

Summing up: Towards a reappraisal of P.O. Brøndsted

by Ivan Boserup

I

I am convinced that I speak on behalf of all the participants of the Brøndsted Symposium when I start by congratulating the organizers for having taken such a brilliant initiative and to have planned it in all details so remarkably well. Peter Oluf Brøndsted is an important figure in 19th century scholarship. In Denmark, he embodies the shift, around 1820, from admiration and classicism to scholarship and historical criticism, having eloquently and with equal success taken part in both movements. However, it is not easy to come to grips with his singularly robust and self-conscious personality. He took himself for granted, and the object of his attention, though often changing (too often, according to both friends and critics, leaving work half-done), was always clear. The theme of this symposium, therefore, focusing on the international connections and roots of Brøndsted – *A Danish Classicist in his European Context* – was well chosen. As we have heard and seen during the symposium, Brøndsted was undoubtedly the most European of the Danish intellectuals of his time. Brøndsted travelled abroad for scholarly purposes, not because of ethnographic curiosity or in order to accumulate new inspiration (as for example the other great Danish traveller of the 19th century, Hans Christian Andersen). From his 25th year till he died aged 62, Brøndsted lived and worked half of the time in Rome, Paris, or London (but never set foot in Berlin, according to his friend and biographer J.P. Mynster). Brøndsted's remarkable ease at picking up languages allowed him to establish many contacts and many lasting friendships across Europe. Lively in company with others, he was never short of sharp opinions on a wide range of subjects, from classical art

and mythology to contemporary music and political issues, and he eagerly observed the organisation and progress of science and scholarship in the great capitals of pre- and early-industrial Europe. In scholarship, he sought to achieve the sublime, seeking his role models among the great names of classical antiquity no less than among the best scholars of his own time.

The program of the symposium was judiciously put together by the organizers. During the first session, Fani Maria Tsigakou and Ted Buttrey introduced the participants vividly and humorously into the material and mental reality that Brøndsted encountered in Athens in 1810, still a young and enthusiastic traveller rather than a self-conscious classical archaeologist. The wide range of approaches to the cultural heritage of Greece that were available to newcomers was made explicit through the contrasting of the focused surveys of captain Leake and the habits of antiquarians and treasure-hunters residing in Athens. Ida Haugsted followed up by giving a general presentation of the five companions of the “two youthful friends” Brøndsted and his brother-in-law Georg Koës, Haller von Hallerstein, Linck, Stackelberg, Cockerell, and Foster. The description of the small but selected and cosmopolite group, picked up in Paris and Rome, and welded together into a project-oriented team, formed a perfect introduction to Gorm Schou-Rode's presentation of Brøndsted's nearly complete set of *Travel Diaries*, kept in the Royal Library. A number of analyzed passages demonstrated the seriousness and professionalism of Brøndsted's reporting to himself of his topographical investigations in Greece – and the high standard of scholarship (textual reliability and extensive annotation) that characterizes the edition that is under

preparation under Schou-Rode's erudite hand. Given their importance as a source for the assessment of Brøndsted's scholarly development and stature, their publication, under the auspices of The Danish Society for Language and Literature (Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab), is eagerly awaited.

In the second session, four papers gave examples, from different quarters, of Brøndsted's amazing self-confidence and single-mindedness, and of his daring and highly unconventional ways. Thus, John Lund analyzed Brøndsted's report on his very first excavation (Karthæa, on the island of Keos, 1811), and showed how he had developed into a professional archaeologist overnight, so to speak. Jørgen Mejer's review of Brøndsted's posthumously published public lectures on his travels (1815-17), based on the *Diaries*, took up the important questions of the background, aims and impact of these highly original, border-crossing weekly Copenhagen events. Jørgen Steen Jensen demonstrated Brøndsted's remarkable self-confidence as director of and fundraiser for The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, an aspect of his personality displayed also by his beautiful and extraordinarily readable handwriting (fig. 1). Finally, Nadia Haupt, in her paper on Jacob Christian Lindberg and Brøndsted insisted on the latter's "directness" as a key aspect of his scholarly personality and reputation. Though often verbose, Brøndsted always expressed clear opinions. His scholarship was vast and solid, he was outspoken, and he was not accustomed to being overlooked, and so, in the perception of the highly intelligent and unconventional Jacob Lindberg, Brøndsted became a revered model of the unprejudiced, outspoken scholar.

