extensive exploitation projects at the fringes of their dominions, and they participated and contributed to the international intellectual debates justifying slavery, exploration and taking possession overseas. Through producing and reproducing racial ideology of difference, supporting expansion and exploitation overseas, Scandinavian ruling class identified itself with the European imperial subject (Granqvist 1999:13–14). The projects discussed by the royal councils that never materialised, many of them presented by foreign explorers and entrepreneurs, indicate that Denmark and Sweden aspired to and were perceived as colonial powers by foreigners (Loit 1984:392; Weiss 2010; chapter by Schnakenbourg).

The case studies in this volume illustrate the scope, character and various aspects of Scandinavian colonial projects. They consider how the expansion and exploitation was justified in early modern Scandinavia and how colonial politics were shaped and implemented by the Crown and administrators in such diverse landscapes as Sápmi, Greenland, the Guinea coast, the Caribbean and the Delaware. They illustrate the roots and the character of Sweden's and Denmark's complex entanglement with the global history.

With this collection of papers, we hope to broaden the field of global historical, post-colonial and critical studies. We combine anthropological, archaeological and historical methods and perspectives, fully aware of the need for further multidisciplinary examination of a broadly understood colonialism and interconnectedness of the small and the large agents in a global arena.

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## Chapter 2

# Colonialism and Swedish History: Unthinkable Connections?

Gunlög Fur

### Introduction

In 1937, Nils Ahnlund, eminent professor of history at Stockholm University, stirred up a debate in the middle of preparations for the 300th anniversary of the founding of the New Sweden colony on the Delaware River in North America (1638–1655). In a presentation to the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography, Ahnlund suggested that Sweden had been a weak and deficient coloniser and described New Sweden as a penal colony. This outraged some of his listeners, who preferred to view seventeenth-century Sweden as a powerful nation and wished to commemorate the colony's contributions.<sup>1</sup> However, Ahnlund also depicted relations between Swedish colonists and Native Americans, and these comments aligned well with the general perception of what transpired in the colony:

That the Swedes have had a good hand with the natives is an old, and in terms of our national sensitivity, satisfying notion, which fortunately can be maintained, particularly if one looks at the larger picture ... . New Sweden was always spared the furious Indian feuds

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<sup>1</sup> The debate surrounding the commemorations in 1938 has been described by Max Engman (1991, 1994). Frustration at Ahnlund's lecture concerned his portrayal of the colony's "dark sides" as well as his emphasis on the participation of colonists from Finland. Sweden's representative to the US Wollmar Boström wrote to Foreign Secretary Fritz Henriksson, May 8, 1937, that Ahnlund's reference to New Sweden as a penal colony was "particularly ill chosen at this moment and would unnecessarily injure Swedish-Americans, if it came out here ... . I cannot understand how someone in Professor Ahnlund's position can show such poor judgment, that he expresses these dark sides of the matter, just at the time when the Crown Prince, the Government, the Parliament and the people so warmly embrace the 300th anniversary ... ." UD, 1920 års dossiersystem, P66, volym 844, *Riksarkivet*. My thanks to Adam Hjorthén for alerting me to this source.

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of the kind that the larger Dutch establishment was exposed to. (Ahnlund 1937:269, this and all further translations of Swedish quotes are mine)

Ahnlund managed to portray Swedes in the colony as both active and dominant in that they “had a good hand with the natives”, and meek and passive as they were “spared the furious feuds”. These assertions worked together to produce the same conclusion—Sweden was a “good” coloniser.

This particular ambivalence, I argue, characterises Swedish scholarship regarding the nation’s historical involvement in European expansion and colonialism. Neither a self-confident world power nor colonised and dependent, Sweden’s view of its past vacillates uneasily between alignment with the perceived centre of European power politics and a place as an unallied and neutral—and therefore more objective—observer. This conflicted relationship with a history of colonialism is neither specifically Swedish nor identical with discourses elsewhere. Rather it represents one of the several possible positions vis-à-vis hegemonical power—positions employed to regulate understandings of the nation’s history and contemporary role. Sweden shares a set of discourses with its Scandinavian or Nordic neighbours: Denmark, Norway and (to some extent) Finland regarding its role in the history of European expansion and colonialism. Engagement with colonialism proper appears limited and distant in time, and this “indirect” form of Scandinavian involvement in colonial expansion allows room for claims of innocence in confrontations with colonial histories. Seemingly untainted by colonialism’s heritage, the Scandinavian countries throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first successfully maintained positions as champions of minority rights and mediators in global politics (Ipsen and Fur 2009:7,10).

To understand this development scholars have recently begun to re-evaluate Scandinavian histories of colonial and global interaction. This concern primarily grows out of a need to understand contemporary changes as societies become more heterogeneous, as immigration and a multicultural society meet xenophobic and populist reactions, framed in a global financial crisis reaching also into the Nordic countries. Increasingly, scholars are also taking a new look at the period when European powers began assembling territorial possessions around the globe.

This chapter seeks to situate the debates concerning Sweden’s role in European expansion by taking a look at how historians have treated Swedish colonial endeavours in the early modern period. Discussing colonialism as a topic in and for Swedish history does not mean advocating a (re)turn to a contested field of colonial studies. Rather I aim for a discussion of how presences and silences reveal historiographical desires and for how positioning Sweden represents a stake in contemporary world systems.

## Colonialism and Historiographical Possibilities

Generations of Swedish school children learned their history from Carl Grimberg’s books. First published in 1913–1924 his brilliantly conceived *Svenska Folkets Underbara Öden* (The Wonderful Fortunes of the Swedish People) in nine volumes

mesmerised readers with its lively language and references to contemporary scholarship (Torbacke 1993). Volume 3, with its focus on Swedish great power status during the seventeenth century devotes a substantial section—25 pages—to Swedish colonial activities. Grimberg describes the purchase of land “from the Negro king of Futu” at Cabo Corso and does not hide the fact that the African company intended “to buy up slaves in Africa and sell them in America and there instead purchase sugar and other colonial goods, which could be sold in Sweden” (Grimberg 1924:231). Documents demonstrate that this also came to pass as one Guinea captain reported that he had bought 150 “blacks” and a large quantity of ivory. Some of the slaves died during the crossing to the West Indies where the captain traded the survivors for sugar. As a titillating titbit for his young readers, Grimberg adds that three black boys and a girl had been brought back to Sweden and at least one of them ended up with the King’s Chancellor Erik Oxenstierna, since in his account book for 1654 one finds payment related to the funeral of “one Negro” at his estate Tidö. Sweden’s possession of a trading post on the West African coast turned out to be brief, and Grimberg attributes the loss of the fort to great power conflicts in Europe, not to any aspect of Swedish military or political weakness (Grimberg 1924:231–232).

The largest portion of the description of seventeenth-century expansion is, not surprisingly, devoted to the New Sweden colony. Grimberg refers to the rather large body of scholarship on the colony, Swedish as well as American, and in the description makes two assertions that have become part and parcel of the discourse surrounding the Swedish attempt to establish a colony in North America. It is, he writes, “an attractive trait in the history of the Swedish colony, that the indigenous inhabitants there were treated like humans, and that slavery never took root there. New Sweden was inhabited only by free men. The Indians on their part, responded to the respect which the Swedes showed them” (Grimberg 1924:250). Grimberg ended the account of this overseas experiment with the conclusion that “yet still today remains in the large North American republic the achievements of Swedish civilization and Swedish piety, first made in the seventeenth century by our countrymen” (Grimberg 1924:254).<sup>2</sup>

The colony that had the longest tenure among Swedish overseas possessions, St. Barthélemy, receives a very different treatment in Grimberg’s history. Perhaps it is because Sweden acquired it first in 1784, long *after* its zenith as a significant force in European politics, or because the colony does not illustrate the values of “Swedish civilisation and Swedish piety” that are so frequently attached to New Sweden. St. Barthélemy came under Swedish dominion amidst frivolous entertainments and amorous escapades during King Gustav III’s visit to Versailles (Grimberg 1921/1927:307–309). In return for Swedish neutrality, the French government had promised an island colony in the West Indies (see Schnakenbourg in this volume). A rather disparaging description of the colony follows in conjunction with the

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<sup>2</sup> This assertion has been reiterated in many forms and venues. One of the oddest is perhaps on a beer can, promoting a “New Sweden beer”, on which one could read that Sweden was “one of the three peoples who planted civilization” in America.

account of Sweden's retreat from colonial possessions in 1878. One catastrophe after another befalls the tiny island, racial violence mars relations in the colony, and all attempts to make the colony's production gainful fail. However, in 1846 and 1847 the Swedish parliament appropriated funds through which more than 500 slaves were emancipated and "the freedmen offered in an address their warm gratitude to Sweden's king and people, who had delivered them from the chains of thrall-dom". A curious event in 1920 ends the story of the unsuccessful century of Swedish colonial rule. The Swedish prince Vilhelm toured Central America, and on a brief visit to the island, he met "old negroes and negresses from the Swedish time crying with emotion, when they saw the blue and yellow flag and heard the Swedish language. (...) Still today, the poor of St. Barthélemy benefited from a fund instituted by King Oscar II" (Grimberg 1925/1933:258–262).

Grimberg thus unabashedly wrote about Swedish overseas possessions as part of the expansion of a great power, and its loss a consequence of treachery and envy from European competitors. He built on such venerable predecessors as Victor Granlund who already in 1879 had written a history of the Swedish Africa Company, aptly entitled *A Swedish Colony in Africa*. Granlund deplored the fact that the colony had been neglected by scholars and claimed that it had been of no small significance as he firmly placed its history within the larger framework of Sweden's great power status. A Swedish kingdom that through its "great achievements and wise counsel had liberated an oppressed people and ended the longest and most destructive war, known to the new age", had found its place among the great powers of Europe with a "voice perhaps not bolstered by the greatest power, but at least the most respected" (Granlund 1879:4). Such apologetic positions suffused the writings of nineteenth-century historians and persisted well into the early decades of the twentieth century and explain the irritation turned at Ahnlund's speech in 1937. In this, of course, Swedish historians did not differ from their continental colleagues. Colonial history held a venerable position as a proper field of historical study.

In the years leading up to WWII colonialism still reflected national pride and achievements in an unproblematic manner.<sup>3</sup> In addition to discussing overseas colonies, historians also underscored the contributions of Swedish adventurers. "The knighthood of Swedish explorers" included Olof Bergh, who in the 1680s had headed an expedition into the interior of southern Africa. Other Swedes who deserved mention for their role in African exploration included Andries Stockenström, who should be remembered for "his humanitarian position towards the black indigenous population" and his support for abolition (Langenfelt 1934:115–121; see Olsson 2007 for a different view). Extolling such heroes was particularly popular in the wake of contemporary explorers such as Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld who led the *Vega* expedition through the Arctic Ocean to find the northeast passage in 1878–1879 and Sven Hedin,

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<sup>3</sup> One of Grimberg's predecessors in writing an overview of Swedish history was C. T. Odhner, professor of history at Lund University at the turn of the nineteenth century. He also published a seminal (and international!) article on New Sweden (Odhner 1879). His colleagues and contemporaries published considerably on colonial history, for example, Sprinchorn (1879, 1923).

who returned to Sweden in triumph after crossing the Gobi desert in 1897. Such veneration also characterised the treatment of the most famous early modern travellers, Carolus Linnaeus' disciples. Around the time of the 200th anniversary of Linnaeus' birth, in 1907, heightened nationalist pride and romantic enchantment flavoured depictions of Linnean scientific circumnavigations. Moulded on the pattern of the great achievements of previous military greatness, historian Theodor Fries asserted, citing his father the naturalist Elias Fries, that what "Gustavus Adolphus and his host of heroes meant for Sweden in political terms, Linnaeus and his disciples was for the natural sciences. Each people, who have performed in the history of the world, have had their age of heroes; each science that has won greater development its time of chivalry. For botany that was the time of Linnaeus" (Fries 1903:86; see also Hodacs and Nyberg 2007:20–21). The comparison with Gustavus Adolphus and Sweden's military might was not random, but formed part of a conscious chain of argumentation. Sweden had emerged from the ravaging contests on the European continent as a weakened military power, but in searching for alternative routes to greatness had settled on a more peaceful path. In this perspective the work of Linnaeus and his students represented an equally valuable, and possibly morally superior, platform than war and military prowess (Hodacs and Nyberg 2007:19–20).

This admiring view of Swedish expansion in different areas was to change in the aftermath of the war with ensuing liberation processes in almost all of the European possessions. This, however, did not result from a sense of complicity with the imperial projects, but rather the opposite. Post-war Sweden distanced itself from European expansion and discursively allied itself with decolonisation efforts (Engl 2009). European colonialism certainly still played a part in the historical landscape, but historians ceased to display Sweden prominently in it. They no longer viewed Sweden's seventeenth-century possessions and colonial pretensions as significant segments of Swedish history. Sture Waller, in one of the few articles on St. Barthélemy as a Swedish colony, gave words to a characteristic sentiment when he wrote that "Swedish colonial history may sound almost like a self-contradiction". Throughout the article the colony's lack of significance resonates, resembling the verdict forwarded in Grimberg's account. "The insignificant West Indian island St. Barthélemy is indeed the only colony that belonged to Sweden for any longer period, and from the perspective of the nation's history it was a remote spot lacking any greater interest" (Waller 1954:1). Waller, however, did make a case for the importance of discussing the topic from an international perspective, thus driving a wedge into the notion of the nation as the only relevant unit of historical analysis. Ingvar Andersson's *Sweden's history* from the same period demonstrates the centrality of the national paradigm and how it effectively excluded histories of colonial interactions. Brief references to Swedish colonies occur only outside the chronology of the nation and are discussed in a chapter entitled "Swedes in Foreign Land". Cabo Corso is dismissed as a "Swedish colonial attempt ... which had no significance whatsoever". However, the North American colony receives different treatment, and for an interesting reason: "Gold and spices one did not get here, nor furs and tobacco to any greater extent, nonetheless the colonists made a great contribution: they cultivated the primeval forest into fertile fields" (Andersson 1953:411–412).

The 1980s witnessed a noticeable return of interest in the topic of colonialism. An unusual article published in 1980 in *Historisk Tidskrift*, one of Sweden's leading historical journals, heralded a different approach to expansion and colonial encounters.<sup>4</sup> Based on his testimony at a highly charged court case concerning Sámi land rights in mid Sweden, historian Magnus Mörner compared the experiences of colonisation and the consequences for land rights among Sámi people and American Indians. He was the first Swedish historian to describe Swedish presence in the *Lapland* as colonial domination (Mörner 1980). In this decade and at the beginning of the next several book length studies of Sweden's early modern colonial enterprises emerged. First out was Lennart Lundmark (1971, 1982, 2008), who had long been engaged in research on Sámi history within the Swedish state. Then came Jan Arvid Hellström's study of the religious history of the Swedish colonial period on St. Barthélemy (1987), followed by György Nováky's dissertation on the Swedish Africa Company (1990). The commemoration of the founding of the New Sweden colony in 1988 sparked a large number of publications of academic as well as more popular interest (Weslager 1987; Blanck 1988; Dahlgren and Norman 1988; Ruhnbro 1988; Losman et al. 1988; Edsman 1991; Hoffecker et al. 1995; Craig 1993). In this period, European power was still treated more or less as hegemonic, but now scholarship increasingly mirrored a dissatisfaction with European deployment of power across the globe and strove to critically dissect it and discuss Sweden's part in it. By and large, however, Swedes and other Europeans remained central actors, and colonialism was construed as a history of European subjects encountering and acting upon non-European and non-human objects.

This was to change in the 1990s when under the influence of ethnohistory and historical anthropology, scholars attempted to view histories of colonialism as cultural encounters of mutual significance and allow non-European agency (Fur 1993, 2006; Lindmark 2006). The opening of the twenty-first century has seen a flurry of interest (of which this book is proof) allowing for a number of different interpretational schemes, some of which revisit colonialism as European in terms of agency and origins, while other approaches turn a postcolonial gaze on the North (Sjöström 1999; Körber 2004; Olsson 2007; Keskinen et al. 2009; Rodell 2009; Rönnbäck 2009). Increasingly studies focus on northern expansion, although "colonialism" remains a contested concept for describing this process. A journal survey shows a small but steady increase in articles discussing matters of Nordic colonialism and in books published in the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ernst Ekman's (1964) article on St. Barthélemy offers early example of this new outlook on colonialism as it places the colony firmly within a context of European colonial ventures in the Caribbean world. He was writing from a position of a Swedish-American scholar in the United States.

<sup>5</sup>Journals surveyed included *Dansk historisk tidskrift*, *Norsk historisk tidsskrift*, *Svensk historisk tidskrift*, *Scandia* and *Scandinavian Journal of History*. Articles as well as reviews were inventoried for the period 2002–2011. The greatest number of hits, and the most varied, could be found in *Svensk Historisk Tidskrift*, followed by *Norsk historisk tidsskrift*, while the interest in *Dansk historisk tidskrift* remains scant. See articles by Müller (2004); Rud (2006); Roopnarine (2010); Gøbel (2011); Össbo and Lantto (2011) and Ravna (2011). I wish to thank Marie Ulmhed for her excellent work in assembling these data.



University textbooks have remained notably conservative in their treatment of Swedish connections with colonial expansion. If anything they are more reticent on the subject than in Grimberg's time, which is perhaps not surprising. Criticism of colonialism in the intervening decades and attention to the destructive force of European imperialism have complicated the discussion of European expansion (cf. Curtin 2000). Based on a survey of textbooks assigned in basic history courses at Swedish universities, it is possible to claim that students will not find information on actual Swedish early modern colonies in these texts. Nor do they offer material or interpretations that would aid students in connecting Swedish history to the history of European global expansion. Swedish seventeenth-century control and expansion in the Baltic region, in the north of Scandinavia, or travels, exploration and trade in the eighteenth century are not discussed as phenomena related to colonialism across the seas, even though European colonialism receives some attention.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the international debate has not passed Sweden by entirely, and one of the textbooks places Sweden in the context; thus, "Sweden never became a major colonial power outside of Europe. Nonetheless Sweden participated in the colonial trade in both Africa and America. Just like other conquering powers Swedish colonists shared ideological mindsets that allowed Europeans to expropriate assets on other continents" (Lindkvist and Sjöberg 2009:285) (Fig. 2.1).

The situation appears similar in Denmark and Norway. It would seem difficult to pass by Danish colonies altogether, and a recent textbook lists Tranquebar in the south of the Indian subcontinent, the Guinean coast and two islands in the Caribbean as seventeenth-century colonies. The colonial trade connected the colonies as slaves from Guinea were exported to be used in the sugar production in the West Indies. Denmark thus became a part of the European transatlantic trade, "but it was a very modest part" (Busck and Poulsen 2008:173; see also Rian 1997:274–276). That Denmark took part in trade with black slaves is briefly mentioned; however, it is also noted that in 1792 the King banned the slave trade as the first European monarch to do so. But before the royal ordinance took effect, sugar producers managed to ship over enough human cargo to enable plantation owners to ensure their own future supply—through what the textbook calls a more humane treatment of women, the slave owners could expect a natural increase of slave labour (Feldbæk 1998:221). Greenland is treated as a series of smaller settlements along the western coast under the control of a trading company. Already in the beginning of the 1860s, the local administration introduced a form of local self-rule for the population. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the three islands in the West Indies had become a financial liability, and from then on, discussions continued with the United States about a sale of the colonies (Busck and Poulsen 2008:302). Notably, Norwegian textbooks

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<sup>6</sup> As far as possible all textbooks dealing with Swedish or Nordic history at the basic level at Swedish university programmes have been surveyed, based on syllabi published on department websites. These are Norborg and Sjöstedt (1970/1992); Behre et al. (1985/2001); Berggren and Greiff (2009); Gustafsson (2007); Hedenborg and Morell (2006); Hedenborg and Kvarnström (2009); Magnusson (2010); and Lindkvist and Sjöberg (2009). I am indebted to Marie Ulmhed who ably aided me in this survey.

**Fig. 2.1** Images from a world of colonial relations adorn a light post in Gothenburg, home to the Swedish East India Company from 1731. The trade with China and India laid the foundation for accumulation of wealth and expansion for the city and formed a substantial part of Swedish exports in the eighteenth century (Photo courtesy of Torgny Nordin)



discuss the consequences of Danish-Norwegian expansion for Sámi people, describing it primarily as an integration project (Moseng et al. 2003; Dyrvik 1999).

More than 100 years of Swedish historical scholarship offer plenty of evidence that Sweden fully participated in European expansion and shared in all its bolstering arguments. But what differentiates Sweden from, for example, Britain and France is that there was no decolonising moment, during which Sweden had to rethink its position. Instead this left room for reformulating a Swedish strategy for non-alliance and mediation. The colonial legacy was lost in post-WWII radicalism and attempts to connect European expansion in other continents with “internal colonisation”, such as Magnus Mörner did, were largely ignored. This also led to a lack of interest in the ways in which Swedish rulers, subjects and citizens continued to serve and benefit from colonialism, through trade and various forms of exploration and exploitation.

## The Problem with Colonialism

In 1984 Aleksander Loit cautiously introduced the notion that Swedish expansion eastward into the Baltic region could be described as colonialism. He suggested that relations between the mother country and the Baltic provinces bore striking resemblances to colonial relations in that resources were transferred to Sweden, trade overwhelmingly favoured Swedish interests, and Swedish aristocracy dominated

peasants and indentured labour. In consideration of the long period, 150 years, of Swedish control of the area and its significance for Swedish economy and state finances, he concluded that it warranted speaking of Sweden as a significant colonial power (Loit 1984:393–394).<sup>7</sup> Suggesting that Sweden in the seventeenth century was a colonising power is not uncontroversial. As discussed above, most historical overviews make clear that this is not an accepted designation for the kind of expansion that occurred either in the north of the continent or in adjacent regions surrounding the Baltic Sea. New Sweden is more likely to be described as a colony, but its brief existence and scant impact seem to suggest that it did not confer upon Sweden the status of colonial power. When I began doing research on Swedish relations to indigenous peoples in both North America and Lapland—and comparing them—I was told that this was not an appropriate comparison as Sweden had never colonised the north (except in the sense of individuals settling and breaking new land for farming). Regarding Lapland, *integration* or *internal colonisation* has more often been suggested as descriptions for the policy pursued by the government. There may be good, sound research reasons for not implying links between Swedish expansion eastward and northward in Europe and colonialism across the vast oceans. However, there has never been an exhaustive discussion of the possibility of such comparisons, not even minor debates.

Notably, non-Swedish scholars have felt less compunction in avoiding attaching arguments regarding colonialism to northern Scandinavia. American historian John Wunder notes how both Sweden and Denmark-Norway claimed the Arctic Ocean as *mare nostrum* long before they had any undisputed title to land adjacent to this body of water. Mapmakers labelled Sámi land as vacant, and when “slavery was banned in Sweden in the early fourteenth century, Saamis who had not converted to Christianity were excluded” (Wunder 2007:30). In a discussion of the peace of Nöteborg in 1323 and its consequences for Sapmi, Wunder concludes that the emerging nation states “asserted power over the lands that they had taken by expansion, usurping Saami sovereignty. Their ultimate purpose was to displace and deny independence to the Saami people” (Wunder 2007:32). Likewise, international scholarship has pointed out links between the Linnean knowledge project, the extensive travels of his students and the emerging European discourses on imperialism and the hierarchy of mankind (Pratt 1992; Regis 1992/1999:12–23; Haraway 1989:9; Willinsky 1998:33–34).

According to a government report from 1986, Sámi country—or *Sápmi*—is not to be considered a colony in the proper meaning of the term. The report offers three reasons for this: (1) *Sápmi* is not located at a distance from the national states that established borders cutting across Sámi lands (the so-called saltwater test is not applicable);<sup>8</sup> (2) the extent and influence of colonisation (meaning the establishment

<sup>7</sup> Esvelt (1998) even suggested it was the engagement in the Baltic that thwarted Swedish attempts at competing with other major European powers for overseas holdings.

<sup>8</sup> The “saltwater test” states that a colony is territory acquired at a distance from the “mother” country, usually across ocean water. According to this definition, any occupation of internal or adjacent areas was not considered as colonialism. See <http://www.legalfrontiers.ca/2010/11/winds-of-change-or-hot-air-decolonization-and-the-salt-water-test/> (retrieved September 15, 2011).

of non-Sámi settlements) and assimilation policies have been much more radical and successful than, for example, the Danish influence on Inuit culture on Greenland; and (3) the Nordic states have claimed the area as part of their kingdoms ever since the sixteenth century and have never expressly carried out a colonial programme in this region (Johansson 2008:155–156; SOU 1986:36:163–164).

The argument against discussing expansionary thrusts in adjacent areas as colonialism hinges, I suggest, on two interrelated ideas growing out of a general definition of colonisation. This definition stipulates that colonisation involved a sustained effort at controlling from a geographically distant home a new political organisation that had been created by invasion or settlement (Osterhammel 1997:10–11). This definition can be interpreted to mean that colonisation involves prolonged attempts by a group of people to settle and control a land area economically and politically. Successful colonisation would lead to the establishment of institutions which determined the use of resources and imposed the cultural values of the colonising group. Consequently, although New Sweden was a *colony*, the Swedish activity in North America barely warrants the name of colonisation, primarily due to its briefness in time and the minimal success of the project. In northern Sweden, Sámis and Swedes had long coexisted on contiguous territory and since at least the fourteenth-century Sámis had paid tributes or taxes to Swedish or Norwegian kings and lords. It is more likely that historians describe attempts to integrate the Sámis into the realm on Swedish conditions and sometimes with the use of force, than to term it colonisation. Swedish colonies were thus either too marginal or atypical to place Sweden alongside such proper colonial powers as Spain, England, or Holland. Daniel Lindmark discusses the terminology in relation to missionary and educational programmes directed at the Sámis and finds that by using the term *colonisation* in its strict meaning of cultivating new land and establishing new settlements, colonial power relations are obscured in Swedish research concerning Lapland. Describing Swedish expansion as an inner colonisation makes it possible to view Sámi country as an inherently Swedish territory. If one decides to define Sámi land as a part of the Swedish kingdom, then one simultaneously opts out of the possibility of placing the Swedish policy in a colonial context. Then the development in the Swedish Lappmarks becomes something inherently different from the colonialism other European colonial powers practised on other continents (Lindmark 2004; see also Lindmark 2012 in this volume).

The point here is that a discussion of different expansionist processes as separate in kind facilitates a discursive positioning of Sweden—and the other Nordic countries—as beyond or outside the sphere of early modern colonialism. I argue that this has had two consequences. On the one hand it has enabled Scandinavia to emerge in the modern period as untainted by colonialism and thus in a position to claim trustworthiness as mediators and as champions of subaltern and minority rights. Secondly, it has opened space for adoption of postcolonial and decolonial theories of coloniality and modernity to contemporary Swedish society *without* having to deal with, either theoretically or empirically, a longer history of expansion and conflict. It is my contention that Swedish scholarship, and popular understanding, has gone from no colonialism to post-colonialism without stopping at the in-between,

without having to confront the challenges and ambiguities of decolonisation. As historian Hans Norman noted in 1994: “The Swedish colonies have had something of a coincidental character [...] That the Swedish possession of colonies was brief and did not lead to an expanding colonial empire, could well be seen now [...] as a decided advantage. As a consequence, we avoided being involved in the great and painful decolonization process, which has marked the world during our century” (Norman 1994:40).

## Unique Friendships

The controversies surrounding Nils Ahnlund’s speech in 1937 testify to the significance then attached to Sweden’s colonial efforts. Speeches held in Delaware at the official celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the New Sweden colony emphasised the enduring legacy of the Swedish (and Finnish) colonial contributions to the American nation. But they also offered significant statements about Sweden’s role in the contemporary world. The US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, expressed his administration’s appreciation of the relationship with Sweden in terms that suited the perception of both nations as champions for democracy. Sweden could be counted “among those which stand for peace, for stability, for orderly processes of international relations and for a balanced adjustment in the various phases of their national life”, and this had come about “thanks to their possession of those qualities of integrity and strength of character which marked the settlers along the Delaware”. The Swedish colonists, said Hull, had “made an important contribution, in our country and in the world generally, toward that firm, unobtrusive, and essential foundation of solid worth, hard labor, social idealism, and deep piety, without which no civilization can endure” (Observances 1940:25).

In spite of such rhetoric, by the middle of the twentieth century historians generally followed Ahnlund in dismissing Sweden’s colonial ventures as weak and unsuccessful. However, in one area the Swedish colonies rose above the trifling to attain an exceptional status in the reminiscences of colonial ventures. Swedish relations to indigenous populations in the areas they colonised appeared unusual. Gustaf Adolf, then Crown Prince of Sweden, assessed these relations in 1938: “The relations of the Swedish colonists to the Indians were always friendly. By treating the native tribes in a humane manner they won their friendship, and I think this policy explains why the Delaware Valley did not have the sanguinary Indian wars experienced in other colonies” (Observances 1940:21). Cordell Hull concurred: “Though the first colonists were soldiers, no violence marked their arrival. Without threats, without force, following the manner of just men they chose the land they needed and negotiated for its purchase. No Indian wars, no savage massacres, mar the annals of New Sweden on the Delaware” (Observances 1940:24).

Again, this sentiment echoes Ahnlund, but this time historians and political leaders were in agreement. Ingvar Andersson in his history of Sweden provides an illustration. He placed the early modern colonies outside the realm of the really relevant

Swedish history by assigning them to a marginal chapter and noting their lack of significant impact. However, he pointed out that the “Indian tribes ... got on unusually well with the Swedes” thus entering into a long line of voices proclaiming a unique relationship between Swedes and Native Americans. Not only the Indians became the Swedes’ special friends. Victor Granlund evoked a similar image in his history of the African colony: “With the savages the Swedes were from the beginning on excellent terms ... and this good relationship continued uninterrupted and developed into a really touching faithful devotion on the part of the Negroes towards their Swedish allies ... an affection ... that must warm every Swedish heart”. However, Granlund clearly shared an understanding of relations in New Sweden, which may well have influenced his interpretation regarding Cabo Corso. He then offered an explanation for these friendships that hinged on Swedish exceptionalism: “It is unlikely that we are mistaken, if we assume, that it was the old Swedish honesty and integrity—where others were in the habit to deceive—in both places that gave the Swedes the advantage with these simple children of nature and called forth this confidence and this devotion” (Andersson 1953:411; Granlund 1879:14).

This notion of a special friendship extends its roots back to the years following the loss of the Swedish colony along the Delaware River. But it can also be viewed as a colonial trope with certain characteristics and uses. It emerges as an apologetic conclusion to discussions of colonial failures, and it serves to embellish the colonial experience with a cloak of justification. It is not difficult to find such pronouncements in scholarly publications as well as popular press from the late nineteenth century up until the latest major commemoration of New Sweden in 1988 (Fig. 2.2). Since then such commentary has declined, no doubt under the influence of general criticism of colonialism (Fur 2004).<sup>9</sup>

As we have seen, New Sweden was not the only colony defined through its peaceful relations with the “local population”. Instead, this appears to be an expansionist trope of some consequence. Similar protestations emerged among traders of various nationalities in Asia, who all claimed to have established particularly friendly relations with the peoples they encountered.<sup>10</sup> The idea of a special relationship to American Indians occurred among many European peoples, according to Christian Feest. He argues that nations that did not possess large overseas holdings, such as Germany, saw themselves as potentially (morally) superior and thus as allies to native peoples in their struggle against British and French colonial oppression (Feest 1990). He claims that the “desire to identify with Indians is a widespread European phenomenon, rather than just a German aberration” (Feest 2002:29).

<sup>9</sup> A partial list of references for this notion includes the following: Holm (1702/1988):122; Acrelius (1759):91–92; Kalm (1756/1970):142; Enander (1874–1877):189–191; Bergström (1882):66–71, 76; Scharf and Westcott (1884):31; Alund (1892):189–195; Balch (1914):320; Edqvist (1917):168–170; Berkhofer (1978):119, 125; *The New Sweden Project* (1988); Ruhnbro (1988); Jordan and Kaups (1989):89, 90; Edsman (1991):191–192; Ballantine and Ballantine (1993):193; and Englund (1993):559–560; for this notion perpetuated in popular culture, see also Ulmhed (2012).

<sup>10</sup> See Lisa Hellman’s ongoing dissertation project on the Swedish East Indian Company at Stockholm University.



**Fig. 2.2** Official commemorative stamps from 1938 to 1988. The motifs portray relations between Swedes and Indians as peaceful and characterised by equality and balance

## The Problem with History

History may be described as collective memory, a common key to the past. The key has often been identified as nationalism, progress and the development of civilisation. The nation state serves as the core around which identity and loyalty should be encouraged. It was in the European nation states that true historic development (change over time) could be observed, the nation states were seen as agents on the stage of history, and all other parts of the world—those that lacked history—were left to the anthropologists (Fur 1999).

Canadian educator John Willinsky has studied how history education (at all levels of the educational system) tends to affirm seemingly “natural” borders between nations and establish hierarchies between peoples. He concludes that “[i]n the rise of the West, the achievement of superiority has been accomplished not only by the sword and cross, but also by a philosophy of history that has used time and place as conceptual tools for dividing the world according to the interests of imperialism” (Willinsky 1998:134).

To counteract such division, Willinsky advocates research and education that critically evaluate and recognise the imperial story of western progress as a collective myth. But this is not easily done partly because there is a lack of historical research that takes its understanding from colonial and postcolonial perspectives and partly because the national focus—and responsibility to be a repository of the national memory—of the discipline conflicts with the need to look across borders and include the hitherto excluded. In fact, the challenges of globalisation discourses have led to an entrenchment of nationalistic perspectives and discourses aimed at ethnic and national identity formation all across Europe and America (Bloom 1987; Appleby 1992; Hingham 1997; Cornbleth 2000; Macintyre and Clark 2003; Cunningham 2008).

In this context trying to write colonialism into Swedish history is not an easy undertaking. As a neutral state during the war years, unscathed where neighbouring nations had been devastated, Sweden fashioned itself as modern and forward-looking. History played no part in this other than as a reminder of past poverty and despair. In this atmosphere, culture and history appeared to belong to other peoples, while Sweden had rationality and future. Swedes described themselves as progressive, hard working, capable of rational organisation and valued independence and equality (Berggren and Trägårdh 2006:224–225). In this atmosphere it is hardly

surprising that long gone and distant entanglements would attract scant interest. Writing colonial history promises few rewards, and it provides only shaky ground for building contemporary identities.

It is perhaps symptomatic that when a scholarly volume finally appears on Nordic colonialism, it takes its point of origin in the present. The editors of recently published *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* state that the collection “examines colonial histories and mentalities [in] countries which represent themselves as outsiders in relation to colonial power relations” (Keskinen et al. 2009:1). The aim, therefore, is to critically investigate Nordic complicity with colonialism rather than accept an “idealised image” which describes the region as weak in colonial ties and “characterised by development aid, peace building and cooperation, rather than colonialism or imperialism”. The book fruitfully develops the concept of colonial complicity to illuminate ways in which to challenge Nordic self-perceptions as both outside of colonial practices and hegemonies and aligned with them. But in spite of the introduction’s promise “to deepen the understanding of European colonial past, readers find none but the most recent historical perspectives.”

It obviously takes some more thinking to link early modern Scandinavian colonial ventures to contemporary complicity with European hegemony. Rather than a return to a history of colonies, I suggest that a more fruitful way is through a focus on the many roads and pathways to colonialism.

Scandinavian colonial history reminds historians to go beyond colonies to the development and movement of ideas, networks, groups and individuals. In the case of Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries, we need a history that traces colonialism beyond colonies to local encounters, a history that follows Scandinavian merchant ships, scientists, missionaries and other travellers around the world of European expansion—whether it took place across the oceans or within Europe (Ipsen and Fur 2009:12–13). Such a history reveals that it is as much in the ellipses and silences and in the choice of company that Sweden’s relation to colonialism should be measured.

At the end of the day, what matters is how human perceptions of history define who they wish to find themselves adjacent—how the company they keep reveals where their loyalties lie. Sweden may not have been a colonial power; perhaps that is a correct historical assessment. But the proper company for Swedish history is still firmly located within a European sphere of dominance. “Willem Usselinx ... later came to an upward moving Sweden and suggested to Gustavus Adolphus that through a large trading company he would secure for his kingdom a place at the meat pots of world trading. His argument was the Spanish riches from America but also the rapid expansion of the Dutch in power and wealth ... similarly the Swedish company share holders would become rich, the Swedish state would receive increased incomes and the peasants enjoy the rising prices, if one sailed out to foreign continents” (Holmberg 1982:61). Usselinx never got to experience such a golden age for the Swedish economy, but his hopes and the context of the historian who penned these lines suggest that Sweden belonged among those for whom the world opened and who deserved to benefit from its bounty. Whether viewed as



tragic, or failed, the history of Swedish expansion belonged in the same category as the colonial empires of Britain, France or Holland.

What might a history be like that challenged that assignation? Imagine a history of recent immigration to Sweden from across vast distances that took its cue from descriptions of relations in the Delaware Valley in the mid-seventeenth century: “The relations of Somali immigrants to the Swedes were always friendly. By treating the natives in a humane manner deriving from the adherence to venerable Muslim values such as charity and honesty, they won their friendship and it is likely that this explains why there were no destructive and violent riots, as in other parts of Europe”. Such a version would turn the tables on perceptions of strength, causation and agency.

But we need not only imagine. In 1645, the year after Governor Johan Printz sent a letter from New Sweden to his superiors asking for enough soldiers to kill all the Lenape Indians in the region, a large number of Lenape leaders met to discuss what to do with the Swedes.<sup>11</sup> Mattahorn, who had called the meeting, was one of the few Lenapes who occur with relative frequency in colonial sources from the period. He had sent out messengers to adjoining villages to join him in a council, and he sent his son Ackahorn on a hunting expedition in order to provide food for the great gathering, because the purpose of the conference was dire: should the autonomous Lenape villages join together to kill all Swedes? Complaints abounded regarding the Swedish presence in the valley, they took land without reimbursing the Indians for it, and they had nothing valuable to trade. Negotiations continued for several days. Mattahorn and his son Ackahorn argued forcefully for an all-out attack against the Swedish settlements and when these were destroyed turning to the Dutch with offers of trade and alliance. Others saw an advantage in a small and relatively harmless foreign population as a buffer between the Lenapes and the more aggressive Dutch and English colonies and placed their hope in the Swedish governor’s promise of an imminent arrival of a ship loaded with trade goods. This view apparently gained support and no war was launched against the Swedish colony.

But Mattahorn and those who agreed with him were apparently not satisfied with the decision. In 1648 he donated land to the Dutch and ordered the Swedes to leave. This triggered a crisis between Swedish and Dutch interests and 3 years later Mattahorn’s name again turns up in the documents. A delegation of Lenapes visited the Dutch commissary at Fort Nassau and offered the Dutch a large tract of land in exchange for regular trade and other services. The Dutch rejoiced but expressed concern that this was Swedish land. Mattahorn responded that the Swedes had only properly bought a small piece of land and then proceeded to grab the rest without reimbursing the Lenapes, and therefore, they now had both the right and the will to offer it to the Dutch instead. Apparently this was attractive enough that Governor

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<sup>11</sup> This letter has been called “the first Swedish extermination program” by historian Peter Englund, who nonetheless describes Swedes as somewhat “better” as colonisers than the Dutch and the English (Englund 1993:497–502, 559–560). It should be noted that Englund succeeds in integrating New Sweden into his account of Sweden’s history as a great power in the seventeenth century. He is, to my knowledge, the only historian to do so.

Peter Stuyvesant himself travelled from New Amsterdam to oversee the transfer. The Swedes on their part responded with futile bluster, lacking resources to back their claim. Violence erupted between Dutch and Swedish colonists and threatened a large-scale conflict. But Mattahorn's actions had challenged the order of Lenape society as well, and an influential elder, a woman named Notike, contacted the Swedish governor and claimed that Mattahorn had usurped his rights and had no authority to donate anything to the Dutch. Her undisputed power forced Mattahorn and his followers to back down, and for a brief period the Swedes remained secure in their forts along the river (Fur 2006:126–130, 156–157, 263–264).

When historians claim that “the Indians were the least of the problems in the colony in the New World”, this reveals more about the configuration of Sweden in Europe and the world, than it does about actual events in the Delaware Valley. It suggests that the proper framework of reference for Swedish history is one of expansion and agency, and not one as hapless victims of other peoples' policies and schemes. In this way Sweden is placed firmly within a history of European colonialism imbued with notions of agency, masculine prowess and enlightened intellect.

It is in order to question these historical bedfellows that studies in early modern history are important. They reveal how contemporary society employs and negotiates Sweden's relationship and complicity in colonialism and colonial historical legacies. They may well demonstrate, as Ahnlund once did, that Sweden displayed its own unique brand of colonialism, and like his lecture it may turn out to be uncomfortable to readers accustomed to notions of Sweden as a minor, but benevolent presence in the colonial European world.

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# Chapter 3

## Black on White: Danish Colonialism, Iceland and the Caribbean

Kristín Loftsdóttir and Gísli Pálsson

### Introduction

As a colony of Denmark and Norway from 1262 to 1944, Iceland often remained in a peculiar geopolitical and cultural position. On the one hand, for the West, it generally represented the far north, “Thule”, struggling with the forces of nature at the margin of civilisation. For early Icelanders themselves, their neighbours in Greenland—Inuit, or “Eskimos”, as they used to be called—represented a radical “Other” (Pálsson 1995; Toft and Seiding this volume). The loaded Icelandic concept of *skraelingi* had the dual meaning of “barbarian” and “native of Greenland”. Icelanders, in sum, had a troubled relationship with everything “Eskimo”. On the other hand, in the Nordic and Germanic world, Iceland was often seen as the cradle of spectacular social and intellectual developments, in particular the formation of a democratic society of brave, free people and the creation and cultivation for centuries of a classic literary heritage of the Sagas. Iceland was seen as the home base of everything authentic and Nordic, providing a framework that European nationalists could usefully draw upon and exploit for a variety of ideological purposes.

As a result of this often contradictory position, Icelanders present an interesting case: often compared by others to both Inuit and Norse (Pálsson and Guðbjörnsson 2011), but situating themselves within the category of the “civilised”, masculine and European (Loftsdóttir 2008, 2009).

Colonialism and imperialism were central in European identity formations, shaping notions of nationhood, history, gender and identity, involving diverse and intimate connections between individuals, simultaneously creating more rigid boundaries between “Europeans” and others (e.g., Stoler 2002). This role of colonialism in shaping relationships in the world is exemplified by Nicholas Dirks, who states that colonialism

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was “less a process that began in the European metropole and expanded outward than it was a moment when new encounters within the world facilitated the formation of categories of metropole and colony in the first place” (Dirks 1992:6).

This chapter explores Iceland’s special position in relation to colonialism, emphasising the importance of looking at colonialism as a “messy past” (Horning 2011:68) where simplistic oppositions of colonisers and colonised do not always apply. It shows how colonialism linked parts of the world that previously had little or no connection to each other, taking Iceland’s relationship with another Danish colony—St. Croix in the Virgin Islands—as a case example. To exemplify these transnational connections, the case of Hans Jonatan is explored. He was classified as a “Mulatto” who was born into slavery on a sugar plantation in St. Croix, later transferred to Copenhagen as part of a Danish household, then, after the abolition of slavery in Denmark, sentenced to go back to St. Croix, eventually escaping to Iceland, where he settled and raised a family. The saga of Hans Jonatan illuminates some of the contradictions of Danish colonialism, the forces and developments now often associated with the term “globalisation”, and the diverse concepts of racial differences that existed in the late eighteenth century as compared to those of the late nineteenth century.

The idea of racial difference is recent and seen by most scholars today as emerging in connection to the nation-state and ideas of modernity, furthermore as entangled with colonialism and imperialism (Mullings 2005; Loftsdóttir and Hipfl 2012). Early pejorative views, which link skin colour to specific characteristics, are sometimes distinguished from modern forms of racism as proto-racism (Mullings 2005:671), underlining that it can be misleading to assume that the same ideas existed in the past in terms of the diversity of human populations (Smedley 1998).

We start by situating Iceland broadly within a geopolitical context as a Danish dependency, then moving towards a closer examination of Iceland’s relationship with colonised people in remote parts of the world. From there we proceed to explore the case of Hans Jonatan, his dramatic life, and the famous legal case in which he was involved.

## **Iceland and the Rest of the World**

The Icelandic Commonwealth was founded soon after settlement, with the establishment of Alþingi in 930. Iceland, however, came under Norwegian rule in 1260, and with the Kalmar Union uniting Norway, Denmark and Sweden, it also became a part of the combined kingdom. Despite all the accounts of the travels of the Vikings and the numerous textual references to other lands and histories evident in Icelandic manuscripts, the ordinary Icelanders must have lived in a relatively isolated world, given the country’s location in the North Atlantic. In 1523, the Kalmar Union ended and the North Atlantic Provinces (Iceland, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Orkneys and Shetlands) became the subjects of the Danish Crown (Oslund 2011:12). Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the Danish empire was powerful, consisting of possessions in the north such as Norway, Greenland and Iceland but also more remote



colonies, such as trading stations in India, the Nicobar Islands (off the coast of India), the Gold Coast, as well as the plantation islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix in the Caribbean (Agnarsdóttir 2008:60).

Denmark gradually lost its colonies, and Iceland had to struggle for almost a century to gain independence. This is perhaps altogether more surprising considering that Iceland had become a financial burden on Denmark, especially after the Laki eruption in 1783, which led to the loss of lives of a quarter of the population. Iceland had a poor economy based on agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing, its inhabitants lived on small farms, and towns were nonexistent. In 1860, agriculture was still the main occupation of 80% of the population, while only 3% were employed in industry and trade. As Gunnar Karlsson (1995:47) has noted, there was a sharp difference between the standard of living in Denmark and that in Iceland at that time. The prolonged relationship between Denmark and its Icelandic colony can to some degree be explained by the fact that for the Danes, Iceland represented a repository of old Nordic culture, as a “living past”. These associations with ancient history and preservation of traditional values and norms were not always positive. Danes and other Europeans often represented Icelanders as backward and simple, to the great distress of the more educated Icelanders, who in medieval times had already tried to influence the oversimplified image of Iceland (Durrenberger and Pálsson 1989). Arngrímur Jónsson’s text *Brevis Commentarius de Islandia*, published in 1593, and Oddur Einarsson’s description of Iceland from 1597 were both intended to defend the country against what the authors saw as unjustified representations (Benediktsson 1971).

While attempting to refute the image of the “backward other” imposed by the Western authors, Icelandic medieval and later writers readily participated in producing equally biased descriptions of remote parts of the world by copying texts published in Europe and by describing their own encounters with non-Europeans (Miller 1985; Steiner 1995). European images of monstrous races date back at least to classic antiquity and the work of such authors as Plinius the Elder, whose book *Naturalis Historiae* was copied for centuries after his death in 79 AD (Friedman 2000:5–7, 86). The fourteenth-century *Hauksbók* (*The Book of Haukur*) written by the Icelandic lawyer Haukur Erlingsson was based on the works of Isidore of Seville, especially benefiting from his *Etymologiae*, the encyclopaedia that greatly influenced European scholars for centuries (Nordal et al. 1992). *Hauksbók* presents Africa as a place of strange creatures, monsters without heads and beings called *Panfagi* who eat everything they encounter (Kristjánsdóttir et al. 1991:77). Icelandic texts written prior to the sixteenth century—as noted by Jenny Jochens—use the term *blámaður* (“blue man”) to refer to all kinds of strange people living outside Iceland (Jochens 1999:182–183), a term that was also often negatively associated with the dark skin colour of trolls and giants (Jochens 1999:190). However, family relations with giants were not necessarily perceived as negative in the old Icelandic texts because some great men of history were characterised as having such relations (Jakobsson 2001).

Not many firsthand accounts of Icelanders travelling to remote places exist from past centuries, but those that do exist were probably highly influential. The account of Jón Ólafsson, who sold his farm and spent more than a year in India during 1623 and 1624 and wrote about his experiences, was widely read in Iceland (Durrenberger and

Pálsson 1989:xiii). The priest Ólafur Egilsson wrote about his experiences in Algeria. He was one of a hundred other Icelanders who were captured in 1627 by Algerian pirates, who harried along the island's coast kidnapping people to sell them as slaves. Ólafur's descriptions of Algerian society, even though ethnocentric, are to some extent surprisingly objective when considering this being the personal story of a family sold into slavery. His text was widely known in Iceland. Árni Magnússon, usually identified with his farm, Geitastekkur, was probably one of the first Icelanders to travel to an African country. Difficult economic conditions in Iceland and his desire for adventure led him to sell his farm and leave for Denmark. During his extensive travels between 1753 and 1797, he visited Cape Verde. His brief description of these African islands is overly negative, characterising Cape Verdeans as thieves and murderers, possibly reflecting views held also by other crewmen on his ship. These two accounts, separated by more than 100 years, reflect the transnational, even global, relationships in which Iceland was embedded. They echo a very different position within the globalised system. One is written from the point of view of a subjugated person, while the other is the account of a participant in global exploration and trade.

Some premodern texts also reflect on the issues of racial difference and skin colour. Magnús Stephensen, one of Iceland's leading intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and a strong advocate of the Enlightenment, is particularly interesting to quote because of his status within Icelandic society and the fact that his writing takes place during roughly the time Hans Jonatan settled in Iceland. In a text aiming at educating Icelanders, written in 1797, Stephensen expressed his thoughts on human diversity. His narrative centred partly around questions regarding the reasons why some people are "black" (*svartar manneskiur*) and suggested that this must be because they never washed. Stephensen acknowledged that humanity is characterised by more diversity than skin colour and saw it as shaped by climate conditions, landscape, diet and tradition. He also points out that in other countries things that "we" find normal are seen as unusual, just as "black" people are for "us" (Stephensen 1797:89–90); thus, he highlighted the relativity of what is normal. When describing different African nations, he stressed their exotic aspects and produced generalisations of biological differences of bodily forms and facial features. Stephensen, furthermore, emphasised the primacy of "white" skin colour, seeing it as probably the original colour, but simultaneously recognising that diversity could not be simplified into these racial terms. He suggested, for example, that even though the term "negro" (*negri*) had become a general name for the inhabitants of Africa, they were "still very diverse" (*þó mjög breytilegir*; Stephensen 1797:103–107). Another text, an educational geography by Gunnlaugur Oddsson entitled *Almenn landskipunarfræði* (Oddsson 1821), also draws up the image of exotic Africa but, like Stephensen's text, leaves space for a plural reading of the African inhabitants, focusing on different ethnic groups and their specific characteristics (Oddsson 1821:221–223).

During the late nineteenth century, these ideas of difference were more strongly reified within the Icelandic context, in line with what was happening elsewhere in Europe. Bringing news from all over the world, the journal *Skírnir* is especially interesting to investigate in order to discuss how disparate views of "blackness" gained more coherent form in nineteenth-century Iceland. Launched in 1827, it was deeply embedded in the nationalistic movement in Iceland (H. Pálsson 1978:71).

Many of *Skírnir*'s texts carried a strong emphasis on demonstrating the importance of Europeans in distributing “civilisation” to the rest of the world (Loftsdóttir 2008, 2009). This was visible, for example, in discussions of slavery. In the 1852 issue, it was argued that the British queen tried to suppress the “disgusting slavery of black people from Africa”, the native chiefs being “those most involved in slavery and displacement of slaves” (Loftsdóttir 2008:180), thus ironically using slavery as a way to reflect favourably on Britain.

There were, however, also more sympathetic perspectives. Thus, when discussing the United States in 1836, the treatment of “blacks” (*blökkumenn*) is described as “cruel”, observing unjust and unethical practice where “skin-colour determines the rights of people” (*ræður og litarháttur mjög réttindum manna*; *Skírnir* 1832:68). No criticism can, however, be detected in the discussion of Danish plantations in the West Indies, only short summaries of the news from that part of the world (*Skírnir* 1832:68). The emphasis on civilisation through narratives of colonised people, however, has to be seen in terms of the importance for Icelandic intellectuals to situate themselves within this discursive framework of civilisation and savagery. As Kristín Loftsdóttir has stressed, it is important to analyse how “marginal European countries also participated in the ideologies of colonialism and the enforcement of European identity as apart and intrinsically different from an African identity”, simultaneously contextualising this participation within Iceland's subject status (Loftsdóttir 2009:272).

As stressed earlier, with rising nationalistic sentiments in Iceland, the ambiguous position of the country within the colonial geopolitical context became more visible in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Icelanders themselves “negotiated and enforced” their status as a part of the civilised part of the world (Loftsdóttir 2008:184; see also Loftsdóttir 2009 and 2010). Gísli Pálsson's (2005) biographical research of Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, the Canadian-Icelandic explorer of the Arctic in the early twentieth century, shows Stefánsson as firmly located within an empire—as a member of the “educated” and “civilised” part of the world. However, in other contexts, such as the colonial exhibition in Denmark in 1905, Icelanders were generally categorised as the subjects of Danish colonialism (Loftsdóttir 2008; Lucas and Parigoris this volume).

The eugenics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fit well with these racial ideas in Iceland. Furthermore, they resonated with the nationalistic views portraying Icelanders as almost a special breed of people (Karlsdóttir 1998:151; Loftsdóttir 2010; Pálsson and Guðbjörnsson 2011). The eugenics movement never gained extended acceptance in Iceland, but it was nevertheless advocated by predominant figures in Icelandic society, such as Guðmundur Finnbogason, a professor and rector at the University of Iceland (Finnbogason 1925).

## The “Mulatto”: The Saga of Hans Jonatan

Denmark was a latecomer to the scramble for colonies in the Caribbean. It colonised St. Thomas in 1671 and St. John in 1717 and bought St. Croix from France in 1733. Sugar and slavery integrated these tropical islands into the Danish empire through a series of thriving plantations (Hall 1992). At the peak of the plantation



**Fig. 3.1** The plantation at Constitution Hill painted by Frederik von Scholten in 1833 (Courtesy of the M/S Maritime Museum of Denmark)

economy, the enslaved population of St. Croix numbered between 18,000 and 20,000, the white population ranging between 1,500 and 2,000.

Hans Jonatan was born into slavery on one of the sugar plantations on St. Croix, Constitution Hill, in 1784 (Fig. 3.1). In the racial language of the time, he was a “Mulatto”. According to the records of the Lutheran Church, his father was a white “Secretary”, probably a man named Gram although some recent accounts have assumed that he was fathered by either his owner, Heinrich Ludvig Ernst von Schimmelmann, or even one of the sons of the famous aristocrat Adam Gottlob Moltke (Larsen 2008). Little is known about Secretary Gram, but at the time in question, he was a member of the slaveholders’ household, with the Schimmelmann family, in charge of plantation accounts and records. Hans Jonatan’s mother, Emilia Regina, a “Negro house slave”, was born on St. Croix, possibly on the plantation La Reine (“The Queen”) owned by a certain Wilhelm Schäffer. Her name appears on the slave list of La Reine in 1773 (Head Tax Lists for La Reine, St. Croix, 1773). Holsoe’s analysis (Holsoe 2009) of a particular “women’s network” on St. Croix provides an ethnographic context that illuminates the interracial tensions and complications that characterised plantation society at the time in question.

*A List!*

*Of the Negroes on the Estate Constitution Hill as well as of the House Negroes, belonging to Major*

*Negroes paying Taxes,*

<i>Field and other Plantation Negroes</i>				<i>House Negroes free</i>		
<i>Able Men</i>	<i>Able Men</i>	<i>Able Women</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Manquoms and Tradesmen</i>	<i>Men</i>	
1 Luamina	38 Prince Royal	72 Ina	<i>Boys</i>		1 Carl	6
2 Suavis	39 Hildus	73 Janny	107 Paat		2 Francis	1 1/2
3 John	40 Jacob	74 Abel	108 Jacoe		3 Gusto	2 1/2
4 Jure	41 Dunlon	75 Franky	109 Abram	<i>Manquoms</i>	4 Siraphat	3 1/2
5 Will	42 Medrid	76 Anicilla	110 Zehwally	<i>Men</i>	5 Thumet	
6 Adam	43 John Royal	77 Janny	111 Abrah	133 Bruffel	6 Andreas	
7 Hans	44 John	78 Moromia	112 Johanna	134 Jantus	7 Christian	
8 Suavis (bowl)	45 Carsti	79 Jure	113 Johanna	<i>Women</i>		
9 London	46 Kachis	80 Jure	114 Carl	135 Jura	8 Regina	1
10 Oberte	47 Hara	81 Susanna	115 Frederich	136 Jure	9 Darna	
11 Wapio Royal	48 Ferdinand	82 Cleveris	116 Suavis	137 August	10 Moromia	1 1/2
12 Brind	49 Lemus Royal	83 Moralla	117 Jacob	138 Maria	11 Jura	5 1/2
13 Februar	50 Enfix 22	84 Christian	118 Corneilus	139 Christiany	12 Jurek	
14 Oledor	51 John 22	85 Anna		140 Jura	13 Julel Ouled	
15 Felix	52 August	86 Beata	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Tradesmen</i>	14 Antonelle	
16 Pompeus	<i>Non Boys</i>	87 Babete	118 Judith	<i>Cooper</i>	15 Juliana	6 1/2
17 Frederic	53 Jure Child	88 Talla	119 Sarah	141 Jura	16 Cartha	7 1/2
18 Womani	54 Jure	89 Jure	120 Abetia	142 Jure	17 Jette	
19 Carl	55 Janny	90 Pinna	121 Augustina	143 Andreas	18 Jule	
20 Juel	56 Baranua	91 Maria	122 Kamma	144 Michel	19 Kachis	
21 Sabal	57 Janny	92 Frederica	123 Magdalena	145 Abram	<i>Children</i>	
22 Jilla	58 Jure	93 Maria	124 Jally	<i>Cooper</i>	<i>Boys</i>	
23 Jaul	59 Jure	94 Diana	125 Jure	146 Daniel	20 Jurek	3 1/2
24 Florich	60 Jure	95 Jure	126 Maria	147 Cartha	21 Jurek	10 1/2
25 Jonas	61 Jure	96 Elizabeth	127 Elizabeth	148 Jure	22 Jurek	
26 Jure	62 Jure	97 Amilia	128 Jure	149 Jure	23 Jonathan J. Jurek	
27 Rasmus	63 Jure	98 Jure	129 Cartha	150 Carl	24 Jurek	11 1/2
28 Jure	64 Jure	99 Christian	130 Alitta	<i>Maroni</i>	25 Jurek	
29 Jure	65 Charles	100 Magdalena	131 Jure	151 Jure	26 Jurek	
30 Jure	66 Christian	101 Jure	132 Maria	<i>Doctors</i>	27 Hans J. Jurek	1 1/2
31 Jure	67 Peter	102 Jure	133 Jure	152 Jure	28 Jurek	
32 Jure	68 Emanuel	103 Jure	134 Jure	<i>Cooper</i>	29 Jurek	12 1/2
33 Jure	69 Carl Royal	104 Jure	135 Jure	153 Jure	<i>Wife</i>	
34 Jure	70 Jure	105 Jure	136 Jure	154 Jure	30 Jurek	15 1/2
35 Jure	71 Jure	106 Jure		155 Jure	31 Jurek	
36 Jure				156 Jure	32 Jurek	
37 Daniel				157 Jure	33 Jurek	

*White Men on Constitution*  
 1. Miller Jurek  
 2. Felix Jurek  
 3. Robert Jurek

Fig. 3.2 Head Tax List, Constitution Hill, 1786. The list presents “able” men and women (capable of working), house slaves or servants, and children on the plantation. Emilia Regina is House Negro no. 8 and Hans Jonatan is listed as her son, no. 27. Andreas, the father of Anna Maria, is listed as House Slave no. 6 (Courtesy of the National Archives, Copenhagen)

When Hans Jonatan was four years old, his mother had another child, Anna Maria, fathered by the “Negro” Andreas, also a house slave with the Schimmelmanns in 1784. In the Head Tax List for the Schimmelmann family for 1786, Andreas is listed as working in the field along with other labourers, indicating that his previous status of a house slave was degraded (Fig. 3.2). Perhaps the change highlights the complications of race and intimacy under conditions of colonialism and slavery. The two children—a boy and a girl, a “Mulatto” and a

“Negro”—had radically different lives ahead of them, in line with the roles of the colonial regime. Gender played an important role for personal identity and social status, but nuances in physical makeup, in particular “colour”, might have overshadowed everything else. Anna Maria disappears from the records, and so does her father. However, Hans Jonatan was destined to make history.

Personal names usually serve the purpose of situating people in social space, connecting them to family, lineage, ethnic group, etc. Not only do names classify people, but naming is a speech act shaping the life course and the person involved. Names, in other words, both personify and embody. The name “Hans Jonatan”, however, does not say much about the background of the person or the family involved in his upbringing. It is not clear either what naming traditions Hans Jonatan and his mother were used to, as we do not know with certainty from which part of West Africa their ancestors came (on West African theories of naming and personhood, see Obeyesekere 2006: Chapter 2). Research into genetic history is likely to provide some clues; an important project in this vein is that of “The History, Archaeology and New Genetics of the Transatlantic Slave Trade” (EUROTAST 2012).

There is no doubt, however, that the slave owners adopted new kinds of names for their slaves that would have sounded alien to their free African ancestors. Invariably, slaves had to accept being renamed (Holsoe 2009). This was part of the erasure of identity and history that characterised the so-called Middle Passage between West Africa and the plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas (Davis 2006; Rediker 2007). While slave owners, including Heinrich Ludvig Ernst von Schimmelmann, had complex and colourful names, indicating family connections across time and space, their slaves were called only by their simple first names that distinguished them one from another, and all of them from their masters and other free persons. The slave names on the plantation lists from St. Croix are usually European or Western: Emilia, Regina, Hans, Jonatan, Anna, Maria, Andreas, and so on. Occasionally, though, one can see “strange” names on the tax lists, sounding exotic to Euro-American readers: Stettin, Profix, Polepti, Leipsis, Suatre. Probably these were recent acquisitions that had not yet been renamed.

When the plantation business suffered from financial downturn in the 1780s, Hans Jonatan, along with his mother, followed the Schimmelmann family to Copenhagen. Economically it probably made sense to move the slaves to Denmark. The slave trade was nearing its end, which caused growing financial problems for plantation owners (Highfield and Tyson 2009; Parker 2011). Denmark was the first European nation to abolish the transatlantic slave trade in 1802. Moving African servants to Europe ensured a variety of services for the former plantation owners. In addition, coloured people were a sign of possession and class, given the culture of taste of the colonial regime (Gikandi 2011).

Moving to Europe implied considerable change for the slaves that grew up at the plantations. When in Denmark, they entertained greater freedom than they were used to. In Copenhagen Hans Jonatan witnessed changes in the sociopolitical climate of Europe: the battle against slavery and the ideals of the French Revolution (1789–1799). He managed to escape in 1801 and fought in the Napoleonic War, for

which he received recognition and respect among Danish aristocrats. The bonds of slavery, however, were not completely gone. Ludvig Schimmelmann died soon after arriving in Copenhagen, and his widow, Henriette Catharine, felt compelled to assert her ownership and control. Perhaps she had always regarded Hans Jonatan as a difficult boy. He was intelligent and had acquired important skills and knowledge, including the command of several languages. He wanted to go his own way, get rid of the shackles of slavery, and make it in the larger world. While slavery was being abolished in Denmark, Henriette Catharine Schimmelmann still regarded her African servants as her “property”. She had, after all, bought them, invested in them, and financed their transfer to Denmark and felt, consequently, entitled to use them as she liked.

In the spring of 1801, Hans Jonatan had enough and decided to leave. The same day, Henriette Catharine contacted the local police and requested that Hans Jonatan—“a Mulatto of yellowish colour” (*mulat af en gulagtig Couleur*)—be arrested for theft and brought back to his home, thus beginning a historic legal case that was resolved a year later at the Copenhagen Court (Hof-og Stadsret: *Generalmajorinde Henriette de Schimmelmann contra mulatten Hans Jonathan 1802*). Did Hans Jonatan’s stay in Denmark set him free, or was he still subjected to some legal corpus on property, slavery and servitude? Hans Jonatan’s attorney in the case, Algreen-Ussing, argued that slaveholding violated Danish law and that the laws for the Danish West Indies did not apply in Denmark (Hall 1992:35). Hans Jonatan and his mother, however, were sentenced to be sent back to St. Croix, as slaves in the possession of Henriette Schimmelmann (Fig. 3.3).

The judges’ verdict was a controversial one, and Henriette Schimmelmann probably had benefited from her contacts with the Danish elite who supported her claims. The key judge, the young Anders Sandøe Ørsted, who later would become a prominent politician and the prime minister of Denmark (Jørgensen 1957), had limited experience at this point, and his reasoning in the case seems to have been swayed by public opinion in Copenhagen. In his argument, Ørsted acknowledged that Henriette Schimmelmann had acquired Hans Jonatan in accordance with Danish West Indian law; his arrest was, as a result, according to law, and the owner was entitled to transport him back as a slave to the West Indies. While property in people was no longer legal in Denmark, different principles applied in the colonies. Freedom, human rights and dignity had their own geography.

Waaben (1964) has analysed the judges’ logic, situating it in the context of Danish history and the cultural climate of Copenhagen. It might appear that the case was a trivial one. At the time in question, a number of other “coloured” people in Copenhagen, most of whom had been slaves in the West Indies, were in a similar position. While the judges may have imagined that this was a routine case, they faced, however, a complicated and growing problem: The legal status of people who had been slaves in the colonies was unclear as a result of the abolition of slavery in Denmark and a rapidly changing political landscape, here and elsewhere, that increasingly focused on freedom and human dignity. The case of Hans Jonatan, indeed, would have its aftermath and repercussions. With his escape and opposition,

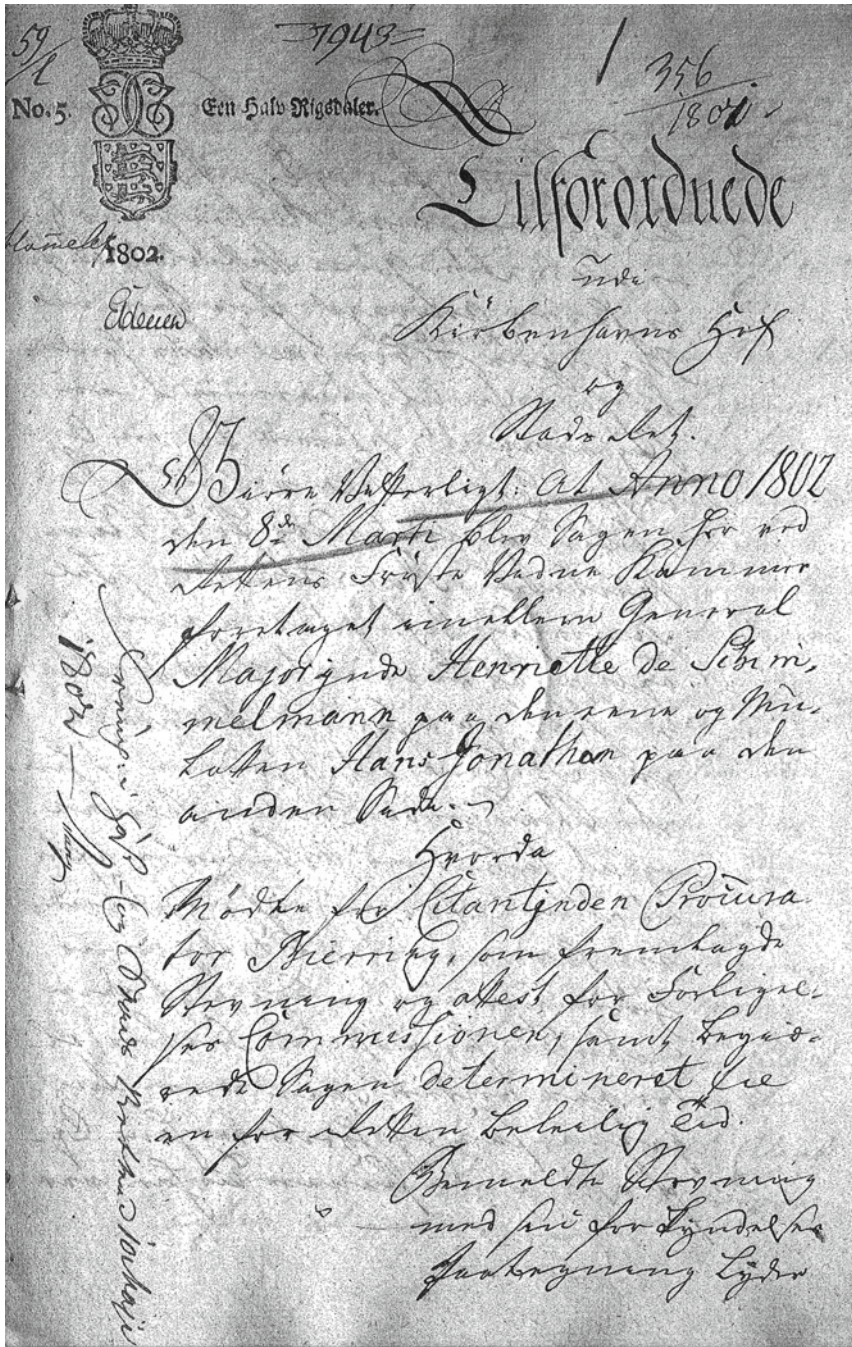


Fig. 3.3 The resolution of the Hans Jonatan case at the Danish Court, 1802 (Courtesy of the National Archives, Copenhagen)



he firmly established his name in the history of Danish law and, more broadly, Western scholarship about slavery. The arguments applied and the final ruling have repeatedly offered a frame of reference for legal scholars to address key questions about the rights to own a person and the conditions of prolonged servitude (Waaben 1964; Hall 1992).

Hans Jonatan disappeared from the radar of the Danish authorities once he had been sentenced to be arrested. He immediately escaped, while his mother seems to have stayed in Copenhagen. Nothing is known about his life the following three years. Inquiries from Copenhagen as to whether he returned to St. Croix were firmly negative. In 1805, he miraculously turned up in Djúpvogur in East Iceland, a tiny port with a Danish colonial trading base. The first evidence regarding his landing there comes from a note in the diaries of a Norwegian cartographer, Hans Frisak, who hired him as a local guide (*Hans Frisaks dagbøker 1810–1815*). It took almost two centuries to bring the news about his fate back to Copenhagen; Hans Jonatan's Icelandic descendants managed to connect their ancestor to Danish records and told their story (Larsen 2008).

Few would probably have expected that Hans Jonatan would settle in Iceland, but it may have been a good place to hide away from Danish law and administration, and there was much at stake: freedom for a young man, at this point 19 years old, or lifelong slavery. In February 1820, he was married to Katrín Antoníusdóttir in the parish where he landed. At first he worked at the Danish trading station (Fig. 3.4), somehow managing to avoid the gaze of Danish empire, but once married, he settled with his wife on a nearby farm (Fig. 3.5), where he spent the rest of his short life, until 1827. The transition from Copenhagen must have been quite a change for Hans Jonatan; Iceland in 1800 was only populated by roughly 50,000 people, and most of them lived on isolated farms. The Danish king forbade commercial dealings of Icelanders with passing ships, but each spring he sent 50 merchant ships from Copenhagen with necessities (Agnarsdóttir 2006:12).

The Caribbean slave had become a peasant in Iceland, leading a way of life classically described by Laxness (1999) in his epic novel *Independent People* (originally published in 1933–1935), characterised by a heightened sense of personal autonomy and a constant battle with a harsh environment, limited means of subsistence, and local authorities. The arrival of Hans Jonatan raises many questions regarding the way in which Icelanders, many of whom had never before seen “blue men”, or “Negroes”, received him and talked about him. How did they describe his colour—or was that perhaps unimportant? Given Magnus Stephensen's writings on human diversity, Hans Jonatan was probably seen as markedly exotic in some sense due to his skin colour, but not necessarily as a lesser human being. Hans Jonatan and Katrín had three children, two of whom survived and apparently became respected citizens, considering oral memory and local accounts (Jónsson 1987). Their descendants now number several hundred. In year 2000, at a well-attended reunion in Eastern Iceland, they celebrated for the first time the memory and heritage of their Caribbean and Icelandic ancestors (Pálsson n.d.).

