

## Chapter 5

# A Political Geography of University Foundation: The Case of the Danish Monarchy



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The reasons for founding, or establishing, a university have been numerous and have varied with the *raison d'être* of the university. In this chapter we explore the political geography of university foundation in two ways. First, we examine how universities have been used geopolitically, then we investigate the role of university foundation in relation to nation-building. We use the geographer Klaus Dodds's (2014) conceptualization of geopolitics as a way of understanding the world and the links between power, knowledge, and geography, and we analyze the discourses related to establishing universities in certain areas from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. In early modern Europe states were not linked to well-defined territories in the same ways as they are today. Territories could have overlapping jurisdictions and mixed modes of political authority. It was an era of multiple spatialities of power in which political space could not be reduced to national territories. For example, Koenigsberger (1986) coined the term "composite state" (p. 12) to denote the monarchies in early modern Europe. Elliott (1992), referred to "composite monarchies" to describe that cultural and political construction of Europe. Gustafsson (1998) wrote of the "conglomerate state" (p. 194) to describe state formation in early modern Europe, when states consisted of several more or less well-defined territories. Territories gained new rulers through wars and alliances. In this process universities could be founded as a means of consolidating power—and universities could be perceived as a threat to rulers.

Whereas literature on education has shown mass education's bearings on efforts at nation-building by mutually competing states within the European interstate system (e.g., Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Riddle, 1996), the part that universities play

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has received less attention, although there has been an interest in the role of higher education in European regionalism (e.g., Neave, 2011; Paterson, 2001). A number of German geographers (e.g., Geipel, 1966, 1971; Mayr, 1979; Meusbürger, 2012) have addressed the politics of university establishment, but English literature on university history usually passes over the spatial issues and geopolitics related to the founding of universities (e.g., de Ridder-Symoens, 1992, 1996; Pedersen, 1997; Rüegg, 2004, 2011).<sup>1</sup> We seek to close this gap in English scholarship by applying a geographical perspective to the history of university establishment. Because of the aforementioned complexities of state, power, and territory, we treat one state in detail rather than provide a more general overview.

Our empirical point of departure is the Danish state, also called the Danish monarchy, and its varying territorial claims from the fourteenth to the twentieth century, with the main emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the role of university-founding in regard to nation-building. Some readers may consider Denmark a small country for such an undertaking. The present nation-state is indeed a small example, but the composite state<sup>2</sup> of Denmark, which covered a much larger territory, tells a story of war and peace, territorial expansion and contraction, and fights over where knowledge creation and higher education should take place. Though focusing on Denmark, we stress that this case is not unique. Early universities in German-speaking lands, too, were founded for political reasons in the residences of the rulers (Kintzinger, 2003, 2012; Schwinges, 1998, 2008; see also chapter Schwinges in this volume).

We thus provide a geographical outlook on university history by analyzing the part that universities have played in the Danish monarchy from the founding of the University of Copenhagen in 1479 to the establishment of the University of Greenland in 1987. We first afford a territorial picture of the Danish state. It is followed by the analysis, in the first part of which we explore the geopolitics of university establishment in three selected regions. In the second part we examine the founding of four specific universities in the Danish monarchy to show how university establishment has been related to political independence and nation-building. In the final part of the analysis, we move from the Danish case to consideration of the university as part of a country's arsenal of national symbols and institutions. In the discussion and concluding remarks, we examine the role that internationalization has for universities in relation to their local or national agenda.

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<sup>1</sup>The subdiscipline known as the geography of education was pioneered by German geographers such as Robert Geipel in the early 1960s and Alois Mayr, who focused on universities as of 1970. In 1983 the Association of German Geographers formed a working group on the geography of education (for details see Meusbürger, 2015a).

<sup>2</sup>In this chapter we use the term *composite state*, which has become the most common one among historians in this context (e.g., J. R. Rasmussen, 1995).

## The Danish State from a Territorial Standpoint

According to Weber (2004), a state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. So defined, territory is an important characteristic of the state. We argue that a state can be thought of more broadly as a government that has sovereignty over a geographically specific territory with a permanent population and official connections to other states. The state institutions must have exclusive rights to establish and maintain legal order within the territory. Historically, the picture is more complex. A territory could have multiple rulers (in Europe they have been emperors, kings, dukes, and counts); a state might not consist of contiguous territories; and the laws, institutions, religions, and social structures could differ from one area to the next within a state (Koenigsberger, 1986). Since the Treaties of Westphalia of 1648, which brought an end to the religious wars in Europe by dividing the area into territories ruled by representatives of the opposing religious confessions, there has been a movement toward a system of sovereign and territorially well-defined states (see chapter by Hotson in this volume). Political geographers such as Agnew (1998) have argued that state territory is not always the same as state sovereignty and have warned against a simple “Westphalian view” (p. 12), in which the world consists solely of states or territorial actors and no other types of polity. That conceptualization posits a one-to-one relationship between territory and emperor, so a territory is perceived as belonging to one ruler only. Such a framework excludes the dynamics that have shaped the present nation-state of Denmark.<sup>3</sup>

