

P.O. Brøndsted as Royal Danish court agent in Rome

by *Otto Christian Schepelern*

The world wishes to be fooled ...

The aim of this paper is to point out the extent of myths and misunderstandings concerning the so-called diplomatic career of Peter Oluf Brøndsted (fig. 1). My background is 36 years in the Danish Foreign Service working in Copenhagen and abroad at various embassies. Therefore the scope of the following contribution is not Brøndsted seen as a scholar, but assessed professionally as a diplomat.¹ It is well known that both Brøndsted and posterity considered that the Danish Foreign Service took advantage of or even exploited him. As the following will demonstrate, it was rather the other way around.²

To understand Brøndsted's diplomatic intermezzo it will be necessary to give an outline of his Danish and European environment.

The expression 'Denmark': When I use the terms 'Denmark' and 'Danish' I refer to the monarchy ruled by the King of Denmark in Brøndsted's time. I thus include the mainly German-speaking duchies of Slesvig, Holstein and Lauenburg, the richest and most developed parts of the King's possessions. Altona was the second city next to the capital of Copenhagen, and the constant influx of German know-how, capital and ideas was essential to the monarchy. To a certain extent

Norway had counterbalanced the German parts of the monarchy, but after the loss of that kingdom in 1814 the importance of the three duchies – of which Holstein and Lauenburg were members of the German Confederation – became even stronger.

The political environment: In theory Denmark was perhaps the most absolutist and autocratic state of Europe, with no popular representation. A public debate existed but in a submissive and subtle manner – the wisdom of the King was not to be questioned – and in the absence of political parties and a free press protection from important people was required to promote a career. Brøndsted was in his element in this Danish environment with his rich marriage, charm, social talents and constant endeavour to approach possible decision-makers. Networking is the modern expression for this sort of thing.

Concerning foreign policy, the position of Denmark was shattered by the Napoleonic wars. Being among the defeated states at the Vienna Conference 1814-15, Denmark had to accept the covenant of the German Confederation. That some kind of constitutional assembly should be established in its member states represented a threat to Royal absolutism and to the integrity of the

1. Main sources: RA (The Danish National Archives/Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen), 302 (archive no. 302: The Department of Foreign Affairs 1770-1848); RA, 202 (archive no. 202: Kongehuset, Christian 8., konge), 121-163 (1794-1848, udat., Breve fra forskellige), ASV (Archivio Segreto Vaticano/ Secret Archives of the Vatican, Rome), SdS (Segretaria di Stato/Foreign Department of The Holy See); Christian VIII 1943-1995.

2. The general tradition of Brøndsted as a victim of his diplomatic burdens is founded on his letters to family and friends (see Andersen 2005), established with the biography by M. Cl. Gertz in DBL 1, and reiterated in the 2nd and 3rd editions of that work.

Danish Monarchy as such. Therefore Denmark became a client of conservative Austria in order to avoid the possible constitutions of Holstein and Lauenburg, and generally gave proof of loyalty to Austria to counter-balance Prussia and German federalism.

At the European level, Denmark was committed to the reactionary Holy Alliance under the leadership of Austria. As Italy – *expression géographique* according to Metternich – including the Papal State was the political backyard of Austria, Denmark could in no way risk provoking its main supporter, which became evident in connection with the revolution in Naples in 1820 and the ensuing Austrian military intervention in 1821. In the Federal Diet in Frankfurt, the Bundestag – the UN of those days – the envoy of Denmark had a general instruction to vote like Austria.³ Among the numerous Italian states, Denmark only had regular diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies through a chargé d'affaires in Naples. Danish interests in Italy were economical, not political, and in all the important ports a Royal Danish honorary consul took care of shipping and trade. A well-known example is the Dalgas family in Livorno.

The economic environment: The State bankruptcy in 1813, the loss of overseas trade because of the alliance with Napoleon 1807-1814, and the serious agricultural crisis from 1818 onwards made reductions in public spending necessary. These were to include the Foreign Service.