The connection between Iceland and St. Croix was not only crafted by Hans Jonatan and his wife. The owner of the plantation La Reine, where Hans Jonatan's



**Fig. 3.4** The trading station of Djúpivogur (Photo by Gísli Pálsson)



**Fig. 3.5** The ruins of the farm at Borgargarður where Hans Jonatan and his family lived (Photo by Gísli Pálsson)

mother entered the story, was a certain Baron Christian Lebrecht von Pröck, who inscribed his name onto both West Indian and Icelandic history. In 1755, he was appointed governor of the Danish West Indies, but he was considered docile and inefficient and was deposed and requested to return to Denmark in 1766. Two years

before he sold his property at La Reine to Schäffer (who became the owner of Emilia Regina), he was appointed governor (*Stiftsamtmand*) in Iceland. He felt, however, that he was not honoured by such an appointment, and he only kept the position for one year and never visited Iceland. While his role was negligible, it draws attention to the strong global connections through which Iceland and St. Croix, and by the same token, Hans Jonatan and his family, were connected, via the Danish colonial empire and the administration in Copenhagen.

## Conclusions

The preceding discussion has outlined Iceland's particular situation in the colonial world and some of the complications and contradictions of Danish colonialism. While the slave trade in general divided the world into subjects and colonisers, it also united different parts of the globe that earlier had gone their own way, ruled by their own lords and traditions. Dirks (1992) observes that celebrated meta-narratives of the Enlightenment as the age of discoveries leading to the advancement of science to great extent ignored the impact of the colonial project as facilitating the scientific imagination. The ideas of civilisation and modernity have to be seen as taking shape within various transnational and geographical encounters. The end result of colonising ventures varied enormously during this early globalisation, depending on local histories and empires. The same empire sometimes exhibited extensive fragmentation and internal difference. This was the case with the Danish empire. While it connected distant lands such as Iceland and St. Croix, it treated Icelanders, on the one hand, and blacks and mulattos, on the other hand, in radically different fashions.

Slaveholders were usually keen to rename their slaves, often with names not unlike those applied to pets and livestock. Caribbean slaves, most of whom came from West Africa, were usually renamed for the purpose of humiliating them and reconstituting them as different social beings, removing them from their original social context (Benson 2006). At the same time, the application or citing of the person's original name was liable to be subject to punishment. Thus, the persona of the slave was deformed with the new name. This is why naming practices are often a contested issue for groups campaigning for human rights and social justice. Significantly, when slaves were granted freedom, they often insisted upon formally receiving a new name in front of witnesses, to mark the ending of oppression, to regain their dignity, and to confirm the support and acceptance of society. This helps to highlight the relevance of practices of naming for body politics, the radical differences between the recent Western tradition of surnames and some indigenous naming traditions and epistemologies, and the cultural and political clashes that sometimes result when an expanding empire encounters and colonises an indigenous tradition (see, for instance, Scott et al. 2002). Clashes between different traditions and practices of naming, especially in the context of slavery and empires, often illuminate with striking clarity the relevance of names as technologies of exclusion, subjugation and belonging.

Personal names, however, were not always changed once freedom was granted. Hans Jonatan, for instance, retained throughout his life the name he was given in slavery. The reasons are not clear. Changing the name should have helped to avoid the gaze of Danish law once he had landed in Iceland. Perhaps his name had a special ring, thanks to the fact that he was a “Mulatto”, protected by his white Danish father. Perhaps it was the name given to him by his mother, without pressure from the plantation owner. The perspective of personal names is highly pertinent for the study of the use of signatures associated with ethnicity and race and social attempts to modify, establish, or erase any kind of social hierarchy (Finch 2008). This is particularly evident in the context of colonialism and slavery. Slave names usually seem disconnected from history, devoid of references to history and identity. Collectively, they represent the signatures of slavery, highlighting relations of ownership and oppression.

The colonised, including slaves and their descendants, were not mere pawns in the game. Collectively they paved the way for modernity through their lives, mixing their labour with sugar cane and other colonial products, linking different parts of the globe, fuelling the economies of the colonial metropolises, and influencing judgements of taste. Slaves sometimes had considerable power and were able to fashion their own lives. The saga of Hans Jonatan, who was born into slavery and ended up a peasant in eastern Iceland, is a case in point, illuminating some of the contradictions and tensions of the colonial regime. Danish law, at that time, recognised his freed status if he was to stay in Copenhagen, but he might have remained a property of slaveholders in the plantation society of the colonies. After his escape to Iceland, he managed to hide away from Danish judges and administrators for the rest of his life. While the historical evidence on his life in Iceland is scant, it seems that despite Icelanders’ somewhat mythological understanding of race and difference, he was fully accepted as a citizen. He and his descendants seem to have been respected early on despite their unusual ancestry. The categories of race and colour only became strong signatures in political discourse a century later, with strong Icelandic nationalism and the eugenic thought that also became important among some of Iceland’s leading intellectuals.

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# Chapter 4

## From Gammelbo Bruk to Calabar: Swedish Iron in an Expanding Atlantic Economy

Chris Evans and Göran Rydén

### Introduction

On 27 April 1737, the Bristol merchant Graffin Prankard sent a letter to his “esteemed friend” Francis Jennings, a merchant in Stockholm. They were both deeply involved in the international iron trade. Prankard was considered by far the largest trader along the British west coast. A Hull merchant informed a Stockholm correspondent that “The Bristoll Chester & Liverpool Traders are but Slippery except one Prankard of Bristoll” (Maister to Broadley, 25 Aug, 1729, Hull City Archives, DFB/78). As for Jennings, he had become in a few short years in the early 1720s one of the most important iron exporters in the Swedish capital. At the time of the letter, he was the greatest. The letter contains Prankard’s instructions to Jennings regarding a load on one of his ships that was soon to arrive in Stockholm:

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To ship on y:e ship Carolina as under mentiond

Tons	
60	(Leufsta) and (Åkerby) flats part of it 2 ¼ and 2 ½ wide including 2 or 3 tons of 2 inch squ: and 4 or 5 tons 4 inch w:d clean and free from flaws
20	fine narr: flats about 64 to y:e ton
10	¾ squares
20	voyage
15	(Strömsberg) part 4 inch w:d and thin
15	CDG part 4 inch w:d and thin
10	2 ½ and 2 ¾ w:d thin comm: iron but good mettle all lile rose
10	3 inch w:d 7/8 thick box iron lile rose
5	1 ¼ and 1 ½ squ:
5	4 or 5 inch w:d and strong drawn with 1600 of deales w:ch will make in all about 230 tons
170	

(Prankard to Jennings, 27 Apr, 1737, SA, DD/DN 426)

This letter was one of a sequence that detailed a commercial relationship going back to the late 1720s. We are dealing with two major actors, but this was not an equal relationship; it was one where Prankard set the agenda. He issued credit to Jennings; he expected to be repaid with Swedish bar iron. Jennings was Prankard's commission agent and had to follow the latter's instructions. Using this letter we can start a discussion about the place of Swedish iron in the Atlantic economy and do so in a number of different spatial directions. One starting point is the place where the iron bars were made: the *bruk* (ironworks). Swedish iron will then be linked to the manufacture of steel and weapons in England and then to the slave trade. First, however, something must be said about the place of iron making in Sweden's economic development.

## Iron in the Swedish Economy

Early modern Europe (and Sweden *a fortiori*) was a place of subsistence agriculture where the market economy was limited in extent. Towns were few and small; the rate of urbanisation at the onset of the eighteenth century was only about 5%. This pattern was only broken in two regions, the Netherlands and England, where the metropolises of Amsterdam and London acted as Europe's economic hubs, where market relations prevailed and trade held sway over agriculture (De Vries 1984).

The rate of urbanisation is one possible measure of Europe's development. Another might be to contrast agricultural production with that of the non-agricultural sector. Much research has been devoted to textile manufactures, most notably by students of proto-industrialisation (Ogilvie and Cerman 1996), but the metal trades could be studied with equal profit. This is especially so with respect to Sweden, for the Swedish iron industry, both in relation to size and its European importance, is the one that best illustrates the distinctiveness of Sweden within the European economy.



From the middle of the seventeenth century, Swedish iron production grew significantly, and the export of bar iron followed suit. During the century that followed, up to three quarters of Swedish exports consisted of bar iron. Sweden's iron surplus, together with that of Russia from the 1730s, went west. During the seventeenth century most of this iron was exported to the Dutch market and Amsterdam, but from the end of the century Britain became the main recipient of the Swedish exports and ultimately Russian iron as well (Hildebrand 1992:25–42). For the eighteenth century one can speak of a structure where most of Europe was more or less self-sufficient in iron, but with the British market as a deficit area, filled with Swedish and Russian iron.

Earlier research by Eli Heckscher, Karl-Gustaf Hildebrand and Staffan Högberg mapped out Swedish iron exports in scope, range and volumes and documented a gradual transition of the export from Amsterdam to London (Heckscher 1949; Hildebrand 1992; Högberg 1969). However, their analysis to a large extent concluded with the iron bars being loaded on to ships departing for foreign ports. The markets on which the iron was sold were discussed in only a limited way. No research was undertaken to determine whether, or how, this foreign demand influenced the workings of the Swedish industry or how the ultimate consumers of this iron were linked to the producers. In terms of comparison and connections, one can say that the Swedish iron industry has only been examined from its domestic circumstances and conditions. The industry needs to be appreciated within a much wider global perspective—its true setting, considering how much of the output that was destined for distant markets.

Contemporary actors were certainly well informed and familiar with the importance of the global integration. The eighteenth-century proponents of Swedish iron making knew well that most of its output was destined for the British market and that brands of Swedish iron were evaluated by very demanding consumers. The quality and the price of the iron were frequent topics of discussion in official Swedish circles, and Sweden's political class took all of this into account when regulating the trade. Swedish economic policies were, in common with those of other European states, mercantilist. The state sought to regulate shipping and foreign trade and to promote domestic industry. Foremost under this last heading came state support of the textile trades, but iron making was also well attended to. A government agency, the *Board of Mines* (Sw. Bergskollegium), had been established as early as the 1630s, and in the eighteenth century it was given the authority to penalise any *bruk* that exceeded the production quota it had been awarded. The *Board of Mines* also exercised quality control. Both the volume and value of bar iron were assessed at the so-called *Jernvägar* (iron weighs) in the staple towns to which the export of iron was restricted (Evans and Rydén 2007:32–33).

## The Ironworks

Swedish metal making has a long history. Ores of silver, copper and iron have been extracted in the *Bergslagen* region since the Middle Ages. The sector has often been at the technological cutting edge; one can, for instance, point out the very

early establishment of blast furnaces in Sweden for the production of pig iron (Sw. *tackjärn*). It is also clear that Swedish iron-making peasants were connected to major iron markets beyond Sweden from an early date, with German merchants in Stockholm acting as intermediaries.

During the late Middle Ages and up until the sixteenth century, the entire iron production process lays in the hands of the peasantry from the central Swedish district of *Bergslagen*. Free peasants (*bergsmän*) dug ore, smelted it and forged wrought iron at water-powered hammers in the forests. For centuries this meant the manufacturing of osmund iron, which was sold by the barrel in the Hanseatic towns along the Baltic coast, but in the sixteenth century the King Gustav Vasa recruited German forgemen to teach Swedish workers how to make bar iron, the standard form in which wrought iron was sold at European markets. The development was slow, but from the beginning of the next century bar iron began to expand at the expense of osmund iron. It is likely that this process was influenced by another process in which the Swedish Crown started to establish production units in its own name, the so-called *kronobruken*, where pig iron was refined into bars and not to smaller osmund pieces that were sold in barrels (Hildebrand 1992:43).

The early modern Swedish iron industry emerged from its medieval shell in the early decades of the seventeenth century. This was when the *Board of Mines* was established with the explicit aim of imposing a radically different organisation on the trade. A new division of labour was to be enforced—a division of labour that had social, spatial and technological dimensions. The *bergsmän* were still to be responsible for the mining of the ore and its smelting. Villages of free peasant miners were to continue working in the time-honoured fashion, with the communally owned blast furnace at their centre. However, these peasants were no longer to have anything to do with the making of wrought iron, whether shaped as bars or as osmund pieces. That became instead the task for entirely new communities, the *bruk*, which were established on the outskirts of the mining regions where ore was extracted and pig iron made. The rationale behind this was to economise on timber, as firewood was used in the mines and charcoal in both the *bergsmän*'s furnaces and the forges at the *bruk* (Hildebrand 1992).

The *bruk* was a completely new sort of community, far removed from the relatively egalitarian villages of the *bergsmän*. The *bruks* were owned by the gentry or by wealthy merchants (*brukspatroner*) and peopled by skilled forge workers (*hammarsmeder*) whose task was to process the pig iron that the *bergsmän* supplied. The development of the *bruk* was promoted by the Crown (which leased the older *kronobruken* to private owners) and by powerful Dutch capitalist merchants and entrepreneurs, who took a keen interest in Swedish resources. With the demand for iron, copper and brass growing across the continent, just as supply declined in central Europe amid the chaos of the Thirty Years' War, the rich mines, large forests and ample water power of *Bergslagen* became increasingly attractive. Prominent Dutch families like the De Besches and the De Geers brought capital, expertise and manpower to the Swedish metal making trades and thereby hastened Swedish industrial development.



Fig. 4.1 Leufsta bruk viewed from south, painted by Elias Martin c. 1794

This new framework for the Swedish mining industry, with *bergsmän* working at the mines and furnaces and with bar iron being made in the *bruk*, was never completely put in place. In some places *bergsmän* continued to make bars in their small forges, while elsewhere *brukspatroner* built their own blast furnaces. The intrusion of *bruk* into the business of smelting was especially common in the county of Uppland, around the large Dannemora mine. Here, every *bruk* had its own furnace. This area was the main exception to the pattern that the *Board of Mines* tried to enforce, and there are two reasons for this. First, the Dannemora mine gave a particularly rich ore of high quality, which enabled forgers to produce bars of a correspondingly high quality. Second, it was in this region that Dutch influence came to be concentrated. The larger *bruk*, with Leufsta, Österby and Gimo to the fore, fell into the hands of the De Geer family at an early stage; it is also here where we find the highest concentration of skilled Walloon immigrants, hence the designation *Vallonbruk* (Florén and Ternhag 2002) (Fig. 4.1).

The Walloons' influence was such that the method of producing iron at the *Vallonbruk* came to differ from the rest of Sweden. They built a different style of blast furnace, they used a forging technique that was distinct from the German method employed outside Uppland, and they produced charcoal in a new and individual way. It should be remembered though that the *Vallonbruk* occupied an enclave that produced just 15% of Swedish bar iron production (Rydén 2002).

The early modern Swedish iron industry grew relentlessly. Measured in exported bar iron, we can detect a rise from about 11,000 tons during the 1640s to above

40,000 tons a century later. This can be attributed to increased demands from Dutch and British consumers, but we must not forget the internal reorganisation of the trade that made it possible to respond to increased demand. Central to this domestic refurbishment was the *Board of Mines*, which enforced stringent regulations, but the emergence of a group of *brukspatroner*, with a new, more rational approach to running the business of making iron, was also important. The combination of state regulation and powerful owners underpinned the export of ever-growing volumes of Swedish iron, which was disposed of on markets in the more advanced parts of Europe.

To return to the letter from Graffin Prankard to Francis Jennings, it contained an unspoken—yet obvious—demand from the Bristol merchant that Jennings should contact the owners of specific *bruk* to supply him with their bars. More precisely, Prankard demanded that Jennings dealt with the owners of Leufsta and Gammelbo, and it is now time to pursue these relationships. It is time to follow the Leufsta and Gammelbo iron from their forges, via Stockholm and Bristol, to the various markets to which Prankard had access.

## From Gammelbo to Calabar: And Beyond

In early February 1736 there was a shift in production at one of the Gammelbo forges, that at Berg. Since the previous November the master forgerman there, Hans Hansson Palt, and his forge crew had made bars of regular dimensions. Letters with new instructions, however, now arrived, and the forgermen began to make the so-called voyage iron. In 1788–1789 the Swedish metallurgist Sven Rinman defined voyage iron in his *Bergwerkslexicon* as bars folded twice over so that they “at foreign places could be taken on difficult roads on donkey backs” (Rinman 1789:1180). Voyage iron’s main destination was Africa where the bars were exchanged for slaves. Master Palt was at the far end of a trading chain that began in the city of Calabar on the Bight of Biafra but which had Graffin Prankard of Bristol as its centre. It was Prankard who provided the slave ships with iron. During the early spring months, he sent letters to his commission agent in Stockholm, Francis Jennings, with instructions on what kind of iron he wanted and in what quantities. This was the starting point for the complicated process that linked Gammelbo to Calabar.

As soon as Jennings received Prankard’s letter, he, in turn, contacted Jacob Feiff, Gammelbo’s commission agent in Stockholm, who then notified the owner of the *bruk*, Greta Tilas. It was her task to make sure that the forgermen adapted to the new instructions. A delicate logistical arrangement ensued. The bars made by the Gammelbo forgermen had to be carted to the town of Arboga and then, as soon as the winter ice broke up, shipped across Lake Mälaren to Stockholm. Prankard had the previous autumn sent his ships from Bristol, “the metropolis of the West”, across the Atlantic to Charleston loaded with hardware and steel. As a return freight the ships carried rice, South Carolina’s most important export commodity. This cargo had to be delivered and sold in Hamburg in the last months of the spring so that the

ships could arrive in Stockholm in early June. In July, they should be back in Bristol loaded with iron, including the bars of voyage iron from Gammelbo, so that Prankard was well supplied for the important St. James's Fair.

It was in the late summer that most of slave ships left Bristol, and it was thus important that Prankard was furnished with voyage iron before these ships left for Africa. For master Palt and the other forgemen at Gammelbo, the shipment of these special bars of iron on the *Carolina* for Bristol did not mean the end of this production cycle. At the Gammelbo forges the making of bars for the African market continued until the autumn storm season, i.e. until that they could no longer be shipped safely out of Stockholm. At this time, during the late autumn months, the forgemen at Gammelbo resumed the making of common bar iron (Evans and Rydén 2007:166–173).

The standard passage from Bristol to the Guinea coast was about 10–12 weeks, depending on winds and the final destination. Arrival on the coast was timed to coincide with the maximum supply of slaves as well as when the harvest of rice and yams was completed. These crops were an important food source for the slaves on the voyage across the Atlantic. It was in the period between August and November that European slave traders purchased most slaves. The actual market transactions in Africa were not as simple as the traditional image of this trade has made us believe, and a more complex picture has emerged in recent research (Richardson 1979; Behrendt 2001). Two features should be noted. On the one hand, the trade was dominated by African traders who fully controlled the supply of slaves, and on the other hand, it took quite some time, often over 6 months, to fill a ship with slaves. Small groups of slaves were brought from the interior to the towns and trading centres along the coast by African traders. They prepared their captives for the first sale by feeding them and oiling their skin. Very often, the African traders had obtained European goods on credit. The number of transactions needed to fill a ship was high, as it was not infrequent that only one or two slaves were purchased per day. Once the prison-like decks had been filled with their human cargo, together with food supplies and stocks of water, the so-called Middle Passage, the voyage across the Atlantic, could begin (Rediker 2008). The slaves were to be transported to markets in the New World, where they would produce sugar, tobacco, rice, indigo, etc. The average length of this passage was between two and 3 months at sea.

The African market for imported commodities is often somewhat simplistically seen as uniform and dominated by a few goods like textiles. Nothing could be further from the truth; we are dealing with quite distinct markets, each with a specialised profile (see Weiss this volume). In the traditional analysis bar iron has been given a quite limited role. Generally, bar iron was a relatively minor item in Euro-African trade. However, in specific markets, this is not the case. If general figures point towards a situation where bar iron constituted a few percent of all the commodities sent to Africa, some regions show much higher figures; in the Bight of Biafra, for example, Swedish iron made up about 12% of the commodities brought in, and in Cameroon the corresponding figure was 18% (Richardson 1979:312–314). These two markets developed somewhat later than the markets further west, and in this slave traders from Bristol were pioneers. It is, thus, not difficult to assume that

the demand for Gammelbo iron rose as the slave trade penetrated further east along the African coast, and Graffin Prankard had a crucial role in this process.

If we scrutinise this link between Gammelbo and the slave trade along the Bight of Biafra, it is clear that we are dealing with close-knit relationships, originating in the emergent British Empire with tentacles all around the Atlantic. Iron production at Gammelbo was governed by market signals derived from Calabar and its hinterland but mediated via Bristol. A number of interesting features can be picked out. For a start, it is clear that the production of voyage iron at the *bruk* was directly related to the demand for slaves in the New World. Prankard's sales of Gammelbo iron are mirrored in the number of slave ships leaving Bristol. There was also, as we have seen, a close relationship between the seasonality of the slave trade and the production cycle at the *bruk*; production of voyage iron only took place in the spring—early autumn months, when it was possible to send it to Bristol. A third interesting feature relates to the design of the bars hammered out by the Gammelbo forgemen. The Swedish bars that reached the African coast were often used as means of exchange: they were a form of currency. They had therefore to be made in specific dimensions and to have a specific weight. These dimensions, however, changed over the years, and the bars became increasingly smaller and lighter. That this was so, and had an impact on master Palt and the other forgemen at Gammelbo, is clear from a letter from Prankard to Jennings, written in February 1733. He emphasised that Jennings should “press hard on Feiff for Striking the Voyage of [Gammelbo] much Wider & to run about 90 to ye Ton” (Prankard to Jennings, 28 Feb, 1733, SA, DD/DN 425). That these new instructions were followed by Feiff and the forgemen is clear from a glance at the account books from the following year; in 1734 the forgemen made lighter bars. Swedish producers responded as directly as they could to the instructions filtered through Bristol from Africa.

The European slave trade, and New World slavery, is one of the most dramatic and tragic events in the making of modern society. The debate over the moral and the economic impact of this trade has been intense. Some scholars have claimed that it created the very foundation upon which the West could build its dominant global position, while others have tried to downplay the significance of this human oppression (Williams 1944; Inikori 2002). The discussion has also been intense about where to put the blame for it all. Are we discussing a phenomenon that is the outcome of some countries' oppression of the African continent, or Africans, or should the burdens be distributed in a different way? Sweden was scarcely involved in the slave trade from Africa or in slavery itself, but the links discussed here suggest that one must take a broader perspective when the moral and financial debts of slavery are discussed. In any case it is clear that Swedish actors were well integrated in the eighteenth-century slave trade.

## From Leufsta to Birmingham's Steel Furnaces

In his letter to Francis Jennings, Graffin Prankard not only ordered voyage iron from Gammelbo; he also ordered large consignments from two *bruk* in the county of Upland: Leufsta and Åkerby. He also urged Jennings to fill his warehouse

with “common iron”, ahead of his ship’s docking at Stockholm. “Common iron” was, as the name suggests, iron that could have originated at any *bruk* employing the German forging method. It could have been from Gammelbo, made at times when voyage iron production was suspended. Prankard sold this iron to merchants and artisans in the many regional markets served by Bristol, with large volumes of iron being sold at St. James’s Fair in July, the high point in the city’s commercial calendar.

Much of this metal was used to make wares for the domestic market—nails, horseshoes and the like—but “common iron” was also used by British artisans in making commodities that had a market outside of Britain. Bars from Gammelbo were, for instance, required by gunmakers in Birmingham, the town that had surpassed London as the foremost British gun making centre at the end of the seventeenth century, making muskets, rifles and pistols for overseas markets (Evans and Rydén 2007:151–158). Gammelbo bars were suitable for the making of the barrels, which would later be assembled with the locks and stocks in small workshops close to the city centre. The export trade was extensive, and with names such as “Angola Musquets”, it is obvious that many of these guns arrived in Africa. The Swedish traveller Samuel Schröder bore witness to this. The Birmingham gunmaker Thomas Hadley, he reported, “makes in great abundance a sort of musket which is sold to the Barbarians in Africa on the coast of Guinea”. Schröder also noted that the gun could be an article of conspicuous consumption in Africa: “the barbarians dig them into the Earth, as it is seen as wealth to have many of them” (Schröder 1748–1751, Kungliga Biblioteket). The arms trade, with guns made out of Swedish iron, was an integral part of the African slave trade.

If the Swedish iron of the “common sort” had a rather imprecise market, the same could not be said about iron from the *Vallonbruk* and in particular the iron from Leufsta and Åkerby. This was an iron Prankard was willing to do almost anything to get his hands on. The *Vallonbruk*, as noted above, were Dutch in inspiration. They had been created in the first half of the seventeenth century, and even a century later, we still find a large number of *brukspatroner* who were of Dutch origin and a workforce of Walloon descent. These skilled workers had also retained their Walloon forging technique. Furthermore, *bruk* in the county of Uppland remained closely attached to the Dutch market.

The beginning of the eighteenth century, however, brought changes as increasing quantities of iron from the *Vallonbruk* entered the English market. Behind this development lay a rapid expansion of English steel making. Before the introduction of bulk production methods in 1860s, steel was made laboriously in small batches and commanded a high price as a consequence. In Britain steel making was done in cementation furnaces, which sprouted up around Newcastle, Sheffield and Birmingham in the late seventeenth century, using high-quality non-phosphoric bar iron. It was soon clear that the best iron for making steel was from the *Vallonbruk*. Because steel was an exclusive material, the treasured bars from Leufsta and Åkerby were in correspondingly high demand. “[N]o other marks will answer here for steel”, as Prankard reminded Jennings in 1732 (Prankard to Jennings, 16 Aug, 1732, SA, DD/DN 425).

Prankard was very active in diverting *Öregrund Iron*—as bars from the *Vallonbruk* were called in Britain—from Dutch ports to English steelmakers. During the 1720s, a growing amount of this iron came to pass through Bristol on its way up the Severn to Birmingham, where the steelmaker John Kettle was one of Prankard's main customers. Kettle would not settle for anything other than *Öregrund Iron* and so Prankard sought to purchase the iron directly from Stockholm. In the 1730s he importuned Swedish intermediaries such as the Grill family and Francis Jennings, although without immediate success.

The early decades of the eighteenth century were not tranquil in the county of Uppland. Quite apart from rapidly changing external markets, there were internal difficulties. The region had stagnated since a major cave-in at the Dannemora mine at the end of the previous century. Then came the Russian raids in the last years of the Great Northern War. Leufsta, for instance, was burned to the ground by Russian troops in 1719, and many large bar iron warehouses along the coast were destroyed. Everything was rebuilt, but it took time and money. The De Geer family had both and used the situation to enhance its position in the region. The brothers Charles and Jean Jacques De Geer, with the latter's three sons, purchased *bruk* from weaker *brukspatroner* in the 1730s and came to control as much as three-quarters of the region's output of bar iron. Buying new facilities and investing in those they already owned, the De Geers aimed to monopolise the supply of *Öregrund Iron* (Evans and Rydén 2007:71–78).

The De Geer family was prepared to sell the entire annual production of the most coveted brands of iron to one buyer, and in some cases contracts were made for several years at a time. Accordingly, Prankard authorised Jennings to bid for the entire production of Leufsta and Åkerby, a bid made in cooperation with the Sheffield steelmaker Samuel Shore. The idea was to split the English domestic market, with Prankard taking control over Birmingham and the western parts of England and Shore taking the eastern region. At first they had no luck, as a rival London/Birmingham consortium won the contract, but in the mid-1730s Prankard and Shore won the contract.

Such was the situation when Prankard wrote to Jennings in the spring of 1737. Prankard had the contract for the lucrative bars from Leufsta and Åkerby. Jennings was his commission agent, charged with ensuring that the iron was delivered to the Iron Weigh Yard in Stockholm, where it would be weighed and checked. Jennings's task was to ensure that this happened at the earliest possible date. In the case of Leufsta, this meant that once the forgers had drawn out the bars, they were taken to the small port at Ängskär whence they were shipped to Stockholm as soon as the sea was ice free (Fig. 4.2). This was arranged to coincide with the arrival of Prankard's ships.

The sailing season in the Baltic Sea began at the end of April or in May, and from then on small ships loaded with Leufsta and Åkerby bars left Ängskär for Stockholm where Jennings had begun to stockpile iron in compliance with the instructions sent by Prankard. "Common iron" had to be rushed to Bristol in time for the St. James's Fair. There was not the same time pressure when it came to *Öregrund Iron* as this iron was sold to a select few buyers and had probably been ordered in advance. Most went to John Kettle's steel furnaces at Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham.





**Fig. 4.2** The “järmboden” storehouse for bar iron in Ängskär (Photo by the courtesy of Antiquarian Topographical Archive, National Heritage Board, Sweden)

The early 1730s was a difficult period for Graffin Prankard. He was excluded from the access to the best iron from Uppland. The frustration is evident in a letter to Jennings from 1732. It was hard, he noted, to see this iron “pass by me here & up into ye Markett & Sold by a Person that wont Sell it on any reasonable terms or really not at all to my best Chapp [i.e. Kettle]” (Prankard to Jennings, 16 Aug, 1732, SA, DD/DN 425). Yet as soon as Prankard managed to seize hold of the key *Öregrund* brands, another problem emerged. The Leufsta iron did not live up to expectations. Samuel Shore complained that “the Proprietor of Said Works [Leufsta] is very Defficient in keeping it to Its usual Goodness” (Shore & Son to Worster..., 15 Aug, 1735, SA, DD/DN 426). Prankard was even franker: the iron was not “Clean from ye drossy part ... which causes it to be so rotten [and] not fit for Conversion into Steel” (Prankard to Jennings, 13 Dec, 1735, SA, DD/DN 426).

For Prankard, the situation was very serious. Unless the iron from Leufsta and Åkerby regained its old quality, Kettle would have to stop making steel and Prankard would lose his best customer. He responded instantly. He fired off a letter of protest to Stockholm and this eventually found its way to Eric Touscher, *Directeur* at Leufsta *bruk* and the man responsible for the production of bar iron at both Leufsta and Åkerby. Just as with Gammelbo, the concerns of the international market were communicated rapidly to the direct producers, ultimately to the forgemmen themselves.

In answer to the complaints of Prankard and Shore, Eric Touscher convened a meeting to which the forgemen and the clerks at the *bruk* were summoned. On 18 August 1738, six iron workers, eight clerks and two clergymen met in the office at Leufsta in the presence of *Directeur* Touscher. The latter began reading out “an austere and earnest letter” from Louis De Geer, requiring “a truthful proof and a reliable story how it goes with the pig and bar iron making” at both *bruk*. Three letters from Prankard and Shore, complaining about the quality of the iron, had been translated and enclosed with De Geer’s letter; Touscher wanted to hear the forgemen’s response.<sup>1</sup>

The forgemen were indignant. They insisted that the iron they made was as good as it ever had been, and as evidence they wanted “that the bar iron made this year, and of which the majority ought to still be at Stockholm Iron Weigh, should be inspected”. They added that no changes had been made in relation to the work in the forges, but added that no one “ever had heard of any fault with the bar iron” before Touscher’s predecessor had started to consort with “an Englishman” (in fact, a Scot) named Campbell. The problem, thus, had its origin in the close connections created between the *bruk* and the English market. The forgemen were asked to make a greater variety of bars, which required working in a rush, which adversely affected the quality:

for first is ordered so much of these sorts [of bars], then of others, [and] then the clerks throw back the iron made by the hammermen, as it is too long, then too short and then too thick, although this has never been asked for in bygone times (Leufstaarkivet, vol. 43B).

Iron from the *Vallonbruk* was no longer a generic material, fulfilling a variety of functions on the European market; it was increasingly yoked to the steel-producing sector in Britain.

Steel in the eighteenth century was an exclusive material and commanded a high price. It was used in small volumes for specific and important purposes in tools that carried a cutting edge, such as axes, knives and scythes, and when hardness was required in files, anvils and hammers. Steel was also used for purely aesthetic purposes, in buttons, polished clasps and buckles. The metal was thus well integrated in eighteenth-century everyday life. To this, one can of course add that weapons could not be made without the use of steel, either in the form of a blade or as a material incorporated into gunlocks. The markets that British manufacturers served in the eighteenth century were not just domestic. On the contrary, they catered for rapidly growing colonial markets (Evans 2012). The emergence of Britain as the most dynamic centre of steel production and consumption in Europe in the eighteenth century signalled the incorporation of the *Vallonbruk* into the Atlantic world at large.

## The Swedish Economy in an Atlantic Context

Swedish iron production had long been integrated into an international iron trade. Ever since the Middle Ages, when iron from *Bergslagen* was transferred to Stockholm for further transport across the Baltic, Sweden looked abroad for markets.

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<sup>1</sup>For this quote and the following, see Leufstaarkivet, vol. 43B, Leufsta Bruksarkiv, Lövestabruk.

For most of the seventeenth century it was the Dutch market that dominated, but from the 1670s London became the main destination for Swedish bar iron. British domination continued in the following century, but with some important changes. London's position declined in favour of "the outports", with Hull and Bristol as the most important ports, and it became apparent that Swedish iron making developed in concert with the expansion of the British Empire.

Iron and steel are often taken to be the material expression of modernity. They are there in the Eiffel Tower and the steel-framed skyline of Manhattan. Yet it is important to stress that iron and steel were already crucial during the early modern period. For a start, empires would be unthinkable without a ferrous content; weapons are made out of iron and steel, and the many Swedish *bruk* were willing suppliers to the armament workshops in and around Birmingham. This expanding metropolis in central England became something of a "workshop of the World" or perhaps a "workshop for the Empire". This was also the place where many of the bars from Leufsta and Åkerby were turned into steel. Swedish bar iron of a totally different quality was sent to Bristol where it was promptly transhipped onto slaving vessels and thence to Africa where the iron was exchanged for slaves.

As much as three quarters of Swedish iron production was destined for foreign markets, sometimes more. Most of this iron came from forges using the German forging technique to produce "common iron" of ordinary quality, but this played its role in the globalising market. Gammelbo bars became gun barrels at workshops outside Birmingham. *Öregrund Iron* represented a significantly smaller proportion of Swedish iron exports, at most 15%, but its global position was much clearer. From the 1720s this iron was intimately tied to English steel production, and this pattern persisted for more than a century.

The connections between the steel produced in Yorkshire, Newcastle and Birmingham, the creation of the British empire, and plantation agriculture based on slave labour is largely overlooked. Yet every hoe and machete wielded by a slave in the British sugar plantations was edged with steel that originated in ore from the great mine at Dannemora in Uppland. Similar connections were materialised in the voyage iron, which at least from the beginning of the eighteenth century was of major importance for Bristol slave traders as they began to trade along the Bight of Biafra where demand for this metal was notably strong. One can assume that this link, between some *bruk* in the interior of Sweden, Bristol and the Bight of Biafra, remained important as long as slaves were taken from this part of Africa.

It is crucial to stress that the Swedish iron industry should be viewed from a global perspective, not just because large quantities of bar iron that were sold on foreign markets but because this trade came to have an important influence on Swedish *bruk*. As the examples from both Gammelbo and Leufsta reveal, it is clear that Swedish forgemen had to adapt to market signals that had their origin as far away as Birmingham and the Bight of Biafra. When the African market demanded lighter bars master Palt and the other forgemen at Gammelbo had to comply and when English steelmakers wanted bars made in specific dimensions, Leufsta's forgemen were obliged to adjust working practices that had been in place for a century. In 1730, when the *Directeur* signed a trade contract with "an Englishman", a new

era began. If Global History is about “comparisons and connections” and if these entanglements promote change, then the links between Swedish *bruk* and various places within the British Empire are good examples of far-reaching scope and consequences of early modern economic and colonial ambitions.

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Graffin Prankard to Francis Jennings, 28 February 1733

DD/DN 426

Samuel Shore & Son to Worster, Wordsworth & Jennings, 15 August 1735

Graffin Prankard to Francis Jennings, 13 December 1735

Graffin Prankard to Francis Jennings, 27 April 1737

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# Chapter 5

## Heritage Tourism in Tranquebar: Colonial Nostalgia or Postcolonial Encounter?

Helle Jørgensen

### Introduction

“Welcome to Denmark!”, exclaimed an Indian guide with enthusiasm, as he and his Danish colleague along with their group of around 20 Danish tourists travelling in South India got off their tour bus by the town gate of Tranquebar. “In fact”, he continued, “you should be welcoming me!” The object of this welcome, which I experienced during fieldwork in 2007, was a small fishing town with some 7,000 inhabitants, situated in the state of Tamil Nadu. It was also a town which, in the years 1620–1845, served as a Danish trading colony. On this spot, which in 1620 was already a small town with commerce of its own, the Danish East India Company established a fort, and later a fortified townscape, from which to conduct trade in items such as spices and textiles.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, diminished trade and the increasing dominance of Great Britain in India caused an unsentimental sale of the small Danish colony to the British. Now, however, the Danes are back—in the guise of tourists and developers of Indo-Danish (post)colonial heritage (Fig. 5.1).

Though constituting a relatively brief interval in the history of Tranquebar, the history of the 225 years of Danish rule has gained increasing relevance to the town in recent decades. Due to its hitherto limited economic growth, Tranquebar has retained much of the architecture which characterised the town while it was under the rule of the Danes (Figs. 5.2 and 5.3). The well-preserved townscape with its mix of Tamil and colonial architecture was in 1980 declared a so-called heritage town by

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<sup>1</sup>Prior to this, the town was known in Tamil as Tharangambadi. Tranquebar is an Europeanised form of the Tamil name (the transliteration of which varies slightly). Both names continue to be used locally. Here I use Tranquebar as the internationally known name.

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**Fig. 5.1** The town gate of Tranquebar (Photo by the author)



the state of Tamil Nadu. Both Danish and Indian agents, ranging from public authorities to NGOs, researchers and private investors, have engaged in attempts to preserve the built heritage of the town and to use it to promote development by means of attracting heritage tourism.

The development of colonial heritage in the postcolonial present, which is taking place with increasing speed across the globe, has sparked much discussion concerning the relations and narratives which are produced in this process (e.g. Hall and Tucker 2005; Graham and Howard 2008). One concept which is frequently discussed in this context is that of nostalgia, which many analysts have taken to imply that the commemoration and development of colonial heritage constitutes a yearning for—or a revival of—the colonial past, or even a form of neocolonialism (Rosaldo 1989; Fisher 2005). Here I will focus on the question of what sort of narratives and encounters are produced, as Tranquebar is being developed and visited as a site of Indo-Danish heritage, and how nostalgia enters into and is shaped in this particular context. In other words, which sentiments and reflections on the past are engaged and negotiated in situations such as that when the Indian guide was welcoming the Danish tourists to Tranquebar? The “welcome to Denmark” might indeed seem to address a form of colonial nostalgia, but as I will show, the colonial past is subject to more complex reengagements and appropriations in the heritage town of Tranquebar,



**Fig. 5.2** Fort Dansborg, built by the Danes when they acquired Tranquebar in 1620, now serves as a museum (Photo by the author)

in which nostalgia is both expressed and challenged, negotiated and used strategically within limitations (Fig. 5.2).

### **Heritage Tourism: Colonial Nostalgia?**

What, then, do Danish tourists feel as they visit Tranquebar today? For some, the travel is motivated by deep-seated interests in history, which a number of such tourists told me had been sparked by reading books such as the classic Danish historiography on “Our Old Tropical Colonies” (Brøndsted 1952–1953, author’s translation). Conversely, since Tranquebar is often one stop only on the tours of South India, which are sold by various travel agencies, other tourists’ encounters with the town result in surprise. One Danish comment in the guest book of Tranquebar’s New Jerusalem Church, dated 4/12/2003, reads: “Fancy that Denmark had a ‘colony’ in India, I had no idea!”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Here and in the following, unless otherwise noted, I have translated the comments quoted from guest books from Danish.





**Fig. 5.3** King Street, a main street in Tranquebar (Photo by the author)

The guest books at hotels and churches in Tranquebar demonstrate a broad selection of tourist views. The comments from Danish visitors are replete with fixed expressions that characterise the experience of visiting Tranquebar as “feeling the presence of history”, “walking in the footprints of the Danes”, wishing that “the walls could talk” and “feeling at home” in Tranquebar due to the perception of the former colony as “a little piece of Denmark in India”. A recurring sentiment in these comments is one of national pride and nostalgia (Fig. 5.4). Though the majority of Danes who arrive in Tranquebar know English and the occasional note in English is left by visitors with people in Tranquebar as the intended audience, for instance to say “Thank you for taking care of our heritage so that we can show it to our children” as one visitor did in the guest book of the New Jerusalem Church on 21/3/2007, the comments are often written in Danish, thus being directed at a national audience. As a characteristic Danish entry in the same guest book, dated 22/9/1999, declares: “it is impossible not to feel a bit sentimental when you meet old Danish history so far from our part of the world. Think of all the stories that hide under the old grave-stones”. Another typical comment in the same book, dated 12/11/2000, reads: “Impressive to see something so Danish so far from the fatherland. You feel proud to be Danish!”



**Fig. 5.4** Danish tourists admire a building constructed in the colonial period on King Street (Photo by the author)

The sentiment of Danish visitors in Tranquebar has been strikingly portrayed by Poul Pedersen, an anthropologist visiting the town in 1985 as part of a cross-disciplinary Danish survey team that was to document the townscape:

If you come to Tranquebar as a Dane today, it is hard not to be touched. When walking through the Land Gate and the streets, seeing the old mansions, the mission houses and churches, you are caught up in unreality, being struck by a romantic and sentimental atmosphere. The past is so distinct, and that in the special derelict shape that calls forth melancholy. All this past can let the present down. Tranquebar of today easily fades out of sight in favour of yesterday. The small, poor town on the south-east coast of India can hardly bear the comparison with Tranquebar of 200 years ago. (...) Tranquebar of today is diminished to the sad appendix of a better past. The illusion in Tranquebar is real, but it does not last long. If you stay in the town for a longer period; some weeks, some months, it is worn out by daily use. (...) The town is set free from the yoke of colonial perceptions that you carry with you from home. The place ceases to be a mental province in the history of the realm of Denmark (Pedersen 1987:50–51, author’s translation).

Indeed, for the people who live in Tranquebar, the town—as the frame of their daily life—is anything but “a mental province in the history of the realm of Denmark”. Nonetheless it is only a fraction of the Danish visitors to Tranquebar who stay for “some weeks, some months”, as in Pedersen’s attempt to deconstruct

the sentimental Danish gaze on Tranquebar. Notably, tourists generally stay for a day or at most two. Hence the question emerges: As Tranquebar is developed as a heritage town intended to attract tourism, with the period of the Danish rule emphasised as a defining moment in the history of the town, what sort of (post)colonial narratives and relations are constructed?

Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett have argued that tourism gives colonialism a second life by bringing it back as a representation of itself (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005:33). Indeed, tourism has often been criticised as constituting a form of imperialism or neocolonialism in economic as well as in cultural terms (Nash 1977; Britton 1982; Hall and Tucker 2005). Thus, while in his description of the town Pedersen is careful to move beyond, but not to devalue the “[r]omantic and sentimental (...) mood that takes possession of you during the encounter with Tranquebar”, observing that “I put no condescension into this [characterisation of the visitors]” (Pedersen 1987:50, author’s translation), many analysts would engage a more critical perspective here. For instance Renato Rosaldo has coined the term “imperialist nostalgia” to frame a critique of the mode of “innocent yearning” (Rosaldo 1989:70) which he finds constructed to engage the imagination and conceal colonial power relations in popular representations of colonialism, not only in the past by the agents of colonialism themselves, but also in modern sources such as films.

It is not only in the controversial historic context of colonialism that the identification of nostalgic sentiments requires qualifying remarks, such as Pedersen’s in the above, to make it explicit that the analysis of such sentimental attachments is not meant to be disparaging. As Svetlana Boym has observed, nostalgia is “something of a bad word” (Boym 2001:xiv), which is frequently used in a dismissive way, implying selected memories of an idealised past. A claim often associated with heritage is precisely that it is essentially a nostalgic venture, a perspective which implies a critical approach on the part of the analysts due to the perception that “Nostalgia ... is essentially history without guilt” (Krammen, in Boym 2001:xiv).

Analytically it might seem easy to frame the heritage town of Tranquebar as for instance David Fisher approaches the case of Levuka, the old capital on Fiji: “A colonial town for neocolonial tourism” (Fisher 2005:126). Here, I would however argue that such a framing of the ongoing development in Tranquebar would be *too* easy. In “Tourism and Postcolonialism” (Hall & Tucker 2005), a recent anthology on cultural tourism in postcolonial environments, replete with the term “neocolonialism” (such as Fisher’s article), the editors Michael Hall and Hazel Tucker conclude that a crucial topic of future research would be to investigate in more detail how the practice of tourism engages the colonial past. They propose to ask how, and to what extent, tourists—and others engaged both with the promotion and the analysis of tourism—“negotiate, dismantle, resist or sustain the colonial elements of contemporary travel discourse and industry in their travelling practices” (Tucker and Hall 2005:187). It is inquiries along this line which I aim to undertake in this article.

Space does not permit that I draw in Danish colonial historiography, but the fact that I met several Danish tourists in Tranquebar who cited Brøndsted’s classic work on “Our Old Tropical Colonies” as the source of their fascination with colonial history illustrates that heritage tourism also draws on existing publications, creating

what might be termed an intertextual field, which is played out not only in actual text but also in the practice of tourism itself. The fact that the antique coin dealers in Tranquebar sell their goods not only with arguments like “your national memory, madam”, but are also equipped with Danish publications on numismatics and the history of minting coins during the Danish period in Tranquebar, shows that they have caught on to this reality quite well. Regarding published Danish accounts on Tranquebar and the other former tropical colonies of Denmark, Kirsten Thisted has observed that the distinction between travelogue, novel and (popular) historiography often appears erased (Thisted 2008:3). As the travelogue merges with historiography, so, one might say, does the practice of travelling and tourism.

### **From Danish Postcolonial Narratives to Postcolonial Encounters**

In her work with another former colony of Denmark, the Danish West Indies (presently known as the US Virgin Islands),<sup>3</sup> Karen Fog Olwig has argued that the dominant Danish narratives about colonialism have not been confronted with the perceptions of history in the former Danish tropical colonies. These colonies, she argues, were sold at earlier points in history and were therefore not associated with Denmark during the process of decolonisation in the late twentieth century under which post-colonial critique has predominantly been directed at greater colonial powers, leaving the national narrative of Denmark relatively unaffected (Olwig 2003). In this context both the practices of tourism and the wider Danish engagement in the development of Tranquebar as a heritage town emerge as potential loci of both change and contestation, but not, as I will argue, only between Denmark and Tranquebar as former coloniser and colonised, but also cross-cutting such simple binary distinctions. For instance the same guest books in the local churches and “heritage hotels” which document a considerable Danish nostalgia also demonstrate a reflexive engagement with colonial history and the question of how to relate to it.

A Danish comment in the guest book of the New Jerusalem Church, dated 14/06/1999, reads: “Danish imperialism—fortunately it is over. Let the Indians keep their religions. Christianity has brought nothing good to India. In a sense one is a bit ashamed as a Dane in Tharangambadi”. This is not the only entry into local guest books which shows that colonial history may also be associated with shame on the part of the erstwhile colonial powers. Interestingly, in this respect the guest books can also be read as a dialogue. It is evident from these books that many tourists leaf through the pages to read what others have written and comment on their experiences from Tranquebar. A number of entries constitute commentaries on what other visitors have written on the nature of colonial and postcolonial history and relations. As a Danish entry in the same book, dated 2000, reads:

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<sup>3</sup> These three Caribbean islands (the last Danish tropical colony) were sold to the USA in 1917.

Then here one sits on a church bench which is no more Danish than the priest who founded the church.<sup>4</sup> But of course it was financed out of Danish funds. To those [Danish visitors] who write that the Danish cultural imperialism is somewhat cloying or that Christianity has brought nothing good to India, one must say that they ought to study their Indian history more closely. The Protestant missions have (...) accommodated themselves and become absolutely independent. The social dimension which the missions have contributed to India in the form of schools and hospitals should not be disparaged.

The writer then proceeds to recommend visiting local schools and hospitals to see for oneself.

The guest books of churches and hotels in Tranquebar are in fact full of instances where visitors comment upon, play with or distance themselves from imaginations of colonial relations. For example, in the first “heritage hotel” of Tranquebar, the restored residence of the former district administrator, comments range from that of a Norwegian visitor who in 2005 wrote (in English) “Thank you for the hospitality (...), and let me add: We should appreciate that we have fewer and fewer colonial powers” to three other Norwegians who conversely played with colonial identities in a comment dated 05/08/2007, stating that “We have walked in the footprints of the old Scandinavians in the colonial period. (...) The hotel also gave us a little taste of colonial dominion”. The latter comment seems akin to that left by a Danish lady in the New Jerusalem Church who jokingly wrote on 16/03/2000 that “I would have made a good governor’s wife here”, illustrating that tourism moves in a field of fanciful play with history as well as more serious reflection.

As distancing and identification with colonialism alternate, tourism thus becomes an occasion for debate on perceptions of history—with others engaged in the tourist encounter or in the form of more personal reflections. An example of the latter is a Danish couple whom I met in Tranquebar’s Zion Church during a Christmas service, where they were making an effort to pay their respects by participating as actively yet inconspicuously as possible, humming along wordlessly on the Tamil psalms, the text of which they as Danes could not follow. It was the second time that they were visiting Tranquebar, they told, and as we struck up a conversation in a break, they commented on the idea of what they termed “the traces of the Danish presence”. As the husband explained, his impression was that “people [here] mainly remember us for good things (...); but then we haven’t done anything [adverse] here; whereas in Africa [where Denmark had forts and plantations on the Gold Coast, in present Ghana] there was slave trade”.

The above comment is not a complete picture of the past, though an accurate one of what is recalled in the present. Tranquebar is mostly associated with a more uncontroversial history of trading, whereas the Danish engagements in Africa and the Caribbean have in recent decades increasingly been subject to critique due to Denmark’s role in the atrocities associated with slavery and the transatlantic slave trade (Stecher-Hansen 2008). A little known fact amongst Danes and Indians alike

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<sup>4</sup>The missionaries sent by the King of Denmark from 1705 came from *die Pietistische Stiftung zu Halle* in Germany.



**Fig. 5.5** A Danish tourist takes photos of residents in Tranquebar (Photo by the author)

is that since slavery was commonly accepted at the time and was not limited to Europeans but was also practised amongst the Indians, the trading goods that passed through Tranquebar also included slaves, just as the Danish company and the Europeans in Tranquebar owned slaves although the colony was not—like the Danish West Indies—directly dependent on slavery (Bredsdorff 2009:148–149). On the Coromandel Coast where Tranquebar is located, there is evidence of a periodic export of slaves eastwards, although not of regular slave trade. Slaves were supplied through local wars or kidnapping, and severe famines or devastations caused by local warfare would also lead the destitute to offer themselves for sale at the ports along the coast (Arasatnam 1986:104–105, 210–212).

Some facts of the past in Tranquebar thus remain unknown. Nonetheless the use of the national “we” that demonstrates identification with past colonial agents and events as it implicitly calls forth an imagined community in quotes such as the above reflects the fact that heritage tourism implies the imagination of both colonial and postcolonial relations and of the nations implied in them. Tourism becomes an occasion both to contemplate historic identities associated with what “we” did during the colonial period and how “they” in the former colony might think of “us” in the present. Thus, through tourism national narratives are reconnected with the notion that colonial history constitutes encounters which have had effects for both colonisers and colonised—and that these colonial encounters also have implications in present relations and identities (Fig. 5.5). As the following will show, this realisation is also a key element in the transnational process of contemporary heritage development in Tranquebar.

## Negotiating (Post)colonial Relations

The handling of postcolonial relations and national interests in Tranquebar requires continual negotiations. Thus, when the Danish fort Dansborg was to be inaugurated after a restoration to which the Tranquebar Association, a private Danish organisation of volunteers, had contributed in 2001, the association approached the commissioner of archaeology in Chennai with a plea. As one of the founders told:

We inquired very carefully, like: Could we get permission for [hoisting] a *tiny* Danish flag [at the ceremony]? Then he said: “Same height, same size, we are two friendly nations, we will make a new flag pole”, so we got an extra flag pole on fort Dansborg, and then we first hoisted the Indian flag and sang the Indian national anthem, and then [the Danish flag and anthem] (...); we stood with tears in our eyes.

That this ceremony was so touching to the Danish participants is not surprising, also above and beyond the conventional symbolic value that is invoked by national flags and anthems (Billig 2008; Hobsbawm 2009). The sentiment has its own historical background in the established narrations of Danish colonial history. In Danish publications the image of the flag that “waves over” the colonies or is “taken down for the last time” is firmly established as a recurrent metaphor for the Danish presence in—and loss of—the tropical colonies of Denmark (Thisted 2009). Being allowed to hoist the Danish flag was thus a very tangible symbol of a Danish return to Tranquebar.

The hoisting of flags at the inauguration of the restored fort indicates that some degree of national sentiment can be expressed in a common space between Danes and Indians in Tranquebar without conflict—but also that the associated postcolonial relations need to be carefully negotiated. So does another circumstance: Accidentally it turned out that the Danish flag which the Tranquebar Association had acquired and brought with them from Denmark for the inauguration was bigger than the corresponding Indian flag which was to be used in the ceremony. The Danish flag ended up being hoisted after all. First, however, it was sent to a local tailor to be cut down to size and sewn together again: “same size, same height”. In this scheme of things the fact that the Indian flag was hoisted first also carries symbolic value, sending a subtle message about Indian independence.

Certainly, perceived from the perspective of ongoing developments in India, it is far from an obvious approach that colonial history ought to be remembered or actively commemorated, let alone with sentiments of nostalgia. Danish agents engaged in Tranquebar thus have good reasons to consider how their interests in the commemoration of colonial heritage in India are received here. After independence many locations in India have, for instance, been subject to name changes, in which cities and streets have been renamed, partly to reflect the linguistic boundaries of the reorganised local states rather than the (mainly British) colonial divisions and partly as explicit political acts of anti-colonialism. In more recent years such name changes have taken place in some of the major commercial hubs in India. Thus in 1996 the name of Tamil Nadu’s capital city Madras was officially changed to Chennai, just

like Bombay was renamed Mumbai in 1995, and the name of Calcutta was changed to Kolkata in 2001, making some of India's largest cities subject to an ongoing symbolic decolonisation.<sup>5</sup>

That attempts at present commemorations of colonial history can prove highly problematic in India was evidenced by a case published in the *New Indian Express* during my fieldwork. When Sir Mark Allan Havelock, the great-great-grandson of the British Major General Sir Henry Havelock, visited India for the 150th anniversary of his forebear's role in the British–India war of 1857, angry public protest resulted as he made a thwarted request to put up a plaque at the Major General's grave in Meerut to commemorate what he referred to as the "bravery" of his forebear's battalion in 1857. Under the acerbic headline "150 years on, no place for 1857 British 'heroes'", the article describes outbreaks of public demonstration, while a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party ("Indian People's Party"), a major political party in India, is quoted to the effect that such a celebration was "an insult to India" (Pande 2007:9).<sup>6</sup>

Considering such politics of history, there does seem to be reason for Danish agents to reflect on what sort of implications it might have to advance Danish heritage interests which are associated with the colonial period in India. But it did not seem to follow from these examples that Danish interests in Tranquebar were necessarily interpreted as acts of neocolonialism perceived from the vantage point of the former colony. For example, one Indian historian who worked with Tranquebar indicated that India might receive the Danish engagement in research and development in the town with considerable self-confidence:

Research has to be tied to geopolitical interest or colonialism, especially in the relationship between East and West. With respect to the marginal position of Denmark in world politics, its orientation has to be towards its former colonies. I also wouldn't discount the growing importance of India in the world economy.

This comment directs attention to relations of the present, indicating that the colonial past is not just "there" in Tranquebar to be commemorated or forgotten. Rather, it is produced in the course of contemporary encounters that bring present interests to bear, creating specific narratives and views on the Indo-Danish colonial period. In the following I will look more closely into the character of these narratives.

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<sup>5</sup> While decolonisation is frequently an explicit argument in the politics of name changes in India, it should be noted that these name changes are also applied as political tools for expressing regionalist political stances, such as Dravidianist sentiments in the context of Tamil Nadu (Hancock 2008:52). Thus the renaming (which can be seen as appropriations of history) is also very much part of internal Indian politics, even as it may be justified and understood in part on anti-colonialist grounds.

<sup>6</sup> Such a commemoration runs against the grain of the effort of post-independence politics of history in India, where the state has worked to build a public history in which this war (which the British termed a mutiny) has been presented as the 'First War of Indian Independence' (Cohn 1971:56).



## Reengaging with the Colonial History of Tranquebar: Narratives of Anti-conquest

Mary Louise Pratt has coined the term “anti-conquest” to connote “strategies of representation “in modern travel and exploration” whereby the European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (Pratt 2006:9). In Tranquebar, too, one might identify narrations of anti-conquest, but in quite particular ways, which indicate that anti-conquest need not only be a narrative strategy of the erstwhile colonial powers, but can in some contexts also be used to serve the interests of the formerly colonised. For instance, the assessment of Tranquebar which I got from the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation was that

it is a very good location; (...) it has history. Previously Danish people made trade with our local people—reciprocally you sold and purchased, [carried out] these commercial activities; then only the British came. Consequently the British took over India. Where the Danish people landed, they constructed a small fort—a safety for them to make business there. Now it is maintained by [the] State Archaeology Department, telling history like a museum.

Notwithstanding the presence of a museum in the fort (Fig. 5.6) and the intensifying work to develop heritage tourism with the Danish colonial rule and its traces as the point of interest, the fact remains that the colonial history which is recalled by the residents of Tranquebar is largely that of the century of British rule which followed the presence of the Danes. The awareness of the historic presence of the Danes and the attempts at strategic use of this history in various business ventures have increased in the course of the development of Tranquebar as heritage (Jørgensen 2009, 2011, *forthcoming*; Fig. 5.7). Nonetheless, amongst the population of Tranquebar, recollections of the period of Danish rule are limited, and the Danes are often confused with other half-forgotten colonial powers that have resided on the coast of Tamil Nadu (notably the Dutch). Yet to the extent that the period of Danish colonial rule is known of locally, it tends to be spoken of in positive terms. As one elderly man from a neighbouring village expressed it: “The Danish people came here for business only. They were good people”. He contrasted the Danes with the British, whom he characterised as “harsh on the local population, gathering all of the country in their hands”. Denmark is thus not associated with imperialism, as opposed to its British successors, and the prevailing image of the Danes amongst the population of Tranquebar is that of “good trading people” who did not come to India to conquer and dominate. As such the Danish period can be subject to both Indian and Danish sentiments of more or less diffuse nostalgia and narrations of positive relations, in a way which would hardly be possible for the British colonial past in India.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>From a Scandinavian perspective this narrative of anti-conquest is not unique. Ipsen and Fur have noted that the discourse on colonialism in the Scandinavian countries generally positions Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland as insignificant and relatively innocent and benign colonial powers as compared to agents with greater powers such as the Netherlands and the Great Britain, which are associated with imperial oppression (Ipsen and Fur 2009, see also Fur 2012, this volume).



**Fig. 5.6** Reengaging with the colonial past. Indian and Danish archaeologists explain a joint excavation of fort Dansborg’s moat (Photo from the author’s fieldwork)

In the booklets on local history which are available for sale at fort Dansborg, the term “anti-conquest” can be said to apply quite literally to representations of the colonial relationship between Denmark and India. Here, emphasis is put on the acquisition of the colony through negotiations which led to the signing of a lawful treaty between the ruler (*nayak*) of Tanjore and representatives of the King of Denmark (Nagaswamy 1987:4–5, 22–25). Thus, if one looks at the booklet “Tarangampadi”, published in 1987 by the then Commissioner of Archaeology in Chennai (Nagaswamy 1987), the treaty on the establishment of Tranquebar as a trading colony of the Danes is included in its full length. It is also emphasised that a “golden letter of friendship” from the nayak to the representatives of the Danish King, as well as the treaty which the parties concluded, is still preserved at the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen (Nagaswamy 1987:4). Demonstrating how the narration of history is entangled in the politics of the present, the booklet was originally brought out in honour of a visit to Tranquebar by the then Prime Minister of Denmark Poul Schlüter, its author being the same commissioner of archaeology under whom the museum at fort Dansborg had been established. This formal visit from Denmark, along with the development aid for the local fisherman population, which the contact with Denmark also entailed in the form of new boats and nets, is still widely recalled amongst the inhabitants of Tranquebar.

On the part of Danes and Indians alike, there appears a common interest in narrating anti-conquest in the history of Tranquebar. Thus, in 1983 a book entitled



**Fig. 5.7** A local businessman alludes to Tranquebar’s colonial history in the name of his “Danish shop” (Photo by the author)

“India—Denmark: Connections and Cooperation” (Mølgaard 1983a, author’s translation) was brought out in Denmark in honour of a visit of the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. In the foreword, the Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs, P.V. Narasimha Rao, states that “The connection between our two countries has always been characterised by warmth and cordiality” (Rao 1983, author’s translation). The first article in the book is on the topic of “Indian-Danish historical relations”, and its very first lines read:

A treaty between the King of Tanjore, the state of Tamil Nadu in India, and Christian IV, King of Denmark, signed in the year 1620 marks the beginning of the Danish-Indian friendship, which has remained cordial in more than 350 years as a tribute to the peace-loving peoples in both India and Denmark. (Nagaswamy 1983:5, author’s translation)

Continuing its narration of anti-conquest the article states that “the Danes (...) kept the place [i.e. Tranquebar] (...) till 1845, when the entire Danish possession was sold to the English, mainly because of the increasing power of the English at the time” (Nagaswamy 1987:7). The article might have emphasised the dwindling economic success of the trade in the colony as the cause of the sale to the British, but clearly the narrative strategy is rather one of emphasising a positive and enduring relationship between India and Denmark. Thus it is also claimed that “Apart from very few insignificant quarrels the Danish stay in India took place in perfect

friendship” (Nagaswamy 1987:7). One example of events in the relations between the Danes and the rulers of Tanjore that are generalised as “insignificant quarrels” is mentioned in the following article in the same book, where a Danish author states that “Many enemies were watching the Danish colony—pirates, Portuguese, Dutch and later English competitors—also the Indian rulers several times sought to besiege the town to pressure the Danes to pay higher rents—but they benefited from the trade, so no serious attempts were made to drive out the Danes when they kept the colony after the lease expired” (Petersen 1983:13, my translation). It is similarly emphasised that “It was the Indian ruler who had the power (...). Tranquebar was, as other colonies at the time, first and foremost a trading colony, and both Indians and Danes benefited from the trade” (Petersen 1983:13, my translation).

The colonial relationship between Denmark and India did differ from that which developed with the dominant colonial power in India, Great Britain, in the age of imperialism. Tranquebar was a small colony which never had territorial expansion as its purpose. The colony consisted of a fortified town and a small encompassing territory of 50 km<sup>2</sup> at its largest. For Denmark the main importance of Tranquebar was that of a trading colony which provided access to coveted tropical goods such as spices and cotton cloth and contributed to the building of Danish merchant capitalism. At the same time the colony also participated in a wider network of colonial and global relations. Denmark especially profited from the small colony in 1775–1807 when Denmark’s neutral position in the contemporary conflicts between Great Britain and France made it attractive for trade and capital to operate under the cover of the Danish flag (Feldbæk 1969). The fact that the Danish settlement in Tranquebar was established by a treaty with the nayak of Tanjore does indeed reflect an Indian interest in the establishment of the trading colony, as a means to increase the nayak’s power base and the local trade as well as offsetting the rights of trade given to the Portuguese who were already established in the region. Thus there were mutual benefits, although this did not preclude conflicts or more unpalatable aspects of the trading relations, such as the existence of slavery.

The “perfect friendship” alluded to in the mutual strategy of narrating a history of anti-conquest more likely refers to the primary field of relations between India and Denmark at the time of the above mentioned publications, namely, that of development aid, which was given from Denmark to India in the period 1963–2005, reaching a peak in the 1980s. This relationship has been characterised in a recent Danish publication as one between “The Rich Mouse and the Poor Elephant” (Folke and Heldgaard 2006, my translation). The metaphor implies that “Denmark [as a small nation] became a faithful but never a big donor in India” (Schaumburg-Müller 2006a:43, my translation).<sup>8</sup> India had an interest in such a relation in order to

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<sup>8</sup>In terms of state-to-state development aid, there are at present no such relations between Denmark and India. In 2005 India, which had itself become an economic power of global significance, terminated its bilateral agreements with a number of smaller donors such as Denmark, Sweden and others, insisting that development aid would in the future only be received from larger donors, e.g. the USA and the EU (Schaumburg-Müller 2006b:39). When the bilateral agreement was terminated, Denmark had in total provided around 6 billion DKK in development aid to India, making India the largest recipient of Danish development aid next after Tanzania (Schaumburg-Müller 2006a:40, 43).

promote social and economic development, thereby consolidating its status as a newly independent state, but Denmark was (in addition to maintaining a national image of humanism) also aware of the prospects of private commercial cooperation with India, with its “impressive industrial development since independence” (Mølgaard 1983b:85, my translation). Both nations in other words had an interest in portraying a history of benign relations, which Tranquebar and its trading history served well to symbolise.

## Conclusion

The redevelopment of the material traces of colonial encounters as heritage constitutes a reengagement of both Danes and Indians with the colonial past and with the relations which it has produced. Equally important, this reengagement produces its own postcolonial encounters, identities and narratives that build on the present relations between the former colony and the former colonial power. Historians might easily deflate the notion that the relationship between Denmark and India at the time when Tranquebar was under Danish rule was more benign than the relations with other contemporary colonial powers. As the Danish historian Ole Feldbæk has noted, the Danish administration in Tranquebar followed “exactly the same policy which as a matter of principle was followed in all of the European trading posts along the coast of India” (Feldbæk 1980: 187, my translation). But one thing that does characterise the Danish engagement in Tranquebar is that it was the engagement of a minor colonial power, which today has an even more marginal status in world politics than it had in the colonial period, while the global economic significance of postcolonial India is on the rise. The fact that Denmark was a marginal colonial power which never grew into an imperial power on the scale of Great Britain, and that Denmark might at present be characterised as a half-forgotten colonial power in the eyes of many Indians, makes the history of Tranquebar more open to contemporary reengagements that can emphasise narratives of anti-conquest and mutually beneficial economic relations in both past and present. Through the development of Tranquebar as a heritage town, spaces are created where sentiments of nostalgia concerning the Indo-Danish colonial connections of the town may be expressed and used strategically, yet within limitations. At the same time tourist encounters with Tranquebar as a heritage town also constitute reengagements with the colonial past that open to reflections concerning the nature of colonial relations in Tranquebar and beyond. These encounters draw the attention of the tourists to the fact that colonialism constituted encounters that engaged both colonisers and colonised, with effects on past as well as present relations and identities, thus creating scope for dialogue and more reflected reengagements with the past rather than reproducing unmitigated colonial nostalgia.

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**Part II**  
**Colonizing the North**



# Chapter 6

## Icelandic Archaeology and the Ambiguities of Colonialism

Gavin Lucas and Angelos Parigoris

### Iceland, the Colonial Project and Crypto-Colonialism

Iceland was not directly involved in the colonial project, except on an individual basis as in the example of Jón Ólafsson, a farmer's son from the Westfjords, who joined the Danish East India Company in the early seventeenth century and sailed the world, recording his exploits in a memoir many years later in 1661 (Ólafsson 1908–1909). Nonetheless Iceland did directly benefit from the colonial project through the acquisition of goods produced and traded in the overseas colonies, such as sugar, coffee and tobacco, which entered Iceland in increasing amounts over the eighteenth century (Jónsson 1997). Archaeologically, finds of clay tobacco pipes and new ceramic forms, as well as oriental porcelain, are the most obvious indication of such influences from the colonial enterprise and occur on archaeological sites in Iceland from the seventeenth century onwards, especially on settlements of the elite. The details of this process however remain obscure; that is, quite how this influx of new goods and materials from the colonies effected existing lifeways is unknown although archaeology remains one of the best means for examining such a process.

One of these effects must have been the awareness of a very different cultural aesthetic as exemplified, for example, through Chinese porcelain. The popularity of the Chinese style or chinoiserie in European culture during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, conveyed especially well through ceramics, is not of course about Europeans wanting to imitate or adopt Chinese identity. Rather, it speaks of a more general desire for otherness and novelty, the characteristic hallmarks of a modernist outlook. Yet the significant element here is how China, as the alien or

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**Fig. 6.1** Glass bottle for sun tanning lotion found at a farm in southwest Iceland (Photo by Guðrún Gísladóttir)



foreign “other”, becomes the *means* of expressing this modernity. We can explore this through an even more recent phenomenon. In 2006, archaeologists working at a site in the southwest of Iceland found a small but complete green glass bottle dating to the 1930s–1940s (Fig. 6.1). Embossed lettering on the bottle indicated that this held a commercial product called Pigmentan, manufactured in Germany, which was used to both tan and protect the skin from the sun (Gísladóttir 2006:22). Skin tanning became in vogue in Europe during the late 1920s, but especially from the 1940s; prior to that, tanned skin was often perceived as a lower- or working-class trait. Indeed the darkness of skin tone in general was used as a material signifier of racial and cultural hierarchy, especially during the late nineteenth century (Young 1995:35). Kristin Loftsdóttir has written much on the ideology of whiteness in Icelandic identity formation, linking it to wider European discourses on race and specifically on how the emergence of nationalism in nineteenth-century Iceland drew on such a colonial discourse to legitimate its claims (Loftsdóttir 2008, 2011; also see Loftsdóttir and Pálsson, this volume). What is interesting about this bottle though is how, like the example of the Chinese porcelain, it testifies to the adoption or *incorporation* of the foreign other—rather than its separation, as a signifier of modernity. Even so, it works in much the same way as Loftsdóttir has suggested about the Icelandic discourse on Africa: it aligns Icelanders with the colonisers rather than the colonised.

However, the connection of Iceland to colonialism is rather more complex than this initial discussion suggests, for two reasons. First, Iceland has only been an independent nation for less than a century; prior to that it was part of the Danish kingdom and scholars have argued over whether Iceland was in fact itself a colony. Second, Iceland was—and arguably still is—a marginal nation in global and European politics and culture and its very ambiguous status as a former colony connects well with Michael Herzfeld’s concept of crypto-colonialism (Herzfeld 2002). Crypto-colonialism refers to the effect of colonialism on those regions or countries which were never directly annexed through the colonial project, and thus being neither coloniser nor colonised, fall between the cracks of western discourse. Herzfeld’s arguments which focus mainly on Greece apply equally well to Iceland insofar as they display a doubled absence in contemporary discourse. On the one hand, Iceland is conspicuously marginal in broader discussions of European history and archaeology; on the other hand, even when it does receive attention—as in the case of Viking Age—this masks a more furtive absence insofar as the actual contribution of Iceland to European historiography remains rather invisible. Iceland barely registers in histories of archaeology compared to other nations.

One could argue that this reflects a real deficit: Iceland simply had/has little to contribute. But as Herzfeld reminds us, the core issue with crypto-colonialism is the distribution of cultural significance and who decides what is of value. This is a theme we will return to at the end of our chapter, but first, we want to unpack the first part of this complex question: was Iceland a colony?

