

Ancient vases and ancient regimes. On the relationship between P.O. Brøndsted and Prince Christian Frederik

by Christian Gottlieb

In November 1820 the protagonist of this symposium, Peter Oluf Brøndsted (fig. 1), published a learned essay presenting his interpretation of an inscription in classical Greek engraved on an antique bronze helmet recently uncovered in the ruins of Olympia in Greece. The essay was written in Italian in a scholarly style, extensively footnoted, published by a learned society in Naples, and was evidently intended as a contribution to the advancement of archaeology and classical studies, the author's own professional disciplines.¹

On the face of it, this essay hardly seemed the sort of publication likely to cause a controversy outside the scholarly circles for which it was intended. But so it came to be. Whatever the scholarly merit of the essay it was to suffer what is surely a rare fate for such essays: to be a cause of embarrassment at the highest political level and a minor diplomatic crisis. The problem was not the essay's topic or the author's interpretation of it but the fact that this publication openly combined Brøndsted's relations to the royal court of Denmark with his unauthorized political opinions, briefly pronounced in the preface. As expressly stated on the title page, Brøndsted occupied a position as a so-called "Royal Danish Court Agent to the Holy See" in which

capacity he appeared to act as a sort of official representative of the King of Denmark². Moreover, the text of the essay was preceded by an inscription to the heir to the Danish throne, Prince Christian Frederik, who happened also to be present in Naples and with whom Brøndsted had spent a considerable amount of time (fig. 2). A rather conventional expression of veneration for the Prince, it might seem, innocent enough in itself, but not in combination with the political opinions expressed in the preface. Here Brøndsted openly declared his praise of the King of the Two Sicilies for having just granted his people freedom, "the most precious gift that can be given to mortals", i.e. for having yielded to the revolutionary demand for a democratic constitution, modelled on the Spanish one of 1812 – whereby Brøndsted had expressed an opinion directly opposed to that of his own Danish government, as well as of other European governments, the Austrian one in particular, bent on preserving the political order recently re-established at the congress of Vienna after the upheaval of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

Brøndsted had made a *faux pas*, in other words. His essay on an ancient *iscrizione* had turned into an

1. Brøndsted 1820.

2. On Brøndsted's work as a diplomat and the actual significance of his title, see the article by Otto Schepelern in this publication.



Fig. 1: P.O.Brøndsted, portrait, oil on canvas, by C.A. Jensen, 1842. This portrait, which is a replication of the one from 1827, was probably executed after Brøndsted's death. (Mikala Brøndsted, cat no. 14).

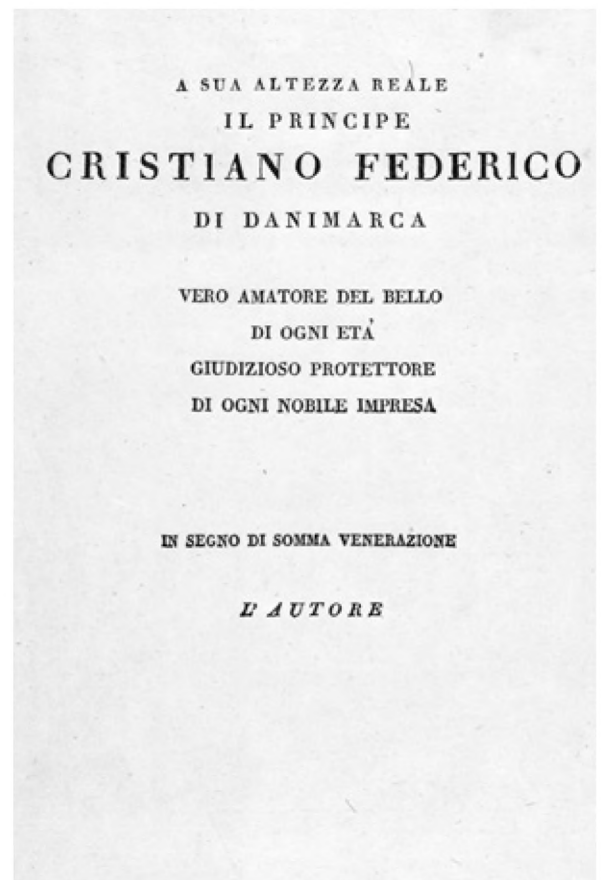
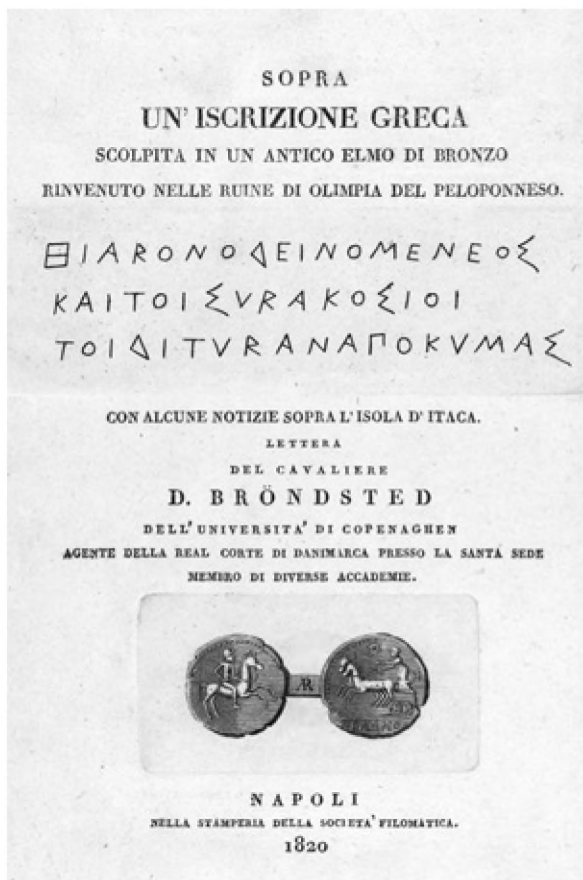