The cultural environment: Danish historians in general have ignored the 400 years of happy Danish-German symbiosis, following the election of the King of Denmark and Norway as Duke of Slesvig and count of

Holstein in 1460. In Brøndsted's day, approximately 1/3 of the population of Copenhagen was German-speaking with its own churches, schools and press, while in the academic field Denmark was deeply intertwined with German culture through the universities of Copenhagen and Kiel. In the diplomatic papers of Brøndsted there are neither traces of Danish nationalism nor of Scandinavianism, which is remarkable just 25 years before the Danish-German civil war broke out in 1848. The return of Thorvaldsen to Rome in 1820, for instance, engendered a common Danish-German celebration.⁴ If Brøndsted expresses national resentment it is towards Sweden and Bernadotte.

The European supra-national environment: The elite in Brøndsted's day felt loyalty to the ruling prince before loyalty to the nation. Count Christian Bernstorff was Danish foreign minister till 1810, then Prussian foreign minister from 1818. Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke (der grosse) had attended the military academy in Copenhagen and begun his career in the Danish army. Barthold Niebuhr from Holstein left a career in Copenhagen for Berlin, and Brøndsted met him in Rome as envoy of Prussia. For centuries, young north Germans had made careers serving the Danish Kings. Now they were attracted to Berlin – a bad omen for the future of the Danish-German monarchy.

The professional environment of diplomacy: The general European requirements of diplomatic service were nobility and wealth, and the aristocratic background of the diplomats made them accepted at the courts. Salary and allowances existed but did not at all cover the expenses of being posted abroad. A private income was necessary, and no diplomat could live on his salary.

3. Nørregaard 1960.

4. Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 305, the 28th of December 1820.



Fig. 1. Anonymous drawing of Brøndsted, recently identified. Ascribed to Chrétien, c. 1810. (Mikala Brøndsted, cat.no 3)

Denmark was no exception, and its diplomatic service abroad was dominated by noblemen and estate owners with a strong element of rich counts and barons from Holstein. In other words you did not become rich being an envoy, you became an envoy because you were rich. There even existed a Royal decree stating – after certain unfortunate incidents – that no Danish diplomats were to be recruited unless they possessed sufficient private means.⁵

The abyss between diplomatic and consular service:

The diplomatic service acted at the courts of the sovereign dealing with alliances, war and peace. It considered itself superior to – and separated from – the consular service, which dealt with inferior matters like trade, shipping, customs, passports and estates of deceased persons. Professor Zoëga had been a Danish consular agent in Rome at his death in 1809 and in this capacity reported to the Department of Commerce; not to the Department of Foreign Affairs. In Rome upon the arrival of Brøndsted, Denmark was represented by a rich and influential honorary consul, Luigi Chiaveri, stepson of the banker Torlonia, duke of Bracciano; and in the Papal State there also were Royal Danish Consuls in the ports of Ancona and Civitavecchia.

The division of activities was clearly reflected in the social background of the Danish representatives: as mentioned above, the diplomats were generally wealthy noblemen, while the honorary consuls – who were and are unsalaried – were rich local merchants or ship-owners.

The concept and title of Court Agent

In the first place the word ‘Agent’ indicated that there were no regular diplomatic relations between Denmark and the Holy See – they were not established until 1882. The expression, which reflected a relation between the courts (even today an ambassador in London is accredited to the Court of St James), was a euphemism for foreign political relations. There was a contradiction between Brøndsted’s apparent diplomatic title and the lack of diplomatic relations, so the impressive title was formally empty. As appears below, Denmark had no intention of approaching the Papal State politically. The constant ambition of Brøndsted to be appointed Chargé d’Affaires⁶ instead of court agent materialized only in 1827 – four years after his final departure from Rome – and it thus became another empty title. However, it proves the PR sense of Brøndsted that on the title page of *Voyages* in 1830 he still uses the impressive title of Royal Danish Court Agent to the Holy See.

Brøndsted’s diplomatic career as seen in the files of the Foreign Department⁷

Chronological table

- 1816**, *May, Copenhagen*: Application for the post and title of Chargé d’Affaires or Royal Court Agent to the Holy See with salary. Forwarded to the King, supported by Foreign Minister Rosenkrantz (fig. 2). Submitted by the King to the Department of Finance. Rejected.
- 1818**, *August, Copenhagen*: Application for a post in Rome and a diplomatic title without salary.
- 1818**, *September, Copenhagen*: Appointed Court Agent. Letter of introduction from Rosenkrantz to the Papal State Secretary, Cardinal Consalvi.

