

The State of Denmark – Territory and Nation

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Until the loss of the Norwegian part of the realm in 1814, the name 'Denmark' referred to a composite state, typical of the European era of territorial states.¹ The official name of this mid-sized sovereign power in Northern Europe was the 'Danish Monarchy,' or the 'Oldenburg Monarchy.' Today, to the extent that this entity is remembered at all, it is known by such politically correct terms as 'the Dual Monarchy,' 'Denmark-Norway,' or 'the Twin Kingdom.' However, these polite terms are so imprecise as to be misleading. Following the loss of Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bohuslen, Herjedalen, and Gotland in 1658, the Danish king in 1660 became the absolute ruler of the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway and the duchies of Sleswig and Holstein, which comprised the State geographically. Holstein was part of the Holy Roman Empire (in Latin, *Sacrum Imperium*), which complicated the constitutional situation considerably: as duke of Holstein, the Danish king formally was subordinate to the German-Roman emperor. The situation was further complicated by the fact that in 1460 in Ribe the knights of the two duchies had compelled Christian I to recognize that the two regions should 'always' be ruled together – in Low German 'dat se bliuen ewich tosamende ungedeelt.'

In addition to the four main realms, the composite state comprised the three North Atlantic territories of Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland. Originally affiliated with Norway, these three countries in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries gradually came under direct rule from Copenhagen. Finally, the Danish monarchy in this period acquired a number of colonies in the West Indies (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas), West Africa (the Christiansborg fortress in today's Ghana), and India (Frederiksnagore, today Serampore outside Calcutta, and Tranquebar). By virtue of this colonial empire, Denmark played a role, however small, in the Atlantic trade triangle between a European center, the slave-producing West Africa, and the sugar-growing West Indies (Degn, 1974), complemented by a part in the East Asian trade (Feldbæk & Justesen, 1980). The multinational character of the realm is evidenced by the fact that by the end of the 18th century the biggest cities of the composite state were Copenhagen in Denmark proper, Altona and Kiel in Holstein, Flensburg in Sleswig, and Bergen in Norway, while the seaports of Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas and Frederiksnagore were second and sixth, respectively, as measured by trade volume.

¹ 'Composite state,' 'conglomerate state,' etc. have become accepted technical terms for the territorial states of early modern Europe. A definition is proposed by J. C. D. Clark in Østergård (1991a). The features of the British composite state are pursued in Clark (1989); for an examination of the phenomenon in a European context, see H.G. Koenigsberger (1989) and J.H. Elliot (1992). Early attempts to apply these terms in Danish and Nordic history include Ole Feldbæk in C.V. Johansen et al. (1992), Jens Rahbek Rasmussen in N.A. Sørensen (1995), and Harald Gustafsson (1994, 1997).

Customs duties on traffic to and from the Baltic through the Oresund contributed significantly to the relatively large revenue of the Danish state. In general, the monarchy owed no small part of its strong position to its location at the entrance to the Baltic. In 1420-25, Erik of Pommern built a castle at Elsinore. Frederik II rebuilt it as a spectacular Renaissance castle, which was sufficiently well-known in Europe that Shakespeare used the place as the setting for his famous play *Hamlet*. For more than 400 years until the mid-1600s, the Danish monarchy, due to its geopolitical position, ruled a dominion in Northern Europe that was formalized in the Kalmar Union from 1397 to 1523. The loose union of three crowns, plus dependencies, revolved around a range of issues, but long of the dissolution of the Union in 1523 the quest for maritime control of the Baltic, *Dominium Maris Baltici*, remained the principal theme of the history of Northern Europe (Østergård, 1998: 231 ff.). From the 15th to the mid 17th century, the Danish state dominated the Baltic region by virtue of a strong fleet and the possession of the islands of Gotland, Dagö, Ösel, Bornholm, and Rügen (Ahnlund, 1956; Sørensen, 1992).

