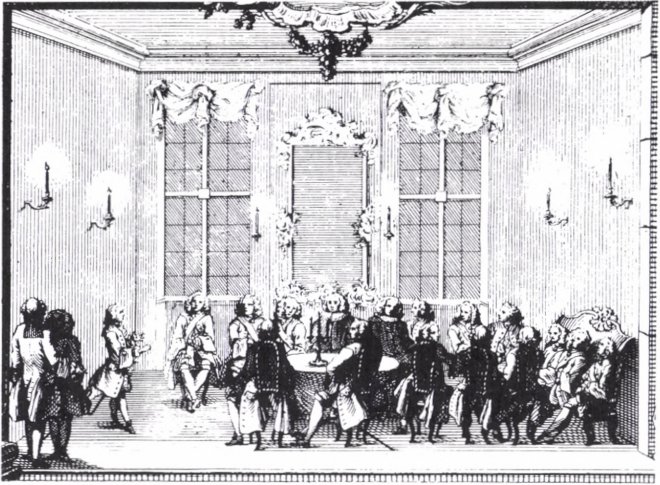


Outline of the History of the Academy

The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters owes its existence to the initiative of three personalities: King CHRISTIAN VI, his very culturally involved Prime Minister, Count JOHAN LUDVIG HOLSTEIN of Ledreborg, and the Royal Historiographer HANS GRAM. On 13th November 1742, with the approval of the King, a learned society was initiated which, following Gram's suggestion, was to be a *Collegium Antiquitatum* to promote the study of the nation's history. At the very first meeting, however, the scope of the society was enlarged to include all scholarly pursuits in general.

The new Academy was to consist of three classes of members: *rådgivere*, *arbejdere* and *adjunkter*, i.e. advisory, active and associate members, under the leadership of a president, for which office J. L. Holstein was an obvious choice. Members were to gather for regular meetings at which lectures would be held and business transacted, the latter being primarily concerned with the publication of learned treatises.

In its first years the Academy functioned without a set of statutes, but during the course of the 18th century its name became established and a seal was issued. The first statutes were drawn up in 1776 and a little later a membership diploma was issued.



*Meeting of the Academy in Holstein's mansion,
10 Stormgade, Copenhagen, on January 18th, 1751.
Etching by O. H. DE LODE.*

The admission of new members to the Academy to ensure the continuation of its many-faceted activities has always been a matter which has attracted much interest, and the rules governing this procedure have often been the subject of discussion and change. Until the first statutes were drawn up, new Danish members were frequently admitted at the invitation of the president, a procedure which was obviously rather arbitrary and often dependent on rank and social standing.

From 1776 members were admitted by election, the number being unlimited. However, throughout almost the entire 19th century there were only between 40 and 50 Danish members.

In the years 1792 and 1795 members were divided into four classes, one for history, one for

physics, one for mathematics and one for philosophy, which corresponded to the subject groups specified in the statutes. In 1866 the four classes were amalgamated into two, one for history and philosophy and one for mathematics and the natural sciences, each with its own chairman.

The interpretation of which subjects fall within the sphere of the Academy has at times given rise to debate. The traditional view is that members should be recruited from among the basic sciences, i.e., philosophy, history (including archaeology, art history and musicology), linguistics and philology, mathematics, physics (including chemistry, astronomy, geology and the like), and the biological sciences. Outside the scope of the Academy lie the applied sciences, i.e., theology, law, clinical medicine, the technical sciences, commercial science, agronomics etc. – but with exceptions such as ecclesiastical history, history of law, political economy and, within medicine, such subjects as bacteriology, pharmacology, physiology, genetics, pathology, serology and suchlike disciplines.

After the year 1900 the number of Danish members began to increase rapidly and it proved necessary to introduce rules to limit the membership, based on statistical calculations of accession and mortality.

In addition to its Danish members, the Academy has elected a large number of foreign members during the course of time. Interest in these elections has fluctuated – partly under the influence of political factors. In recent years the need to establish connections with research workers from abroad has very much increased.

Finally, in earlier times the Academy had a third category of members, namely honorary members, who were often nobles and others of high social standing who had some interest in science and scholarship. Since 1815 the Academy has elected only one honorary member under special circumstances. This was Crown Prince FREDERIK (VIII), who very frequently participated in Academy meetings. The provisions for the admission of this particular class of member are now no longer operative.