5. Kjølsen 1970, I, 45.

6. Cf. the article by Mikala Brøndsted in this publication.

7. RA, 302, 2305 (parcel no. 2305: Cases concerning the Danish agents in Rome, 1780-1827).

- 1819**, *February, Rome*: Application for the title of Chargé d’Affaires with the ensuing salary.⁸ Rejected.
- 1820**, *February, Naples*: Application for c. three months leave in order to travel to Greece. Granted.
- 1821**, *November, Rome*: Begging letters to the King and Rosenkrantz applying for a salary. Rejected.
- 1823**, *April, Rome*: Application for c. twelve months leave from Rome in order to launch *Voyages*. Requests for letters of recommendation to the Royal Danish Legations in Paris and London. Granted after his actual departure in May.
- 1826**, *September, Copenhagen*: Application to Foreign Minister Schimmelmann for prolonged leave till 1827.
- 1827**, *May, Copenhagen*: Application to Count Schimmelmann for the title of Chargé d’Affaires, prolonged leave till 1828, and a salary upon his return to Rome.
- 1827**, *June, Copenhagen*: Application for alleged postage expenses 1819-1823. 404 rigsbankdaler. Granted.
- 1827**, *June, Copenhagen*: Appointed Chargé d’Affaires with prolonged leave provided that he does not return to Rome!
- 1827**, *June, Copenhagen*: Appointed Privy Councillor of Legation (Geheimelegationsråd) with exemption of rates and dues.

It would completely derail this contribution to go into the bureaucratic details, but the table above shows how Brøndsted before, during and after his years in Rome made applications for the title of Chargé d’Affaires

and for a salary. It should be noted, however, that Brøndsted received his salary as a professor from the University of Copenhagen until January 1821 – a parallel to Zoëga who was paid by the University of Kiel – and that before his appointment in 1818 he told the Department that he possessed the necessary private means. When he sends the begging letters in 1821 “for the sake of my three motherless children”, the King rejects the petition with the remark that Brøndsted is free to return to his university chair and salary.⁹ And everybody knew that his three small children were rich heirs to their late mother.

This incident makes me suggest that a special survey dealing with the complicated money transactions of Brøndsted should be undertaken. And perhaps also a survey of his relations with his university: It will not be the first nor the last time a Danish university pays in order to keep a difficult colleague away.

Cavaliere Brøndsted: Diplomatic activity in Rome. The transformation of a professor

Brøndsted arrived in Rome on the birthday of King Frederik VI, 28 January 1819, rented a residence in Via di Porta Pinciana 41, and delivered his letter of introduction to Cardinal Consalvi the 2nd of February.¹⁰ A few days later, he was received by Pope Pius VII in Palazzo Quirinale.¹¹

During his years in Rome Brøndsted used the title of *Cavaliere* – knight of Dannebrog – and wore the blue diplomatic uniform, which has hardly changed since then. His official letters to the Papal authorities are in French and their answers in Italian.

What did Brøndsted report home to Copenhagen? Roman gossip, scandals, briganti (highwaymen) and

8. See also RA, 302, 2307 (parcel no. 2307: Reports from the royal agent in Rome, Professor Brøndsted, and from the Danish consul Louis Chiaveri, 1819-1832), report to Niels Rosenkrantz, the 10th-12th of February 1819.

9. The King’s reaction and applications for salary and title equally are to be found RA, 302, 2305.

10. RA, 302, 2307, report to Niels Rosenkrantz, the 10th-12th of February 1819.

11. Ibid.



Fig. 2. Baron Niels Rosenkrantz. Head of The Department of Foreign Affairs from 1810 till his death. A friendly and hard-working boss, who understands the peculiarities of Brøndsted, forgives his diplomatic blunders and recommends him to the King. Brøndsted evidently knows Rosenkrantz socially, calls him benefactor and often in his reports sends greetings to Her Grace the Baroness. The Foreign Minister from 1824, Count Ernst Schimmelmann, is also a protector of Brøndsted, appoints him Privy Councillor of Legation and helps him financially in 1827. Painting by F.C. Gröger 1809. Frederiksborg.

important visitors. Nothing about the Protestant Cemetery in Rome – a possible bilateral issue considering his background¹² – and very little about Roman politics, but a lot about developments in Greece and particularly in Naples.