The expectations raised by the first two sessions were not frustrated by the following. But it required the participants to make a mental turn-about. It was the other side of the coin, or the Nemesis of directness and self-confidence. Thus, Otto Schepeleern took up Brøndsted's outspokenness, unveiling him as a tolerated but

unsuccessful diplomat,¹ meddling and occasionally politicizing, and fundamentally unwilling to understand the narrow limits of free speech in an autocratic monarchy: a tragic hero, ahead of his time; intelligent, but not wise; idealistic, but without followers. Jakob Isager followed up on the specific issue of Brøndsted's untimely (if not scandalous) republican and "revolutionary" leanings, an issue that was looked upon with concern and severity by the kings and princes he served, and which taught Brøndsted to mind his tongue and pen. Tobias Fischer-Hansen, examining the scholarly outcome of Brøndsted's research on the topography and antiquities of the Northern coast of Sicily (1820), demonstrated that Brøndsted this time had embarked on a journey without the necessary preliminary preparation, and that he did not come to master the antiquities of Sicily as profoundly as he had mastered those of Greece ten years earlier. Finally, Bodil Bundgaard Rasmussen shed new light on Brøndsted as a collector and dealer of antiquities. She focused on his failure to strike a deal on what he considered to be a fitting home (the British Museum) for his select antiquities, which he hoped would help him out of his personal financial crisis.

The fourth and last session of the symposium did not answer the great questions that confronted Brøndsted's contemporaries and still confront us today: was Brøndsted a brilliant genius or a tragic hero? It did better. It created a dynamic harmony out of the apparently conflicting trends of the previous two. This final session – and thus the symposium in general – demonstrated that many sources have not yet been examined adequately, thus pointing out the need for more research on the multiple activities of Brøndsted and the many unused sources available. Brøndsted was not a fanatic letter-writer, but his correspondence, very sparsely published, and difficult to overview, is evidently a very promising source of information and of nuances of interpretation, as demonstrated by Christ-

1. Otto Schepeleern delighted the participants of the symposium by lecturing dressed in the impressive uniform which Brøndsted would have worn as Court Agent.

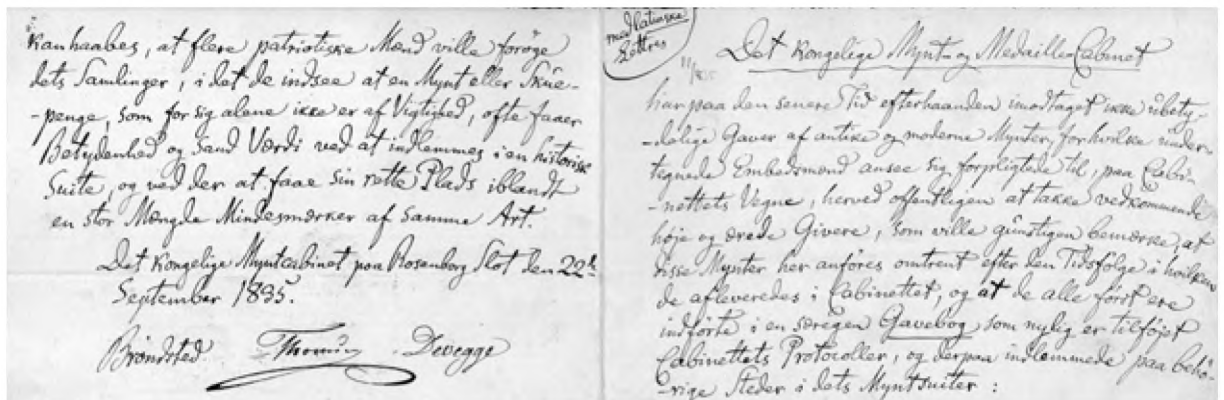


Fig. 1: Brøndsted's original manuscript to the introduction and conclusion of the first published report about the donations to The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, 1835. At the time it was unusual in Denmark to use Latin letters in hand-writing, nearly all people making use of a special Danish hand-writing, a variety of the German, 'Gothic' hand-writing. We may suppose that Brøndsted acquired his preference during his first travel to France. From the letterhead we see that Brøndsted also wanted Latin letters to be used in the print, the final word 'lettres' actually being French and not Danish ('med latinske Letteres'). the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, 11/1835.