The multinational character of the state is further evidenced by the universities. Conventionally, the university in Aarhus from 1928 is considered Denmark's second. True, Copenhagen University is the oldest, established in 1479. But the second was Kiel University, established in 1665, though its language of instruction was German and it was founded by Count Christian Albrecht of the House of Gottorp, a vassal of the Danish king, who was simultaneously his competitor in alliance with the Swedish enemy (Lange, 1996: 224). Following the incorporation of the Gottorp parts of Sleswig and Holstein into the Danish monarchy after 1720, the university served to educate officials of the united state (*helstat*),² even after the 1776 adoption of a citizen requirement which restricted administrative positions to citizens born within the borders of the kingdom. The third university was inaugurated in Christiania (today's Oslo) in 1811. The fourth was established in Frederiksnagore (Serampore) in 1821/1827 under the name 'The Seramporan College;' though the university was run in English by British baptist missionaries, the entire charter (oktroyen) was issued by Frederik VI and is filed at the National Archives. The mission of the college, apparent from its official title, 'College for the Instruction of Asiatic and Other Youth in Eastern Literature and European Science,' was to educate Christian Indian youth in Sanscrit, other Asian languages and European science (Rasch, 1966: 238). Even after the dissolution of the united state in 1864, universities were founded in different parts of the surviving federation: the university in Reykjavik (Háskóli Íslands) in 1911; Froðskapasetur Føroya in

² The unitary state was a term employed in the 1800s to describe the entire Danish monarchy, comprised of the kingdom of Denmark and the duchies of Sleswig, Hostenin, and Lauenburg. The policy of the unitary state was to unite the entire realm against two competing national programs, the national-liberal Danish and the Sleswig-Hosteinian, respectively, which both claimed all of Sleswig/South Jutland. In recent years, the term unitary state has gained prominence in history writing as a reference to the multinational Danish state of the 1700s, e.g. several works on the period by Ole Feldbæk.

Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands was added in 1952, while the University of Greenland, Ilisimatusarfik, was founded in Nuuk in 1983 after the establishment of home rule in 1979.

The same history could be written of the multinational Swedish empire, beginning with Uppsala in 1477, Tartu (Dorpat), established by Gustav Adolf in 1632, Åbo Academy from 1640, and Greifswald University, founded in 1456 and Swedish from 1648 to 1815. Thus, the university in Lund from 1668, which is usually considered Sweden's second, is actually the fifth in the line of Swedish universities. Incidentally, it was established with the explicit purpose of influencing the loyalty of the population by educating Swedish-oriented ministers to succeed the Danish. In the Catholic middle ages, Lund was the seat of the arch bishop and the ideological center of the Danish kingdom. When in 1658 the Danish king was forced to cede Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bohuslen, Herjedalen and Gotland to Sweden, the Swedish state immediately established a new university as an alternative to the University of Copenhagen, which previously had been the natural center. Oresund, the narrow strait between Denmark and the newly acquired territories Scania, Halland and Blekinge, became a divide to such an extent that only in the 1820s Swedes and Danes could legally cross the Sund. The political logic behind Lund University was to Swedenize Denmark's rural population, or at least to direct its loyalty away from the Danish crown. This policy was far more successful than in comparable European countries such as Bohemia-Moravia or Alsace (cf. Fabricius, 1906-58; Åberg, 1994), even if today several modern historians think that the policy must be conceived as 'Scania-nization' – as opposed to either Danish or Swedish identity – rather than an actual 'Swedenization' (Gustafsson, 2000: 19-20).

The monarchy in Europe

The composite state stretched from the North Cape to Hamburg, a distance equal to that between Hamburg and Sicily. Add to that the far-flung North Atlantic parts of the realm. The military, technological, and political backbone of the empire was the fleet, manned to a large extent by fishermen from Norway and the North Atlantic islands. This fleet was big enough to fight a growing Swedish rival in the Baltic and to protect the extensive possessions for more than a 150 years. However, between 1645 and 1660, after exhausting its resources, the realm suffered a series of humiliating defeats. Until 1721, the Swedish competitor and newly-established Baltic Empire seized control of Northern Europe (Roberts, 1979). Nevertheless, the Danish fleet proved capable of inflicting massive losses among the Swedes in the Scanian war of 1675-79. Only the superiority of the Swedish land forces and thus the Swedish success in the battle at Lund on December 3, 1676 enabled Sweden to safeguard the newly-conquered territories in what today is South Sweden (Larsson, 1999). These losses notwithstanding, Denmark-Norway-Sleswig-Holstein even in the 1700s ranked as a medium-sized European power, surpassed only by such great powers as France, Great Britain, Austria (Hapsburg), Russia, and the budding Prussia.