At present the term *Denmark* defines the small nation-state that was formed after military defeat in 1864 and the incorporation of North Schleswig in 1920. In historical literature, however, the word refers to the composite state that came into being in 1460 as a typical kind of union in the era of territorial states. This entity could also be called the Danish monarchy, the Oldenburg monarchy, or the Danish-Norwegian-Schleswig-Holstein personal union (Østergaard, 2002). These terms, however, have never come into general use either colloquially or professionally. In this chapter we refer to *the state of Denmark* and *the Danish state* to denote the composite state covering a much larger territory than the present nation-state of Denmark. That type of composite state, which was held together only by the personage of a king or queen, was the dominant type of state in Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. As long as local traditions and regional laws were respected, the composite nature of the monarchical states could persist. The apparatus of power gained its legitimacy from God, a relationship not widely questioned until the 1700s, when the legitimacy of the old monarchical states was challenged by the new bourgeois public (Adriansen, 2003).

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<sup>3</sup>The word *natio* comes from Latin and means lineage or family. In this chapter it is used in its expanded, nineteenth-century meaning: a group of people whose identity is based on, for example, an ethnic, historical, cultural, or linguistic sense of community.

Geographically, the Danish state from 1460 to 1814 encompassed two kingdoms, Denmark and Norway; two duchies, Schleswig and Holstein (the latter was upgraded from a county to a duchy in 1474); two North Atlantic possessions, the Faroe Islands and Iceland; and four colonies: Greenland, Danish Ostindia (in India), the Gold Coast (West Africa), and the Danish West Indies (in the Caribbean). The two kingdoms constituted a personal union, as did the two duchies, and all four were bound together by their shared ruler, the Danish king, although his rank in the two duchies was only that of duke. Holstein, however, had a double status, for this duchy was also a member of the Holy Roman Empire (*Sacrum Romanum Imperium*). In Holstein the Danish king was therefore formally subject to the German-Roman emperor (known in English-language historiography as the Holy Roman emperor). To make things even more complicated, the Danish king had to promise in 1460, when he was appointed as duke of Schleswig and count of Holstein, that the two territories would be ruled as one entity (C. P. Rasmussen, 2008). The Danish state also included possessions east of Oresund in present-day Sweden. But following defeats in wars to Sweden in 1645 and 1658, the Danish state was reduced (see Fig. 5.1), losing all areas east of Oresund: Scania, Halland, Blekinge, the Baltic islands of Gotland and Saaremaa, and two areas in Norway (Härjedalen and Jämtland) (Jespersen, 2011).

The Danish state was still multinational, including many language groups or peoples. Speakers of Danish lived in the Kingdom of Denmark and the northern part of the Duchy of Schleswig, speakers of Norwegian lived in the Kingdom of Norway, and there were speakers of Frisian in western Schleswig as well as German speakers in southern Schleswig and all of Holstein. In the North Atlantic dependencies (the Faroe Islands; Iceland; and the colony, Greenland), the languages spoken were Faroese, Icelandic, and Greenlandic (Jespersen, 2011; Østergaard, 2015). In the second half of the eighteenth century, nation-building began to occur in the Danish state. Even though this process did not succeed on the periphery of the territory, it did weld different regions and ethnic groups together within the Kingdom of Denmark, which eventually emerged as one nation with major linguistic and cultural similarities (Adriansen, 2003). The gradual disintegration of the Danish composite state began in 1814. The personal union of the two kingdoms (Denmark and Norway), which had lasted for 434 years, ended in 1814 when Denmark, having fought on the losing side in the Napoleonic Wars, had to cede Norway to Sweden. In return Denmark received Swedish West Pomerania, which was soon given to Prussia in exchange for the small duchy of Lauenburg southeast of Holstein. The following year, 1815, Holstein became part of the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*). This separation of ways proved to be notable, for by 1848, when revolution engulfed many parts of Europe, the inhabitants of Holstein had come to feel solidarity with the German nation instead of the Danish (Adriansen & Christensen, 2015). The Danish state was further reduced after another military defeat in 1864, with Denmark having to surrender Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg to Prussia and Austria.

Denmark thereby became an approximated nation-state that included only one people, the Danish—the North Atlantic dependencies notwithstanding. The duchies



**Fig. 5.1** Permanent cedings of Danish territory from the 17th to the 19th centuries.

Source: Modified after Danmarks Nationalleksikon. Cartography: V. Schniepp.

became part of Prussia in 1867, but the population in North Schleswig maintained a Danish identity. In an internationally monitored referendum mandated by the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, 75% of the population in North Schleswig voted for incorporation into Denmark, and North Schleswig duly became part of Denmark in 1920 (Adriansen & Christensen, 2013).