Fig. 2: Brøndsted's ill-fated inscription to Christian Frederik seems innocent enough as it stands: "To his Royal Highness, Prince Christian Frederik of Denmark, true lover of beauty in any age, judicious protector of any noble enterprise, as a sign of the highest respect, the author". Copy of *Brøndsted* 1820 in The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

actual *indiscrezione* that became a particular embarrassment for the man to whom the essay was dedicated, Prince Christian Frederik, who as a result soon found himself the centre of much unwanted attention from representatives of the great powers of Europe. However, despite the embarrassment over the essay and despite the fact that Brøndsted obviously did not change his opinion – though he never again publicly implicated the Prince, – this incident evidently did not lead to a break of relations between them. In 1820

their acquaintance was still relatively new and untried but as evidenced by their respective diaries and correspondence both men seem to have remained on friendly and trustful terms for life, i.e. for another twenty odd years. This fact throws light on the interests, opinions and characters of both parties whose mutual relation is therefore worthy of consideration. However, as there are several aspects of this long-standing relationship, the present contribution will concentrate primarily on one of the two aspects re-

vealed by Brøndsted's archaeological essay with particular emphasis on the early 1820s.³

The most obvious side of Brøndsted's relationship to Christian Frederik was their mutual interest in the history and culture of classical antiquity, Greece and Rome in particular, as well as in contemporary art, much of which was inspired by classical models. This was the basis of their relationship and evidently its most important and enduring aspect. In pursuit of their shared interest, Brøndsted as the senior (by six years) became a mentor, guide and interlocutor to Christian Frederik whose aspiration to refine his taste and understanding led him to become an able and dedicated collector of antiquities. In this connection Brøndsted exercised an important influence on Christian Frederik, both as a general intellectual inspiration and more concretely as a collaborator in acquiring a large number of the antique vases, coins, artefacts and other items collected by the Prince and now forming an important part of the collections of the National Museum of Denmark. Acquisition of contemporary art, either originals or copies, was also an important part of their mutual dealings. Numerous letters from Brøndsted to the Prince and by far the most of the Brøndsted-related en-

tries in the Prince's diaries refer to these activities. Earlier studies of the Prince's collections, chiefly by Niels Breitenstein and by some of the editors of these Acts, have touched on this side of their relationship.⁴

The other aspect of their relationship, which is in focus here, is the role played by Brøndsted's political persuasions and his interest in the current affairs of his time. Strikingly illustrated by his essay of 1820, this aspect is otherwise more elusive and perhaps less mutual but even so it remains a recurring theme in their acquaintance. This is due to the fact that Brøndsted's preface was not merely a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm inspired by momentous events he had recently witnessed, but constituted an authentic expression of long-held persuasions. As an outspoken sympathizer with the various liberation movements arising in Europe in the 1820s and '30s, Brøndsted watched revolutions unfold with a mixture of rejoicing and revulsion: in Naples and Palermo in 1820, in Paris in 1830 and the Greek struggle against Turkish domination throughout the decade. Although shocked by the anarchy unleashed by some of these revolts he greeted the political changes as necessary and beneficent.⁵ A persuasion that he did not conceal either from his friends

3. This article is based on preserved papers of both parties. The extensive diaries of Prince Christian Frederik/King Christian VIII, housed in RA (The Danish National Archives/Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen), have been published largely in their entirety in Christian VIII 1943-1995. The relevant correspondence by Brøndsted remains mostly unpublished and is preserved partly in RA, partly in KB (The Royal Library/Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen). While RA keeps 65 letters from Brøndsted to Christian Frederik of 1813-1842, among which also a few drafts of replies in Christian Frederik's hand in RA, 202 (archive no. 202: Kongehuset, Christian 8, Breve fra forskellige); KB keeps draft copies of those of the period September 1814 – October 1825 in KB, NKS (New Royal Collection/Ny kongelig Samling), 1578 (1578 2°: P.O. Brøndsted, Brevkopibog 1814-25, I-II). KB, NKS, 4648 (4648 4°: Breve til P.O. Brøndsted, hans børn og sønnesønner o.a.) contains one letter of 1842 from Brøndsted to Christian VIII and three letters of 1821 from Christian Frederik to Brøndsted. In addition to this material some of Brøndsted's letters to other correspondents have also been consulted: Thus a series of 17 letters of 1818-1840 from Brøndsted to the Aagaard family (Brøndsted's in-laws), also kept in KB (thanks are due to Dr Jesper Brandt Andersen for directing my attention to this),

also refer to his dealings with Christian Frederik. Brøndsted's letters to his friend Jens Møller, published in Brøndsted 1926, are also relevant in this connection. So are Brøndsted's diplomatic reports sent mostly from Rome 1819-1823 to the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen, Baron Niels Rosenkrantz. The series comprises 53 reports of which all except no. 1, 45-47 and 51 are preserved in RA, 302 (archive no. 302: The Department of Foreign Affairs 1770-1848), 2307 (parcel no. 2307: Reports from the royal agent in Rome, Professor Brøndsted, and from the Danish consul Louis Chiaveri, 1819-1832). Draft copies of these reports can be found in KB, NKS, 1578. Some of Brøndsted's papers have also been posthumously published as extracts from his "travel diaries" by N.V. Dorph in Brøndsted 1850; it has a somewhat misleading title because about half the text derives not from his diaries but from his letters but without indication that this is the case and without citing exact dates and recipients.

4. Breitenstein 1951; Galster 1967; J.S. Jensen 2000; Kromann & Jensen 1986; Lund 2000; Rasmussen 2000b; Rasmussen 2006.

5. On the political ideas of Brøndsted, see the article by Isager in this publication.

or, as demonstrated, from his royal protector who was even publicly confronted with it.

