

Letter from the Guest Editors

NIELS BRIMNES, PERNILLE IPSEN, AND GUNVOR SIMONSEN

The present issue of *Itinerario* focuses on Scandinavian colonialism. As a chapter in the history of European expansion, Scandinavian colonialism has received little attention, both internationally and in the national historiographies of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Compared to the larger empires, Scandinavian colonialism was small and fragmented, but the colonial past is, nevertheless, important in relation to the national historiographies of the Scandinavian countries—in ways that have only become clearer today as processes of globalisation re-accentuate past colonial encounters and their echoes in contemporary European societies. Also, precisely because the Scandinavian colonial enterprise was marginal, we maintain that looking at colonialism from this perspective enables us to see aspects which are not as visible from more conventional vantage points.

Together the four articles by Már Jónsson, Søren Rud, Karina Skeie, and Sunniva Engh, show the multifaceted nature of Scandinavian engagements with the colonial world that emerged during the period of European expansion. Broaching histories of whaling, a boarding house for Greenlanders in Copenhagen, Norwegian missionaries in Madagascar, and Scandinavian development aid to the “third world”, the articles show how Scandinavian colonialism went both South and North and how it encompassed the establishment of colonies by companies and states. Indeed, as we hope to show with the selection of these four articles, Scandinavian colonialism was developed by states, but cannot be reduced to state enterprises; it was also developed by non-state agents such as traders, scientists, sailors and missionaries.

The four articles were all originally presented at conferences hosted by the research network *Global Cultural History. Studies in Colonialism and Post-Colonialism*, funded by the Danish Research Council from 2006-2008. The editors would like to thank the Research Council, the authors, the anonymous readers, and the many members of the research network for an inspiring and continuing conversation about colonialism and post-colonialism in general, and Scandinavian colonialism in particular. It is our hope that this issue of *Itinerario* will be followed by new initiatives and discussions of how to confront the challenges posed by the soiled and slippery historical path of Scandinavian colonialism.