The North Atlantic Dependencies (Iceland and the Faroe Islands) and the colony (Greenland) acquired different degrees of autonomy. Iceland became an independent state in 1918 but chose to enter into a personal union with Denmark for the first 25 years of this new arrangement. The Faroe Islands achieved home rule in 1948, with their own home-rule government. Greenland gained the same right in 1979. The

present Danish state is what is known as a united kingdom or realm community, for it comprises the three territories: Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland (Harhoff, 1993). In this overview of the Danish state's transition from a multinational, composite state to an approximated nation-state, universities played a key role.

## The Geopolitics of University Foundation

Since the Middle Ages, universities have been influential institutions in society as pivotal educators of clerics and loyal bureaucrats for the administration and as sources of knowledge production (Hammerstein, 1996; Kintzinger, 2003, 2012; Meusburger, 2012, 2015b). Universities have therefore been of interest to monarchs and other sovereigns. In this section we adopt a regional perspective to explore how the founding of universities has been related to the geopolitics of territorial expansion and reduction. We do not advocate a neoclassical geopolitical stance, which corresponds to what the layman expects geopolitics to be: "It is about the effects of geographical location and other geographical features on the foreign policy of a state and its relations with other states" (Mamadouh, 1998, p. 238). Rather, we are inspired by the geographers Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew (1992) and their characterization of critical geopolitics as a discursive practice "by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way as to represent it as a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas" (p. 192). In the following section, we analyze the geopolitical arguments for establishing universities in three regions of the Danish state. We also look to historian John E. Craig (1984), who analyzed universities in the contested region of Alsace-Lorraine.

### *Eastern Denmark*

Scania has been the southernmost region of Sweden since 1658, but it used to be part of the region that came to make up the Danish state in the tenth century. The narrow strait, Oresund, provided a ready connection, whereas Scania was separated from the northern territories of Sweden by great, almost impenetrable forests. In the early Middle Ages Scania had greater religious and economic significance than any other part of Denmark. In 1103 the main city, Lund, became the seat of the archbishop, who was the primate not only in the Danish kingdom but also in Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. Scania, however, was a source of discord between Denmark and Sweden and became the theater of several wars (Fig. 5.2).

The Danish king, Eric of Pomerania (1397–1439), made Copenhagen his capital. Until then, rulers had traveled around their kingdom, and there had been no permanent center of power. The idea of locating a university in Copenhagen seemed obvious because Danes wishing to pursuing academic studies had to go to foreign universities. In 1419 King Eric addressed the pope in Rome, requesting permission to establish a university in continuation of the cathedral school in Copenhagen. Pope





**Fig. 5.2** Final and deliberated locations of universities in Denmark and its neighboring regions  
Source: Design by authors. Cartography: V. Schniepp.

Martin V gave his permission for three faculties—law, medicine, and liberal arts. However, he declined to allow the creation of a faculty of theology, for his control would be hard to enforce in a place so far from Rome. Moreover, the permission to found a university in Copenhagen was valid for only two years, and King Eric became committed to a struggle with the Hanseatic League. In short, he was unable to carry out his educational plan (Lausten, 1991; Stybe, 1979).

Half a century later, in 1474, the Danish king, Christian I (1426–1481), made a pilgrimage to Rome to establish good relations with the pope in the hopes of gaining sway over the potentially troublesome bishops in the Danish kingdom. A generation earlier, the Danish archbishop had helped depose King Eric of Pomerania. Among the matters that King Christian discussed with the pope was renewed permission to found a university, including a faculty of theology. The charter was issued the following year (Slotved & Tamm, 2009). However, the plan was not realized until four years later, by which time Sweden, Denmark's foremost rival, had already established the first university in Scandinavia—Uppsala (1477). Upon hearing of the Danish petition in Rome, the Swedish king had decided to make a similar request, which was quickly granted by the pope and rapidly acted on in Sweden (Stybe,

1979). This example shows there can be multiple discourses for establishing a university. King Eric argued it would strengthen his new capital, King Christian sought a good relationship with the pope and permission to teach theology in Denmark in order to minimize tensions between the clergy and royal power, and the Swedish king wanted to position his country as the leading Nordic state.

It is worth noting that the papal charter of 1475 concerning the establishment of Copenhagen University was addressed to the archbishop in Lund, where a Franciscan *studium generale* (liberal arts school) had been created next to the cathedral as early as 1425. The charter stipulated that the chancellor of the university should be the archbishop or the bishop of the area where it was sited (Stybe, 1979). Nonetheless, it was not in Lund that King Christian had decided to locate his university but in Copenhagen, where he himself lived. Only when the Danish state broke with the Catholic Church after the Reformation in Denmark-Norway in 1536 was the king rather than the pope empowered to allow the founding of universities.