Although Brøndsted's political ideas were hardly original in themselves, there is something striking about his behaviour in this regard that begs the question whether he was expecting more from the Prince than the latter was able or willing to give, or whether he was merely being insensitive and short of intuition. In any case Brøndsted can hardly have been unaware of the Prince's situation: Although the Prince was himself reputed to entertain liberal inclinations he was after all the heir to a kingdom which, though benignly enlightened, still remained one of the formally most autocratic monarchies of Europe. As long as Christian Frederik remained Prince, he was hardly in a position to realize whatever liberal intentions he might have had.

Thus, when considering this aspect of their relationship, the question remains: which role, if any, did Brøndsted's political opinions play? What did he expect from uttering them to the Prince? Sympathy, secret agreement perhaps, or even a chance to influence him? And did they in fact matter to the Prince? – Or, did he simply see them as one of Brøndsted's idiosyncrasies that he chose to tolerate?

Relevant questions, surely. Unfortunately the answers provided by the sources are not clear. What we get are merely hints, suggestions, possibilities that leave plenty of room for speculation and guesswork. This is due to the one-sidedness of the sources. While Brøndsted's opinions are clearly expressed, if not always wholly consistent, in his correspondence and papers, the Prince's papers are sadly silent about how he reacted to these opinions. That he considered them of some importance in some instances is evident, but to

what extent he agreed with them remains unclear. The following brief survey of stages of their relationship is therefore open to several interpretations.

The relationship began in 1813 and lasted with varying degrees of intensity until interrupted by Brøndsted's sudden death in 1842. It began tenuously by correspondence and on Brøndsted's initiative. After seven years abroad Brøndsted had returned to Denmark in September 1813, preceded by the rumour of his exploits in Greece. On the 28th of that month he had written the Prince to inform him of his return and of the learning he had acquired on Greece and Italy as well as of his regret that they were unable to meet. The Prince, who had been made aware of Brøndsted's existence at least as early as 1810, had replied favourably, confirming his interest in things Greek and Italian and also regretting that he could not be among those welcoming Brøndsted back home.⁶ The relationship had been initiated but it was to be a number of years before they actually met.

The reason why they were unable to meet in 1813 was that in May of that year the Prince had left Denmark to take up the post of governor of Norway, then still part of the united kingdom of Denmark-Norway, in which capacity he was to play an important part whose details cannot be recounted here. Suffice it to say that when Denmark, at the peace negotiations in January 1814, was forced to cede Norway to Sweden, it became the governor's duty to arrange the transfer of Norway to Swedish authority, much to the protest of many Norwegians. In sympathy with the protesters the Prince then chose to disregard his duty and sided with the rebellious Norwegians in their struggle to create an independent Norwegian state. In a few months of intense activity a democratic constitution was drawn up,

6. RA, 202, 128 (parcel no. 128: Bræstrup-Bülöw), Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Copenhagen the 28th of September 1813 and undated draft reply in Christian Frederik's hand. Christian Frede-

rik had been informed of Brøndsted's travels in a letter of the 7th of July 1810 from Hans West, Danish consul in Rome; it is published in Christian VIII 1965, II, 166.

enacted by the National Assembly at Eidsvold on 17 May 1814 while Christian Frederik was hailed as a hero of liberation and elected King of Norway, the first such for more than 400 years and even a constitutional one. In a sudden, unexpected development the Norwegian people had made a claim to national sovereignty and had acquired the most liberal constitution in Europe. However, since this development was not acceptable to Sweden or to the great European powers backing the peace, Norwegian independence was to be short-lived. After merely five months, and following a brief war, Sweden eventually prevailed: Norway was united with Sweden, though reluctantly allowed to keep its constitution, and Christian Frederik had to leave Norway, a sadder but a wiser man, returning to Denmark in October 1814.⁷

However, though the Prince had lost in the end, he had also succeeded in making a dramatic statement that inspired the admiration of many liberals at home and abroad, as well as the suspicion of the supporters of absolutism, including that of his cousin King Frederik VI. Among his liberally minded admirers was P.O. Brøndsted. In several letters of late 1814 and early 1815 to acquaintances abroad he refers to the Norwegian situation, expressing his sympathy with “our noble Prince Christian Frederik” who “threatened by all the world”, and though elected King of Norway, has had to leave the country again. In a letter of the 16th of February 1815 there is perhaps a hint of disappointment that “our good Prince C.F.” was not up to “that great task” of liberating Norway.⁸ Even so, Brøndsted is quite aware that confronted with such overwhelming opposition, the Prince would not have stood a chance. Thus it seems that Brøndsted, from an early stage of his relationship with the Prince, had good reason to be-

lieve the Prince to be a champion of liberal constitutional government, which Brøndsted hoped to see introduced in his own country before his death.⁹ Whether this was also how the Prince saw himself is still a matter of debate, perhaps a question which he might not have been quite decided about himself. In any case it was to be an important issue on his later travels in Europe and in his dealings with influential European peers among whom it was important to play down his liberal reputation.

Although the subsequent period, late October 1814 to late June 1818, was one of only two extended periods when both men found themselves in Denmark at the same time, there is no indication that they actually met. For most of this time Christian Frederik resided in Odense to fulfil the mostly ceremonial post of Governor of Funen, while Brøndsted tried to settle down as husband, father and professor at the University of Copenhagen.

Their first actual meeting appears to have taken place in Altona, in November 1818 according to Brøndsted’s correspondence. By this time the Prince and his wife were returning to Denmark after touring Germany and Austria since June, while Brøndsted, after the death of his wife, was on his way back to Rome to take up his new post of Royal Danish Court Agent and, more importantly for himself, to prepare his great work on his travels and researches in Greece for publication. In a letter to his family Brøndsted recounts how he was delayed in his departure from Hamburg in order to meet the Prince and his entourage for a few days. Although there is a hint of irritation at the delay, Brøndsted obviously comes away with a good impression of the Prince: He has a clear mind and a good understanding of the arts and sciences as well as a natu-

7. On Christian Frederik’s part in these developments, cf. the biographical studies in Linvald 1952, Linvald 1962, Linvald 1965a, Langslet 2000, 44-170.