What did he tell His Eminence and his Segretaria di Stato? There may of course have been direct social contacts, but his official letters show nothing of political importance, as Brøndsted received no instructions to promote Danish interests. He writes about practical details of the visit of Prince Christian Frederik and other Danish Royalty, customs facilities for Thorvaldsen etc., nothing which might not as well have been achieved by Consul Chiaveri.¹³

A Papal miscalculation

This level of friendly indifference was reached after an initial misunderstanding in 1819 about a Danish *rap-prochement* and possible diplomatic relations. Shortly after delivering his letter of introduction to Cardinal Consalvi, Brøndsted received two official replies, one for himself and one for Rosenkrantz whom Consalvi knew from the Vienna Congress.¹⁴ Both Papal notes stated that since according to the Congress, unfortunately, a court agent could not be a recognized member of the *corps diplomatique*, Denmark should appoint Brøndsted Chargé d’Affaires.¹⁵ To Brøndsted this title implied a salary; to Consalvi it implied diplomatic relations with a North German state, which might counterbalance dependence on Austria. That the arrival of Brøndsted caused expectations of closer contacts at the Quirinale is furthermore indicated by the fact that His Holiness at the audience of 8 February

1819 questioned him about the conditions of Catholics in Denmark.¹⁶ Delighted, Brøndsted forwarded both Papal notes to Copenhagen with a vigorous application for title and salary,¹⁷ but the King and Rosenkrantz did not fall into the trap. Denmark had no significant Catholic population and could not risk raising Austrian suspicions by establishing closer relations with The Holy See.¹⁸

This was quite different from the achievements of the Prussian envoy Barthold Niebuhr who, like Brøndsted, left Rome in 1823 but with a concordate signed. Gonsalvi and the Papal Court soon realized that Brøndsted had no diplomatic authority and that the reason for Brøndsted’s presence in Rome – despite his spectacular title – was cultural.

Diplomatic blunders.

Upon his arrival in Rome Brøndsted had neither diplomatic training nor experience, so it is not surprising that he violated a number of the unwritten rules of diplomacy. The following list mentions some classical blunders, but is not exhaustive.

a) Never embarrass important persons

Prince Christian Frederik was regarded with certain scepticism at the courts of Europe after the events in Norway 1814. As Christian Gottlieb has observed¹⁹ it was not wise to dedicate to the Prince the book on the Greek helmet, *Sopra un’Iscrizione greca scolpita in un antico elmo* (1820) with its praise of a liberal constitution. Nor was it wise to forward a copy of it to Consalvi, which Brøndsted, however, did in December 1820. The Cardinal sent his acknowledgements with-

12. The issue of the Protestant Cemetery was taken to Consalvi by Prince Christian Frederik and by Niebuhr. See Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 330ff., the 15th and 18th of March 1821.

13. ASV, SdS, Ministri Esteri 1819-23.

14. RA, 302, 2307, report to Niels Rosenkrantz, the 10th – 12th of February 1819.

15. RA, 302, 2305, the 2 originals are dated the 12th of February 1819.

16. RA, 302, 2307, report to Niels Rosenkrantz, the 10th – 12th of February 1819.

17. Ibid.

18. Danish rejection: RA, 302, 2306 (parcel no. 2306: Letters etc. to Georg Zoëga as Danish agent in Rome as well as misc. drafts of orders to the royal agent in Rome, Professor Brøndsted), Niels Rosenkrantz to Brøndsted, the 27th of Marts 1819.