ian Gottlieb (with important supplementary contributions by Jesper Brandt Andersen), while Jan Zahle, by combining a great variety of evidence scattered in various archives, showed Brøndsted to have been a visionary key contributor to the early development of the important collection of plaster casts of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. On her side, Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen set Brøndsted – inspired and inspiring – into the context of contemporary Danish classicism in decorative arts, while Niels Henrik Holmqvist-Larsen, from a historian's point of view, gave vivid examples of the importance, for any assessment of Brøndsted's background and activities, of carefully scrutinizing the complex prosopography and the intertwined social networks of early 19th century Copenhagen.

Before trying to assess the long-term importance of the 2006 Brøndsted Symposium, I should like to add two further comments. The first concerns Brøndsted's papers in the Royal Library; the other, a topic that has been only casually touched upon during the symposium, is Brøndsted and the University of Copenhagen.

II

The "papers" of Brøndsted in The Royal Library are spread over a number of individual archival units in

the so-called New Royal Collection. They include, partly intermingled, papers of both Koës and Brøndsted. While Brøndsted could sift the papers of Koës after the latter's untimely death in 1811, he had no opportunity to go through and organize his papers for posterity before his own fateful accident in 1842. Much remained for long time with the family, while substantial parts were bequeathed to the Royal Library during the 19th century. Much has vanished. The manuscripts of Brøndsted's 1815-17 public lectures were for a time in the Royal Library, on loan after Dorph's edition was printed 1844, but their fate or whereabouts are today unknown. One seeks vainly, too, the manuscripts or drafts of the announced sequel to the first Parthenon-volume ("Voyages III"), considered at that time to be the fruit of Brøndsted's greatest stroke of genius. The *Diaries*, as mentioned, are being prepared for publication, and Brøndsted's letter-books have also, with time, found their way to the Royal Library. These sources, together with a quite vast collection of notes and excerpts of Koës and Brøndsted, mostly from the years in Paris, but with many later additions, have already been used by Danish archaeologists and epigraphists (e.g. J.L. Ussing), in their quest for observations and evidence that deserved to be brought to the attention of the scholarly world. However it may still

Important years in the life of P.O. Brøndsted

Biographical sketch	1813	Returns to Copenhagen; appointed professor extraordinarius of philology
1780, 11.17 Born at the vicarage of Fruering near Skanderborg, Eastern Jutland	1813, 10.23	Marriage to Frederikke Koës
1785 The family moves to Horsens; Brøndsted attends "the learned school", the headmaster is Oluf Worm	1814	Takes part in the establishment of the Danish Bible Society
1796 Studies theology at the University of Copenhagen	1815	Member of the commission, which revises the translation of the New Testament
1802 Graduates in theology (<i>Attestats</i>) at the University of Copenhagen	1815-1817	The University lectures, 'Travels in Greece'. ("Reiser i Grækenland", published by N.V. Dorph, Copenhagen, 1844)
1804 Earns the gold medal of the University in philology	1815	Brøndsted gets the decoration 'Order of Dannebrog', often called the 'Knight's Cross'. Consequently, for the rest of his life he often uses the title Chevalier together with his family name (in Danish, French and Italian and perhaps other languages as well).
1804 Trip to Göttingen	1818, 5.10	Frederikke dies after having given birth to their third child. The three children are left to the care of Frederikke's sister Marie Aagaard and her husband Holger; they live at a small manor house, the Iselingen near Vordingborg, Southern Sealand
1806 Defends his thesis for a doctorate in philology, University of Copenhagen	1818	Appointed an agent of the Royal Danish Court to the Holy See
1806 Engaged to Frederikke Koës	1818	Sets out for Rome; visiting Goethe at Weimar on the way
1806 Sets out on the journey to Greece with his friend and brother-in-law, Georg Koës	1819	Arrival in Rome; receives Prince Christian Frederik (Christian VIII) and Princess Caroline Amalie when they arrive at Rome in December
1806 Stay in Weimar, also during the battle at nearby Jena		
1806-1809 Stay in Paris – prepares for the journey to Greece		
1809-1810 Stay in Rome - prepares for the journey to Greece		
1810 Brøndsted and Koës with a group of international fellow travellers arrive at Korfu in September		
1810-1813 Travels in Greece and Asia Minor		
1811 Georg Koës dies on Zante		
1811 Archaeological excavation on the island of Keos		
1812 Archaeological work on Aigina and at Philaleia		
1812 Meeting with Ali Pascha		