8. KB, NKS, 1578, I, 2, thus Brøndsted to Consul Gropius in Plön, Copenhagen the 1st of September 1814; KB, NKS, 1578, I, 9, Brøndsted to Countess Lunzi on the island of Zante, Copenhagen

the 12th of December 1814; KB, NKS, 1578, I, 12, Brøndsted to an unidentified recipient in Frankfurt, Copenhagen the 16th of February 1815.

9. According to a comment of the early 1820s, cited from Brøndsted 1850, 148.

ral, not princely feigned, respect for the highest aspirations of human thought. Above all, the Prince appears to Brøndsted full of heartfelt kindness and good nature.¹⁰ Thus, Brøndsted was clearly sympathetic to the Prince from the beginning but to what extent it was reciprocated is not known; the Prince made no record of the meeting.

The following years, 1819-1821, were probably the most intense period of their relationship. This is documented by a considerable number of letters from Brøndsted (at least 19 from 1819-1821) and numerous entries in the Prince's diaries in the course of a year: 26 entries refer to Brøndsted, of which 22 are records of meetings from December 1819 to December 1820, making an average of almost one meeting every two weeks. Much of the time was devoted to excursions to ancient monuments, collections, acquisition of ancient vases, coins and other artefacts. Both parties were now abroad again, Brøndsted since late October 1818, to stay away with a short interruption in 1827 for 14 years; the Prince and his wife since May 1819 on their grand tour of Europe lasting until late August 1822. Their first meeting this time took place, appropriately, in Rome on the 23rd of December 1819. The Prince had notified Brøndsted of his expected arrival in a letter of the 12th of November, while Brøndsted, in his capacity of Court Agent, had secured free passage for the Prince from Cardinal Consalvi. In his reply of the 6th of December, Brøndsted took the opportunity of welcoming the Prince to Rome in the most flourishing manner:

“Welcome, Gracious Lord, most heartily welcome

to wonderful and memorable Italy! In the spring we were many Danes in Rome, now we are but few and the best among us, our Albert Thorvaldsen has also left, but we who remain shall all now [...] experience the great happiness of seeing our noble Danish Prince, the true protector of the sciences and the arts, in glorious *Roma*, – oh how much is contained in these four small letters, and how joyful I am that Your Highness shall now behold the great she-wolf – *she* is forever young and her breasts are full of strong and healthy milk”.¹¹

In a passage like this it is hard to overlook the flattery, characteristic also of many other letters to the Prince, which may leave us to wonder about its sincerity. This is not easily determined, however, since Brøndsted's attitude to royalty and, in particular, to nobility, was at this time rather ambiguous: Whereas in some instances he is quite clear about his disdain for courtly and aristocratic life and no stranger to the idea of a world without princes, he is no less clear when, elsewhere, he pronounces himself to be a “royalist of all my heart because I consider this form supremely suited to further true happiness and blessing in a state”.¹² Still, it should be noted that the way he addresses the Prince, as noble and gracious protector of the arts and sciences, differs only in degree and lavishness, not in content, from the way he speaks about him to others. Particularly in letters to his family his judgment of the Prince is always sympathetic, even more so as they get to know each other better. Thus, it seems that although Brøndsted was no great admirer of

10. RA, 202, 128 and draft in KB, NKS, 1578, I, 68, Brøndsted to his family, Hamburg the 17th of November 1818. Brøndsted refers briefly to the meeting in his third letter to Christian Frederik, Munich the 5th of January 1819.

11. “Vær velkommen, Naadige Herre, ret af Hjertet velkommen i det skjønnede og minderige Italia! Vi vare i foraaet mange danske i Rom, nu ere vi ikkun faa, og den Bedste af os, vor Albert Thorvaldsen er ogsaa borte – men vi Andre ville [...] nu have den store Lykke at see vor ædle danske Prinds, Videnskabens og Konstens sande Velynder i det herlige *Roma* – o! hvor saare meget indbefattes ej i disse fire smaa Bogstaver – og hvor det glæder mig at Ds. Højhed nu selv kan skue den store Ulvinde –

Hun er evig ung og hendes Bryster fulde af sund og kraftig Melk”. Brøndsted's emphasis, RA, 202, 128, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Rome 6 Dec. 1819. Draft in KB, NKS, 1578, I, 114 in which he refers to Christian Frederik's letter of the 12th of November. Cf. RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, Rome the 29th of November 1819, and Brøndsted to Jens Møller, Rome the 7th of December 1819 in Brøndsted 1926, 135.

12. Cf. the letter to Jens Møller, Paris the 30th of November 1823 in: Brøndsted 1926, 151-2 expressing his admiration of “happy Switzerland”, which manages to live well *without* princes; Cf. also a diary entry of 1824 in Brøndsted 1850, 139.

princes in general, he *was* an admirer of this particular Prince. If there may be a measure of conscious flattery in this and other similar passages there may be no less a measure of authentic admiration, probably the same admiration expressed so unfortunately in the dedication and preface of his essay from about a year later.

On arriving in Rome the Prince was immediately greeted by Brøndsted, at whose place he was annoyed to see for the first time the new version of the Danish state coat of arms without the Norwegian Lion. The following days around Christmas and the new year were also spent in Brøndsted's company visiting St. Peter's Basilica, meeting Pope Pius VII, seeing the Vatican including the Sistine Chapel and as many ancient monuments as possible. The schedule was quite hectic and, as Brøndsted comments in his report to Foreign Secretary Rosenkrantz, he found the Prince "absolutely indefatigable" in his desire to see everything, reflect on everything and compare things. Brøndsted even confesses to have been driven almost tired by the Prince on some occasions. "It is impossible", Brøndsted concludes, "to follow a plan of study with more zeal than that demonstrated by the Prince during his days of excursions in Rome".¹³

After a fortnight in Rome the Prince and his entourage travelled on south to Naples where he became a guest of King Ferdinand of the Two Sicilies. But already in late January he again met Brøndsted who had also come to Naples. Here Brøndsted presented his wish to obtain a two to three-months leave from his duties as Court Agent in order to travel in the spring with his acquaintance Lord Guilford to the Ionian Islands and Sicily to collect material for his book. Brøndsted had written elaborately to the Prince on the