## Was Iceland a Colony?

Iceland was settled in the late ninth century by Vikings from Norway and the British Isles and after a brief period of independence became politically united with Norway in 1262. When the Norwegian and Danish crowns united in 1380, Iceland became a part of the Danish kingdom to which it remained connected for the next 5 centuries. Nationalist and independence movements began in the middle of the nineteenth century and through a series of legislations, Iceland became a fully independent nation in 1944 (e.g. see Hálfdanarson 2001). The status of Iceland’s relation to Denmark, and particularly its designation as a colony, has been a recurrent theme of heated discussion among Icelandic historians, most recently in a discussion in 2011 on the listserve associated with the website of the Icelandic historical society (<http://www.sagnfraedingafelag.net/gammabrekka/>). Most historians have tended to reject the idea that Iceland was a colony; one of the first points usually made being is that the word for Iceland’s political status was that of a dependency (*hjálanda*) not a colony (*nýlenda*). However, it is no coincidence that the adoption of this word was promoted by the leading figure in the Icelandic nationalist movement in the middle of the nineteenth century as a deliberate strategy in the call for independence (Ellenberger 2009:100). Discussion of the colonial status of Iceland is in fact only obscured by such simple terminology, as a recent review paper by Íris Ellenberger

makes very clear, for there are actually multiple facets to the issue of colonialism and Iceland, including the political, economic and ideological, which do not necessarily paint the same picture (Ellenberger 2009). Indeed, in many ways the debates in Iceland echo similar discussions in Irish history, and while the particular relations between England and Ireland exhibit many differences to Denmark and Iceland (not least the absence of major plantations of Danish settlement), some of the broader themes are very similar (see papers in McDonough 2005; also in relation to archaeology, see especially Horning 2006, 2011).

Those scholars who have seen colonialism as a political phenomenon argue that Iceland did not occupy the same political position as the *de jure* colonies of the Danish monarchy but rather held a special status within the realm. Agnarsdóttir (2008) traces the special status of Iceland within the Danish state in the relative autonomy of the Icelandic officials, the possible economic benefits that emanated from that status and the common heritage that linked Icelanders and Danes alike. Along the same lines, Hálfðanarson had earlier (2001:3) added the dimension of distance as a crucial factor in preventing the construction of a coherent administrative policy for Iceland. It limited the influence of Copenhagen in the Icelandic home affairs and the role that Iceland might have played in the affairs of the Danish state.

It is true that a number of administrative representatives within the Danish realm from the eighteenth century onwards were of Icelandic descent and that the official language of the law courts and the church was Icelandic. The latter carries a further significance at a political level as under the influence of the national revivalists and romantic philosophy, Icelanders based their demands for national emancipation on the claim that they spoke the original language of the Nordic people. An additional cultural capital was also placed in the re-establishment of the ancient assembly of the *Alþingi* in 1845 and its eventual limited legislative authority at the time when Iceland acquired its constitution in 1874. It is argued therefore that Iceland did not share the same position as the other Danish colonies which held no representative positions and were often subjected to civilising missions. On the contrary both the Danes and Icelanders subscribed to a common mythology for achieving their own separate national inspirations. The Danes in this framework viewed the Icelanders as guardians of their common heritage and thus not in the same way as the colonial subjects of Greenland and the West Indies (the Faroe Islands occupying a somewhat more ambiguous status). Arguments against the position of Iceland as a non-colony vary. It is quite usual in this context to refer to the Icelandic officials as a “virtual oligarchy” (Ellenberger 2009:102) who did not fully represent Icelandic interests, while the issue of distance from the metropolis of Copenhagen is often viewed in comparison to the distances that had to be covered by other colonial empires for the tight control of their colonies. Moreover, the fact that Icelanders spoke the language of the Danish ancestors, the eventual appearance of a discourse of the past and the “primitive” Icelandic conditions of living met by Danish officials and European travellers alike (Ísleifsson 1996) reinforced the view of Iceland as static and therefore not adequately fit to be perceived as a progressive, civilised nation.

However, the most extraordinary fact when considering Iceland’s position within the context of political colonialism is that the arguments of distance, language and

the autonomy of Icelandic officials are used to explain both the submissiveness and eventual national awakening and struggle of independence (see Hálfðanarson 2001). The factor that has driven Icelanders from subjects of an empire to desiring an autonomous status appears to be the appearance of the ideology of nationalism. The failure to grasp the complexities of the national phenomenon and the colonial venture both in the metropolis and the colonies or dependencies for that matter is closely associated with the Danish historical discourse concerning Denmark's status as a proper colonial empire or rather a "conglomerate state" as a subcategory of empire (Gustafsson 1998). Opinions on the issue do vary, yet it is not the scope of this chapter to go into full detail (for details, see Brengsbo and Villads Jensen 2004; Gustafsson 2005) However, it is worth noting that the denial to consider nineteenth-century Denmark as an empire despite the possession of numerous colonies clearly illustrates an unwillingness to equate Denmark with those empires that have been associated with oppression and exploitation of their colonies. However reductionist this form of thinking might be, it clearly manifests the attempt of Scandinavian states to disassociate themselves from the colonial legacies of oppression and racism and be linked to a national mythology that speaks of welfare states, rationality and modernity.

A more pragmatic approach is taken by Icelandic historians such as Gunnar Karlsson and Sigfús Haukur Andrésson who speak of Iceland as a proper colony. For Andrésson (1997, 2001), the trade monopoly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a clear example of Danish oppression and describes the eventual abolition of the trade restrictions in 1787 and the succeeding commercial autonomy in 1855 as colonial arrangements (*nýlenduþyrirkomulag*). Similarly, Halldór Bjarnason (2001) supports the view that Iceland has been an economic colony since the mid-seventeenth century due to Denmark's dominance over the Icelandic economy and the resulting unequal relations of power prevalent in the contexts of informal imperialism and colonialism. For Bjarnason the entanglement of colonialism and mercantilism is responsible for the poor fate of Iceland's economy and argues that Iceland had been a capitalist colony since 1886 and up to the early twentieth century. Gunnar Karlsson (1995), on the other hand, utilises Hechter's (1975) notion of internal colonialism and speaks of the tensions between metropolitan Copenhagen and peripheral Iceland that stem from their unequal power relations. Within this framework, he argues that the Icelandic nationalist movement was the vehicle upon which an underdeveloped peripheral state expressed its reaction to the economic progress and modernisation of the metropolis.

It is quite clear that the above approaches bound the colonial experience to the very specific spheres of politics and economics. Within this framework, colonialism appears to be treated as a top-down political programme implemented by politicians and intellectuals and executed by the colonial subjects. The colonial experience however is a more complex and dynamic process. It is an ontology that continuously constructs itself and its social agents (Hamilakis 2007), defines people's place in society and guides their social interaction (Anderson 1983/1991; Herzfeld 1992; Gourgouris 1996). Its influence can only be measured partially when dealing with the political and economic contexts alone. Anderson's (1991) statement that nationalism

has to be seen as a cultural system rather than a political programme is therefore applicable to colonialism both by extension and by the fact that colonialism and nationalism have developed in parallel trajectories. Perhaps one of the serious transgressions of the above theories in this context is the failure to recognise the entanglement of colonialism and nationalism which has resulted in the polarisation of such terms as the “nation” and “colony”, the “colonised” and “coloniser” and therefore the “self” and “other”. For some, the failure to identify the intersection and entanglement of nationalism and colonialism reveals the lasting effects of colonialism in Icelandic academia after the decolonisation of the country, whether this is perceived as economic, political or cultural (Þorgrímsdóttir 2006). In the next section, we explore this entanglement through a consideration of archaeological evidence.

## The Archaeology of Danish Presence

The material presence of the Danish state in Iceland is marked in somewhat ambiguous ways, but linked both to Danish administrative functions and the trade monopoly. Architecturally, a number of new building forms appeared in Iceland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including merchant’s timber houses at the trading stations scattered around the island (e.g. at Eyrarbakki, a station on the south coast), and the more grand, stone houses of administrative officials (e.g. Viðeyjarstofa, Nesstofa, both in the environs of Reykjavík, the former being the treasurer’s residence, the latter that of the director of public health). The apex of the administrative hierarchy was the colonial governor’s residence at Bessastaðir (now the official home of the president of Iceland), which in the seventeenth century was remodelled along the lines of a courtyard complex known as *Konungsgarður* or the King’s Manor. Part of this complex was excavated in the 1980s and 1990s revealing a brick and timber structure associated with the seventeenth-century rebuilding (Ólafsson 1991). The uses of dressed stone, timber and brick were all alien building methods to the Icelandic architectural vernacular which used turf or turf and undressed stone as their primary building materials. The internal spatial organisation of these new buildings was also a novelty.

Besides these alien architectural forms, there are imported commodities, which came either as legal trade through Danish merchants, as personal cargo or through illicit trade. Such goods, which included all ceramics, glassware and a great deal of metalware, make up an increasingly large proportion of archaeological assemblages in Iceland between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. However, many of the imported objects were not Danish; German stonewares and Dutch clay pipes are extremely common on Icelandic sites, alongside lesser amounts of oriental porcelain, although it seems likely that most of the more utilitarian red earthenwares were of Danish manufacture, based on compositional analysis (Sveinbjarnardóttir 1996). Similarly, many of the timber houses mentioned above would have been built by German or Norwegian merchants, especially before the trade monopoly was instigated. Nonetheless, even though many such goods and buildings may not have

been manufactured in Denmark or designed/constructed by Danes, the crucial question in this context concerns how they were *perceived*.

Christina Folke Ax (2009) has pointed out that for Icelanders, Danishness was almost synonymous with foreignness insofar as everything that was not Icelandic was often simply called Danish—sometimes pejoratively, sometimes admiringly. However, arguably such an association may have been strongest during the nineteenth century as the nationalist movement took hold, a point well exemplified in the case of alcohol. Alcohol had been consumed in Iceland since the settlement of the island in the ninth century, but at the start of the twentieth century it was frequently referred to as a foreign or Danish vice and a malevolent influence on Icelanders. Although alcohol was produced locally, a great deal was also imported, especially wine, beer and spirits. This “othering” of alcohol—and in particular, associating it with the Danes—linked the temperance movement directly to the nationalist cause (Ísleifsson 2007). In 1915, prohibition went into effect in Iceland and was only partially repealed in 1935 as spirits became exempt; beer however remained illegal until 1989. At least for the early period, prohibition thus became a form of independence by other means, while those who indulged in alcohol consumption were underlining their subservience not only to the bottle, but to Danish culture and the Danish state. To see how such a perception could have been maintained at a very concrete level, let us take an archaeological example.

Recent excavations by one of the authors of this chapter at an early industrial fishing village which was occupied between 1907 and 1943 in the bay of Reykjavík uncovered fragments of an embossed flask which held a blended whisky from a New York distillery called Littlemore operating between 1907 and 1936 (Fig. 6.2). Given these dates, its presence on this site suggests a flouting of the prohibition, an activity that is known to have occurred from contemporary newspaper sources. One story in particular is worth telling because of the explicit associations with nationalism. In 1917, a fishing trawler Þór docked at Viðey and unloaded an illegal cargo of alcohol, which everyone in the village seemed to know about and take advantage of. Despite the villagers keeping quiet about it, the authorities heard of it and impounded what remained of the liquor. One of the few villagers who were against the cargo—a schoolteacher—was later accused of tipping off the authorities. She promptly wrote a letter to the national paper, *Morgunblaðið*, denying this charge but openly confessed her dislike of alcohol in flagrant nationalist terms:

I find [alcohol] to be a powerful enemy which makes war against my country, and what is more, consider it treason to join up with it, or to tolerate its arrival unhindered as it could do even more harm here than in other places.

I believe it should be the duty of all good men and true Icelanders to fight against it, not the least my duty as a member of the temperance movement.<sup>1</sup>

*Morgunblaðið*, 22nd March 1917, p. 2, col. 3 (authors' translation).

<sup>1</sup> Mér fanst hann vera öflagur óvinur sem væri að herja á landið mitt, og að það, væru föðurlandssvik að ganga í lið með honum, eða líða honum að komast óhindrað áfram og gera ef til vill enn þá meira illt af sér annars staðar. Að það væri skylda allra góðra manna og sannra Íslendinga að berjá móti honum, og þá ekki sízt skylda min, sem var templari.

**Fig. 6.2** Fragment of a whisky flask found during the excavations on Viðey (Photo by Gavin Lucas)



The quote illustrates the clear links between nationalism and the temperance movement through its language and words used. But what is doubly interesting about this particular case is that the fishing village and associated factory was established by a joint stock company based in Copenhagen and that Danish personnel and companies were a key part of operations, even if most of the workers were Icelandic. Given the close relationship between the Icelanders living in the village and the Danish companies working there, the flouting of prohibition in the village seen both in documentary and archaeological sources would have appeared to the temperance movement as a confirmation of the ideological links between alcohol consumption and political subservience. How the villagers and workers saw it however is another matter.

## **Nationalism, Colonialism and Archaeology**

The entanglement of nationalism and colonialism discussed above needs further elaboration in the context of Iceland. Since the nineteenth century, Iceland has been perceived as a place to escape from the corruption of modernity, with its pristine nature and “simpler” way of life, and as static and primitive. By European standards, it carried both an exoticism and a familiarity. The familiarity was manifested in history, religion and literary tradition, the latter evident in the nineteenth-century



glorification of the sagas, whereas Icelanders were considered the custodians of the Danish national (or even pan-Scandinavian) heritage, linguistic and cultural. At the same time perceptions of Iceland and Icelanders by other Europeans during the nineteenth century were often not very favourable. In stereotypical fashion, Iceland was often portrayed as a backward, uncivilised place by the increasing number of tourists and scientific expeditions who went there from the mid-eighteenth century (Ísleifsson 1996, 2007). At the same time, Icelandic elites and intellectuals tried to distance themselves from this image through participating in the same colonial discourse of non-western peoples. Such a discourse was a deliberate attempt to counter foreign perceptions of Iceland which might have aligned the island with non-European others and instead situate Iceland emphatically within the European core.

Although the colonial project was undoubtedly enfolded in such discourses, one has to bear in mind that this perception of Iceland was not simply about Europeans and others. Within Europe itself, the urban middle classes were increasingly using the same language to describe the European peasantry and working classes as they applied to Africans and other non-European peoples. The nineteenth-century descriptions of Swedish peasantry as backward and uncivilised by the Swedish middle classes are not substantially different to those of Iceland by foreign visitors (Frykman and Löfgren 1987:174–220). Of course there is an inevitable connection between the colonial and class discourses (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Ahmad 1992), but what is especially interesting about Iceland is how it straddles both of these. The European perception of nineteenth-century Iceland as backward was ambiguously both a colonial and a class issue.

This ambiguity about how Iceland is viewed in western discourse can be also linked to its perception as a geographical and historical marginal part of Europe and European culture since the late Middle Ages (Durrenberger and Pálsson 1989; Pálsson and Durrenberger 1992; also see Wolff 1994). However, such ambiguity within Iceland itself probably only became manifest in the nineteenth century during the rise of nationalism and demands for independence from Denmark and was especially felt over Iceland's equivocal status as coloniser/colony (Loftsdóttir 2010). That is, the extent to which Iceland identified itself with the European imperial core as opposed to being perceived as a colony of the metropole. Iceland thus presented an anomaly in the dualities inherent in the colonialist, imperialist and nationalist rhetoric which distinguished the civilised from the uncivilised. It occupied an in-between position on the borderland between the civilised and the uncivilised nations of the nineteenth century (Oslund 2011). These politics of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion, the tensions between cultural greatness and savagery, modernity and primitiveness, which ultimately translate into concurrent feelings of cultural superiority and economic and technological inferiority, have had a deep effect in Icelandic society.

This is well illustrated in the World Fair of 1900 in Paris and the Danish colonial exhibition in 1904. The former was organised by one of the famous and still largely quoted antiquarians of the time, Daniel Bruun. The exhibition went by the name "Northern Dwellers" and was held at the Colonial Pavilion. The intention of Daniel

Bruun as an antiquarian and chief curator of the exhibition was to illustrate the cultural connections of the northern colonies/dependencies with Denmark through religion. Even though it was acknowledged that Iceland and the Faeroe Islands were dependencies with political representation within the Danish kingdom, they were placed alongside the colony of Greenland in order to provide a better comparative approach between their material culture and justify cultural connections along the North Atlantic (Mogensen 1997). The classification of Iceland alongside the “primitive” Greenlanders instigated various objections among the Icelandic elites. Similarly, the latter exhibition regarding the Danish colonies in 1904 was strongly opposed by Icelandic students residing in Copenhagen. The protesters considered that the participation of Iceland in the exhibition automatically meant the reduction of Iceland’s status to that of a colony. Even though the intention of the exhibition was to focus on Iceland’s history and nature, placing Iceland alongside the colonies of Greenland and Africa prompted major reactions and comments declaring that Iceland was “being posed along with uncultured savage ethnicities (*siðlausum villipjóðum*) [...] to disgrace us in the eyes of the cultivated world” (Sveinsson, quoted in Loftsdóttir 2008:183).

The above displays can be taken as evidence of the paternalistic role that the Danes had assumed towards their colonies/dependencies and reflect the implicit responsibility of bringing civilisation to those faraway isolated territories. Iceland in this respect resembled the core of the Danish monarchy through the Christian religion yet not those aspects of modernity so as to be equated with the other civilised nations. Greenland’s position, on the other hand, was at the bottom of that hierarchy of civilisation. What is of greater importance however is the fact that both exhibitions clearly show that colonialism and nationalism do not just simply use the same set of criteria for identification but that they fundamentally share the same worldview in matters of civilisation, race, history and the past. The point of departure of nationalism is akin to the colonial discourse.

Postcolonial critique has not only taught us that the “coloniser” and the “colonised” need each other in order to constitute themselves (Bhabha 1994), but also that their relationship involves such heterogeneous networks of power that it becomes impossible to contain them in one uniform and articulate narrative (Spivak 1988). Nationalism as an ontological apparatus and a frame of reference is a hybrid construct that does not connote a culturally bounded whole (Stewart 1999). It stems from a reworking and at times forceful combination of previously existing cultural elements and not from the simple stratified combination of distinct cultural forms (Bhabha 1994). It is a product that is stemming from the ambivalence inherent in colonial situations. For Partha Chatterjee (1986) nationalism is a derivative discourse of colonialism within which anti-colonial sentiments create an illusory antithesis between nationalism and colonialism. National emancipation and resistance to colonial dominion therefore “is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the ‘content’ of another culture... It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and re-implicate them within the deferential

relations of colonial power—hierarchy, normalization, marginalization and so forth” (Bhabha 1994:110–11).

In this framework, Icelandic and Danish antiquarians participated actively in the production of a colonial-cum-nationalist discourse, although it manifested itself in a rather unusual way. Part of this must relate to the historical role archaeology played—or rather did *not* play in the independence movement in Iceland. Unlike many other countries, the role of archaeology was minimal in nationalist discourse; far more important was the literary and linguistic heritage (Byock 1992; also see Hálfðanarson 2005). Why was this? In part, it relates to the way in which the literary heritage attested to a degree of modernity or civilisation that none of its monuments or ruins could ever do. Iceland’s medieval literary heritage was a far more powerful tool in the fight for independence than archaeology because it demonstrated Iceland’s right to be counted as a modernising and advanced nation. In contrast, its archaeological remains were often non-descript and certainly unimpressive when compared with the archaeology of Denmark or indeed other European countries. In fact, it was much easier and less contentious to subsume the archaeological record of Iceland within a broader pan-Scandinavian cultural tradition, which is how it was perceived in many ways, by both Icelandic and Danish antiquarians during the late nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, archaeology was conscripted to the nationalist/colonialist cause and was done so by aligning it to the more potent literary heritage which acted to turn such non-descript sites into monuments (Friðriksson 1994). Along these lines, the Icelandic member of the Danish Royal Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities, Finnur Magnússon, undertook a systematic survey of all the visible monuments in Iceland in 1816. His *Udsigt over mærkelige oldsager i Island* (Survey of Remarkable Antiquities in Iceland) was comprised of reports sent by each Icelandic parish and constituted the basis upon which the first preservation order was put in 1817. Similarly, the Icelandic Literary Society attempted to complete a total description of Iceland in the mid-nineteenth century. Part of this project was to locate ancient monuments and involved such figures as poet, natural philosopher and early nationalist, Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807–1845). On both occasions, ancient ruins were associated to saga events and historic figures. Early antiquarians such as the Danish scholars Kristian Kålund (1844–1919), Daniel Bruun (1856–1931), the Icelandic Sigurður Vigfússon (1828–1892) and Brynjúlfur Jónsson (1838–1914) all contributed in their own ways in recording ancient monuments, legends and folklore, describing landscapes and making literary analogies to the medieval sagas. They were partners in creating the modern structures of professional archaeology as seen in the establishment of the Collection of Icelandic Antiquities in 1863 and the Archaeological Society in 1879.

The search for sites and especially for those types that were believed to be associated with the civilised world, such as temples and law courts, was very much a preoccupation of both the local and foreign early antiquarians in Iceland. Such work turned sites into *monuments*. As Friðriksson comments on the work of Olaf Olsen: “Olsen compared the topographic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and discovered a marked increase in ruins identified as temples in the latter half of

the nineteenth century. While only a few temple ruins are mentioned in the Land Register from 1703 to 1712, and numbered a mere 14 in the parish archaeological reports of 1817–1823, they rise to about 100 at the turn of the century” (Friðriksson 1994:73). Similarly, court circles and law courts also reappear in abundance in the literature of the nineteenth century. Olsen explains the above as a reflection of the growing interest in antiquities inspired by national romanticism in Iceland. However, the conviction that language, race, religion and in our case ancient monuments can measure the civility and cultural superiority of a nation is shared by both the nationalist and colonialist discourse. As fundamental ideologies of western modernity, they create a civilising discourse within which national entities and colonial empires are entangled in a race to top the hierarchy of the civilised, modernised world. The participation of the Icelandic nationalists in this race is clearly illustrated in the words of one of the most influential Icelandic nationalist historians, J.J. Aðils, written at the beginning of the twentieth century: “... Iceland was so rich and beautiful and great that such greatness had not been witnessed before, apart from the Ancient Greeks ...at the highest level of maturity ...”, Icelanders would “gain excellent fame for courage and deeds, strength and honesty ... wealth and prosperity grow at home, fame and reputation abroad” (Aðils 1903:238–9, quoted in Friðriksson 1994:5–6).

## **Transcending the Colonial Dichotomy and Crypto-Colonialism**

The ambiguity of the colonial status of Iceland alluded to earlier in this chapter ultimately impacted on the nature of Icelandic nationalism. Insofar as Iceland struggled for independence from Denmark, its shared cultural heritage meant that any such separation was bound to be equivocal—if not politically, at least ideologically. Paraphrasing Herzfeld (2002), one might suggest that for a country like Iceland, the need to establish a nation equal to those of others and the creation of a stable national identity involved a sacrifice. Not so much of economic dependence as Herzfeld argues, but of cultural dependence. Just as nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeologists often portrayed Icelandic material remains in terms of a pan-Scandinavian heritage, so a common contemporary refrain in academic discourse is the situating of Iceland within a broader, supra-entity—of yet another imagined community to which Iceland belongs. If not Scandinavia, then the North Atlantic or the Arctic. The parade of invented terms such as “Scandinavian orientalism” (Jóhannsson 2000), “arcticality” (Pálsson 2002) and “borealism” (Schram 2011) even though constructed to counteract the modern essentialist discourses that pervade Icelandic society through tourism, nationalism and discourses of globalisation, only succeed to connote the anxiety to be included within some larger cultural entity or a wider community of the “North” that accepts Iceland as an equal partner and contributor.

We would suggest that while the generation of the above terms is an attempt to transcend the ambivalence of Iceland's former colonial status or indeed the colonialist/nationalist dichotomy, they do so at a cost. This cost is an *accentuation* rather than diminution of anxiety about cultural identity for Icelanders—an anxiety of belonging and a place in the world. On Wednesday, 19th October 2011, *Frettablaðið*, a daily free national newspaper distributed over most of Iceland, reported that Icelandic horses were to be used in shooting the new film *The Hobbit*. Articles of this kind occur regularly in this newspaper and seem to encapsulate this anxiety about national self-identity. On the one hand, they explicitly express a pride in how Iceland and its citizens (human, equine or otherwise) are playing a role in the international arena. On the other hand, the very fact they report on what are often fairly trivial matters is an implicit acknowledgement of a deep fear of the very opposite: how unimportant Iceland is to the world. In searching for a place, for cultural significance in a global arena, the very ambiguity of Iceland's former colonial status still resounds today.

And this brings us back to the point we began and Herzfeld's concept of crypto-colonialism. Iceland may not have been a coloniser and it may not even have been a colony, but it is precisely because it does not neatly fall into these categories that it demands close attention. For, like other crypto-colonies, it raises questions over the distribution of cultural significance and who decides what counts as important. It exposes the prejudices of our terms and the master narratives of colonialism and nationalism—and indeed of modernity itself. In many ways, the issue can be condensed to a spatial one, concerning cores and margins; such a political geography will always create an uneven space and one in which the terms of debate remain the same. Iceland will either be viewed as marginal or it will argue for core status. The only way forward is to neutralise such political geography. One way has been the construction of new supra-entities or regional communities like the North, but we suggest this only creates the possibility of new spatial hierarchies at a higher level. A better solution is to abandon any pretence at a scalar approach to space (regional, national or supranational) and rather consider the situated nature of existence. Space looks different depending on where you are standing. For archaeology, this means attending to the obvious fact that one is always working at a particular site or within a particular landscape; the core is thus wherever you happen to be and the periphery, the limits of your site's network. The problem is archaeologists all too often make the leap from their concrete site to a larger, abstract community (e.g. a cultural region) and in doing so immediately submit their archaeology to a political geography of cores and margins. What if we stay grounded and what if we follow objects and connections between places suggested by objects and in doing so move our perspective with them? This is not about denying the unequal power relations between places or the role that nationalist and colonial ideologies play in this network, but rather about exploring the paths and networks along which these power relations flow. In doing this, questions of cores and margins become more fluid and contingent and the ambiguities of colonialism and nationalism, which before seemed so problematic, now appear quite inevitable.

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# Chapter 7

## Circumventing Colonial Policies: Consumption and Family Life as Social Practices in the Early Nineteenth-Century Disko Bay

Peter A. Toft and Inge Høst Seiding

### Prologue

This is an account of a colonial relationship with a power balance as skewed as in any other colonial situation. However, it is told from a point of view that, with the words of Chris Gosden, undermines the question of who had agency in colonial encounters and argues that all actors involved in these relationships were able to act and react (Gosden 2004:82).

Our work with the colonial encounter in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Greenland combining a vast, yet still incompletely excavated, archaeological source material and unique colonial archives provides a promising insight into the colonial culture within which colonial subjects were forced to act. Greenlanders<sup>1</sup> were subjected to a colonial administration at all times anxiously controlling access to elements of European culture. Control was especially intense when it came to the most tangible yet unruly aspects of the cultural encounter in the eyes of the colonial administrators: consumption of European goods and intermarriage/intimate relations between European men and Greenlandic women.

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<sup>1</sup> The indigenous population of Greenland are Inuit but have referred to themselves as *Kalaallit* since precolonial times. Today this remains the marker of nationality and national culture of the Greenlanders, especially since the name of the now self-governing country is *Kalaallit Nunaat*—‘land of the Kalaallit’—in Greenland. In Danish, *grønlander*—‘Greenlander’—is still used. There is no tradition of self-reference or reference to Greenlandic Inuit, despite an awareness of and engagement in the Panarctic Inuit cultural and political community as Greenlandic Inuit. Accordingly, the indigenous population will be referred to as ‘Greenlanders.’

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## Consumption and Family Life in the Contact Zones

Studying changes in family life, material culture and consumption during the colonial encounter in Greenland, we have sought to avoid a perspective that would reduce these processes to examples of cultural decay and Europeanisation or as a unidirectional adoption of European culture. Such a view corresponds with the one expressed by the colonial administration and leaves the colonial population as a group of passive, colonial subjects. Inspired by Mary Louise Pratt's concepts of contact zones and transculturation and the thought that "while subjugated people cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do to varying extents control what they absorb into their own, how they use it and what they make it mean" (Pratt 1992:7), the analysis moves beyond counteragency and towards illuminating the complex social and cultural change in which Greenlanders actively engaged.

The Greenlanders' engagement in the trade economy as sellers and buyers as well as their use of new goods in the context of new kin relations at different levels of the trade hierarchy were elements in a complex cultural exchange and need to be understood as such. Campbell's (1993) critique of historical analysis of eighteenth-century consumer conduct questioning simplified commoners' consumption of luxury goods as imitation or emulative behaviour offers a source of inspiration. Similar concerns are found in recent consumption studies in historical archaeology, in which consumers are seen as social agents who actively define meanings of foreign commodities in relation to existing tradition, in opposition to external dominant ideology and in self-definition and collective identification (Mullins 2011:134–135, 140, 2012:31–32, 38). Considering consumer conduct as corresponding to contemporary cultural ideals makes sense in our case to the extent that consumer behaviour in colonial Greenland was closely connected to cultural modes of exchange and social relations, for example, the known parallels between hunting trips and store shopping as social events (Toft 2010:205). This offers an understanding of colonial trade and consumption as something that became integrated in the social and cultural economy, adding new value and meaning to events and objects. Pratt's notion of transculturation is mainly inspired by cultural encounters of literature and language, but it makes equal sense when focusing on material aspects of a cultural encounter along the lines of Gosden's description of "middle ground" in colonial situations. Drawing on White's (1991) concept describing the development of colonial, hybrid worlds of shared meaning, Gosden specifically points out the material aspect of such cultural encounters. In these dense points of cultural negotiation, objects were traded and bartered, given new value and meaning (Gosden 2004:82–83).

These points, along with inspiration from Thomas' (1991) important analysis of cultural exchange in colonial situations in the Pacific, make up a useful vantage point for an analytical perspective on colonial Greenland in the early nineteenth century. With the theoretical foci mentioned above, this chapter seeks to combine broad social questions with detailed analysis of the purchase and use of everyday things, a combination that, according to Paul Mullins, has troubled many consumption studies in

historical archaeology in the last 30 years (2012:31). Seeing the objects made, sold, bought and used as expressions of self-definition and identity also makes perfect sense when working with the archaeological and historical source material from Greenland, particularly when, as suggested by Paul Mullins, these expressions are seen in the context of the cultural and structural processes in which they were made. The rich archaeological and historical evidence from Greenland calls for such a perspective on the colonial encounter. With a detailed knowledge about shifting trade policies, annual trade results and activities as well as consumption on the level of individuals, the case is clear for an analysis providing us with important clues to central processes of cultural exchange in the specific colonial context of Greenland. These varied sources allow us to “embrace the agency of consumers and recognise that goods assume meaning in a tension between structural and localised processes that cannot be described as being either wholly deterministic or disconnected from consumer symbolism” (Mullins 2011:134–135).

## Colonial Greenland

The Danish colonisation of Greenland in the period from 1721 to 1953 was initially a predominantly mission-based project. Norwegian missionary Hans Egede travelled on behalf of the Danish–Norwegian monarchy to southwestern Greenland in his search of unreformed Christians, descendants of the Norse settlers. The mission, partly financed by colonial trade, quickly changed its focus to the conversion of the Greenlanders, as the search for the lost Norse population failed.

During the first 150 years of colonisation, the Lutheran mission was challenged by Moravian preachers establishing several stations in the southwest of Greenland. The Danish mission remained closely connected to and financially dependent on colonial trade. Until 1905, the school system was administered and developed by the church. From the beginning of the colonisation lessons in Christianity, reading and writing were given by missionaries and a growing number of local Greenlandic catechists as well as the so-called readers. Readers were literate Greenlanders, women as well as men, who were paid to teach reading and writing locally, especially at outposts, which were rarely visited by a missionary or a catechist. Catechists and readers helped missionaries overcome the logistic difficulties posed by the scattered settlement pattern as well as the seasonal movements of the Greenlanders to their summer hunting grounds far away from winter settlements around the factories and outposts. This practice resulted in early, widespread literacy among the Greenlanders (Frandsen 1999).

The first local, overall administration of trade was introduced with the establishment of *Kongelige Grønlandske Handel* (KGH)—the Royal Greenlandic Trading Department (RGTD)—following the liquidation of the joint stock company, *Almindelige Handelskompagni*, in the mid-1770s. The new, fully state-sponsored trading company of the early 1780s established a colonial administration structure

lasting until after the Second World War. It consisted of an overseas central administration in Copenhagen and two local superior administrators—governors, one in the southern part of Greenland in Godthåb (present-day capital Nuuk) and one in the northern part in Godhavn (present-day Qeqertarsuaq), dividing colonial Greenland in southern and northern inspectorates. In 1774, colonial Greenland consisted of scattered factories and outposts on the west coast, from Nanortalik in the south to Upernavik in the north. Each inspector overseeing factories in his region answered directly to Copenhagen (Frandsen 2010:15–18). The factories were known as *colonies* in Danish, which is why Greenland was commonly referred to as the *Greenlandic colonies* in plural.

All factories were manned by a chief factor, one or two deputy factors and a staff of carpenters, coopers, cooks and other manual labourers depending on the size of the factory. Outposts were manned by manual labourers and craftsmen and managed by an outpost manager answering to the chief factor at the nearest factory. Both factories and outposts were the scene of colonial trade during which European commodities were exchanged for local Greenlandic products, such as whale and seal blubber, baleen, skin and narwhale tooth, which were exported to Europe by the RGTD. Factories were also the centres of colonial whale hunting and mission.

## Archaeological Evidence of Colonial Consumption and Illegal Trade

In many historical contexts, archaeological sources provide evidence of the local population breaking colonial trade monopolies by bartering with foreign sailors, whalers, fishermen, fur trappers, etc. (e.g., Schmidt and Mrozowski 1993; Deagan 2007; Loring and Arendt 2009:52). The key to this is the provenance of objects, which supports an origin outside the sphere of influence of the colonial homeland. In the context of modern Europe, with its global trade networks, the use of objects to exemplify illegal trade, however, is less simple. This is clearly illustrated by the archaeological record of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Disko Bay. In colonial Greenland, the assemblage of commodities sold by the Danish colonial trade companies and foreign whalers was often the same. Both parties sold Dutch glass beads in the eighteenth century and small Venetian seed beads in the nineteenth century, as the European centre for production changed from Amsterdam to Venice (Dubin 1987:111). The price lists of the RGTD reveal only a few details about the nature of the faience and porcelain sold. Most of these items were bought from German merchants and are only described in the company's import records by material and quality (*Direktorat*, RA 458.11). In Disko Bay, most of the early nineteenth-century faience is British (Fig. 7.1), but this does not prove illegal trade between Greenlanders and British whalers. During the Napoleonic wars, Greenland was under blockade by the British navy, and only a few Danish ships reached Greenlandic shores. After 1810, the British

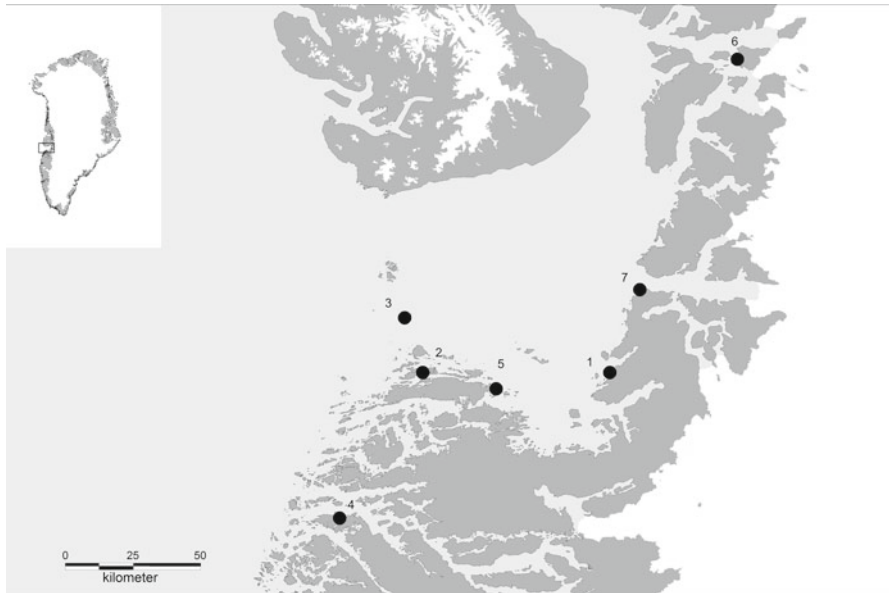
**Fig. 7.1** Fragment of a hand-painted British faience plate, produced in the years 1770–1800, found in Disko Bay. The plate could have been supplied to the Greenlanders by British whalers or through a Scottish Company during the Napoleonic wars (Photo by Peter A. Toft)



government allowed Greenland to be supplied by a Scottish company in Leith (Gad 1984:202). Thus, the British faience could originate from this period. Further, the origin of most European iron artefacts remains obscure, as they lack factory stamps and are highly corroded.

In short, the illegal trade with foreign whalers is hard to quantify in Greenland based solely on the provenance of objects. Only few artefacts from Disko Bay reveal their illicit origin. One object is a Dutch medal made in the seventeenth century found at Iginniarfik (Fig. 7.2) and a Saxon coin stamped in 1624 found at Hunde Eyland (Toft 2010:30). A few other objects can be identified as illegal commodities solely by their type. Guns were prohibited from sale by the colonists until 1757; only 2 gun parts, 24 gunflints and 6 lead bullets exists in the archaeological record of the region, and the earliest can only be broadly dated to the eighteenth century. Consequently, these objects could also be commodities sold at the Danish colonies after 1757.

Alcoholic beverages were another forbidden commodity, not released for sale to the Greenlanders until 1955 (Bornemann 1956:100). Thus, a small rim-shard of a brandy jar from an eighteenth-century midden at Sermermiut must have been bought by Greenlanders from a Dutch or British ship or from the Danish colonial staff, who were allowed to buy alcohol (Toft 2010:66). In addition, 13 fragments of glass from Sermermiut, Illutalik and Ikkarlusuup Timaa originate from liquor or wine bottles. Bottle glass was sometimes knapped or made into scrapers and in one case ornamented with a chequered pattern (Toft 2010:51). The illegal consumption of alcohol

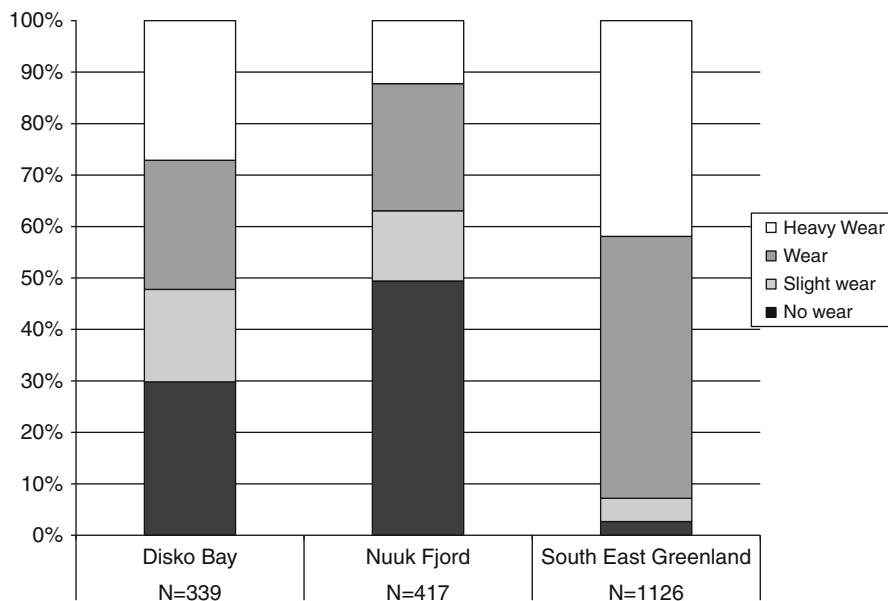


**Fig. 7.2** Map of the Southern part of Disko Bay with sites mentioned in the text. 1 Christianshaab (Qasigiannugit), 2 Egedesminde (Aasiaat), 3 Hunde Eyland, 4 Igginiarfik, 5 Ikkarlussuup Timaa, 6 Illutalik, 7 Sermermiut (Map drawn by Peter A. Toft)

by Greenlanders is mentioned in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century written accounts (Egede and Egede 1939:167–168; Gad 1969:579, 1976:76, 272; Egede 1988:63; Frandsen 2010:200–203) and must have been more frequent than what is evident in the archaeological record.

In contrast, the most common European objects in the archaeological record of Disko Bay are glass beads. According to written sources and ethnographic material from the nineteenth century, these were used as dress ornaments and jewellery (Egede 1925:370; Birket-Smith 1924). The use and wear of glass beads illuminate how the presence of colonial shops and foreign whalers affected consumption patterns in West Greenland. A difference in the degree of wear is evident when comparing glass beads from two regions with European contact and a steady supply of European commodities, Disko Bay and the Nuuk Fjord, with southeast Greenland (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4). The latter region was colonised as late as in 1894, and European commodities were only received through the hands of Greenlandic middlemen (Gulløv 2005:340).

The many unused glass beads and their frequent finds in middens of Disko Bay and the Nuuk Fjord show a “buy and discard” practice reflecting a favourable supply situation (Toft 2010:90–91, 115). Easy access to European commodities in Disko Bay is also illustrated by the two single Greenlandic examples of glass beads reshaped as tops for children (Fig. 7.5). In contrast, glass beads were used in amulet-harnesses in southeast Greenland (Toft 2010:92). Glass beads are

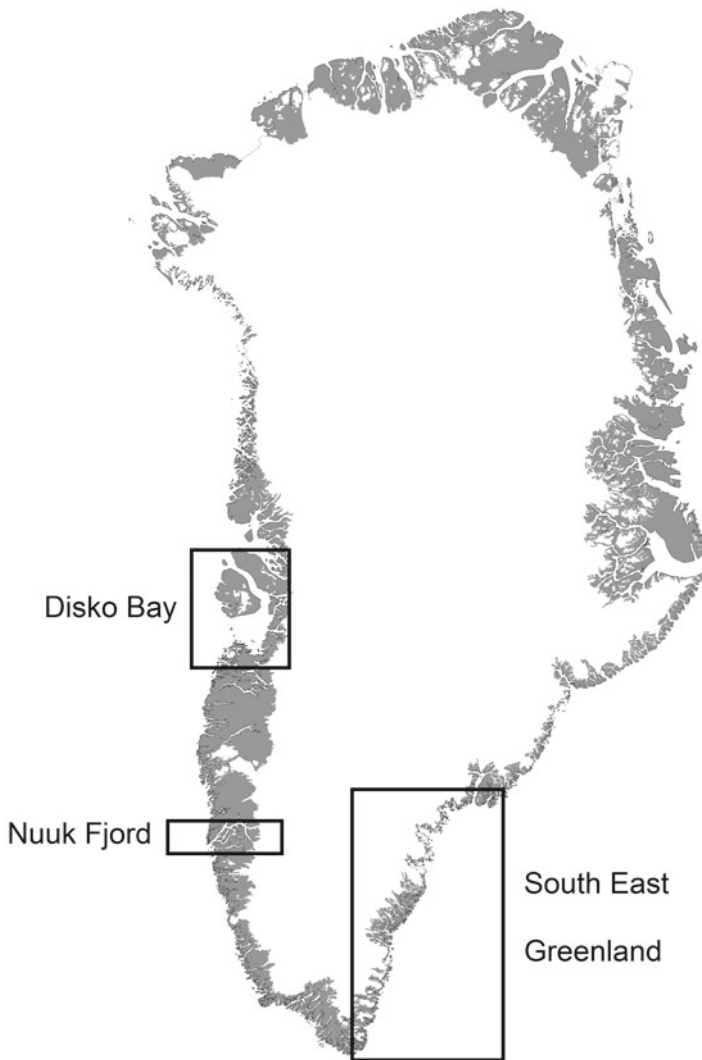


**Fig. 7.3** Variation in the wear of 1882 glass beads in the three regions. Easy access to European commodities in Disko Bay and Nuuk Fjord clearly affected consumption patterns (graph drawn by Peter A. Toft)

only one example of the regional variation in the Greenlandic transculturation of European goods (Toft 2010). This variation in the consumption and use of European commodities and patterns of wear in glass beads, for example, supports Mullins' argument that the specific cultural and historical context shapes consumption and the distinct ways in which everyday objects are socialised (Mullins 2011:136–137, 142, 2012:32).

Even objects made of lasting materials such as glass beads are underrepresented in the archaeological record, as evidenced by the account journals of the colonies of Egedesminde and Christianshaab in the years 1806, 1816 and 1826.<sup>2</sup> In these three years, the number of glass beads sold to the Greenlanders was 22–26 times larger than in the total archaeological material from Disko Bay (Toft 2010:216). The detailed account books of the RGTD and colonial census lists of the early nineteenth century are also excellent sources for studying Greenlandic consumption and marriage patterns, that is, how consumption, family and colonial ties were entangled with each other.

<sup>2</sup> In colonial Greenland, the term “year” denotes the period between the 1st of July and the 30th of June. For instance, the year 1806 covers the period between the 1st of July 1805 and the 30th of June 1806. The administration of the Danish colonies in Greenland was run by this temporal framework, as the supply ships reached Greenland in early July after the disappearance of the sea ice.



**Fig. 7.4** Map of Greenland with the regions of Disko Bay, Nuuk Fjord, and southeast Greenland marked

### **Colonial Trade Administration in Nineteenth-Century Greenland: Paradoxical Policies and Practice**

Apart from an ethical intention of protecting the natural state of the Greenlanders and preventing economic and moral impoverishment, economic reasoning was a decisive factor behind the policy of the RGTD. As 75% of the company's income consisted of skin, baleen, teeth and blubber from marine mammals supplied



**Fig. 7.5** Glass bead reused as a top for children. The length of the top is 5.1 cm (Photo by Peter A. Toft)



by Greenlanders in return for European commodities (Gad 1976:285), it was vital that the Greenlanders remained hunters. Hence, only locals of mixed descent unsuited for hunting due to the lack of skill or physique were employed in the trade or mission (Rud 2010:97, 148–149). Due to the competition from foreign whalers, coffee, tea, sugar, sugar candy, peas, meals and bread were released for sale in 1806, but only in return for skin (Bendixen 1917:6). The sale of other foodstuffs to Greenlanders was still banned. Later, all restrictions on the sale of coffee were lifted in 1847 (Sveistrup 1944:62–63). However, the colonial policy made certain exceptions, allowing restricted food and alcohol to be used at special occasions, such as royal birthdays and the Holy Communion, or as a reward for hard work in unloading ships and serving as lookouts for whales. Food was also distributed by the missionaries to Greenlanders who had been successful in their efforts to master reading (Kragh 1875:84, 88, 201; Marquardt 1997:201). Historical sources provide some information about foodstuffs sold or bartered with foreign whalers. In the below-mentioned diary of Henriette Egede, it is described how she and her husband received potatoes, cheese and fresh pork meat, perishable foodstuffs otherwise unavailable, from an English ship in the early spring of 1833 (*Diary*, AI, A301/102). This illegal trade with food was performed by a superior trade employee, Henriette's husband,

who was a deputy factor and outpost manager. However, another employee, the cooper at the nearby outpost where the ship had been able to come closer to the shore, performed the actual exchange. Henriette does not write anything about payment, but it seems that it was an element in a frequent, informal barter economy taking place among both Europeans and Greenlanders as well as between these two groups.

The contrast between colonial intention and policy is also clear from the annual pricelists of the RGTD. From 1786, commodities were divided into three general categories: *necessary* (*nødvendige*), *useful* (*nyttige*) and *sumptuous* (*overdaadige*) goods. These categories were further divided into types, such as ammunition, tobacco, provisions and woollen products. In order to control Greenlandic consumption, the three categories had different profits, which were added to the cost: 12% on most necessary goods, 30% on useful goods, and 40% on sumptuous goods (Bendixen 1917:4–5). In 1796, the pricelists were reorganised and the categories were placed as abbreviations in the margins, but the profit system remained the same until 1833. However, the intention of the price system to limit Greenlandic consumption to *necessary* and *useful* goods diverged from the actual assortment of commodities sent to the colony. A comparison of the price lists from 1786 to 1796 shows an increasing appetite for *sumptuous* commodities. Objects such as ironmongery, commodities made of tin and miscellaneous types were especially in demand (*Price lists*, AI, A 315.I). A similar rise in the demand for the *necessary* and *useful* goods can be noted (Toft 2010:207). The selection of commodity types was of course influenced by competition with the foreign whalers. Several written accounts mention Greenlanders buying European commodities from the whalers if they were cheaper or of superior quality than those offered by the Danish merchants (Egede 1988:25, 122–123). This practice is also demonstrated by Danish colonists sending samples of popular commodities supplied by the whalers to the management of the RGTD (Frandsen 2010:404–405, 500).

The trade policy did not have the intended effect locally, neither among Danish colonists nor among Greenlanders. This is clearly evident in the account books, called *Grønlanderbøger*, in which the commodities bought and the local products traded by the Greenlanders not employed in the RGTD or the missions were recorded. These account books from the colonies Egedesminde (present-day Aasiaat) and Christianshaab (present-day Qasigiannuit) in the years 1806, 1816 and 1826 reveal a massive Greenlandic consumption of sumptuous goods.<sup>3</sup> In 1806, in Egedesminde, the consumption of expensive textiles, wool and silk ribbons, tableware, expensive jewellery and woollen wristlets far surpasses the sale of hunting equipment, tools and

<sup>3</sup>Account books: *Grønlanderbog*, Christianshaab 1805–1806, NKA 57.11.01, 72.20, 1.1; *Grønlanderbog*, Egedesminde 1806–1816, NKA 57.10.01/72.21/1; *Grønlanderbog*, Christianshaab 1814–1820, NKA 57.11.01/72.21/1; *Grønlanderbog*, Egedesminde 1816–1824, NKA 57.10.01/72.21/3; *Grønlanderbog*, Christianshaab 1821–1829, NKA 57.11.01/72.21/2; *Grønlanderbog*, Egedesminde 1825–1833, NKA 57.10.01/72.21/4.

cooking vessels. The contemporary consumption at Christianshaab is dominated by cheaper textiles, woollen clothing and ammunition, although expensive textiles and food also made a sizable part of the sale. The pattern of consumption in 1816 is reversed, as the largest total sale and the highest consumption of sumptuous and expensive commodities took place in Christianshaab. In this colony, the sale of woollen wristlets, glass beads and jewellery topped the consumption of tools and cooking vessels. Ten years later the total sale peaks yet again in Egedesminde. The account books are dominated by coffee, sugar and sugar candy and food. Foodstuffs make up one fourth of the sale in 1826 in this colony. The temporal variation in the sale of sumptuous goods between the two colonies is related to variations in the presence of hunted prey, which affected the economic resources of most Greenlanders. Sumptuous goods were bought in times of economic surplus.

Apart from the illegal and parallel trade, the Greenlanders also circumvented the ethical and economic intentions of the trade policy when trading in the colonial shops. In some cases, RGTD employees also broke the rules. In 1806, the sale of butter, salt, salted pork and dried fish is recorded on different occasions in the account journals of Christianshaab. The transactions noted under the heading *Adskellige Grønlandere* (“several Greenlanders”) denoted the sale of a journeying merchant to individuals residing in the peripheries of the colonial districts or by a trade manager when trading with groups of nonresident Greenlanders travelling through the district. This phenomenon is also known from the year 1826 in Egedesminde, when pepper and allspice were sold outside store settings (Toft 2010:170–173). Obviously, rule breaking was best done at some distance from the colony or when trading with travelling Greenlanders who were not resident in the colonial district. The illegal sale was recorded in order to meet the demands of the RGTD for detailed records of the yearly status count of unsold commodities in the colonial shops and the related balance of the account journals. Another example of the ambiguity of the trade policy is the system by which local Danish merchants were paid. Apart from their salary, the merchants made a profit based on the value of the local materials obtained from the Greenlanders. Thus, merchants were highly motivated to sell commodities from categories with a high profit, namely, the sumptuous goods. It is obvious from the rise in the sale of sumptuous goods in the price lists that the high profit set on these commodities by the RGTD management was made in order to profit from goods desired by the Greenlanders, rather than keeping their interest for such commodities at bay. The Greenlanders’ high consumption of sumptuous goods and the illicit trade with restricted foods to Greenlanders by RGTD employees as well as the illegal trade with foreign whalers are clear examples of how local consumption counteracted “dominant structures” described by Mullins (2011:136, 2012:32–33). However, in this case the goals of these “dominant structures”, that is, trade regulations set by the RGTD management in Copenhagen, were highly ambiguous. Restrictions in food sale and high profits on sumptuous goods followed ethical principles of civilisation but at the same time secured a stable source of raw materials and high profits for the company.

## Intermarriage and Trading Women: Social and Cultural Background

To establish sustainable production and trade in Greenland, all aspects of the Danish activities were regulated and the administration disciplined through a set of formal rules. The colonial legislation was set in *Instruksen af 1782*, which was only formally revised in 1873 (Frandsen 2010:93–124). The document touched upon a multitude of issues, including interaction in trade and personal relations between European company employees and the Greenlanders. It aimed at including the Greenlanders efficiently in the production and trade but also at drawing lines of distinction between the colonial populations and at controlling the degree of cultural exchange.

Since the 1740s, formal, church-sanctioned intermarriage was accepted except for a short period before the establishment of the RGTD. Always a topic of heated debate, this was a matter of great interest and concern of the mission as well as the trade administrators. The shifting and ambiguous attitudes towards intermarriage were based on ambiguous notions of intermarriage as harmful as well as useful in trade relations or just plain unavoidable if moral decay was to be prevented. All previous concerns about intermarriage are directly or indirectly expressed in the rules of 1782, as the access to intermarriage becomes limited to *blanding*,<sup>4</sup> that is, only to the Greenlandic women of mixed descent. All marriages still had to be approved by the administration, and access to marriage was more restricted than it appears in the *Instruks*. If the groom was a chief deputy factor, marriages to Greenlandic women were only rarely approved by the governor and/or the administration in Copenhagen (Seiding 2011:113). The formal discourse of the *Instruks* was not always in accordance with administrative practice in matters concerning intermarriage. It stated that intermarriage did not oblige the man to stay in Greenland, but the grooms did in fact sign a contract stating that they would never leave the country.

The marriage contracts established the husband's obligation to raise his family as Greenlanders (with regards to lifestyle and skills), keeping them from becoming dependent on European goods. The main concern of the colonial administration was an unintended side effect of colonial trade and the mixed family relations: a population of Greenlanders neither motivated nor skilled to contribute to the trade production as hunters. They would become what were regarded as useless, expensive dependents or Europeanised Greenlanders, hybrids blurring the distinction between the two colonial populations on which the colonial power balance inevitably rested. This concern is expressed in the ways the RGTD established itself as a colonial government and commenced an era of meticulous control, regulation and registration of its population at a rather unique level of detail. This common colonial feature of knowledge retrieval has left an abundance of historical source materials that, in combination with archaeo-

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<sup>4</sup> *Blanding*, the term used by the colonial administration, can be directly translated as 'mixture' or 'mix' similar to the concepts of *metis* or *mestizo*. In Greenland, *blanding* remained in use as an administrative concept until the 1911 national census. *Blanding* is not and has never been a concept used as self-identification. In Greenlandic, the word *akutaq* has been used to refer to people with bright eyes, blond or bright-coloured hair but not necessarily referring to mixed descent.

logical findings, tell the tale not only of the exertion of colonial power but also of the responses to it (Cohen 1996). As was the case with consumption, colonial restraints on intimate relations and the lifestyle of the mixed families were constantly negotiated by those affected by them, especially since the mixed families with familiar ties to trade employees had a higher degree of both interest in and access to European goods.

Women are generally underrepresented in colonial history as well as in the written sources that this discipline draws upon. The case of the RGTD is no exception. In the account journals from 1806, 1816 and 1826, only 21 women are listed among the 256 Greenlandic consumers in the colonial district of Egedesminde and Christianshaab (Table 7.1). This reflects an economy mainly connected to the men's catch, as bag sizes and purchases were recorded in their names. The majority of women in the account books of these three years belonged to families with many individuals of mixed parentage (Toft 2010:195–197). These families are the early roots to an upper social stratum of Greenlandic families of mixed decent, who married among themselves or with Europeans and in many ways followed colonial norms of lifestyle, house decor and dress (Rasmussen 1983:63–67, 1986:104–107). Men from these families were deliberately recruited as employees of the RGTD and mission after 1789 (Gad 1976:360, 438). Their daughters, sisters and wives were seen as frequent shoppers and consumers of European goods. They were also involved in the trade of Greenlandic goods on behalf of their fathers, brothers, or husbands. This is illustrated by the case of Johanne, Andreas Larsen's daughter, who, according to the account journals, handed in sealskins several times in 1816. In the entry of 22 March 1816, the name of her brother Lars is even written beside the sealskins. But Johanne also had an income of her own. She collected eiderdown and traded it on several occasions (Seiding and Toft 2011:290). The fact that Johanne and other women shopped on their own and had their individual page in the account books probably added to their social status.

However, women with other backgrounds are also seen in the account journals. One of them is the widow Helene vel. Egunna,<sup>5</sup> who financed her purchases by frequently collecting eiderdown. Another widow, Eleonora Liedemark, bought more than is evident from the account books, as her purchases were partially recorded in the salary records of Egedesminde, where she worked as a midwife. Obviously, widows shopped on their own due to their independent sources of income. Either this income was based on work, or in the case of widows of high-ranking European RGTD employees, it came from different forms of pensions. For the wives of RGTD employees, the traditional role of procuring meat and skin of the catch became a rare part of everyday life, as their men had less time for hunting. However, skin products in some cases constituted additional revenue for these women. Like many other women of Disko Bay, they circumvented the colonial trade system and made skin clothing, boots and tobacco purses for foreign whalers

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<sup>5</sup>The abbreviation 'v.' or 'vel.' was used in the colonial sources to connect the several names of the individual Inuit, e.g., their Christian name, Greenlandic names, and nicknames. The use of multiple names for the same person was done to identify specific persons, as many Inuit had the same Christian name.

**Table 7.1** The women noted in the sales records of the two colonies in 1806, 1816 and 1826, the total expense of their purchases, and their background<sup>a</sup>

Colony	Name	Consumption			Background
		Rdl	Mrk	Sk	
Eg	Johanne, Andreas Larsen's daughter	13	2	3	Daughter of a Danish specksioner married a man of mixed descent
Eg	Johanne, late Akartlok's daughter	10	3	1.5	Wife of a catechist
Eg	Birgitte	9		2.5	Daughter of a Danish assistant. Mother of illegitimate children with a merchant
Eg	Regine, Rasmus Andersen's daughter	8	1	11.25	Daughter of Danish father (sailor)
Eg	Helene vel. Eguamma	6	1	1.62	Widow
Eg	Lydia at Birgitte	5	5	14.25	Servant of Birgitte
Eg	Karoline Lundblad	4	1	3	Wife of a European sailor
Eg	Christiane vel. Majukak late Grl. Akartlok's daughter	2	4	11.5	Mother of illegitimate children with a European cook
Eg	Elisabeth, Bent Thorin's daughter	2	1		Daughter of a Swedish cooper; married to a man of mixed descent
Chr	Ane Marie from Unagassik	1	4	4	
Eg	Kringaja vel. Cathrine	1	4		
Chr	Anne Sørensen		5	14	Wife of a Danish and later a Swedish cooper
Eg	Regine, Mariane's daughter	4	11		Mother of illegitimate children with a merchant
Chr	Karin, F. Gjerulff's wife	4	2		Wife of a Norwegian boatswain
Eg	Sophie, at the merchants' house	3	12		Servant in the merchants' house
Eg	Pigen Otillia, Andreas Larsen's daughter	3	0.5		Daughter of a Danish specksioner; married to a man of mixed descent
Chr	Marie	2	7		
Eg	Eleonora Liedemark	2	4		Merchant's widow
Eg	Sophie, widow of late Catechist Zacharias	1	5		Catechist widow
Eg	Maren, wife of Upernangitsok	1	5		Wife of a skilled hunter
Eg	Abelone, fat David's daughter		5.5		Unmarried

*EG* Egedesminde; *Chr* Christianshaab, *Rdl* rigsbankdaler equals 6 mark, and 1 mark equals 16 skilling (1 Rigsbankdaler equals 6 mark, and 1 mark equals 16 skilling)  
<sup>a</sup>Account book, Grønlanderbog, Christianshaab 1805–1806, Qasigianguit/Christianshåb, NKA 57.11.01, 72.20, 1.1; Account book, Grønlanderbog, Egedesminde 1806–16, Aasiaat/Egedesminde, NKA 57.10.01/73.21/1; Account book, Grønlanderbog, Christianshaab 1814–1820, Qasigianguit/Christianshåb, NKA 57.11.01/72.21/1; Account book, Grønlanderbog, Egedesminde 1816–1820, Aasiaat/Egedesminde, NKA 57.10.01/72.21/3; Account book, Grønlanderbog, Christianshaab 1821–1829, Qasigianguit/Christianshåb, NKA 57.11.01/72.21/2; Account book, Grønlanderbog, Egedesminde 1825–33, Aasiaat/Egedesminde, NKA 57.10.01/72.21/4; Church census record, 1818–1819, Egedesminde 1793–1851 NKA 22.10-01/31.10/1; Trade census record, Egedesminde 1789–1825, NKA A 01.02/31.20/4; Trade census record, Christianshaab 1793–1825, NKA 01.02/31.20/9; Church census record, Egedesminde 1794–1851, NKA 22.10.01/31.10/1 & Kragh 1875

(Kragh 1875:83). These were also sold on the parallel market to Europeans in the colonies. Another mode of income, more in line with colonial policies, was the employment as servants, called *kiffaq* (Rønsager 2006:64–66). One such *kiffaq* was Birgitte, who lived in the chief factor's house and was a serious shopper in 1806, 1816 and 1826. Birgitte's own housemaid Lydia was also among the women with a significant trading activity in Egedesminde, with consumer choices influenced by those of Birgitte's. On 6 July 1815, Birgitte bought three pairs of blue teacups. On this day the shop was visited by at least 23 people, which indicates the arrival of the yearly ship with provisions and commodities. The teacups were novelty items and were also bought by Regine, Rasmus Andersen's daughter, and Helene vel. Eguanna. One month later, on the 10th of August, Lydia bought a similar pair of cups, exhibiting a rare example of a servant being inspired by purchases of her employer (Toft 2010:199–200).

Generally, women bought commodities connected to their role as hunter's wives: *ulos*, traditional knives with a sharp crescent-shaped blade used for women's tasks of parting and flensing sea mammals as well as scraping the blubber and fat off sea mammal and reindeer skins (Birket-Smith 1924:92–105) and materials for making clothes, for instance, Silesian and flax linen, canvas, wool and silk ribbons, together with sewing rings (thimbles worn on a thumb), needles and thread. Women also bought things for personal use, such as tobacco, wristlets, combs, handkerchiefs and perfume or items for their homes: painted paper, straw boxes and spoons of wood or tin. In these three years, glass beads were only purchased by two women from the two colonies. Johanne, Andreas Larsen's daughter, and Anne Sørensen were unmarried at the time, but they were also daughters of Danish RGTD-employed craftsmen, which explains their purchase of expensive goods in 1806. European bed linen was an equally expensive commodity mostly bought by men. Two of the three women buying such items have a similar social position. Christiane vel. Majukak and Birgitte both had children born out of wedlock with Danish colonists. The third woman, Johanne, Andreas Larsen's daughter, who purchased a woollen bed cover in 1815, was raised in a mixed family and was used to sleeping in European bedding (Toft 2010:198–199).

Women who intermarried are prominent in the account journals of Egedesminde and Christianshaab. But commodities purchased by these women are of the same kind as those bought by Greenlandic men. The difference between their consumption patterns is not so much in the types of goods they were purchasing, but rather in the rate of consumption and the fact that they shopped on their own. The last fact must have been noticed locally. However, certain commodities were particularly popular among Greenlanders of mixed parentage, which can be interpreted as an expression of a common identity. In Egedesminde, this was done by buying European woollen clothes, bedding and tableware. In contrast, woollen clothing was bought by everyone in Christianshaab, and bedding and tableware were purchased by skilled hunters with a large economic surplus. These patterns probably originate from the different social contexts of the two colonies, as the main colony in the district, Egedesminde, had a larger staff of Greenlanders employed by the RGTD. In another part of Disko Bay, bed linen is referred to as common and thus not used

by particular social groups as markers of social identity (*Diary*, AI, A301/102). This makes a strong case for a local perspective in the analysis of social processes in colonial societies.

From the account books, it is clear that European commodities were used in the social competition between households rather than between inhabitants of the same house (Toft 2010:200). The social significance of the households is also indicated by the fact that people living and working in the same house went to the shop on the same days, whether or not they were biologically related (Toft 2010:203–205). The use of European commodities in this context was motivated and inspired by the local assortment of goods and the social significance of expensive goods, rather than by the foreign provenance of the goods themselves. This collective household shopping, a specific example described below, and the women's role in shopping reflect some of the cultural traditions and distribution rights in the Greenlandic household organisation. As explained by Robert Petersen, most commonly it was the female head of the households who had the decisive power over the use and distribution of the goods and catches within the household as well as the ultimate say in the practice of gift giving outside the household (Petersen 2003:57–58). The above-mentioned shoppers, for example, Johanne, Andreas Larsen's daughter, who in 1822 married a man of mixed descent, may have expressed their role as head of households and distributor of goods when shopping on behalf of their families. Johanne was probably head of a household even prior to her marriage, as she was the oldest woman in a house without a male head of family (Church census record, 1828, Egedesminde, NKA 22.10.01/31.10/1).

This local analysis of women's consumption practices and their social background illustrates the potential of consumption studies for deciphering the complex dialectic interplay of groups and individuals within the social structures of colonial societies. The case of Egedesminde and Christianshaab relates to the various levels of interpretation described by Mullins (2011:135) spanning from the "mixed" population using specific European commodities in display of status and identity, gender roles exemplified by the women's varied social backgrounds, to, for example, Brigitte's and Lydia's consumer interest in tea cups as processes of self-fashioning and collective identification.

### **Ane Thorin: The Cooper's Wife**

The widowed Ane Sørensdatter, a woman of mixed descent and resident of Egedesminde, remarried in 1815. Her first husband, a Dane, Niels Andersen Falkenberg, and her second husband, a Swede, Bent Thorin, were both coopers. Being the wife of European craftsmen placed Ane in the same social position as her mother and grandmother, who both married a European carpenter/cooper.

The probate case of Ane's father lists a wooden house, built by himself and financed by an advance of salary received in 1794 (Frandsen 2010:558–559). The house stayed in the family thanks to Ane's mother's ability to repurchase it after the



death of her husband (Brønlund Christensen probate case, NKA 01.02/81.20/15). This shows that Ane was raised in a more European-style house than the marriage contracts prescribed for a man like her father and his Greenlandic family. Ane and Bent's home was a traditional turf house, more in line with RGTD recommendations, but the interior had wooden panels and the house was described as a "large, Danish-Greenlandic house" (Ostermann 1921:29). The inventory list in the Thorin probate case shows that the house was furnished with traditional, Greenlandic, built-in plank beds as well as tables, a chest of drawers, bureau, and wall clock and was, like many other mixed homes, well equipped with books (Thorin probate case, NKA 01.02/81.20/35). Ane may have put up tapestry on one of the panelled walls: In 1818, she bought three metres of tapestry paper in the shop (*Grønlænderbog*, Egedesminde, NKA 57.10.01/73.21/2). Bent Thorin was a cooper with a significantly lower income than a senior staff member such as chief or deputy factor. However, he successfully managed to add to the household income through net sealing, which provided the family with food as well as skins and blubber that could be used in the household or sold to the RGTD. In 1833, Bent Thorin caught 309 seals, from which he must have sold the skins and/or blubber, since the catch appears in the annual accounts for Egedesminde (NKA 57.10.01/73.12/1).

Ane's visits to the shop show that she was an independent woman. She appears often in the account books in the years following her marriage to Bent, spending both her earnings from eiderdown trading and from Bent's account. The latter is unusual at least compared to the other women noted in the chief factor's account book in Egedesminde around 1818 (NKA 57.10.01/72.10/4). On one occasion in 1818, other members of the family shop on her account, as the Thorin children are noted as buyers alongside the widow Christine and her son, who lived in the Thorin house (Figs. 7.6 and 7.7; *Grønlænderbog*, Egedesminde, NKA 57.10.01/73.21/1). Ane and Bent's home and lifestyle reflected Ane's background with a mother and grandmother in a socially similar position as her own. Obviously, she had been in close contact with European language (in this case, Danish and Swedish) and lifestyle through her paternal ancestry.

When marrying a Greenlandic woman, common staff Europeans signed a contract obliging them to stay in Greenland as long as the wife was alive and their children still dependent on their parents. Furthermore, the contract stated that the children should be raised to be Greenlanders, fed on a Greenlandic diet, and instructed to become hunters or hunter's wives. The families were to live in Greenlandic turf houses, preferably among other families.<sup>6</sup> The Thorin household followed these rules in many ways, but their home and lifestyle in general were a blend of Greenlandic and European norms and objects, including foodstuffs, furniture, literature and clothing, the purchase of which was financed through sealing and

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<sup>6</sup> The earliest version of a marriage contract preserved in the archives is a transcript from a church record to a mission journal from 1754. The wording of the marriage contracts changed very little in the following century, but focus on Greenlandic lifestyle—housing, food, childcare, and teaching of hunting skills—remained central (Mission journal 1754, Jacobshavn, NKA 22.12.01/05.50/1).