The price of this position was a higher degree of militarization of the relatively poor and sparsely populated Danish and Swedish lands than necessary in more affluent and densely populated European states (Ladewig Petersen, 1984). It is, then, rather remarkable that the geographically far-flung and economically overburdened Danish state succeeded in modernizing itself through a kind of revolution from above at the end of the 17th century and once again in the late 18th century (Horstbøll & Østergård, 1990). The Danish kingdom underwent a revolution akin to the French through a timely self-reformation between the years 1784-1814. In many respects this northern European monarchy personified the ideals of the enlightenment thinkers. Thus, from Venice to London the political system of the state was eagerly debated among political observers – not always in flattering terms, as we know from Montesquieu's excoriation in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), which in 1753 provoked Holberg to publish a fierce response in French. The fact remains that the state was an object of discussion (Østergård, 1995). Theoretically, the political system was the most autocratic in Europe, formalized, even, in a kind of absolute 'constitution' (*Kongeloven* or *Lex Regia* from 1665). But the political reality was far from despotic, a state that the Norwegian historian Jens Arup Seip somewhat paradoxically has termed 'opinion-governed autocracy' (Seip, 1858). This tradition of consulting public opinion is the main reason that the Danish monarchy succeeded in revolutionizing itself from above through a series of relatively continuous reforms of the agrarian system, civil rights, customs, trade, education, and emancipation of the Jews between 1784 and 1814 (Løfting et al., 1989). In contrast, the French king lost legitimacy among the tax-granting assembly of the States General which triggering an uncontrollable democratic revolution, subsequently hailed by much of French history writing as the only meaning of history, despite the enormous cost and the brutal terror it also involved.

As mentioned Norway was lost in 1814, but only in the wake of the military and political disaster of 1864 the middle sized multinational, composite state was reduced to the small homogeneous nation state we know as Denmark today. After the loss of Sleswig and Holstein many among the dominant elite thought it too small to be likely to survive as an independent state. It did, however. Competing elites invented different programs for the survival of the state. Parts of the national liberal intelligentsia favored a union with Sweden and Norway, who had already joined a union together. This program went by the name of Scandinavism and would have implied a *de facto* Swedish hegemony (Stråth, 1980; Stråth, 1995; Østergård, 1996, 1997). While a minority favored an alliance with the new Germany, the great majority preferred neutrality towards Germany, combined with an economic orientation towards the British empire. As farmers gradually won political, cultural, and economic influence, this program prevailed as a successful national democracy. In the 20th century this nationally democracy became a social democracy as a result of the rise of the workers movement, the Social Democratic party becoming the largest party before World War I. Thus, the Danish rump state became the quintessential 'smaller state,' as

envisaged by the American sociologist Moore in his introduction to one of the most influential works of comparative historical sociology, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.³

However, though we usually refer to them both as Denmark, it is important to distinguish between this extremely homogeneous nation state and the older composite state. Conflating them would be as misleading as confusing today's Russia or Serbia with the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia. Obvious continuities notwithstanding, the breaks and differences are more important in many respects, most significantly the complete misunderstanding of the role of the composite state in international politics. When innumerable historiographies of Denmark refer to both states as 'Denmark,' we conflate a multinational medium-sized power with a small national welfare state in the 20th century, though as state types they share little but a certain geographic continuity in Denmark proper, that is, the two Jutland provinces of North and South Jutland, as well as Sealand, Funen, and other islands. The logical implication of this disregard for other parts of the monarchy is the denial of differences within the nation state. Denmark ended up as an extremely centralized state, disguised as local government. This outcome was not given. As Steen Bo Frandsen convincingly has demonstrated in a close analysis of the 'Jutland question,' no analysis of 19th century Denmark can ignore the attempts to transform this multinational monarchy into a federal state (Frandsen, 1993, 1996).