1820	Travels with Lord Guilford to the Ionian Islands, Malta and Sicily	1830	Second volume of "Voyages" published in a French and a German edition
1821	Stay in Naples with Christian Frederik; assists the Prince in the acquisition of a collection of antiquities, belonging to the former archbishop of Taranto	1831	London; engaged in work on Greek vases
1820-1823	Stay in Rome; working on the first volume of "Voyages"	1832	Return to Copenhagen; Appointed Keeper of The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals at Rosenborg and professor ordinarius in philology and archaeology. Few months afterwards Brøndsted sets out again.
1824	Travels to London to prepare an English edition of "Voyages". It never materializes due to the bankruptcy of the publisher	1832-33	Travels to Paris and London to collect casts of Greek coins for the Coin Cabinet
1825	Stay in Paris	1836	Agent for the British Museum at the Paris auction of the collection of Greek vases belonging to Edmé Durand; collects casts of coins for the Coin Cabinet
1826	First volume of "Voyages", which is published both in a French and a German edition	1839	President of the Society for the Promotion of Danish Literature
1826-27	Studies the Parthenon sculptures in London; elected as a member of the The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters	1839-40	Travels to Paris and London to collect casts of coins for the Coin Cabinet
1827	Visit in Denmark. In connection with a settlement of his diplomatic service, Brøndsted leaves this service, obtaining the title of a "Geheimelegationsraad"; this title is from then on often used in official letters	1842	Rector Magnificus of the University of Copenhagen
1828-30	London and Paris; studies the Parthenon sculptures for the second volume of "Voyages"	1842, 6.26	Brøndsted dies at the Frederik's Hospital, Copenhagen, after a few days before having fallen from his horse on a morning ride.

be possible to find material among the Koës and Brøndsted papers that throws new light on Brøndsted's complex personality, the stages of evolution of his plans, his engagement in many "marginal" activities, etc.

I shall give only one example. On two facing blank pages within a small notebook in Brøndsted's hand on "Phigalia" (Bassæ), which forms part of an alphabetically filed collection of excerpts and notes to himself (the major part of which, however, are in Koës' hand), one finds a plan for a series of 7 volumes of *Voyages dans la Grèce*. It seems to antedate the 8-volumes plan published by Brøndsted in December 1825. The two plans are summarized here, and compared with what Brøndsted actually published in *Voyages*:

Most significantly, the two volumes (5 & 6) of *Voyages* dedicated to the memory of Koës have disappeared from Brøndsted's plans by 1825. His decision, in 1826, to postpone to the 8th volume the Summary of the journey appearing as the introductory volume in earlier plans and as late as December 1825, as well as the insertion of a whole volume dedicated to his bronzes of Siris, are of the same kind as Brøndsted's decision (December 1825, at the latest) to drop the two Koës-volumes.