Following defeat in 1658, the Danish monarchy had to cede Scania to the Swedish Crown. With Scania Sweden became considerably larger, giving rise to the need for a new university (Rosén, 1968). In 1666, with many Swedish cities contending for the honor, the Swedish king allowed the establishment of a university in Lund, primarily because the cathedral chapter still administrated large estates and thus had the capacity to fund the new university, which was placed in the former cathedral school (Sanders, 2008). The founding of Lund University is often interpreted as a deliberate element of Scania's renationalization, or Swedification<sup>4</sup> (e.g., Asmussen, 2012; Feldbæk, 1998), a narrative that also appears on the university's home page (Lunds Universitet, 2016). There is, however, no supporting evidence. In the beginning only a third of the teaching staff consisted of Swedes, one third had been educated at the cathedral school during the era of Danish rule, and the remaining third had been Germans. It took a few decennia for Lund University to serve as a tool for strengthening the Swedish state. Analogous development took place at other European universities as well (Sanders, 2008).

### *The Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein*

In 1460 the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein came under the Danish Crown. Schleswig was a Danish fief, whereas Holstein was a German fief with the German-Roman emperor as its feudal overlord. As of the 1630s the desire for a university arose among the prominent citizens of Flensburg, the largest city in the Duchy of Schleswig and the leading trading post in the Danish monarchy. The purpose of the university was to educate priests and civil servants for the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. A suitable building was identified in Flensburg, the main

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<sup>4</sup>For this reason we have decided to mention the creation of the institution, even though Lund, as part of Scania, was already Swedish territory by that time.



part of the funding was raised, and the suggestion was endorsed by the two ruling dukes, King Christian IV of Denmark-Norway (1577–1648) and Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp (1597–1659). However, the plans had to be postponed when Swedish troops entered the duchies in 1643 (Battrup, 2007).

In 1658 the son of Frederick III, Duke Christian Albrecht (1641–1694), was released from his commitments to the Danish king, and this new sovereignty of his duchy was confirmed in 1660 by the Danish king (C. P. Rasmussen, 2008). In 1665 Christian Albrecht founded the University of Kiel (*Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel*). This decision probably contributed much to the visibility and staging of the duchy's new status as a sovereign state (Henningsen, 2008; Lohmeier, 1997). The creation of a university in Kiel placed the newly formed miniature state of Holstein-Gottorp on a par with the greater German states. The institution was set up in the Duchy of Holstein, even though the duke still resided in Gottorp Castle in the Duchy of Schleswig. But because Holstein was a German fief, the German-Roman emperor could be expected to offer protection against possible interference by the Danish king. In 1713 the Danish king, Frederik IV (1671–1730), took over the Gottorpien parts of Holstein, making all parts of the duchy subject to the Danish crown. Frederik was made to promise that he would strengthen the University of Kiel, which he did with a decree ensuring that all students from Schleswig and Holstein must study for two years in Kiel if they wanted employment in the duchies—even if they had completed an education at the University of Copenhagen (Tamm, 1996).

In the late eighteenth century professors at the University of Copenhagen contemplated a merger of the universities of Copenhagen and Kiel. The large new university was to be located in the city of Schleswig for three reasons. First, the physical distance from the central power in Copenhagen would increase academic freedom. Second, the distance from the temptations of the capital would enhance the students' focus on their studies. Third, the merger would strengthen the state union by building a cultural bridge between the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. However, the suggestion was not taken seriously by the autocratic king, who was against any kind of decentralization (Albeck, 1978).

The requirement that all civil servants in the duchies had to study at least two years in Kiel came under criticism from the Danish side when the national conflict between Danish and German identity worsened from the 1830s onward (Hofmann, 1965; Tamm, 1996). The obligation was originally introduced for regional political reasons, but it acquired great national political significance when nationalism entered the stage and the university in Kiel came to play a salient role in nation-building. Modern nationalism in Schleswig and Holstein was formulated in 1815–1816 by two professors from the University of Kiel, the historian F. C. Dahlmann (1785–1860) and the lawyer N. N. Falck (1784–1850). Many students became interested in the ideology and identified closely with the German nation, turning the university in Kiel (and those elsewhere) into a hotbed of political unrest (Frandsen, 2008).

However, not all professors in Kiel were German patriots. A few of them were Danish-minded, among them Christian Paulsen (1798–1854). In 1842 he suggested

that a university be founded in the Duchy of Schleswig to save civil servants from having to study for two years in Kiel and thus becoming influenced by German culture. Paulsen asserted that “the Danish spirit is in need of a scientific border fortress . . . A university will have a spiritual impact far beyond the circle of students” (Misfeldt, 1925, p. 3).<sup>5</sup> However, there was no immediate support for the suggestion, which was presented to the Danish king. Paulsen was right in his assessment of the spiritual impact of universities, and his concern over the ideological influence in Kiel was shared by many. In 1848 the First Schleswig War broke out, and when it came to an end in 1851 the university question was not raised again. In 1867, after the Second Schleswig War in 1864, both duchies were made part of Prussia (Adriansen & Christensen, 2013), and the University of Kiel was restructured along Prussian lines. For more than two centuries the fate of the university was closely related to the discussions and territorial disputes over the Schleswig-Holstein area.