Only one continuity is so obvious as to refuse disregard: the relationship between the remaining parts of the vanished multinational state, the Faroe Islands and Greenland and Denmark proper. Neither the constitution of 1849 nor the redrafted version of 1953 have arrived at a good definition of the relationship between the different parts of the kingdom, hence the continual demands of recognition of other parts of the realm as independent nations – denied by a bipartisan Danish political system which understands the concept of a state only as a nation state and which, with a knee-jerk reaction, rejects any suggestion of a federation.

Unitary nation or national community

Nationally and socially Denmark is among the world's most homogeneous states, as any Danish child and many foreigners will know. Until the recognition of Slovenia's independence in 1991, Denmark figured along with Iceland and Portugal in authoritative treatises as the only European countries with an almost perfect overlap between state, people, and nation (Connor, 1994). This position has been a convenient basis for an active role in minority politics around the world. We have been able to take exception to the poor treatment of national minorities in other countries without risking a seat in the hot chair ourselves, at least once Greenland in 1953 was

³ According to Barrington Moore, comparative studies may ignore small states because of their lack of originality and influence (Moore, 1966: x). His use of the term 'small state' is a historical-sociological description rather than expression of contempt for small countries, though it has often been perceived as such in the Netherlands and Scandinavia

named an administrative district rather than a colony. But historically as well as a matter of state theory, 'Denmark' is a more ambiguous concept than we generally allow.

'This constitution applies to all parts of the Danish realm,' article 1 of the Constitution affirms. Thus, the Danish state comprises several parts, bound together by a common constitution. What this unity means, what the units are, and how the connections should be understood is less clear from the legalese. For an indication, one must consult the drafts, reproduced in the *Report of the Constitutional Commission*, no. 837/78, vol. 1-2, 1953. Page 28 states that the 'Danish Realm' comprises three parts: Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland. Article 3 of the Constitution defines a common legislative, executive, and judicial branch for these three parts of the Danish kingdom.

Constitutionally, then, Denmark is a *unity*. But that does not necessarily imply a unitary state, though colloquial use in the mainland assumes as much. In Greenland and the Faroe Islands, relations are viewed quite differently, as became painfully clear to the Danish public and government in negotiations of the responsibility of the Faroese debt crisis in the early 1990s (Høydal, 2000). Strangely, the entire body of constitutional theory preceding Frederik Harhoff's 1993 dissertation on the National Community failed to address in any detail the character of this composite state. Even after the introduction of home rule in the two transatlantic territories in 1948 and 1979, respectively, text books of constitutional theory mention home rule only as a curiosity (cf. Harhoff, 1993: 17). Apparently, Denmark is still perceived as a centralized unitary state, in the worst tradition of the national liberal politician Orla Lehmann. In a toast in the middle of a heated debate at the Copenhagen Bookclub [Københavns Læseforening] on May 27, 1838, Lehman rhetorically questioned the desirability of a merger of the assemblies of the States General of Viborg and Roskilde.

"But are there no Provinces in Denmark? No, Gentlemen! Not even in dusty archives, much less in the fresh, splendid reality, one finds as much as a name for one of the halves into which our Denmark has been arbitrarily divided; there are in Denmark no provinces. Or is it perhaps in the so-called mainland-ness of Jutland (laughter) that one must locate the reason for this division? Then, the night when the North Sea wed the Liim Fiord, the storm that plowed a wet channel through the sand dunes of Jutland, have overturned this entire system (applause)! Or is it the special interests that necessitated special assemblies? But which are they then? Where are they? What are their names? A thousand times this question has been raised, never yet answered. I will tell you the reason: because Denmark allows special interests in one sense only, namely, those of every county, every ward, every town, every street – there are in Denmark no provinces; there is only one Denmark, populated by Danish (loud applause)! Danes by common blood, common history, one single inseparable

people with a common character and customs, common language and literature, common memories and hopes; Danes who, as King Christian the Fifth's Law says, have but one God, one King, and one Constitution. Therefore also we Danish one and all wish – in that at least we concur with our King's Law – that 'all the country, without exception, be undivided and whole' (Lehmann, 1838).