27th of January, stating that he had already obtained permission from Rosenkrantz but also declaring that he would refrain from going if it would in any way displease His Highness. Despite this assurance of compliance it is notable that in this matter Brøndsted was not being entirely honest with the Prince. As revealed by the documents it was only in his report of the 3rd of February that he asked Rosenkrantz for the permission he claimed to the Prince to have obtained already. However this may be, the Prince certainly sensed that this project was important to Brøndsted, as he commented in his diary on the 1st of February that Brøndsted seemed so eager to go that the Prince would not let him feel the inconvenience of his absence from Rome to which the Prince planned to return. There is a rare hint here of irritation on the Prince's part but also of indulgence. Obviously, Brøndsted must have been able to count on the Prince's favour.¹⁴

In any case it was to prove an important decision, since this is the reason why Brøndsted, come July, found himself in the Sicilian capital Palermo a few days before the outbreak of the revolution, which he therefore happened to witness. The experiences of the two weeks he spent there during the upheavals must have left a considerable impression on him, as witnessed by his detailed reports to the Department of Foreign Affairs: "Since last night Palermo is in the grip of total rebellion", begins his 19th report of the 16th-17th of July containing a vivid, almost hour-by-hour eyewitness account of revolutionary developments in the city. About ten days later, on the 27th of July, followed another copious account of fighting, rioting and murders as well as of the political circumstances. It should be noted that Brøndsted made no attempt to disguise or

13. "Il est impossible de suivre son plan d'étude avec plus de zèle que celui que le Prince a montré en continuant ses journées d'excursions à Rome". Christian Frederik's diary for the 23rd, 25th and 27th of December 1819 and the 2nd of January 1820 in Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 1, 171, 174, 177 and 188. RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, Rome the 1st of January 1819 [i.e. 1820] and the 8th of January 1820. Also Brøndsted to his family, Rome the 17th of January 1820, in which he declares

of the princely couple, Christian Frederik and his wife Princess Caroline Amalie, that he has grown much more fond of them as he has been spending all day every day in their company.

14. RA, 202, 128 and draft in KB, NKS, 1578, I, 122, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Naples the 27th of January 1820; RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, Naples the 3rd of February 1820, report no. 14; Christian Frederik's diary for the 1st of February 1820, Christian VIII 1943-1995, I, 1, 210.

diminish the importance of this ugly side of the revolution; on the contrary, he quite abhorred the anarchy, violence and bestiality perpetrated by an unrestrained mob even as he remained positive towards the prospect of political change. This was also the message to the Prince to whom, on the day before, he had written a letter with enclosed copies of his latest reports to Rosenkrantz. From arriving Neapolitan papers Brøndsted had learned of the revolution taking place simultaneously in Naples and got the impression that, unlike in Palermo, violence and murder had not soiled the Neapolitan revolution which caused a “possibly fortunate change of government in the capital”¹⁵.

That Brøndsted’s accounts of the Palermitan revolution also left an impression on the Prince is obvious from the fact that he paraphrases these reports extensively in his diary. This should be seen against the background of the almost simultaneous events in Naples, where revolution had broken out on the 3rd of July, so that the Prince too became a first hand witness to the unfolding of revolutionary events. In both Naples and Palermo the people had demanded a constitution, a demand that had been swiftly granted by the Crown Prince on the King’s authority. In the Prince’s diary these events are recounted extensively and continue to occupy him for the rest of the year even to the extent of his attending meetings of the newly established Neapolitan parliament on several occasions through October and November.

So it did for Brøndsted whose reports to Rosenkrantz keep referring to and commenting on the situation in Naples and Sicily, particularly as the prospect of foreign intervention arose and was eventually realized. The occupation in February-March 1821 of the

Kingdom of the Two Sicilies by Austrian troops in order to undo the political changes found no sympathiser in Brøndsted who did not conceal his views either from Rosenkrantz or from the Prince. Thus, there was no shortage of important issues to discuss and, although the sources do not reveal details, these developments seem most likely to have been the subject of much discussion between the Prince and Brøndsted after the latter’s return, with some difficulty, to Naples by the end of July. On the 5th of August Brøndsted talked a great deal about Sicily, according to the Prince’s diary, and on the 10th of the same month the Prince remarks that “Brøndsted read to me his report on the revolt in Palermo”, and then adds, “Seen his coins”, a remark that seems characteristic of the way in which their mutual archaeological and numismatic interests sometimes provided the occasion for discussion of current affairs. Staying in Naples evidently provided plenty of such occasions, as both the Prince and Brøndsted stayed on here until returning together to Rome in late November.¹⁶

Such was the background that spurred Brøndsted to write the ill-fated preface and dedication of his essay in November 1820. Perhaps in a mistaken belief that the Prince, with whom he had shared his experience, thought along the same lines or without considering that even if he did, he was not in a position to say so. Apparently without realising it, Brøndsted had publicly stated the fact that a seemingly official representative of the King of Denmark and a protégé of the heir to the Danish throne sympathised with political ideas and actions which soon after led the Austrian government to military intervention. That Brøndsted did not realize the implications of his essay is suggested by the

15. RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted’s reports to Niels Rosenkrantz no. 18-20 of the 9th, 16th and 27th of July 1820; RA, 202, 128 and draft in KB, NKS, 1578, I, 149, letter to Christian Frederik of the 26th of July 1820.

16. Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 1, 259ff., 263, Christian Frederik’s diary for 17th-27th of July, the 5th and 10th of August 1820 and numerous entries for the rest of the year; RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted’s reports no. 21-23, 26-34 and 38, the 1st of September 1820 – the 5th of June 1821, to Niels Rosenkrantz.

fact that he himself notified Rosenkrantz of its publication and of the fact that he had taken “the liberty of dedicating it to H.H. Prince Christian”¹⁷.