## *Jutland*

The following analysis is closely related to the one above, for the southern part of the Jutland peninsula is Schleswig. The proposal to establish a university in the southern part of the Danish kingdom, near the border to the duchies, was presented in 1845 by H. P. Selmer (1802–1877), a department head in the administration of the University of Copenhagen. Embedded in Denmark’s national geopolitical discourse, his reasoning was that a university would have great impact on both the region where it was located and the adjacent regions. In Selmer’s mind, there was no doubt that

a major reason for the supremacy that German nationality has managed to gain in the duchies at the expense of the Danes lies in the fact that it is being fostered by the German university [in Kiel]. . . . A university in Jutland would thus provide the strongest support in the struggle against the unjustified advance of German nationality. (Albeck, 1978, p. 28)<sup>6</sup>

However, national disagreements after the war in 1848 prevented action in this regard.

When Denmark was planning a new university after World War I, debates arose about where it should be located. The professors at the University of Copenhagen were of the opinion that their own institution ought to be expanded and that it would prove impossible to motivate qualified researchers to settle outside the capital. The

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<sup>5</sup>“*Den danske Aand kan trænge til en videnskabelig Grænsfæstning [. . .] Et Universitet kan få en aandelig Virkning langt ud over Studenternes Kreds*” (Misfeldt, 1925, p. 3). All English translations in this chapter are our own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup>“*At en væsentlig Aarsag til den Overlegenhed som den tyske Nationalitet i Hertugdømmerne har vidst at tilvende sig paa den danskes Bekostning, netop ligger deri, at hin understøttes ved det daværende tyske Universitet [i Kiel]. . . Et Universitet i Jylland vilde saaledes give dette den kraftigste Støtte i Kampen mod den tyske Nationalitets uberettigede Fremtrængen*” (Albeck, 1978, p. 28).

faculty claimed that a university on the periphery would not be viable (Albeck, 1978).

For many decades, though, a strong desire for a university in Jutland had existed, and in 1919 the Danish Ministry of Education set up a university commission. Three towns in Jutland, two of which were rather small, entered the contest to become the host of the future university, each with a different rationale for why they were appropriate candidates. Viborg had a cathedral and a regional archive and was an old center of education. Sønderborg in North Schleswig was situated close to the future Danish-German frontier and needed economic and national reinforcement. Aarhus's main advantage in the debate was that it had grown to become the second largest city in Denmark. In Viborg and Sønderborg this very fact spoke against locating the university in Aarhus. The vital interaction between teachers and between teachers and students would be facilitated much better in a smaller town, where it would also be possible to promote fruitful interaction between the university researchers and people from outside academia.

Aarhus ultimately won (Albeck, 1978). A broad range of citizens representing the business community joined forces in 1921 in The University Society, Aarhus, an organization that, together with the Aarhus city council, that eventually became the driving force in the campaign. Scientific collections were secured, scientific societies were created, and the city hospital was improved to become the leading hospital outside the capital. Private parties donated great sums, and a building plot was offered for free. Private university-level teaching in Aarhus began in 1928, and within three years the city managed to convince the parliament that it should be the second university city in the Kingdom of Denmark. The bill pertaining to Aarhus University was passed in 1931. However, it committed the central state to cover running costs only; money for the construction of university buildings had to come from other sources, including private ones. The university buildings were paid for by the Aarhus city council and private funds until the 1940s (Albeck, 1978).

In Sønderborg the abortive bid to have a university sited there led to great disappointment. One reason for the failure was a fear of national and political unrest that could be caused by an influx of German students. The border region did not acquire an institution of higher education until 1963, when an engineering college was founded in Sønderborg. It was joined by a business college in 1984, and the two institutions merged with Odense University in 1998 to become the University of Southern Denmark. The new university expanded in 2004 to include the Department of Border Region Studies.

In southern Schleswig, which remained under German rule after 1920, a college of education was changed into Flensburg university in 1994 (Ruck, 2007). Today, the universities in Sønderborg and Flensburg collaborate in numerous areas and offer joint courses. The two university campuses on either side of the border are located in peripheral regions. Likewise, the University of Southern Denmark (with its main campus in Odense) collaborates with the University of Kiel in many fields. Hence, destructive national politics has been replaced with constructive regional and cross-border politics.

## ***University Foundation from a Geopolitical Perspective***

To show how geography can contribute to university history, this section sums up the various facets of the chapter's arguments so far by supplementing existing literature with analysis of geopolitical arguments for establishing universities. Agnew (2001) showed how the national boundaries in Europe have their origins in the sixteenth century, "when political sovereignty began to shift from the personhood of the monarch to the territory of the state" (p. 7), linking authority and territory in an unprecedented manner. In the Middle Ages university students, for instance, constituted a community with their own jurisdiction and their own prisons within the university. Territorial states meant an end to overlapping jurisdictions and mixed modes of political authority. In this process of shaping nations, education became a useful tool. Although universities have been quite international from the outset, they have always been a staple of political power because universities educate clergy, bureaucrats, and other parts of the elite; because universities are houses of knowledge; and because knowledge and power are closely linked (Hammerstein, 1996; Meusburger, 2012, 2015b). Many rulers have therefore tried to consolidate their power by establishing universities and controlling their location, as the Danish state has shown on various occasions. Several chapters in Gregory, Meusburger, and Suarsana (2015) have addressed the roles that universities and scholars have in mediating knowledge and power and have examined ways in which rulers have sought to aggrandize their power through universities and academic knowledge. As the next section shows, universities have also become important for discourses on nationhood and independence, so rulers can also exercise power by *not* allowing the creation of a university.