Thus ridiculing any notion of the existence of regional differences, Orla Lehmann demanded the dissolution of the independent North Jutland assembly of States General in Viborg, which had been established in 1834 (Østergård, 1999). The speech marked a high-point of the 1838-1849 campaign of the Copenhagen liberal opposition against all efforts to organize the realm regionally or federally (cf. Frandsen, 1996). The basis of Lehmann's assertion of the non-existence of Danish provinces remains unclear. It did, however, become a self-fulfilling prophecy as a working assumption of all future political parties and governments – and, until very recently, of constitutional theorists.

If the term 'Denmark' is misleading, what then is an appropriate name for a Danish state, comprised of three parts? Today the term 'National Community' [*Rigsfællesskab*] is often used, though it was explicitly rejected by Alf Ross in his draft of the Faroese constitution of June 16, 1947, and by the Home Rule Commission for Greenland (*Report 837/78*, vol. I, 7). Instead, both commissions favored the term 'Unitary Nation' [Rigsenhed], which remains to this day the concept employed in both home rule constitutions. Thus, the introduction of the *Faroe Island Home Rule Law* of March 23, 1948, reads, 'Recognizing the special national, historical, and geographical position of the Faroe Islands within the Realm, the Rigsdag, in accordance with Decisions by the Lagting of the Faroe Islands, has passed, and We (Frederik IX) by our Royal Assent have affirmed, the following Law on the constitutional position of the Faroe Islands within the Realm:

"Article 1. Within the framework of this law, the Faroe Islands constitutes a self-governing national community within the Danish Realm. Under these terms, the Faroese people assume its own elected representation, the Lagting, and an administration established by it, for the organization and control of Faroese special concerns, as provided by this Law" (Himmelstrup & Møller, 1958: 165).

The home rule commission of Greenland explicitly considered the appropriate terminology and concluded that the term 'community' in standard legal usage is employed about relations between sovereign states. However, since Greenland did *not* aspire to national independence, the term 'unitary nation' was viewed as the most logical and appropriate reference to the state as a whole (Harhoff, 1993: 31). Nonetheless, the Office of the Prime Minister used the term 'National Community' in a letter of December 23, 1975, to the Home Rule Commission (reproduced as an appendix to *Report 837/78*, vol. 2, 7), with an added note that within the framework of

the national community a home rule system excluded the formation of a union or federation of states, or similar.

However, the term 'unitary nation' is not a realistic characterization of the relationship between the parts of the Realm. Unitary implies a fundamental shared identity, which is exactly what is missing, regardless of whether identity is defined linguistically or culturally, or according to climate and customs. The Realm comprises three national parts, separated by basic differences in language, culture, climate, and traditions. Besides foreign policy, power, and international considerations, the national community is united by a shared history and mutual political and economic interests. Hence, the shared constitution. As an aside, English terms such as national community only poorly convey the meaning of the Danish *Rigsfællesskab*. Alternative terms are Commonwealth or simply Realm. In his English summary, Frederik Harhoff chose the latter solution. While technically correct, realm sounds rather old-fashioned and implies connotations of the territorial monarchies (state nations) of the of early modern Europe. However, political considerations count against alternative terms, and the more neutral 'composite state,' used in the academic literature about Great Britain (Clark, 1991) is too technical. Terminologically, Denmark faces the same situation as Russia in relation to other successor states to the old Soviet Union.

Regardless of one's preferred solution to the terminological and classificatory problems of the character of the composite state, the fact remains that Faroese and Greenlanders are not minorities in the Danish state. Rather, they constitute nations (i.e. self-governing peoples) in their own right, with their own state potential. Hence the prolonged ratification process when Denmark adopted the European Council convention on minority languages. Eventually the ratification passed with reference to the German minority, along with Faroese and Greenlanders. That, however, is wrong and is not recognized by Greenland and the Faroe Island. The reality of three nations with varying degrees of actual differences and independence within the same state is emphasized by current plans to establish a common 'state council' for the three parts of the realm. Using history as a lesson, one might suggest that this council be organized somewhat along the lines of the common state council for Denmark, Sleswig, and Holstein, which was established in 1854, but never became operational. A further argument in favor of recognizing the Danish composite state as a federation of three nations is the often ignored fact that neither the Faroe Islands nor Greenland are members of the European Union.