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Ane Thorin's Account

Credit Debit

1818-1818

Date	Description	Amount	Balance
Jul. 27. 302	10 1/2 Eiderdown	26/	43 58
30-304	19 1/2 Stichelsoo - Brandt	for	4
	1/2 Stichelsoo - 18	26 40/	5
	2 ad. Souding - Ane	40/	1 44
	1/2 ad. Souding - Soud		32
	1 1/2 ad. Souding - Ane		3
	2 to Hobau Souding	48/	1
	1 1/2 ad. Souding - Soud		32
	4 to Souding - Rusewobad	43/	5 32
Aug. 28. 325	3 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	2 18
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		40
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		88
	3 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	1 4
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	64
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	64
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	1 44
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		40
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		64
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	12
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		80
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		20
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		8 1/2
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		3
	3 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	2 18
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		1 32
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		32
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		2 40
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		32
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	2 18
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	2 18
	2 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	64
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		40
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		64
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		32
	3 ad. Souding - Rusewobad	43/	2 18
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		88
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		32
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		32
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		90
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		3
	1 ad. Souding - Rusewobad		140 58 45 67 1/2

Fig. 7.6 Page of a colonial account book, called Grønlænderbøger, showing an account of the Greenlanders Ane Thorin in Egedesminde. The account documents the sales and purchases of Ane and other members of the Thorin household in 1818. Eiderdown was sold and items such as stoneware, tobacco, silk ribbons, eau de toilette, a range of textiles and tapestry were purchased (Photo by Inge H. Seiding)

No	Familien nr Person	Ålder for alderdommen, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn	Opførelse af sin forældrenes, for Børn
22	Christiane Ana hva. hvalbod (hvalbod) Hvost lufte. Alth	44	Sept. 1792, 16 Enev. gi.	"	"	"	"	godt gødt loft.
27	Paul Ole for 28. Sept. 1801 4 s. hval.	17 1/2	Cal. Hermann & Cal. Krogh d. Marts 1802	Cal. Krogh d. Marts 1819	Cal. Hermann d. Sept. 1819 1 1/2 hval.	"	"	godt gødt og hvalbod
28	Anna Catharina Agnet. Thorsen for 2 Aug. 1791	38	Cal. Munk d. 5 Aug. 1781	Cal. Krogh d. Marts 1819	Cal. Hermann d. Sept. 1819 1 1/2 hval.	"	"	godt gødt
29	Maria Margrethe for 12. Febr. 1816	3	Cal. Hartz d. 12 Febr. 1816	"	"	"	"	at hvalbod loft.
30	Larsen for 4 Dec. 1818	1/2	Cal. Krogh d. 20 Dec. 1818	"	"	"	"	at hval
31	Ulrich Thorsen for 17. Febr. 1805	14	Cal. Krogh d. 7 Febr. 1805	Cal. Krogh d. Sept. 1819	"	"	"	ungt gødt og hvalbod
32	Ulrich Thorsen for 17. Febr. 1810	9	Cal. Hartz d. 29 Febr. 1810	"	"	"	"	loger hval i hvalbod
33	Elle Ana for 12. Febr. 1815	6	Cal. Hartz d. 20 Febr. 1815	"	"	"	"	hvalbod hval.
34	Christiane for 17. Febr. 1800	18	Cal. Krogh d. 17 Febr. 1800	Cal. Krogh d. Sept. 1819	Cal. Hermann d. Sept. 1819 1 1/2 hval.	"	"	godt gødt
35	Larsen for 12. Febr. 1801	18	Cal. Hermann d. Marts 1801	Cal. Krogh d. Sept. 1819	Cal. Hermann d. Sept. 1819 1 1/2 hval.	"	"	godt gødt og hvalbod
36	Larsen for 12. Febr. 1811	8 1/2	Cal. Hartz d. Marts 1811	"	"	"	"	godt gødt
37	Maria Catharina for 12. Febr. 1810	8 1/2	Cal. Hartz d. Marts 1811	"	"	"	"	godt gødt
38	Ulrich Thorsen for 12. Febr. 1815	6	Cal. Hartz d. 20 Febr. 1815	"	"	"	"	godt gødt

Fig. 7.7 Missionary census record from Egedesminde dated to 1818–1819. The page shows the Thorin household members that year. Bent Thorin is not listed as he was a European—only Greenlanders were included in the trade and mission census lists (Photo by Inge H. Seiding)

wage work. Access to the European goods was in some cases achieved through Bent Thorin, but equally through Ane's cultural heritage and independent earnings and shopping habits. As mentioned above, Greenlandic female heads of households traditionally played a significant part in the distribution of goods and catch. As such, their shopping activities were probably less restricted by their cultural background than by the restrictions placed upon them by the trade policies. Ane Thorin went beyond those policies, acting like a head of the household, as indicated by the amount and quality of her purchases and the frequency of her shop visits. This probably reflects a combination of her intimate cultural knowledge of the trade company regulations and their loopholes and her role as a traditional female head of an extended household. In that position, she would have a significant influence on the distribution of the catch, in this case also the "trade catch", that is, the earnings of the family and the goods they gave access to. As a consumer, Ane, and others like her, acted not in strategic opposition to the colonial system, but as an individual driven by an interest in commodities invested with a specific value and meaning by her and/or her fellow household members. However, this consumer behaviour as we see it today through objects and archives is an example of consumer desire and its effect on dominant structures: "The imaginative and spontaneous desire projected onto seemingly innocuous things illuminates consumer culture's power to subordinate consumers even as it risks embracing everyday desires that challenge the roles, ideologies, and structural alienation at the heart of that very society" (Mullins 2012:41). And as the very heart of this particular colonial society struggled with its ambiguous ambitions, it was indeed vulnerable to such challenges from an increasingly cross-culturally creative population.

## **The Material Cultural Encounter: Class, Ethnicity and Transculturation**

In the changing social and cultural landscape of the small, colonial coastal societies in Greenland, the families straddled the colonial divide as they lived in the cultural encounter affecting both material and immaterial aspects of their life. However, from the viewpoint of a small but slowly growing all-European upper-class population, these families were distinctly not European.

The skewed colonial power balance is, neither surprisingly nor uncommonly, reflected in the historical source material. The voices are European, male and belonging to those employed in trading companies. An exceptional early source representing views of one of the few European women in Greenland provides a glimpse of a European, upper-class perception of the cross-cultural society in 1832. Until the mid-1800s, only a few European women lived in Greenland as the wives of missionaries or senior trade employees. As an increasing number of larger, wooden houses were built around the factories, the number of European wives increased in the late 1800s, among them also wives of common staff members.

This meant a decrease in the number of marriages between Europeans and Greenlanders. Henriette (Gjøe) Egede, Danish fiancée of deputy factor Nicolaj Egede at the outpost of Niakornaq, arrived in Greenland in 1832. Her diary presents a multitude of details about colonial life, but in this context one of the most illustrative elements is her description of a young Greenlandic woman, with a strong focus on her use of European goods (*Diary*, AI, A301/102). On her way to the outpost managed by her future husband, Henriette stays with the governor and his wife in Godhavn, attending the birthday of Arnaq, who is a maid in their home and had travelled with them to Denmark the year before<sup>7</sup>:

[...] she (Arnaq) was delighted; today she was dressed as a Dane but looked awful; she wore both genuine and fake rings on her fingers—and many of them—amongst them a heavy brass ring, a gift from the Prussian Minister [...] Arnaq served coffee, she had six tiny toy tea cups given to her in Copenhagen; she served us Danes with these cups and serenely presented them to us—Madam (the Governor’s wife) had to serve biscuits and cake—it was doll’s stuff but we were all amused by it. (*Diary*, AI, A301/102; I. Seiding’s translation).

In the eyes of the young Henriette, Arnaq is a spectacle of ridiculous mimicry; she has neither sense of “dress code” nor code of conduct when serving coffee, mistaking her toys for real porcelain. Arnaq’s purchase and use of European commodities illustrate an important point made by Mullins that material assemblages often indicates who consumers imagined themselves to be rather than the essential identity of a person or dominant symbolism in a historical context (Mullins 2012:39). From the viewpoint of the contemporary European colonists, it was expected and maybe almost a relief that the young Greenlandic woman, despite her access to the European cultural sphere, lacked the ability to act in it as a European. Strikingly, the description of Arnaq by the newcomer Henriette parallels one of the hallmarks of Danish colonial discourse about Greenlanders—their description as helpless children being raised to mature civilisation by the colonisers (e.g., Langaard 2003). From this point of view, Arnaq is a childlike European playing with the “adults”.

Henriette’s account is also a source confirming the general views of the trade administration, as she had no other frame of reference when interacting with the Greenlanders upon her arrival. She is baffled by the tradition of gift giving, a tradition that involved, a form of delayed reciprocity, where nothing was expected immediately in return, but a donor felt reassured that the recipient would follow the rules of reciprocity in case she or he was in need. The female heads of household were, as explained above, the ones with the final word in catch distribution, and this was also the case with gifts consisting of meat and other Greenlandic products (Petersen 2003:59–60). When Henriette and her husband, Nicolaj, received a gift from the cooper at the nearby outpost

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<sup>7</sup>Arnaq (‘woman’ in Greenlandic) was her Greenlandic name. She was christened Frederikke Broberg and was a daughter of the governor’s Greenlandic cook, Carl Vilhelm Broberg, and his wife, Helena, both Greenlanders of mixed parentage. At the age of 16, Arnaq married the Danish RGTD sailor Jens Andersen (Mission census record, Godhavn 1827 and 1850, NKA 22.10.01/31.10/1).

consisting of reindeer meat and a pair of tin candlesticks, she noted that the latter was a gift from the cooper's kiffaq, his housekeeper, who was actually his Greenlandic wife. Henriette wrote that it was a nice present, but felt unsure if she needed to return the pleasantries with a gift of expensive or restricted commodities such as coffee. Elisabeth Møller, the cooper's wife, may have expected coffee or some other object otherwise unavailable to her at the time; the exchange and gift system was basically about sharing when in surplus and receiving when in need from participants in the sharing network. In the case of European goods, it probably was less about "insurance" and more about bartering objects of desire. The gift of candlestick and reindeer meat represented material objects from both types of relations—the traditional meat gift and a gift of rare (not available from the RGTD catalogue) tin candlesticks—a European luxury item at least in the colonial context. Henriette did not see beyond the coffee; thus, she missed the fact that the Møllers had initiated a sharing relation. Later, the Møllers also provided Henriette and her husband with illegal goods, vegetables, from English whalers, which they gladly received, but she did not reflect upon this relationship to the Møllers, which seemed to have been maintained only through gifts.

Arnaq, the Møllers, and the Thorins provide us with a few clues about a cultural encounter that was highly influenced by the restraints of colonial administration but also by local ways of interacting and counteracting. Locally, Arnaq's looks, Ane's shopping and Elisabeth Møller's gifts made sense beyond the obvious European origin of the objects involved. Henriette Egede's descriptions, missing an understanding of these practices, only supported the fact that the new objects and novel practices were incorporated into existing systems of cultural norms.

## Epilogue

The material side of the Danish colonial activities in Greenland was an area of concern and control throughout the colonial era. How Greenlanders acted within and beyond these changes and restraints to this day remains a story only partially told. The administrative fears inherent in the regulations are commonly expressed in the accounts of colonial administrators describing the unfortunate, from their point of view, effects of the European goods in Greenland. In the ambiguous attempts to adjust the dosage of European culture and the interaction in general, regulations remained strict but always up for negotiation or flexible practice.

Exploring the archaeological as well as historical source material makes it possible to filter away the tense concerns surrounding the access to and consumption of European goods. This opens a venue for the stories of irregular trade, barter and use of objects and goods, as well as the material side of intimate relations and mixed marriages as dense points of cultural exchange and creativity. This work has only

just begun, but the beginning, accounted for here, hopefully shows how this aspect of the colonial cultural encounter in Greenland was acted out among Greenlanders as objects, family relationships, and social events took on new shapes and meanings in the small colonial societies.

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# Chapter 8

## Colonial Encounter in Early Modern Sápmi

Daniel Lindmark

### Introduction

In the course of the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, the northern areas of Scandinavia became a target of increasing advancements of the Swedish state (Lundmark 1982, 1998, 2010; Fur 1993, 2006).<sup>1</sup> The discovery of silver ore in the Piteå Lapland in the 1630s met with great expectations of the state and was quickly followed by plans to establish mining activities. These expectations prompted the Crown to push further the colonisation efforts. To this end, in 1673 the *Lapland Bill* was published promoting new settlement in Sápmi.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of “colonisation” was twofold: to get access and exploit the natural riches of Sápmi and to establish visible presence by populating an area, to which several different nations still laid claim (e.g. the Norwegian border would not be permanently established until 1751).

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter combines results from the author’s previous publications (esp. Lindmark 2006a; 2006b; 2010; and 2013).

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, the Saami term *Sápmi* refers to the entire Saami area in northern Fennoscandia, some of which was administered by the state of Sweden. In the early modern period, the part of Sápmi under Swedish sovereignty was referred to as Lapland (Sw. *Lappland*) or the Laplands (Sw. *lappmarkerna*). When referring to Saami districts and communities in the early modern period, the article makes use of contemporary terminology, such as Umeå Lapland and Luleå Lapland (Sw. *Ume lappmark*, *Lule lappmark*), i.e. the part of Sápmi belonging under the medieval parishes of Umeå and Luleå, respectively, both of which included large areas ranging from the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia up to the mountains. When the Saami area belonging to Umeå parish in 1673 was separated to become the independent parish of Lycksele, the old term Umeå Lapland (Sw. *Ume lappmark*) continued to be used. Several Saami communities could be found in Umeå Lapland, including the Vapsten community. The parish of Jokkmokk in Luleå Lapland was separated from Luleå parish in 1694 (Fig. 8.1).

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Fig. 8.1 Map of Lapland from Johannes Schefferus' *Lapponia*, printed in 1673 in Frankfurt. Lycksele is located in the southwestern corner of the map

However, pioneering activities were of no particular consequence before the end of the eighteenth century. With the support of the *Lapland Regulations* of 1749, a growing amount of land was granted to the farmers after the Saami failed to convince Swedish authorities that their livelihoods would be endangered (Sörlin 1988; Lundmark 1998).

In the Swedish historiography and popular thinking, these Swedish encroachments in Sápmi are rarely considered to be a case of imperial colonialism. These efforts are understood in much *milder* terms of agricultural expansion, or *internal colonisation*, thus asymmetrical character of colonial power relationships such as expansion entailed is pushed to the background (Arell 1977; Sörlin 1988:198–200; Forsgren 2000, see also Hechter 1999; Calvert 2001 and Elenius 2010 for a different take on the concept). Apart from sounding uncontroversial, indeed on the contrary quite far-sighted, such framing of this expansion also contains the implicit perception of Sápmi as a purely Swedish region. Choosing to define Sápmi as a part of the Swedish realm, one ignores the possibility of placing Swedish policy in Sápmi in a colonial context. Thus the development in the *Swedish Laplands* becomes something essentially different from the colonialism practised by European powers on other continents.

If, on the other hand, one apprehends the Swedish presence in Sápmi as an expression of colonialism, then this implies an admission that the relationship between Swedes and Saami has always been asymmetrical. From its dominant position of power, the Swedish government has dictated the conditions for the Saami who lived in the region of Sápmi that lay under Swedish jurisdiction. It was in the interests of the Swedish government to control the area, which motivated the expansion of various institutions. In the course of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, the territory of Sápmi was measured, surveyed and mapped, divided into provinces, parishes and tax lands. Domestication of the landscape went hand in hand with domestication of its dwellers. Civilising efforts of Lutheran missionaries and school masters aimed at reforming the minds and bodies of the students and creating obedient subjects (Haller 1896; Nordberg 1955; Widén 1964, 1965; Öberg 1983; Anderzén 1992; Henrysson et al. 1993).

## Colonial and Saami Education

The history of colonialism iterates the importance education had in the hands of the colonising power, which offered a restricted curriculum to inculcate knowledge, values and attitudes deemed necessary to controlling the colonised (Ball 1983; Altbach and Kelly 1984; Bhabha 1994; Sjöström 2000; Omolewa 2006). Commonly, lessons were limited to elementary skills like reading, writing and arithmetic, sometimes complemented with basic vocational training. In this manner, the colonised were prepared to enter the labour market equipped with the norms and values essential to creating a loyal, diligent and conscientious working class. This ethical perspective was transmitted both openly, in textbooks and curricula (*moral curricula*), and informally in the very organisation of the lessons themselves (*hidden curricula*). By instilling virtues like order, precision, punctuality and obedience, their schoolwork groomed students to fulfil the demands of colonial society. These norms were usually buttressed with Christianity lessons (*religious or evangelical curricula*), which is why colonial and religious education were more or less identical. Even if their content and organisation resembled that offered in the European metropolises from whence they came, the colonial context lent them their distinctive character. By advancing the colonial power's demands for obedience and efficiency, education contributed to laying the groundwork for political dominance and economic exploitation.

The colonial education of the Saami has its roots in the seventeenth century, though the only abiding effort came in the form of a school founded in Lycksele in 1632 (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2), through a donation made by the privy councillor Johan Skytte (Hasselhuhn 1851). It would take another one hundred years before Swedish parliament pushed through a law of collective agreement on an educational programme for Sápmi. The government was appalled to hear reports that Saami shamanistic rites were still being conducted, which it saw as a threat to national stability (Widén 1964; Huggert 2000:69–70). According to the orthodox, Lutheran theory of



**Fig. 8.2** The Skyttean school in Lycksele, main building in the early twentieth century. Undated photo by Bertil Berthelson. (Courtesy of Antiquarian Topographical Archive, Stockholm)

governing, unity in religion was the necessary prerequisite to a functional social order. To remedy this situation, a parliamentary decree issued in 1723 established a residential school for six Saami boys in each parish of Lapland. After some delay, classes began in Åsele and Jokkmokk in 1732, and by mid-century schools had opened their doors in all seven parishes. Finances were regulated by government decree issued in 1729, and in 1735 a curriculum was fixed, the so-called School Instruction (Instruction 1735; Haller 1896:148–155).

The School Instruction stipulated limited and selective enrolment of students and a normal study period of 2 years, after which time the students ought to have acquired sufficient knowledge to be sent home. During school hours and leisure time, students were to refrain from contact with their families and remained under constant surveillance, a point on which the Instruction to the headmaster is very clear:

The pedagogue ought to assure that his disciples are kept near to him under his watchful eye as much as possible during vacations, since it shall also be entirely forbidden to return any student to his hometown and parents before he has acquired as thorough a training in Christianity, as shall be stated below, in order that the youth thereby might be kept under careful chastisement and the exercise of Christianity, and in no wise be hindered until through the grace of God he has acquired such enlightenment, as to be able to control and guide himself. (Instruction 1735:10–11, author's translation)

Headmaster's surveillance constituted direct analogy to the omnipresence of God, who "sees into their souls and hearts and knows how often they transgress his commandments even in the slightest degree" (Instruction 1735:12), which was emphasised in the curriculum.

The authors of the Instruction paid close attention to the moral qualities of the headmasters. The teacher was expected to educate, instruct and indoctrinate his

students and function as a perfect role model embodying Christian values. This was expressed in the teacher's oath: "Through my own example shall I urge them to piety, civility and an irreproachable life" (Instruction 1735:10). The teacher was to participate in morning, afternoon and evening prayers and also to inculcate the importance of "true piety and the necessity of prayer" so that the students would understand that Christian life did not consist "merely of reading and external manners, but of an internal devotion of the soul" (Instruction 1735:11–12).

The residential school education aimed at reforming the students, reshaping their will and transforming their spirituality. The purpose of education was a complete internalisation of the Christian philosophy and religiosity, in other words the total overhaul of the individual's personality, an "invasion within" (Axtell 1985). On a practical level the schools meant to prepare the students for the carriers of assistant teachers or missionaries in their homes and villages. Upon graduating, the student was encouraged "to always remember what he had learned, and apply it daily in the guidance of himself and his brothers at home" (Instruction 1735:13). It was then the responsibility of the inspector and the pastor to check that graduating students were put to use in education in the villages of Sápmi. This function was institutionalised in the 1740s, when particularly suitable and extra-prepared students were hired as roving assistant teachers, the so-called catechisers. Catechisers were also responsible for leading village prayer and often performed emergency baptisms, the most common form of baptism in Sápmi.

The School Instruction reveals similarities to Pietist pedagogy and the system employed by the residential schools established by August Hermann Francke in Halle in 1695. Pietism, a movement of strict religious observance, which developed in the German Lutheranism in 1670s, aimed at the revival of devotion and practical Christianity. Pietist pedagogy strove to achieve "an enlightened intellect and a sanctified will" (Welp 1977:24). In practice this meant total indoctrination, which was achieved through means of isolation and surveillance practised in the schools; the significance of the teacher as role model; the emphasis on diligence, obedience and compliancy as fundamental virtues; the drive toward individual conversion and the internalisation of desirable norms; the use of persuasion rather than corporal punishment to modify bad behaviour; fostering a diligent prayer and devotional life and the ultimate goal of turning out teachers and missionaries (Francke 1748; Widén 1967; Welp 1977; Gawthrop and Strauss 1984; Gawthrop 1993).

The School Instruction and practice of residential schools in Sápmi should also be placed in the context of colonial education and civilising programme, which was essentially driven by the desire "for a reformed, recognizable other" and creation of a class of interpreters between the colonial elites and the masses they governed, native "in blood and colour" but European in "tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Bhabha 1994:85–92). These motives are well illustrated in a study of Catholic seminaries in the Belgian Congo conducted by a postcolonial theorist Valentin Yves Mudimbe (1994). His observations are relevant because they resonate with educational practice at the eighteenth-century Saami schools. The most obvious parallel is the use of *isolation*. Both the Congolese seminary and the Saami schools comprised their own, separate worlds cut off from undesirable

outside influences. By doing so, these school systems created conditions ripe for indoctrination and acculturation. Students were under the constant supervision of authority figures enforcing the rules of their isolated environment, in order to effect a radical *transformation* of the life of the student, to merge thought and action with the religious ideology of the school. The principle of placing the students in an ambivalent *in-between position*, between the colonisers and the colonised, whereby their education and status would elevate the students above the general native population, is also characteristic of the Saami context.

According to Mudimbe, the process of acculturation enforced by the long period of schooling was based on three factors: space, time and the transparency of consciousness. The school environment comprised a separate, isolated and sheltered space. In this Spartan and masculine space, the system perpetuated its own existence through the sombre architecture of school buildings and assemblages of specific objects selected for the school purpose. The division of the school day followed the rigid order of monastic life, where a recurring schedule marked the borders between prayer, work and rest: a time for everything and everything in its time. This total immersion in Christian ideology led to deconstruction of oneself, spiritual rebirth and transformation.

Mudimbe's analysis of the creation of the transparency of consciousness is very interesting, especially as it draws attention to principles which also applied to the Saami school system. The Instruction guiding education among Saami emphasised the significance of a change of heart and *an internal devotion of the soul*, thus urged deep spiritual transformation and transparency of the consciousness of the students. Both examples of schools were closed spaces for authoritarian ideological transmission. Placed in a colonial context, the schools not only attempted to obliterate the religion and culture of the colonised, but also strove to implant those components of colonial culture which were considered appropriate to the colonised. Through the transmission of norms of obedience and submission, the schools have served the purpose of the colonial power in domesticating the colonised subjects.

## Conversion of a Saami Youngster

Although the colonised peoples were silenced, the historian can find evidence of articulated resistance. In the search for their voice, missionary reports have proven an obliging source. Often compromised by triumphalist attitudes about the Christian faith and Western civilisation, they do also contain objections from the individuals to whom they are proselytising. These can also be found occasionally in stories about missionary efforts among the Saami. Theophilus Gran served as assistant vicar and schoolmaster in Jokkmokk 1757–1768, and while later serving as vicar in the coastal parish of Piteå, he authored a manuscript with the title “Some Collected Signs and Proof of the Growth of Christianity in Luleå Lapland and the Parish of Jokkmokk”. In the chapter on the “Conversion of a Saami Youngster”, Gran recounts his efforts at converting teenaged Saami Anders during his years at the Jokkmokk

Saami School in the 1760s. When 19-year-old Anders arrived at the school, he was apprehended by headmaster Gran as:

Fully grown, medium in height, and had thick limbs, he was handy, faithful, hard-working, good with books, had an ordinary memory and intellect so that, with regard to that, I liked him. On the other hand, however, he was morose, surly, ill-tempered, inflexible, lacking compassion, and could very well gladly stand and watch both his fellow man and his property in danger without being moved in any way, let alone contribute to his rescue (Gran 1773:83, author's translation).

Thus the headmaster had a somewhat dual image of his new student. On the one hand Anders appeared talented and hard-working; on the other hand, he displayed a particularly unchristian nature. Gran especially mentions the morose and aggressive impertinence of the new student. Apparently, Anders lacked the compliant subservience and obedience that Gran expected in a student.

The new student lacked interest in the Bible and failed to show any interest in conversion and spiritual renewal, evident in a snatch of dialogue between the schoolmaster and his student, where Anders utters his objection to the missionaries. "Why shouldn't we live the way we choose? If there is a life after this, then we'll find out when we get there" (Gran 1773:85). When schoolmaster Gran asked, "Do you not think that you are happier than your forefathers, who lived in ignorance and wandered in the darkness?" Anders replied, "Not everyone who can read is happy" (Gran 1773:86, author's translation).

In the end, however, Anders' resistance proved in vain. While battling a drawn-out illness, he had a frightening vision in which the Devil appeared in a traditional Saami garb and came to claim his soul. Anders tried to protect himself by praying to the Christian God and attempted at educating and converting the creature in his vision by offering it his book in his stead, which was dismissed with, "I can read more than you can". After vowing to return, the guest disappeared head first through the floor boards. According to Gran, when Anders became well again, he turned into a pious and studious pupil who recognised the divine hand in what had transpired.

The story of Anders and his transformation from ill-tempered, arrogant and lacking compassion man to a good student "loving in the company of others and rather quite in his ways" is used by Gran as a proof of effectiveness of the educational efforts: through love of God, natural intractability shall be overcome. Through the total isolation and constant presence of the teacher as supervisor and example, the recurring admonishments to submit to visible and invisible forces, the refined methods of internalising desirable norms and the diligent transmission of common ideological manifestations, an effective indoctrination is possible to accomplish. Even if the need for conversion here is given a completely intra-religious motive, the adjustment of the Saami behaviour to Christian norms functioned as a significant part of the policy of acculturation.

Theophilus Gran's story of the conversion of Anders concludes with the headmaster allowing his student to make a complete apology for his previous ways. Gran quotes yet another conversation, where Anders perceives the requirement to attend school itself as the Divine means by which his soul was saved from damnation:



“I did not want to go to school, and would not have come, if my mother had not been required to teach me how to read. And she had no other alternative.” I [Gran] said, “What do you think now?” He said, “As a blind man falls into a pit, so would my blindness have been, until I had become damned, if God had not taken hold of me this way”. (Gran 1773:92, author’s translation and quotation marks).

The quote shows that Anders seemed to totally assimilate the worldview that the Saami school system mediated, that he perceived acculturation as a transformation from blindness to sight, from ruin to salvation. So total was the ideological indoctrination of the Saami school system that the indoctrination itself was perceived as Divine Providence by its victim. The consequences of colonialism can hardly be more clearly presented than that.

## Colonial Education and Saami Resistance

Colonial education, which meant to reform and domesticate the uncivilised *Other*, often proved to be a double-edged sword. In the stubborn attempt to educate and Christianise, missionaries equipped their students with valid tools of writing, Western model of thinking and acting and with an appropriate vocabulary enabling them to question, ridicule and fight back the colonial encroachment.

In his 1674–1676 account of native Umeå Lapland, Nicolaus Lundius, a graduate of the early Skyttean school in Lycksele, commented on the way Saami trick their ministers and administrators in believing in their total conversion. He describes how Umeå Saami seem “to be very obedient to their Priests outwardly and come to church more regularly than Northern Lapps” (*Berättelser*, Lundius, 11). They willingly read and sing and behave in a way they are expected to act. But inwardly the Saami do not master and disregard the Christian ideology (*Berättelser*, Lundius, 16; on Saami strategies, see Rydving 1993).

Olof Sjulsson, another Saami and graduate of Skyttean school, is a good example of such dual, ambiguous position. He also exemplifies how skilful mimicking of language and reasoning applied by the missionaries and government officials was used to evade constraints and regulations imposed by them.

We know little about Olof Sjulsson. He came from the Saami community of Vapsten in Umeå Lapland and was a pupil at the Skyttean school in Lycksele until 1676, after which he spent a year attending classes in Umeå and several more in Härnösand. Though he never took church vows, he reached a prominent position in the local community becoming county sheriff (Sw. *länsman*) in the 1680s.

On 26 March 1687, Sjulsson, in his capacity of a sheriff, wrote to the King proposing several changes in Vapsten and requesting to be allowed to use his drum as a compass. The letter has been lost, but its main arguments are known through a number of other writs concerning the matter. One item proposed administrative gerrymandering so that Vapsten would no longer belong to Lycksele congregation but rather to Åsele in Anundsjö parish, on the pretext that the Saami of Vapsten lived closer to the latter church. In his formulation, Sjulsson seemed to have exercised

logic and common sense and, quite rightly, counted on King's ignorance of Sápmi geography. In response, the King entrusted County Governor (Sw. *landshövding*) Kruse and Bishop Steuchius with the task of ensuring that the Saami of Vapsten "may attend the church which lies closest to them" and not have to travel all the way to Lycksele (ENA 43:237–8). Before the County Governor answered the Royal letter, he sought the counsel of experts in the matter.

In his report, Bailiff (Sw. *lappfogde*) Aegidius Otto stated that Sjulsson had manufactured "a great untruth" (ENA 43:241). In Otto's estimation, the distance between Vapsten and Åsele was twice as long as the distance between Vapsten and Lycksele. The vicar of Lycksele, Olaus Stephani Graan, and District Court Judge Lars Grubb also affirmed that northern Vapsten, the community of Olof Sjulsson, was in fact located much closer to Lycksele than Åsele (ENA 43:243, 247). Grubb suspected that Sjulsson's desire for a change of venue had nothing to do with distance but rather that he wished to avoid the religion trials taking place in Västerbotten. No such process had been undertaken in the province of Västernorrland, to which Åsele belonged, and Grubb suspected that Sjulsson and the Saami of Vapsten were fleeing from being indicted in Åsele for their "increasingly savage perpetuation of idolatry and superstition" (ENA 43:243–244).

Bishop Steuchius concurred with Grubb in his reply to the King. Sjulsson's request was nothing more than an attempt to "avoid inquisition into his well-known sinful ways" (ENA 43:253). Since attempting to escape justice flew in the face of His Majesty's intentions, Steuchius had no choice but to deny the request. When the King finally reaffirmed the prevailing order of things in a letter to the County Governor and the bishop in 23 May 1688, his reason was not just that the transfer to Åsele lacked merit but that its objective was unchristian (ENA 43:254–255).

Despite its innocent appearance, true motives of Sjulsson's petition were discovered and exposed. Bishop Steuchius and Governor Kruse were well aware of persistence of Saami practices including visits to sacrificial sites (so-called *seite*) and use of drum (Huggert 2000). During their trip to Umeå and Luleå Laplands in the early 1688, they found interrogated Saami "utterly obstinate" in these matters (ENA 43:191). Only after managing to persuade several of them to identify who used the drum was the commission able to coax them to confess and do penitence.

The subsequent test of catechetical knowledge served to prove that the Saami of Vapsten possessed the feeblest knowledge of the tenets of Christianity of all the Saami in Umeå Lapland. Only County Sheriff Olof Sjulsson could read, but he made himself scarce since he had also been "found with a drum" (ENA 43:191), a fact that undoubtedly rose the suspicion toward Sjulsson and his petition. In order to remedy the situation, the youngest members of the Vapsten community were ordered to attend school. Although the commission may have managed to quell the protests of the parents, it could not stop presumptive pupils from fleeing to Norway.

In his letter to the King, Sjulsson also petitioned to be put in charge of the educational system in Vapsten. Being a graduate of missionary schools, he believed that his former education would enable him to receive the post. The authorities never questioned Sjulsson's formal teaching qualifications, which had in fact been confirmed in testimonies about his extensive education sent under the same cover as Kruse's letter. Instead, Vicar Graan zeroed in on his *suitability* for the job.



**Fig. 8.3** Saami drum from Åsele Lappmark. This drum, together with 27 others, was taken from the Saami in 1725 and brought to the Board of Antiquities (Antikvitetskollegiet). Today in the National Historical Museum inv. no 360:23. (Photo by the National Historical Museum)

Sjulsson had asked to conduct services for the Saami of Vapsten and give them lessons in Christianity, so that the children no longer need attend school in Lycksele. He had also expressed interest in sparing the children from “the unusual fare” served in the Skyttean school (ENA 43:243). Graan admitted that the desire to spread the Word of God was a “divine act” completely in sync with the Skyttean school’s aim of inducing former students to serve as teachers in their respective communities (ENA 43:247). However, up to now Sjulsson had never shown the slightest inclination. On the contrary, Graan stated that Sjulsson had not even proven himself capable of running his own household properly: “When I asked him three years ago why he had not made more of an effort to teach his own wife, I was met with derision and indecent gestures” (ENA 43:247).

This and similar experiences made Graan fear that the Saami of Vapsten, who as it stood rarely attended church services, would abandon the church and its teachings entirely with Sjulsson as their schoolmaster. District Court Judge Grubb too expressed his doubts and feared that Sjulsson would “instruct innocent children in how to play the drum and other idolatrous superstitions, rather than teach them their Christian verses” (ENA 43: 243). Bailiff Otto shared the opinion of Grubb and Graan on the consequences of appointing Sjulsson to the job—“should that devil be made schoolmaster, few will come to church” (ENA 43: 241).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Olof Sjulsson’s petition is his request to be allowed to continue using his drum as an instrument of orientation when up in the mountain ranges, a request which was seen by local and regional authorities as the height of audacity. Bailiff Otto stated that in his forty-four years in Lapland, he had never heard the Saami refer to their drums as guides or compasses. They used them exclusively to predict their hunting and fishing luck (Fig. 8.3).

Vicar Graan developed an even sharper scepticism toward the supposed ability of the drum to show the way back to camp. According to him, this was nothing less than a “shocking and idolatrous request” which the well-educated Sjulsson ought have had enough sense to forgo, setting a good example for the Vapsten Saami instead (ENA 43:246). He rejected the idea that the drum could function as a compass since it lacked magnetisation, only moving when “the sorcerer and its superstitious worshippers, through the machinations of satan and idolatrous superstition, make it show him either good or evil” (ENA 43:246). If it had not been a tool of idolatry but a truly functioning instrument of navigation, then ships at sea would have begun using the drum long ago. Aided by this fantastic instrument, sailors would always know their exact position and dock safely in their harbours day or night. Graan concludes his sarcastic effusions by stating that “such tools of Satan” were of no service to Christians “but only to sorcerers and idolaters who have learned this art from one another” (ENA 43:246).

District Court Judge (Sw. *häradsövding*) Grubb also took to strong language to condemn the continued use of the drum. The petition was shameful, an expression of “madness and false belief” (ENA 43:243). In his estimation, the Saami wanted to “continue in their heathen blindness and superstition”, which in itself qualified as high treason (ENA 43:242). Grubb stated that Sjulsson, who had attended school for so many years at the pleasure of the Crown, ought to have set a good example for his less-educated brethren in his teachings and living. Since the obdurate Sjulsson should have known better, he “should be punished as a warning to the others” (ENA 43:242). Only then would the Saami gone astray be freed from the shackles of the Devil. In similar terms, Vicar Graan expressed the importance that “this satanic art be abolished” (ENA 43:249). Only then could the clergy liberate and rehabilitate the misguided members of the flock.

The choice of analogy between a drum and a scientific instrument is an interesting example of mimicking practicality, confidence and reliance on such tools brought by the Swedish officials and teachers. During his youth and years spent in Umeå and Vapsten, Sjulsson could have encountered cartographers with their measuring equipment including compasses, telescopes and sextants. Mapping the northern territories began in 1611 and between 1661 and 1666, a set of detailed maps of Västerbotten parishes (including Umeå) was produced. The charting activities continued throughout the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth century, making the sights of compasses and other scientific instruments quite common. Comparing Saami drum to a compass was a clever wordplay. By likening the two Sjulsson might have attempted at demystifying the drum, clearing it of its demonic associations and disguising it as an innocent object of uttermost practicality. Sjulsson’s choice of vocabulary might have also been indicative of the central importance of drums for Saami practices. As much as representation of distance, description of landscape and physical travel were impossible without a compass, drum was a tool necessary to accomplish spiritual journey.

Defending traditional Saami lifestyle and practices by using logic, vocabulary and concepts of the colonisers became a necessary but not always successful strategy.

The true motives of Sjulsson were exposed. In the supplementary testimony enclosed in County Governor Kruse's reply to the King, aspersions on the character and intent of Sjulsson are cast in no uncertain words. According to Bailiff Otto, "Olof Sjulsson is a grand mythmaker, [who] makes the Laplanders obstinate... He is a crook and ought not escape punishment" (ENA 43:241). Similar indignant statements occur in all of the testimonies included. In his report to the King, Kruse declares Sjulsson "the most angry" of all the Saami in Vapsten, who in turn were the worst in all of Lapland (ENA 43:239). Apparently both the spiritual and the worldly authorities had a hard time coming to grips with "this barbaric people ... for no one can imagine how wicked they are" (ENA 43:240).

This coordinated attack on the character of Olof Sjulsson was apparently motivated by the bald-faced provocation his petition to the King was seen to be. The impudence of applying for something contrary to the wishes expressed by the King in countless resolutions implied that Sjulsson had committed high treason. There were to be no mitigating circumstances for him, since he had spent many years studying at the expense of the King himself in Lycksele, Umeå and Härnösand. He had acted despite knowing better and was therefore considered callous and cynical. He took advantage of the trust that the long-term financial support had represented and he had failed to use his acquired knowledge in a responsible manner. Instead, he led his unlearned brethren astray and undermined both the spiritual and worldly power of the authorities.

The fact that the petition was sent in the midst of a trial that involved both ecclesiastical and civil authorities also likely contributed to the violent reactions, as well as the alarming fact that His Majesty initially accepted Sjulsson's disingenuous arguments about the distance the Saami were forced to travel to church. Sjulsson was perceived as a threat to the extermination of what the authorities regarded the idolatrous witchcraft at large in Sápmi.

The indignation of the powers was certainly also founded in the fact that the Saami counterattacked and defended their religion and culture with weapons only the Swedes had previously mastered. With the aid of the written word, Sjulsson could appeal directly to the Royal Court, whose knowledge of the actual state of affairs was strictly limited. The fact that County Governor Kruse based his reply so heavily on supplementary testimony from expert regional authorities reveals the fundamental gravity with which the matter was taken. Kruse backed up the expertise of the local authorities by stating categorically that "no one can imagine how wicked they [the Saami] are without having been among them and dealt with them" (ENA 43:240). For the Swedish authorities directly responsible for Sápmi, it was apparently of the utmost importance to quickly and effectively close the channel that had opened between the Saami and the King. The Saami lacked all credibility in this and all other instances; only the Swedish parties concerned possessed reliable information. This was the message the County Governor sent to the authorities in Stockholm, and the final verdict of the King was proof that his message hit home.

## The Voice of the Colonised and the Legacy of Colonial Education

Olof Sjulsson's attempt to defend his cultural heritage is a unique event in seventeenth-century Saami history. Even when broadening the perspective to include the entirety of European colonial history, few examples of verbal resistance on behalf of the colonised can be found, especially ones in which the latter formulated themselves on paper.

The stories of Olof Sjulsson in Lycksele and Anders the *Saami youngster* in Jokkmokk highlight the role of education as a tool in the service of the church and the government's cultural influence on the Saami. Isolated from their native culture and under constant supervision, Saami children were exposed to intensive acculturation during their years at residential school. At the same time, the school offered skills that at least on occasion could be used to defend Saami culture. By learning to write, Saami youth acquired new abilities to formulate their thoughts and make known their opinions. Nearly all of the pioneers of the Saami political movement which emerged during the first decades of the twentieth century had been pupils at the schools of the Swedish Mission Society. Similarly, the first generation of political leaders decolonising Africa had been educated at Western missionary facilities (Lönneborg 1999:43–65).

Though Sjulsson's defence of Saami culture was unique for its day, he stands at the head of a long line of political activists who gained the opportunity of formulating their standpoints in writing thanks to the government's educational programme. Back then, no one wanted to hear Sjulsson's request to use his drum as a compass. Today, the Saami still have a hard time getting people to listen when they state their claim to land and water.

The basic elements which characterised the Saami school system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries left their imprint on Swedish educational practices in Sápmi. This concerned both the limited scope of the lessons themselves and their religious colouration. Expressed in the terms of international curricula, the history of Swedish Saami education can thus be characterised as both *restricted* and *evangelical curriculum*. Consequently, Swedish Saami education displays the same characteristics usually associated with *colonial curriculum*. But the very fact that the education in Sápmi so thoroughly reflected the official and individual views of Swedish actors as to what was an appropriate education for the Saami comprises sufficient evidence of the powerful influence of the colonial legacy.

The ideologies motivating educational initiatives in Sápmi have changed over time. The Pietist missionary ideology of the eighteenth century was followed in the next century by the Swedish Mission Society, which founded numerous missionary schools in Sápmi. The teaching in these schools was restricted to reading and Christianity, until it eventually expanded to include writing and arithmetic in order to reach what was considered the minimum level of public schooling.

For the Saami, the introduction of the public school system brought lessons that were more or less equivalent to the minimum course of an ordinary Swedish elementary school. Thus the practice of restricted education which had been initiated in the early modern period was now complete. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the view of the Saami came under the influence of theories of cultural levels and racial hygiene. The Nomad School reform which was introduced in 1913 was clearly influenced by ideas of the inferiority of the race and culture of the Saami (Eriksson 1992; Henrysson 1993; Pusch 1998; Karlsson 2000). Only by being kept on its proper level of evolution could Saami culture ever have a chance to survive. This goal could only be achieved if the Saami were segregated from the civilised lifestyle of society at large. The school system therefore accommodated the reindeer-herding Mountain Saami's nomadic lifestyle as far as possible, and the schools took the form of both mobile and permanent Saami cots. Since the purpose of the Nomad School was to preserve the Saami at their cultural level, the contents of the lessons were both restricted and tailored to what was considered the particular needs of the Saami. The nomadic schools were not replaced by new forms of education until after the Second World War.

Concentrating on the living conditions of the Mountain Saami was in line with the comprehensive Saami policy of the government at the outset of the twentieth century. With the nomadic life of the Mountain Saami taken as the only model, an image of the *correct* and legitimate kind of Saami was constructed, to which the minority rights of reindeer pasturing legislation were bound (Mörkenstam 1999; Amft 2000). In their stead, the Forest Saami who subsisted on hunting and fishing became the object of assimilation. The modern state demanded clear, unambiguous categories, and Saami culture had to be redefined to fit that need. The political antagonism which exists today between reindeer-herding Saami and Saami lacking rights to land and water is to a great degree the consequence of the Saami policy of the Swedish government.

Regardless of whether Swedish educational policy in Sápmi has aimed at acculturation or segregation, it has been dictated by Swedish interests in domesticating a colonised populace. This is the colonial legacy in the history of Saami education. The self-appointed right of the Swedish state to define what the Saami are and ought to be is a feature that fuses educational policy with Saami policy in general. At the same time, this power to define *Saaminess* and transform Saami identity creates a fundamental colonial relationship with roots in the missionary and educational efforts of previous centuries in Sápmi.

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# Chapter 9

## Materialities on the Move: Identity and Material Culture Among the Forest Finns in Seventeenth-Century Sweden and America

Fredrik Ekengren

### Introduction

The differences in language, culture and economy were so great that it is reasonable to suggest that the forest Finns, despite Swedish citizenship, had their own nationality. Their situation can therefore to some degree be compared to that of today's immigrants (Stenman 2001:135, translation by the author).

Early modern Scandinavian colonialism is an area of study largely under development. While the idea of Scandinavia as a colonial space has grown stronger within the past few decades of research, gradually focusing on both political expansion and situations where cultural similarities and differences are expressed and negotiated, there are still research areas with a tendency for an essentialist view of culture and peoples. One of these is the research on the so-called forest Finns who migrated from eastern Finland and settled in central and northern Sweden in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Members of this group were later included among the settlers of the colony *New Sweden* in America in the early seventeenth century. The introducing quote above may be taken as representative of the general idea of forest Finn ethnicity and identity prevalent in much ethnographic and historical research, as well as the widespread view on their relationship with other groups. The issue of ethnicity and cultural identity has been central to the research on the forest Finns from the onset (cf. Jordan and Kaups 1989; Pikkola 1990; Norman 1995; Jordan 1995; Wedin et al. 2001; Welinder 2003). The features traditionally considered underlying the ethnic identity of the forest Finns were a common cultural origin in eastern Finland, the Finnish language, their agricultural practice, their mode of building houses, as well as their experience of

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**Fig. 9.1** *Under the Yoke* (Sw. *Trälar under penningen*) by Eero Järnefelt (1893). The painting's iconic depiction of the toil and hardship of slash-and-burn agriculture in the nineteenth century has become part of the forest Finn myth, even with regards to the seventeenth century. (Ateneum Art Museum & The Central Art Archives, Helsinki, Finland. Foto: Hannu Aaltonen)

migration and outside pressures from others, such as the Swedish Crown. However, the inference of these characteristics has up until recently been based largely on retrospective evidence, such as written sources and architectural remains dating to the mid-eighteenth century or later. This has at times led to a kind of reversed ethnocentrism, where the forest Finns appear as a timeless, ingenious and resilient frontier people represented by an unchanging repertoire of cultural traits (Fig. 9.1; cf. critique by Talve 1986; Aronsson 2000; Bladh 2000; Welinder 2003).

Although a complex area of research, the forest Finns provide us with a challenging case study for exploring the issues of the materialities of early modern Scandinavian colonialism and migration, cultural interaction and the consequent dispersion, use and transformation of material culture (e.g. Welinder 2003). In the following I will approach this subject by discussing the seventeenth-century Finnish colonisation of the woodlands of central and northern Sweden as well as along the Delaware Valley in North America. By comparing the relatively well-known situation of the forest Finns in Sweden with the materially unexplored colonisation of the Delaware Valley, I will problematise the impact of interaction and integration on material culture and identity construction. How can one approach the Finnish settlers materially, focusing on material culture in the broadest sense, and how is the material culture to be understood, considering the indicated colonial situations where peoples and cultures intermingled and transformed?

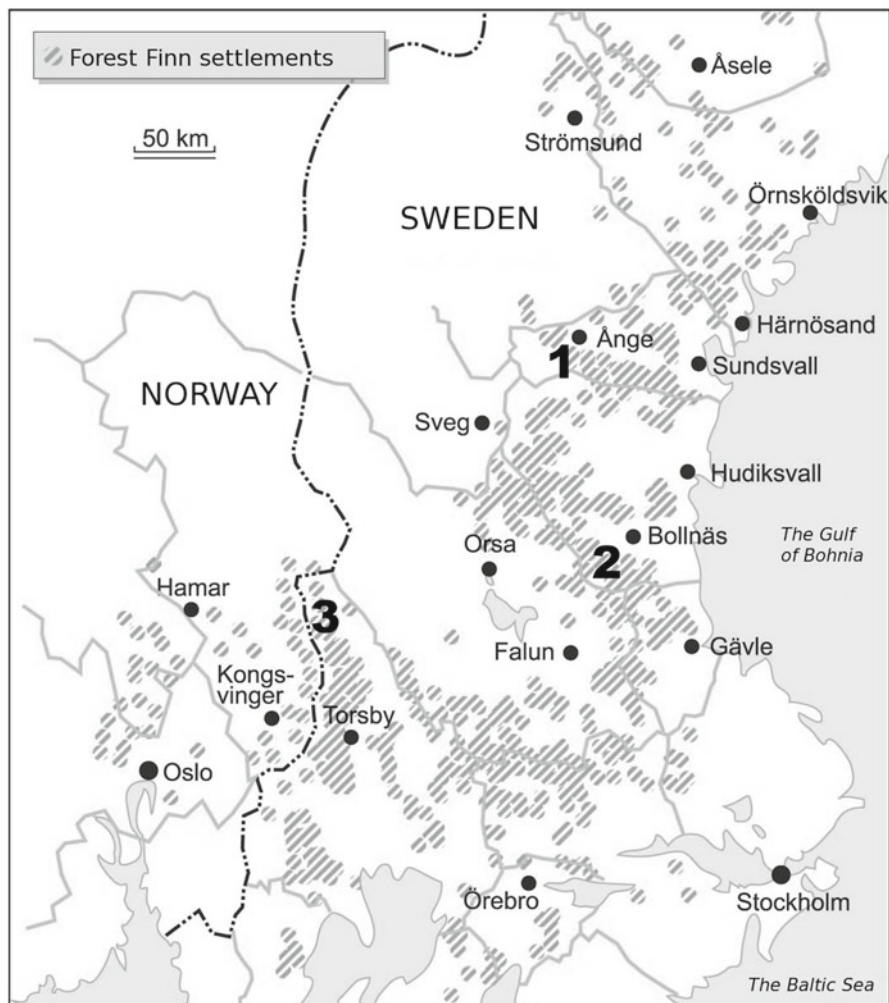
## Ethnicity and Material Culture

Ethnicity has always been a controversial issue in archaeology and material culture studies. Although some scholars refute the possibility of establishing past ethnicities based on material culture (cf. Jones 1997:x), archaeologists are still very much bound to assigning identities to the objects of past peoples. However, the centre of attention has shifted in recent years and scholars have become more mindful of the complexities of identity construction. Instead of viewing ethnicity as essential and unchanging properties, manifesting themselves through specific cultural features, modern scholars approach the issue contextually. In both anthropology and archaeology, ethnicity is thus generally considered to be the process of generating and maintaining self-conceptualisations relative to external categorisations of people and based on perceived cultural discrepancies. This process is, as such, a form of social organisation, and therefore both situational and mutable. It is through the cultural interchange with others that ethnic identities are created and transformed (cf. Barth 1969; Banks 1996; Jones 1997; Johnsen and Welinder 1998; Eriksen 2002; Werbart 2002; Welinder 2003; Hillerdal 2009). In other words, ethnicity is an aspect of social practice, which in turn is constructed in dialogue with material culture (cf. Ehn 1990; Werbart 2000:185). As Sam Lucy puts it: “One of the most powerful ways to reproduce feelings of ethnic belonging is to make use of symbolic resources, especially material culture and everyday practices” (Lucy 2005:96). By studying the material culture patterning, we may thus identify divergences in cultural practice that were the basis for the creation and transformation of ethnic identities (Ehn 1990:84; Lucy 2005:87).

## The Forest Finns in Sweden

Between the years 1580 and 1650, an estimated 12,000 forest Finns migrated from the eastern parts of Finland (which was part of Swedish kingdom at that time) and settled in Sweden (Fig. 9.2), particularly in the provinces of Dalarna, Västmanland and Värmland (Paloposki 1980:29–30; Tarkiainen 1990:133; Wedin 2001:35–42). This coincided with the ambition of the Swedish Crown to increase its revenues by promoting new settlements in the large forests covering the interfluves between already-settled valleys. Forest-dwelling Finns from the Savo-Karelian area of Finland were thus invited to colonise these regions of Sweden, and they were given seeds, cattle and a few years of tax exemption as incentive for their efforts (Tarkiainen 1990:142–144, 148; Wedin 2007:207–238). With them they brought their characteristic slash-and-burn technology by which they turned the coniferous forests into arable land. This practice, which appears to have been the dominant form of agriculture in eastern Finland (Orrman 1995:95–96), was a prerequisite for their colonisation of the Swedish interfluves. Thus, it is often regarded as one of the material practices that singled them out as an ethnic group in their new land (Wedin 2007:137–204; cf. Jordan and Kaups 1989).

As an agricultural technique, the slash-and-burn practice was not unique to the Savo-Karelians. However, the so-called *huuhhta* technique, i.e. the extensive,



**Fig. 9.2** Map of forest Finn settlements in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sweden and Norway. The archaeological sites mentioned in the text are 1=Råsjö, Borgsjö parish, Medelpad; 2=Grannäs, Alfta parish, Hälsingland; and 3=Gammelvallen, Södra Finnskoga parish, Värmland. (Adapted after Wedin 2007:104, Fig. 4:2)

migratory cultivation of rye in the ashes of burned spruce forests, differed from other known Scandinavian practices in the seventeenth century and is regarded as a forest Finn innovation. This technology allowed for a large harvest of grain, which was an important factor and a reason why the Swedish Crown invited the Finns to settle the state-owned land. However, it generally took 3–4 years from the time the forest was burnt until the rye could be harvested, after which the open field was used for haymaking and grazing cattle. It would then take several decades for the forest to renew itself before it could be burnt again (Wedin 2001:44–45). For this practice

to be sustainable, it thus required several concurrent *huuhtas* in different stages of progress. Another, oft-mentioned, slash-and-burn technique was the so-called *kaski*, meaning the burning of the broad leaf forest that established itself on the abandoned *huuhtas*. The trees were cut in the late summer and left to dry, and the clearing was then burnt the next year and rye, turnips and grain sown in the ashes (Bladh 1992; Tvengsberg 1995:279, 281–282; Aronsson 2000; Wedin 2001:44–49; Welinder 2003:110).

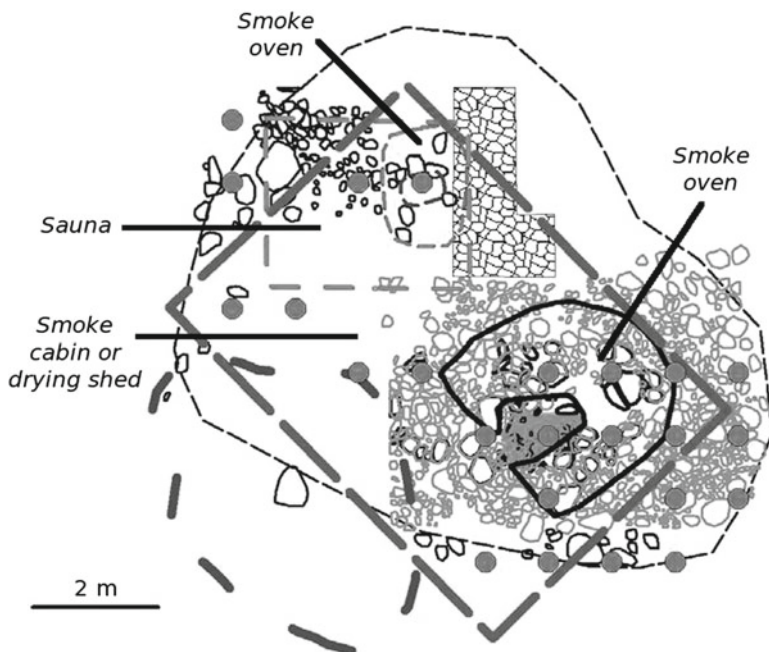
Archaeologically, the burning and cutting of vegetation in order to create arable fields is indicated in pollen and macrofossil samples from a number of historically known forest Finn sites. At the Råsjö farm in Borgsjö parish in Medelpad, which according to written accounts was founded by Finnish-speaking migrants ca. 1620 (e.g. George 2004:5), the pollen samples indicate an establishment phase through an incipient rye cultivation coupled with a decrease in spruce. The macrofossil samples of spruce, pine and birch together with charred branches from a burnt layer under the infields appear to confirm the initial clearing phase in preparation for the fields. The landscape around the farm gradually opened up, giving room to grasses and herbs. The decrease of spruce continued over time while the presence of coal increased, which may be interpreted as evidence of an intensified human activity in the area. After about 20–30 years, the cultivation of rye in burnt clearings appears to have been substituted by the growing of barley in permanent, fertilised fields (George 2004:11–12, 2005:18–19; Wallin 2005).

Similar changes in agricultural focus are also attested in contemporary tithe records in other parts of Sweden (Bladh 1995:155; cf. Lööw 1985:43–48). Although macrofossils and pollen samples from other historically known forest Finn sites testify to burnt clearings and expanding fields as well, indicating the use of a rudimentary slash-and-burn technology (e.g. Welinder 2003:118, 128; Regnell 2005), using such samples to argue for the iconic *huuhta* or *kaski* practices is questionable. The samples are generally small, sometimes hard to directly link to the historically known farms, and they do not offer datable sequences with enough resolution to verify the recurring burning associated with a large-scale and systematic slash-and-burn practice. Furthermore, the traces of coal in some of the samples might originate from any number of sources, including charcoal production (which was usually located in the deep forests) as well as ordinary fireplaces (Welinder 2003:118). A number of analyses seem moreover to indicate that the farms were not established in primeval, non-cultivated forests and did not cause any major changes of the landscape. Rather, the Finnish-speaking settlers arrived to a fairly open forest of both broadleaf and coniferous trees, cultivated by the Swedish farmers through forestry and summer pastures. The land then appears to have then been fairly rapidly burnt, cleared of vegetation and transformed into permanent infields (Welinder 2003:113–118, 121, 128–129; cf. Aronsson et al. 1993; Regnell 2005). This shift in agricultural focus may be attributed to a number of factors: For instance, the *letters of permission* (Sw. *nedsättningsbrev* or *torpebrev*) as well as the years of tax exemption awarded to the Finnish settlers were conditional upon the Finnish settlers establishing permanent (i.e. taxable) fields. Also, the slash-and-burn practice was severely restricted through a number of legislations from the mid-seventeenth century onwards (see below).

The forest Finns also brought with them a number of building traditions that, at least initially, would have set them apart from the Swedish farmers: the smoke cabin (Fi. *pirtti*), the grain-drying shed (Fi. *ria*) and the smoke sauna (Fi. *savusauna*). What separated this group of buildings from the Swedish farms was not so much their outer log construction, being built in the tradition of notched timber cabins found in central and northern Sweden, Norway, the Baltic countries and parts of Russia. It was rather their system of heating, using a chimneyless smoke oven, which sets them apart (Erixon 1982:404–407; Nesholen 2001:96; Gustafson 2005). Although buildings interpreted as smoke cabins, drying sheds or saunas are mentioned in the Swedish and Finnish written sources of the period (Welinder 2003:96–97), we do not have any clear contemporary literary evidence of these smoke ovens in Sweden. And of the extant farm buildings of attested forest Finn origin in Sweden, only four have been dated to the seventeenth century, mostly on the basis of oral tradition (Östberg 2001). Furthermore, all of them have been moved, remodelled and/or added to over the years. Thus, there is no reliable and contemporary comparative material for buildings with smoke ovens. In spite of this, the existence of smoke ovens in the seventeenth century has never been doubted, and their absence in the Swedish literary sources has been attributed to the misconceptions of the contemporary writers (cf. Wedin 2007:161). Based on extant structures of a later date (eighteenth and nineteenth century), the smoke oven was constructed out of fieldstones (with or without mortar) and chimneyless, allowing the smoke to escape through the oven opening and out through a hole in the roof. The oven in the smoke cabin was large, sometimes taking up as much as one quarter of the floor space, while the ones in the saunas and the drying sheds were smaller in size (e.g. Talve 1960:316; Nesholen 2001:96; Gustafson 2005; Wedin 2007:161–167).

Archaeologically, ovens of this type have been identified on three sites dated to the seventeenth century: Råsjö in Borgsjö parish, Medelpad (George 2006, 2007); Grannäs in Alfta parish, Hälsingland (Welinder 2005; Blennå and Gustafson 2011) and Gammelvallen in Södra Finnskoga parish, Värmland (Bladh et al. 1992; Aronsson et al. 1993) (Fig. 9.2). At the Råsjö site, the remains of two, partly overlapping, seventeenth-century buildings were excavated close to the lake, possibly representing the earliest phase of the farm (Fig. 9.3). One of them had the remains of a large smoke oven built of fieldstones in one of the corners. Due to the oven, the building was interpreted as either a smoke cabin or a grain-drying shed (or possibly a multifunctional building), and it was most likely the first building on the site. High amounts of grain from earth samples taken close to the building are possibly the remains of thrashing. The other building, also constructed with a smoke oven made of fieldstones, was a younger structure interpreted as a sauna (George 2006, 2007). On the terrace above the lake, the remains of a third building was partly excavated and dated to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This was a larger, double house (Sw. *parstuga*), with one room housing a smoke oven and the other an oven with a chimney (George 2005).

Although the ovens of these buildings may be interpreted as smoke ovens of Finnish type and thus used to align a specific form of material culture to the ascribed forest Finn identity associated with the farm through the written sources, the material culture in general at Råsjö did not specifically distinguish itself compared to that



**Fig. 9.3** Plan over the two overlapping seventeenth-century buildings with smoke ovens excavated at the lake Råsjö, Borgsjö parish, Medelpad. (Adapted after George 2007:12)

found on contemporary Swedish woodland farms. The excavations yielded material such as a late seventeenth-century coin (Charles XI), window glass, Swedish and German redware pottery dated to 1650–1750, small pieces of clay tobacco pipes, iron objects (e.g. knives and nails), fragments of a soapstone pot and animal bones (George 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). A similar pattern is observable at the early seventeenth-century cabin of Grannäs in Alfta parish (Hälsingland), which material remains included Dutch and English clay tobacco pipes, early seventeenth-century Dutch and German redware pottery, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century coins, as well as window and vessel glass (Welinder 2004, 2005, 2006; Andersson and Welinder 2010:179–180; Blennå and Gustafson 2011:6–7). These examples show that there was a high degree of cultural mobility among at least some of the Finnish settlers and that they had access to a wide national and international market (Pentikäinen 1995:295; Andersson and Welinder 2010:179–180; Blennå and Gustafson 2011:7).

The double house at Råsjö further demonstrates this flexibility. The double houses, with their symmetrical layout of two large gable rooms separated by a small entrance hall and a recessed chamber, were a typical Swedish form in the seventeenth and eighteenth century among both gentry and peasants (Erixon 1982:286, 288, 291). They became common among the Finnish settlers, and documents confirm the increased Swedish characteristics of the forest Finn settlements beginning at the end of the seventeenth century and continuing over the course of



the eighteenth century, both with regard to the layout of the farms and in the types of buildings they included. However, they differed from the Swedish forest farms in one respect, in that they kept the smoke cabin, the drying shed and the sauna as part of their repertoire of buildings. And while the smoke oven disappeared in parts of Finland due to the introduction of the Swedish double house, the smoke ovens on the forest Finn farms were instead frequently combined with chimneyed fireplaces in the same fashion as in the double house at Råsjö (e.g. Talve 1986:73, 1997:39; Gustafson 2005). These changes in architecture and layout of the farms have in turn been associated with the agricultural transition from the relatively mobile slash-and-burn practice to more permanent fields, which are also discernable at the Råsjö farm (Hämäläinen 1945:18; Talve 1953:53; Gustafson 2005).

By the end of the seventeenth century, many of the forest Finn settlements in central and northern Sweden had transformed into more or less Swedish homesteads. The farms were built in Swedish style, the settlers were bilingual, many had married into Swedish families, and the homesteads were not singled out as specifically *Finnish* in the written accounts any more (Löw 1985:77–78; Welinder 2003:60–61). Even if this transformation is not applicable to all forest Finn settlements in Sweden, it nevertheless shows the level of cultural and material integration initiated already at the end of the principal colonisation phase in the mid-seventeenth century. One must neither forget that the Swedish farmers over time appropriated practices and material cultures generally associated with the forest Finns, such as the slash-and-burn cultivation of rye and the construction of grain-drying sheds (Nordmann 1994:41–42; Welinder 2003:109; Nesholen 2001:92, 130).

Thus, through the archaeological and historical sources, we may draw an image which contrasts the stereotypical conception of the forest Finns as poor peasants of a simple backwoods culture, largely isolated from the rest of the world. Likewise, the idea of clearly distinguishable ethnic markers in the material culture must be moderated, although some features, like the smoke ovens, may be ascribed particularly to the immigrants. In other words, the cultural boundaries between the two groups may not always have been so distinct, at least when material culture was concerned.

## The Creation of *Otherness*

During the rivalry and disputes that may have caused part of the above-mentioned transformation, the material practices of the forest Finns became significant. In the 1630 s and 1640 s, a series of legislations and court decisions were issued that prohibited the extensive, forest-destroying, agricultural practice of the forest Finns. This was largely due to the growing complaints of the Swedish farmers, who saw the Finnish presence as an encroachment on their lands, as well as the claims of the developing copper and iron industries in the Bergslagen District who were in need of large supplies of wood for their production (Johnson 1911:148–151; Tarkiainen 1990:173, 189, 194–195; Tvengsberg 1995:280–201; Bladh 1992:8, 1998; Stenman 1998:59; Welinder 2003:107–108, 148).

These conflicts and ensuing restrictions in Sweden coincided with the advent of *Finn* as a collective and derogative label used to describe a troublesome and unfavourable group of people. Before this, *Finn* was more commonly used to signify the origin or language of the individual, particularly those of the first generation of migrants. For the second generation of settlers, the label *Finn* was much more uncommon as an individual designation (Welinder 2003:40, 148–159). In other words, the ethnic construction of *the Finns* as a group distinguished from the Swedish farmers or the metal industries was enhanced as the disputes increased. However, the Crown's discontent also applied to the very mobility of the Finns generated by the migration as well as the slash-and-burn practice. The colonisation was a gradual process carried out in waves, where newcomers as well as second- and third-generation settlers moved along a network of relatives and friends who had arrived before them. In this process, the established settlements functioned as conduits for further migration to new territories (e.g. Wedin 2007:232, 239). Because of this, a forest Finn settlement could house not only the tax-paying farmer and his family but also a fairly large number of other people. One group was the so-called *house Finns* (Sw. *husfinnar*), i.e. lodgers and their families who worked on the farm for an extended period in exchange for room and board, before finding their own land to settle (Wedin 2007:251). The other group was called *vagrant Finns* (Sw. *lösfinnar*), which consisted of individual seasonal workers who assisted in the laborious slash-and-burn practice and who moved freely between the Finnish settlements without settling; a labour system common in eastern Finland (Wedin 2007:252–253). These vagrant Finns also took advantage of the woodlands for hunting and fishing, without seeking permission to do so, which encroached upon the resident farmers' traditional rights to the backwoods. This further increased their strained relationship with the Swedish farmers and the Crown, and in 1636 the system of housing vagrant Finns was declared illegal and all Finns who had not established permanent, taxable, settlements would be deported back to Finland or drafted as soldiers (after Nordmann 1994:46–48; cf. Lööw 1985:52; Tarkiainen 1990:180). One solution to the Crown's problem with vagrant and forest-burning Finns would later be found in the colony of New Sweden in America (cf. *Handlingar* 1848:213–216; see below).

Thus, in the process of portraying the encumbering and nonprofitable migrants and settlers as *the other*, the word *Finn* was imbued with moral connotations. And in this competitive situation, their cultural background and material practices played a role in enforcing this *otherness*. While particularly the *wasteful* and *damaging* slash-and-burn practice was used in the law texts and written complaints to encapsulate the negative attitude towards the migrants, the same cannot be said for other material culture, such as the smoke cabins, smoke ovens, drying sheds and saunas. Instead, these are featured in more mundane accounts, such as estate inventories, and do not appear as ethnically charged as the slash-and-burn practice appears to have become by the middle of the seventeenth century. It was not until the nineteenth century when the forest Finn regions had become proletarianised, as the historical accounts portrayed these buildings as iconic and exotic. These descriptions were then used in the early forest Finn research to conjure up memories of the earliest colonisation of the Swedish backwoods (Welinder 2003:170).

## Tradition and Change Across the Atlantic

The colony of New Sweden in America offers an interesting comparison to the excavated forest Finn settlements, but the extant material culture is scant to say the least. Instead we have to look to the written sources for insights into what material culture traditions were brought to the New World and what part they played in the identity production of the Finns.

When the colony was established in 1638 along the Delaware River on the East Coast of North America (see Ekengren et al. this volume), new possibilities opened for the forest Finns who found it increasingly difficult to come to terms with the Swedish Crown regarding taxation as well as land and forest rights. Even though they are not always easy to identify in the records of the colony, since the sources often regarded the entire population as Swedish, it is estimated that somewhere around 30 % of the colonists arriving between 1638 and 1654 were forest Finns (Carlsson 1995:179). Occasionally they appear bearing patronymic names, converted from their original Finnish family names, but with an added *the Finn* or *a Finn* to mark their distinction (e.g. Dunlap and Moyne 1952:81–83). They migrated from the provinces of Medelpad, Dalarna, Västmanland, Närke, Värmland and possible also Ångermanland (e.g. Johnson 1911:239; Gothe 1945:125–126), and their arrival in the colony was in part due to the propaganda and active recruitment by the Swedish Crown as well as the intensifying judicial restrictions on slash-and-burn agriculture in Sweden (Johnson 1911:149–150; Norman 1988:121; Tarkiainen 1990:208–215; Nordmann 1994:150; Tvensberg 1995:283–286).

New Sweden proved a suitable place for disposing of these unwanted citizens. However, because of the initial lack of interest in migrating across the Atlantic, the Crown had to use diverse strategies to promote settlement of the colony. One of them was offering petty criminals, such as the forest Finns who were found guilty of breaking the forest laws, a reduction of their severe sentences to a few years of indentured labour, if they agreed to go to New Sweden (*Handlingar* 1848:213–220; Stiernman 1747:55; Johnson 1911:239).

Certain of the stereotypes and misconceptions about forest Finns in Sweden also migrated to America (e.g. *Report of Governor Rising*, 1654:149) and affected the way they were treated in the colony. The attitudes towards Finnish-speaking settlers, labourers and freemen seemed to have been sharp, especially during the governorship of Johan Printz. In two petitions against Printz and his abuse of power written in 1653 and 1654, several cases of unjust treatment and physical violence towards Finns are quoted (Craig and Williams 2006:11–14, 22–23).

Despite hard-handed treatment, the forest Finns were allowed to continue their practices, such as slash-and-burn agriculture. This opportunity was certainly advertised in letters and messages sent back to Sweden. In the wake of harsher laws introduced in Sweden, large numbers of Finnish-speaking immigrants decided to board the ships bound for America in the 1650 s (Norman 1988:121; Tarkiainen 1990:211–215).

The forest Finn homesteads spread expansively throughout New Sweden, and mostly they appear to have settled apart from other groups. Some regions of the colony developed into regular Finnish-speaking areas. One of them was aptly named *Finland* and located between Chester Creek and Marcus Hook in Pennsylvania (Ferris 1846:133; Acrelius 1874:68, 1959:69; Dunlap and Moyne 1952:84).

A large contingent of Finnish-speaking colonisers also settled in present-day New Jersey (Norman 1995:199). During his travels in this area in the mid-eighteenth century, Pehr Kalm noted a dispersed settlement pattern consisting of single homesteads:

Single farm houses were scattered in the country, and in one place only was a small village: the country was yet more covered with forests than cultivated, and we were for the greatest part always in a wood (Kalm 1770:333).

Further on in his account he writes:

Sometimes there appeared, though at a considerable distance from each other, some farms, frequently surrounded on all sides by corn-fields. Almost on every corn-field there yet remained the stumps of trees, which had been cut down; a proof that this country has not been long cultivated [—]. The farms did not lie together in villages, or so that several of them were near to each other, in one place; but were all separated from one another. Each countryman lived by himself, had his own ground about the house, separated from the property of his neighbour (Kalm 1771:107).

Accounts like these have been interpreted as indicative of a settlement pattern familiar from the Finnish areas in central and northern Sweden (e.g. Jordan and Kaups 1989:58–59, 127–128), and the mention of fields with the remaining stumps of trees may be a reference to the slash-and-burn practice. In some sources, the colonial observers remarked on the destructive use of the forest in the New Sweden area, where dead trees were left on the fields and some fields in turn abandoned for new clearings after just a few years. In other instances we encounter specific references to burnt clearings sown with rye and barley (Acrelius 1874:147; Fernow 1877:143; Johnson 1911:528–529; Jordan and Kaups 1989:59; Tvengsberg 1995:283, 286; cf. Craig and Williams 2006:24). In the area around Philadelphia, Pehr Kalm noted what he called “[—] Swedish fields, which are formed by burning the trees which grew on them” (Kalm 1770:146).

While some scholars have argued that these sources demonstrate a *kaski* crop regime (rather than the *huuhhta*) practised by the forest Finns in the colony (Jordan and Kaups 1989:104–105), it is impossible to discern any agricultural details from the accounts, as well as determining the ethnic and cultural identity of the people to which they are referring. The terms *Swede* and *Swedish* were often used as collective labels, comprising both Swedes, forest Finns from central Sweden and Finns from the Swedish provinces of Finland. Given that slash-and-burn techniques were known and practised, at least to some extent, among Swedish farmers as well in this period, we cannot be certain that the farming described in the sources was conducted by forest Finns. The same goes for the settlement patterns, although the correlation between the historically known areas of forest Finn settlements in the colony and the noted scattering of isolated farms is tantalising.



**Fig. 9.4** The *Lower Swedish Cabin* located on Creek Road in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania. This is one of the extant seventeenth-century cabins in the New Sweden area which have been attributed to the forest Finns due to its log construction (Jordan and Kaups 1989:151). (Photo by Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe)

We encounter the same difficulties when we search for building traditions in the colony. Some have argued that the forest Finn system of smoke cabins, saunas and grain-drying sheds was transplanted to North America and came to further influence the frontier culture on the continent (Weslager 1952; Jordan and Kaups 1989; Jordan 1995; Immonen 2011:373; however, cf. Glassie 1972 for a different view). Indeed, log cabins are a well-attested feature of the colony, and some of them have survived standing to this day (Fig. 9.4; Ambrose 2002; e.g. Immonen 2011 for a recent review). But again, assigning a specific cultural or ethnic identity to these structures proves more of a challenge, and many of the previous studies have been overly dependent upon retrospective evidence because of the scarceness of contemporary material culture in both the Nordic countries and in America.

Some late seventeenth-century sources mention log construction as a technique associated with the Swedes (e.g. *Letter from Thomas Paschall*, 1683:250–251; cf.