## **Establishment of Universities and Nation-Building**

Having analyzed geopolitical aspects of university establishment in selected regions, we now draw on specific institutional examples to illustrate the role of university-founding in relation to nation-building. As Scott (1990) put it, knowledge and nation are "two rival systems of ideas and values, beliefs and attitudes, which compete for our loyalty" (p. 1). He contended that knowledge represents reason and science, whereas nation represents instinct and custom. However, Scott also pointed out that education, particularly higher education, consists of institutions of knowledge as well as institutions that "preserve and elaborate patterns of national identity" (p. 11). Other authors, too, have noted the relationship between universities and nation-building (e.g., Cohen, 2007; Norrback & Ranki, 1996; Riddle, 1996). Although Adriansen's (2003) research on national symbolism did not include the university as a national symbol, we explore the question of whether the university can be included in the battery of national symbols and institutions. We begin by considering examples within the Danish monarchy.

## ***The University of Oslo—Det Kongelige Frederiks Universitet***

For more than 400 years (1380–1814), Norway was in personal union with Denmark. Norwegians could educate themselves only at universities outside Norway, with the University of Rostock or sometimes the University of Leiden being the preferred choice in the mid-fourteenth century (Langholm, 1996). After the Reformation in Denmark-Norway in 1536, the Danish king ruled that all Norwegians and Danes wishing to apply to foreign universities were required to study first for at least two years at the University of Copenhagen. According to the state, the university's foremost task was to educate loyal civil servants, who had to hold a diploma from the University of Copenhagen to become a priest, judge, or medical doctor in Denmark, Norway, or the North Atlantic dependencies. Because of the physical and psychological distance between northern Norway and Copenhagen, the Norwegians petitioned in 1661 to have their own university, a request that the Danish king categorically rejected. In the eighteenth century Norwegians accounted 40% of Denmark-Norway's entire population but only 15% of the student body at the University of Copenhagen. This background led to a reapplication for the creation of a Norwegian university in 1771. Reflecting the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment, the petitioners invoked the need to increase the level of knowledge and strengthen professional development (Collett, 1999). Supporters pressed for emphasis on the natural sciences and their practical application and stressed the logic of studying Norwegian history and nature in Norway (Langholm, 1996). But once again the request was rejected by the Danish king, who sought to maintain the education of civil servants in Copenhagen (Feldbæk, 1998).

The call for a Norwegian university was heard in the 1790s as well, this time on the grounds that Norway was the only European country to be denied a university. During the Napoleonic Wars Norway became isolated from Denmark because British warships prevented maritime communications between the two countries. This hiatus aided the development of independent Norwegian politics. The desire for a university, which would make Norway a nation of culture, became a central issue for the newly founded Royal Society for the Well-being of Norway, and funding was collected across the country (Collett, 1999). The Danish king feared that a Norwegian university would lead to a split between Denmark and Norway, but eventually the pressure from Norway became too intense. In 1811 the king was forced to give in. The announcement of his acquiescence sparked the first so-called national celebrations in Norway. In the cathedral of Trondheim, there was a performance of a cantata celebrating the future university with the words: "Oh Kingdom of Norway, now the foundation stone of your glory has been laid" (Bagge & Mykland, 1987, p. 295).<sup>7</sup>

Two years later the Royal Frederik University was inaugurated in Kristiania (present-day Oslo), and new celebrations were held to honor the university—a clear demonstration of Norwegian national self-awareness. It was the Norwegians

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<sup>7</sup>"Lagt er da, O Norges Rige, grundvold til din herlighed" (Bagge & Mykland, 1987, p. 295).

themselves who had managed to make the university a reality as a main step toward increased independence. The following year (1814), Denmark was forced to hand over Norway to Sweden. In this new personal union, the Norwegian university became a cornerstone of Norwegian nation-building and helped secure cultural independence in the relationship with Sweden (Collett, 1999).

### ***The University of Iceland—Háskóli Íslands***

Iceland was originally a free state created by its first inhabitants, who were immigrants from Norway. In the mid-thirteenth century Iceland became a Norwegian province, meaning that Iceland was included in the personal union between Norway and Denmark in 1380. Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland remained under Danish rule in 1814, when Denmark was forced to cede Norway to Sweden. An Icelandic independence movement emerged in the 1830s, led by the scholar and expert in Icelandic saga literature, Jón Sigurðsson (1811–1879), who remained the political leader and pioneer for the Icelandic people until his death in 1879. Iceland acquired its own constitution in 1874 and a home rule agreement in 1904 (Adriansen, 2003). However, the goal for most Icelanders was a free state, and they perceived the creation of a university to be a major step in the process toward Icelandic independence from Denmark. The university was established in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik in 1911, the centenary anniversary of Sigurðsson's birth. The institution came about through a merger of three professional schools—theology (founded in 1847), medicine (1876), and law (1908)—with the addition of a faculty of arts responsible for teaching and researching the language, literature, and history of Iceland. Only seven years later, in 1918, Iceland became a free and sovereign state, which opted to enter into a personal union with Denmark. In 1944, independence was forced through by Icelandic nationalists, and the founding of the university had been part of that struggle (Haraldsson, 2003; Jóhannesson, 2013; Karlsson, 2011).