Continuity and discontinuity

Danish observers tend to take the continuity of Danish history for granted to the point of failing to reflect on it at all. The rare cases of reflection often take a dogmatic approach, as in the case of the nationalist minister Søren Krarup, who on November 20, 2001, was elected to Parliament as a member of the Danish People's Party. In an interview in the *Information*

daily on February 9, 2002, Krarup had the following reply to a question about the nation state as a relatively recent construction:

”That’s completely wrong. When you use the word nation, you should not forget that the word actually means ’native.’ And that’s what it’s all about: we are all natives of a certain historical unit. That is, history has always revolved around nations. That is true for Denmark, too.

The interviewer later continues:

The historians Søren Mørch and Uffe Østergaard posit that the nation state was a product of the romantic period and probably will disappear again, in favor of other forms of state?

That’s sheer nonsense. Those kinds of statements show that they’re completely ignorant about their own history. Denmark was constituted in the beginning of the 700s. One of the first expressions was Dannevirke, which was built as a gigantic rampart to the south – a monumental structure by the standards of the time, which shows that Denmark was a united country under a common rule that saw itself in opposition to Germany, or whatever was south of the border” (*Information*, February 9-10, 2002).

Except for the doubt about the constancy of Germany – and thus the ’German danger – acknowledged in the last sentence, we see here the quintessential perception of the continuity of Danish history which has dominated the past 150 years of Danish history writing and which has been spouted by Krarup on several occasions in recent years. That makes it no more true. Neither does the fact that the Dannevirke argument as evidence of a united Danish state of the same extent as today forms the basis of the analysis of the first volume of a new multi-volume history of Danish foreign policy. In volume I, the medieval historian Esben Albrechtsen, without any specific arguments, revives the unreflective conceptions of the ’Danish people’s territory’ from the earliest days of the Vikings with reference to Dannevirke (Albrechtsen et al., 2001: 14). Undoubtedly, the building of the ramparts, along with the later *Trelleborgs* and the bridge across Vejle Ådal, is evidence of organized royal power. But what was the extent of this realm? Did it include the islands and Scania, or were there two realms, united by Harald when he, in his own words, ’won all of Denmark and Norway and converted the Danes to Christianity,’ as is engraved on the large runic inscription at the royal burial place in Jelling, dated to around 962?

Undeniably, Carolus Magnus wanted to settle a score with king Godfred of Denmark, as described in the Franconian Annals. But the exact nature of the realm, its organization, and its extent ought to be carefully argued, especially with archeological evidence. Nationalists such as Søren Krarup do not inconvenience themselves with that – but unfortunately neither do traditionalists such as Esben Albrechtsen. To them, people and nation exist *a*

priori, and since a king and thus a vision of a realm certainly existed, so, presto!, we have the 19th century nation state in embryonic form. Thus is assumed what really has to be proved. It is debatable whether the word nation is an appropriate term for the people and the language that no doubt existed in the early viking era or earlier, according to archeological evidence of early state formations (Hedeager, 1992). Personally, I prefer to reserve the word for the known political communities which slowly developed in the early modern times, between 1500 and 1800, and to use the more nebulous, but certainly no less loaded term *people* in earlier periods. More significant, though, is the coupling of the national consciousness and the modern territorial state – of the Italian *lo stato* as opposed to the Latin *res publica* – which developed in Europe, including Scandinavia, between 1500 and 1800 (Hettne et al., 1998).

It is in this particular sense that nationalism as an ideology – as opposed to the older and more nebulous national consciousness as reference to feelings of affiliation with a country (province or region) – and the nation state came into being only with the national reactions to the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Moreover, the real budding of the nation state did not occur until the 20th century with the border-drawing of the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of national majority states – and, as a consequence, of national minorities, in Denmark as well in the rest of Europe (Østergård, 1992). These state formations later lead to instability, competition, and wars, just as those found in today's Africa or the Indian sub-continent, where nation states are consolidating themselves through processes much like those characteristic of Europe in former centuries. For all of these reasons, terminological clarity is essential – not for the sake of concepts, but to understand the historical situation on its own terms, not as identical to a contemporary situation.