Ekengren et al., this volume). In an account by Andreas Rudman, who was a Lutheran minister serving the Swedish congregation in the late 1600s, it is mentioned that the houses in the area were “built after the Swedish manner” (Holm 1834:102). In the mid-eighteenth century, Pehr Kalm wrote:

The houses which the Swedes build when they first settled here, were very bad. The whole house consisted of one little room, the door of which was so low, that one was obliged to stoop in order to get in. As they had brought no glass with them, they were obliged to be content with little holes before which a moveable board was fastened. They found no moss, or at least none which could have been serviceable in stopping up holes or cracks in the walls. They were therefore forced to close them, both without and within, with clay. The chimneys were made in a corner, either of grey sand, a stone, or (in places where no stone was to be got) of mere clay, which they laid very thick in one corner of the house. The ovens for baking were likewise in the rooms (Kalm 1771:121).

Kalm’s account is one of the few where the structure of the cabin is noted. Although the English translator of the text used the word *chimneys* for the fireplaces, the Swedish version uses the less specific word *spisarne*, simply meaning the *stoves* or *fireplaces* (Kalm 1915:56). Thus, Kalm may have referred to either an open hearth with a mantle and a chimney or a chimneyless smoke oven. But the description is not detailed enough to offer a clear identification.

Besides a possible, but weak, reference by Kalm to an oven made of fieldstones, the written sources describe what appear to be conventional log cabins of a style common in many parts of the Nordic countries. This is interesting enough, but does not help us in linking particular structures to the traditions of a specific group of people. A further problem is that most of the descriptions of buildings, such as those referred to above, were made in the late seventeenth century when the colony had fallen under Dutch and then English rule, and thus may not be valid for the initial Swedish period of colonisation. And if we look to the eight extant log cabins in the New Sweden area along the Delaware, all of them dating to the second half of the seventeenth century or early eighteenth century, they have fireplaces with chimneys constructed out of either fieldstones or brick, possibly a result of later modifications (Ambrose 2002).

While smoke ovens, and indeed smoke cabins as such, are absent from the extant material, a number of written sources mention *bathhouses*. In a written complaint against Governor Printz dated to 7 July 1654, a number of settlers protested against the hard labour forced upon them; among other things, the erection of a bathhouse on the governor’s estate on Tinicum Island (Craig and Williams 2006:22). Another reference is made in the Upland court records of the late seventeenth century, which describes a fight taking place in the *badstoe* (bathhouse) of a certain Lace Colman, his surname being an English rendition of the Finnish *Kolehmainen* (Armstrong 1860:79; Dunlap and Moyne 1952:82, 88). Furthermore, Pehr Kalm, writing nearly a century later, recounts that “[a]lmost all the Swedes made use of baths; and they commonly bathed every Saturday” (Kalm 1771:123; cf. Johnson 1911:357).

These accounts indicate that bathhouses were an established feature in the building tradition of the colony, from the early periods well into the Dutch and English

rule. Some scholars take them as descriptions of Finnish smoke saunas (e.g. Johnson 1911:357–362; Jordan and Kaups 1989:59), and they consequently propose that the Finnish sauna culture was transplanted into America by the forest Finns. This interpretation has then turned into one of the classic tropes in the story of the New Sweden colony. However, I would argue that the available accounts do not support this claim. Bathhouses were a common feature in seventeenth-century Sweden, both on peasant farms, at rectories and at the residences of the gentry (Talve 1960:161–185, 200–201). Granted, these buildings were generally for tub baths rather than steam, but since the construction of the buildings are absent from the colonial accounts we cannot determine whether we are dealing with smoke saunas or regular bathhouses of the Swedish kind.

The written sources also comment on the cultural transformations that occurred under Dutch and English rule. While the Swedes, including the substantial number of forest Finns who migrated to the area just after Sweden had lost the colony, enjoyed a large degree of independence under the Dutch and the English, their traditions were slowly beginning to change. Characteristics, such as the Swedish and Finnish languages, which had first marked their difference, began to dissipate and were replaced by new customs (cf. Acrelius 1874:360; Norman 1995:194, 199; Craig 2000). Pehr Kalm noted that:

[—] before the English settled here, they [i.e. the Swedes] followed wholly the customs of Old Sweden; but after the English had been in the country for some time, the Swedes began gradually to follow their customs (Kalm 1771:123).

This transformation probably explains the colonial blending of features visible in some of the extant New Sweden cabins, where Scandinavian and Anglo-American features are melded together (Ambrose 2002; see Ekengren et al. this volume).

## Colonising the In-Between

What has this comparison between early modern Sweden and America shown, besides the complexities in discussing cultural identity and ethnicity based on the present evidence? If we approach the archaeological and written sources guided by the notion that ethnicity is not a bounded and timeless construct but situational and must be studied contextually, then it becomes apparent that the traditional view of the forest Finns as an unchanging ethnic group must be revised.

What we see is that the cultural scenery of the forest Finn regions in Sweden as well as the New Sweden colony was in no way static. The excavated settlements in Sweden indicate that certain cultural traits were retained in the new environment, buildings with smoke ovens being the most evident material traces. At the same time, the results also indicate that the Finns were not such an isolated group as is sometimes suggested (cf. Welinder 2003; Andersson and Welinder 2010). They settled in a landscape already characterised by the outland use of the Swedish farmers, and their initial slash-and-burn practice seems early

on to have shifted to the use of permanent fertilised fields. Furthermore, the finds of window glass as well as imported objects show that the everyday life of the Finns was part of a larger cultural and economic network than often presumed. Thus one could argue that it was primarily through the written sources of the seventeenth century that the stereotypical image of the forest Finns was created. These accounts were written by others and often as a result of economic conflicts where material practices such as slash-and-burn farming were recharged as markers of ethnicity and difference.

The materialised identity of the New Sweden forest Finns is equally multifaceted. One could expect the Finns, especially those who were displaced by force, to materially accentuate their sense of Finnish identity in the New World. But the available sources give no indication of this, at least not of the type of clear-cut identity often expected by previous scholars. Even if some of the sources on the colony refer the Finns as a group, these accounts were also written by others. Occasionally they distinguish between Swedes and Finns, primarily on the basis of language and in periods of conflict, but more often they refer to the entire population of the colonial area as Swedish. Some of the written accounts indicate that groups of Finnish-speaking migrants settled in specific regions and that their farmsteads lay scattered in the landscape, but whether this should be attributed to an extensive slash-and-burn practice or not is impossible to say. Also, even if there are scattered references to slash-and-burn farming and the growing of rye, these practices are characterised by the writers as Swedish in contrast to the Dutch and English, rather than something particularly Finnish. Furthermore, it is difficult to see the straightforward division in the building traditions between Swedes and Finns as argued by some scholars. This is partly due to the lack of well-preserved and comparable seventeenth-century buildings in both Sweden and America. The characteristic smoke ovens, which are one of the most tangible forest Finn features in the archaeology of seventeenth-century Sweden, are not featured in the written accounts of the colony and are completely missing in the extant log buildings in America. The same goes for the characteristic buildings that accompanied them: the smoke cabin, the drying shed and the smoke sauna. On the other hand, considering the cultural transformations that the forest Finns of Sweden underwent in the course of the seventeenth century, it is perhaps not surprising that the material boundaries between Finnish and Swedish in America are not more tangible.

These patterns suggest that while certain material practices may have been used to inscribe the new environment with a sense of familiarity and tradition, perhaps as part of a conscious strategy to retain the link to a perceived cultural background, this was likewise an amalgamation where old practices blended with new ones (cf. Ehn 1990; Stewart and Strathern 2005; Naum 2008; Turan 2010). We are in other words not dealing with simple conservatism but rather a process where material practices of different origin functioned as resources in creating a sense of identity and belonging to a particular place. The forest Finns were thus living within a field of tension between difference and hybridity—a testament to the diversity of early modern Sweden and America.



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**Part III**  
**Venturing Into the World: Scandinavian**  
**Colonies in America, Africa and Asia**

# Chapter 10

## Sweden in the Delaware Valley: Everyday Life and Material Culture in New Sweden

Fredrik Ekengren, Magdalena Naum, and Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe

### The Colony of New Sweden

The colony of New Sweden was established in 1638 along the Delaware River, in the territory of the modern states of Delaware, south-eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey (Fig. 10.1). It was the first Swedish experiment in ascertaining presence and claiming territory outside of Europe. The idea of venturing to America was masterminded by Samuel Blommaert and Peter Minuit, former employees of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), together with leading members of the Swedish government, including Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna and Admiral Claes Fleming (Johnson 1911; Dahlgren 1988:3–6; Norman 1988:45–51; Fur 2006:89–92). In seeking royal approval and financial backing, several arguments in favour of the colony were presented. It was argued, for example, that a transatlantic venture would strengthen Swedish trade and help to develop shipping and long-distance seafaring; it would enrich the kingdom and the investors; it would, furthermore, open a door for land acquisition and create an

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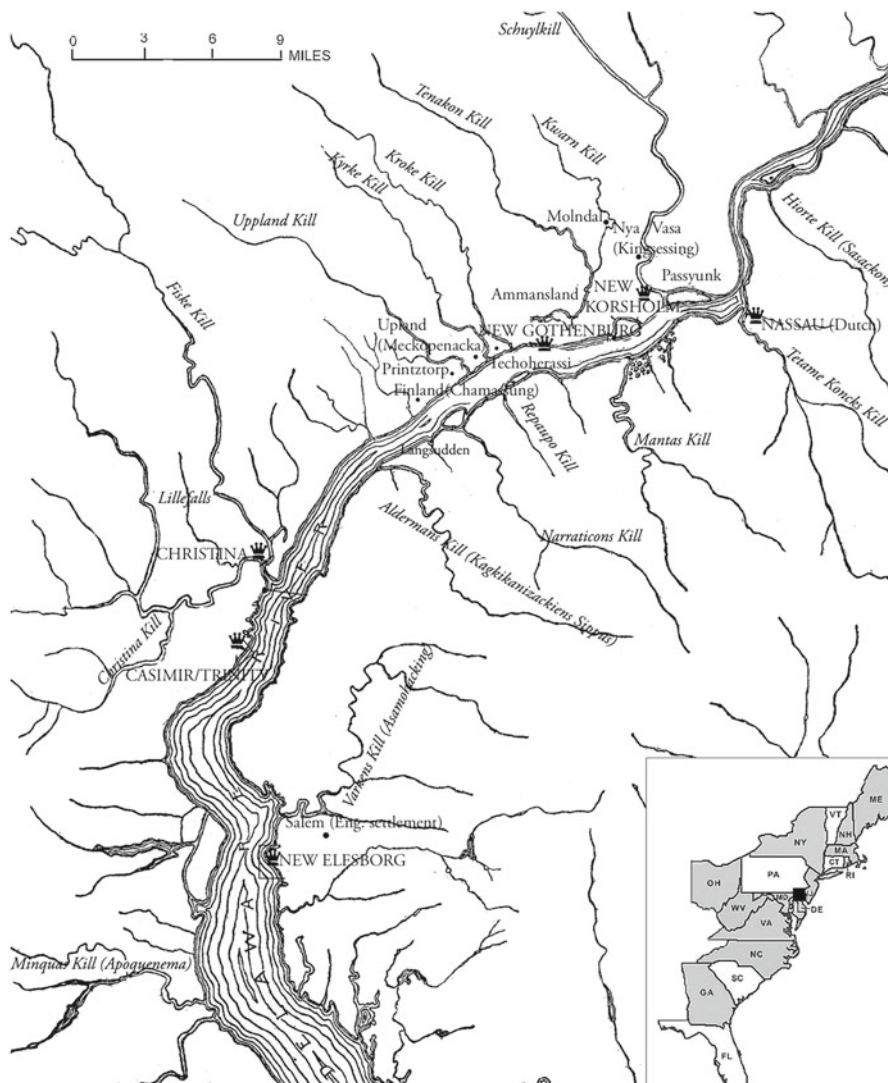
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**Fig. 10.1** Geography of New Sweden (Drawn by authors after Johnson 1911)

opportunity to spread Christianity and civilisation among the Native Americans (Campanius Holm 1834:63–64; Dahlgren 1988:12–16, 1995).

A colonial plan was approved in 1637 when the South (or New Sweden) Company was established. The materialisation of this endeavour was largely possible thanks to the Dutch involvement. The former employees of the WIC provided not only substantial capital injection but they were also able to con-

tribute with important know-how, including maps and charts, transatlantic sailing experience, insight into the conditions of the country and lists of wares sought after by indigenous groups. Strong Dutch involvement in the venture was also reflected in the initial character of the colony, which took the form of a fortified trading station focused on tobacco and beaver pelt trade (Norman 1988:47–59).

The first expeditions left Sweden in 1637 and 1639. Peter Minuit (the first governor of New Sweden) purchased an extensive area on the western side of the Delaware River and established a fort and a trading station in the vicinity of the shores of Delaware River and Minquas Kill. To honour the Swedish monarch, the fort was named Fort Christina.

Despite a promising prognosis, the New Sweden venture turned out to be rather disappointing in terms of commercial outcome. Dutch investors, unsatisfied with the results, withdrew from the company in 1640 (Johnson 1911:131–34; Dahlgren 1988). From now on the fate of New Sweden became the sole responsibility of the Swedish Crown and the reorganised New Sweden Company.

Reorganisation of the company required new staff and a programme for recruiting settlers willing to emigrate. Thus far the major posts in the colony were entrusted to the Dutch, who also constituted a large portion the settlers. This situation was partly remedied by an active strategy of enforcing relocation to America and by appointing Lieutenant Johan Printz as a new governor of the colony. Equipped with comprehensive instructions giving him executive power, instructing him to develop the colony and establish legal and religious institutions patterned on Swedish examples and urging him to establish tobacco plantations and other industries (salt works, fisheries, silk production, cattle and sheep husbandry), Printz arrived in America in 1642. His long governorship, which he gave up in December 1653, was a period of considerable economic and territorial growth for the colony. It was inhibited, however, by an insufficient commitment by the Crown to the project. In 1655, as a result of a Dutch attack and takeover, the Swedish colony ceased to exist. The last governor of the colony, Johan Risingh, most of the soldiers and some of the colonists returned to Sweden. Others stayed and prospered under the Dutch and from 1664 the English rule.

The colony has been studied by several historians over the years (e.g. Acrelius 1874; Johnson 1911, 1930; Dahlgren and Norman 1988; Fur 2006). In this chapter we would like to consider a number of issues that are important for understanding this colonial project and the experiences of those who took part in it. We focus on the strategies of recruitment employed by the Swedish Crown, the difficulties in adjusting to a life in America, interactions with Native American groups, as well as the ways in which the settlers domesticated new landscapes through the use of familiar technologies and practices. In our approach, material culture and its significance for coping with migration, organising the landscape, negotiating identities and social spaces, takes the centre stage.



## Settling the Colony: Challenges, Homesickness and Desertion

One of the constant challenges in the history of New Sweden was the low interest in migrating to America among Sweden's population. As a result, settlement in the colony underwent stark fluctuations. At its lowest the number of settlers might have been less than 30 individuals (e.g. in 1640) to reach about 368 individuals, the highest number recorded, in 1654 (Johnson 1911:699–726; Carlsson 1995). Paradoxically, immigration from Sweden continued and even increased after the collapse of the colony. A few hundred settlers arrived in 1656 and in the 1660s and were allowed to stay by the Dutch and the English administrators of the province.

Migrating to America was a complex process. Some colonists, after initial setbacks, fared quite well. For others, adjusting to the life in the colony, away from family and friends, was much harder and even an unbearable challenge. Consequently, the stream of people crossing the Atlantic proceeded in two directions: from Sweden and back to Sweden.

Because of the initial lack of interest in migrating to New Sweden, the Crown had to use diverse strategies to promote the idea of settlement in the colony. One of them was imposing displacement on *problematic* segments of the society. Petty criminals convicted for adultery and encroachment of royal prerogatives were offered a reduction of their severe sentences to a few years of indentured labour as company workers, if they agreed to go to New Sweden (Handlingar 29:217–220; Stiernman 1747:55; Johnson 1911:239). Sending them to New Sweden was also perceived as a way of reforming them and breaking their indolent nature (Cook Myers 1959:161). A group of them, mostly of Finnish origins, was on board the *Charitas* and *Kalmar Nyckel* during the fourth transatlantic expedition, which arrived in New Sweden towards the end of 1641. Another contingent of convicts arrived in 1643 (Campanius Holm 1834:73; Carlsson 1995).

Non-compliant soldiers, deserters and those who evaded army drafting were also forced to serve in New Sweden. A popular conception of America as a dreadful and feared place made military officials consider service in the colony as an appropriate form of punishment for stubborn and non-compliant soldiers (AOSB 1898, 1905:315–318; Handlingar 29:210–212; Johnson 1911:268).

The resentment and fears of serving in America were often only confirmed and deepened after arrival in New Sweden. In the correspondences sent from the colony, motifs of longing, homesickness and despair were constantly repeated (e.g. Johnson 1930; Craig and Williams 2006:6–8). Governor Printz mentioned the wish of the soldiers to go back to Sweden in both his reports dated to 1644 and 1647 and in his letters to Lord High Steward Per Brahe and Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna. Writing in 1650 and 1653 he confessed that:

[...] officers as well as common soldiers, they long and yearn with great desire to be released and to come again to the fatherland, and this might indeed be the best, so that they by chance in the future might not undertake something else. But they all live in the hope that they with the first opportunity may be released and furloughed home (Johnson 1930:177–178).

Printz hinted at the soldiers' readiness to desert the colony, which endangered its already fragile existence. Escaping to the neighbouring colonies of Maryland and New Netherland became a repeated practice harshly dealt with by Governors Printz, Papegoja and Risingh (Cook Myers 1959:156–157; Risingh 1988:157, 221).

Difficulties in adjusting to life in the colony, longing and the wish for returning were also expressed by Governor Printz himself. Already in 1644, in the second report sent to Sweden, he uttered his will of return, a plea that became more urgent with the passing of time (Johnson 1930:113–114). In 1653, alarmed by the long overdue contact with Sweden, he wrote that he had lost all hope of ever being relieved from the position as governor and had become so sickly and so incapable of governing the colony that he was forced to assign the conduct of affairs to another. Once again he repeated his sincere desire to “be relieved and released from this place” (Johnson 1930:189). Finally, not receiving any news or letters from Sweden for 6 years, he decided to leave the colony.<sup>1</sup>

There were certainly various reasons why life in America was difficult to cope with. Many felt insecure and powerless in a fragile colony, the existence of which was largely at the mercy of the Native American groups, as well as the Dutch who never recognised Swedish rights to the Delaware Valley (Acrelius 1874:43–56; Johnson 1930; Dahlgren and Norman 1988:199; Craig and Williams 2006:6–8). Escalating feelings of indifference of the Crown and the company towards the colony, infrequent contact with Sweden, atop of a harsh government introduced by Printz, magnified a sense of hopelessness. Conditions in America appeared in a stark contrast to the life left behind, provoking the feeling of homesickness and longing (e.g. Cressy 1987:191–212; Moogk 1989; Wyman 2005; Matt 2011; Naum 2013).

Nostalgic feelings might have been further instigated by interactions with objects brought from home (e.g. Hofer 1934 [1688]; Hoskins 1998; Parkin 1999; Marcoux 2001; Tolia-Kelly 2004; Digby 2006; Miller 2008; Naum 2008). Soldiers and settlers arriving in the colony carried with them bundles of personal possessions. Johan Printz might have brought most of his valuables to America. An inventory made after the fire at his house in 1645 lists a number of personal things: a great number of books, clothes, personal accessories, curtains and fabrics for decorating the house, mugs, tableware, candle holders, household articles and silver and golden trinkets (Johnson 1930, see also Cook Myers 1959:28). Most of the carpentry fittings in his American house might have been made of Swedish timber he brought with him (Johnson 1911:348). During the excavations on Tincum Island in modern-day Essington (PA), additional objects were unearthed and the site interpreted as Printz's estate, *Printzhof* (Becker 1979; Cotter et al. 1992:405–409; Johnson and Wennberg 2005; Becker 2011). These artefacts somewhat diverge from the written inventories and include, above all, everyday objects (pottery, pipes, metal tools) that were perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> This decision was not taken lightly by Governor Printz. He deserted once before from a battlefield in Germany—a decision that resulted in imprisonment and a setback in his career (Johnson 1930).

too numerous and deemed as relatively worthless to be included in his compensation claim after the fire. Together the inventory and the excavated objects give an impression of Printz's uncompromised will to recreate the comforts of daily life in the colony.

By equipping the house with familiar objects, Printz might have succeeded at domesticating the foreign environment, creating an illusion of stability and unchanged reality. By doing so he also unknowingly created stimuli for his longing. The contrast between the recreated home and the harshness of daily life outside his doorstep might have made living in New Sweden even more unbearable. Being surrounded by material objects constantly reminding of the past and realising that the ideas of home imbedded in those objects were so incompatible with the daily existence in the colony, Printz easily became a victim of nostalgic longing, fixated with the idea of return.

## Carving Familiar Spaces in Unfamiliar Territories

A clearly expressed wish from the Swedish Crown was to literally create a *new* Sweden in America. Culturally significant traits such as the Lutheran faith, laws, language and traditions were meant to order daily life in the colony:

The Swedish language should be kept, spoken and written, purely without any mixture of other languages. All rivers and streams as well as herbs and woods [should] be called with old Swedish names; abolish all expressions from the Dutch, which now seem to be somewhat ingrained. In fine, both in manners and customs, as far as possibly can be managed, everything should be conformed to old Swedish (*Instructions* §23 Johnson 1930:156–157).

This was urged by Per Brahe in one of his letters to Governor Printz. This confessional, linguistic and cultural unity was an important step in assuring a constant link with the homeland and reinforcing the identity and allegiance of the colonists as subjects of the Swedish Crown (Dahlgren 1995:61–62; Gustafsson 1998; Lindmark 1999:17–18; Haefeli 2006). To please the Crown, and more importantly to create recognisable reference points, the governor and the settlers quickly inscribed the landscape with familiar-sounding names. Hopokehocking became Fort Christina, Chamassung was known as Finland, Meckoponacka was christened Upland, Techoherassi was called Olof Stille's Land and Tenakong (Tinicum) Island hosted fort New Gothenburg (Acrelius 1874:67–69; Johnson 1930:112, 131). Other settlers chose to reside in places named Mölndal, New Vasa or New Korsholm (Fig. 10.1). These rituals of naming, with their spatial and temporal symbolism reflecting familiar geographies, were designed to produce “local subjects, actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends”, soldiers and farmers (Appadurai 1996:179).

The Crown and the colonial administration made constant attempts to manage and domesticate the landscape of New Sweden as part of the plans to maximise the profits and to turn it into a *civilised* and recognisable space. This is evident in the

instructions given to the colonial Governors Johan Printz and Johan Risingh and in administrators' executive decisions and projects described in their reports sent to the Swedish government and the Board of Commerce (Sw: Kammarkollegiet) (Johnson 1930; Cook Myers 1959:136–165; Risingh 1988). Churches, water mills, farms, orchards and pastures dotted New Sweden's landscape.

However, the domestication of the landscape was not only a project directed by the Crown. The settlers in their day-to-day life made choices that to a large degree relied, perhaps unsurprisingly, on their habitual knowledge and practical know-how. In their lives disrupted by migration, this was an important act of emplacement, placemaking and production of locality meant to keep at bay an endemic sense of anxiety and instability caused by displacement (Tuan 1986; Appadurai 1996:179; Casey 1998; Turton 2005).

Turning foreign, hostile and unpredictable into recognisable and comfortable spaces was achieved through material means of housebuilding, homemaking and traditional means of sustenance. Early buildings, settlement patterns and the way of life seemed to a considerable degree reminiscent of practices back home. Extensive conservatism in house construction and lifestyle postdating the fall of the colony to the Dutch and the English is noted in several accounts dated to the seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

Jaspar Dankers and Peter Sluyter, who visited Delaware region in 1679–1680, commented on the architecture and multicultural characteristics of the area. The landscapes they passed were described very much through the accounts of the houses and farms they saw and stayed in, each one ascribed with clear ethnic signatures. The Swedish houses were described as rigidly traditional and unlike the English ones. They were made of logs split or shaped from whole tree trunks and attached by incisions at the corners without the use of nails. They were warmed by a fireplace in the corner, and although simple in their appearance, they were small and cosy (Dankers and Sluyter 1867:175). Passing through a Swedish settlement of Wicaco (south of Philadelphia), the travellers noticed another interesting feature: a drying house equipped with a stove (Dankers and Sluyter 1867:235). Perhaps this was an example of a *ria*, a drying house commonly constructed by the Forest Finns (see Ekengren 2013).

Just like the houses, the Swedes they met during the journey were described as conservative and preserving their cultural identity to a surprising degree. “We drank very good beer here, brewed by the Swedes, who, although they have come to America, have not left behind their old customs”, noted Dankers and Sluyter (1867:177). Similar observation of conservatism and cultural particularity of the Swedish and Finnish settlers is noted by Thomas Paschall, an Englishman, who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1682/83. Paschall noticed the simplicity and self-reliance of the Scandinavian settlers: their modest log cabin dwellings built with minimal use of tools; their reliance on traditional crops such as rye, turnips and barley (“they plant but little Indian corn, nor tobacco”); their home-based weaving and sewing (although he mentions also the English fashion of their clothes); and their particular liking of rye bread (Cook Myers 1959:250–54; see also Kalm 1771:397–9, 404–7). The unmistakable Swedishness of these settlers was also confirmed by Reverends



**Fig. 10.2** Morton Homestead in Prospect Park, Pennsylvania. (Photo by Smallbones)

Eric Biörk and Anders Rudman who served as ministers in the colony in 1697–1714 (Campanius Holm 1834:90, 100, 102; Craig and Williams 2006:63–4).

Attachment to traditional ways of life notwithstanding, it would be wrong to assume that the complex mixture of people, traditions and material culture of Middle Atlantic America did not have an impact on the culture of Scandinavian settlers. Already in the early years of the colony, the shores of the Delaware River, besides diverse groups of Native Americans, were occupied by the Swedes, Finns, Dutch, Germans, English and single Africans. After the fall of New Sweden, and increasingly after English takeover, the whole area became a magnet for European settlers searching for religious freedom and economic opportunities. Their increased influx meant that previously isolated and scattered Finnish and Swedish farmsteads became gradually swallowed by new settlements and clearings. With this expansion came pressure to adopt English customs (Kalm 1771:404–407; Acrelius 1874:125–130, 157, 310). The generation shift and political and cultural developments of the eighteenth century meant further Americanisation and integration (Lindmark 1999, 2005). This ambiguity, the tensions between conservative elements and new cultural influences as well as colonial hybridity, is also manifest in archaeological and architectural material (Frens and Frens 1989; Jordan 1995; Ambrose 2002). One of the houses exemplifying colonial blending is Morton Homestead in Prospect Park, Pennsylvania (Fig. 10.2).

The house is connected with the history of the Mårtenson family. Mårten Mårtenson senior was born in Finland and migrated to America in 1654 to become a freeman (Johnson 1911:721). He settled in an area known as Ammansland that constituted a hub of Scandinavian settlement in the second half of the seventeenth

and in the eighteenth century (Craig and Williams 2007:49, 51, 92, 101, 264–266). His property rights were confirmed in 1672, when Governor Francis Lovelace issued a patent to him and two other landholders acknowledging their possession of more than 700 acres along Darby Creek. The property remained with the family until 1784 (Cotter et al. 1992:409–411).

The oldest structure documented at the Morton Homestead was a square foundation, found underneath one of the still-standing rooms. Interpreted as a possible dwelling room (so-called *eldhus*) or sauna, it was dated to 1660s (Frens and Frens 1989). The northern room in the still-standing house was possibly constructed as early as 1698 (the date carved on the back of the fireplace lintel), as a free-standing building. Built with white cedar logs, the approximately 4 by 6 m dwelling featured a fireplace in the room's corner and a staircase leading to the second floor. The southern unit was built later, probably in the middle of the eighteenth century, and it was meant as a separate two-storey dwelling, equipped with a fireplace. The two originally separate buildings were then joined by a stone middle room (Frens and Frens 1989).

The construction of the early building as well as the two units, which then were fixed into one large house, corresponds with the ownership of the property by different members of the Mårtenson family: Mårten Mårtenson senior, who died in 1709; his son Mathias; his grandson Andrew; and Jonas (great-grandson of Mårten senior). Although the original building was altered by a restoration in 1938, the remaining features carefully studied by Dale and Susan Frens (1989) reveal interesting technological choices made by the builders. Double notch corners in both rooms, the use of conifer timber in the older room as well as tightly fitting log walls and the lack of mud and clay chinking in both rooms show references to the Scandinavian tradition (Erixon 1982). However, on the other hand, the roof framing is Anglo-American in style, and the southern building is made of oak, a material preferred by the English. The fireplace in the southern (younger) room is English as well. The Morton Homestead shows thus an interesting blending of styles, technologies and influences. Neither Scandinavian nor English in terms of technological solutions, it is a good material illustration of the eighteenth-century American colonial culture.

## **Materialising the Middle Ground: Interactions Between the Settlers and Native American Groups**

The relatively scarce population, the preference of scattered settlement and the considerable remoteness of many of the settlements had important consequences. These factors contributed not only to a close adherence to familiar norms that remained mostly unchanged and unchallenged until eighteenth century, but they influenced the development of a close relationship with the Native groups of Lenape and Susquehannocks, visible in material exchanges and appropriations (Kalm 1771; Campanius Holm 1834:98–103; Fur 2006:171–220, 240–246).

In their dealings with the Native groups, the Swedish Crown and the trading company applied a strategy of acknowledging Indian rightful ownership of land.

This land, which was bought by the representatives of the colonial company, formed a base of colonial foothold. Proofs of legal purchase and settlement were used to counter claims of other European empires, notably England, which asserted its rights based on the first documented discovery (Jennings 1988; Fur 2006:116–118). Furthermore, the Crown from the onset recognised the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the Native population. In the instructions to Governor Printz, he was commanded to treat the “wild nations, bordering upon all other sides, [---] with all humanity and respect” and:

see thereto that the people of [Her] Roy[al] Maj[esty], or of the Company, who are engaged for the [Indian] trade in those parts, allow the wild people to obtain the necessary things they need for somewhat more moderate price than they are getting of the Hollanders from Fort Nassau, or the adjacent English, all [to the purpose] that said wild people may withdraw from them, and so much the more turn to our own [people] (Johnson 1930:78–80).

But the colony never received the homeland support crucial for a colonial enterprise of the magnitude envisioned by the Crown. Since it often lacked trade goods and supplies from Sweden, it could not compete in the American trade in ways the other colonies did. Instead, New Sweden took up an intermediary role in the trade between other Europeans and Indians, buying goods from the Dutch and English colonies, trading them with the Native Americans for furs and then reselling the furs for transport to Europe. Thus, the settlers who could capitalise on rudimentary knowledge of Algonquian and Native customs became an important link that connected the Europeans with the Native American trade networks in the interior of North America. Additionally, since the Swedish initially focused the majority of their agricultural efforts on tobacco cultivation, they were forced to obtain a large portion of their food supply (particularly maize) from their Native neighbours, the Lenape (Johnson 1930:111; cf. Kupperman 1995; Williams 1995; Fur 2006).

The New Sweden colony may, in some respects, be regarded as a *middle ground* or a *contact site* from the onset (cf. Galke 2004:92; Loren 2008:7–9; White 2009, 2011; see De Cunzo and Nordin 2013). It was a cultural and geographical space characterised by daily negotiations, translation and remaking of cultural schemes, rather than the single-sided enforcement of colonial dominance (Bhabha 2004; cf. Hall 1999; Fahlander 2007; Naum 2010). Engineered by European stakeholders and populated by a mix of Swedes, Finns, Dutch, Germans as well as Africans, it was pluralistic by nature (cf. Lightfoot 1995:200). And much to the alarm of the other European colonists, the Native Americans were no strangers to the Swedish settlements either. Governor Risingh remarked in his journal that when the English commissioner Mr. Ringold visited Fort Christina and “[---] saw the Indians come and go so freely here, he said that we ought not to allow this, as they could be murderous when they had the opportunity” (Risingh 1988:173).

It was not simply the allure of European culture, or the promise of trade, that attracted the Lenape and Susquehannock to the Swedish settlements. It was rather the Swedish colonists who gravitated towards the Native communities. Fort Christina was founded on the earliest known Lenape summer camps at the confluence of the Brandywine Creek and the Minquas Kill, later renamed Christina River. Fort New

Gothenburg on Tinicum Island, where Governor Johan Printz built his private residence, *Printzhof*, was a springtime station used for pelt trade by the Susquehannocks. Also, Fort New Korsholm was located at a site near the mouth of Schuylkill River where the Lenape cultivated some of the corn on which the colonists depended (e.g. Johnson 1911:182; Becker 1980:21; 1984:24; 1993a:64–66; 1993b:324; 1995:124–125; 2011:3). These annexations of Native settlements into the colony were intentional, since part of the strategy of the trading company was to intersect the trade routes to New Netherland and give the Swedes sole access to the indigenous cultural and economic networks along the Delaware River and its tributaries (Johnson 1911:331; Dahlgren and Norman 1988:71; Ordahl Kupperman 1995:95; cf. Johnson 1930:130–135, 165).

Turning to archaeology, this coexistence seems to be supported by the finds from the *Printzhof* site. Here, excavations not only revealed what is considered to be the residence of the Swedish governor, but also the postmolds of two *wigwams*, the domed, circular type of shelters used by the Native population in the area (Becker 1988; 1993a; 2011). Native American artefacts, including worked bottle glass, a stone pipe and a stone axe along with the fragment of a large trade bead manufactured in the seventeenth-century Amsterdam or Venice, together with European goods are indications that the *Printzhof* served both as a Native American trading station as well as a private residence for the governor (Becker 1979:40; 1984:24; 1993a:64, 67–68, 70; 1999:83–88; 2011:16, 21; see Nordin this volume). Marshall J. Becker, one of the excavators at the site, views the presence of some of the Native objects in connection to the residence as an expression of Printz's interest in collecting Native American souvenirs, referring among other things to the Native wampum belt and stone tobacco pipe sent by him as a gift to Queen Christina and the wooden pipe and otter skin muff sent to Per Brahe (Becker 1999:84–85; 2011:17; cf. Johnson 1930:166–167). Objects like these represent the kind of encyclopaedic collection that fascinated the European elite of the time (cf. Becker 1990a; 1990b; Brunius 1995; Yaya 2008; Snickare 2011). This allure of *the others* and their material culture also corresponds with the ethnocentric musings over Native American life apparent in other contemporary writing and images (Fig. 10.3). There are several accounts of the daily interaction in New Sweden which focus on the physical appearance, moral character and material culture of the Natives, all in the style of Western ethnographic descriptions of the time (cf. Jacobsson 1922). For instance, in the correspondence of Governor Printz as well as in his official reports to the trading company, the Natives are characterised as strong and stout, wise in trade, skilled in hunting and crafts, as well as barbarously heathen, vindictive and ill-tempered (Johnson 1930:150, 153). This attitude is present in other sources as well, but we also get glimpses of the compromises and adoptions made by colonist and Native Americans as a result of living close to each other (cf. Jacobsson 1922; Fur 2006). For example, while authors like Peter Lindeström describe the Native Americans' fondness for European household utensils, textiles and clothing, Per Kalm (eighteenth-century Swedish botanist) provides a list of native medicinal, poisonous and edible plants, the proper use of which the Swedes learnt from the neighbouring Lenape (Kalm 1771; Lindeström 1962:150).





**Fig. 10.3** Peter Lindeström's drawing of a Lenape family from his *Geographia Americae*. Manuscript from 1661. (Courtesy of De la Gardiegymsnaset, Lidköping, Sweden)

The multicultural environment in the colony led to an ambiguous process of estrangement as well as dependencies, compromise and hybridisation. While the curiosities collected and sent home, as well as the starkly contrasting descriptions of the Native Americans helped to create and enforce the Swedes' view of themselves and their place in the world, the daily interaction blurred the line of difference between material practices.

## Recasting Identities Beyond the Colonial Borders

The close cohabitation and trade networks meant that a stream of European trade goods flowed towards Native American settlements. There are a number of roughly contemporary Lenape sites in the Delaware Valley, many of them burial sites, that

include objects like glass vessels, beads of brass or glass, pipes, dress accessories, iron tools, gun parts, brass kettles and brass and iron arrowheads fashioned from recycled metal objects (Becker 1980; Forks of the Delaware 1980; Kraft 1986; Pietak 1998; Kraft 2001; cf. Grumet 1995).

This pattern is reinforced if we move further away from the colony into Susquehannock territory in the interior of modern-day Pennsylvania. Living along the Susquehanna River, they were the main fur traders in the region, controlling a large trading network that covered the entire mid-Atlantic region and beyond (Becker 2011:2). Therefore, the Swedes were actively pursuing a trade and military alliance with them (Kent 2001:37), and at times, the Susquehannocks seem to have preferred trade with the Swedes (Becker 2011:21). This was mostly a result of their constant feuding with the English in Maryland and the fact that the Swedish colony had cut off the trade access to New Netherland in the north. Thus, the Susquehannock sites may offer some of the best opportunity for archaeologically studying the interaction with New Sweden, even though the European objects found on the sites are not of discernibly Swedish manufacture.

Two Susquehannock sites are worth mentioning in this context. The first one is the Roberts site on the Conestoga Creek in Lancaster County, dating to ca 1630–1645. It appears to have been the major settlement for the Susquehannocks in this period, and based on its location, it has been suggested that this is in fact the settlement mentioned by Campanius Holm located some 12 Swedish miles from the colony (Kent 2001:36). It was visited by the Swedes ca 1645: “They went thither with cloth, kettles, axes, hatchets, knives, mirrors and coral beads, which they sold to them for beaver and other valuable skins” (Campanius Holm 1834:157). The burials associated with the site contained numerous objects of European manufacture such as metal tools, fragments and small objects of brass, metal parts of guns, fragments of glass bottles and glass beads (Kent 2001:339–342).

The Strickler Site in Lancaster County is a well-known, mid-seventeenth-century settlement dated to the height of Susquehannock power in the mid-Atlantic (Kent 2001:254). The burials on the site contained a large quantity of objects of European origin as well as Native American objects made of European materials (Fig. 10.4). European brass kettles were especially abundant and were used for depositing food in the graves. Several of them showed signs of local repairs, most likely made by Native artisans. Other objects included spoons, snuff box covers, thimbles and bells made of brass, pistols, rifle barrels and flint locks of iron, textiles (probably blankets), iron knives, as well as beads and vessels of glass (Cadzow 1936; Futer 1959; Kent 2001:292, Table 19, 348–367).

One simple but significant observation when studying the so-called European trade goods found on both Lenape and Susquehannock sites is that they are always integrated with indigenous material culture or refashioned to fit existing practices rather than supplanting them. Glass beads, for example, used in the funerary costume of both Native American groups, were fashioned into necklaces and headbands and sewn onto clothing together with traditional shell beads (cf. Pietak 1998:146–147, 151). Similar kinds of cultural choices and interpretations are seen



**Fig. 10.4** European objects from the mid-seventeenth-century Susquehannock site at Strickler in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. (Courtesy of The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)

in the creative way European objects were adapted and transformed into new material forms. Glass from broken bottles was refashioned into scrapers, broken stems from European pipes were turned into beads, Dutch delftware was worked into ornamental discs, and ballast flints from European ships were knapped into gunflints using indigenous techniques (e.g. Becker 1980:22, 25; Kent 1983:28–29; Becker 1984:24; Kraft 1986:208–209; Kent 2001:249–250; Kraft 2001:382, Fig. 9.25). The list of examples is extensive, but the most cited practice of this nature is the use of brass sheets from dismantled kettles to fashion jewellery, such as pendants, bracelets and ear ornaments, as well as arrowheads (e.g. Kraft 1986:208). At the Strickler Site, triangular brass arrowheads outnumbered points made of stone, and some were fastened using fine cord, possibly made of European flax (Kent 2001:191, 204). The kettles were thus not only used for the cooking and storing of food, but broken into pieces and reworked to fit into the already existing material repertoire. Through these transformations, the European kettles and their metal came to be associated with a diverse range of cultural settings, practices and values (cf. Calvin 1975; van Dongen 1996:115; 139–141; Richter 2001:42–43; Immonen 2011:381).

All the examples above show the different ways in which the material world of the colonist became culturally embedded within the material and socio-cultural world of the Native Americans and vice versa. The Natives and the colonists of New Sweden performed their daily lives using material culture of various origins, blending the new and the familiar and thus shaping their world and their sense of self and the other.

## Conclusions

New Sweden was a short-lived project and a place full of ambiguities. Dreamt as a colony bringing profits and glory to the Crown and the country, it turned out to be a financial and political fiasco. Styled as a new homeland full of opportunities, it proved to be desperately unbearable for some. Imagined as a charitable project of bringing Christianity and civilisation to the Native Americans, it would have failed much sooner if not for the help, trade and protection of the Native communities. Wished to be a mirror of customs and norms practised in the home country, it became a hybridised middle ground. In the processes of establishing and maintaining the colony, in shaping it as a *new* Sweden, in everyday conduct and in interactions with Native American groups, material culture played an important role. It helped to domesticate the landscape and to counter the estrangement caused by migration to America, it served as a tacit means for expressing identities, and it functioned as a means of transactions and communication. Material objects and their use encapsulated the colonial entanglement of the colonists and Native groups and their simultaneous attachments and embeddedness in the old and the new world.

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# Chapter 11

## Borderland in the Middle: The Delaware Colony on the Atlantic Coast

Lu Ann De Cunzo

### Introduction

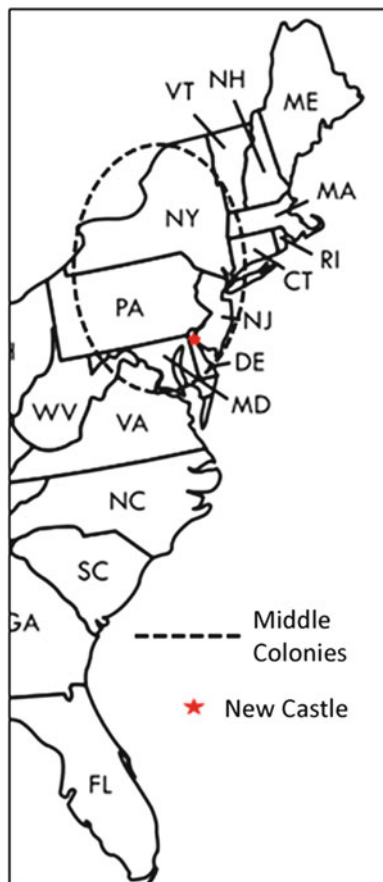
I am a newcomer to Scandinavian colonialism, thanks to a serendipitous convergence of interests and events. I have been struggling with how to *place* Delaware, to theorise it spatially and culturally. Heightened interest in the seventeenth-century Delaware Valley, within the region's archaeological and descendant communities and among a new generation of transnational historical archaeologists exploring how to situate, place, and theorise Scandinavian colonialism globally, has created new synergies and perspectives. I use this chapter as an opportunity to think New Sweden into the colonial archaeology of the Delaware Valley and more specifically that of New Castle (or actually, Tamecongh/Aresapa, Sandhoeck, Fort Casimir, Fort Trefaldighet, New Amstel, New Castle; Fig. 11.1).

New Sweden was only a “queer, little-known sidebar to history” of 17 years and a few hundred people on the colonial landscape. Small and short as it was, though, it made “surprising contributions to history” (Shorto 2004:117). Spatially, the Delaware Valley is in the middle of North America's Middle Atlantic. But focusing on this middling has diverted us from seeing that the middle was actually a contested *borderland* between north and south. So too was Sweden the *middle* of Scandinavia in the northern Baltic *borderland* of Europe. Sweden's experience on the margins of Europe, a northern state going empire in the early seventeenth century, deploying the Renaissance culture of the European centre in the margins—it's the implications of these spatial imaginaries that I explore here. The materialities of seventeenth-century imperial-colonial Sweden were both crafted in the dynamic, liminal, *tweenness* of borderlands in the middle.

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**Fig. 11.1** Eastern U.S. map showing New Castle, Delaware, in the Middle Colonies



## On Borderlands

Borderlands—place and concept—have been highly theorised over the past quarter century. Two recent publications offer points of departure to examine the definitions of borderland. Magdalena Naum (2010) brings to bear the perspective of an archaeologist, while the authors in I. William Zartman’s edited volume, *Understanding Life in the Borderlands*, address geography and political economy. “Borderlands”, Naum begins (2010:101), “are physically present wherever two or more groups come into contact with each other, where people of different cultural backgrounds occupy the same territory and where the space between them grows intimate”. Borders “run across land but through people”, Zartman continues. They “divide and unite, bind the interior and link with the exterior, [as] barriers and junctions, walls and doors, organs of defense and attack” (Strassoldo 1989:393 cited in Zartman 2010:6). Economic production and exchange, land ownership, social ownership (identity), rule, location and geography, language and communication, security, and

pressure from central powers to act drive borderland life. Borderlands are social processes (Zartman 2010:10), “places of manifold realities” fraught with tensions and conflicts that create “fragmented landscapes” (Naum 2010:102; Zartman 2010:10). As a result, borderlands are “empowering, creating possibilities to act in ways impossible or difficult to do in other places, creating hybrid solutions pregnant with potential for new worldviews and discourses” (Naum 2010:127). In sum, Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999) wrote that borderlands are liminal, multivocal, multilocal, dynamic, contested places in which, they add, people deploy identity strategically and situationally.

To untangle the way boundaries affect the nature of interactions among peoples, David Newman (2006:101, quoted in Gavrilis 2010:40) proposes, “it is the process of bordering, rather than the course of the line per se, which is important”. Postcolonial theories offer a conceptual toolbox for probing this bordering process. Homi Bhabha imagines such conceptual spaces as Third Spaces, places of translation and constant dialogue that “ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (Bhabha 2004:55, quoted in Naum 2010:106–107). Archaeologist Daniel Rodgers (2004:342) demands that we focus on the interaction process that defines “how meaning takes shape in relation to place, object, time, and the actor”.

Richard White emphasised the importance of such approaches to the study of seventeenth-century colonialism, during “which minor agents, allies, and even subjects at the periphery often guide[d] the course of empires” (White 1991:xi). Kent Lightfoot (2005:209) reinforced White’s argument in his critique of Eurocentric colonial models that “presume asymmetrical power relations from the very outset”. Indeed, Stoler and Cooper (1997:4) proposed, the “most basic tension of empire... is how a grammar of difference was continuously and vigorously crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority”. At times, White (1991:x) argues, a “middle ground” emerged, a space of accommodation and common meaning achieved at special moments in the processes of colonisation, a conceptual space in a physical place that challenges conventional, simplistic metaphors of acculturation and persistence. A *middle ground* grammar emerges when no one group is in a position to gain their ends by force and each side begins to incorporate the other into their conceptual order and then act based on these precepts of the others’ cultural premises. The “grammar of the middle” then pervaded both the rituals of everyday life and of formal diplomacy, until the time when one group could finally “invent” the other (White 1991:51–53). From her analytical place in the Arkansas Valley, however, Kathleen DuVal (2006:6–10) warns that borderlands theory has too often reproduced historical amnesia, as scholars “forget” that Indians created and contested geographic and metaphoric borders well before Europeans arrived.

## Middle Ground in the European Borderland: Sweden

In 2006, Matthew Johnson asserted that a postcolonial archaeology of Europe must necessarily focus on the margins. Creating “Europe” required defining its boundaries, and the borderlands became “on the one hand, areas subject to colonial and

imperial conquest, and on the other, increasingly self-conscious and aggressive “mother nations” (Johnson 2006:326–328). In Scandinavia and the larger Baltic region, this process of “making Europe” was especially extenuated and complex, involving Christianisation, new power structures, the introduction of feudalism, the foundation of towns, and technological innovation (Kala 2001:3). It transformed the region into a battleground and meeting ground for centuries.

For centuries, the region experienced cycles of war interrupted by moments of negotiated *middle grounds* as one aspiring power after another fought, unsuccessfully, to dominate the region. By the mid-1500s, these included Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Poland–Lithuania, Brandenburg–Prussia, and the Turkish Ottoman empire (Stadin 2001:4; Plakans 2011:86; Palmer 2006:87). From the middle of Scandinavia, Sweden came closest, disrupting the Hanseatic trading monopoly and consolidating possession south of the Gulf of Finland (Lilja 2001:53).

Near century’s end, King Carl IX initiated wars with Poland, Russia, and Denmark, forcing his son Gustav II Adolphus to conclude them in the 1610s–1620s. By then, Sweden had figuratively colonised and gained control of the entire Baltic coast down to the German Empire and cut off Russian access to the Sea (Nilsson 1988; Palmer 2006:98, 105; Plakans 2011:98). Entering the Thirty Years’ War to defeat the Catholic Habsburg Empire, Sweden became increasingly entangled with the other states of the European “centre” (Seymour 2004:205). Concurrent with this militarist expansion, the convergence of the Little Ice Age, prolonged bad weather, and poor harvests across western Europe supported Sweden’s colonialist expansion into the northland (Seymour 2004:128, 150). By the latter 1640s, Sweden was one of the most powerful European nations (Lilja 2001:51, 53). But the new empire could not consolidate its power in the inherently contested borderland geography, and within a century, its expansionist policy had failed and a new *middle ground* negotiated (Nilsson 1988; Stadin 2001:4; Plakans 2011:118–119).

Colonisation abroad was providing a larger canvas for Europe’s acquisitive bloodletting (Seymour 2004:125–126). In the mid-1630s, Peter Minuit, former director of New Netherland, set out to profit from Dutch-Swedish rivalry in the colonial North American trade under Swedish protection. He understood the importance of the middle Delaware Valley. For the Swedish Crown, New Sweden promised legitimacy, naval experience, and growth (Nilsson 1988). The colony was supported by 12 expeditions from the homeland over its 17-year life, ending in 1655 with Dutch annexation.

## Borderland Materiality

Borderland materialities create and negotiate conscious bodies-in-places, or subjects. Processes of “creolization through ambiguity” produced hybrid persona crafted from new and recombined elements of individuals’ backgrounds, interests, and motivations (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995:479, 482–483). Nicholas Thomas wrote of the “object entanglements” of colonialism, arguing that objects “change[d]

in defiance of their material stability. The category to which a thing belong[ed], the emotion and judgment it prompt[ed], and the narrative it recall[ed], [were] all historically refigured” (Thomas 1991:125).

## *Sweden*

In the post-medieval political and economic era of state-building, social and religious ideologies served integrating functions in the forms, respectively, of “civilisation” and “reformation” (Stadin 2001:5,8). In the sixteenth century, Sweden’s first Protestant king, Gustav, promoted the latter, but left his sons to cultivate knowledge (Eriksson 1988:69). Alan Palmer (2006:91) described King Eric XIV (reigned 1560–1568) as a Renaissance Prince, the “first Swedish King to rule in splendor and fill his court at Kalmar with artists and musicians”. King Johan III’s (reigned 1568–1592) Italian mother-in-law also helped cultivate Renaissance ideas in the northern borderlands. In the seventeenth century, Swedish artists and artisans manipulated Renaissance forms and images to create imaginary worlds for their patrons, worlds pervaded with compelling symbols that glamorised and popularised the state’s growing power (Ellenius 1988:61–62).

The ship *Vasa* embodies the process. King Gustavus II Adolphus was at war and needed a navy that could dominate the sea. Saviour of the pure Protestant faith and descendant of the Roman emperors, the King commissioned *Vasa* in 1624. For the first of five large, splendid warships, Gustavus Adolphus demanded a vessel that took more than 1,000 oak trees to build, with masts over 150’ tall—a ship that took 400 workers 4 years to build. An awe-inspiring, three-dimensional, brilliantly coloured floating spectacle of Swedish aspiration, *Vasa* was launched with great ceremony, then capsized and sank on her maiden voyage in Stockholm harbour. Had she been seaworthy, *Vasa* promised an illustrious career in the theatres of war across the Baltic. The ship’s recovery and ongoing conservation give us unparalleled insight into the material dreamscapes and realities of Swedish imperialism on the eve of New Sweden (Matz 2011).

A floating allegory, *Vasa* deployed an array of cultural and visual languages in 500 figural sculptures and more than 200 decorative carvings (Fig. 11.2). This was no ship of the middle ground. Rather, she narrated the King’s lineage, legitimating his right, responsibility, capacity, and power to rule. Greek and Roman antiquity, the Old and New Testaments, ancient Egypt, and European fantasia merge with the Swedish royal family and nation-state to envelop the floating war machine. Hercules and 20 Roman emperors identified with Gustavus Adolphus appear side by side with idealised Italian Renaissance interpretations of antiquity, some straight from art manuals, and others translated through the aesthetic of German and Dutch artists (Soop 1986). Fabled and frightening mermaids, devils, monsters, and tritons with deep roots in European tradition identified the King as transcendent. The lion, a virtually universal symbol of royal and primal power, appears on the insides of gun-port doors as well as on the figurehead and atop the rudder. The King himself

**Fig. 11.2** *Vasa* from the stern, showing elaborate sculptures. (Photo by Karolina Kristensson, courtesy of National Maritime Museum)



completes the historical imaginary, portrayed atop the stern transom as a young boy being crowned by griffins representing his father, Charles IX (Matz 2011).

*Vasa* constituted a borderland hybrid not only symbolically, but also materially. Designed and erected by Dutch shipbuilders at the Stockholm shipyard, she was commanded by a Danish captain. Latvian hemp rigging deployed her sails, fabricated from French, German, and Netherlandish materials. Ship furnishings and crew possessions also represented the diverse European locales and states upon which Sweden depended even as it competed for wealth, power, and excess (Matz 2011).

Four years after *Vasa* sank, in the middle of the Thirty Years' War, King Gustavus Adolphus visited southern Germany, which the Swedes had recently taken. In Augsburg, the City Council presented him an art cabinet that more than 30 artisans had laboured 6 years to craft. Unlike *Vasa*, a product of borderland contention, the Augsburg cabinet represents appropriation to the borderland of the beauty and spectacle crafted in the European centre (Fig. 11.3). Reflecting the *entire world*, the

**Fig. 11.3** The Augsburg art cabinet, Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala University, Sweden. (Photo courtesy of Uppsala University)



cabinet contained approximately 1,000 objects (Cederlund and Norrby 2003), “virtually everything it was possible to pack into it in terms of 17th-century knowledge and objects of fantasy”. The cabinet embodied the knowledge prerequisite to power.

A baroque masterpiece, the Augsburg cabinet affords informative parallels as well as stark contrasts with *Vasa*. The two share allegorical themes—the Old and New Testaments, Greek and Roman mythology, the mythic sea, life and death, and the European court—and the cabinet introduces two new references to nature—the four elements and the four seasons. Like *Vasa*, it embodies power and control, and evokes fantasy, curiosity, awe, and admiration. Its godly artistry and creativity serve the owner’s body, intellect, and emotion (Cederlund and Norrby 2003:13). The cabinet’s form mimics the human body, composed of legs supporting the body, crowned by a head of shell, coral, and crystals. It contains bloodletting, shaving, and toilet articles to serve the body. Its clock, scientific instruments, chess set, playing cards, coins, and medals challenge the intellect, and its music box and octave virginal played the emotions.

Awash in paintings and sculpture shaped from precious metals, stones, and other exotic materials, the Augsburg cabinet literally and figuratively extends from the heights of the earth to the depths of the sea (Cederlund and Norby 2003:13). In its form, craftsmanship, and decoration, the cabinet epitomises scientific artistic mastery and celebration of nature for useful and aestheticised ends. Moreover, its three-dimensional form hides and protects secrets, representing the power, danger, and dynamism of knowledge. It bounds, encloses, and organises its contents in the form of layered revelation exposed by action—the opening and closing of doors and drawers, the rotating corpus, and the ladder that one climbs to reach the virginal’s keyboard. The gift of the Augsburg cabinet acknowledged Sweden’s (temporary) defeat of the middle ground and the shifting of the borderland.

The northern power struggles took another material form in fortification. During the seventeenth century, to reward the aristocracy’s military service and bind them to the state, the king granted extensive estates. Familiar from their military travels with European courtly culture, Swedish nobles too imported a late Renaissance aristocratic lifestyle (Eriksson 1988:69; Revera 1988:103). Skokloster Castle, built between 1654 and 1676 by Count Carl Gustaf Wrangel, exemplifies nobles’ desire to *fix*, or reify, their, and Sweden’s, new place in this shifting, chaotic world. Skokloster became a *mappa mundi* or *theatrum mundi*, an enormous curiosity cabinet inspired by the King’s Augsburg cabinet and others in which microcosm reflected macrocosm (Eriksdotter and Nordin 2011:157). Crafted from materials imported from around the world, Skokloster Castle features armillary globes crowning the four towers (four “continents”), rooms named after places around the world, paintings depicting global landscapes, and collections of maps, globes, travel books, scientific instruments, and “exotic” objects (Nordin *in press*:3, 5). “Here in [this Third Space] at the intersection of Swedish, Scandinavian, European and Native American, African and Asian identities a space of negotiations, change and formation of identity took place” (Nordin *in press*:5, cites Naum 2010:106–107). At Skokloster, Wrangel preserved medieval ruins, built in historical styles, and installed a baroque garden, creating “a multi-chronological physical hybrid” of Renaissance globalism and colonialism (Nordin *in press*:9). The dining hall features an extraordinary stucco ceiling portraying an allegory of seventeenth-century European colonialist world view (Nordin *in press*:2). Its four corners feature symbols of Europe, Africa, Asia, and America arrayed around a mythological struggle with a dragon, from whose jaws hang an awesome glass chandelier (Fig. 11.4).

The Skokloster museum is a cabinet of curiosities within a cabinet of curiosities. Indeed, Eriksdotter and Nordin (2011:156) argue, collecting “sustained colonialism as a Eurocentric project”. Among its collections are items from New Sweden, believed to be Lenape gifts to the New Sweden Company, which supported the highly romanticised view of Indians that prevailed in Sweden elite circles (Losman 1988; Kylsberg 1997; Fur 2006:27–28; Nordin this volume). Like the rest of Skokloster, these collections manifest a fantasy, an imaginary, a utopia, or, rather, a dystopia (Nordin *in press*).





**Fig. 11.4** Central medallion, featuring mythological struggle with dragon, from which suspends glass chandelier installed 1672. (a) allegory of America. (b) allegory of Europe. King's Hall stucco ceiling, Skokloster Castle, Sweden. (Photo courtesy of the author)

## *New Sweden*

Homi Bhabha (1997:153) has proposed that mimicry performed an important role in support of the colonial dystopia. “Colonial mimicry”, he argued, “is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite* [italics original]”. In the Middle Atlantic, Sweden’s colonists encountered the Delaware/Lenape and the Minquas/Susquehannocks. The former lived in small groups organised around tributaries of the Delaware River. Living in unfortified communities of up to 200 people near their planting fields in spring and summer, they dispersed for the winter following communal hunts (Williams 1995:113; Schutt 2007:31). The immigrant Minquas occupied a single large village fortification with smaller satellites and held land in common. By establishing trade relations with coastal European partners, they had “established themselves as the most powerful nation in the region” (Fur 2006:139). With the arrival of the Swedes, their concern was to maintain access to the coastal trade (Fur 2006:112–113).

Lenape customs set the pattern for exchange during the seventeenth-century middle ground on the Delaware. For them, land *acted* through its exchange, use, and users to build and renew relationships among native groups and with Europeans. Although Sweden acknowledged Indian rights to reconquest land, they consciously

misinterpreted Indian conceptions of possession and use rights (Fur 2006:110–111). Lenape concern grew, as they regularly tried to explain their land tenure system at diplomatic meetings, with varying degrees of success. The Swedes interpreted grants of land made to them with no requirement of immediate payment as *gifts*; the Lenape understood gift reciprocity as a continuous practice in the maintenance of trade relations. European payment goods included wampum, cloth and clothing, kettles, guns and shot, alcohol, iron tools, and tobacco smoking pipes that native recipients distributed among themselves and other groups to renew and reinforce alliances (Schutt 2007:31–36).

In *Ceremonies of Possession*, Patricia Seed (1995:2) argued that “colonial rule over the New World was initiated through largely ceremonial practices—planting crosses, standards, banners, and coats of arms—marching in processions, picking up dirt, measuring the stars, drawing maps, speaking certain words, or remaining silent”. These practices enacted a kind of colonial mimicry the moment Europeans stepped off their ships, ritually incorporating, almost, the indigenous population and their lands into the empire. Further, European nations’ different cultural histories led them to deploy different cultural domains “in creating rights to rule the New World” (Seed 1995:6). The Spanish delivered a ritualised speech to the natives demanding submission. The French staged ritual theatre involving “elaborately orchestrated processions” (Seed 1995:42). The English, alternatively, demonstrated almost an aversion to ceremony, rather acting immediately to Anglicise the land, dividing and bounding it, building houses and planting gardens in customary ways, and “fixing” their possession through settlement (Seed 1995:17–18). The Dutch, building empire on the strength of their navigators and merchants, described and mapped to possess and appropriate (Seed 1995:13–14, 167).

Two colonial documents that suggest the distinctive Swedish *ceremonies of possession* are Per Lindeström’s map of the Delaware Valley and the journal of New Sweden’s last governor, Johan Risingh. Like the Dutch whose colonial model inspired their own, the Swedes possessed in part through word and image. Lindeström’s 1654 map labels more than 100 drainages, geographical features, and indigenous and European settlements between the Atlantic and the Delaware River fall line. Like the English, the Swedes also knew a need for physical possession. Their borderland history of middle grounds and conquests, however, had produced a fortified landscape, which Crown and Company reproduced on an unprecedented scale in this new, yet familiar, peripheral land. Lindeström’s map identified 23 Swedish fortifications along the roughly 35 miles of river from Salem, New Jersey, to Philadelphia! Beyond mere defence, these enclosed, defended, nationalised outposts of empire formed hyper-places through which the Swedish leadership passed, paused, and acted on ritualised journeys of possession across the colony (Fig. 11.5).

Witness Governor Risingh, who upon his return to Sweden, recorded his experiences in a journal. Risingh had arrived in the colony on 20 May 1654. On his ship anchored off Fort Elfsborg, he received four Dutchmen from Fort Casimir who “kindly, offered... friendship to all the Dutch freemen...” while demanding that they yield Fort Casimir. The next day, he sailed up to Sandhook and “gave Fort



Fig. 11.5 Map of New Sweden drawn by Per Lindstrom published in Thomas Campanius Holm's Kort beskrifning om provincien Nya Swerige uti America (1702)

Casimir the Swedish salute”, the nine Dutch soldiers defending the fort submitted, and Risingh enacted the ritual of replacing the Dutch with the Swedish flag (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:149–151, 155).

Two days later, arriving at Fort Christina, Risingh met the Dutch colonists from the Sandhook to negotiate their protection, freedom, and rights. From his base at the fort, Risingh spent the next week sending men to Virginia on behalf of the Swedish claim, dispatching a letter to Governor Stuyvesant in New Amsterdam and a ship to New England in search of food (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:155–163). Then he began a tour of the colony, first to Fort Casimir to confirm the Dutch residents’ oath of loyalty and plan for improving and renaming the Fort Trefaldighet (Trinity), “as it was deemed best to exclude all Dutch names from the *Rivier*” (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:167). From there he journeyed up to New Gothenburg at Tinicum, site of Printz’s manor house, up the Schuylkill to Fort Korsholm (burned by Indians after Printz’s departure), Kingsessing, and then back to Fort Christina.

He also spent June negotiating the middle ground in the borderland: Risingh met English messengers from Virginia and travelled to Tinicum to meet Lenape sachems to confirm alliance and present gifts. The war chief Nachaman responded as he hoped, “extolling with words, images, gestures and grand airs, so that we had to marvel at the Indians” (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:177). He then met with an English trader, a Susquehannock sachem, English representatives from Maryland come to present their claims to the territory, held court at Fort Trinity, received an Indian carrying a message from Manhattan about trade, held court at Tinicum, met a tobacco trader to bargain on prices, and received his representatives sent to Horn Kill to meet an Indian sachem there (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:177–187).

Edited and in places written after the demise of New Sweden, Risingh’s narrative of specific acts and events is disputed. It is the plot, however, that is significant, as Risingh recounted his traverse of the claimed lands, meeting and negotiating with the borderland actors to present claims and exchange gifts to secure the colony’s future. I wonder how he accommodated meeting rituals to those of the different cultural traditions in attendance. How did he, and his predecessors, deploy material culture in these acts of colonial and imperial mimicry?

From his experience with New Netherland, Peter Minuit had learned Indian customs and the first Swedish expedition to the Delaware arrived laden with the gifts essential to any Lenape social contract. Studies of these textiles and metal trade goods as well as unique middle ground media are untangling the contexts of use, meaning, and value that embodied the multinational, multicultural colonial exchange system along the Delaware. The most profound material of this middle ground was wampum (Nordin, this volume). Early misunderstandings, misconceptions, and cultural differences in the value of land, European goods, furs, and food induced a middle ground as groups worked to establish relationships of value favouring their goods (Fur 2006:165–167). Wampum, not a native Lenape good, was appropriated and re-imagined to meet the need. For the Europeans, it became a currency. For the native people, wampum proved and protected transactions. Beads worked into designs on belts narrated and marked important transactions; moreover, the Lenape imagined wampum a purifier that shielded them against spiritual contagion

(Fur 2006:160–162). Wampum became the ultimate polyvalent object, a “kind of universal language, a way to cap joint rituals, to seal treaties, pay homage to dignitaries” (Shorto 2004:117–118), that could mean virtually whatever its holders needed it to.

Other materials further demonstrate the significance of polyvalence and mutability of meaning in creating the web of entanglements that bound borderland actors to the others they—almost—mimicked. European textile and clothing for native furs is perhaps the most obvious and ironic example. Swedish-made knee-length coats of blue and red frieze modelled after clothing produced for orphans in Stockholm became popular among prominent Lenapes as badges of position (Lindeström, cited in Fur 2006:205–206). In this case, garments that signified the ultimate dependency of parentless children—and Indians—underwent a process of cultural inversion that the Lenape may not have even realised.

In an exemplary exploration of Dutch brass and copper kettles, one of the most important trade items and quintessential object of the middle ground, Alexandra van Dongen (1996:115) argued that “Indians ‘adopted’ this mundane utensil and integrated it into their own social and material culture, bringing about wondrous changes on its form, function and symbolic meaning”. European colonisers agreed that kettles ranked high on the list of essential household items for immigrants. In seventeenth-century Dutch painting, kettles represented “female lust and seduction” as well as, in the context of the paradigmatic housewife’s obsession with cleanliness, the symbol of the clean, pure, and virginal (van Dongen 1996:129). When introduced to northeastern Algonquin and Iroquois in the sixteenth century, kettles offered a source of workable metal repurposed into jewellery, bodily ornaments, projectiles, and decorated tobacco pipes. The number appearing in graves increased beginning in the mid-1620s, as Iroquois incorporated them into burial rituals, a use comprehensible to seventeenth-century Europeans familiar with kettle drums’ role in purification rituals. Only later did Iroquois adopt kettles for cooking, merging the objects’ endowed ritual power with its function in survival. Toy kettles appear in Iroquoian shaman bundles, and the mythic association of the kettle and an inexhaustible food supply in Europe is reproduced in Native America (van Dongen 1996:128–129, 133; Ekengren et al. this volume).

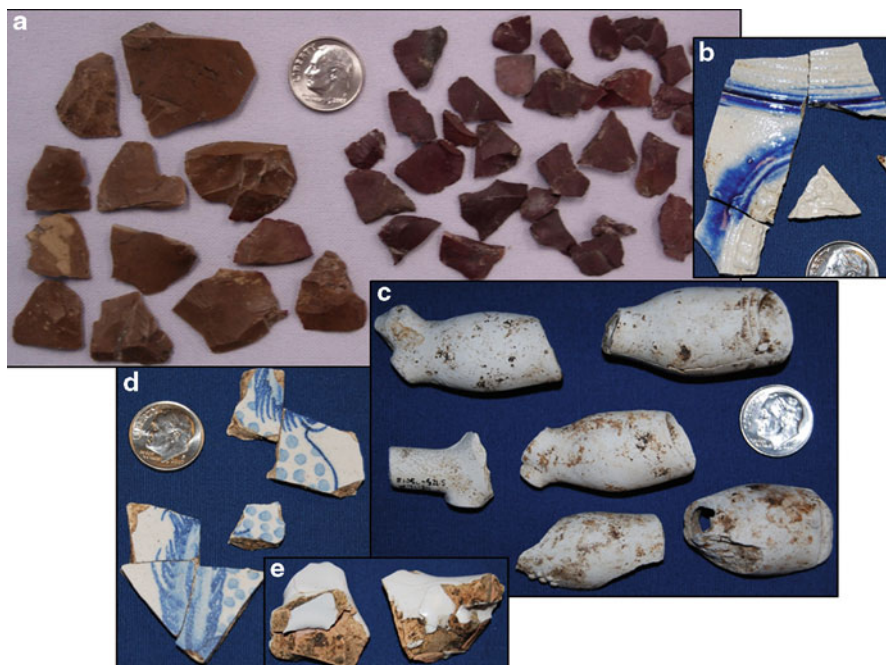
Swedish copper fuelled the supply of copper and later brass kettles at home and in the colonies (van Dongen 1996:125). Visa Immonen (2011) has extended van Dongen’s argument about kettles as *forms of colonial encounter* for Sweden. On the journey founding New Sweden, Minuit presented a kettle and other gifts to a Lenape sachem for land, and the Indians specifically requested more, leading Per Lindeström to remark that “local Indian houses were full of brass and brass kettles from one door to the other, small and large” (Lindeström 1923:173, cited in Immonen 2011:376–377). In New Sweden, kettles became essential to the gift-giving process that built and maintained social relations among Indians and between Indians and Europeans. Lenape incorporated them into the Big House Ceremony and women received kettles at marriage, which many took to their grave. A prime example of the colonial process of commodification, Immonen (2011:377, 381) concludes and, I argue, of borderland appropriation and middle ground ambiguity.

## **Tamecongh/Aresapa, Fort Casimir, Fort Trefaldighet, New Amstel, New Castle**

In 1650, the final stop on our journey through the borderlands was still a bit of sandy, marshy, riverfront Lenape real estate. The story begins the following year with a typically Stuyvesant act of provocation, ordering the Dutch Delaware River fortification moved south and across the river from Fort Elfsborg, naming it Fort Casimir at Santhoek. For the first 3 years, the Dutch settlement consisted of the fort and a row of dwellings along the riverbank. Most original settlers served in the military or as personnel of the West India Company. Risingh met little resistance overtaking the settlement, but was forced to withdraw a year later (Dahlgren and Norman 1988:151–159, 245–277). In 1656, the city of Amsterdam assumed control of the colony from the overextended Dutch West India Company. The settlement, renamed New Amstel, initially thrived and reportedly contained a maximum population of 600 people residing in 110 houses laid out in two rows of long, narrow lots, with 50' or 60' frontage, 300' deep, extending through the block from street to street. By 1659, however, political infighting and economic turmoil had led to emigration, and the population plummeted (Heite 1978:10, 56; Weslager 2001:1, 16). Conflict with Swedish settlers continued through the 1660s, as they challenged Dutch rule (Fur 2006:226–227).

In 1664, the Duke of York captured New Amstel in order to extend English control along the Atlantic coast and thwart the lucrative Dutch trade in tobacco and furs with Maryland planters. The English rebuilt the fort, established a colonial court at the renamed New Castle, resurveyed the streets, granted properties, drained marshes, and built dykes to prevent flooding. This construction effort muted the town's military character, but did not affect its eclectic look and population, composed of Lenape, African servants, and Swedish, Dutch, Finnish, French, and English settlers (Heite 1978). Excavations in New Castle have been limited, and few seventeenth-century contexts discovered. One has proven suggestive. Isaac Tayne, a French-born Dutch citizen, acquired a waterfront property in the early 1660s and lived there with his wife, a New Amstel widow (Heite 1978:114). His new house measured 33' deep and 26' wide (10×7.9 m), gable end to the street. Excavations documented his efforts to fill a low-lying swale, and archaeobotanical remains revealed the dominance of native grasses and colonising asters typical of a riverine environment undergoing transformation into an agricultural settlement and a population relying on local deadwood for fuel. Nails and brick remained from the new construction on the lot and possibly from demolition or renovation of an earlier domicile. The remains describe a timber-framed building with brick chimney and hearth, wood roof and siding, and at least one glazed window (De Cunzo *in prep.*).