The population of Iceland in 1911 was 85,000, and the university initially had 20 teachers (11 of them full-time) and 45 male students. It was housed on the ground floor of the parliamentary building in the center of Reykjavik. In 1940 it was relocated just outside the town center with options for expansion. The university was regarded as one of the most magnificent buildings in the whole country. Its limited range of degree programs, however, led some students to study abroad, mostly in Denmark or Norway. During World War II (when Denmark and Norway were occupied by the Germans), Icelandic students stayed at home (see Hammerstein, 2004). There was thus a great need to expand the university and diversify its curriculum with degree programs such as engineering and business (Karlsson, 2011).

Through Sigurðsson a close link was forged between independence and scholarship focusing especially on Icelandic history and the sagas. At present, the University of Iceland has several programs focusing on Icelandic language, literature,



history, and Norse culture and includes special courses in physical geography and geology emphasizing glaciology, volcanology, and other subjects relating to Iceland's natural landscape. Icelandic is the medium of instruction, but there are also courses taught in English, and students may submit assignments in Danish. Today, the University of Iceland is the single largest employer in Iceland. Haraldsson (2003) has argued that the strong, state university has greatly advanced the transformation of Icelandic society from traditional, dependent, fishing-and-farming structures into a modern independent state:

The University became one of the cornerstone[s] and a symbol for the Icelanders to take the final step towards independence. That would probably have been impossible without a university, strongly emphasising the nation's cultural inheritance to strengthen the self-confidence of the people. I am certain that the Faroese people could learn a lot from our experience in that respect, and if there will be a decision to take the step all the way and seek full independence the Fróðskaparsetur [University of the Faroe Islands] should be utilized in a similar way as the University of Iceland was. (p. 21)

As the next section shows, the Faroe Islands have not yet taken that step, but the University of the Faroe Islands is an influential institution in society there.

### ***The University of the Faroe Islands—Fróðskaparsetur Føroya***

The Faroe Islands (Faroese: *Føroyar*), where the present population is approximately 50,000, have been under Norwegian and later Danish control since 1380. Unlike Greenland, however, the Faroe Islands have never been a colony; they became a Danish county in 1852. Some Faroese wanted home rule, and there has been a gradual introduction of the Faroese language in schools, churches, and legal system. Growing Faroese self-awareness was reflected in the inception and frequent use of national symbols of the Faroe Islands, not least during World War II, when the physical separation from Denmark demonstrated that Faroe Islanders could manage under other auspices. Since 1948, when the Faroe Islands were granted home rule, there has been a gradual movement toward more local autonomy. The Faroese path to greater independence is reflected in national symbols such as Faroese banknotes in 1951 and Faroese postage stamps in 1975 (Adriansen, 2003). The founding of a university can be seen as step in this process. After inauguration of The Faroese Academy of Sciences in 1952, its members promoted the creation of a university in the Faroe Islands, and in 1965 the Faroese Parliament agreed to establish an institution of higher education under the Latin name of *Academia Færoensis*. Its purpose was to carry out scientific research and teaching at the tertiary level. From the outset the goal was to promote nation-building and to prepare for nationhood (Marnersdóttir, 2003). The academy initially offered one-year courses in natural history and Faroese for schoolteachers. The limited staff focused on research on the Faroese language and folk culture. *Academia Færoensis* obtained official recognition as a university in 1990, and in 2008 the Faroese School of Education and the Faroese School of Nursing were incorporated into the university.

The University of the Faroe Islands currently consists of five departments: (a) Faroese Language and Literature, (b) Education, (c) Science and Technology, (d) Nursing, and (e) History and Social Sciences. There is thus great emphasis on Faroese language, literature, and history and on programs relevant to the Faroese labor market. All departments collaborate closely with universities in Denmark and other Nordic countries. Despite its small student body of approximately 600 students, the university offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Faroese is the medium of instruction (University of the Faroe Islands, 2016). The orientation of the university has shifted from being directed toward nation-building to being directed toward industry. Although national consciousness demands research on the Faroese language, history, and culture, financial independence requires research on economics and applied science. All of these areas of learning and research are now offered at the University of Faroe Islands (Marnersdóttir, 2003).