Since the establishment of the Academy in 1742 the Sovereigns of Denmark have been its patrons. Christian VI must be especially mentioned in this connection as he was directly involved in the Academy's establishment and personally interested in several of its earliest undertakings. CHRISTIAN VIII was president of the Academy both as Crown Prince and as King, while Crown Prince he chaired nearly all of its meetings.

In the first hundred years of the Academy's existence, leading aristocrats or courtiers with scholarly and scientific interests were elected president. This first phase in the existence of the Academy culminated with the presidency of King Christian VIII, since which time the office of president has been entrusted to a member wholly on the basis of his personal and scholarly qualifications, whereas until the death of Christian VIII a considerable part of the Academy's work consisted of assignments imposed on it by the King or the state. The activities of the Academy have since been concentrated entirely on research projects proposed by the Academy and its members, and



The presidential chair of King CHRISTIAN VIII.

on international collaboration on these tasks. The new series of presidents began with ANDERS SANDØE ØRSTED and was continued by J. N. MADVIG, JULIUS THOMSEN and VILHELM THOMSEN. After some years with a succession of presidents who held office for shorter periods, NIELS BOHR

was elected president in 1939 and retained the office until his death in 1962. Later presidents have again held office for relatively short periods of time.

The management of the ordinary business of the Academy has from the beginning been entrusted to a secretary elected from among the members. The first secretary, HENRIK HJELMSTIERNE, dealt with all matters, but later on the duties of the secretary were relieved of the functions of editor and of treasurer. H. C. Ørsted was a particularly active secretary in the years 1815–1851. During the term of office of JAPETUS STEENSTRUP in 1866–1878 a secretariat was set up to assist the secretary.

The finances of the Academy are under the supervision of a permanent Financial Commission, established in 1780. The Academy as such is legally independent and not subject to any state authority. It has always demanded the greatest possible independence of the State, and is distinguished in this respect from the academies of many other countries.

At the time when many of the Academy's undertakings were prescribed by the King, the expenses involved were defrayed by him. At a later date funds, particularly for the issue of publications, had to be sought from the state. The Academy also receives financial support from other sources, such as the Carlsberg Foundation.

One function of the Academy which is exceptional is that it elects the members of the board of the Carlsberg Foundation. The Carlsberg Foundation was set up in 1876 by the brewer J. C. JACOB-



*J. C. JACOBSEN, founder of the Carlsberg Foundation.
Painting by A. JERNDORFF.*

SEN, who immediately requested that the Academy take it in its charge. J. C. Jacobsen explained his motivation for this assignment by saying that the



*The members of the Academy in 1896, gathered in the former meeting-place, the palace which now is part of the National Museum.
Painting by P. S. KRØYER.*

Academy was “that society in which Danish scholarship has hitherto found and certainly always will find its most outstanding representatives, and which in our country is the only institution fortunate enough to be independent of all outside, non-



scholarly interests and influences". The objectives of the Foundation are to continue and extend the work of the Carlsberg Laboratory and to promote the natural sciences, as well as mathematics, philosophy, history and philology. In addition, a few years later the Foundation established the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg. The board of the Carlsberg Foundation consists of five members, elected by the Academy from among its own members. On the death of J. C.



The Carlsberg Foundation's building on H. C. Andersens Boulevard in Copenhagen, where the Academy has its premises on the first and second floors, plus the top storey.

Jacobsen in 1887 the Foundation became the owner of the Old Carlsberg brewery and in 1902 of the New Carlsberg brewery which had belonged to CARL JACOBSEN, son of J. C. Jacobsen. In 1902 the New Carlsberg Foundation was set up as a new department to promote artistic endeavours in Denmark, and in particular to administer the New Carlsberg Glyptotek – built in 1897 – by the State and the municipality of Copenhagen which came to house the large art collections of Carl Jacobsen. This unique combination of a large industrial concern and a learned institution gives the latter considerable resources for the support of Danish scholarship and art.



Meeting of the Academy in the assembly hall on April 17th, 1964, in the presence of H. M. King FREDERIK IX, H. M. Queen INGRID and Princess MARGRETHE, now H. M. Queen MARGRETHE II and present patron of the Academy.

The board's composition of active scholars and scientists ensures a very intimate connection between the Academy and the Foundation whose primary task is support of basic research. Until the establishment of National Research Councils by the Government in the 1950's the Carlsberg Foundation, by its yearly contributions, performed a function which was vital in many ways for the development of the Sciences and the Humanities in times when support, besides the rather restricted regular university allowances, was very difficult to obtain elsewhere.