19. See the article by Christian Gottlieb in this publication.

out further comments, and it is significant that I found the book as an enclosure in the files of the Segretaria di Stato.²⁰ In other words the cardinal did not incorporate it in his library.

b) Never comment on Danish Government policy – domestic or foreign

Generally Brøndsted in his applications to the Department for a salary criticizes the domestic economic measures, which followed the Danish state bankruptcy in 1813 and their impact on his own financial circumstances.²¹ In his reports to Copenhagen he writes enthusiastically about the revolution in Naples and sarcastically about the Austrian military intervention in 1821. The reaction was a warning from Foreign Minister Rosenkrantz that his reports were seen by the King, and that neither the Danish court nor foreign courts, i.e. Austria, shared his views.²²

c) Never comment on the internal affairs of the host country

In the spring of 1819, when the young Princes of Augustenborg, nephews to the King, visited Rome their hotel collapsed and destroyed their coach. A Papal commission of enquiry was established, and nothing happened. In an official note to Consalvi concerning possible economic compensation Brøndsted discusses and criticizes over 4 pages – with many quotations from Horace and other Roman poets – the whole legal system of the Papal State.²³

d) Never meddle in your neighbouring diplomatic district

In Naples there was a regular Danish chargé d'affaires, Captain Vogt. Nevertheless, despite the friendly advice

of Rosenkrantz, Brøndsted reports continuously about events in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which he evidently considers more interesting than Roman politics.

In the summer and autumn of 1820, King Frederik and the Foreign Department might have been confused as they received simultaneously four sets of reports about the revolution in the kingdom: from Prince Christian Frederik, from Captain Vogt, from Baron Schubart – former envoy in Naples who accompanied the Prince – and from Brøndsted who stayed with the Prince instead of returning to Rome.²⁴

e) Never meddle in consular matters – the domain of the Danish Department of Commerce

Coming to Palermo from Malta in July 1820 Brøndsted finds three Danish sailors from Flensburg in jail. He reports immediately to Baron Rosenkrantz, but this is not an issue for the Department.²⁵

f) Never take a case to several Danish decision makers simultaneously

At the same time Brøndsted takes the case to the Department of Commerce, although there is already a Danish consul in Palermo, and also to Prince Christian Frederik in Naples asking him to intervene with his host, King Fernando of the Two Sicilies.²⁶ (Ironically this issue was solved a few days later in a very special manner, as the revolutionary mob in Palermo set all jailed prisoners free.)

Still, it is essential to observe that the blunders involving Denmark were always noticed and corrected by the paternal foreign minister Rosenkrantz in a friendly and indulgent way.²⁷ Brøndsted was not considered a professional diplomat, and no sanctions were

20. ASV, SdS, Ministri Esteri, 1820, Rubriche 277.

21. RA, 302, 2305

22. RA, 302, 2306, Niels Rosenkrantz to Brøndsted, the 28th of April 1821.

23. ASV, SdS, Ministri Esteri, the 17th of July 1819.

24. RA, 302, 2307, reports to Niels Rosenkrantz, Palermo and Naples July-November 1820.

25. RA, 302, 2307, report to Niels Rosenkrantz, Palermo the 9th of July 1820.

26. RA, 202, 121-163, letter to Prince Christian Frederik from Brøndsted, Palermo the 5th of July 1820.

27. RA, 302, 2306.

imposed. A Danish career diplomat making similar blunders might have been recalled or dismissed, but the special position of Brøndsted made it possible to play down his behaviour, for instance to Austria.

As a kind of epilogue, it should be mentioned that the blunders of the next generation were worse. In 1863, during the agony of the Danish-German state, Brøndsted's daughter Marie, wife of Prime Minister C.C. Hall, was at the head of a public subscription in favour of the Poles then rebelling against the Tsar. Russia was not happy, and this incident accelerated the diplomatic isolation of Denmark before the final breakdown in 1864.