A year later this preface, as mentioned, was to cause the Prince considerable embarrassment as he arrived in Paris. Here he was informed by the Danish envoy that his political views were regarded with much suspicion by representatives of the great powers, because they were seen as too liberal, even quasi-revolutionary. Among the chief causes of this was the Prince’s own prolonged sojourn in Naples and the “inconsiderate preface” by Brøndsted. This was certainly a problem. After Norway the Prince had an image to repair relative to his peers in other European countries, and this reparation was evidently part of the purpose of his grand tour. Now this fragile edifice was being threatened and the Prince had a lot of explaining to do, not least because of the inconsiderate remarks of *il cavaliere* Brøndsted.¹⁸

It should be noted that already before the Prince’s arrival in Paris, the issue had been raised by Foreign Secretary Rosenkrantz who, in a letter of the 28th of April 1821, had taken exception to the opinions expressed by Brøndsted in his reports. In a friendly but unmistakable manner he had made it clear to Brøndsted that his judgment of developments in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies did not coincide with that of the Royal Danish Court or of the Danish government. However, this reprimand did not lead Brøndsted to change his opinions nor even to realize that his official position as Court Agent implied certain limits to his

freedom of expression. In a long and spirited reply of the 13th of June Brøndsted defended himself, arguing that there was no point in merely repeating to others what they already believed. It was much more useful to hear an authentic expression of differing views. Brøndsted also used the occasion to state his case to the Prince to whom he wrote three days later promising to send the Prince a copy of his reply to Rosenkrantz. As formulated here it is clear that Brøndsted had come to feel quite free to speak his mind to the Prince: “I have as I believe replied sufficiently to these pronouncements [by Rosenkrantz] in my last report of 13 June; and as Your Royal Highness has infused in me the trust on which the noble Prince can count when he has decided to become a powerful supporter of the future welfare of [our] common fatherland, I shall dare next week to communicate to Your Highness a copy of my last report to Councillor Rosenkrantz, believing that no honest man and loyal subject can communicate to this Prince anything better than the full conviction of his soul on some of the most important questions of life”.¹⁹

On the basis of this statement it is to be believed that this is in fact what Brøndsted had become used to do: to speak his mind to the Prince, and although the latter has left us practically no clue as to what he thought of Brøndsted’s opinions, it may be surmised that since the Prince continued to listen to them, he cannot have found them wholly disagreeable. A case in point may be found in Brøndsted’s next letter of the 18th of July 1821 where he refers to pronouncements by the Prince concerning the matter of Greece.

17. RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, Rome the 2nd of December 1820, report no. 23.

18. Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 2, 438ff.: “Notices sur les évènements du jour. Paris 1821-1822 par le Comte d’Oldenbourg [i.e.: Christian Frederik]”. Cf. Langslet 2000, 188-197.

19. “Jeg har, som jeg troer, tilstrækkeligen besvaret disse Ytringer [af Rosenkrantz] i min sidste Depeche af 13 Junij; og da Ds. Kongelige Højhed har indgivet mig den Tillid, som den ædle Fyrste kan regne paa naar han har besluttet at vorde en kraftig stytte for fælleds Fædrelands Velfærd i Fremtiden, saa vover jeg i næste Uge at meddele Ds. Højhed en Afskrivt af mit sidste Scriptum til GehejmeR. R[osenkrantz], menende at ingen ærlig

Mand og tro Undersaat kan meddele hin Fyrste noget bedre end sin Sjæls fuldeste Overbevisning om nogle af Livets Vigtigste Anliggender”. RA, 202, 128, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Rome the 16th of June 1821; RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, Rome the 13th of June 1821, report no. 39. It may be noted that a part of Brøndsted’s reply to Niels Rosenkrantz was published already when Christian Frederik was still alive in the short biography by J.P. Mynster: Brøndsted 1844b, I, 42f., a copy of which is still kept in Christian VIII’s library in HM the Queen’s Reference Library/H.M. Dronningens Håndbibliotek, Copenhagen.

Brøndsted here asserts that he sympathises entirely with the Prince's view of the Greek struggle for liberation, "the endeavours of the interesting and highly intelligent Greek nation to throw off the yoke of slavery". Brøndsted goes on to assure the Prince that as soon as he learns something further about the Greek situation he will report it to His Highness (fig. 3). This promise he fulfilled on later occasions in subsequent years by reporting and commenting on developments in Greece, a matter that was clearly also of importance to himself.²⁰

After the Prince's departure from Rome in April 1821, he and Brøndsted no longer had the opportunity to meet until Brøndsted's return to Denmark in May 1832. The relationship was kept alive, though, through correspondence: At least 18 letters were sent by Brøndsted to the Prince in the period 1822-30, some of which obviously reply to or refer to letters from the Prince. Even so, no references to Brøndsted are found in the Prince's diaries, which, after his return to Denmark and through most of this time, have been only sparsely kept, in some periods not at all. Most of Brøndsted's letters are concerned with the main aspect of their relationship: art, antiquities or the Prince's collections. Sometimes, however, Brøndsted dropped a comment on his political or cultural opinions. Thus, for instance, on the Prince's birthday, the 18th of September 1824, Brøndsted wrote the Prince from London to congratulate him. Being in London he took the opportunity to expand on his admiration of this wonderful city, "an immense mirror image of modern civilisation with all its vices and virtues", and more generally of English society, praising the marvellous fruits of a liberal constitution, civic freedom and legality, the experience of which he considers "highly joyful and re-

freshing for anybody with true humanity in his heart and a sincere conviction that precisely where the law obliges all to fulfil their duties, there the rights of all, also of those most highly stationed, are exercised at their best".²¹

This appreciation of London, and generally of England and English life, is quite consistent with remarks made elsewhere on the same topic as well as with his general preference for representative government, civil society and the rule of law. Still, one wonders what he expected the Prince to make of these comments, even after the embarrassment caused by his essay of 1820. Go Thou and do likewise?