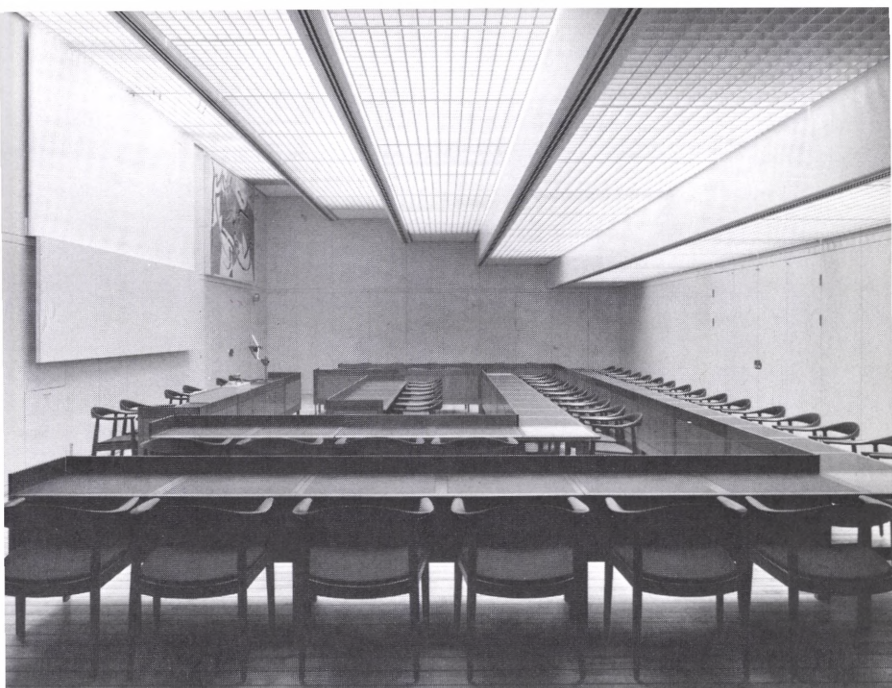
The main forum for the activities of the Academy has always been its regular meetings, at



The assembly hall, redecorated in 1976.

which papers are read and administrative business discussed. The venue has often been changed, and it was fortunate for the Academy that in 1893 the Carlsberg Foundation offered it permanent premises, free of charge, in a new building that the Foundation was to build on Vestre Boulevard (now H. C. Andersen's Boulevard) in Copenhagen. The Academy moved into these premises in 1898–1899 and thus acquired ample space for meetings, offices and storage. On the occasion of its centenary the Carlsberg Foundation rebuilt and modernised the premises, a munificent gift which made possible an expansion of the Academy's activities.

A task of essential importance to the Academy is



The new lecture hall with furniture arranged for a symposium.

the publication of learned papers, and these are tangible evidence of its activities in disseminating knowledge of scientific and scholarly matters and making known the initiatives and results of Danish research for the benefit of Danish science and of the nation and to the honour of the Academy. In 1745 publication started of the *Skrifter* (Memoirs), in which series were printed the papers read by the first members at their meetings. Many important works have appeared here in the course of time. In 1822 the *Skrifter* were divided up into two series according to subject matter, and in recent years these have again been further subdivided to satisfy the wishes of specialized libraries. In addition to the *Skrifter*, the Academy started to publish

annual *Bekendtgørelser* (Transactions) in 1793, containing information on the prizes offered by the Academy for works on set subjects and on the prize papers received. This extremely modest publication rapidly developed into an *Oversigt* (Annual Report) that in addition came to include reports of meetings and such like matters and, before long, also numerous scientific papers on a variety of subjects. In 1917 the papers were dropped from this publication, to be issued in several series of *Meddelelser* (Communications), the annual *Oversigt* becoming once again a report of meetings and of the administrative side of the Academy's activities, supplemented by a report to the Academy

The reading room.



Skrifter,
sont udi
det Kiøbenhavnste
Selskab
af
Lærdoms og Videnskabers Listere
ere
fremlagte og oplæste
i Aarene 1743 og 1744.
Første Deel.

K J Ø B E N S A D N,
Udi det Kongelig Båhnsenhuses Bogtrykkerie
og paa dets Forlag.
Trykt af Gottmann Friderich Kisel. Aar 1745.