Myths and misunderstandings

As mentioned above the Danish biographical tradition dealing with Brøndsted has generated a number of myths concerning his years in Rome and his relations to the Foreign Service, which I am happy to repudiate. Probably those misunderstandings are related to the general contempt for Danish absolutism in the years following its fall in 1848.

a) Rome as the exile of the bereaved and reluctant husband

Already in May 1816 – two years before the death of his wife Frederikke – Brøndsted sends his first application for the post in Rome to the Foreign Department, probably with the position previously held by Zoëga in mind. But Zoëga had been a consular agent, a post now occupied by Luigi Chiaveri, so Brøndsted suggests a superior title and position.

b) The necessity of ensuring the scholar an income in Rome by irrelevant and time-wasting diplomatic work²⁸

The prestigious title of Court Agent provided Brøndsted with social standing, a uniform, and possible access to important people and collections (but not with a single scudo). That is why he tells the Department in 1818 that he is rich.²⁹

c) The independent diplomat whose salary was withdrawn because of his liberal political views

As mentioned above Brøndsted was not considered a diplomat either by Copenhagen or Rome, and never received a salary from the Department. The Department in fact recommended it on several occasions, but the idea was rejected by the King both before and after the row in 1821 concerning Brøndsted's book on the Greek helmet. So the lack of salary had nothing to do with the book nor did it constitute a sanction; rather, it might have been related to the economy of the state in connection with the general reduction of the Foreign Service in the 1820s. Denmark could not establish or maintain a paid representative in Rome when far more important missions had to be reduced or closed for budgetary reasons.³⁰ However, as mentioned above, Brøndsted's Roman postage expenses were reimbursed without receipts as late as June 1827 – 4 years after his departure – quite a generous gesture from the successor of Rosenkrantz, Count Schimmelmann.³¹ One may imagine the mixed feelings of the Foreign Department staff in Copenhagen, since the 404 rigsbankdaler reimbursed surpassed the yearly pay of a civil servant.³²

28. Brøndsted 1926; DBL 3.

29. RA, 302, 2305.

30. Kjølshen 1970, I, 72ff.

31. RA, 302, 2305.

32. Table of Foreign Department salaries, Kjølshen 1970, I, 65.

*d) The heavy burden of writing reports to the Department*³³

In the first place it should be noted that in 1818 Brøndsted himself suggested drawing up reports in connection with his appointment.³⁴ In Rome, as Court Agent, he sent 53 reports to Copenhagen in 4½ years, fewer than one report per month. During his absence from Rome, February-November 1820, his reports dealt with Greece, the Ionian University in Ithaca, archaeology, and the revolution in the Two Sicilies – matters highly relevant to him but probably not to the Department. Further rationalization of the burdensome report writing was accomplished by more or less re-cycling his letters to Prince Christian Frederik as reports to Baron Rosenkrantz and vice versa.³⁵

e) The heavy burden of Danish visitors

Again, the idea of assisting Danish visitors was promoted by Brøndsted himself in his aforementioned applications for the post in 1816 and 1818. But using a ploy that all parents have experienced, he escaped to Greece before the Easter visit of Prince Christian Frederik to Rome in 1820, which made the Prince sulky.³⁶ During his final stay in Rome 1820-21 Nibby took over as the royal guide despite Brøndsted's presence.³⁷ That Prince Christian Frederik used Brøndsted as a consultant in connection with acquisitions of art and antiquities should not be looked upon as the same thing as irrelevant sight-seeing nor diplomatic work. Already the Augustenborg princes in 1819 were shown around by Peder Hjort.³⁸ A less naïve diplomat would have stuck closely to Danish Royalty.

May I add from my own experience that normally a Danish diplomat is very pleased with official visits because it offers the opportunity to meet important peo-

ple from the host country. He may thus improve his own working conditions. In this regard it is interesting to note that according to his diaries, Prince Christian Frederik was not accompanied by Brøndsted when he met eminent people in Rome. And the prince received his briefings on Papal politics from the Prussian envoy Barthold Niebuhr – not from Brøndsted.

Summary

To summarize, I do not consider Brøndsted's diplomatic workload a heavy burden nor a convincing excuse for possible delay in his scientific work. The Foreign Department considered him a researcher and does its best to promote his scientific activities and to provide him with a framework (social position, title and uniform) and even a salary. They were not successful in the latter, but notice the generosity in 1827 with old postal expenses. The Department also proves its sense of pragmatism by prolonging his leave from Rome and – at last – by appointing him Chargé d'Affaires and conferring the distinguished title of Privy Councillor of Legation (Geheimelegationsråd) provided that he does *not* return to his post! In other words the diplomatic shortcomings of Brøndsted did not affect the support of the Department, nor did his political blunders bring about any sanctions, neither during his stay abroad nor after his final return to Denmark in 1832. If his applications were rejected, it was by the Department of Finance and by King Frederik VI who governed Denmark like a strict headmaster knowing his pupils only too well

33. See Andersen 2005.

34. RA, 302, 2305.

35. Compare RA, 302, 2307, Brøndsted to Niels Rosenkrantz, the 2nd of June 1821 and RA, 202, 121-163, Brøndsted to Prince Christian Frederik, the 16th of June 1821.

