Chapter 1
Introduction: Situating Scandinavian Colonialism

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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 Sebro; 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)[1] 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

[1] 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 Nielss 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; Sebro; 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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