Artefact distribution indicates a compact living area along the riverfront. More than 95% of the artefacts came from the yard next to the house, their numbers thinning dramatically behind the house and toward the adjoining property line. They suggest a mixed-use work space and refuse dump. Food waste, although limited, includes head cuts of cow, sheep, and pig such as brawn, jowl, and tongue in addi-



**Fig. 11.6** Artefacts, Isaac Tayne household, 1660s. (a) Lithic debitage. (b) German grey stoneware jug. (c) Ball clay tobacco pipes. (d) Tin-enamelled blue-on-white earthenware plate featuring mermaid design. (e) Fragments, tin-enamelled earthenware costrel. Site 7NC-E-105C, Read House and Gardens, New Castle, Delaware. Collections of Delaware Historical Society. (Photo by the author)

tion to rib and leg cuts such as ham and loins. The origin of the deer, goose and other fowl, fish, oysters, and turtle may be suggested by their occurrence with Indian materials. A deer haunch, its long bones shattered to extract marrow, and oysters harvested locally, close to shore, may have traded hands across cultures (De Cunzo [in prep.](#)).

Interaction with the Lenape is clearly evident, although its exact nature remains unclear. Recovered Minguannan ceramics may have been traded as a commodity or a container for foodstuffs; the few fragments are inconclusive. They appeared in context with 1,075 lithic flakes and shatter from someone finishing or maintaining jasper biface tools in the yard. Readily available, and commonly used, jasper occurred in deposits west of New Castle, in southeastern Pennsylvania, and north-west Maryland. More enigmatic is the single glass trade bead embedded in the buried seventeenth-century living surface behind the house (Fig. 11.6). Dutch and English smoking pipes are more numerous, although Tayne's tobacco suppliers remain unknown. We do know the exchanges occurred when authorities feared the outbreak of war with the native people fuelled by excessive use of European spirits (De Cunzo [in prep.](#)).

The Taynes also discarded at least 13 ceramic food and beverage storage, preparation, service, and consumption vessels. The diversity, distinctiveness, and international origins of this small assemblage are striking. Storage vessels include an Iberian jar, redware pot, buff-bodied pot or jar, two German grey stoneware jugs, and a probable Hohn stoneware jug. An exceptionally unusual, and possibly unique, vessel reported in colonial Delaware to date is a double-handled costrel. It matches descriptions of fine-grained Mexican majolica, although this attribution is not definitive. Tin-glazed tablewares and display pieces included a blue-on-white mermaid plate and a blue-on-white floral charger. A probable *vetro a fili* beaker would have brought further distinction to the Taynes' dining table in this era of political, social, and economic manoeuvring for position and opportunity (De Cunzo in prep.).

Between 1651 and 1680, many objects changed hands at Fort Casimir, Fort Trefaldighet, New Amstel, and New Castle in the name of diplomacy, empire, and trade, most arriving on Dutch ships or along Indian pathways. In this case, we know the French and Dutch ancestry of the Taynes, but could not have discerned their specific European origins or identities from the material remains. How can we distinguish a Swede from a Dutchman from an Englishman, the period of Swedish imperial control from that of the Dutch or the English? In Sweden, imperialism was multicultural acquisitiveness like and yet not like it was throughout Europe. The familiarity and the exoticism of that material world to colonial scholars give us pause as we wonder, and ponder, how to unravel this complexity. We have much to learn from the European borderland. The Swedish royalty and nobility appropriated the refined and civilised, and hybridised the conquered in a process of mimicry that relocated and recreated—almost—the European *centre*. Then, entering the nationalist imperialist contest late and unprepared, they turned to complication, negotiation, obfuscation, and ambiguity, a risky business that forced the middle ground for a short time.

Nationalist identity and imperial power drove individuals like Governor Risingh and became instruments of personal desire and aspiration for others like Peter Minit. For both, and for all the others caught in this web of colonialism, fluid identities sustained relationships that supplied coveted things. The *intention* was for these coveted, exotic things to redefine the materiality of nationalist identity. That is the legacy of New Sweden that pervaded the culture of this Middle Atlantic borderland. Consider one English immigrant, Ralph Hutchinson, who wrote his will in New Castle in 1680 (CSP 1904:395–397). Hendrik Vanden Burgh and John Kan were his appraisers. In his will, Hutchinson distributes his estate as follows: to Pieter Alrichs my Plush Saddle; Wessel Alrichs the mare at John Cokses; two colts of that mare to John Ogle's sons; to James Walliam and Thomas Woollaston—5 pounds of *the best pay of the River*; Woollaston also was to receive tools at John Gerretsens; and his wife, the sows at John Smiths; to John Darby the mare running on the island; to Mr. Sempil's daughter the money due from John Anderson of Christina; to Anne Wollaston the money due from Swart Jacob; to Amond Bedford six oyled skins; to uncle John Bedford 4,000 lb tobacco; sell my plantation at Christina Creek for my sisters' use, and land in Mayor Fenwick's colony for my siblings in old England. The interconnectedness of this Englishman's life with his English, Swedish, Dutch,



and Indian neighbours (at least) and the expansiveness of his material life across northern Delaware, across the Delaware, and across the Atlantic are astonishing. How do we do an archaeology of this borderland? This remains as open and complex a question now as it was in 1995, when Kent Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez (1995:62) urged archaeologists to imagine borders as “simultaneously structures and processes, things and relationships, histories and events”.

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# Chapter 12

## There and Back Again: A Study of Travelling Material Culture in New and Old Sweden

Jonas M. Nordin

### Introduction

Next to the altar in Frösthult parish church in the province of Uppland, central Sweden, lies a baroque grave slab with the inscription: *Umar Sachiman Chinsika hacking haro ankarop machis chuki*, “Here lies a great sachem who died in old age” (Fig. 12.1).<sup>1</sup> These words in the Algonquian language of the Lenape Indians commemorate Johannes Campanius Holm, a Swedish priest stationed in New Sweden in 1642–1648, who died in Frösthult in 1683 (Brunius 1988:142). Johannes Campanius Holm was probably the only European of the seventeenth century to have a grave epitaph written in a Native American language.

Although his associations with Native Americans and his first-hand experience of life in the colony of New Sweden, captured in a brief narrative, made him a unique individual, Holm was but one of quite many people in Sweden to experience the New World either through direct contact (by journeying across the Atlantic) or through images, objects or fantasies of America. Colonisation in New Sweden seems to have been a process that not only changed the tracts of the Delaware, Lenapehoking and America, but also had an impact on Europe, Sweden, Uppland and Frösthult (cf. Johnson 2006; Nordin 2012).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the colonial praxis in New Sweden and Sweden in the middle of the seventeenth century was contested and negotiated through material culture. This will be done by readdressing the use of material culture in a colonial praxis and to study how objects connected and transformed not

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<sup>1</sup> My transcription. On the interpretation of the phonetic writings, see Brunius 2007: 33, n3, also Williams 2012, especially page 346 on the translation of Algonquin into Swedish.

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**Fig. 12.1** Johannes Campanius Holm's grave in the nave of Frösthult parish church, Uppland, Sweden. (Photo by the author)



only the Americas but also Europe, in this particular case, the tract of Delaware and central Sweden.

Furthermore the chapter acknowledges the multicultural situation of the early modern period in colonies and mother countries alike, in the context of a small-time agent of a colonial scene, such as Sweden and its colonial ambitions. The question of the grave slab in Uppland and other material traces of New Sweden will be addressed by analysing how material things were used in a seventeenth-century colonial context. The study considers material culture attributed to Swedes in the colony of New Sweden and the material culture in America and Sweden related to North American Indians in contact with the colony.

The point of departure, theoretically as well as methodologically, is that essentially separate and antagonistic cultures—an idea prevailing in contemporary society and to some extent in the archaeology and history of colonial relations—do not exist today nor did they exist in the early modern period. Contact between people produces identity, and contact leads and led to the renegotiation of identity through the strengthening and reworking of often taken-for-granted ideas about what it meant to be a certain type of man, woman, child, coloniser, colonised, returnee, etc. Contact means and meant change (cf. Barth 1998). It involved degrees of alteration, mixing and hybridity. Furthermore, contact meant the exchange of material things

in general, through trade and gifts. Colonial encounters and praxis also entailed negotiating and using power in order to obtain dominance, through trade, expansion and mission (Silliman 2005:58–59). Even though the Swedish colony only lasted for 17 years, it was part of a grander colonial process including many more agents than Swedes on the one hand and Lenape and Susquehannock on the other. This means that, although the Swedes exerted limited power over the indigenous people of America, they had come there with similar preconceptions to other Europeans—the notion of supremacy and domination.

This chapter will discuss the material culture related to the colony in the light of an object-biographical approach with the emphasis on contact and change through exchange of objects leading to hybridisation and furthermore the hybridisation of objects in an American–Swedish early modern context. In order to contextualise and understand the actions of Johannes Campanius Holm and his family, the chapter discusses the excavations of the Printzhof/New Gothenburg site (Pennsylvania), which revealed a blend of material culture attributed to North American Indians as well as Europeans. The examination of the biographical sequence of American objects ending up in Sweden includes a history in the old country, with special emphasis on the objects in Skokloster Castle and their context. The chapter concludes by stating that material culture did matter in the praxis of globalisation and its inclusion of the semi-periphery of the Scandinavian countries.

## **New Sweden: A Material Place of Colonial Contact in the Atlantic World**

In the early modern period, Europeans venturing across the oceans brought souvenirs, commodities and images of Africa, America and Asia to Europe. Through these, the continents, their exotic inhabitants and valuable resources were displayed, consumed and appropriated (cf. for example Feest 1989; Feest 1995; Kupperman 1995; Saunders 1999; Arnold 2006). Foreign objects were used in a baroque staging of European supremacy displayed at European courts (Mignolo 1995; Mauriès 2002). Scandinavian aristocrats and royals were eager “consumers” of the New World but also devoted collectors. Naturalia and artificialia were brought from America via Amsterdam, London, Augsburg, Hamburg, Bremen and Copenhagen to the collections of men like Hermann Francke in Germany, Ole Worm in Denmark and Carl Gustav Wrangel in Sweden (Losman 1988; Mauriès 2002; Mordhorst 2009). A desire for exotic objects existed in Sweden before the country had its own reliable source for providing these kinds of goods, in the form of the overseas colonies. The market for objects from the New World, however, changed dramatically after the foundation of New Sweden, and the vast majority of these objects that still remain can be related to the New Sweden colony (Brunius 1990, 1995, 2007).

This material culture can be viewed as a colonial transcript similar to the ones acknowledged by Edward Said in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century novels (Said 1993). The life lived on the English and European estates of the colonial period was intertwined with that of its economic base in the plantations in America,

visible in architecture, literature, physical space as well as material culture (Said 1993:95–116; Johnson 2006). The lives lived in New Sweden and Sweden can be viewed contrapuntally to each other. In the light of the colonialism, contact and globalisation, it is possible to understand the two localities studied. Sweden was part of the global world through the influx of commodities from distant parts of the world and the export of copper, iron and other commodities, but also through people's travels and contact. Everyday goods such as tobacco and sugar or exotic souvenirs, objects loaded with cultural meaning such as Inuit kayaks, south American hammocks or North American ball-headed clubs, poaches or pipes made their way across the Atlantic (Mordhorst 2009). These objects were part of a general fashion of consuming and collecting exotic objects that helped to order the European aristocratic world view—a European identity on the one hand—and a people without history and without future other than as an economic asset (cf. Wolf 1982; cf. also Sheller 2003).

In more specific terms the objects from New Sweden, through their intimate contact with users on both sides of the Atlantic, came to be part of a changing society affected by the transatlantic colonisation. Many of the objects were kept in places with rather restricted access for a general public, such as the wampum belt of Johan Printz and the American pouches of his daughter Armegot, and the things kept in Skokloster Castle in central Sweden. Others, for example the grave slab of Reverend Holm and the printed books and illustrations telling the European story of the New World, were more accessible and set for display. These and other objects including beaver furs and felt hats, tobacco, sugar and other colonial commodities acted as day-to-day reminders, although not always conscious, of the New World.

The exchange of commodities between Europeans and North American Indians has generally been regarded as a reflection of reciprocal interest in desirable goods without a subsequent reciprocal change in identity and world view. The Europeans' longing for tobacco and beaver pelts and the Native groups' demand for glass beads, copper kettles, cloth and weapons have been widely acknowledged (cf. Risingh 1988:177; White 1991; Dolin 2010; Howey 2011). Objects not for direct consumption, ending up at the princely courts of Europe and in the collections, are usually regarded as mere curiosities. When brought to Europe, they were recontextualised and used in the construction of the images of the non-European "Other" and the cosmopolitan "self".

Objects circulating in the early modern Atlantic world had different biographies. As they were exchanged, refashioned and altered, the meaning ascribed to them by their subsequent users changed as well. On its way from producers to buyers, the Native American material culture was changed from being sacred symbols, gifts or emblems of power to commodities with new meanings added. These transformations, sometimes visible, sometimes not, meant hybridisation of the objects and subsequently of people (cf. Thomas 1991; Bhabha 1994:112–120). When these commodities came into new contexts in Sweden and other objects were made with material inspiration from New Sweden, such as the ball-headed club in Skokloster or the phonetic writings on the grave slab of Johannes Campanius Holm, most of them became what Igor Kopytoff has labelled as singularised things (Kopytoff 1986).

Through singularisation, the commodity is taken out of the market and becomes a singular, and thus priceless, object (Kopytoff 1986:73–74). The point is that commoditisation can be a phase in the history of an object or a category of objects, as in the case of the material culture of New Sweden where Swedish officials went to trade, but trade itself resulted in much more than the mere exchange of copper or iron tools for furs and tobacco (cf. Appadurai 1986:17).

The biographical chains—the lives of the objects related to New Sweden—all seem to have undergone a process of changing meaning. The Native American objects of the Printz family, known from written accounts, and the objects in museum collections in Scandinavia and in Skokloster Castle, as well as the inscriptions on Holm’s gravestone, are all tokens of material expressions of alteration and change. The material things were thus not unequivocal in New Sweden—or in any other colonial context—but went through a process that included being symbols, gifts, currency, commodities and then singularised symbols again (cf. Appadurai 1986). To further investigate this, the analysis will more thoroughly discuss the material praxis of New Sweden as it is possible to study through the settlement at New Gothenburg/Printzhof/Tenakong. By so doing, this chapter brings together scattered source material that has not been thoroughly studied in the context of early modern colonialism, globalisation and nascent modernity. The historical archaeological perspective presented here highlights the meaning and importance of contact and colonial notions and its relevance for understanding the use of material things in the Atlantic world and its particular American-Swedish relation of early modern society.

## **(Material) Culture and Identity: The Archaeology of Printzhof, Pennsylvania Revisited**

The Printzhof manor and the New Gothenburg fort were founded by Johan Printz in 1643 at Tenakong/Tinicum Island, 30 km up the Delaware river from Fort Christina (on the outskirts of present-day Philadelphia; Johnson 1911:496–97; on the place name, see Dunlap and Weslager 1950; for further discussion on the New Sweden colony, see Ekengren et al. and De Cunzo of this volume). The Printzhof estate was donated to Johan Printz by Queen Christina of Sweden (Instructions for Governor Printz §10, in Johnson 1930:81–83). It stayed in the hands of his family even after the loss of the colony and was sold as late as 1662 (Becker 1979:29–30). The written record and the archaeological evidence show expanding settlement and use of the site by colonists from the 1640s to the end of the nineteenth century (Becker 1979:29–31).

Per Lindeström, a fortification engineer and surveyor, as well as the author of *Geographia Americae*, which is an account of his stay in the colony (1653–1655), describes Printzhof as *kostelig och väl byggt med trädgård, lusthus och sådant mera* (“very lavish and well-built, with a pleasure garden, summerhouse [gazebo] and other such [things]” Lindeström 1962:98; 1925:172). Lindeström’s brief accounts



of Printzhof have led to some speculations about the size and wealth of the manor (Johnson 1938; Magnusson 2003:225 n13). The existence of a gazebo and Lindeström's mention of a garden may be an indication of a walled, formal baroque garden at Printzhof.

Archaeological investigations at the Printzhof site were undertaken in 1937 by Donald Cadzow and in 1976, 1985 and 1986 by Marshall Becker. The excavations revealed a rather substantial main building, a palisade or a wall, a burial ground and a dwelling of Native American style (Johnson 1938; Becker 1979, 1999, 2011). The fieldwork of the 1970s and 1980s was also able to confirm a fire in 1645 (Report 20.02.1647 in Johnson 1930:130; Becker 1999:78). After the fire the area was resettled and the main building was reconstructed, enlarged and given a rectangular shape (Becker 1979:36–37; 1999:84).

The fieldwork at Printzhof conducted by Marshall Becker revealed a substantial set of structures and finds dating to the early and mid-seventeenth century: the New Sweden period (Becker 2011:18–19). Adjacent to the bastion but outside, some 10–15 m inland, the foundation of the main building at Printzhof was uncovered (Becker 1999:81; 2011:10). The excavations revealed a series of building sequences beginning with a slightly rectangular 6.2×5.6 m (WNW–ESE) stone foundation which was extended, probably after the fire in 1645, to 8.2×7.3 m (NNW–SSE). The addition in 1646 probably included an extension to the south with foundations to support a jetty or a balcony (Becker 1979:36–37). The building was later expanded again in the mid-eighteenth century. The stone foundation had supported a timber structure of one or perhaps two storeys (Becker 1979; Cotter and Roberts 1992:406). Substantial brick chimneys made out of Dutch-type yellow bricks could be traced from both phases (Becker 1977, 2011:6, 8). This corresponds to the documented transport of the sixth expedition when bricks were bought in the Netherlands, shipped to Sweden and in Gothenburg loaded onto ships, the *Fama* and the *Swan* (Johnson 1911:242).

Since the whole site is not excavated, it is not certain whether the foundations belong to Governor Printz's manor or some other building from the period, but the existence of stone walls and a fireplace makes it plausible that the foundation actually belongs to the manor. At least in the old country, the farmers and the lower nobility generally had only one heated dwelling (Werne 1993:57). A substantial amount of the artefacts found at Printzhof have been linked to the New Sweden period (Becker 1999; now kept in the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission) including red earthenware (although a surprisingly small amount of faience and stoneware), yellow bricks of Dutch type, a brass finial, glass from drinking vessels and shards of Dutch clay pipes dated to the 1630–1640s (Becker 1977; Cotter and Roberts 1992:406; Becker 1999, 2011:18–19). Among these finds, the archaeologists also recovered chipped glass, a trade bead from Amsterdam or Venice, two stone calumet pipe heads, an axe or adze and a stone orb of Native American type (Becker 1999:83–88).

In addition to this, traces of a dwelling, a wigwam, probably made by Native Americans were found adjacent to the main dwelling (Becker 1999:83). The traces of the wigwam consisted of two sequentially built structures; it is not dated, but has

been suggested by the excavator to have been in use before the Swedes came to the site (Becker 1999:88). Traces of a Native American burial ground had also been found to the southeast of the Swedish settlement in the 1930s excavation together with a large amount of Native American objects (Becker 1979:32). In fact, the colonists preferred to settle in the cleared land of the Native Americans, because it was often both convenient and pastorally beautiful according to the Swedes, with open grassland and scattered trees (Becker 1999:77, 83–84; Fur 2006:102; also Lindeström 1962:95).

There were conflicts between the colonists and the Lenape, and the officials expressed respect as well as prejudices and contempt towards the Native Americans. The instructions for the third governor, Johan Printz, issued by Queen Christina of Sweden, state that the “wild” inhabitants are to be treated as the rightful owners of the land (Instructions for Governor Printz §5, 15 August 1642, in Johnson 1930:68). The governor himself expressed loathing and abomination: “Nothing would be better than to send over here a couple of hundred soldiers and [keep here] until we broke the necks of all of them in this River” (Printz’s letter to Count Brahe, 19 July 1644, in Johnson 1930:167; Printz’s report of 11 June 1644, in Johnson 1930:117; Johnson 1911:377).

The colony had at the same time to rely heavily on the support of the surrounding Native American community, which might in part explain the habitation pattern (cf. Becker 1995). Although tentative, having the Native American objects from Printzhof in mind, it is possible that the wigwams were either contemporary with the Swedish settlement or even a part of it. Settling at already inhabited places in the New World was actually a rather common occurrence. Right from the beginning in 1634, St. Mary’s City in Maryland, for example, was already a contact zone between Yaocomico Indians and English settlers (Miller 2003:225). After negotiation with the Piscataway nation, obtaining a general permit to settle in the Chesapeake, Leonard Calvert bought a substantial part of a Yaocomico village. Many of the first inhabitants moved, leaving their houses to the English, but many stayed, and the settlement was thus provided with a multicultural foundation from the start (Miller 2003:225–26). Archaeological evidence also supports this, with a substantial amount of material culture connected with North American Indians, Europeans and hybridisation between the two (Miller 2003:230–231).

The excavated area at Printzhof is rather limited in comparison to the vast examined areas of St. Mary’s City, and no proper comparison is possible. Although the European objects are in the majority at Printzhof, the Native American material culture is represented and comprises a broad set of artefacts used in daily life, such as smoking, adornment and food preparation. Moreover, the finds tell of substantial contacts and interaction between Europeans and Native Americans. This is in line with recent theoretical development in the humanities and the global critique of colonialism and Eurocentrism, criticising the notion of antagonistic cultural entities so fundamental in the ideas of Western universalism, and it has provided the archaeology and history of early modern society with theoretical instruments to understand places such as Printzhof and processes taking place in colonial landscapes (see for example Silliman 2005; Horning 2009a; Naum 2010).



**Fig. 12.2** Heads of clay pipes and stone pipes from Printzhof. (Photo by David Furlow, courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)

The existence of practices involving adoption, appropriation and reuse of foreign material culture (e.g. chipping of European-produced bottle glass for tool making; Becker 1999:83) points rather distinctly at hybridisation processes (cf. van Dongen 1995). These appropriations and responses to the demands created by colonial encounters were sometimes enacted far from the physical sites of European–indigenous interactions. The clay pipe industry in the Netherlands, as well as local production in Maryland (i.e. the Swan Cove Site, Anne Arundel County, 1660–1669), for example, started to produce Native American preferred elbow-shaped pipes and funnel-angle pipes especially for the North American market (Lukenbach et al. 2002; Huey 2005). Bowls of these kinds of pipes were also found at Printzhof, such as the pipes manufactured in the Netherlands by Edward Bird in 1645–1655 (cf. Huey 2005) (Fig. 12.2).

The excavations of the remains of Printzhof dated to the 1640s and early 1650s show a blend of several identities or cultural traditions. Native Americans, probably Lenape, settled the site and buried their dead, most likely before the Swedes arrived. The Swedes bought their land from the Lenape and Johan Printz founded the fort of New Gothenburg and shortly after had his manor constructed in baroque aristocratic style. A piece of Western Europe was built in America. Archaeology shows that the two spheres—Europeans and Native American—not only met but mingled. Not only did the Swedes buy and appropriate Native American material culture, but the latter was used and produced at Printzhof. The settlement was a hybrid right from the beginning.

## The Imprints of Colonial Praxis: The Material Journey There

The people living in the Swedish colony, whether they were of African, Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Norwegian or Spanish descent, slaves, indentured servants, freemen or noblemen (Johnson 1911:705; Carlsson 1995; see Ekengren this volume for a discussion on forest Finns in New Sweden),<sup>2</sup> bought and brought objects from Sweden, the Netherlands, the English colonies and other places. Things were brought to enable a life in America and to trade with the Native Americans. Among other things, Swedes sold cloth, rifles, trade beads and mirrors from the Netherlands, and from Sweden axes, copper kettles, knives and thimbles (for example Risingh 1988:177; Johnson 1911:242, 255). Copper in particular had an emblematic role in several Native American communities in the early seventeenth century, and the metal actually dominated the trade between Jamestown settlers and the Powhatan (Mallios and Emmet 2004; Horning 2009b).

The trade in copper and brass kettles is one of the few things that with relative certainty can be regarded as an actual material trace of the Swedish colony among the Lenape, Nanticoke and Susquehannock nations (Immonen 2011). Sweden was the world's leading producer of copper in the early modern period, and plenty of kettles are recorded as cargo on the ships sailing to America (see for example Magnusson 2010:124–131). Over 300 kettles, for example, were brought on the ship *Gyllene Hajen* (Eng. Golden Shark) alone in 1646 (Johnson 1911:255).

The Lenape wished to possess the kettles, not only as cooking vessels but for the quality of the metal they were made of (cf. Saunders 1999:246). Many kettles were transformed into other objects such as pendants, beads, pipes and arrowheads. The copper was used by many Native Americans on the east coast in the seventeenth century to decorate wooden or ceramic objects (van Dongen 1995; Immonen 2011). The kettles, thimbles or other objects were thus transformed into artefacts of use and significance in the native context. But also plain fragments of kettles have been found, such as the ones unearthed at the Bell Farm (Sussex County, New Jersey) and currently displayed at the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia (New Jersey State Museum, Inv. no 66.718; 66.725–726). These might be traces of the transformation: breaking the European material culture was just a part of the transformation; turning it into something else meant incorporating the object into a new context and a new meaning.

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<sup>2</sup>The social span was quite wide, including all these categories. It is highly relevant to acknowledge that the Swedes appropriated a common European and colonial attitude in adopting the system of slavery. One slave is known (the first in Delaware), Anthony, who had been bought in the Caribbean in 1638 and brought to Fort Christina (RA Handel och Sjöfart vol. 196; cf. also Johnson 1911:699; Williams 1996:2–4). After the arrival of Johan Printz in 1643, Anthony was recorded under the name Antoni Swart (Eng. Black) and was forced to follow the governor to New Gothenburg and to work as a field hand and running the governor's sloop (Johnson 1911:706).

Also wampum—the shell beads of different colours made in the Northeast Atlantic region—was used in a wide set of ways by both Europeans and North American Indians. Wampum was used as decoration and had, among other things, a mnemonic function for the users, related to storytelling, diplomacy and communication. This function meant that the beads, already at an early stage, perhaps from the first contacts between Europeans and Native Americans, were turned into an object of struggle and competition as well as a means of payment between colonists and North American Indians (Otto 2010:178).

European commodities were traded for wampum and later traded for food, beaver pelts, tobacco, precious metals and other objects with the surrounding Lenape community. This material culture was not unambiguous but an active part of an appropriation—beaver pelts were turned into hats, tobacco became commodities, copper kettles were turned into arrowheads and so on—and subsequently added to the biographical chain of the objects (cf. for example Saunders 1999).

Per Lindeström tells about the use of wampum as means of payment, but he also describes some of the varied relations with the beads and their functions in communication, narrative and memory (Lindeström 1962:129–138; Fur 2006:147; Otto 2010). He also reports on the use of wampum by the Swedes in their position as middlemen in the trade but also for other purposes such as prestige or communication. Governor Printz is said to have “had the savages make and thread up for him a suit of clothes with coat, trousers and sword belt entirely of their *own money*, which was very artistic, threaded and worked with all kinds of animals which came to a few thousand florins” (my emphasis, Lindeström 1925:222; Feest 1995:339). Printz also writes to the Chancellor of the Realm, Count Per Brahe, that he is sending a string of beads to Queen Christina: “one of the foremost bands which the Indian chiefs use on their Kinteka [gathering] and greatest glory and is so highly esteemed among them as among us gold and silver” (Printz, letter to Brahe, 14 July 1644, in Johnson 1930:166). In the same letter Printz mentions that he is sending a tobacco pipe made of stone by “the savages” to Queen Christina and a tobacco pipe of wood and an otter skin for a muff to Brahe. The whereabouts of these gifts are not known.

The wampum coat and trousers with belt to be worn by the governor of New Sweden are examples of the blend of several traits of material culture and social relations in the Delaware valley. The wampum dress was ordered, at least according to Lindeström, by Governor Printz and manufactured by Lenape Indians out of a material loaded with various meanings, such as indigenous identity and memory, colonial encounter, contact and commerce, and then delivered to and used by Printz. The written accounts do not say in what way Printz used the dress, if he used it in interaction with the Lenape, in front of his own people or not or if he valued it as a treasure and stored it at Printzhof. Either way the Printz wampum dress is an example of the ongoing hybridisation between Native Americans and Swedish colonists where dress tended to blend; the latter used coats of otter skin, commonly known as savage coats, and trousers of elk skin (Johnson 1911:534), whereas the North American Indians used to buy cloth from the Swedes (see De Cunzo this volume).

## And Back Again

But what happened to the material culture, the objects and to the identity of the colonists when they were transferred to other contexts in Europe, such as Printz's manor Gunillaberg in Västergötland or the home of Campanius Holm in the rectory at Frösthult? Johan Printz kept a belt of wampum his whole life, perhaps the same as the one mentioned by Lindeström, and it is listed in the probate records after Printz's death in 1663 (Göta hovrätts Arkiv E XIA:10, no. 916, 6 verso) (Fig. 12.3). Printz's daughter Armegot, who had been living in New Sweden with her father, is recorded as having four "Indianiske notaskar", probably meaning Native American-made pouches (RA Likvidationer, Försträckningar och leveranser serie B, vol. 221; Elfving 1986:33, cf. Lindeström 1962:112).

Holm's grave became an object of both local oral traditions and recurrent external commemoration. At the eastern wall of the nave there are two painted heads with floral festoons connecting them with the vaults. These decorations have been interpreted in local tradition as faces of Indians with feathers and connected to the life of Johannes Campanius Holm (personal communication Susann Sagström Frösthult). The paintings are from 1637 which is remarkably late and close in time to the arrival of Campanius Holm in 1648, but painted before the time of Holm and not connected to him (Kilström 1972:8; Brunius 1988:142). This tradition is an indication of the local importance of Holm's grave and of the connection between the Delaware and Frösthult. In connection with the commemorations of the New Sweden colony in 1963 and 1988, representatives of the Lenape nation visited Frösthult and the grave of Campanius Holm (Brunius 2007:28–29) which aroused significant local attention (Fjärdhundra Kontakt 1963:3). The contact between America and Frösthult is commemorated because of Johannes Campanius' foremost effort: the Algonquian/Lenape–Swedish dictionary, *Vocabularium Barbaro-Virgineorum*, and the *Lutheri Catechismus öfwersatt på American-Virginiske språket* (Luther's Catechism translated into the American-Virginian language) printed in 1696 (Holm 1696/1937; Holm 1988). As has been indicated above, Johannes Campanius Holm brought the Algonquian language and its phonetic forms as images to Sweden.

Aristocrats, soldiers and royals such as Per Brahe, Johan Printz, Herman and Carl Gustav Wrangel and Queen Christina obtained objects from the New Sweden colony, some of which have survived (Fig. 12.5). These material artefacts consist of axes, clubs, headdresses, pipes, pouches and strings of wampum beads (Becker 1990a, 1990b; Brunius 1990, 1995, 2007).

One of the axes is mentioned for the first time in 1686 as belonging to King Charles XI (1655–97; Brunius 1995, 2007; Snickare 2011). It was kept in the royal armoury, but is now in the Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm. The axe helve is made of wood with wampum inlay and with an iron blade with thin leather straps attached, in a fitting that is unsuitable for practical use—either hunting or warfare—the helve still has traces of being used (Brunius 1995:159).



The iron is of European—probably Swedish production<sup>3</sup>—and the helve of Native American origin. Oddly, an almost identical axe from the same period was kept in the Danish royal *kunstkammer* or museum in Copenhagen. This axe has the helve clad with both wampum and European glass beads; the blade, on the other hand, is not of iron but of stone of American origin (Due 1980:31; Feest 1989:53; Brunius 2007:36). Both axes thus emphasise their hybrid nature by blending iron with wampum and glass with greenstone.

The anthropomorphic clubs with ball-shaped heads in Copenhagen and Stockholm have been suggested to be nineteenth-century Swedish copies of the one in Skokloster (Brunius 2007:36). Owning Native American objects was thus prestigious, and production of things associated with the New World was undertaken in Europe. Objects which beyond doubt stem from the seventeenth century and almost certainly came from the New Sweden colony are the two clubs, three strings and three red-dyed objects made to look like wolf's heads in Skokloster Castle (Fig. 12.4). One of the clubs has not only an inlay of wampum but also of copper—perhaps of Swedish origin (Becker 1990b:23). This is almost ironic that commodities produced in Sweden should travel that far and change their form in such a way and still end up so close to their birthplace. Tentatively, one part of the object's biography starts in a copper mine in Falun, Sweden, from where the sheets of copper were transported to Stockholm or the Netherlands, where kettles and other objects were made. Some of the kettles were then sent across the Atlantic to New Sweden and exchanged for fur or tobacco. North American Indians, who acquired the kettles, as discussed above, broke them up to refashion pieces of copper into familiar and more needed objects. Bits of copper were used as inlay in a club, which eventually was sold or given to the Swedes and came back to Sweden. The biographical chain of this one object thus brings together two continents, different systems of value and cultural norms and the work of many people.

Skokloster Castle is contemporary with the New Sweden colony. The castle was founded by the count, admiral and general of the Thirty Years' War, Carl Gustav Wrangel and his wife Anna Margareta von Haugwitz, between 1654 and 1676. Skokloster is famous for its size, its well-kept exterior and interior and for its collections. Fine arts and furniture can be studied along with collectors' items from all over the world (Bergström 2005). The death of Anna Margareta von Haugwitz in 1673 and of Carl Gustav Wrangel in 1676, and the subsequent conversion of the castle into an entailed estate produced inventories in 1676 and 1710, giving thorough descriptions of the castle's possessions. Carl Gustav Wrangel and Anna Margareta von Haugwitz had the eight objects from New Sweden displayed in the armoury, as recorded in an inventory of 1710 which probably was based on the older inventory (Brunius 2007:34). Here weapons from many parts of the world were kept together with a kayak, a South American hammock and a preserved armadillo—the symbols of the Americas—and many other things.

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<sup>3</sup> Sweden was not only the leading exporter of copper; iron was also a prominent export commodity (cf., e.g. Magnusson 2010:124–137; Evans and Rydén this volume).





**Fig. 12.4** Native American objects in Skokloster Castle (inv. no 6904 and 6906). (Photo courtesy of Skokloster Castle)

It is not recorded when and how the eight North American objects reached Skokloster, but it may have happened in a various set of ways. Carl Gustav Wrangel personally knew Johan Risingh, the last governor of New Sweden, just as he knew Per Lindeström and Per Brahe, according to dedicated books in his library and his correspondence. Frösthult Parish is not far away, so Johannes Campanius might have been acquainted with the count. Carl Gustav's father, Herman Wrangel, was also part of the committee signing the instructions for Johan Printz in 1642, together with Carl Gustav's friend Per Brahe (Johnson 1930:99). Sweden was geographically a vast country but with a small population; among the aristocracy and clergy, people were bound to know each other in the seventeenth century (cf. De Cunzio this volume).

The castle at Skokloster (Fig. 12.5) was founded on the principles of the Renaissance: geometric harmony, classicism and science (cf. Bergström 2005). The four towers indicate the compass points and symbolise the four elements. The towers are adorned with armillary globes emphasising the castle's cosmological as well as scientific position—the castle was built as a reflection of the harmony of the spheres mapped through the strenuous efforts of science. Inside the castle Carl Gustav Wrangel and Anna Margareta von Haugwitz had a vast collection of scientific instruments for measuring and optics, as well as several terrestrial globes, maps and travel books together with over twenty curiosity cabinets (Losman and Sigurdsson 1975). On the walls of the dining halls, bedrooms and drawing rooms are paintings of exotic beasts, and the stucco ceilings are loaded with symbols of the Renaissance world such as classical myths, animals, wild men and representations of the four known continents (cf. Herva and Nordin [in press](#); Nordin [forthcoming](#)). This is most evident in the great dining hall, where a dragon and its slayer are surrounded by



**Fig. 12.5** Skokloster Castle from the waterfront. (Photo by the author)

depictions of the four continents in shape of four lightly dressed women. Europe is represented by a woman holding a pair of compasses surrounded by an antique ruin, arms and musical instruments (see illustrations in chapter by Lu Ann De Cunzo). America, in the other corner of the ceiling, is symbolised by a woman riding an armadillo together with a packet, probably containing tobacco, and a parrot resting on top of the packet. Europe is presented as history, science, art and refinement, whereas America is depicted as an exotic resource, commodified nature ready for exploitation. The eight objects from New Sweden had a self-evident place in this context as physical tokens of the global world.

Skokloster Castle was made as an astonishingly substantial curiosity cabinet, a *theatrum mundi*, capturing the zeitgeist of the late Renaissance. The castle was made to be the centre of an estate as well as a centre of the world, but it was also a node in the newly risen global world. The proprietor drank cocoa, coffee and tea; smoked tobacco; and collected items from South America, Asia, the North Atlantic as well as the objects from Delaware basin area (cf. Losman 1980:179–182). Skokloster was not solely a theatre of the world but a stage where the colonial world was displayed—a colonial theatre.

The objects from the New Sweden area were made a part of a large *mappa mundi*, as a node pointing towards New Sweden and America. They became a part of the life of Skokloster, as a place where material things and their narratives connected New Sweden to the old country and America connected to Europe. Johan Printz's manor of Gunillaberg, Frösthult parish church, Count Per Brahe's Visingsborg, the royal palace in Stockholm and many other places were sites where America and its hybridity kept on colouring society long after the colony was lost.

## A Materiality of Colonialism: Concluding Remarks

The history of New Sweden has generally been described as a white man's adventure. This chapter proposes a somewhat different interpretation. People from all over, including those already at home, settled as civil servants, soldiers, indentured workers, African slaves and entrepreneurs in New Sweden, together speaking at least ten languages and many more dialects, lived in America and sometimes returned to Sweden or went elsewhere in the colonial world (cf. Carlsson 1995). Through material culture brought from various places in the Atlantic world, the people of New Sweden interacted and negotiated with neighbouring Native Americans, Dutch and English settlers.

The material culture of Printzhof/Tinicum, with Dutch clay pipes made to smoke American tobacco or the Native American stone pipes, clearly points to a blend of traditions and people. The elbow-shaped clay pipes from the Low Countries, made to resemble of American pipes, underlined the significance of smoking as an area of meeting and negotiating, as did the pipes sent to Sweden through the mediation of Johan Printz. The finds of European bottle glass chipped by American Indians into jewellery or tools during their stay at the baroque Printzhof house, with its indentured workers and slaves, testify to ongoing colonial contact between people of different background and with different aims and purposes.

All this tells of a New Sweden that was not a Swedish endeavour but a continuing patriarchal, baroque hybridised modern project which not only changed the people of New Sweden, its surroundings and the old country, but also contributed to the rise of modern colonial capitalism and the world as we know it today. It included many more agents than previously acknowledged.

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# Chapter 13

## Sweden and the Atlantic: The Dynamism of Sweden's Colonial Projects in the Eighteenth Century

Eric Schnakenbourg

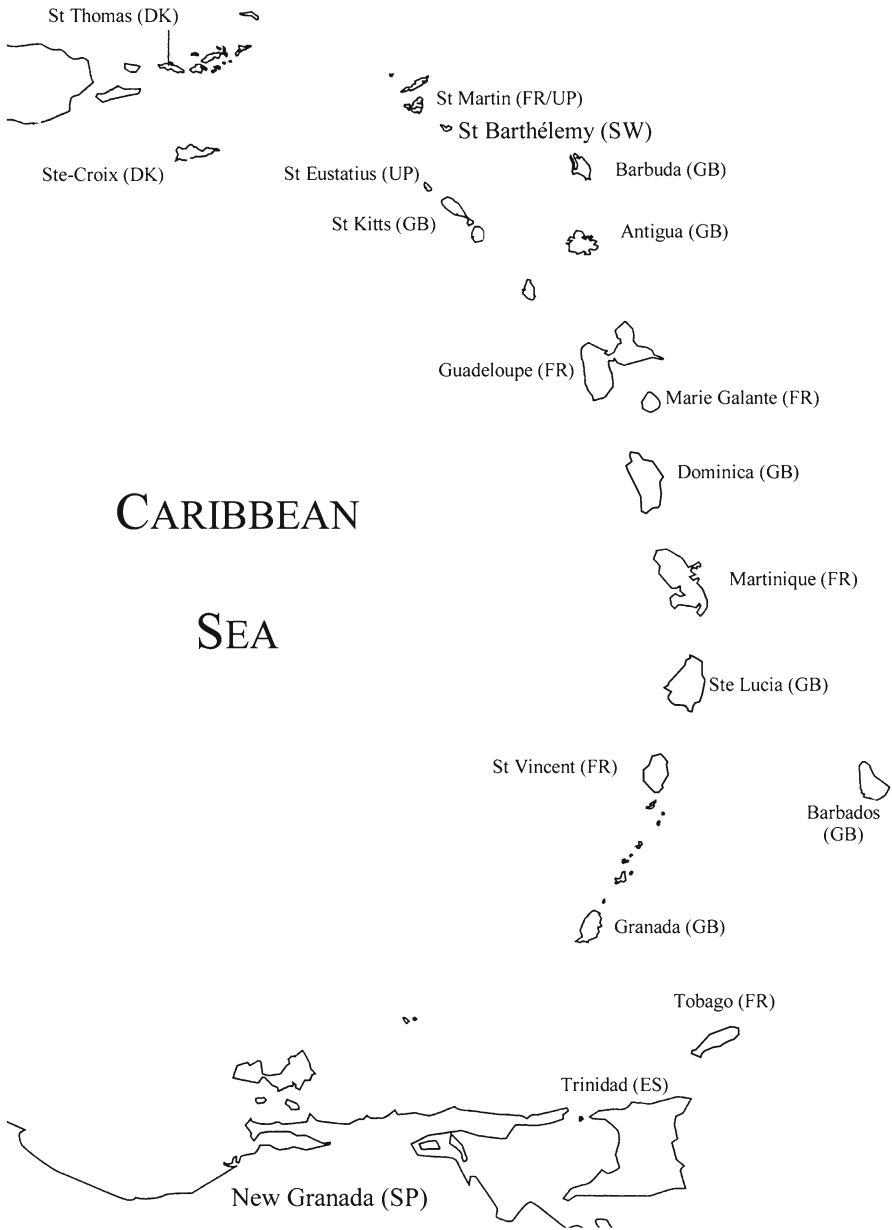
### Introduction

The earliest projects for establishing a Swedish presence in the Americas date from the early seventeenth century. They were designed by the Dutch, seeking Gustavus Adolphus' protection and approval in order to attack Spanish possessions and to be involved in the lucrative smuggling trade (Hildebrand 1899:72; Roberts 1953:271). It was not until 1638, with the founding of the colony of New Sweden, that the Swedes were first established on the American side of the Atlantic. This experience was short-lived, however, because in 1655 the Dutch seized the colony. In 1785, a treaty signed the previous year in Paris enabled the Swedish flag to fly once again over a territory in the Americas, as a result of the transfer of the Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy to King Gustaf III (Fig. 13.1). This 130-year absence from the Americas should not lead us to believe that the Scandinavian kingdom turned its back on the Atlantic region. On the contrary, during this long period, Sweden's interest in the American world continued unabated, as evidenced by several plans to found colonies in the Caribbean or on the South American continent. At the same time, economic ties, both direct and indirect, were growing between Sweden and the Americas. It is in this long-term perspective that we must consider the acquisition of St. Barthélemy, which made Sweden the last European country to establish itself in the Americas. The late arrival of the Swedes and the small size of their colony explain the fact that their aspirations in the New World have long been neglected by historians outside Sweden, especially by the French who have never asked themselves why

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**Fig. 13.1** The Caribbean in 1784. European colonies: *DK* Denmark; *FR* France; *GB* Great Britain; *SP* Spain; *SW* Sweden; *UP* United Provinces (drawing by the author)

Louis XVI gave one of his islands to Gustaf III. The Swedes have been relegated not only to the shadows of the great European colonial powers, but also behind other actors who were by then considered secondary, such as the Dutch and the



Danes. Adopting an historical approach to the Atlantic world that is not limited merely to its shores enables us to reconsider the appearance of Sweden in the Caribbean within a global perspective. Hildebrand's classic study on the first years of Swedish rule in St. Barthélemy does not take into account that this settlement was, in fact, the end result of a long process (Hildebrand 1951). He does not consider that long before obtaining the island, Sweden had already been active on the colonial stage and was involved in the Atlantic world through its foreign exchanges, even though it did not possess a territory in the Caribbean. This chapter seeks to show that, despite the late acquisition of the small island of St. Barthélemy, Sweden developed important connections with the Atlantic throughout the eighteenth century, which encouraged its ambitions in the Americas.

## Sweden's Early Interest in the Atlantic World

The acquisition of the island of Tobago was a recurrent objective for the Swedes from the second half of the seventeenth century. This territory belonged to the Duke of Courland, who did not develop it due to a lack of resources. The island was known in Sweden through accounts of the sailors serving on Courland's ships, which occasionally travelled to the island from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. In the 1690s, a former governor of Tobago, Otto Schmoll, pointed out the value of this virtually deserted island to the King of Sweden, Charles XI. Although the project eventually came to naught, the idea of acquiring territory in the American tropics was thus firmly planted in Stockholm (Macau 1974:3–5; Weiss 2010:46). The Tobago project would resurface several times over the eighteenth century, primarily promoted by Jonas Alströmer, the pioneer of Swedish agricultural modernisation and manufacturing. In the acquisition of this fertile island, Alströmer saw the advantages that could be gained by importing raw materials from the colonies (sugar and tobacco), which could then be processed and sold in the North. His economic analysis was also supported by the King of Sweden Frederick I's claims to the island, as the King was the nephew of Duke Ferdinand of Courland, who had no direct descendants. At Ferdinand's death in 1737, Sweden organised a first expedition of 25 families, not enough settlers to found a colony, but sufficient to arouse the hostility of England and Spain (Anderson 1961:135–140). The project resurfaced again in 1745, thanks to Stockholm merchants Abraham and Jacob Arfwedson. They obtained the privilege for their future West India Company to trade in the Americas, and they were to colonise Tobago and Barima; yet they abandoned the project the following year due to Spanish protest (*Ihro Königl. Maj:t gnädiges ...*, 1745; Müller 2002:101). During the Seven Years' War, the French promised to give Tobago to Sweden in return for its help invading Scotland (Dull 2009:202). However, in 1763, Tobago was officially recognised as a British possession by the peace treaty of Paris. Nevertheless, the Swedes did not

give up and still hoped to acquire the island when a new conflict broke out between France and Great Britain in 1776.

The other major objective in the Americas was Barima, a territory of undetermined sovereignty located on a branch of the Orinoco River delta between Dutch and Spanish possessions. During the 1730s, as part of an overall policy to develop long-distance trade, the Swedes planned a settlement at Barima. The frigate *Fortuna* was even sent there to evaluate the area. Once again, however, the project did not come to fruition but did arouse the concern of the Dutch and Spanish, who were very hostile to the idea of the Swedes settling in their vicinity (Hildebrand 1899:77–80; Paulin 1951; Anderson 1961:141–145). The incident in Porto Novo in 1733, in which a Swedish warehouse on the Coromandel Coast in India was jointly destroyed by the British and the French, was a reminder to the Swedes that they had arrived on the colonial scene after more powerful countries had already established themselves (Gill 1958:47–65). That was why, in the diet of 1738, the Board of Trade (*Kommerskollegium*) advocated diplomacy and negotiation with other powers, such as Spain, in order to obtain unoccupied territories in the Americas. In 1755, merchants from Stockholm asked the Swedish ambassador in Madrid to negotiate with the Spanish government to purchase one of its undeveloped islands. In particular, they hoped to obtain Crab Island (today the island of Vieques), located southeast of Puerto Rico (A.N. B3/418; RA, Gallica, 446, Creutz to Gustaf III, 3 and 13 January, 28 February 1782). In 1774, two British adventurers, Andrew Orr and James Monsell, offered King Gustaf III the opportunity to obtain the island of Puerto Rico from the Spaniards in exchange for trading privileges. The King of Sweden was enthusiastic about this project and ordered his ambassador in Madrid to enter into negotiations (Essén 1928:226–229; Müller 2002:173). Yet, the Spanish firmly refused to cede one of their possessions for fear of creating a new channel for smuggling in their colonies.

These repeated attempts to obtain a colony in the Americas are indicative of Sweden's continued interest in the Atlantic trade. Since the seventeenth century, they had developed several business ventures in this region. The first market they sought to invest in was that of the gold and slave trade from their ports on the Gold Coast. The *Afrikakompaniet* was the first lucrative Swedish company in the Atlantic world. In 1650, it gained the right to supply slaves to the Portuguese colony of São Tomé and to bring back sugar. Seven years later, it was authorised to supply slaves to the Dutch island of Curacao. In the end, over fourteen years of activity, this Swedish company transported between 1,500 and 2,000 slaves (Nováky 1990; Weiss 2010:52). The Dutch conquest of Swedish forts in Guinea in 1663 put an end to this trade. However, the memory of this venture and seeing the profits that the Danes made from the slave trade explain why continuing in this business remained a goal for the Swedes. This was part of an overall colonial development strategy which tended to emphasise the production of raw goods that could only come from plantations using slave labour. Without a tropical territory that would enable them to have their own means of production, the Swedes sought instead to obtain permission to trade through other powerful countries, as exemplified by negotiations with the Spanish in the early 1670s (Storrs 2006:345).

## Sweden's Increasing Integration into Atlantic Trade

The building of sugar refineries in Stockholm in the second half of the seventeenth century clearly shows that this product arrived in the Swedish capital in raw form (Rönnbäck 2010:112). This business, managed by the Dutch, connected Sweden to the Atlantic economy with its rivalling powers. Thus, at the turn of the eighteenth century, French agents travelling to Sweden were told to learn about the refinery in Stockholm and to convince Sweden to use raw sugar from the French colonies instead of Portuguese Brazil (A.N., Marine, B7/222, fol. 279; A.N., Affaires étrangères, B1/1071, fol. 337). The construction of new sugar refineries in Stockholm and Gothenburg during the eighteenth century also attests to Sweden's growing participation in Atlantic trade, which was strengthened even further by the role that Scandinavian iron played in Britain's expansion westward. Starting in the 1670s, London and later Bristol became key markets for the Swedish iron industry. Iron of ordinary quality was one of the goods traded for slaves in the Gulf of Guinea. Better-quality iron served as the basis for hardware, part of which was exported to Britain's American colonies. In return, British merchants brought colonial products to the North (Evans and Rydén 2007 and this volume). These indirect Swedish connections established by the iron trade are reminiscent of those from the herring trade. In fact, the British West Indies were important export markets for herring from the region of Bohuslän, on the west coast of Sweden. A small portion (3–4 % in 1766–1770) of fish was shipped directly to the West Indies from Gothenburg and Marstrand. Yet, most of the goods passed through intermediary hubs such as Amsterdam or, more often, through the Irish port of Cork where they were redirected to the British colonies to feed slaves. Part of the Swedish herring trade was also intended for slaves on the Portuguese island of Madeira (Högberg 1969:175–177). The lack of territory in the Atlantic, therefore, did not prevent Sweden from being involved directly or indirectly in trade in the Americas.

These mercantile exchanges were built on trade networks that were composed of European, Caribbean and American merchants. Since the seventeenth century, the Dutch had been the primary middlemen between Sweden and the colonial ports, but in the eighteenth century, it was the British who played the most important role. The businesses of Irish and Scottish entrepreneurs, often Jacobite refugees who had settled in Gothenburg, allowed Sweden to become part of the Atlantic economy through those entrepreneurs' international trade networks, which extended to the British Isles and cities on the Atlantic coast (Müller 2007:147–174). However, recourse to intermediaries cut into the profits of Swedish merchants, who wanted to trade directly with the colonial markets. Their determination was ignited and encouraged by the high profits that the Danes made from their three Caribbean islands during the Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century (Felbæk 1997:46–47). The Swedes also took advantage of these periods to profit from their neutrality. From the beginning of the War of Austrian Succession, Swedish merchants sought to experiment how to take advantage of the situation to benefit their transatlantic commerce, as did, for example, the captain of the *Ulrika Eleonora* who, in 1745, went from

Stockholm to St. Thomas via Dublin (AN, Affaires étrangères, B3/419, 29 November 1744). Ten years later, when Anglo-French tensions no longer left any doubt that war would soon break out, a man named Derbet, a French merchant in Stockholm associated with the Swedes, told Havrincourt, Louis XV's ambassador, that he offered to organise an expedition to bring provisions to Martinique (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 229, fol. 479 and vol. 230, fol. 255). The diplomat Havrincourt was also solicited by other Swedish merchants interested in transporting slaves to the French islands (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 230, fol. 301). In 1756, he met with merchants from the Swedish capital, and he sought to persuade them to load their boats with goods for the colonies, insinuating that on their return they could take goods from France and bring them to the North. Thus, the integration of Sweden into Atlantic trade was simply considered to be a continuation of business conducted under the pretence of neutrality (AAE, MD, France, vol. 2021, fol. 291). These documents reveal Swedish merchants' interest in trading directly with the Caribbean, as well as French provisions to encourage them by distributing passports, at least in times of conflict (RA, Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 403, September 4, 1757). During the Seven Years' War, despite the risk of capture by the English navy, there were Swedish expeditions to the French Antilles, although they pretended to navigate for the free port of Oranjestad on the Dutch island of St. Eustatius (Pares 1975:204).

The American War of Independence allowed the Swedes to become further involved in Atlantic trade. In 1779, Chanceauline, a merchant from Nantes, France, suggested to Vergennes, the French minister, that a trading house be established in Gothenburg with his Swedish counterparts in order to ensure trade with the colonies (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 270, fol. 174). Yet, the project was unworkable because, as Vergennes reminded him, it would be impossible to justify the sailing of Swedish ships to the Americas "where the King of Sweden has not an inch of land" (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 270, fol. 214). The French navy's commissioner in Gothenburg, Jacques Delisle, also met with several of the city's merchants who offered to supply the French colonies in the Americas and to bring back local products. Delisle told his government that it would be a good idea to use the Swedes as intermediaries since they had experience in Atlantic shipping, as shown by an expedition sent to Grenada in 1781. More generally, Delisle believed that Sweden could be very useful, provided it had "some possession in the Americas that it could quietly use in peacetime and, during war, could be used as an excuse in order to make expeditions" (A.N., Marine, B3/418, *Remarques pour servir d'éclaircissement* ...). The situation became particularly favourable to Swedish merchants after the start of the Anglo-Dutch War in December 1780, which destroyed the entrepôt of St. Eustatius. Sweden's direct trade with the West Indies increased dramatically; it is clear that such an increase was due to warring countries flying Sweden's flag (Hildebrand 1951:316). The Swedish ambassador to Versailles, Gustaf Creutz, served as an intermediary, trying to find out under what conditions Swedish captains could travel to the French colonies (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 273, fol. 78). At the same time as their attempts to increase their trade in goods, Swedish merchants also sought to take advantage of the situation to get involved in the slave trade. In 1782, the trading house Arfwidsson & Söner planned to deliver slaves from Mozambique to the French Antilles. Christian

Arfwidsson, followed by his son, Niclas, had made a fortune in salt herring and its export to Ireland and the Caribbean. They associated themselves with another merchant, Niclas von Jacobsson, owner of the main sugar refinery in Gothenburg, who had already invested in the slave trade during the 1770s (Schibbye 2007:12). During this period, thus, there was certainly an active merchant milieu in Sweden, well versed in the realities of colonial trade and who sought to expand their businesses by investing in the lucrative slave trade (Hildebrand 1951:140).

The Swedes also took advantage of the circumstances of the 1770s to increase their trade with the revolutionary American colonies. As early as 1775, the government in London was informed that an Irish ship had loaded gunpowder and saltpetre destined for the Americans in Gothenburg, pretending to be from the trading house Arfwidsson & Söner (Chance 1928:232). Subsequently, the increase in complaints from the British envoy in Stockholm reveals the intensity of relations between Sweden and the 13 American colonies. The status of free port granted to Marstrand in 1776 provided a base for developing trade with the American rebels, which did not fail to create tensions with the government in London (Roslund Mercurio 1974:475–489). Swedish neutrality thus provided cover for American trade and the establishment of transatlantic commercial networks. John Holker, the French consul in Philadelphia, noted that, despite a Swedish flag, many ships' captains and crews were actually American. However, there were also genuine, profitable business relationships that were established between the Scandinavian kingdom and the rebellious colonies (C.A.D.N., Philadelphie 31, fol. 3 and 12). Interest for this new market explains why, between 1782 and 1784, the Board of Mines (*Bergskollegium*) sent an agent to the USA to estimate the market potential of the country, especially for iron.

## Atlantic Trade and Political Economy in the 1780s

The development of Atlantic trade was not only due to the initiative of individual merchants. It was also a reflection of political economics whose purpose was to determine the best ways to enrich the State. This kind of consideration was one of the reasons that had prompted Europeans to develop world trade in the sixteenth century onwards. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the growing influence of the Physiocrats,<sup>1</sup> the example of other countries starting with the neighbouring Danes, and the profits recorded by the Swedish East India Company (*Svenska Ostindiska Companiet*) fuelled the Swedes' imagination about what additional profits Swedish trade in the Atlantic might generate. Atlantic trade could continue to develop in the New World in three ways that overlapped: smuggling with the

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<sup>1</sup> Physiocracy is an economic doctrine which appeared in France at the end of the 1750s. Physiocrats promoted a kind of economic liberalism in order to encourage the growth of farming and trade.

French and especially Spanish colonies, the direct sale of Swedish products (herring, iron) as well as bringing colonial products back to the North, and allowing vessels to fly the neutral Swedish flag during the Anglo-French wars. It was in this general climate that, in 1776, the first Swedish book specifically devoted to colonial trade was published in Stockholm: *Afhandling om nyttan för Sverige af handel och nybyggen i Indierna och på Africa* (Essay on the benefits for Sweden of trade and colonies in the West Indies and Africa). Taking the example of the Danes, its author, Ulric Nordenskiöld, argued that the Swedes were just as capable of founding colonies to supply themselves with sugar and coffee. According to him, Sweden should try to obtain one of the Caribbean islands forsaken by the major powers. Such an island would, without great expense, enable Sweden to produce sugar, coffee and indigo, as well as engage in the slave trade (Nordenskiöld 1776:44).

His thoughts were published just as the American Revolution began. As they had done during the previous conflict, the French suspended their Exclusive System, which forbade foreign countries from shipping to their colonies, and they granted passage to neutral ships from the start of the conflict. In 1778, the Comte de Vergennes, chief minister of Louis XVI, repeatedly pointed out to the Swedish ambassador, Gustaf Creutz, the benefits that his countrymen could gain from trading with the French territories in the Americas. They would undertake a doubly profitable sea voyage by supplying the French islands with European goods and by bringing back colonial products that could be resold at a profit in France and in the North. Caribbean navigation would be all the more lucrative during the war, since the British islands suffered from shortages because they were no longer supplied with cod from Newfoundland. There was a new market for salted herring and hardware items. Yet not having their own territory in the region, the Swedes had to go through the free port of Oranjestad, at St. Eustatius, the great hub of American commerce in the late 1770s (RA Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 443, 10 January 1779).

The Swedes intensified their efforts to obtain a territory in the Americas. Axel von Fersen, who left to serve in the United States in 1780, was to use his visit to inquire whether the young republic might cede one of its islands to Sweden. The Spanish option also regularly resurfaced, and Creutz raised the possibility of obtaining an island at the mouth of the Orinoco (RA, Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 443, 10 June 1779). In 1780 and again in 1782, the Swedes tried to negotiate with Madrid one more time, but had no more success than in the previous attempts (Hildebrand 1951:21–22). The most serious negotiations, however, took place in Versailles. As during the Seven Years' War, the French renewed their promise to cede Sweden one of the islands that they would take from Britain once the peace was signed (RA, Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 443, 16 May 1779). That was why Creutz became a very careful observer of the military situation in the Caribbean. He received part of his information from Swedes serving in the French navy during Caribbean campaigns (Elovson 1928a; Barton 2009). Creutz's objective was not simply to justify the presence of Swedish ships in the Caribbean, nor to provide a hub for smuggling and a warehouse to ensure trade under Swedish neutrality in wartime. He wanted a real colony for Gustaf III in order to be able to produce tropical goods for supplying

Sweden and the northern Europe market as well. In the long run, this colony would integrate the kingdom into the great world trade. That was why the ambassador regularly sent King Gustaf III his observations on the various islands that might be transferred to Sweden: Dominica, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, Barbados and especially Tobago (RA, *Diplomatica, Gallica*, vol. 443, 10 June and 16 September 1779). When Tobago was conquered by Admiral de Grasse in June 1781, Creutz entertained great hope and insisted upon the benefits that would be gained from its acquisition. It seemed to be the ideal colony: a topography that made it easy to defend, good anchorage spots and, above all, highly fertile soil enabling the cultivation of sugar, indigo, cotton and coffee, all the while being close to the continent which could make it a good base for smuggling with the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. All these benefits would result in “an infinite advantage [enabling] extremely lucrative profits” (RA, *Diplomatica, Gallica*, vol. 445, 25 and 29 November 1781). Gustaf III was wholly convinced and made this clear to his new ambassador to France, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein: “It’s Tobago that I want” (Geffroy 1867:377). The King of Sweden’s determination was all the more great because he was unable to come to terms with Russian Empress Catherine II during their meeting in Fredrikshamn in June 1783. Johan Liljencrantz, Gustaf III’s Finance Minister, who had hoped to make Sweden a trade intermediary between Russia and the rest of Europe, decided instead to reorient the country’s trade policy (Essén 1928:237; Müller 2011:156–157). He now sought to build on the recent momentum of Swedish trade with the West Indies, which, according to statistics from the Board of Trade, had increased nineteen-fold in value between 1777 and 1783, clearly reflecting the ability of Gustaf III’s subjects to participate in Atlantic commerce (Hildebrand 1951:315). To achieve his goal, Liljencrantz adopted a two-pronged strategy: one was the signing of a trade agreement with the United States, on April 3, 1783, shortly after the end of the war. This would maintain Swedish—American trade, which had taken off in previous years, thanks to the free port of Marstrand. The second part concerned the acquisition of an island in the Caribbean.

## The Acquisition of St. Barthélemy

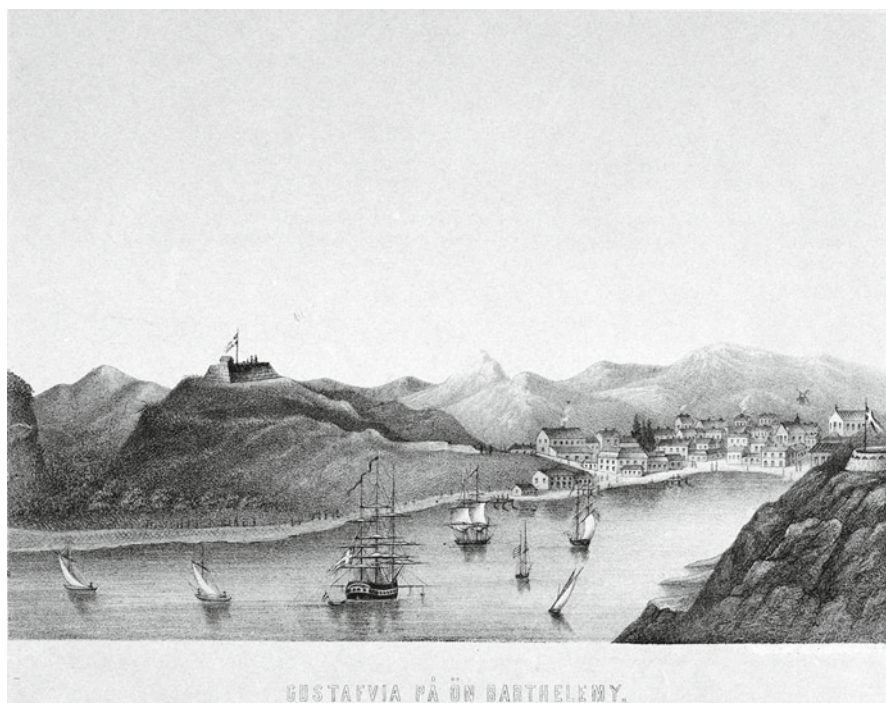
Since his educational voyage throughout Western Europe in the 1750s, Liljencrantz had remained convinced of the importance for a State to develop trade in the Americas. Founding a colony would be a decisive advantage that would not only justify the presence of Swedish vessels in the Americas, but would also provide a base for transferring goods onto Swedish ships and thus take full advantage of the country’s neutrality during future conflicts between France and England. This conviction was strengthened by the Danish example of the island of St. Thomas which became, after the 1781 destruction of St. Eustatius, a very important commercial hub for West Indies trade, as shown by the fourteen-fold increase in port revenue between 1776 and 1782 (Nathanson 1836: 483; Feldbæk 1971:116). Over the longer term, the goal was to move beyond the circumstances of any one particular war

and to fully integrate Sweden into world-trade networks. Proof of this can be found in a paper published in 1784 in *Nya Handelsbibliotheket* entitled, *Förslag till Nybyggens anläggande i Indien och på Africanska Kusten* (Project for the founding of colonies in India and the African coast). It was authored by the renowned poet Johan Henrik Kellgren, who was close to King Gustaf III. Kellgren echoed the arguments already developed in 1776 by Ulric Nordenskiöld, detailing the various possibilities for acquiring a Caribbean island and highlighting the benefits that Sweden would derive (Elovson 1928b:208–209). The similarities between the two authors reveal the considerable reflection about colonial trade that was occurring in Sweden during the American War of Independence. It was in this context that, after the return to peace, Franco-Swedish negotiations began about the transfer of a Caribbean island.

At that time, it seems that there was no unanimity within the French government on the relevance of a Swedish presence in the West Indies. For the supporters, having an island meant that the Swedes would be able to supply the French navy during its West Indian campaigns and would legitimise Sweden's transatlantic shipping. Like the Dutch or the Danes, the Swedes could also use their island as a hub for exchanges between France and her colonies in wartime. Yet, the transfer of an island to Gustaf III had also its opponents within the French government. They noted that inevitably, the Swedes would also supply the English navy, and consequently France would not gain any real advantage from a Swedish presence. Furthermore, in peacetime, like their Dutch and Danish counterparts, the Swedes would encourage the smuggling of sugar and coffee from the French colonies (A.N., Marine, B3/419, *Un établissement suédois dans les Antilles ...*). From his first talks with the French, Ambassador Staël von Holstein understood that he was not facing an easy task. When he suggested the transfer of Tobago to Vergennes, the French minister replied, "So do you want to take the sole benefit of the war from us? This is impossible" (RA, Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 465, May 25, 1783).

Finally, after difficult negotiations conducted by Louis XVI's ministers with Staël von Holstein, the French King agreed to give St. Barthélemy to King Gustaf III. It is a small mountainous island, difficult to defend and lacking a source of fresh water, which had no prospects for agricultural development, but offered good mooring (A.A.E., C.P., Suède, vol. 276, fol. 62–63). This choice did not correspond to Sweden's hopes. Thus, Staël von Holstein tried to exchange St. Barthélemy for the island Marie-Galante. This small island had much greater agricultural potential (it already produced sugar) and a more advantageous location that would facilitate trade especially with neighbouring Guadeloupe as well as with Martinique. Staël's insistence contrasts with his predecessor Creutz's opinion of Marie-Galante, communicated to King Gustaf III 2 years previously, "so small and so insignificant that it is not worth talking about. You need a much bigger island" (RA, Diplomatica, Gallica, vol. 446, 3 January 1782). The contrast between them reveals the level of Sweden's disappointment, which was even greater if we take into account the other islands that had been mentioned: Dominica, St. Vincent and especially Tobago. In these conditions, it is not surprising that after 1784, the Swedes tried once again, still in vain, to obtain an island from the Spanish (Hildebrand 1951:107–108).





**Fig. 13.2** View of Gustavia, St. Barthélemy (unknown artist) (Courtesy of National Maritime Museums, Sweden)

However, St. Barthélemy was not entirely useless. In a report dated August 1784, the Swedish consul in Lorient, France, Simon Berard, noted that, although the island could not be cultivated, it could still become a lucrative entrepôt for the slave trade to the French colonies, either as contraband or through an agreement with Versailles (RA, Rådsprotokoll, Handels och finansärenden, 1784–1788; *Observations sur les avantages ...*). It was for this reason that he advised obtaining other islands, even insignificant ones, that could act as bases for exchanging American, Caribbean and European goods and as supply centres for slaves. This model of colonisation, already practised by the Dutch and the Danes, was based on service and not on production. It enabled them to balance the financial and demographic requirements of colonialism with the limited resources of a second-tier power.

On March 7, 1785, Baron von Rayalin officially took possession of St. Barthélemy (RA, S:t Barthélemysamlingen, n°1/6). He confirmed to Stockholm the weak agricultural potential of the island and the quality of its port (Fig. 13.2). Everything pointed to the island becoming a transit port, styled after the Dutch model of St. Eustatius or the Danish model of St. Thomas (Essén 1928:204–242). In September 1785, Carenage, later called Gustavia, became a free port attracting foreign vessels. St. Barthélemy rapidly rose to be one of the main centres in the region for the

contraband trade in sugar (A.N., Marine, B7/447, Staël von Holstein to Castries, 9 October 1784; Tarrade 1972:618). Lacking a sufficient local market, the trade in goods between St. Barthélemy and Sweden stagnated. However, the island was a centre for the distribution of slaves who were transported by the *Svenska Västindiska Kompaniet* (Swedish West India Company) founded in 1786 (Weiss 2010:56–61). Its investors were merchants who were already experts in Atlantic trade, since they had helped develop relations between Sweden and Africa and had made the Scandinavian kingdom part of the Atlantic economy, even though at a modest level. In the eighteenth-century Sweden, there was a real colonial ambition and a dynamism that linked the country to the main currents of trade in the Atlantic region, whether indirectly or directly. We see this ambition again in 1813, when Sweden obtained Guadeloupe from England in exchange for their support against Napoleon. A Swedish commissioner was dispatched to assess the island's potential, but at the end of the war the island was restored to France (Lacour 1860:218; Carlsson and Höjer 1954:173).

Sweden's colonial projects enable us to bring to light the interconnections between diplomacy, the stakes involved in commercial trade, the networks of merchants and political economy in international relations. Although the acquisition of St. Barthélemy may well be considered as the accomplishment of a long quest, it is nevertheless clear that the model of Swedish colonialism is that of a minor player and raises the question of what colonial rule really meant. While, for great powers such as Britain, France and Spain, colonisation meant the exploitation of natural resources in order to serve the home country, thanks to the considerable use of slave labour, colonisation was different for smaller powers with unproductive islands. This was especially true in the case of St. Barthélemy. Indeed, although Sweden finally had a colony, it cannot be considered as a colonial power in the full sense. On St. Barthélemy, the Swedish population, strictly speaking, had always been a minority and never exceeded 130 individuals (Tigbrand 2002:68). Sweden's limited trade activity, the need to attract foreigners to the island and the competition with other similar islands (in particular the Danish possession of St. Thomas) all prohibited the establishment of mechanisms for capturing wealth that instead simply passed through the free port of Gustavia (Essén 1928:245–246). Thus, Sweden did not really benefit from St. Barthélemy's most prosperous decades.

During the French Revolutionary Wars, thanks to Swedish neutrality the island became a hub for West Indies coastal shipping and for trade between Europe, the United States and the Caribbean. Its population reached 5,000 people in 1,800, and more than a thousand ships per year came to Gustavia during the best years (Müller 2002:169). St. Barthélemy also benefited from the wars of independence in Latin America between 1810 and 1830, when it served as a relay point for the various warring parties (Vidales 1993). Yet, once peace had returned, trade then collapsed as Gustavia became less attractive and the colony had to rely on its own meagre resources. In 1878, Sweden returned the island to France, with a population level equivalent to that of 1784. Thus, Sweden's adventure as a colonial power definitively came to an end, but not the country's connections with the Atlantic World.