36. See the article by Christian Gottlieb in this publication.

37. Christian VIII 1943-1995, II, 295, the 11th of December 1820.

38. Bay 1920-1921, 101.

Conclusion

All this may sound like criticism, but it does not diminish the greatness of Brøndsted in other more essential fields. He was very intelligent but not very wise, and in many ways naïve and egocentric, as I hope to have demonstrated. In the diplomatic field he was hopeless but at the same time modern and ahead of his time, and like Zoëga he was one of the first Danish cultural diplomats. He showed initiatives unfamiliar to the diplomats of his time, like sending letters to the editors of Italian newspapers and caring for ordinary Danes in distress. In a way he was the first in a long line of Danish cultural envoys difficult to manage. His contempt for Lord Elgin – whom he calls the looter of the Parthenon – is also remarkable.³⁹ The views of Brøndsted on the Greek War of Independence – an area that should formally not be dealt with from Rome – are interesting and realistic.

A relevant question concerns the Protestant faith of Brøndsted living in the capital of Catholicism. My impression from his papers is that, to use a modern expression, he was ecumenical and fully respected the Roman Church spiritually. But in his reports you notice a growing disillusionment about Catholicism as a political entity and as the *framework* of the Papal State. His fascination with the *briganti* may be a way of saying that the Papal State was not able to maintain civil order. Brøndsted came to Rome from another autocratic state and preferred the Danish version.

Already among Brøndsted's contemporaries some scepticism was expressed about his diplomatic activities. From his exile in Paris, P.A. Heiberg writes sourly that Brøndsted pretends to be a Danish diplomat in Rome, but that neither court agents nor consuls are to be considered diplomats.⁴⁰

Happily the Department in Copenhagen realized Brøndsted's limitations and both Baron Rosenkrantz and his successor as foreign minister Count Schimmelmann shielded him. I would like to quote Rosenkrantz who wrote to the King in 1816, that the posting and activities of Brøndsted in Rome "would add to the glory of Denmark".⁴¹

Brøndsted was a great writer. I suggest that his reports to the Department be published because of their vivid account of Danish and European life and the portrait he gives of himself. These so-called diplomatic reports may be read like fiction, and what strikes me is the affinity between Brøndsted and his contemporary literary hero, Adam Homo⁴²: the parson's son from Jutland, the rich wife, the broken promises, the Privy Councillor, the death from horseback riding....

As in the poem *Adam Homo*, the career of Brøndsted reflects the Denmark of Frederik VI, where a citizen's rank and title were more important than his functions. Even so, Brøndsted, completely remote from genuine diplomacy, enjoyed rank and title for the rest of his life. But his career also is a testimony of the generosity and broadmindedness of the late Danish absolutism, which despite heavy financial problems found ways and means to promote culture and the arts – for instance by sending Brøndsted under diplomatic disguise to Rome.

Brøndsted was not a diplomat, and it is up to scholars to assess whether his years as Royal Danish Court Agent in Rome delayed or benefited his scientific achievements. Contemplating the triangle Denmark – Rome – Brøndsted, you may ask; who fooled whom?

39. Brøndsted 1926, 134.

40. Heiberg 1830, 115ff. He also makes venomous comments on the publication of *Voyages*, which he considers outdated. My acknowledgements to Ambassador J. Korsgaard-Pedersen. Niels Bygom Krarup is equally sceptical, see Krarup 1957, 145.

41. RA, 302, 2305, Niels Rosenkrantz to Frederik VI, the 25th of May 1816.

42. Paludan-Müller: *Adam Homo*, Copenhagen, 1842-1848. It is a classical novel about social ascendancy/success and human poverty.