Title page of the first volume of the Academy's Memoirs 1745.

from the Carlsberg Foundation, obituaries of deceased members, etc.

Danish was the only language used for regular Academy publications for more than a century, but from 1867 a summary in French was permit-

ted in the *Oversigt*, and a few years later also shorter papers in French. Only in 1902 was the use of the principal languages permitted in all publications of the Academy – a necessary step if Danish scholarship was to become known outside Denmark.

Another important activity of the Academy in earlier times was to offer prizes for papers on certain set subjects and to pass judgement on the papers received in response. The papers were sometimes rewarded with sums from endowments of the Academy, sometimes with a gold medal, perhaps supplemented by a sum of money. The problems set and the responses given in these set papers in themselves help considerably to illustrate the history of learning in this country, and often the papers reflect the topical problems and trends which occupied Danish society at the times in question.

At its inception the Academy was envisaged as a purely national institution, but in the natural course of events an international scholarly collaboration has gradually developed, first through the election of foreign members and the posting of prize papers, later through an exchange of scholarly publications. Personal contacts have often been established through the Academy representatives who attend congresses, jubilees and the like abroad. Since 1900 the Academy has represented Denmark in an international association of academies for the promotion of scholarly enterprises and the facilitation of intercourse among research workers. Two world wars have disrupted this international collaboration, but after each ter-

mination of hostilities it has rapidly been re-established.

Finally, brief mention should be made of some of the larger undertakings of the Academy, particularly those of the first hundred years of its existence when, to a certain extent, it acted as a consultative and executive organ of royal and state powers which dictated its activities.

The most extensive task of a practical scientific nature which has been imposed on the Academy has without doubt been the complete geographical and trigonometrical surveying of Denmark and the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and the subsequent production of maps according to the survey. Work started in 1761 and lasted until 1843 when it was transferred to the topographical department of the General Staff for continuation. By that time the Academy had completed the first actual survey of the country and the tangible results were the 24 maps of Denmark and Schleswig that were then published. The Academy can thus be considered the forerunner of the present-day Geodetic Institute of Denmark.

The lengthiest undertaking of the Academy has been the publication of a Danish dictionary. In 1776 a commission composed of Academy members was set up which in 2115 meetings, held under difficult conditions, worked through vast vocabularies. The first volume of *Den danske Ordbog* appeared in 1793, and the work was completed with the eighth volume in 1905 – exactly 125 years after the appearance of installment A in 1780. Of course, the dictionary had become totally obsolete on completion, but it is still of great importance

inasmuch as it includes the greater part of the old vocabularies. Even before the Academy's dictionary was complete, work was well under way on a new one comprising words from the 18th to the 20th centuries, the result of which was the *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* (Dictionary of the Danish language), volumes I-XXVIII, 1918–1956, published by the Danish Society of Language and Literature and financed by the Carlsberg Foundation and the Danish State.

A further important work was the *Regesta Diplomatica Historiæ Danicæ*, which contains lists of old Danish diplomas and letters up until 1660 with specifications of their contents – an important source of historical research. The Academy appointed a commission for this task in 1828, but publication of the work did not begin before 1843. The actual collection was completed with the two volumes issued in 1870, but was continued with two volumes of supplements. It was not until 1907 that the work of the commission was completed. Plans to publish a *Regestum Diplomaticum*, a collection of diplomas and letters, had to be abandoned, and only in our own times has a *Diplomatarium Danicum* been completed, by the Danish Society of Language and Literature financed by the Carlsberg Foundation and the State.

Lastly, mention should be made of a publication of the Academy that is unique for its time. This is the description of a journey to Egypt and Nubia made in 1737–1738 by the young Danish Captain F. L. NORDEN, which appeared, after his death, in French in two large folio volumes in 1750 and 1755 and includes 159 plates with engravings of Nor-

den's drawings. In the following years several editions of this book appeared abroad in English, French and German.

In 1772 the Academy published yet another pioneering work containing the results of the investigations and collections made by two Icelandic students, EGGERT OLAFSEN and BIARNE POVELSEN, on journeys through Iceland in 1752–1757.

Moreover, the Academy has concerned itself with such widely differing matters as historical almanacs, chronometers, meteorological, astronomical and geomagnetic observations, artesian well-boring, etc.

ASGER LOMHOLT