The current-affairs theme made a dramatic return in 1830 when Brøndsted, again, happened to find himself in the middle of a revolution in the making, this time in Paris where his stay in some ways became a repetition of his experiences in Palermo ten years earlier. Thus on the 28th of July 1830 he wrote the Prince from Paris: "What sad occurrences I have to report to Your Royal Highness!" The letter is obviously hurried and rather disordered in its presentation, leading Brøndsted to ask the Prince gracefully to forgive the "haphazardness with which this has been written down in the midst of incessant thundering of gun and musket shooting, as they are fighting ceaselessly by the Porte St. Denis and on the Boulevard by Faubourg Poisonniere." Once again, Brøndsted's talents as a war correspondent gave the Prince a dense and vivid account of dramatic and important events, continued in his letter of the 4th of August, two days after the abdication of King Charles X. Once again Brøndsted is quite adamant in his condemnation of anarchy and mob rule but less explicit about his judgement of the political implications. This time, there is also no indication of how

20. On Brøndsted as a philhellene, see the investigation of Danish Philhellenism in Krarup 1986, particularly pp. 24-27.

21. "Erfaringen er i høi Grad glædelig og vederqvægende for Enhver, som har sand Humanitet i Hjertet og inderlig Overbevisning om, at just der, hvor Loven forpligter Alle til at opfylde

deres Pligter, just der hjemles Alles, ogsaa de mest Ophøiedes Rettigheder bedst". RA, 202, 128 and draft in KB, NKS, 1578, II, 85, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, London the 18th of September 1824. Over the years Brøndsted many times wrote specifically to congratulate the Prince on his birthday.



Fig. 3: Bust of Prince Christian Frederik appropriately clad in ancient Roman attire, sculpted by Bertel Thorvaldsen in Rome in 1821 and shipped home to Denmark by Brøndsted in May of the same year. Property of Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen. Photo by Ole Woldbye.

the Prince reacted to Brøndsted's account or to the developments themselves.²²

In the last decade of Brøndsted's life, from his return to Denmark in May 1832 until his death on the 26th of June 1842, he began again to have meetings with the Prince. Now their meetings were not nearly so often, though. 28 meetings are recorded in the Prince's diaries in this period, averaging 2-3 times a year, while 27 letters are preserved. By far the most of these meetings, as recorded by the Prince, and most of the letters were concerned, as usual, with ancient vases, coins, art, lectures on excavations etc. However, now and then, the current-affairs theme appeared again, as on the 4th of March 1834 when Brøndsted read a lecture on Ali Pascha of Joanina or, about a year later, on the 26th of February 1835, on Greece. Already in 1833 he had donated a new publication of his to the Prince, one of several adorned with a personal, handwritten inscription (no more printed ones!). The book in question was his edition of the deceased German major Friedrich Müller's description of the military situation in Greece in 1827-28 (*Denkwürdigkeiten aus Griechenland*, Paris 1833) in whose preface he expressly describes himself as a philhellene, confirming publicly his continued interest in the current affairs of his time.²³

On the 3rd of December 1839 the old King Frederik VI died, after an effective reign of 55 years, and Prince Christian Frederik ascended the throne as King Chris-

tian VIII. This change of government had been long awaited, particularly by liberals hoping that the erstwhile leader of the Norwegian rebellion of 1814 would now grant his own country a similar constitution. However, as it soon became clear that the new King had no immediate plans of constitutional change these expectations gave way to widespread disappointment, a sentiment that Brøndsted might be expected to have shared. However, if he did, he didn't say. On the contrary, at least in his letters to the King, he expressly stated his disapproval of such critics. Being in London at the time, he only had second-hand experience of the change, but enough to judge the situation. On the 13th of December 1839 he had written to congratulate the King, praying that he and his reign would receive the blessing of God. About a month later, on the 14th of January 1840, having read of critical reactions in the papers, he wrote a long letter to the King to express his support: "... it seems to me that my dear compatriots should think more about the meaning of the well-known Italian saying "che va piano, va sano" [what goes gently goes soundly]. It seems neither appropriate to talk much about the Eidsvold Constitution before our reigning King has had the time to utter *his* opinion, or to preach to [him] the desirability of several changes while the body of the blessed [late] King is still resting in the palace opposite. Certain of Your Majesty's pronouncements to the good men of the town of Corsøer [on Zealand]... did no harm at all and would, as I

22. RA, 202, 128, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Paris the 28th of July and the 4th of August 1830. In a letter of the 25th of September 1830 he reports to Christian Frederik on the new French government, commenting that the new government will have an "ultraliberal colour which will neither suit nor in the smallest degree further the true happiness of this country".

23. Christian VIII 1943-1995, III, 98, 113, Christian Frederik's diary for the 4th of March 1834 and the 26th of February 1835. Apart from the essay on the Greek helmet four presentation copies with handwritten inscriptions for Christian Frederik are known to exist: Brøndsted 1832, now in the library of the department for Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities at the National Museum of Denmark; Brøndsted 1835a, now in the library of The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, The National Museum of Denmark; Müller 1833; Brøndsted 1834, both in HM The

Queen's Reference Library. The Reference Library's copy of Brøndsted 1826-1830a, splendidly bound in one volume (described in Rohde 1985, 191-209), bears no handwritten inscription and is therefore likely to have belonged to King Frederik VI to whom the printed dedication is addressed. In a letter to Christian Frederik from Paris the 14th of July 1830, RA, 202, 128, Brøndsted informs Christian Frederik that he has just sent a copy of the French edition of vol. II, just published, to the Prince and a copy of the German edition to the Princess. Of these only the copy for the Princess has been preserved in the Reference Library, the Library of Caroline Amalie, together with a copy of vol. I. Both are inscribed by the author to Princess Caroline Amalie and dated in Paris the 26th of January 1826 and the 1st of July 1830 respectively.

hope, have a good effect on our *radicals*. Radicalism is a rash on the bodies of most states in our days, a sickness [...] which can be very dangerous. With us it has until now only affected the *skin*, as far as I can judge; here, in England, it is much worse ...”²⁴

The sharp denunciation of radicalism is notable, but to what extent it implies that Brøndsted had now revised his views of twenty years earlier is not clear; nor is it known whether he appreciated the King’s hesitation as a sign of the latter’s cautious and gradualist approach, though the reference to the Italian proverb might suggest as much.