Translated from the French by Cynthia J. Johnson.

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# Chapter 14

## The Danish Gold Coast as a Multinational and Entangled Space, c. 1700–1850

Holger Weiss

### Introduction

The economic rationale for the European presence along the West African or, as it was also called, Upper and Lower Guinea Coast was the export–import trade in Atlantic goods. While the Portuguese were initially drawn there by gold and ivory, the rapid growth of the Caribbean plantation economy from 1650 onwards resulted in the increasing importance of the slave trade as the main enterprise for European companies. Among them were the Danish West India and Guinea Company and their successors: the Crown (1754–1765, 1776–1850) and the Bargum Trading Company (1765–1776), with their African headquarters at Christiansborg Castle in Accra (Nørregård 1966; Klem 1970; Hernæs 1995; Justesen 2005; on the Danish trade, see Green-Pedersen 1971, 1975; Gøbel 1990; Svalesen 2000). Atlantic imports into West Africa, on the other hand, mainly comprised Indian and European textiles, flintlock guns and gunpowder, alcohol and brass- and ironware (Eltis and Jennings 1988; Evans and Rydén 2012; Nørregård 1951).

More than 50 forts and lodges existed on the Gold Coast during the eighteenth century, most of them established next to existing settlements. In Accra, for example, the Dutch fort was next to the Dutch village of the same name (today Usshertown), the English fort lay adjacent to Jamestown, and the Danish fort was located next to Osu, or Danish Accra. Although the European imprint on local African coastal societies and polities was limited until the second half of the nineteenth century (Daaku 1970; Kea 1982), there was a substantial interaction between Europeans and Africans in the ports, forts and the associated settlement (Gocking 1999; Schumway 2011). These places constituted a microcosm within the early modern Atlantic world or macro-space, where African, American and European

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artefacts and habits existed side by side (Law and Mann 1999; Law 2004). Even though contacts with the outside Atlantic world varied greatly—while several ships annually visited the British and Dutch forts, few Danish ships called at Christiansborg or the other Danish forts—nonetheless, all of the European forts were to a greater or lesser extent what Hopkins defines as “circumscribed little frontier societies” whose survival depended on their interactions with the local African communities (Hopkins 2009:782).

This chapter applies a spatial approach to the study of multinational compositions and processes of acculturation at the Danish ports, in particular Christiansborg and Danish Accra from c. 1700–1850. My approach is inspired by Karl Schlögel’s idea of identifying the complexity and multiple layers of historical change in a particular geographical location (Schlögel 2003).

In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss the multinational space of the ports. At least four different groups of people interacted in these coastal localities: the local inhabitants of the towns, the European administrative and military personnel, “foreign” Africans (traders, emissaries and above all slaves) and the mulattos. Elmina and Cape Coast in particular have rightly been identified as “multinational spaces” where local and foreign influences merged, blended and created fascinating cultural syntheses (Feinberg 1989; Gocking 1999; DeCorse 2001; Yarak 2004; St. Clair 2007). Research into Danish–African interaction, moreover, has highlighted aspects of connected or shared history (DeCorse 1993; Hernæs 1995; Justesen 1979, 2003; Wellington 2006; Ipsen 2008). Like other port enclaves, the Danish trading posts and forts were inhabited by men and women from various parts of the world. Questions of their cultural and social background and their places of origin can be partially answered by the careful reading of Danish written sources. There, one can find ample information about the Europeans, a certain amount about the mulatto population, but few individual details concerning the slaves and inhabitants of the African settlements, including the fort slaves, the Company or Inventory slaves (*Inventorieslaver*), contract slaves and pawn slaves (see further Hernæs 2002). The most intriguing people in the ports were the offspring of Danish–African marital relations and mixed-race individuals born out of wedlock. Such groups existed all along the West African coast, assuming a role of negotiators between the foreign and the local populations, but occasionally perceived as social outcasts (Brooks 2003).

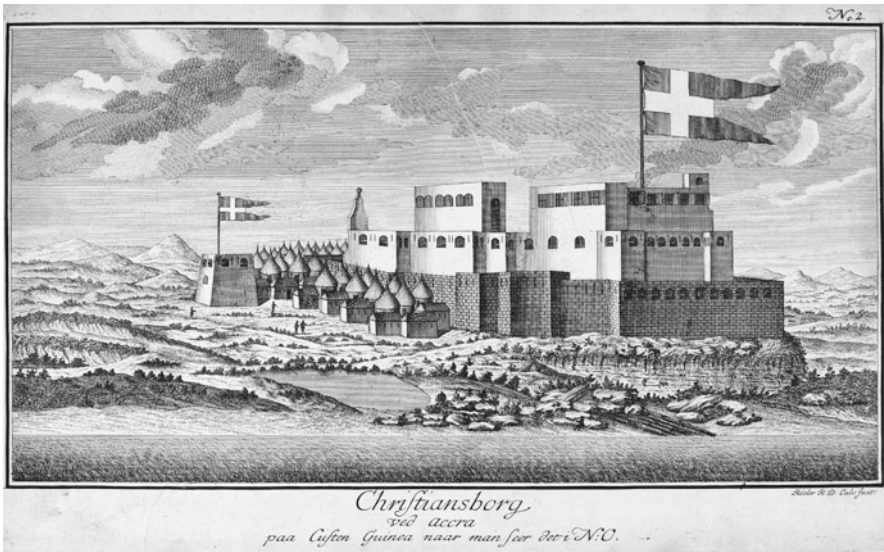
The second part of the chapter looks at the “entangled” spaces of the ports. Using Christiansborg as an example, the focus is on how transnational and global ideas and material artefacts were articulated, reshaped and combined with local ones at such multinational sites. My underlying argument is that the early modern Atlantic world can be seen as an inclusive entity. Such an approach is not a novel one: John Thornton and others have already made a strong claim for including Africa and Africans in any investigation of Atlantic and global history (Thornton 1998; Benjamin 2009). Previous research has underlined the fact that West Africa was a market for Eurasian goods, such as European and Indian textiles (Kriger 2006, 2009; Reikart 1997) or alcohol (Akyeampong 1996). Local changes in West African consumer preferences affected the contents of the basket of goods that European merchants and traders had to put together in order to

meet the demands of their African counterparts, who, in turn, acted as middlemen between the European traders and the local African consumers (Richardson 1979; Kea 1982; Metcalf 1987a, b; Alpern 1995; Reese 2009; Schumway 2011). However, as Hernæs has underlined, the kind of influence that could be imposed by flying a flag was fleeting, although the relationship between Europeans and Africans was strong enough to create an “open interactive system” in which both communities strived for the greatest gain (Hernæs 1996). The crucial question that will be asked is, therefore, that of the extent to which consumption patterns and habits changed in the ports during the early modern period and to what extent the appropriation and cultural transfer were a two-way process.

### **Gold Coast Port Towns: Atlantic Enclaves and Multinational Spaces**

The most prominent outward sign of the European presence along the Gold Coast was the fortified trading posts that were manned by European and Euro-African personnel (van Dantzig 1980). These establishments were extraterritorial enclaves built with the consent of local rulers; each of the European nations had to pay an annual stipend or tribute to the various overlords, at first as a kind of ground rent but increasingly also as a bounty for trade. At Accra, where there existed three European forts, namely, the Dutch Fort Crèvecoeur (built between 1642 and 1649, today known as Fort Ussher), the British Fort James (built in 1673) and the Danish Christiansborg (previously, among others, a Swedish lodge, but from 1661 effectively Danish and rebuilt and extended into a castle), the European companies at first paid a stipend to the local leaders in Accra (Nørregård 1966:43; Daaku 1970:57, 59; Kea 1982:315). Following the defeat of the king of Accra in the 1680s by the interior Akan state of Akwamu, the stipend was transferred to the new overlord of Accra, who, in turn, lost it to the ruler of Akyem after the military defeat of Akwamu in 1730 (Nørregård 1966:57, 79–80). After the successful military campaign of the Asante, which ended with the crushing of Akyem in 1742, Asante authority was extended over Accra and they became the recipient of the stipend (Yarak 1990:138, 152–156).

The European forts served as fortified magazines and warehouses. The African towns adjacent to the forts were tied to long-distance and local trade that was in one way or another directed towards the Atlantic. These “ports of entry” were in many ways marked by their duality: a European settlement and an African town at the crossroads of the Atlantic and the African world, a marketplace for Atlantic as well as African goods. However, while the marketplace was at times a fairly open space, at others, especially at night, the European zone and the African zone became physically divided. Most, if not all, Europeans who lived in a fort had to stay in the fort at night, its main gate being locked so as to establish a barrier against the African town. In this sense, at least, the European forts rather than the African towns remained the Atlantic enclave (Schumway 2011).



**Fig. 14.1** Christiansborg in the 18th century. Engraving by R. D. Rösler from c. 1760 (courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark)

However, in the course of the eighteenth century, the African urban space became increasingly affected by the Atlantic world. An illuminating case was the manifestation of European measurement of time in the ports. Life in the forts was regulated according to the hourglass, and a bell rung at certain intervals to mark the hours and the times for the changing of the guard (Isert 1992:45; van Dantzig 1980:82). In addition, a cannon was fired in the evening to notify people of the closing of the gates. The sound of the bell and the cannon filled the local African space with a perception brought from elsewhere of daily rhythm and order of time. The local populations of these sites lived according to alternations of light and darkness. If the stone-built forts and castles along the Gold Coast visualised European conceptions of physical power and order, the bell constituted even more than that. European physical space was restricted to the building itself, but European conceptions of time and order were to be heard both within and outside the fort when the bell rang or cannons were fired to indicate the closure of the gates in the evening. Symbolically, therefore, European time overlapped African time and was “consumed” by all of the inhabitants.

The complexity of the urban settlements along the Gold Coast is evident in the Danish–African relationship between Christiansborg and the surrounding African town of Osu, which the Danes called *Negeriet* Osu. Both places were “mixed spaces”, especially during the daytime. The castle, which served as the Danish headquarters between 1685 and 1850, was a relatively impressive construction (Fig. 14.1). Originally a square structure with 23-m-thick curtain walls and four corner bastions, it was subsequently enlarged during the eighteenth century (DeCorse 1993:159).



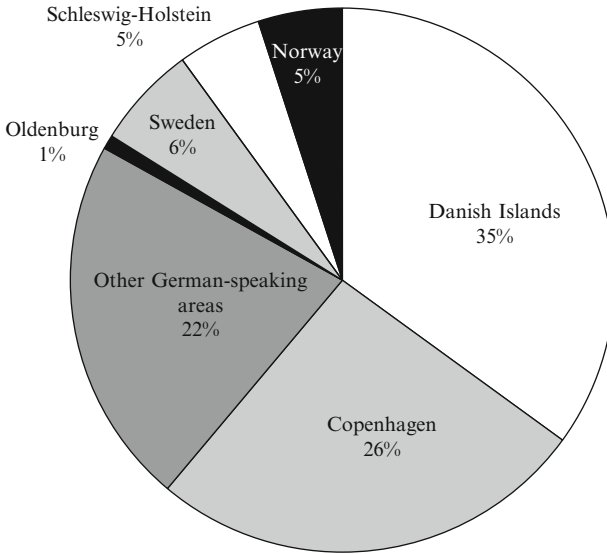
Most, if not all, Europeans and mulattos lived inside Christiansborg, as did some of the fort slaves. Consequently, the castle was usually crowded, and only the governor had more than one room at his own disposal (a bedroom and a side room; Nørregård 1966:160). The other Europeans had to share the small rooms available in the government buildings, and occasionally some officers even had to live in Osu before the extension of the castle in the 1750s (Justesen 2005:937).

The inhabitants of the castle varied greatly during the eighteenth century. In 1760, the payrolls listed only 18 Europeans and 8 mulattos. Two years later, when Governor Carl Gottlieb Resch arrived with new administrative personnel, craftsmen and soldiers, the number increased to 43 Europeans and 16 mulattos (Payrolls 1762, DNA 365/69). The Danes also owned three other possessions: Fort Fredensborg (built in 1734) outside Ningo, and the lodges in Ada and Keta, which were manned by a few European traders and mulatto soldiers. In addition, the Danes owned *Inventarie-slavar*, or fort slaves, employed at the forts and receiving a monthly salary for their services. Initially, there were only between 10 and 20 fort slaves (Nørregård 1966:162). By 1762, their number had increased to 78: 30 males, 29 females, 14 boys and 5 girls. Additionally, the Danes owned 25 *Remidorer-slavar*, slaves who served as canoe men (List of fort slaves 1762, DNA 365/69).

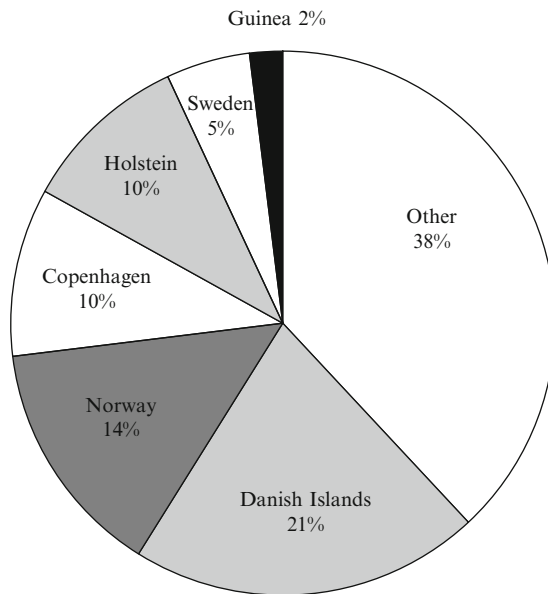
Still, mortality among the Europeans was high and many new arrivals succumbed within the first year of their stay on the Coast. This was the fate of, among others, Studiosus Jacob Zimmer. He arrived on the Coast in 1762 and served first as a soldier and cantor in Christiansborg. In 1764, he was promoted to senior assistant in Christiansborg, and at the end of the year to factor of Way lodge (Payrolls 1764, DNA/70). On 14 February 1765, he was married to Englisha Jensdatter Tomsen, who had been Governor Resch's housekeeper. She is one of the few white women known by their names—in 1765, three women were registered in the parish records' book, but Englisha's name is the only one mentioned. Less than two weeks after their marriage, Zimmer died, leaving behind a son, Jacob Gottlob, who was baptised on 30 May 1765 (Parish records for 1764–65, DNA 365/70).

Altogether almost 100 male Europeans lived in the Danish possessions during the 1760s. Most of them had been born in Denmark or came from various parts of the Oldenburg monarchy, including Norway, Schleswig, Holstein and Oldenburg (Fig. 14.2). About one quarter of the administrative and military personnel were from various German-speaking countries, including Hamburg, Lübeck, Mecklenburg, the Electorate of Saxony and Hesse; others were enlisted soldiers from as far as Elbing (Polish Prussia) and Vienna. Another noteworthy group was made up of six people from various parts of the kingdom of Sweden, such as surgeon Ernst Schnell from Swedish Pomerania and Peter Hissing from Stockholm, who served as a cooper and officer from 1752 until his death in August 1762.

A multinational composition of the European personnel in the Danish possessions is also recorded for the 1790s (Fig. 14.3). The majority of the *Blancs*—as the Europeans were defined in the payrolls—still came from various parts of the Danish Kingdom, but the proportion of other nationalities had risen to almost 50%. A remarkable feature was the small number of persons from Copenhagen: four listed in the 1790s, in comparison with their dominant position during the 1760s, when there were 25 of them.



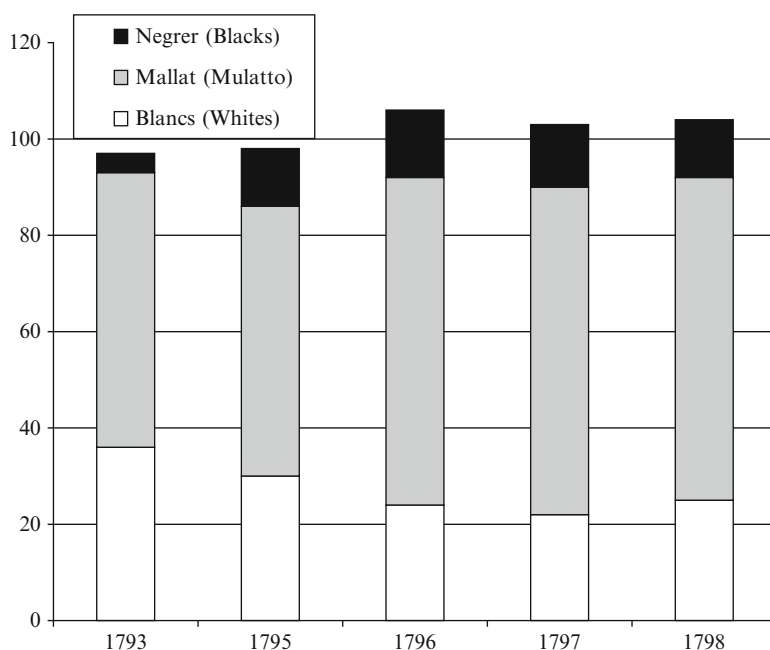
**Fig. 14.2** European personnel in Danish West Africa, 1759–1768. Total number: 98 persons (source: List of payrolls, DNA 365/68–70, 447/162–166)



**Fig. 14.3** European personnel in Danish West Africa, 1793–1798. Total number: 42 persons (source: List of payrolls, DNA 371/994–995)

At the end of the eighteenth century, the payrolls of the Danish possessions listed on average 30 Europeans, 60 mulattos and 10 Africans (Fig. 14.4). The Danish presence, though still modest, had expanded during the 1780s, and several new forts had been established: Fort Prinsensten at Keta (1780), Fort Kongensten at Ada (1784) and Fort Augustaborg at Teshie (1787).

However, proportionally speaking, Europeans never exceeded 40% of the persons listed in the payrolls. The number of mulattos and Africans, on the other hand, had increased as they were now filling the positions of craftsmen and soldiers left vacant by Europeans who had left. The Africans, referred to as “Negerer” in the payrolls, were either free salaried workers, among others a certain Christian Adué, who was one of the coopers at Christiansborg in 1793, and Fridrich Eithe, the headman of the *remidors* in Christiansborg, or “Inventarie-Neger” (Company or inventory slave), who were listed as soldiers (Payrolls 1793, DNA 371/994). However, as the payrolls exclude the free and unfree *remidor*, as well as the fort slaves who also received a salary, the relative dominance of the African population becomes more evident at the forts. According to Hernæs, the total number of fort slaves had increased throughout the eighteenth century, from 20 at the beginning of the century to well over 400 by the end of the century (Hernæs 2002:202–210). In 1793, for example, the fort slaves and *remidor* numbered 442 persons, including females and children (Salaries to employed African personnel 1793, DNA 371/994).



**Fig. 14.4** Salaried personnel in Danish West Africa, 1793, 1795–1798 (source: List of payrolls, DNA 371/994–995)

## African and Euro-African Spaces in Danish Accra

Christiansborg Castle and to a lesser degree Osu were multinational spaces. While the presence of Europeans, Danish-Africans and Africans was a marked feature at the Danish fort from the beginning of its existence, the visible change of Osu into an “Atlantic space” was a slow process. Few, if any, Europeans lived permanently outside the castle until the late eighteenth century. Osu itself was until the late eighteenth century a typical “African” settlement in the sense that no stone buildings had yet been erected in the town apart from Prøvesten Tower, which had been built by the Danes in the western outskirts of the town in the 1740s (Justesen 2005:693, 824). Instead, the compounds and huts were all built of mud, mostly circular, and a few square ones (Besvarelse 1797–1798:173; Monrad 1824:264) (Fig. 14.1).

A few decades later, Osu’s landscape had changed profoundly. While Governor Biørn described the African buildings as neat (Biørn 1797–1798:196), Joseph Wulff, who lived as an independent trader and administrative staff member in Christiansborg and Osu between 1836 and 1842, was not impressed and depicted the town as a country village with narrow streets, most of the houses being in very poor shape, and altogether giving an outsider the impression of being filthy (Wulff 2004). However, there were notable exceptions: the stone houses of the merchants. Although the local African and Afro-European middlemen and merchants were already building brick and stone buildings elsewhere along the Coast during the eighteenth century—especially Elmina had a large number of such houses (DeCorse 2001:62–66)—this occurred in Osu, in British and Dutch Accra, as well as in Cape Coast only at the beginning of the following century (for Cape Coast, see Hyland 1995). “The merchants live in particular fine places”, Wulff noted. “Their houses are formed like small citadels, all of them having balconies all around, and flat roofs, providing for lovely walks” (Wulff 2004:61). A few of them still exist in Accra, giving witness of an intriguing blend of Mediterranean and local African influences. Usually, the property included walled (inner and outer) courtyards with a two-story mansion with warehouse facilities on the ground floor and the chambers and veranda on the first floor (Hyland 1995:173; Wellington 2006:153–155).

One of the Danish houses in Osu was the mansion of merchant Jens Jacobsen. This stone house was bought by another Danish merchant, H. C. Truelsen, in 1812. Others were the lodges of Danish and Danish-African merchants, such as those of Georg Christoph Lutterodt, Johan Richter, J. F. Christian Svanekjær, L. Hesse, Niels Holm and Joseph Fleischer (Wellington 2006:152, 156). Some of these people were also the proprietors of plantations in the hinterland of Accra (Kea 1995:133–135). One mansion that still exists is Frederiksminde, a stone house built by Wulff in 1840 (Nørregård 1966:210; Wulff 2004:167), another the trading house of the local African merchant Nii-Okantey, which was built on the premises of Truelsen’s house (Wellington 2006:152).

The most impressive stone mansion must have been that of Henrich Richter (1785–1849). He was the richest Danish-African merchant during the early decades of the nineteenth century. His father was Johan Richter (d. 1817), who

had lived on the Coast since the 1790s and been appointed Danish governor in 1816. His mother was—presumably—a local Ga woman. He had been educated in London and had lived in Denmark, where he married a Danish woman. Together with his brother, he built a lodge in 1809, called the Richter House. Henrich Richter engaged in the gold and palm oil trade and emerged as the principal merchant of Osu during the 1820s. He was appointed chief military commissioner in 1831 and Knight of the Order of Dannebrog, Fourth Class, in 1836. At his height of his career, he owned 10 barrels of gold and about 400 slaves (Justesen 2003). His home and his habits, too, were luxurious, as one can read from Wulff's letter to his parents: "I have never in my life seen so much gold and silver and other costly articles, as I have seen there. The tables are decked with silverware, and one enjoys all manner of rare foods that he imports from all the corners of the earth" (Wulff 2004:65–67).

Last, but not least, the houses of the Danish, Afro-European and African merchants marked the unification of the Atlantic and African ideas of domestic spaces: built in a "non-African" style and inhabited, in some cases, by non-Europeans. They were, in other words, markers of the overlapping ideas of the Atlantic world. Thus, as Peter Mark (1996) has outlined, architecture can be seen as one of the markers of creolisation. The owners of such buildings not only consumed Atlantic goods but also appropriated outside cultural influences, such as architectural design, to define their position as members of both the Atlantic and local African communities. On the other hand, as Yaw Bredwa-Mensah has highlighted, the Danish and Afro-Danish plantations mark a different spatial development in Danish West Africa. According to him, the planters imposed on the plantations their idealised cognitive representations of the eighteenth-century rural Danish landscape: the manor house and the manorial relations of production. The plantations resembled the physical outline of a Danish manor, laid out in strict, rigid geometric configurations intended to signify elegance, superiority and power (Bredwa-Mensah 2008:137–138).

## The Shifting Identities of the Danish Africans

Few of the Danish Africans ever managed to achieve the position of a merchant or trader. Most instead survived as soldiers and salaried mulatto or Afro-Danish personnel at the Danish establishments. In comparison with the Europeans and the local population, the mulattos had never chosen their fate, and for much of the eighteenth century both the Africans and the Europeans belittled, if not despised, them for being bastards and social outcasts. Wulff noted that the mulattos, for their part, had little affection for the Europeans or affinity with the African population: "The Mulattos hate us Whites more than the Negroes, but they only stay with the Whites because they, in turn, are hated by the Negroes. If the Negroes did not have so much fear of the Whites they would certainly slaughter all the Mulattos like pigs" (Wulff 2004:126). Although Wulff might have exaggerated the rift between the Danish-African and African populations in Osu, his description pinpoints the uneasiness of

the relationship among the three groups. Others, such as the Danish factor Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer, noted that the Africans had a rather positive attitude toward the offspring of Black and White unions (Rømer 2000:186).

Both Rømer and Wulff had first-hand experience with mulattos. The former had at least one son, Ferdinand Rømer, who was listed among the Danish mulatto soldiers (Payrolls 1760, DNA 365/68), while the latter was married to Sara Malm, a mulatto woman of Danish descent (Wulff 2004). In general, the mulattos called “White Negroes” had been given Christian names and had sometimes even been baptised, but few of them lived according to Christian norms or seemed to be practising Christians. Many of the men cohabitated with more than one woman, a custom that can hardly be ascribed as exclusive to the Africans or mulattos. In fact, most of the Europeans living on the Coast themselves had more than one African wife or mistress (Ipsen 2008). The Danish authorities at least tried to introduce a minimum of sexual regulation in their realms when the Bishop of Zeeland, Christen Worm, handed down a dispensation in the 1720s concerning interracial relationships in Guinea: All Danes living there were allowed to cohabit with one African woman on condition that the husband promised to see his wife converted to Christianity, and if he returned to Europe, the wife should accompany him if she so wished (Rømer 2000:185; see also Ipsen 2005).

Few of the Europeans ever returned from Africa, and those who did never brought their African wife and children back home. The mulatto children usually lived with their mothers, but the Danish authorities tried their best to give them a minimum of European/Christian education. Similar to the other European nations, the Danes opened a mulatto school at Christiansborg Castle in 1722 (Graham 1971:4–6). During the 1760s, the school was operated by Christian Protten (1715–1769), who himself was a mulatto but had been sent by his father to Denmark for higher education and received a master’s degree from Copenhagen University (Sensbach 2005). Among Protten’s pupils were Carl, Jörgen and Knud Sonne, the sons of Jörgen Sonne, senior assistant and member of the Secret Council (the Privy Council), who had died on 18 February 1763, after spending 13 years in Africa (List of Mulatto Children at the Castle School, Christiansborg, June 1765, DNA 365/70; Payrolls 1763, DNA 365/69). The Sonne brothers had the same fate as most of the other male mulatto children: At the end of the eighteenth century, all of them were noncommissioned officers in the Danish forts—Carl and Knud Sonne in Christiansborg, Jörgen Sonne at Prinsensten (Payrolls 1793, DNA 371/994).

A somewhat different fate awaited Friderich Wrisberg, Johan P. D. Wrisberg’s mulatto half-brother. Both of the boys had returned from Denmark in 1790, but Friderich Wrisberg was listed not among the administrative or merchant personnel but instead only as a cooper. Two years later he is listed as a sailor on board of the Danish cutter *Piedden*. Interestingly, the captain of the cutter was Christian Balche (Balck), a mulatto from St. Croix—perhaps the first African-Atlantic Creole salaried by the Danish authorities in West Africa (Payrolls 1793, DNA 371/994). Balche established himself as an independent merchant in Osu around 1805 and was at one time the proprietor of the Anonebi plantation (Kea 1995:134); he died heirless in 1843 (Carstensen 1964:79).

Individuals like Henrich Richter and the other Danish-African merchants had multiple identities. A positive interpretation of their mulatto background highlights their role as intermediaries. They combined African and European culture, and the outcome was something new. Like the Luso-Africans, who both maintained a Portuguese identity and over time changed it and Africanised it, the Euro-Africans of Dutch, English and Danish extraction maintained similar links to both the local and Atlantic worlds.

A decisive factor influencing the lives of mulattos was the social position of their parents. A child of a European commander or factor, or someone with a mother from an influential family, had a clear chance to end up as a high-ranking coastal intermediary and merchant (Reynolds 1974:256). The child of a soldier and mulatto or of a slave concubine had few, if any, possibilities to climb the social ladder. He would end up as a soldier or domestic servant, she perhaps as a concubine or wife of another mulatto. This was the fate of the mulatto soldier Peter Ludewig. He was sent as translator on the slaver *Prinsesse Wilhelmina Carolina* to the West Indies in 1752 and returned via Copenhagen to Christiansborg in June 1754. For his services, he was made Chief Bomba (headman) over the Company's slaves and *remidors* (Justesen 2005:852, 941, 947). Perhaps he even went on a second Atlantic tour a few years later, as he is not listed on the list of payrolls from late 1762 until the end of 1764 (Payrolls 5/1762, 12/1762, 1/1765, DNA 365/69–70).

The difference between these two groups of mulattos was also manifested in their consumption of Atlantic goods. The Euro-African intermediaries and merchants upheld Atlantic as well as African networks; the focal point of these networks was their mansion in one of the ports of entry. Here they had established overt references to the Atlantic space. The key denominator of this space was its gradual creolisation during the course of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries: Local foodstuffs were consumed alongside foreign; local artefacts filled the rooms alongside imported ones; local knowledge, customs and behaviour were visible alongside European table manners, European education and ideas.

The Afro-European soldiers, on the other hand, consumed Atlantic goods, but their condition was much more restricted and fragile. What they lacked was the Atlantic network of the Euro-African merchants. While the merchants were oriented towards the Atlantic world in the sense that their wealth, position and prestige derived from their capability to engage in the Atlantic trade, the Afro-European soldiers were only indirectly tied to the Atlantic world, as inhabitants of colonial settlements and consumers of selected goods and ideas. They themselves had few, if any, opportunities to engage in Atlantic trade.

## Multiple Blending and Entangled Spaces in Danish West Africa

Atlantic goods of European, American, or Asian origin poured into the Gold Coast as exchange goods for African products and wares. However, most of the local African population had few, if any, means to access Atlantic consumer goods. According to Rømer, the local inhabitants of Osu owned few things: "Some muskets

and cartridge pouches, a couple of chests, some drinking basins, some calabashes, a couple of clay pots, and a mirror make up his entire household equipment and furniture; with, perhaps, a cat or a dog also owned” (Rømer 2000:114). The majority of commoners as well as the slave population would dress in locally produced clothes and consume locally produced food. However, as will be seen further ahead, any idea of an African way of life unaltered by contact with Europeans would be an inaccurate way of understanding the lives of the majority of the population during the eighteenth century in the Atlantic enclaves along the Gold Coast.

Some Africans, and specifically the recipients of the “ground rent” or stipend, consumed large amounts of Atlantic goods. Similar to the other Europeans, the Danes paid stipends not only to the Asantehene—the ruler of Asante—but also to lesser African rulers, such as the “kings” of Akyem and Popo as well as the *cabussiers* (chiefs, also referred to as “merchant princes”), *mæglers* (mediators, sometimes termed *klaplop-pere*, who acted as middlemen and agents between the Europeans and Africans from the interior; see Rask 1754:138), and secretaries of several coastal polities, including those of Akwapim, Osu, Labodi, Nungua, Teshi, Tema, Kpone, Ningo, Ada, Keta and Aflao (Danish stipends to African rulers and notables, 1793, DNA 371/994).

The instalments were made up of a variety of Atlantic goods; the annual basket included clothes and textiles, alcohol, tobacco, and pipes, while the weekly tribute comprised, for instance, brandy, tobacco and pipes (Biørn 1797–1798:196; Monrad 1824:69). The rank of the recipient was reflected by the contents and value of the “tribute basket”. Not surprisingly, the Asantehene received luxurious presents from the Danish governor worth 500 Riksdaler Guld, including a gold-plated mirror and a lavish mahogany chair. Caboceer Nakku, who was the most influential person in Osu, received a basket worth 100 Riksdaler Guld, while those to the other elders and notables were worth a half or a quarter of that. Especially interesting are the few (luxury) items of political and cultural value that signalled a European and African understanding of how to accumulate symbolic capital: a staff with silver buttons carrying the monogram of the Danish king, a gold or silver braided hat, parasols, a sword with silver fittings, a Danish flag (Biørn 1797–1798:196–198, 202).

A rarely noticed example of the presence of the Atlantic world in African everyday life is the wooden box and gun chest. Produced by carpenters in Europe, its purpose was to serve as a container for goods transported to the African coast. There, these boxes and chests were no longer required for their original purpose and could either be sold or chopped for firewood. Few Europeans ever bothered to mention the large number of wooden containers that found their way to the Coast, let alone speak about what happened to them once they had been emptied of their contents. However, a remarkable situation evolved in some locations where the local Africans started to recycle these wooden containers. While Rask depicted local burial habits as African at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Rask 1754:188–191, 212–213), Isert noted at the end of the century the peculiar habit among the Ga population in Osu of having a particular kind of coffin made for their dead (Isert 1992:133). According to Monrad, the corpse was laid in a coffin made by a local craftsman from a European gun chest; sometimes also other wooden containers were used. The important point is that the former gun or sea chest was transformed into a container for ritual purposes (Monrad



1824:18). While neither Isert nor Monrad says anything about the shape of the coffin, the idea of the transformed eighteenth-century gun box resembles that of the modern custom-built coffins of the Ga in Accra in the shape of a Mercedes-Benz.

Another group of Atlantic consumers were the African intermediaries. Some of these mastered European languages, such as Dutch, English, Danish, French, or Portuguese (Rask 1754:140); others were keen on presenting themselves as fully capable of matching European cultural norms, such as table manners and cuisine (Isert 1992:90). Nevertheless, they styled themselves as African equals and consumed Atlantic goods as part of their African identification. Foreign imports, such as textiles, alcohol and tobacco, were thus “Africanised”: They could in theory be substituted at any time with locally produced goods and were used to enhance one’s social position in local society rather than mark an Atlantic identity. Some of them would even send their sons to Europe for education, which constituted a breaking point in the lives of these families. Risky as it was—the danger of enslavement en route was an ever-present fear for any African in the Atlantic world—the venture certainly paid off, since education abroad enabled these Africans to establish closer professional relationships with the European merchants and companies. Unsurprisingly, their descendants could eventually become African-Atlantic actors (Isert 1992:62).

Another intriguing marker of the entanglement of Atlantic and local habits in the port towns—and even beyond—was the fondness and use of hats exhibited by both Europeans and Africans. Johannes Rask, who served as a minister in Christiansborg from 1708 to 1712, commented on the demand for European-style hats amongst the *caboceers* and the local nobility (Rask 1754:153). Hats were markers of a person’s social and political position in Africa as much as they were in Europe. The ruler of Asante, Asantehene Opoku Ware I, wore one, as did the king of Grand Popo. Rømer commented, “If a copper engraver were to draw Oppoccu’s portrait he would have to portray Oppoccu ... wearing a hat with Point d’Espagne and a white feather on it” (Rømer 2000:156). Similar hats had also been ordered for the rulers and grandees of Akwamu and Akim (Justesen 2005:892). Isert mentioned that the outfit of the King of Grand Popo “consisted of a very costly Black pantjes reaching from his hips all the way to the ground. Over this he wore a loose silken dressing gown, and on his head, a coachman’s cap, on top of which was a European hat worked all over with large silver flowers. ... In his hand he also carried a Spanish manila cane with a silver knob” (Isert 1992:93). Hats, therefore, were to be included in every shipment to the Coast and in the inventory of any warehouse. But the consumption of hats was tied both to changes in fashion and to the taste of their wearers, as the Danes—and certainly the other Europeans—were to experience. At one time, the Danish governor ordered fine hats to be sent to the Coast, only to realise when they arrived that no one was interested in acquiring them (Besvarelse 1797–1798:191).

Local taste rather than European calculations dictated what kinds of hats were in demand. This was not only true in the aesthetic sphere of the hats but also regulated the more mundane import of iron or textiles into West Africa. Here, too, careful attention had to be paid to the requirement of the local African consumers. The quality, weight and dimensions of bar or voyage iron or the patterns and colours of textiles had to match the ever-shifting demands of African buyers (Kriger 2006; Evans and Rydén 2007, and this volume). Local African merchants controlled the terms of exchange, and the Danish

governor often had to report home that the quality of the textiles was so poor that the traders would not even look at them or that the Danish iron bars were “too small and not of the right quality’ and that they ‘must be larger and of better iron that is not so hard and brittle as the former ones”. Sometimes even the flintlocks had rusted due to the poor state of their chests although at other times the governor boasted that Danish powder kegs and flintlocks were held in highest esteem by the local traders (Justesen 2005:915, 939).

In a similar way, the Europeans blended and acculturated local African material and immaterial goods and habits. The cuisine in the coastal enclaves drew on both African and Atlantic influences, and few Europeans had anything negative to say about it once they had become accustomed to it. Breakfast included both Atlantic and African items: tea (imported during the eighteenth century from China via Europe), bread (made from locally grown maize or pearl millet/Guinea corn), and locally grown yams and bananas (Besvarelse 1797–1798:161–162; Monrad 1824:371). If sugar was not available, local honey was used as a substitute in tea and punch, as a sweetener in food dishes and as a spread on bread (Rømer 2000:161). Rømer was enthusiastic about the fish dish he and the other Europeans prepared: eight-day-old dried fish fried with Spanish pepper in palm oil and accompanied by bread: “[it] is a tasty ragout for the Europeans living in that land . . . when you have become accustomed to it, all the negro food is not only most healthy but tasty” (Rømer 2000:196–197). Rask hailed the curative effects of palm wine, Isert praised the locally brewed beer, and Wulff assured that once accustomed to the local food, his stomach had been in perfect working order (Rask 1754:94; Isert 1992:127; Wulff 2004:121).

## Summary and Postscript

The Danish presence on the Gold Coast came to an end in 1850 when Denmark sold all its possessions to the British. After the termination of the Danish slave trade in 1803, the Danes tried to establish coffee, cotton and sugar plantations as the new economic rationale on the Gold Coast, but they had little success (Jeppesen 1966; Hopkins 2009). The Danish and Afro-Danish merchants had few means at their disposal to counteract the encroachment of the British, and Governor Carstensen had to admit that trade was controlled by the English merchants by the early 1840s. The decline of the Danes was also noticeable in cultural terms. Few, if any, of the Danish-Africans and Africans mastered Danish anymore, and Carstensen proposed English as the language of instruction in the mulatto school in Christiansborg as there were only a handful of Danes left on the Coast (Carstensen 1964:33, 52–56).

Still, limited as it was, the Danish–African interaction was at its height relatively intensive. The Atlantic enclaves on the Gold Coast were entangled spaces. Port towns, such as Christiansborg and Danish Accra, were places where external concepts and artefacts overlapped with local ones. European time sounded out in the nearby African town, and African time affected Europeans who lived along the Coast. Atlantic goods, especially tobacco and alcohol, and to a lesser extent imported textiles, became part and parcel of the consumption habits of those people who in one way or another could

get hold of the products. The ports were at the same time multinational spaces. Neither of these two spatial markers was a unique feature of the West African coastal sites—in fact, most, if not all, port cities in the Atlantic world displayed similar characteristics. The special feature of the Gold Coast ports, including those in Danish West Africa, was the gradual emergence of diverse Euro-African communities.

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 365 Generaltoldkammeret—Ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor  
 No. 68 Indkomne guineiske brev 1760–1762  
 Payrolls (General Extract) 1759, 1760, 1761  
 No. 69 Indkomne guineiske brev 1760–1764  
 Payrolls (General Extract) 1762, 1763  
 – List of fort slaves (Inventarielista) 1762  
 No. 70 Indkomne guineiske brev 1764–1768  
 Payrolls (General Extract) 1764, 1765, 1767  
 – Parish records for 1764–65  
 – List of Mulatto Children at the Castle School, Christiansborg, June 1765  
 447 Det guineiske kompagni, Guvernementet i Guinea, No. 162–166. Brevbog 1766–1769  
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 – Salaries to employed African personnel, 1793  
 – Danish stipends to African rulers and notables, 1793  
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# Chapter 15

## The 1733 Slave Revolt on the Island of St. John: Continuity and Change from Africa to the Americas

Louise Sebro

### Introduction

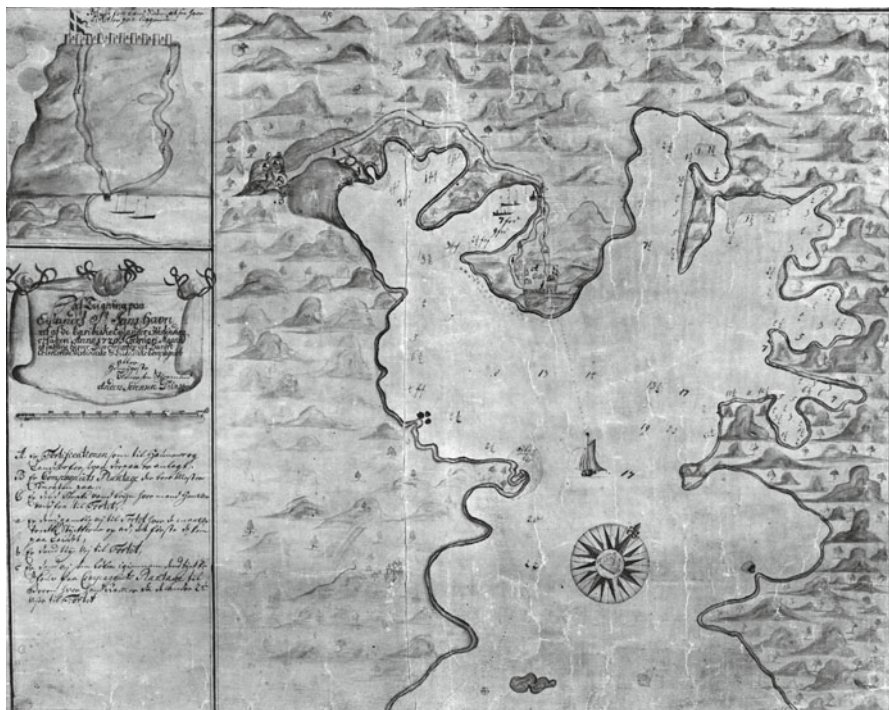
Very early in the morning on the 23rd of November 1733, a group of African Caribbean slaves entered the fort, called Fortsberg, overlooking the small settlement of Coral Bay on the Danish West Indian Island of St. John (Fig. 15.1). They came with firewood from the Company's plantation, but they also brought weapons and quickly killed the soldiers, thus gaining control over the fort. This action was the beginning of a long revolt that lasted until June 1734 and is one of the longest-lasting revolts in the history of the Caribbean (Schuler 1970; Genovese 1979; Gaspar 1985; Petersen 1988: 20–24; Craton 1997). All sources, both contemporary and later, have defined the revolt as an “Amina” revolt, meaning that it was members of a particular African ethnic group (or “nation”, as contemporaries called it) who participated in the uprising. Thus, the incident has been one of the very few cases, and the most prominent one, in the history of the Danish West Indies where the meaning and importance of the ethnic origin of the African Caribbean population in the colony have been considered.

A focus on the ethnic aspects of the St. John revolt fits into a large research field. In the past two decades, research on the American slave societies has focused on how and whether enslaved Africans in the Americas used their particular ethnic origin as foundations for the recreation of their lives in the new traumatic setting of the slave societies. Many studies have scrutinised how and whether differences in ethnic origin influenced African-American identities and the lived culture in the American societies (Gomez 1998; Greene 2000; Lohse 2002; Lovejoy 2003; Sweet 2003; Hall 2005; Law 2005).

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The chapter is based on parts of my Ph.D. thesis from Lund University (Sebro 2010:128–134).

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**Fig. 15.1** 1720 map of Coral Bay in St. John drawn by Anders Sørensen Dunsten showing the fortification of Fortsberg, with men ascending the steep road towards the top, and a nearby plantation. (Courtesy of Royal Library, Copenhagen)

Considering these questions in the context of the Danish West Indies, I have concluded that African Caribbeans, both of the first and second generations, actively related to the so-called nations referring to specific areas and societies and cultural traditions in Africa and that they formed social networks based on origin and transferred lived culture from Africa to the Caribbean (Sebro 2010). Thus, the Danish West Indies, like most other American slave colonies, must be seen not just as places of a new world, where a creolised cultural mix and a pan-African identity dominated, but where ideas of specific African origins were an important part of how African Caribbeans saw themselves.

This does not mean, however, that the connection to specific places and cultures in Africa was not influenced by the new situations in the slave societies. Africa was, in fact, not directly moved across the Atlantic Ocean with the slave ships. But research discussions tend to draw very firm lines against each other: An African-centric position focusing on continuity from Africa stands quite sharp against a school focusing on creolisation and change following the forced migration and mixing of people (Mintz and Price 1992; Olwig 1995; Lovejoy 1997; Sebro 2010:33–37). The Amina revolt in St. John in 1733 is an excellent case to show how references to Africa and creolised subjectivity were played out and played together, and that neither the concept of continuity nor change in itself manages to grasp the nuanced and multifaceted reality of an African-Caribbean slave life.



## The Scene: The Danish West Indies

The revolt took place on the small island of St. John, one of three islands constituting the Danish colony in the Caribbean Sea—a colony that until 1755 was under the rule of the Danish West Indian and Guinea Company and then was taken over by the Danish Crown. In 1733, the main island was St. Thomas, where sugar and cotton were cultivated, and where the town of Charlotte Amalie functioned as the capital. St. Thomas was colonised in 1671; St. John was added in 1718 and was thus in 1733 still in a state of colonisation, where the forest continuously gave way for new sugar plantations, and where few Europeans wanted to stay permanently, which meant that many plantations were directed by African-Caribbean overseers (Petersen 1988:13). In 1733, Denmark had furthermore purchased the island of St. Croix from France. St. Croix was relatively flat, very suited for sugar cultivation, and quickly took over the part of the main island in the colony. Enslaved Africans coming from a vast part of West Africa stretching from Senegambia to the Congo area (and not just the area of the Danish settlements on the Gold Coast) performed the agricultural work. In 1733, they constituted approximately 75–90% of the colony's inhabitants (based on the overall population development of the colony; Hall 1992:5), and the colony was thus a full-fledged slave society that generated wealth for both planters and company shareholders (Hall 1992:1–33; Dookhan 1994:37–49; Sebro 2010:89–93).

The Danish West Indian colony was both geographically and mentally very far from the European metropole; apart from the sugar-generated wealth and the occasional enslaved African Caribbean imported to Copenhagen to serve as a status attire to his or her master's household, there was in the 1730s not much focus on the colony in Denmark and Norway—the two monarchies under the same king (Sebro 2005:94–96). Criticism of slavery did not arise until the last half of the century, leading to the ban of the transatlantic slave trade in 1803 and abolishment of slavery in 1848—in fact, following a relatively nonviolent revolt on St. Croix. The then-economically non-profitable colony was sold to the United States in 1917 (Hall 1992:34–69, 191–227).

## The Revolt

The revolt lasted from November 1733 until June 1734; as mentioned earlier, it started with the successful attack on the fort. The group of rebels signalled to other groups posted around the island and killed the Europeans, who did not manage to flee by boat to the main island of St. Thomas or to a fortified plantation situated on an outer point of the island belonging to the planter Pieter Duurloo. They also killed some nonparticipating African Caribbeans. From Duurloo's plantation, a small group of Europeans and with them some enslaved African Caribbeans stayed to fight the rebels while in continuous contact with the administration in St. Thomas (Westergaard 1917:168; Bro-Jørgensen 1966:230; Petersen 1988:23). The administration quickly sent regiments of Danish soldiers and free African Caribbeans to St. John to counter

the rebels, who fought a guerrilla-style war. Although some rebels were captured from time to time, they were successful in keeping their dominion over the island. It took a group of French soldiers, arriving in May 1734, to end the revolt—which was declared officially over in June. The French (and before them a less successful English regiment of soldiers) came to the aid of the Danes desperate for help. It was in the interest of all European nations in the area to fight any slave uprising, in order to prevent such revolts from inspiring others. But as Arnold R. Highfield and Aimery P. Caron have pointed out, reasons to help might also be found in European politics: A stake in Baltic Sea trade and interests in the Polish war of succession might very well have been incentives behind the French offer to help the Danes (Caron and Highfield 1981:17). The revolt was one of the longest revolts in the Caribbean, and for a long time it was one of the most successful ones since the Europeans *de facto* had lost control of the island for about half a year (VGK 99; VGK 516; VGK 517; Westergaard 1917:167–178; Caron and Highfield 1981; Pannet et al. 1984; Petersen 1988; Greene 1994; Kea 1996; Oldendorp 2000:596–603).

In most descriptions from the eighteenth century and in modern historical literature, the revolt is defined as an “Amina” revolt (Caron and Highfield 1981:8; Petersen 1988:40; Greene 1994:48; Oldendorp 2000:596). It is therefore interesting to ask whether the revolt is a sign that ethnic networks were of great importance in the African Caribbean community in the Danish West Indies. Connected to this question is the issue of when (and based on what information) the revolt was defined as “Amina”, and thus also a discussion about the actual meaning of that term.

The source material describing the revolt is rich. There is voluminous correspondence between the administration in St. Thomas, mainly the governor, Philip Gardelin, and the leaders of the different groups who went to St. John to fight the rebels. In order to investigate why the revolt was assigned to the “Amina” group—whether the idea came from the revolting Africans or from the Europeans looking at the revolt from outside—one must look at how the description of the rebels in this correspondence evolved as the Danes got more and more information about the rebels.

## **An Amina Revolt**

In its initial stage, the uprising was simply described as a “slave revolt” seen, to some degree, as connected with a few specific plantations. The rebels are defined as “negros”, “heathens” and “slaves” (VGK 99; VGK 516; VGK 517). But on December 26th, approximately a month after the outbreak of the revolt, the Sergeant Commander Ottingen, leading the company of soldiers who were in St. John, reports that some of his men had been “hunting” rebels and that they had brought “four Amina women” back with them, who were to be sent to St. Thomas for interrogation, torture and punishment (VGK 517). This is the first time the rebels are defined in ethnic terms, and from this point they are continuously described as “Mina”, “Amina” and “Mine Negroes”.

It is reasonable to see a connection between the direct contact between the Danes and the participants in the rebellion and the more precise definition of who the rebels were. This is an example of how the European description of the African Caribbeans in ethnic categories followed a closer contact. The same pattern can be seen in how the missionaries from the Moravian mission started to realise that Africans were not just Africans but saw themselves as a very diverse group (Sebro 2010:51–67).

The possibility of the revolt having been led by a specific ethnic group is in line with a general tendency regarding slave rebellions in the greater Caribbean area. The historians Michael Craton and Monica Schuler have pointed out that early Caribbean revolts—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—were normally conducted by Africans who in most cases had recently arrived in the Caribbean and that these Africans usually belonged to one particular ethnic group. On the contrary, revolts in the nineteenth century had a tendency to be conducted by Creoles born in the colonies (Schuler 1970:379; Craton 1997:238). That the St. John revolt was conducted by a group of Africans belonging to a specific ethnic group, the *Aminas*, is thus supported both by contemporary sources and by later descriptions and also fits the general picture of the history of slave rebellions (Caron and Highfield 1981:8; Petersen 1988:40, 57; Greene 1994:48; Oldendorp 2000: 596). But the direct connection to Africa is not quite as easy to grasp. In order to understand who these “*Aminas*” were, it is relevant to look at the actual meaning of the term.

## The Nation of *Amina*

Apart from being central in the narrative of the 1733 revolt, the term “*Amina*” can be found in two important sources describing African ethnic groups in the Danish West Indies: two lists of African nations written by mission inspectors from the Moravian church, Nathanael Seidel in 1753 and Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp in 1768–1769. Oldendorp wrote an extensive history of the mission and of the colony and its people, in which he listed all African nations he encountered in the colony and described aspects of their culture. Seidel wrote less extensively but also described nations and cultures (UA R15Ba18 1,2; Oldendorp 2000, 2002). In both, *Amina* is described as a great and important African nation belonging on the Gold Coast.

It is, therefore, strange that the term “*Amina*” was not used in contemporary Africa as a name for an ethnic group or a state. Yet a similar term can be found in many places in the Americas, in Portuguese, Spanish and French colonies, where the term “*Mina*” is used to describe people deriving from the area in the Bight of Benin, which in the eighteenth century was called the Slave Coast.

Sometimes, especially in Brazil, the term “*Mina*” even refers to anyone from the West African coast from Senegambia to Nigeria (as opposed to people from West Central Africa, the Congo and Angola areas) (Hall 2003:65, 2005:36; Sweet 2003:16). The term might have had its background as either referring to a mine and

thus indicating how enslaved people from the Mina area worked in mining in Africa and/or in the Americas, or referring to the Portuguese/Dutch fort of Elmina in the Gold Coast, from where a vast number of enslaved Africans were shipped to the Americas (Hall 2003:68).

In the Danish West Indies, however, the term “Amina” had a different meaning, and it was connected specifically to the Gold Coast. Governor Philip Gardelin described the rebels in his correspondence regarding the revolt as “the Negroes of the here so called Mina, but actually of the Aquambo nation” (VGK 99: 1 Jan. 1734). Thus, he seemed to have known for a fact that the word referred to the great Gold Coast nation of Akwamu, a kingdom, which suffered a great defeat when a collaboration of former vassal states fought it in 1730 (Nørregaard 1968:125; Greene 1994:56; Kea 1996:168).

The two historians Jan Erik Petersen (1988) and Sandra E. Greene (1994) have convincingly argued that there was probably a great market in enslaved people from the Akwamu kingdom following the war and the defeat. They both mean that there reasonably must have been a relatively high concentration of enslaved Africans from this particular kingdom entering the slave societies of the Americas at this point. The despair of these defeated warriors, who had lost their status and had not yet settled in the Danish West Indian context, might be a reason behind the revolt on St. John.

## A Creolised Category

But why did people in the Danish West Indies in 1733 not use the word “Akwamu” instead of “Amina” if the connection seemed so obvious? A thorough investigation of all correspondence related to the revolt written while it happened—in order to get an idea of how the term evolved—has procured no answer (VGK 99, 516, 517). There is no direct explanation of why they used one term for something they knew was called something else. But a look at the way the “Aminas” are defined elsewhere in eighteenth-century sources can help to form some theories about the meaning of the term.

The Moravian mission historian Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, who interviewed Africans in the Danish West Indies in the late 1760s, wrote that the Amina belonged to a great state and nation from the Gold Coast. The descriptions of them are detailed, and there is no doubt that Amina seems to have been a well-defined category. But a few other “nations” are mentioned as being subordinate categories to Amina, namely, the Quahu and the Accra. The Accra nation belongs to Amina but speaks another language, which could point toward an understanding of Amina as a political power, which had the Accra state as a vassal or at least as a payer of tribute (Oldendorp 2000:383–396). This picture fits the situation before the fall of Akwamu (Greene 1994:51). Even though Oldendorp did his research in the late 1760s, it is well worth remembering that many of his informants were born several decades before and that the picture they presented for Oldendorp of the situation in Africa was not up to date. “Amina” might then be a form of creolised

category functioning as a common designation for people who linguistically, ethnically, or culturally were related but who did not necessarily derive from the same political units, that is, the Akwamu state.

It might be even more probable that the term and different ethnic subcategories evolved in the Danish West Indies, not in Africa. It somehow was created as a designation for people of varied background from the Akan-speaking part of the Gold Coast, who in the slave society (where they had lost the connection with their original social setting) had enough in common that it made sense to think of themselves in common terms (Kea 1996:160; Law 2005:257; Petersen 1988:57). The term “Popo”, referring to the Gbe-speaking area of the Bight of Benin, had a similar story in the Danish West Indian context, and it is very probable that this could also be the case with “Amina” (Sebro 2010:72–79).

This hypothesis can be supported by an analysis of one of the lists containing information about the ethnic origin of the African Caribbean members of the Moravian congregation. During his visit in 1753, the earlier-mentioned inspector Nathanael Seidel created a list of the communicants—the members who were allowed to take communion—which was the final step in a conversion process. The list contains, apart from the name of the persons who had reached the attractive status of communicants, information about their birthplace, their African nation and a short description of the personality of each individual. Seidel specifically mentions that the list is based on interviews conducted with each individual on Sundays after church; the list is thus one of the most convincing sources in this field since it seems plausible that the information about ethnicity is derived from the African Caribbeans themselves (UA R15Ba18 no. 1,1 and 1,2; Sebro 2010:67–68). In Seidel’s list, only 3 of the 36 people relating to the Gold Coast call themselves “Fanti”—the rest are defined as “Amina”. Nobody is designated in common Gold Coast terms such as “Accra”, “Akkim”, “Akripong” and “Okwa”, all of which can be found in Oldendorp’s similar list from the late 1760s (Oldendorp 2000:392, 395–6, 399). Similar patterns can be seen in two different church registers (*Moravian Archives*, Catalogues etc. no. 1 and no. 2).

It is noteworthy that the great variation in nations from the Gold Coast, as seen in Oldendorp’s writings, is not to be found in Seidel’s list. After all, they both wrote about the origin of the Africans based on conversations with representatives of the different groups. But a plausible explanation might be that the concept of “Amina” as a more general category incorporating other ethnic designations, based on cultural and political structures stretching back to Africa, changed over time.

The anthropologist Pauline H. Pope investigated the baptismal records from the Moravian mission from a long period from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. I have consulted the same records from the first baptism in 1736 until 1769, in which a few other Gold Coast nations than Amina—Accra and Akkim—are mentioned in the 1760s (EWI no. 3c). But Pope has found a large variation in the ethnic categories referring to the Gold Coast area (Pope 1970:22–25). This might point toward the conclusion that an identification as Amina was more predominant in the early eighteenth century than later. The ethnic designation “Popo” follows the opposite pattern and is more predominant in the late eighteenth

century, while the subcategories to it disappear (Sebro 2010:72–79). Thus, it seems that the level of identification among people from the Gold Coast moves from a generalised to a more particularised conceptualisation, while the development is opposite regarding people from the Bight of Benin.

This is a very different and interesting conclusion seen from the perspective of the theory of creolisation. Theoretically, one should think that more narrow and particular ethnic categories referring to Africa belonged in an early period of an American slave society and that differences slowly became less outspoken and disappeared as new Creole-born generations grew up and the collective memory of Africa was challenged by the emergence of more and more creolised situations and structures in society. But this situation seems to have been different.

A plausible explanation can be that the enslaved population in the Danish West Indies in the beginning of the eighteenth century contained relatively few people from the Gold Coast area. A survey of people's ethnic origin based on a list of the communicants of the Moravian church made by Nathanael Seidel in 1753 indicates that at this time there were more people from the Bight of Benin and from West Central Africa (Sebro 2010:89–93). This situation could explain why the networks based on more distant ethnic relationships could have existed, while the development later in the eighteenth century, when the group of people from the Gold Coast grew, made it easier for people to form networks on the basis of more narrow categories.

It is important to note that this is an attempt to suggest a tendency, and not a firm conclusion. But it is a tendency, which indicates that the ways of referring to Africa in American context did not necessarily change in a straight, unbroken movement from narrow, particular, and directly copying African structures towards broader, generalised categories without relations to specific places in Africa.

This is an essential aspect of creolisation. Creolised forms of culture and identity did not just proceed in a straight line from one point to another; for Africans who had to adapt to a new world, and to new kinds of people in new communities and societies in the Americas, change was varied and probably also individual, and it could lead in different directions and happen on different levels.

However, change was inevitable. Even though it is difficult to define precisely the origin and development of the concept of "Amina", it is central to notice that it was a creolised concept, that is, a concept developed on the basis of the particular cultural encounter situation in the Danish West Indian colony. It was a concept that specifically referred to Africa, when used both by Europeans and by Africans. But a person in Africa who had never been in the Americas would not have understood this denomination. It is an example of the changeability of the world. As the historian John K. Middleton has pointed out, changes were not unnatural in an African context, where group formations had never reached a fixed point (Middleton 1997:477). But changes naturally took new directions in the Americas and were influenced by slavery and colonialism. The use of the term "Amina" in the Danish West Indies underlines this. Even though Africans in the Caribbean described themselves in terms referring to Africa, it was not necessarily equal to the way they would have expressed their relations had they still been in Africa. But such "African"

categories had an important function as a frame for Africans' opportunities to be able to express a connection to a particular place in Africa—and thus avoid being categorised as just an African. A broad African category with no subdivisions would simply not have made sense among people of African descent in an eighteenth-century American slave society.

## The Rebels

Based on the previous analysis, one must expect that the rebels had an identity referring to a shared origin in Africa but that they in fact might have come from a broader background, presumably in the Akan-speaking area of Africa: the Gold Coast. We do not know if the rebels called themselves “Amina” or if such association was made by Governor Gardelin and the other Europeans (among others, the French captain Longueville, who commanded the French soldiers fighting against the rebels). But since these Europeans did not start using the term until they had captured and interrogated rebels, and since the informants speaking to Oldendorp and Seidel seem to have used the term themselves, much points towards the conclusion that “Amina” was a self-defining term. But despite Gardelin's comment, it is, on the other hand, not certain that all of the rebels were, in fact, originally from the Akwamu state.

There are signs that not all the rebels were “Aminas”. Jan Erik Petersen argues on the basis of his thorough reading of all sources that it was only one group of the rebels who were described as “Amina” and that the other half were not described in ethnic terms. Therefore, he thinks that it is a mistake to see the revolt as purely ethnically based. He rather sees it as an example of several groups getting together around a common goal even though they started with slightly different interests. Petersen even thinks that the leaders of the revolt must have had different ethnic origins and therefore originally were in opposition to each other but that the revolt erased their disagreements. It still seems reasonable, though, to see the revolt as dominated so much by a certain group that the rebels were equalled to “Amina” (Petersen 1988:57; Greene 1994: 49, 58).

But one thing is sure: Not all enslaved African Caribbeans in St. John participated in the rebellion. Petersen believes that the difference must have been between African-born and Creole-born and thinks, along the line of the theories of Schuler (1970), that the participants were new arrivals not yet socialised in the Caribbean (Caron and Highfield 1981:9; Kea 1996:188). In the light of newer research in identity formation and differences between Creoles and African-born, Petersen's opinion that Creoles generally looked down at African-born people is not plausible. But there is no doubt at all that the Europeans preferred Creole African Caribbeans to participate in the fighting of the rebellion. A company of “free Negroes” under the leader, a free African Caribbean, Mingo Tamarind, was several times in St. John to hunt down the rebels. Still, at least one of the rebels, “Jachy”, is described as a Creole, so the distinction was not complete (VGK 517, 7 Dec; Petersen 1988:25, 33, 48, 60).

It is, nevertheless, clear that some enslaved African Caribbeans preferred to stick to the European's side and that the rebels saw other African Caribbeans as opponents. Several forms of opposing positions can be behind this. The ethnic aspect has been described thoroughly here. The opposition between Africans and Creoles might have been of importance as well, and naturally it is very probable that some of the enslaved did not believe in a possible success of the rebellion and chose to flee with the Europeans. Many enslaved used the general confusion to seek their own luck by "running maroon"—escaping into the bush and trying to survive and build a new life without participating in the revolt. A list from St. John written during the rebellion in order for the European administration to get an overview of the involved slaves specifies whether the missing slaves were suspected of active opposition or escape. Many of the listed are simply described as "Maroon" (VILA 1.1.29). Thus, to see the rebellion as one-sided and only as Aminas vs. everybody else is not necessarily right. Many different actions and positions were probably present among the African Caribbean population in St. John, which was reflected in the different strategies adopted during the revolt.

## Internal Oppositions in the African Caribbean Population

The ethnic aspect of the revolt and tensions among different African groups can be further deducted from contemporary sources by taking into account a perspective that no one, to my knowledge, has yet noticed. There seems to have been an opposition between the rebels and some individuals described as "Loango", that is, people from West Central Africa, north of the Congo area. In a letter written on 18 December 1733, Captain van Beverhoudt, who was in St. John, wrote to Governor Gardelin, "The rebels have put up a gallows in the Coral Bay in order to hang the Lowango-Negroes. This has already been executed". A boy called January, who had been wounded by the rebels and afterward taken captive by the Europeans and interrogated by both the French captain Longueville and the authorities in St. Thomas, also talked about an opposition between the rebels and Loangos. He specifically mentioned that the rebels had killed two Loangos; one of the killings was even part of a religious rite or by help of sorcery (in the French text called *grisgris*, in the Danish *gregriet*) (VGK 99: 23 July and 9 May, 1734; VGK 517: 8 May, 1734).

Thus, the opponents of the rebels were not just the Europeans, but also Loangos from West Central Africa. Oldendorp supports this picture. His interviews with a number of African Caribbeans, conducted about 35 years after the revolt, allow him to conclude that one of the reasons why the revolt broke out was the emergence of a conflict between some slaves on the Company's plantation in St. John. The leading bomba (head slave), who was Loango, is said to have told the subordinate bomba, who was Amina, to whip a third slave (Oldendorp 2000:597). The subordinate bomba refused, and this was the beginning of the revolt, which thus intermixed the slave society's hierarchy of power with opposition among ethnic groups referring to Africa. If a description such as Oldendorp's, based on 35-year-old memories, had been the



only source touching upon a theme, it would have been problematic to give too much importance to it. But as the oppositional position between Aminas and Loangos also is present in contemporary sources, there is a good reason to give credibility to it.

The ethnically defined opposition between African Caribbeans is one of the most interesting aspects of the revolt. This is a very rare opportunity to see how the internal dynamic of a slave society worked. And it points toward the crucial conclusion that ideas about group belonging were not just defined by the dichotomy black–white—not even African-born–Creole-born was the only important opposition within the African-Caribbean population. In my opinion, the fact that another group defined in terms referring to a specific African origin is presented as oppositional to the rebels underlines the ethnic element of the revolt even more than the mere fact that the rebels were said to be “Aminas”.

Generally, a focus on ethnic conflicts in the Americas based on differences in African ethnic origin has centred on ideas that conflicts were copied directly from Africa to the new setting. Oldendorp’s interviews reveal that Africans in the Danish West Indies defined friends and enemies on the basis of an African context (at least when asked by Oldendorp). The historian Sandra E. Greene has argued that conflicts involving the Akwamu in Africa were defining for choosing sides in the St. John revolt, based on the assumption that the Amina were all Akwamu, and thus arguing that their position on the Gold Coast as the dominating power until 1730, known for brutal warfare, must have made people from surrounding states fear the Akwamu (Oldendorp 2000:376, 429; Greene 1994:58; Rediker 2007:270).

The theme of the Loangos, however, adds a new important perspective to this thesis. If the opposition was between a group originating from the Gold Coast and one originating in West Central Africa, the source of the conflict could hardly derive from Africa. People from two areas so far apart are very unlikely to have had any contact in Africa. It is therefore certain that the animosity must have developed within the frames of the Danish West Indian slave society, very likely specifically in the St. John plantation community. Thus, the story about the ethnic aspect of the revolt connects the African and the Creole. It is the story about the survival of identifications with groups defined as deriving from Africa, but at the same time a story about how such groups in their content and in the meaning became creolised—how they adapted to the American slave society.

The disagreement between a Loango and an Amina, as recounted by Oldendorp, indicates that there might have been a power struggle between the two groups in the small St. John community and that the position of the most prominent representatives of the groups, the two bombas, in relation to the European power holders might have influenced which strategies both individuals and groups (defined in terms of African ethnic origin) chose in order to strengthen their own position in the community. If the Loangos were seen as supporters of the European regime, it is not surprising that they became opponents of Aminas, who decided to revolt. Such a possible perspective fits well with the fact that the goal of the rebels, as described by both contemporaries and historians, was the proclamation of an independent Amina state with both European and African subjects (VGK 99: 5 Jan, 1734; Petersen 1988:24, 42, 62).

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that an important foundation of the 1733–1734 St. John slave rebellion was a group identity based on the ideas about a common origin in a specific geocultural area in Africa. This perspective is supported by the contemporary definitions of the revolt as an “Amina” revolt targeting both the European planters and administration and a group of African Caribbeans likewise defined in ethnic terms: the Loangos. The story about the slave revolt is important because it supports the conclusion that ethnic identities were not just of symbolic value for Africans in the Americas; they were practical tools that meant something for the way they lived their lives and for the choices they made as part of these lives.

The revolt is traditionally seen as a unique situation in Danish West Indian history and the only occurrence where ethnic group identity played a role, because of the unique situation where the fall of the Akwamu kingdom had created an influx of a large group of slaves with warrior background on the international slave markets. I rather believe that the revolt should be seen as an occurrence supporting the general picture of how Africans in the Danish West Indies used their sense of belonging to African-defined ethnic groups as foundations for how they conducted their colonial lives in praxis, formed networks and used common cultural knowledge. An example of this is the collective suicide conducted by the last standing rebels shortly before they were reached by the French troops. It took place on the easternmost part of the island, close to the water, and can thus be seen as being founded in ideas about the return to the soil and the kin in Africa (Gomez 1998:114; Sebro 2010:169).

But most of all, the story about the revolt is a valuable case from which it becomes clear that even though ideas about Africa, praxis derived from Africa, and group formations defined as deriving from Africa played important roles, they were all to a greater or lesser extent also influenced by the transition to the Americas—they were all creolised. Creolisation meant simultaneous continuity and change and involved redefinition of oneself and cultural practices in the context of American slave society. This redefinition was often based on the meanings and references derived from Africa. Thus, the processes following the Middle Passage cannot be characterized as either continuity or change, but rather as a complex mixture of both.

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# Chapter 16

## Networked Interaction: Archaeological Exploration of Walled and Terraced House Compounds in the Danish Colonial Port Town of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas

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### Introduction

Though initially slow to develop as a trading centre, by the late eighteenth century, the Danish free port at Charlotte Amalie on the island of St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies rapidly expanded as an entrepôt for local and global trade. The port of Charlotte Amalie grew from an initial occupation at Fort Christian to a crowded row of long waterfront warehouses, multi-storey residences in the valleys and terraced house compounds on the steep surrounding hillsides (Westergaard 1917:31; Zabriskie 1918; Gjessing and Maclean 1987; Dookhan 1994:37; Highfield 1997). This port town grew dramatically after the sacking of St. Eustatius by the British in 1781 (Larsen 1954; Tyson 1986, 1991; Gøbel 1990; Hurst 1996; Sonesson 2004). The merchants of Charlotte Amalie took advantage of Denmark's free port environment and participated in trading networks that linked island to island, and the Caribbean to global centres of commerce and trade in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Far East (Gøbel 1997; Williamson 2009; Williamson and Armstrong 2009; Armstrong 2011; Armstrong and Williamson 2011). The island's central location and its neutrality brought continuous trade at times when other island colonies were encumbered by recurrent European conflicts or the restrictive covenants of mercantilism. The open infrastructure of Danish trade in this port town setting is reflected in diversity of materials recovered and the wide range of sources of goods acquired and used.

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This record also reflects specific signatures of Danish colonial influence and trade, through the presence of material goods that derive from Denmark and Northern Europe as well as from Denmark's trading partners from around the world, including the Far East.

The Caribbean was already dotted with Spanish, English, French and Dutch colonial outposts when Denmark began its initial foray into the region in the mid-seventeenth century. Danish historians like Svend Green-Pedersen (1971) and Erik Gøbel (1990) viewed the slave trade from newly acquired West African outposts in Guinea as the *raison d'être* for establishing the Danish West Indies not only as a place to utilise slave labour on their own colonial indigo, cotton and sugar plantations but also as a centre for the transshipment of African slaves to the more numerous and expansive plantations in the British, French and Spanish Caribbean colonies. However, a competitive Caribbean market crowded with diverse colonial interests meant that Denmark may have been more motivated by nationalistic drive to equal their European counterparts rather than by a real capitalist need to seize new territory and expand in new markets (Keller 1903).