Thus, during the years following the display of the Elgin marbles in London (1826), Brøndsted definitively gave up the *Travels*-genre, more and more outdated and unsatisfactory for himself as an active scholar, and substituted for it the then-emerging *Exca-*

Phigalia-notebook	Promotional pamphlet of 1825	Published and ultimately planned as parts of <i>Voyages</i>
1. Summary of the journey	1. Summary of the journey	
2. Keos	2. Keos	1. Keos, 1826
		2. Parthenon 1, 1830
		<3. Parthenon 2>
	3. The Bronzes of Siris (Published separately in London 1836)	
3-4. Peloponnese, Phigalia, Delphi, Thessaly	4-6. Peloponnese, Phigalia, Delphi, Thessaly	
5-6. The life of Georg Koës. Greek and Turkish music in Koës's collections		
7. Ægina	7. Ægina	
	8. Current situation of Greece. Survey of all earlier travels in Greece	



Fig. 2: Stylograph executed by E. Fortling, 1841 or later, after C.A. Jensen's portrait from 1839. The stylography was a galvanoplastic way of making the task easier for the copperplate engraver. The procedure was invented in 1841. (Mikala Brøndsted, cat. no. 16).

ventions-genre. When he died in 1842, *Voyages dans la Grèce* consisted of 2 monographic volumes, neither of which, really, fitted into the Travel/Voyage concept. Vol. 3 was expected to contain Brøndsted's ingenious interpretation of the Parthenon pediment sculptures, not exactly a travel report from Greece.

III

By way of introduction to a brief comment on the relation of Brøndsted and the University of Copenhagen, I should like to mention another small document, filed under Photius in the just-mentioned Koës-Brøndsted *collectanea* in the Royal Library. It is also in Brøndsted's hand, and consists of a 28 pages review of a specimen of an edition of the lexicon of Photius, published in Copenhagen by Niels Schow in 1817. Schow was Professor of "archaeology" (in the old sense: art history and mythology) at the University of Copenhagen and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts – and thus one of Brøndsted's teachers. Brøndsted's review, to my knowledge unpublished, is devastating, making fun even of Schow's bad Latin.

Brøndsted started at the university as an extremely gifted philologist, following the main trends of the time, that is, neo-classicism and the quest for the aesthetic depth and splendour of Greek art, and the morality of Greek philosophy and literature. In brief, Greek tragedy, and Plato. Although Mynster has diligently documented the occasions on which Brøndsted got lower marks at university exams than expected, the latter was considered to be very promising, and he was invited to join Professor Moldenhawer's visionary but ephemeral school for higher humanistic studies, the "Pædagogisk Seminarium." It aimed at forming school teachers (head-masters) with a solid classical background on top of their theological studies. Moldenhawer's Seminarium was inspired by his teacher Heyne, in Göttingen, and by Fr. A. Wolf's "philological seminars" in Halle and later in Berlin. Brøndsted now came into close contact with another of the alumni of the Copenhagen Seminar, Georg Koës, son of a rich Danish banker and recently returned after having studied with Wolf. Koës' dissertation was about the *Odyssey*, a sequel to the *Iliad*-analysis of his German teacher's famous *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795).

When Brøndsted and Koës departed for Paris in 1806, they had two projects: First, to make discoveries among the Greek manuscripts in the newly opened Bibliothèque Nationale ("Impériale" at that time). They were in quest of *anecdota*, in scholia (commentaries) and other late antique or mediaeval texts from

which long-lost information on classical splendour could be culled. This was a pure Wolfian project. Second, their aim was to prepare themselves adequately for a Greek journey, particularly by examining and making excerpts from the papers of the celebrated hellenist D'Ansse de Villoison (he had become foreign member of The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters in 1779, had travelled extensively in Greece in 1785-87, and had deceased in 1805). The expectations in Copenhagen for the outcome of Brøndsted's travels were high, and when he returned from Greece, after six years, he was immediately appointed Professor of philology. After five years, however, he went abroad in order to work on the publication of the results of his travels, parts of which he had conveyed in Danish in his 1815-17 public lectures. Brøndsted subsequently took leave from his professorship and became a diplomat, the Agent of the Danish Royal Court to the Holy See.