If we return to the formation of the Danish state – the episode of such crucial importance to nationalist argumentation, whether explicitly political and disguised as science – one finds a far simpler and more convincing exposition in a small book by the legal historian Stig Jørgensen. In 1987, he affirmed the following obvious fact:

”From a legal-historical perspective, it makes little sense to think of a united Danish realm before the Jellinge dynasty. In and of itself, the fact that at the time legal foundations differed among the different 'countries' -- Jutland, Funen, Sealand, and Scania along with Halland and later Blekinge – indicates that historically Denmark, like other Nordic countries, comprised a number of legal communities that ranked next to each other and only later were united in larger constitutional units. The presence of three or four main Houses in Viborg, Ringsted, and Lund, as well as Urnehoved in South Jutland, where oaths of royal allegiance continued to be sworn, point in the same direction. There is good reason, then, to trust Olaf Tryggveson's saga, which tells the story of king Gorm who won the crown by

fighting a number of Jutland kings, rather than the type of argumentation which finds evidence of ancient national unity in the stories of the battles between king Godfred and later Hedeby kings and the Franconian Empire and the German emperors of the 800s, as well as the building of the oldest parts of Dannevirke and other military installations on land and on water. Surely if the German tribes were able to resist the mighty Roman empire, a Viking king of Jutland or South Jutland would be capable of keeping a fragile Franconian empire at bay in the trackless border regions.”

Stig Jørgensen concludes:

”We must remember also that ‘Denmark’ appeared for the first time in Danish sources on the Jellinge stone in the context of Harald Bluetooth’s claim that he united ‘all of Denmark’ (Jørgensen, 1987: 23-24).

I do not question, then, that the Danish kingdom was established in the early middle ages and was at that time of an extent somewhat greater than ‘Denmark’ is today (except for the North Atlantic parts of the national community). What I do question is the unchallenged continuity between the changing state formations which in 1920 led to Denmark’s reduction to its proper ‘Danish’ size (or, according to Søren Krarup, a size a bit too small because of the loss of Flensburg). Arguments about alternative courses are speculative at best, pondering, example, how things might have turned out differently under Valdemar the Great when he broke his allegiance to the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire who had helped him to victory over other pretenders to the crown. ‘Counterfactual history’ historians now term the genre which is gaining momentum even in Danish professional circles searching for a new readership (Dahlberg, 2001 and other forthcoming works).

In this compressed analysis I have attempted to compensate a bit for the lack of expositions on the history of the Danish monarchy or of the Danish state as a whole. Not even the otherwise meritorious four-volume work about Denmark-Norway 1380-1814 by Esben Albrechtsen, Øystein Rian, Ståle Dyrvik and Ole Feldbæk has succeeded in filling the gap about Sleswig/South Jutland, Holstein, and Scania, Halland, and Blekinge, as well as Bohuslen and the Baltic islands, the colonies, and the North Atlantic parts of the realm. But I hope to have made a convincing case for the need for such a new perspective, as well as a new and much more thorough study of the history of the neighboring countries and the rest of Europe, if one wishes to understand the attachment of a particular Danish political culture and mentality to a very specific territory and certain parts of the landscapes within the realm. Only the ‘beech-light islands,’ the yellow grain fields, and hazy-blue beaches have become part of the vision of the ‘real’ Denmark, while the moor, spruce plantations, marsh, North Sea beaches, and Bornholm granite go uncelebrated (Østergård, 1991b).

'Denmark' refers to a multinational state as well as an ethnically and partly socially homogenous small state. This duality is the reason why Denmark, in contrast to all other countries in the world, needs two national anthems, as Tim Knudsen noted in a 1992 article (Knudsen, 1992). The first, 'Kong Christian stod ved højen mast', was written by Johannes Ewald in 1779; this bellicose song hails the warrior king who conquers the enemies of the realm – and politely forgets that he actually lost the 1644 sea battle at Kolberger Heide in the Kieler Bay. The other national anthem is 'Der er et yndigt land,' written in 1819 by Adam Oehlenschläger. It celebrates the beautiful country and its citizens who are kind and peaceful. Denmark, the Danes, and the Danish consensus is torn between these two competing and occasionally antagonistic perceptions of Danish-ness. The explanation lies in the many versions of the Danish territory which collective memory and political culture more or less unconsciously refer to.

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