Denmark initially settled in 1671 on the smaller fringe port of St. Thomas in the constellation of islands dubbed by Columbus during his second visit to the Caribbean as "Las Virgens" (Westergaard 1917). Its location between Spanish stronghold Puerto Rico to the west and the British outpost of Tortola to the east marked a no-man's land between two rival European nations. Through the early seventeenth century, this competition prevented any long-term occupation, but ultimately left the Virgin Islands open for possible Danish colonial settlements. Though Denmark had a strong history of maritime trade and warfare, the contemporary nation lacked the resources to provide a constant naval presence in the Caribbean that would protect the burgeoning colony from pirates and hostile nations. This required a different colonial plan than building massive forts and patrolling naval forces for the long-term survival of St. Thomas. Like other European colonies in the Caribbean that lacked military might (the Netherlands and Sweden; see Schnakenbourg, this volume), the Danes had to establish niche markets that could lure merchants, traders and settlers from other Caribbean islands and those European nations lacking their own colonies (primarily German and the Mediterranean countries) to their island through a free port status and maintain neutrality in the various European conflicts that spread to their Caribbean colonies (Sonesson 2004).

This study examines the complexity of residential house compounds of the Magens House and the Bankhus on Government Hill overlooking the warehouses of Charlotte Amalie (Fig. 16.1). House compounds on the hill include residential structures and associated outbuildings constructed within a complex matrix of walls, gates, stairs and levelled earthen terraces, which restructured the steep hillside into usable spaces. These physical features reflect socioeconomic separations and connections within local society. The divisions and connections in physical spaces are mirrored by the residential structures and the material culture deposited in the soils of each terrace. Historical documents, such as census records which list each resident by name, relationship and occupation, allow us to tie these spaces and the material record to the individuals and families who occupied each space, and who



**Fig. 16.1** Waterfront wharfs with Government Hill on *right*, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Danish West Indies (Post Card from Lightborn’s West Indian Series, personal collection)

based on relationships and social affiliation either moved between the terraces and through the gates or did not (Census, St. Thomas, 1828–1911). Each terrace, gate and wall served to either socially tie together or divide.

The formal entryways to homes, government buildings and churches on St. Thomas are called “welcoming arms” (Fig. 16.2). Their positive connotation as symbols of welcome to visitors is the basis for their adoption as the moniker of the St. Thomas’s Historical Society. However, gates, steps, doorways, walls and even “welcoming arms” project differential access depending on who you were within the island’s economically and socially stratified community.

By the late eighteenth century, St. Thomas’s harbour had become a major trading centre facilitated by Danish neutrality, free port status and a *laissez-faire* approach to trade (Ragster 1986; Woods et al. 1992; Sonesson 2004). The hillside of Government Hill was optimistically laid out as a flat grid by Peter Oxholm in the 1769s based more on assumptions of civil order and flat topography of Copenhagen, Denmark, than on the reality of the steep hillsides of St. Thomas, Danish West Indies (Gjessing and Maclean 1987). Rather than change their plans based on the topography, steep “step” streets were constructed on the hillside. Hence, immediately west of the Magens House, the street formally named “Store Taarne Gade” is actually a series of steep steps that became known as “99 Steps”. Each step is short and long so that donkeys could be guided along it. Government Hill was a preferred location for relatively wealthy merchants because of its proximity to warehouses and government buildings (Taylor 1888; Gjessing and Maclean 1987). Ober (1908:371) noted that “the best structures in Charlotte Amalia...are on Government Hill, while the shops, etc., are on the main street, which runs between the hills and the harbour”. Houses on the steep hillside also had a view of the harbour and picked up the cooling trade winds. Yards also served as important extensions of the home with many houses having both ornamental and functional or provision gardens.

Homes in Charlotte Amalie were typically not larger than two stories, with the upper storey constructed of wood and the lower storey serving as the foundation of brick and stone (Taylor 1888). The main living room and bedrooms were located on the upper floor instead of the bottom floor like in Europe, again to take advan-



**Fig. 16.2** “Welcoming arms” entry ways at the Magens House site (*top*, star on map) and Bankhus (*bottom*, triangle on map), located on the 1893 Goad Insurance Map



tage of better air circulation and the prevailing trade winds. The kitchen with its brick hearth and the pantry would be on the bottom floor or in a separate building. Cast iron was more commonly used for ornamentation and porch supports. Since brick had to be imported as ships ballast and thus was expensive, it was used primarily for the wealthy for decoration. Rubble masonry construction was the most common method with lime plaster coating for durability and decoration. Many of the interiors were furnished with mahogany and other durable tropical timber (Taylor 1888).

In contrast to the predominance of agricultural production based on slave labour, in the port town environment the majority of residents were free. By 1803 even the majority of persons of African descent on St. Thomas were free (Green-Pedersen 1971; Harrigan and Varlack 1977; Knight and Prime 1999). By 1835, the free-coloured population had grown to over 5,204 living in St. Thomas (Boyer 1983). Neville Hall states that “differences in the occupational and ownership structure of slave society in town and country were reflected strongly in the material conditions of life of the slaves” (1992: 93). The port town environment, with its constant movement of people and goods, constituted a haven to those who were escaping from slavery. It also offered skill-based jobs that provided a means of individuals buying or simply asserting their freedom. If one’s freedom was challenged, the port town maritime setting provided a means to transport oneself away by signing aboard departing vessels (Hall 1985, 1992, 1997a, b).

The housing compounds on Government Hill include residential structures and associated outbuildings constructed within a complex matrix of walls, gates, stairs and levelled earthen terraces. This setting of urban house compounds is ideal for comparisons to seventeenth-century port town contexts in Port Royal, Jamaica (Hamilton 2006), and the British colonial port town of Bridgetown, Barbados (Welch 2003). Archaeological studies of housing in Charleston, South Carolina, provide a more parallel temporal context and provide useful comparisons despite the fact that they are from a North American setting (Zierden and Calhoun 1986; Herman 1999). Urban sites in Charleston and St. Thomas were designed to maximise interactive living and work spaces and included primary residents, outbuildings and other structures associated with businesses and other activities (Zierden 1999). However, the walled terraces of St. Thomas present far greater spatial resolution related to differential use of space across the property than the flat sheet middens in Charleston sites (Zierden 1999; Armstrong and Williamson 2011). The Magens and Bankhus contexts thus provide greater spatial separation and definition of materials used by the residents of the main house, their servants, and mid-level managerial families that rented residential housing within the walled housing compounds of Government Hill. Moreover, the distinct terraces are replete with spatially segregated evidence of a cottage industry at the Magens House compound involving the production of bone buttons, along with an array of domestic material associated with daily life (D. Armstrong et al. 2009; Williamson and Armstrong 2009, 2011; Armstrong and Williamson 2011).

An unusual aspect of Danish colonial settlement is the diversity of nationalities, backgrounds and religions represented in the populace. Denmark was interested in



**Fig. 16.3** Magens House (a) and Bankhus (b) parcels outlined on Hingleberg Insurance Map (1837) and the Goad Fire Insurance Map (1893). Small structures are shown on the early map, and the building shown in 1893 has essentially the same layout as the structures found today on the property

having a trading centre and foothold in the Caribbean region, but Danish citizens were not particularly interested in moving to the West Indies. In an effort to attract sufficient population to sustain, the colony encouraged settlers from a wide range of nationalities, and the island, along with St. John and St. Croix, was managed with a degree of religious tolerance, freedom from taxes, enticing land grants and agricultural aid. While the other two major islands of the Danish West Indies were more focused on agrarian pursuits of sugar and provisions, and fell more closely within the region's sugar-based economy, the free port of St. Thomas's primary economic activity was trade. The result was a virtual polyglot of nationalities including settlers from throughout the Caribbean and Europe, included Dutch, English, French and Jewish as planters, traders, merchants, sailors and craftsmen (Moolenaar 2005). Among those who came in the late eighteenth century were large numbers of Huguenot fugitives from St. Kitts (Keller 1903).

Complex social relations are expressed in the spatial and material record of five house compounds in the Kongens, or Kings, Quarter of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Two sites, the Magens House and the Bankhus, have undergone extensive archaeological exploration (Figs. 16.3 and 16.4). Three other house compounds in the neighbourhood, the Haagensen House (Freiesleben 2001), Crown House and the McDougal, or Treasury, House, are linked to the Magens House not only by spatial proximity but by familial affiliation. These sites overlooked crowded rows of long warehouses on the harbour front. The various gates and passageways separating and connecting the properties



**Fig. 16.4** Nineteenth-century gates at the Magens House with gateways located on 1893 Goad Insurance Map

point to the complexity in West Indian society and provide a snapshot of harbour and town of St. Thomas during a pivotal time in the colony's history.

### Spatial Analysis: Gates that Include and Divide

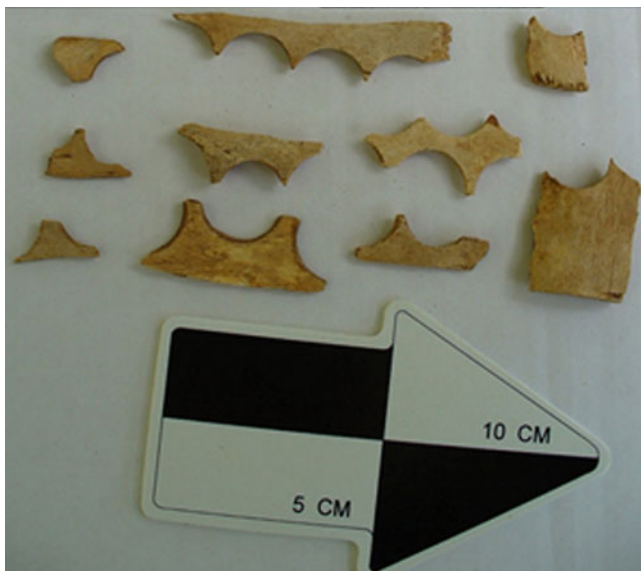
Spatial ethnographer SETHA LOW has written that “the built environment not only reflects socio-cultural concerns, but also shapes behavior” and projects “a living history of cultural meaning and intentions” (LOW 1993:76). Built forms include not only the easily defined scaled differences expressed in main house and servant quarters but also the more subtle structures like walls, gates, pathways and doorways. These latter forms were used to connect and divide habitation spaces and are “...a repository for historical meaning that reproduce social relations” (LOW 1993:76). In examining space and social interactions, this study relates to Bourdieu's structural notion of the *habitus* in that it addresses elements of the “enclosed space of the

house” versus the open space outside (Bourdieu 1977:61, 89). However, rather than a simple binary relationship, we looked at space as divided into several intersecting spheres of dynamic interaction. Moreover, the study incorporates the residue of daily life including the analysis of glass, ceramics and other material remains associated with each spatially distinct feature (D. Armstrong and Williamson 2011).

A combination of detailed census records and contemporary accounts allow us to understand family relationships and social interaction in the nineteenth-century port town environment of Charlotte Amalie. Kinship and social ties were linked to business partnerships among merchants and position in the colonial government. Such relationships are manifested spatially in the landscape as different properties are connected or divided based on the relationships of their owners. By conducting a detailed historical and archaeological study of the organisation of space and material use in a series of urban lots on Kongensgade, we gain a comprehensive view of landscape, social relations, trade and consumption in a Caribbean free port.

Since 2007, students from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University have collaborated with the Kongens Quarter Historical Trust in St. Thomas to conduct archaeological research at the Magens House compound as the initial step in a long-term archaeological project centred on the neighbourhood of Blackbeard’s or Government Hill. In addition to understanding the growth and development of an urban Caribbean neighbourhood, a prominent goal of the archaeological project at the Magens House focuses on incorporating the property into an existing tourist complex that currently consists of Skjtsborg Tower, now known as Blackbeard’s Castle, and several other restored historic homes surrounding the archaeological site (NHLN 1994). Students from six Syracuse University field schools excavated 58 1 × 1 metre units (totalling 279 levels) at the Magens House and 24 units (totalling 192 levels) at the Bankhus. In addition, each of these sites was intensively mapped to plot current buildings, walls, walks, terraces, doorways and past structural features (Figs. 16.3 and 16.4).

Analysis of spatial and material findings from these sites allows us to examine social relations within a Danish port town and to show the complexity of social interaction among households. Moreover, it demonstrates that while the footprint of Danish colonialism was relatively small, those engaged in trade in the port town setting in Charlotte Amalie did so on multiple scales that bridged both local and global spheres (Figs. 16.5 and 16.6). At the local level cottage industries and production systems on-site in the form of bone button manufacturing produced goods such as bone buttons and food provisions for the household and local market and supplied labour and skills needed to facilitate port town trade (Fig. 16.5). On the regional level Danish merchants and their support personnel utilised and coordinated the interisland trade of goods and wares. On the global level the Danish port town, and its residents, engaged in three venues of trade. As a free port they were not limited by mercantile restriction, best known for colonies of the British Empire, and were instead a conduit for goods from around the world. However, they also were purveyors of goods made in Denmark and obtained through specific relations with long-term trading partners in the Far East. The cultural and material link to Denmark is linked to the presence of relatively expensive Royal Copenhagen “fluted



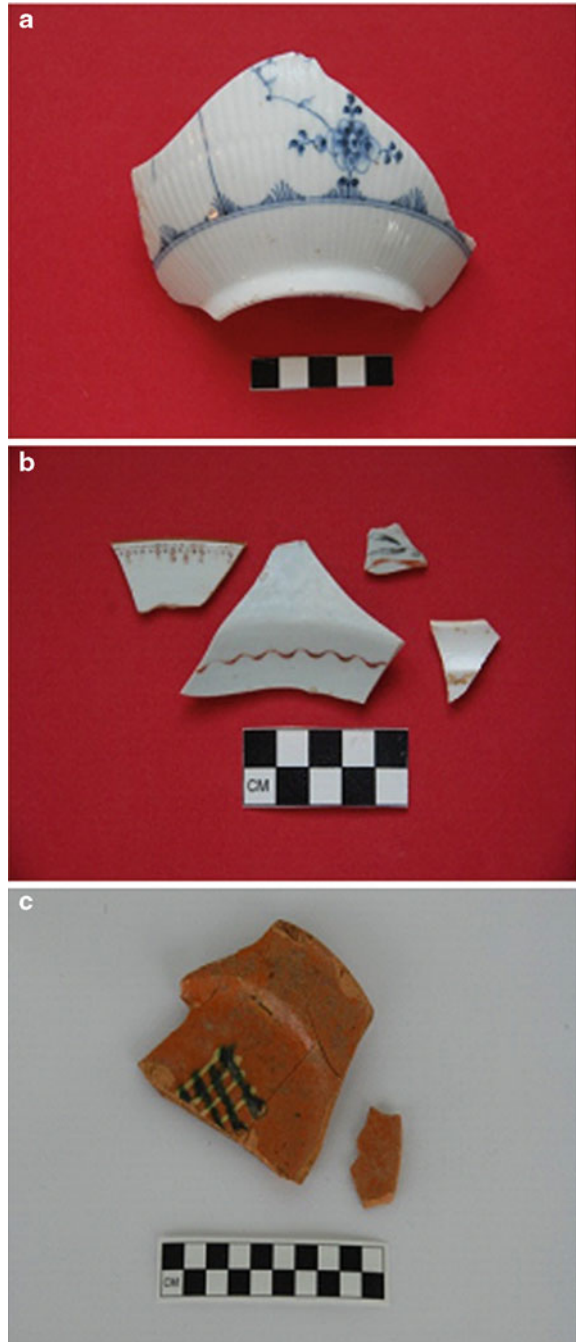
**Fig. 16.5** Bone button blanks from the Magens House

lace” pattern, blue hand-decorated porcelain (produced in Denmark from ca. 1770 to the present) (Fig. 16.6a), which was found in quantities at both sites and in particular abundance at the Bankhus site. The Danish West Indies links to specific trading partners in the Far East are represented by distinctive red, black and gilded overglaze porcelain (Fig. 16.6b). These wares are seldom found elsewhere in the Americas but have been documented at sites on St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John (D. Armstrong, Knight and Hauser 2005) (Fig. 16.6c). Finally, the port town served as a transshipment or redistribution centre. Its warehouses took in goods, repacked them and redirected them to ports around the world.

## The Magens House

To tell the story of social relations at the Magens House site, we must begin, at least briefly, with the neighbouring Crown House (located immediately east of the upslope portion of the Magens property on Dronningensgade (Queen Street)). The Crown House was occupied by the harbourmaster and collector of the Crown’s port tax. In the 1810s it was a residence of Peter von Scholten before he became governor and moved three houses away to the Governor’s House. In the 1820s it was occupied by Harbourmaster Rohde (Dyhr 2001; Dahl and Licht 2004). Rohde acquired the adjacent lot in 1822 to build a house for the children of his deceased

**Fig. 16.6** Ceramics from the garden terrace at the Bankhus. (a) Danish fluted lace porcelain; (b) black, gold and red overglaze porcelain from the Danish East Indian trade. (c) Moravian ware



sister and their widowed father, Joachim Melchior Magens II. Hence, we see social agency, in a familiar form, at the inception of the formation of this community. The younger Magens came from a prominent Creole Danish family and served many temporary governmental posts, but his officious nature resulted in a series of conflicts with the powerful governor von Scholten (Williamson and D. Armstrong 2011). When the Magens House was constructed, a gate was built in the wall connecting the Crown and Magens houses, and after 1825 one of the Magens' daughters moved in with her uncle (Census, St. Thomas 1828–1911; Hingelberg 1837).

There were five gated passages in the outer wall of the Magens House. On the east side of the Magens property, there was one passageway to the Crown House, but no breaks separating the Magens House from the Bankhus. On the west side, three gates opened out into a public road, known as “99 Steps”, a public path that has found its way into tourist brochures and in literary folklore as the model for the fictional exaggeration of the “1000 steps” referred to in Herman Wouk's 1965 novel “Don't Stop the Carnival” (1992). The final gateway was on the south side, on Kongensgade, the main street of Government Hill. Moving into the compound, one found a series of 23 walled terraces that divided the site and an array of additional gates and doorways that would be opened or closed to the residents and visitors based on their social position. Within the walled compound, there were five residential structures.

The main structure at the Magens House was a relatively large urban town house located at the centre of the property. Terraces associated with this house included those with the kitchen, cistern and formal gardens of the main house. Excavating the ruins of the main house, damaged in 1995 by hurricane Marilyn, we found evidence of the house's original floor plan including buried doorways and steps from the 1820s and early 1830s that had been covered by expansion of the house in 1836 by Magens (Hingelberg 1837). Excavated material remains reflect an upper middle-class assemblage ranging from fine porcelain bowls to an array of annular wares and some stemware and regional earthenware, particularly near the kitchen. Though not yet formally sourced, the array of earthenware present suggests a wide range of diversity in clays and forms that is indicative of local earthenware found throughout the region. Many are similar to wares found on Martinique (Kelly et al. 2008; Hauser and Kelly 2009). Also, present are distinctive wares with bright orange glazing and green and red decorations that are associated with trade and production of Moravian missions. The Moravian mission began on St. Thomas in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and by the early nineteenth century had become the dominant religion among persons of African descent on the island (Lenik and Armstrong 2010).

On a separate terrace up the hill is a structure associated with the residence and work of servants on the property. Located behind the central residence towards the back portion of the lot, labourers would have been able to move easily between the house and the kitchen but could also travel to the other adjoining properties or the step street down the hill via two connecting gates on the same terrace. By 1834 residents of this structure were free labourers (mostly from the Lesser Antilles), a demographic pattern consistent with the city as a whole. The terraces associated

with the labourer's house had an assemblage somewhat similar to that of the main house but without the porcelains. It included also a collection of bone button blanks suggestive of a local cottage industry catering to basic needs of the port town (see Ascher and Fairbanks 1971:13; Brown and Cooper 1990; Klippel and Schroedl 1999) (Fig. 16.5). At the Magens House labourers and servants within the household had access to the main house and the kitchen but lived separately and apparently did not have access to the yards of the mid-level managers and clerks at the bottom of the property (on Kongensgade). At the Bankhus, separate structures and living areas are clearly defined for owners and servants; but the difference in material culture is not so clearly defined, at least in economic terms. Relatively high-cost goods were found on all terraces. However, a higher proportion of chamber wares were found near the servant's quarters, and evidence of high-cost items like crystal chandelier luminaries and glassware were found only in areas adjacent to the main house.

The third set of two residential structures and their associated terraces and internal compounds were from their inception rental properties that housed waves of mid-level managerial immigrants. These structures were separated from the main house's yard and gardens by a formal internal gate. The pair of wrought iron gates not only separated the spaces, but the ironwork itself projected an aspect of the nineteenth century's global trade, as this was one of the products merchandised, warehoused and transhipped by the second owners of the property, the McDougal family from Scotland. This gate represented the formal entry to the house, and probably was not in regular use by either the residents or informal visitors, all of whom had less formal and perhaps easier points of entry and egress through other gates.

The two rental houses faced south towards Kongensgade and housed clerks who worked in the warehouses and dockyards of Charlotte Amalie. From at least the 1850s, these houses were used to attract skilled and educated labour from England, who frequently moved on to new opportunities. They were accessible from Kongensgade and 99 Steps and were separated from one another only by an open central walkway and low gates. Each of these houses had small front and back terraces. Materials included large quantities of ceramics (predominantly annular wares) and glass bottle fragments along with some regional earthenware.

Three gates opened onto 99 Steps. The centre gate tied the Magens House directly to the Haagensen House on the west side of the lane. Magens' daughter Anny married Mr. Haagensen, survived him and became the long-term matriarch of that household. The two facing gates on either side of 99 Steps linked the formal "welcoming arms" of the two house compounds. These gates restricted the general public from entrance but provided a very rapid means of movement between the two houses by relatives. The top gate was similarly aligned with a gate at the upslope side of the Haagensen House. Insiders could continue on across the Magens property and pass through to the yard of the Crown House where another sister Elizabeth Magens Hicks was in residence (Census, St. Thomas, 1828–1850) with her uncle Capt. Rohde. Rohde was a functioning guardian of his nieces and nephews in the Magens' household, particularly during several years in which Magens was dispatched to St. John as the Danish colonial administrator (high level for St. John but



low level in the social structure of Danish colonial society). Hence, for family members the gates tied the three properties together.

To some extent, gates probably provided a means to simplify workloads and share tasks across property lines for those working on the three related house sites as they facilitated movement of domestic labourers, servants, nurses and gardeners between the three houses. Finally, it is likely that an urban garden on the upper terraces of the Magens House was a source of provisions for all three households during the period of Magens' family ownership (see Bourdieu 1979:138). The upper servants' quarters could have been reached only through the garden (Vom Vruck 1997:147). However, gates allowed direct movement in, through and across the property, and the garden terrace, immediately behind the servant quarters. These gates provided a direct line of access to members of the Magens family, linking the Magens House to relatives living in the Haagensen House to the west and the Crown House to the east.

One intriguing event reflecting movement through the compound was recorded in a letter written in 1825 by Magens' daughter, after her father was dismissed from his post on the St. Thomas Royal Council. Magens allowed, if not encouraged, to publish newspaper reports on piracy including the outfitting of the pirate schooner *Las Damas Argentinas* (alias *Bolivar* and *Elizabeth*, captained by Captain Beaupre and outfitted by Cabot and Co. of St. Thomas) and inaction related to slave traders in the harbour, which cast a bad light on Governor von Scholten and harbour operations (Supreme Court Parcel 1852). Though captured in the act of piracy off the coast of St. Kitts, Captain Beaupre and three crew members from the ship were enjoying themselves in the bars of St. Thomas (Lawaetz 1999; Armstrong and Williamson 2011). Following Magens' demotion to a post on St. John, his brother-in-law set up a meeting with von Scholten hoping for reinstatement. The meeting took place at the Magens House at 2:30 p.m., the hottest part of the day. Present at this gathering was Magens' daughter Anny, who apparently was favoured by former neighbour von Scholten and who would later take up residence in the Haagensen House. Also present was Magens' married daughter Elizabeth Hicks, who was visiting from Boston (and who would remain on island and live in the Crown House with her uncle).

Significant to our understanding of both the layout of the house and social relations of the time, letters relating to this meeting describe a scene at Magens House before, during and after this meeting. Leading up to the meeting, the women were described as "busy dusting off the knick-knacks..." within the widower Magens' main room. Von Scholten, accompanied by Captain Klaumann and Captain Rohde, came up the steps through the gate past the arms and into the living room. The house's green shutters were closed to keep out the midday heat, but as a result the room provided an "an impression of semi-darkness" and the ill Magens "who is pale, becomes even more pale in the greenish light" (Lawaetz 1999:137). According to Magens' account, in the presence of the family and friends, von Scholten admitted having done Magens an injustice and regretted threatening him with a suspension, stating that he would have never done it had he known that it would cause Magens' sickness. Elizabeth (Magens) Hicks wrote of Magens' plea that von Scholten did

not change his mind but added a few new administrative titles for Magens on St. John. By Hicks account, Anny and her sister pressed hard on von Scholten as he “exited out to the garden gate” but in vain (Lawaetz 1999). The governor rapidly departing through the garden and out the gate with Magens’ family members in pursuit turning back only after von Scholten had left the yard and turned towards the Governor’s House (three buildings to the east).

In 1847, a year before formal emancipation and three years after J. M. Magens II’s death, the Magens House was sold to a Scottish immigrant merchant Duncan McDougal (Armstrong and Williamson 2011). The McDougal family, like others from diverse backgrounds engaging in warehousing and transshipment of goods, built their fortune at the free port of Charlotte Amalie by importing, transshipping and exporting goods. The family initially lived on-site in the central residence, but as the business grew to include multiple waterfront warehouses in St. Thomas and St. Croix and warehouses as far afield as Bristol, Australia and New Zealand, the family purchased a second larger house across Kongensgade. The McDougals began renting the former Magens’ central residence to other merchants and later to their son Herman (who was also the British Consul). The lower houses fronting the street continued to be rented to clerks connected to the McDougal business, and the upper structure continued to be used for servants, gardeners, nurses, cooks and support staff. Thus, later nineteenth-century use was similar to that of the earlier period. The five residential structures also continued to project a continuation of material use patterns of the earlier era. However, a new set of spatial relations governed the compound and its relation to neighbouring households. Formal ties with the Crown House ceased, and this gate was filled in. Similarly, the direct passage between the Magens House and Haagensen House became less important; the gates were retained, but their usage was no doubt restructured.

## The Bankhus

Like the Magens House, the neighbouring Bankhus was the residence of merchants and their servants (Fig. 16.4). However, unlike the Magens House compound, it had no doors or gates linking it to its neighbours, likely because the original owner of the property shared no familial connection with the Magens or McDougal families to the west or the Lutheran parsonage to the east. Rather, it had one formal doorway and one gate and both open to Kongensgade. This property was originally connected to the Lutheran Parsonage (still present to its east), which housed clergy of the Danish Lutheran Church located directly across the street (to the south). Christian Hingleberg’s 1837 map of the property illustrates its connection to the Lutheran Parsonage and the existence of several buildings (noted in red) prior to the property’s division and sale at auction in 1843 (Fig. 16.4). Merchant Creighton Whitmore purchased this property from the Lutheran Church and built a large two-storey building in 1844 (St. Thomas Tax Records 1837, 1848). The property changed hands frequently through the nineteenth century and by the beginning of the

twentieth century was owned by the director of the Danish West Indian National Bank, hence the name Bankhus. The number of terraces at the Bankhus (13 compared with 23 at the Magens House) along with a smaller and less diverse grouping of structures indicates a far less complex social structuring than at the Magens House. Moreover, in contrast to the distinct social class and economic differentiations found among the various households of the Magens House, the Bankhus projects a more uniformly higher economic class with quantities of over- and underglazed porcelain and significant numbers of expensive ceramics and glasswares recovered from all terraces. This is not surprising given that the Bankhus was consistently occupied by successful and prominent members of the merchant class of St Thomas, while the Magens House featured a wider variety of social groups (mid-level merchants, clerks, along with resident owners, children of owners and relatives in adjacent and connected house compounds) and higher turnover since it was primarily occupied by renters rather than owners. The only internal differentiation was a higher percentage of relatively expensive transfer-printed chamber pots in the upper terraces associated with house servants and a higher number of glassware items in terraces adjacent to the main house.

## Conclusion

The studies of Magens and Bankhus properties have examined the cultural permutations of spatial relations and *habitus*. The composite, spatial and structural material records show the complexity of social dynamics within and between house compounds. In this chapter, we have highlighted the role of walls, gates and doorways, along with evidence of residential structures and associated activity areas, and the material record derived from excavation within a series of well-defined garden terraces. The external gates defined who could enter the compound providing a protective buffer in an urban environment. The internal gates and doorways defined internal differentiation in access to the different classes of people living within the compound, with access tied to the position of gates and passageways, and defined by internal social relations of owners, extended family, servants and renters. While focusing on local, site level data, we have looked at complexity within compounds and differential social relationships between neighbouring house compounds. The walls, fences and doors allow flows of people and objects, but simultaneously impose social and economic divisions and control.

Comparing the two house compounds, the Magens House contains a higher frequency of undecorated wares by both count and weight within virtually every terrace and living area, but is most pronounced in terraced areas associated with the servant quarters (the garden terraces in the upper portion of the lot) and houses rented to McDougal company (the rental houses fronting Kongensgade) (Fig. 16.3). At the Bankhus, all terraces show a nearly equal high proportion of decorated wares in count and weight, but the garden terrace immediately adjacent to the main house shows a high proportion of relatively expensive tablewares, while the upper terraces

near the servants' quarters have relatively more chamber pot fragments. Expensive stemware and chandelier parts are also found in the deposits associated with the terrace just outside the main house doors. All of the terraces at the Bankhus show a predominance of creamwares and pearlwares in all three contexts. This is probably the result of accumulations of broken wares associated with hurricanes and earthquakes of the early nineteenth century and the ability of the property owners to replenish their household wares. The distribution of ceramic types from the Magens House compound illustrates a degree of intra-site continuity indicative of access to goods across all spatial and social boundaries. At the Magens House compound, pearlwares are the dominant type in both count and weight with the creamwares, porcelains and refined earthenwares roughly equally distributed.

What can we conclude from the lack of diversity within sites and the nature of the diversity between sites? The preponderance of undecorated ceramics, primarily pearlwares, at the Magens House, particularly in the contexts related to the renters and yard space could represent the social standing of the merchant clerks living at the property. The predominance of decorated wares in garden terraces associated with the main house at the Bankhus compared to the relatively lower percentages, and smaller quantity of these wares, found at the Magens House may reflect greater access to discretionary funds over a long period of time. Throughout the history of the Bankhus compound, the main house was occupied by a series of relatively affluent merchants. In comparison, the initial Magens family were mid-level Danish administrators, and the later McDougal family also acquired an adjacent home across Kongensgade, and the main house was taken over by their children by the later nineteenth century. Although creamware and pearlware types made up the majority of wares recovered from the Bankhus, it is important to note that several expensive wares which represent uncommon finds in the region were also recovered, including porcelains manufactured in Denmark and overglazed porcelain acquired from Denmark's trading partners in the Far East.

Finally, this study uses the combination of the material record and detailed documentary records to show patterns of differential access depending upon who one was in the community: owner-servant, daughter-son, employer-employee, invited-uninvited and rich-poor. Reflections of these social relations are definable in the surviving landscape. Both the Magens and Bankhus compounds retain their original boundary walls and gates, and the combination of surviving structures and archaeological evidence of spatial divisors survive in the form of intact terracing, walk and pathways and doorways, which were used to include or exclude people outside and within the house compounds. Even in a relatively open Danish colonial port town like St. Thomas, where opportunities for freedom were tied to the pragmatic needs of a maritime environment, many social layers separated and divided the town's residents. Many of these divisions were built into the lived environment at the Magens and Bankhus sites.

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**Part IV**  
**Post Scriptum: Reflections**



# Chapter 17

## Insinuations: Framing a New Understanding of Colonialism

Audrey Horning

### Introduction: Defining the Universe

Colonialism matters. Defined following Osterhammel (1997) as a system of domination, processes of colonialism emerge in this volume as implicated in even the smallest of individual actions in the early modern world. Colonialism has long been employed as the framework for understanding the process of establishing settler societies, but for many of the authors in this collection, colonialism also encompasses a range of more ambiguous if undeniably asymmetrical power relations between the Swedish and the Saami, or the Swedish and the forest Finns, or the peoples of Denmark and Greenland. Here the authors are overtly challenging accepted narratives that downplay the colonial character of these regional relationships. Particularly confounding accepted models of colonial relations is the case of Iceland, as critically explored by Gavin Lucas and Angelos Parigoris (Chap. 6), and by Kristin Loftsdóttir and Gísli Pálsson (Chap. 3). Even the Swedish ironworker labouring at the forge was an active participant in a colonial system, as the iron bars he produced to order were shipped to Africa and exchanged for human lives. Swedish iron was also shipped to Birmingham and transformed into guns sent to Africa to facilitate enslavement, arriving in a wooden box made by a European joiner that would later be repurposed as a coffin by a West African craftsman, as considered by Chris Evans and Gören Rydén (Chap. 4) and Holger Weiss (Chap. 14). As this volume eloquently demonstrates, nowhere, and no one, was untouched by the forces of colonialism in the early modern world. Welcome or not, recognised or not, colonialism insinuated itself into everyday lives.

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But if colonialism is so all pervasive, does it lose all value as an interpretive construct? Where do we draw the line? When is an action best explained by colonialism, and when is it not? The key to the successful expansion of definitions of colonialism in this volume lies in nuance. Nuance and the microscale of individual human narratives give this collection its greatest strength. Individuals like Hans Jonatan, as discussed by Kristin Loftsdóttir and Gísli Pálsson (Chap. 3), who was born into slavery in Danish St. Croix but later made his way via Copenhagen to establish a new life in Iceland, embody the contradictions inherent to the colonial process. The very ambiguities that lie at the core of colonialism work to confound totalising or muting narratives.

So why does colonialism matter, and why in particular does Scandinavian colonialism matter? Simply put, because its legacies remain unresolved. As explained by editors Magdalena Naum and Jonas Nordin in their introduction, the chapters in this volume intentionally target the contemporary desire to believe that, somehow, Scandinavian colonialism was kinder and gentler than the more well-known and studied Spanish, Dutch and British versions. Deconstructing this narrative requires close, critical re-evaluation of evidence from around the globe, with immediate relevance to the present. In short, the imbrications of past and present are inescapable and permeate the volume with the deafening resonances of colonialism.

## Charting Scandinavian Colonialism

By the time that the Scandinavian nations began dipping their toes into the stormy seas of colonial expansion, models were widely available. The Swedes heading to the Delaware Valley were instructed to grow tobacco, produce silk, raise cattle and sheep and exploit fish and forests, as discussed by Fredrik Ekengren, Magdalena Naum and Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe (Chap. 10). They benefited from the myriad mistakes made and the lessons learned by earlier English adventurers and colonists, most notably at Roanoke and Jamestown (Kupperman 2007a, b). The archaeological record from Jamestown underscores the willingness of adventurers to try almost anything to make a profit. Refiners and alchemists and miners rubbed shoulders with carpenters, cooks and potters. Enthusiastic adventurers sought gold and silver and precious gems, or at the very least the copper and calamine needed to produce brass (Kelso 2006; Straube 2007; Hudgins et al. 2009). Scandinavian nations intent on attaining a foothold in the New World, as considered by Eric Schnakenbourg (Chap. 8), did so on the basis of considerable knowledge of earlier colonial expansion and the demonstrated potential of New World colonies, particularly in the Caribbean. Knowledge, however, was no guarantee of success.

Failures of colonialism are exposed in this volume. Not just the failure of Sweden to establish a viable Caribbean colonial powerhouse rather than meekly accepting the nearly barren St. Barthelémy (Chap. 13) as an emblem of their small-time agent status, but failures of the very tenets of colonialism—that of moulding and shaping the other to the needs and desires and in the image of the coloniser. As discussed by Daniel Lindmark (Chap. 8), efforts by the Swedish to impose



**Fig. 17.1** Building of the Brufferton Indian School established in 1723 at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Photo courtesy of Mark Kostro, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

“civilisation” and reconfigure the worlds of the Saami followed established patterns of indoctrination. Saami children were extracted from their families and sent to re-education centres, following a tactic employed in other colonial zones. By way of comparison, one of the oldest structures on the campus of the College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg, Virginia, is that of the 1723 Brufferton Indian School (Fig. 17.1), designed to Christianise and assimilate natives from Virginia and beyond (Stuart 1988; Atkins 2012).

In neither case were the efforts wholly successful. Education itself provides a weapon for the newly educated, through knowledge of the practices, strengths and weaknesses of those in power. In fact, the first effort to educate and Christianise Virginia natives ended in disaster for the English, when in 1622 Powhatan forces launched a combined series of attacks on English settlements, carefully timed to coincide with the Lenten observances their children had learned about in George Thorpe’s Indian school (Gleach 1997).

## Colonial Materialities

Colonialism was intentionally, even aggressively material, and objects and the understandings multivalent and subject to misunderstanding. Objects were intentionally used and manipulated as part of colonial projects. However, a coloniser

could never fully direct the reception nor the understanding. Meanings get lost in translation. An excellent example of mistranslation and multivalency can be found in an example from the Delaware Valley cited by Lu Ann De Cunzo (Chap. 11). The blue and red coats given by the Swedish colonists to the Lenni Lenape conveyed one set of meaning to the Swedish but undoubtedly meant something very different to the indigenous people. Modelled after those used to materially mark orphans in Swedish society, symbolising dependency and impoverishment, such coats must have held a very different meaning for their new native owners, demographically dominant in the Delaware Valley and very much not dependent upon the struggling Swedish colony. Other Algonquian societies clearly attached spiritual and political power to the colour red: perhaps the same held true for the Lenape (Gallivan 2003:164; Gleach 1997:56–57). So an attempt to mark the Lenape as inferior may instead have been understood as enhancing their superiority.

Material influences were impossible to avoid, and many African elites, as considered by Holger Weiss (Chap. 14), were as avid consumers of Atlantic trade goods as were their European counterparts. Like the Lenni Lenape, however, European goods were translated according to local frames of reference and employed in locally situated fashion. Furthermore, the demands of Africans on the Gold Coast shaped the range of goods that were brought to the region. African merchants, as also noted by Chris Evans and Göran Rydén (Chap. 4), directly influenced the production of iron in Swedish forges. Complaints about the quality of iron shipped to the Gold Coast were rapidly conveyed from the African consumers back to the Swedish ironmasters via a network of British-based merchants. Not all influences could be so controlled. Less tangible but equally impossible to avoid were new sounds. The ringing of the bell at Danish slave posts on the Gold Coast trading posts insinuated a European sense of time and order into local African minds, resonating at both a conscious and unconscious level. Day and night were divided up and parcelled into segments of time; time allocated to routines and rituals that challenged existing daily practices.

New forms of buildings and the spatial layout of settlements similarly impacted upon daily routines on both a conscious and unconscious level. As pointed out by Douglas Armstrong, Christian Williamson and Alan Armstrong (Chap. 16), the welcoming arms of the formal colonial entryways in the Danish port of Charlotte Amalie on the island of St. Thomas speak of welcome only to certain sectors of the population. Indeed, to materially mark a “welcome” suggests a fear of being “unwelcome” and the need to delineate status, so clear in the spatial hierarchy of the urban layout identified by the authors in Charlotte Amalie. Such strict attention to controlling spatiality evokes those material anxieties experienced by the colonial Dutch merchants of South Africa as starkly exposed by Martin Hall (2000).

Consumerism could itself be a potent source of conflict and contestation, as considered by Peter Andres Toft and Inge Høst Seiding (Chap. 7) in relation to Danish efforts to control Greenlanders. While the Inuit of Greenland were targeted as objects for conversion to Christianity early in the eighteenth century, the paternalistic framing of Danish colonial ideology prioritised the maintenance of “authentic” Inuit lifeways through arresting the spread of European material culture.



**Fig. 17.2** Colonial pancake house. Photo by the author

But Greenlanders made up their own minds about what they did and did not desire. As demonstrated by the archaeological record from Disko Bay, Greenlanders actively sought a variety of European goods, sourcing them both legally and illegally. Women, as shown by Toft and Seiding, were particularly proactive in the sphere of consumption, reflecting their traditional leadership role in the household.

Of course objects still proclaim the values of colonialism. In Chap. 2, Gunlög Fur cites the example of “New Sweden Beer,” the container which credits Sweden for planting “civilisation” in America. But New Swedish beer sits comfortably amongst the myriad other commodified colonial narratives. Businesses throughout eastern North America routinely and unquestioningly employ the word “colonial” to convey a sense of historicity and to encourage trust. One can drive on branded “colonial” tyres, burn “colonial” candles, eat “colonial” pancakes (Fig. 17.2), sleep on “colonial” mattresses and drink “colonial” coffee, all while living in a two-storey “colonial” in a subdivision dubbed Colonial Acres in a town called Colonial Heights.<sup>1</sup> Authors in this volume may lament the dominant narrative of Scandinavian colonialism as a watered down, benign version of “the real thing,” but Scandinavians are no more or less guilty of a lack of critical engagement with ongoing colonial legacies than their counterparts in other lands.

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<sup>1</sup> The shorthand “colonial” has evolved as a generic term for a two-storey suburban tract house.

## Colonial Identities

The increasing reach and influence of postcolonial theory in archaeology have provided us with new ways of understanding and questioning relations between peoples in contact and worlds in motion. Homi Bhabha (1994) in particular emerges as an inspiration for many of the authors in this volume. His powerful conceptualisation of mimicry is exemplified not just by the efforts of colonised people to interpret and mimic the practices of the colonisers, as in the case of the Greenland woman who served tea to her Danish guests using a child's toy cups discussed by Toft and Seiding (Chap. 7), but also by the actions of elites. The commissioning of a wampum coat and trousers by New Sweden Governor Printz, as considered by Jonas Nordin (Chap. 12), and the eager acquisition of native knowledge and objects by Swedes both home and abroad, as considered by Nordin and by De Cunzo (Chap. 11), critically highlight the ways in which colonial agents also sought to mediate their relations with the unfamiliar through borrowed objects and actions, however imperfectly rendered.

Considerations of syncretism and hybridity in this volume also take us a long way away from the Quimby-Spoehr model wherein artefacts served as a proxy for degrees of acculturation (Quimby and Spoehr 1951; Quimby 1966). Yet it is worth acknowledging the reality that essentialist understandings of identity still permeate many regional studies. Fredrik Ekengren's (Chap. 9) consideration of the forest Finns, and particularly the evaluation of their influence in the New World, serves as an important caution and case in point. By carefully examining and deconstructing the actions and practices of the forest Finns who first made their way to Sweden and then to New Sweden, Ekengren demolishes the notion, popularised by Jordan and Kaups (1989), that Finnish culture was transplanted wholesale to the New World where it provided the principal model for what has been loosely defined as American backwoods culture. Reflexivity is called for when ascribing credit for hybridised practices. For example, it is worth questioning the attribution of slash and burn or swidden agricultural practice in the Delaware Valley to the influence of the Finns, as discussed by Ekengren. Such practices were identical to those employed by the native inhabitants of the region. Arguably, the desire to attribute the practice to the minority Finns reflects the continuing legacy of colonial ideologies where innovation and dynamism is perceived to be solely in the remit of the coloniser.

We should also spare a thought for the unwilling colonist. As acknowledged by Armstrong, Williamson and Armstrong (Chap. 16), Danes were not particularly interested in moving to the West Indies, preferring to control their mercantile activities from afar and through intermediaries. Others were given less of a choice. Few Swedes relished the prospect of settling in New Sweden. As explored by Fredrik Ekengren, Magdalena Naum and Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe (Chap. 10), anxiety and fear structured colonial Swedish encounters with the unknown. Elsewhere, colonial agents defied convention, intermarrying with indigenous people and participating fully in the emergence of deliberately constructed new identities. Holger Weiss (Chap. 14) addresses multicultural marriages and sexual alliances on the

West Coast that gave rise to a community of mixed race individuals who employed the ambiguities of their identity to facilitate negotiations between local populations and incomers. Such strategic alliances could also be coercive. As another recent collection of essays on colonialism (Voss and Casella 2011) reminds us, the unequal power relations inherent to colonialism routinely etched themselves upon the bodies of the indigene.

Over the last decade, increasingly sophisticated understandings of African identities and their expression in the New World have emerged (e.g. Oguniran and Falola 2007). Louise Sebro (Chap. 15) usefully builds upon that scholarship to explore African identities on St. John. As she demonstrates, the ahistorical and essentialist category of “African,” long employed to elide difference within racially constructed narratives, cannot substitute for an awareness of the complexities of identities in early modern Africa and through the African Diaspora. Knowledge of self and other, notions of belonging and not belonging, was not erased via the trauma of the Middle Passage. Sebro also makes the critical point that continuity and change are not polar opposites but can coexist as frameworks for social action and identity construction. As expressed by Grey Gundaker (2000: 130), “creolization involves both innovation and use of historical resources and precedents. No object or event is altogether new; nor is it reducible to its antecedents.” New identity constructions did emerge within the enslaved African community on St. John, as in the use of the designation *Amina*, an ethnic-proxy category unrecognised in West Africa. As explored by Sebro, the documented hostilities between the *Amina* and the *Loango*, West Central Africans on St. John, illustrate the strength of separate communal identities within enslaved communities. Crucially, however, the hostility between *Amina* and *Loango* was a product of their respective New World experiences and not drawn from a lingering, essentialised African past.

Individual identities are also mutable and subject to reconfiguration. Here the story of Hans Jonatan, as told by Kristin Loftsdóttir and Gísli Pálsson (Chap. 3), illustrates the power of the individual to retain and to jettison elements of personal identity, forcing a reconceptualisation of self and other. Jonatan transformed himself from a Caribbean slave to an Icelandic peasant, his own family tree spanning three continents. That he found a welcome in Iceland reflects in part the liminal position occupied by Iceland within the history of European imperialism. Gavin Lucas and Angelos Parigoris (Chap. 6) find merit in Herzfeld’s concept of crypto-colonisation in discussing Iceland’s liminality. Neither coloniser nor clear-cut colony, Iceland was nonetheless directly as well as indirectly impacted by the colonising activities of Denmark, which incorporated Iceland in its territory from the fourteenth century until Icelandic independence in 1944. While Iceland, like Ireland (Howe 2000), sits uneasily in a colonial model, clearly elements of the relationship between Denmark and Iceland employed colonial strategies. More to the point, as eloquently argued by Lucas and Parigoris, postcolonial rhetoric informs Icelandic notions of nationhood, much as it lies at the core of national identity within the Republic of Ireland and continues to confound politics in Northern Ireland (Horning 2007).

## But Where Next?

If colonialism was rife in Scandinavia and everyone, ultimately, implicated in the attendant violence and dispossession associated with Atlantic expansion and most notably with the African slave trade, what responsibility do contemporary Scandinavians hold for addressing its messy aftermath? Should they, and by extension all citizens of former colonial powers, be accountable for the sins of their ancestors and the rectification of injustice? Gunlög Fur (Chap. 2) is impatient with Scandinavian “claims of innocence” and belief in being untainted by colonialism, as she identifies a pattern of consistent understatement in even the most recent Scandinavian and Nordic university history textbooks. Set in the context of contemporary heterogeneous and multicultural European society, tales of colonialism’s long arm have a social value. Challenging simplistic versions of Sweden as a “benevolent presence in the colonial European world,” Fur argues for a more reflexive understanding of the contemporary debates over identity and immigration within Sweden. Similarly, Lucas and Parigoris argue that efforts to deny nineteenth-century Denmark imperial status serve only to obscure Danish complicity in the racism and oppression attendant to imperial projects. History, here, has a strong social value. Without greater honesty over the character of Scandinavia’s past immersion in colonial politics and practices, contemporary debates will remain impoverished.

Helle Jørgensen (Chap. 5) also pays particular attention to this question of the contemporary resonances and unfinished legacies of Scandinavian colonialism. Honing in upon the case of Tranquebar, where Denmark maintained a trading colony from 1620 to 1845, she turns a critical eye to the perceptions of contemporary Danish visitors and the manner in which the Indian residents of the locale negotiate the presentation of the past with its importance in the present. Put bluntly, India matters far more to Denmark today than Denmark matters to India. Arguably, local residents can afford to be generous about the original motivations of the Danish merchants and the attendant local dispossessions. After all, India is an economic powerhouse with a GDP in 2011 of \$1.84 trillion, versus Denmark’s \$332.7 billion. As Jørgensen thoughtfully concludes, this asymmetry opens up useful possibilities for meaningful discourse between Danish visitors and Tranquebar residents that focuses upon the very ambiguities and complexities so forcefully exposed throughout this volume.

In the end, Scandinavians may have been small-time colonial agents, but they were agents nonetheless. Their stories, and those of the millions touched directly or indirectly by Scandinavian colonial projects, resonate today.

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# Chapter 18

## Colonial Encounters of the Nordic Kind

James Symonds

### Nordic Gangstas

On a warm summer's day in August 2008, I was returning home with my family from fieldwork in Lapland. We had set time aside to visit the Museum of Cultures in Helsinki and had viewed the serried ranks of ethnographic material with a mixture of wonderment and reverential solemnity. The tall glass cases in the museum, which is incongruously located inside a multiplex cinema complex, contain wondrous things: brightly coloured Chinese porcelains, intricately woven Persian carpets, and tools and weapons from South America, Papua New Guinea, and Alaska; all *fetched from afar* by earlier generations of Finnish explorers and traders. One glass case contains trinkets from the heart of Africa, curious Congolese items that had been collected by the Finnish machinists who worked on riverboats in the Congo in the early twentieth century. Together, these objects create an unequivocal sense of a Nordic global presence. And yet rather than commenting upon any present-day reality, these trade goods, tokens, and trophies seem to bear witness to a lost age of global encounters and entanglements. This twilight colonial past is difficult to pin down but hovers somewhere in time towards the end of the long nineteenth century. Its inhabitants look out nonchalantly from yellowing sepia photographs as they stand beside charismatic animals (usually shot) and exotically dressed tribesmen.

Stepping outside and blinking at the daylight, our young son was drawn to the sound of loud music from a nearby square. The heavy bass of a beatbox reverberated across the street and threatened to engulf the staccato vocals of a thinly amplified voice: "Gangsta gansta you....gangsta gangsta I" The singer, a

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Finnish-Somali boy in his mid-teens, wore a hooded top, loosely fitting denim jeans, and American branded trainers. As he sang, he twisted and stabbed at the air with his long slender fingers. His family were probably among the 1,000 or so Somalis who had fled the Horn of Africa in the last twenty years and received political asylum in Helsinki. An audience of sullen-faced teenagers looked on, watching each other, watching him, with an air of feigned indifference. Their Nordic ancestry was betrayed by the tufts of blonde hair which protruded from their hoods, their milk-white skin, and watery-blue eyes.

The scene was captivating, but unsettling. What should we make of this? Was this an example of the Americanisation of global popular culture or of the power of transnational music and clothing corporations to ensnare youthful consumers? It was probably both of these things. But it was also more than this. It took a few moments for me to realise that my unease stemmed from the unlikely juxtaposition of the participants in this street scene. Things seemed to be out of place here, or to be more precise, this entanglement, or perhaps more accurately, collision of identities and cultures, was not something that I had expected to encounter in the back streets of Helsinki. The irony is that even though I had just walked out of an exhibition about Nordic colonialism, I had failed to understand the ambiguity and hybridity of this scene. In a sense this street scene was timeless and offered an important lesson. Whereas colonialism requires (I write in the present tense because colonialism has not ended) the creation of a range of racial and other categories in order to function and flourish, it is enacted by participants who sometimes choose to ignore, or consciously manipulate these categories for their own ends, with varying degrees of success. In the contemporary West, it is the young who most often probe power structures and doxic beliefs, chancing their luck like a game of rock-paper-scissors. But it was not always so.

## **Small-Time Agents?**

When Magdalena and Jonas invited me to comment on the chapters in this volume, I was flattered but quickly became perturbed at the prospect of doing justice to such an innovative and rewarding collection of essays. The subtitle of the book—*Small-Time Agents in a Global Arena*—seems almost apologetic. But this modest assessment of Swedish and Danish colonialism should not be taken to suggest that the topic lacks significance or that this original contribution to the historiography of colonialism will be overlooked in favour of the burgeoning literature on the better-known European colonial powers or their victims. The detailed case studies set out in this volume will no doubt swell the footnotes of future histories of the Atlantic, West Africa, and the Indian subcontinent. But the value of this book does not lie in the new detail which it provides, as welcome as this may be, but rather in the range of new perspectives which it opens up.

It would be glib to suggest that this particular postcolonial confession is merely an attempt to share the burden of colonial guilt, but at a fundamental level it is just that.

The metanarratives of colonialism are deeply inscribed and often focus on familiar themes, such as the role that slavery played in involuntarily transporting bodies across the globe from east to west or the outcomes of resettlement in the Americas or the Caribbean. But as we are led through the forts, plantations, and storehouses of the Nordic colonial world, there are some unexpected twists and turns, and the contributors reveal a range of rich and highly unpredictable pasts. From the evidence presented here, it is clear that the Nordic countries approached colonialism in highly distinctive ways, sometimes through choice, but more often than not through circumstance, and a shortage of resources and capital.

The colonial endeavours of the Nordic countries never matched those of Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, or France. In the case of Denmark, the colonisation of neighbouring areas of the Baltic started early, with the conquest of territory in Estonia, in the thirteenth century, but was short-lived. Beyond Europe, Denmark's tropical territories survived rather longer but were all relinquished before the height of European imperialism: those in India were sold to the United Kingdom in 1845, and Africa in 1850, and the Virgin Islands, in the Danish West Indies, were sold to the USA in 1917. Crucially, these small overseas possessions were regarded as trading posts, rather than colonies of mass emigration and settlement, and were maintained by a relatively small number of Danish traders and soldiers who returned home when the colonies were sold, thereby weakening the cultural memory of Danish rule (Bregnsbo 2008:79).

The Danish North Atlantic territories, in contrast, had deeper roots, stretching back to the tenth century in the case of Greenland, preceding the seventeenth-century mercantile scrambles for overseas territory by more than half a millennium. The newly established National Museum of Denmark started to collect ethnographic material from Greenland in the 1830s. This "primitive" technology was used to illustrate the earliest phases of Stone-Age life in Denmark (Høiris 1986) and bolstered the notion of social evolution which lay at the heart of Thomsen's "Three-Age System" (Heizer 1962; Rowley-Conwy 2007). The link between archaeology and nationalism is significant here as representations of indigenous materialities, which seemed to demonstrate a lower level of technological advancement than "civilised" European nation states, were frequently used as a justification for the conquest and domination of indigenous peoples (Lydon and Rizvi 2010:24).

Attempts by the Swedish Crown to create a colonial outpost in the Delaware River in 1638 were primarily driven by commercial considerations, and a desire to secure access to the profitable trade in tobacco and beaver pelts from America. Although this venture involved a conscious, albeit piecemeal attempt to colonise the territory, it was short-lived, and only lasted for 17 years. Two points may be raised here. First, as with the subsequent purchase of Saint-Barthélemy in the Caribbean in 1785, it is clear that the Swedish Crown was attempting to gain a place at the "top table" of European powers (see Schnakenbourg, this volume). To secure this dubious privilege, a state needed to change the scale of its operations, to demonstrate a global reach, and importantly, to maintain regular access to the range of minerals, raw materials and exotic trade goods which were flooding into continental Europe after *c.* 1500. The complex webs of capital, obligations and alliances, which were



**Fig. 18.1** Well-preserved seventeenth-century ceramic vessels from excavations in Tornio. (Photograph courtesy of Risto Nurmi)

needed to fund colonial ventures, involved the work of many hands. These networks were multi- or transnational and were frequently manipulated by individuals or groups with shared interests, a point I will return to below.

Second, it is interesting how “rehearsals” closer to home may have influenced the treatment of indigenous peoples in overseas colonies. The settlement of Western Uusimaa (Sw. *Nyland*), on the northern shores of the Gulf of Finland, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, has traditionally been explained as a case of Swedish colonists moving into a barren and previously uninhabited area. Recent research, however, has shown that these colonists, who included Swedish nobles, added an administrative layer of churches and castles to a region which had been sparsely populated by Finnish subsistence farmers (Haggrén 2011). In the early seventeenth century, the Swedish state attempted to extend its power over the Sámi peoples by establishing the town of Tornio and gathering taxes in subarctic Lapland. Encounters with indigenous peoples in North America between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries also reflected back upon Sweden and encouraged the pejorative “othering” of the Sámi (chapter by Lindmark). The assault upon indigenous lifestyles and Sámi materiality was grounded in goods and manufactured items. In Lapland, the tentacles of mercantile trade introduced a host of alien artefacts to the new town of Tornio and the Tornionjoki river valley: red earthenware, faience, majolica, and tin-glazed ceramics being among the most common (Herva and Nurmi 2009; Fig. 18.1).

It is clear, then, that the small agents who feature in this volume were strongly implicated in the wider European project of colonialism, but levels of involvement vacillated, and were in all cases historically contingent (see Fur, this volume). Even countries like Finland, which never possessed any overseas colonies, and was for many years part of Sweden, and later a Grand Duchy of Russia, has recently been accused of being guilty of “colonial complicity” (Vuorela 2009). Perhaps we Europeans were “all in it together”, but where one might ask? does this admission of guilt (or complicity) fit within the wider scheme of European colonialism? And how might it challenge current theoretical perspectives?

## We Are All Entangled, Nowadays

Nicholas Thomas started something big when he used the word “entangled” to refer to goods in the Pacific and drew attention to the mutable, historically situated nature of material objects and the importance of understanding local contexts (Thomas 1991). Used in another way, the idea that people and things are entangled has been a feature of the “material turn” (Hicks 2010) which has swept through the humanities, drawing upon the work of Appadurai (1986), Latour (1993), and Miller (2005). In this reading, calls have been made for greater attention to be paid to “material agency” (Gell 1998), and for the crafting of more “symmetrical” archaeologies (Shanks 2007) that break away from subject-object dualities, and focus instead upon “flows and dependencies” and the webs that are created between people and things (Hodder 2012).

Studies of colonialism have used the concept of entanglement to explore the power and agency of indigenous peoples, and their ability to confront or subvert the influences of colonising powers (Dietler 1998, 2010; Jordan 2009; Martindale 2009). Rather than being seen as a simplistic top-down transmission of dominant values, leading to the inevitable subjugation of indigenous peoples, colonial interaction is now more likely to be viewed as a bi- or multidirectional process which is enacted through *colonial encounters* (Stein 2005). And where scholars previously referred to a process of *acculturation*, we are now more likely to see reference being made to creolisation (Hannerz 1987) or the concept of hybridity, derived from subaltern studies (Bhabha 1994). Finally, it is pleasing to see that the more extreme excesses of practice theory, which magically invested all social agents with a seemingly unbounded and universal agency in the neoliberal 1990s, have now been toned down (see Ekengren, Naum and Zagal-Mach Wolfe, De Cunzo, Nordin, Weiss, Sebros, this volume). An uncritical evocation of the power of agency has been replaced with more realistic calls for attention to be paid to “the parameters of action—the alternatives and limitations for an individual in any given social setting” (Silliman 2001:192; Wobst 2000:41).

Several of the chapters in this volume make use of Richard White’s seminal work on seventeenth-century French fur traders and Indians in the Great Lakes area

(White 1991). White's concept of the "middle ground", a space of accommodation and incorporation which emerges when no one group is capable of gaining the upper hand through force, is highly relevant, as it highlights the fact that "minor agents, allies, and even subjects at the periphery often guide[d] the course of empires" (White 1991:xi, cited by De Cunzo, this volume).

A good example of the use of strategic alliances, and the influence of peripheral agents, is the way in which Dutch investors supported and profited from Scandinavian state building and colonialism. The "unseen hand" of Dutch mercantile capitalism is exposed by the finds of eighteenth-century glass beads in Greenland (Toft and Seiding) and the Dutch clay tobacco pipes and alcohol bottles unearthed in Iceland (Lucas and Parigoris). More overt Dutch influence can be seen in the contribution that was made to the design and construction of the *Vasa* ship (De Cunzo) and by Dutch investment in the Dannemora iron mine (Evans and Rydén) and sugar refineries in seventeenth-century Stockholm (Schnakenbourg). Dutch merchants were also involved in the Nordic colonies in the Delaware Valley (De Cunzo; Ekengren, Naum, and Zagal-Mach Wolfe), the Gold Coast (Weiss), and the Danish Virgin Islands (Sebro). Even prior to the establishment of the Dutch West India Company (WIC) in 1621, the Dutch pursued a policy of seeking out mutually beneficial alliances with native peoples, and others, who wished to obtain their trade goods (Meuwese 2012). The Dutch willingness to accommodate indigenous traditions and land rights in the interests of trade set them apart from the colonial Spanish and English and may well have influenced the attitudes of their Nordic partners.

A focus on small agents, and the collaborations that were forged through mutual needs, and usually a desire for profit, goes some way towards decentering the rhetoric of earlier nationalistic accounts of colonialism by exposing the messy, ad hoc, and in many cases multi- or transnational composition of early colonies. Transnational communities were especially common in localities which were primarily intended as trading posts, as Weiss (this volume) illustrates in relation to Danish enclaves on the Gold Coast. But the broader point, which has been made elsewhere, is that we should not assume that colonies were tightly controlled by the central authorities of a state and therefore "directly reflect the interests of their colonial homelands" (Stein 2005:11).

If state authorities did not exercise absolute power over their implanted colonies, then who did? Shannon Dawdy has observed that "Colonialism was as much a creation of rogues and independent agents as it was the project of imperial states" (Dawdy 2008:18). Dawdy's concept of "rogue colonialism" (Dawdy 2008:4), which she so elegantly explores in relation to French colonial New Orleans, works well with the small agents of the Nordic colonial world and forces us to look beyond "colonial power" as an abstract force, which is imposed from above. When seen through this lens, the brutality of many colonial encounters is shown to be "perpetrated on the ground by local militias, slave-owners, and colonial administrators often acting on their own initiative and in pursuit of their own interests" (Dawdy 2008:19). This of course begs two obvious questions. To what extent were individuals in Nordic colonial settings able to shape their lives, or those of others, by creating or resisting change? And when setting a scale for our investigations, should we

adopt a particularistic standpoint and search for highly specific examples of local agency, with a tight temporal resolution, or aim for a broader comparative perspective, with a longitudinal time-depth and transnational scope?

## Longitudinal Perspectives on Race and Place

The internationally acclaimed Danish novel, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (Høeg 1992/1994) begins with the heroine, Smilla Jaspersen, attending the funeral of a young Inuit boy in the Greenlanders' cemetery in Copenhagen. The pastor conducts the funeral service in West Greenlandic and quotes passages from a Moravian bible. But as the story unfolds, it is clear that Smilla embodies an uneasy hybridity. She is fiercely intelligent and possesses the heightened sensory perception of an Arctic hunter, and yet she is marginalised and confined to Copenhagen's urban underclass of postcolonial migrants as a consequence of her race and ethnicity.

This view of the Greenlander as "other" has a long history. When the Norse colonised Greenland in the early medieval period, they disparagingly referred to the Inuit as *skraellings*, or "small weaklings" (Langgård 2008:92). But whereas the Norse settlers perished when the climate of Greenland deteriorated during the "Little Ice Age" in the fifteenth century, the adept indigenous seal hunters survived. It was only after 1721, when the Norwegian Lutheran pastor Hans Egede visited Greenland in an effort to locate the descendants of the "lost" Norse settlers, and when they could not be found began baptising Inuit, that Scandinavians accepted Inuit peoples as human beings and individuals.

Greenland ceased to be a Danish colony in 1953, and incorporated into the Kingdom of Denmark and granted representation through two seats in the Danish Parliament. Denmark subsequently gained home rule in 1979, but remains a heavily subsidised member of the Danish Commonwealth. So whereas in Greenland, "It is no longer tenable to view the Greenland Inuit, unlike other aboriginal peoples, as an oppressed minority in relation to a dominant nation-state" (Nuttall 1994:1), in Denmark there is a widely held belief that the Greenlander is an "ungrateful and somehow lacking citizen" (Jensen 2008:60). This example demonstrates the importance of taking a long view, to expose how racial prejudice in contemporary Denmark is embedded within both past and present-day economic systems.

Several scholars have advocated taking a longitudinal comparative view of colonialism (Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Given 2004; Stein 2005) arguing that a long-term perspective can reveal the emergence of highly specific local practices against a background of continuous flux (Gosden 2004:20). A case in point here is Toft and Seiding's detailed exploration of consumption and family life in southern Disko Bay. Here we are shown that despite the best efforts of the state-sponsored Royal Greenlandic Trading Company (RGTC) to maintain a monopoly on trade and to restrict the supply of alcohol and "corrupting" European luxury goods to Greenlanders, there is widespread evidence for irregular trade and barter. In nineteenth-century Greenland, indigenous agency was played out through intimate



relations and mixed marriages, which served as “dense points of cultural exchange and creativity” (Toft and Seiding, this volume). At first sight it is striking how this pattern resembles studies of the Spanish colonisation of the Americas (Deagan 1998, 2003). The similarity is of course superficial, but the important point is that this chapter allows us to move beyond the traditional explanatory device of acculturation theory, which dominated earlier studies of European colonialism (Cusick 1998) towards a more nuanced and gendered appreciation of indigenous agency and transculturation (Pratt 1992).

With the benefit of time-depth, it is possible to see how racial prejudice and discrimination based on skin colour is a relatively recent phenomenon in the West, becoming prominent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before becoming institutionalised in America and elsewhere in the twentieth century (Fredrickson 2003). The compilation of transnational histories by postcolonial scholars has shown that constructions of race, class, and gender are “developed in global counterpoint between the metropolis and the colonies” (Lydon and Rizvi 2010:25). Where detailed historical records survive, this discursive interplay can be found at the microscale, through the reconstruction of individual biographies. The story of Hans Jonatan, a black man who successfully took advantage of the poor hand that he had been dealt by life to escape enslavement in the Caribbean and gain freedom in Iceland, illustrates this point very well, showing that in some circumstances individuals were able to change their lives for the better (Loftsdóttir and Pálsson, this volume).

Thinking about how attitudes to race and ethnicity have changed through time allows us to move beyond perpetuating older Eurocentric constructions of colonialism which stressed differences based upon racial essentialisms (Silliman (2010:147). The problems associated with characterising European colonialism as an abstract force with a shared “European mentality” were identified some years ago by Ann Stoler (Stoler 1989). It is equally important, however, to identify the varied and historically situated contribution that indigenous peoples made to the “grammar of difference” which was continually being formulated and contested in colonial settings (Stoler and Cooper 1997:4). At a basic level this might mean examining the positionality, contingency, and hybridity of indigenous peoples, to see how incoming European trade goods, such as copper items, were put to use by individuals, or incorporated into the power struggles of competing indigenous groups (Hantman, 2010; van Dongen 1995; Immonen 2011; Weiss, this volume).

It also, importantly, means looking beyond catch-all labels, such as “African slave”, which were applied by Europeans to transported individuals, and through the process of labelling rendered humans into a commodity, erasing their social identities and diverse cultural heritages. The example of the St John slave revolt in the Danish West Indies makes the important point that the dispute between the Loango and Amina was based upon social networks which had originated in Africa but crucially, related to differences which had developed in the Caribbean. This valuable case study effectively dispels the notion that a static pan-African identity or “world-view” had somehow been transported to the New World where it either

withered or was promptly replaced by a new system of European values and beliefs (Sebro, this volume).

There is, nevertheless, rather more to this problem than simply recognising that indigenous agency has multiple folds. Thinking seriously about constructions of race and ethnicity also forces us to break down the “reductionist dichotomy of peoples” identities as Western and other’ which has characterised some postcolonial writing, as scholars have rushed to incorporate the “native” voice (Benavides 2010:236). One obvious way to do this is to expose the fact that “whiteness” is itself a construction, rather than a “natural” or neutral category from which other races diverge, and to explicitly study the process of “white ethnogenesis” in different temporal and geographical contexts (Bell 2005:447).

Two points can be made here. First, the forest-dwelling Finns from Savo-Karelia in eastern Finland who migrated first to Sweden, and then to New Sweden, are said to have had several distinctive cultural markers which set them apart as an ethnic group in the eyes of other Swedish colonists. These traits included their language, their use of slash-and-burn cultivation, and the presence of chimneyless smoke ovens in their log houses. In time, the forest Finn predilection for fire setting led to the term “Finn” being used in a collective way for a troublesome group of people (Ekengren, this volume). Although this might seem to be a fairly obvious point to make, it is clear that perceived ethnic differences existed within white Nordic populations in both old and New Sweden.

The second point, which arises from the first, is that non-Nordic peoples who encountered Swedish settlers in the New World are unlikely to have recognised such subtle distinctions. Social identities are malleable, context-specific, and open to individual interpretation. A little over a century after the demise of the colony of New Sweden, Benjamin Franklin set out his concerns over the future colonisation of America. Franklin’s observations contained some highly idiosyncratic views on race and skin colour:

All Africa is black or tawny. Asia chiefly tawny. America (exclusive of the new Comers) wholly so. And in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion; as are the Germans also, the Saxons only excepted, who with the English, make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. (Franklin 1751)

Franklin feared that the continued importation of African slaves into America would diminish the work ethic and fertility of white settlers, who would, in his view, become indolent through a life of luxury. But the racial intolerance evident in this pamphlet is also directed at German immigrants. Franklin’s colony of Pennsylvania had received an influx of German settlers in the mid-eighteenth century, and his writing attempted to denigrate them by linking their language and customs to their skin colour. The implication is clear that Germans, and by association other “swarthy” Europeans, including Swedes, were non-whites and were therefore undesirable immigrants: “Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our language or customs, any more than they can acquire our complexion?” (Franklin 1751).

## Concluding Thoughts

The historical archaeologist Margaret Purser once said to me: “Other people’s stories are like babies. When they are passed to you, you must handle them with care”. This is especially true with metanarratives of colonialism, which have the capacity to perpetuate inequality, injustice, and oppression. When we attempt to use archaeological evidence to reconstruct colonial encounters we need to be clear at the outset whether our work is “re-presenting” or “representing” other peoples’ lives; or to put it another way, are we speaking about? Or speaking for someone? (Spivak 1999:257). This “responsibility to the story” has recently been debated in the field of human rights: “The human rights practitioner is sanctioned (or self-sanctioned) to speak on behalf of others, to tell the story. There are various ways of describing this role.... (these) depictions of the human rights practitioner as representative, ally, mediator or exploiter raise further dilemmas... On what basis does the human rights practitioner as outsider claim to know the victim’s reality, and at what point, if ever, does this justify speaking on the victim’s behalf?” (Gready 2010:187).

In the twenty-first century, it is widely recognised that the production of archaeological knowledge is embedded within wider social and political frameworks. Postprocessual archaeologies have, in addition, questioned the objectivity of “scientific” archaeology. The question of how an archaeologist gains the authority to speak about the past is, however, raised less often, except in relation to work involving indigenous peoples, or the descendants of enslaved communities. Rethinking the scale on which we work can change such a narrow focus. As Lucas and Parigoris and Nordin note (this volume), we need to work outwards from our particular sites and follow material networks. Multi-sited investigations of the flows and dependencies of commodities, routines, and beliefs in colonised societies can broaden the scope of archaeology immensely, but as Matthew Johnson has observed, it is equally important to investigate the impact that colonial encounters had on the lives of colonisers, as well as those who “stayed at home” (Johnson 2006:313).

There is of course a critical difference between the evidence that is available to human rights practitioners and archaeologists. In the case of historical archaeology, both victims and perpetrators are usually long dead and gone and cannot respond directly to forensic questioning or interrogation. To my mind this only strengthens the need to gather and collate evidence for a “backstory” which documents colonial encounters and creates new opportunities for social justice and reconciliation. As the contributors to this book have very ably shown, the temporal and spatial dimensions of archaeological evidence can be combined to create powerful and compelling narratives. Retelling old stories can promote dialogue and encourage new forms of engagement with otherwise sedimented colonial encounters. Our challenge within the study of Nordic colonialism, and elsewhere, is to use these stories to create a new kind of “cosmopolitan” archaeology which foregrounds moral and ethical responsibilities and respect for cultural differences, and confronts the enduring inequalities which are increasing rather than decreasing in the contemporary world (Meskell 2009).

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