When Brøndsted resettled in Copenhagen in 1832, two things had changed. On the one hand, he had himself developed and become more specialised as a "modern" archaeologist. On the other hand, another genius had emerged within Danish classical studies: J.N. Madvig. They were two very different personalities, socially and as scholars. For the cosmopolitan Brøndsted, the university was a useful institution insofar as it secured his income, for Madvig it was the key factor in the emergence of modern Denmark through much-needed reforms and the development of its school system. Madvig was a linguist, a grammarian, a textual critic, and he was unimpressed by Wolf's scholarship (his pupil Fr. Nutzhorn dismantled Wolf's Homer-analysis), and strongly opposed to any hollow "admiration" of ancient Greece. Initially in his academic career, following the contemporary trend, Madvig had like Brøndsted focused his attention on Greek culture and philosophy (Plato). The main achievement of his youth concerned the sources of the most Greek and most philosophical work of Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (1839). While Madvig early dominated the faculty of humanities at the University of Copenhagen, Brøndsted during his second tenure, 1832-42, became more and more marginalised. His ap-

proach to classical antiquity did not match the curricular system implemented by Madvig.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Madvig's pupils came to dominate not only the faculty of humanities, but also the posthumous academic view of Brøndsted. Often recounted is the slander about Brøndsted's coming late to examinations. His personal adoption of the title "cavaliere" has not helped to strengthen his renown in Copenhagen, although it was not usurped, and probably was useful in diplomatic contexts, or in order to get access to important private collections or to the arcane parts of public collections. Brøndsted's cosmopolitanism isolated him at home, and prevented him from having many followers. There was a "Madvigianism" in Danish humanities, but no similar group of dedicated followers of Brøndsted. The holistic approach towards ancient Greek culture, Winckelmann's approach, still vividly present in Wolf, was closely tied to the aesthetic values of the *ancient regime*, and the reaction against it under the leadership of Madvig was strong.

The centre of Brøndsted's academic life was not the University of Copenhagen, but the cultural and scholarly elites in Rome, Paris and London. What Brøndsted could do, in distant Copenhagen, was to introduce some of the brilliance and originality he had encountered in the capitals of Europe and their thriving scientific academies. His place in the history of classical studies, however, was defined by Madvig's silence, which amounted to a *damnatio memoriae*. J.L. Ussing, the earliest of Madvig's pupils to become his colleague, became Brøndsted's "successor," but his teaching of archaeology was a side-activity to philology (he edited Plautus, following Madvig's method), and he never himself conducted or participated in an excavation. When classical archaeology was established in Copenhagen as a study of its own, Brøndsted became a distant icon, taken for granted rather than understood in the totality of his unique career. The museological activities of Brøndsted in Denmark, as numismatist and as counsellor to the Academy of Fine Arts, was more rewarding, that is, his particular talents were more readily appreciated there than by the classical scholars who were his university colleagues.



Fig. 3: The bust by O. Evens was executed from a painting, 1888-89, nearly half a century after P.O. Brøndsted's death, and it testifies to the fact that Brøndsted was not forgotten. Like many other portraits and busts it entered the Danish Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle, Hillerød. (Mikala Brøndsted, cat. no. 22).

IV

Many of the papers of the present symposium have stressed Brøndsted's original approach, as a scholar and as an administrator of cultural heritage. By illuminating the cosmopolitan basis of Brøndsted's activities and scholarship, we see that much of what might seem to be a stroke of genius, or whimsical, or without any perspective in its immediate context, should perhaps be reinterpreted in this European light, and will turn out to be aligned with contemporary international standards. Thus, this symposium invites a renewed, broader, and historically more correct assessment of Brøndsted, a reassessment that includes further in-depth probings of Brøndsted's "European context". On the debit side, Brøndsted may turn out to have been less original (in the many senses of the word) than he is usually considered to be, but on the credit side, the gain will be a more coherent conceptualization of his life and of his manifold activities. The great rifts and choices of his life and scholarship will not thereby be reduced or repressed, but they will stand out all the more important and unavoidable.

In 1806, the title of *doctor philosophiae* was bestowed by the University of Copenhagen upon Petrus Olaus Brøndsted, then 25 years of age, who then set out on the journey which will always remain the pivotal point of his life. Exactly two centuries later, we must all thank the organizers of the present symposium as well as its many contributors, from Denmark and abroad, for having initiated the long-needed process of reassessment of P.O. Brøndsted.