On the 26th of June 1842, Brøndsted died after a fall from his horse. By all appearances the relationship between Brøndsted and the king had remained intact right up to this point. The last entry in the King’s diary referring to Brøndsted dates from the 20th of March 1842 when the King had Brøndsted, H.C. Ørsted and others for dinner; while the last preserved letter from Brøndsted to the King is dated the 16th of April 1842. It is quite brief and seems merely to have accompanied an enclosed essay by Brøndsted mentioning two of the vases in the King’s collection. Thus, the relationship between the two can be said to have ended more or less on the same note as it began, with their shared interest in the history and remains of classical antiquity, but now informed by years of study and the accumulation of important collections.²⁵

However, although Brøndsted himself had died the

relationship was, in a sense, continued even beyond this point by the King’s efforts to have the unpublished parts of Brøndsted’s work published in a suitable form. According to the King’s diary the initiative came from Brøndsted’s daughter, Mrs Hall. Having settled the economic side of the matter (Brøndsted had died indebted²⁶ to the King), the King entrusted the task of editing his works to Mr N.V. Dorph, who in the following years published some of Brøndsted’s works. One of these, and the only one coming close to the splendour of his unfinished *Voyages*, was the edition of his work on the so-called “Ficoronian Cista” which came out in a folio edition in 1847, the year before the King died. For obvious reasons this work was not inscribed by the author but it still, in a sense, bears witness to an important relationship: “Published by Royal command”²⁷ proclaims the title page – as an appropriate last greeting from the relationship’s surviving party.²⁸

It was mentioned above that the political aspect of their relationship treated here was hardly the most important to either of them. Throughout their acquaintance ancient vases evidently predominated over ancient regimes. However, as demonstrated by this investigation, the issue of ancient regimes and their prospective substitution with new ones remained a recurring theme throughout their acquaintance. As an issue of great importance – to the Prince also on a very personal level – it had a potential for considerable tension: the desirability and feasibility of representative

24. “Ikkun synes det mig at mine kjære Landsmænd skulde bedre betænke Meningen med det bekendte italienske Ordsprog: “che va piano, va sano”. Det synes hverken passende, førend vor regjerende Konge har faaet Tid til selv at yttre *sin* Anskuelse, at tale meget om Eidsvoldconstitutionen eller at foredrage Regenten Ønskeligheden af adskillige Forandringer, imedens salig Kongens Liig endnu hviler i Paladset lige over for. Visse Yttringer af Ds. Majestæt til de gode Mænd fra Corsøer [...] skadede slet ikke, og ville, som jeg haaber, være af god Virkning paa vore *Radicaler*. Radicalismen er en Udslet paa de fleste Statslegemer i vore Dage, en Sygdom som [...] kan blive meget farlig. Hos os har den, saa vidt jeg skjønner, hidtil ikkun afficeret *Huden*; her, i England, er den meget værre, ...”. Brøndsted’s emphasis, RA, 202, 128, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, London the 14th of January 1840. On the 28th of June of that year Brønd-

sted attended the official coronation and anointment ceremony of Christian VIII in the Frederiksborg Castle Chapel.

25. Christian VIII 1943-1995, IV, 1, 205, Christian VIII’s diary for the 20th of March 1842; KB, NKS, 4648, Brøndsted to Christian Frederik, Copenhagen the 16th of April 1842.

26. Cf. the article by Niels Henrik Holmqvist-Larsen in this publication.

27. “Efter allerhöieste Befaling udgivet”.

28. Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 1-2, Christian Frederik’s diary for the 2nd and the 5th of February 1843, the 12th of March 1843, the 8th of January 1844, the 4th of February 1844, the 24th of March 1844, the 21st and 29th of April 1844, the 19th of January 1845, the 11th and 13th of May 1845, the 1st of January 1846, Langslet 2000, 333-41 and 379f.

constitutional government versus the well-trying principles of absolutism, which had existed in Denmark since 1660. The fact that the tension did not result in a break suggests that the Prince and King cannot have been wholly unsympathetic to Brøndsted's opinions. And, although this side of their relationship had no visible, tangible results, it is worth noting the little known fact that in the last year of the King's life he devoted much of his renowned energy to the preparation of precisely what Brøndsted had wanted to see before his death: the introduction of constitutional government. The granting of the constitution had been planned for the autumn of 1848 to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the Oldenburg dynasty and as a voluntary gift from the King to a mature people.²⁹ The sudden death of the King in January 1848 disrupted the plan and the introduction of the constitution was left to his son, Frederik VII – who was to exercise his father's command. Whether these plans were in any way inspired by Brøndsted is unknown. But it is not unlikely that the opinions voiced by Brøndsted over many years and the momentous experiences shared with him by the Prince contributed to the King's realization that the days of absolutism were numbered.

Thus, even if the ancient vases were a more important aspect of their relationship than the issue of ancient or new regimes, they provided the possibility for the commoner P.O. Brøndsted to talk with the heir to the throne about subjects that would have been unthinkable with any of Christian Frederik's predecessors. Their shared interest in archaeology, classical studies and the arts brought them together on a sort of common – even level ground – where they could converse on equal terms. For Brøndsted it provided an opportunity not merely to promote the professional interests of himself and others but also to present the Prince with political views which, if hardly original in themselves, were still quite bold and controversial. In the terms of the history of scholarship and as a tale of changing social mores the relationship between P.O. Brøndsted and Prince Christian Frederik is an illustration of the changes brought by the first half of the 19th century: the professional scholar of a non-aristocratic background who by virtue of his professionalism meets with the princely amateur and future king on equal terms.

29. Langslet 2000, 333-41 and 379 seq.