### ***The University of Greenland—Iisimatusarfik***

Greenland (Greenlandic: *Kalaallit Nunaat*) has been inhabited by Inuit for more than 4,500 years. In the Viking Age (A.D. 793–1066), Norsemen, particularly from Norway and Iceland, settled on the southwest coast of Greenland, but they vanished in the early fifteenth century. Colonialization similar to the types practiced by other European countries began in the early eighteenth century, when Denmark and Norway asserted sovereignty over the land. It ended in 1953 when Greenland was integrated within the Danish realm. Danish citizenship was extended to the Greenlandic population, and a strategy of cultural assimilation began. However, the strategy failed against a reaffirmation of Greenlandic cultural identity among the Greenlandic elite. This resurgence led to a movement in favor of independence, which peaked in the 1970s. Greenland was granted home rule in 1979. The assimilation policies had not resulted in Greenlanders taking over administrative jobs performed mostly by skilled Danes (Loukacheva, 2007). An institution of higher education, an Inuit Institute, was suggested in 1974 by the Greenlandic County (*landsråd*), but it was not until 1981 that the home-rule government decided to set up two independent centers of higher education: the Inuit Institute, which offered two-year courses in language, literature, anthropology, sociology, and history; and an institute of theology rooted in specific Greenlandic conditions. In 1987 the two institutes merged under the name Inuit Institute. By 1989 it had been expanded to include new degree programs in social sciences and communication, and the administrative structure had been adapted to prepare for the official inauguration of the entire facility as the University of Greenland in 1989 (Marquardt, 2003).

The medium of instruction is Danish, but a few courses are taught in Greenlandic and classes by exchange lecturers are often in English. The University of Greenland is expected to provide knowledge about Greenland's past and present and to help foster Greenlandization of the society by providing academics with a Greenlandic background who can take over academic jobs from Danes. The candidates have put

their distinctive mark on Greenlandic society (K. Kjærgaard & T. Kjærgaard, 2003; Marquardt, 2003). Hence, the purpose of the university is strongly linked to national interests, as in the other North Atlantic universities.

## Universities as Part of the Arsenal of National Symbols and Institutions

Since the nineteenth century, a series of national European states have formed through war, subsequent territorial gains and losses, and conscious promotion of nationalism predominantly through mass education. Within a given territory, the various ethnic groups have been integrated and assimilated into the national state, or a particular ethnic group has pursued cultural separation, ending in independence and the creation of a new nation-state. These developments became apparent as of the 1840s in the Danish state, which by that point included multiple language groups: mainly Danish, German, and Icelandic, but also Frisian, Faroese, and Greenlandic. Wars and independence movements gave rise to the present Danish nation-state, the nation-state of Iceland, and two self-governing territories—the Faroe Islands and Greenland (Østergaard, 2015).

Any sovereign state has an array of national symbols and institutions that are also international signals of independence and domestic emblems of the population's support for the regime. They reinforce the citizenry's imagined sense of community and sense of belonging to the nation and the state. They can be official (e.g., the state's army, constitution, national flag, national anthem, and national day) or unofficial (e.g., monuments, events of mythology, and landscapes). The sense of national community that these different phenomena mirror suffuses the population through the educational system (Adriansen, 2003), and the symbols are used actively in the processes of state- and nation-building, in which universities, too, have figured prominently.

From the outset and until the eighteenth century, universities were fairly independent of the state in which they were located. They were once united in a large European community that used the same books and the same language, Latin (Pedersen, 1997). It may seem paradoxical that these extremely international institutions have become *national* symbols as it were, but the development of nation-states in the nineteenth century instilled the need to construct, preserve, and spread aspects of national identity, and universities were useful for that project. A common feature among the country-related examples presented above is the importance accorded to language, or rather to the mother tongue, which can be considered an unofficial national symbol. Throughout the twentieth century, there was a growing, official use of Faroese in the Faroe Islands. It became the language of administration, the church, and schools. Growing Faroese political independence is well reflected in this linguistic detachment from Danish. An analogous trend is evident in Greenland, where the use of Greenlandic as the official language has increased since the change

to home rule. Evidence of this shift also surfaces in the official use of Greenlandic place names and in a general return to the use of Greenlandic personal names that had disappeared during the period of missionary influence. In Iceland the independent status of the Icelandic language has never been contested (Adriansen, 2003).

Universities have a vital role to play in the preservation of national languages. Nearly all states in Europe have a state-institutionalized national language council, a school curriculum, examinations, higher education, and a politically approved orthographic dictionary that upholds the national language. Universities, together with primary and secondary schools and museums, are likewise used for preserving unofficial national symbols such as a nation's history. Lastly, universities are often central to the study of the national landscape, a third unofficial national symbol according to Adriansen (2003). This focus is seen most clearly in the Icelandic case. Hence, although universities in themselves may not be national symbols, they can help sustain and strengthen the national symbolic world. The University of Iceland is an apt example again: "Preservation of the national cultural values and inheritance is also one of the key roles of the university" (Haraldsson, 2003, p. 20).

However, universities, too, may be national symbols, especially the first university in a small country. This standing occurred in some African countries after their independence, which granted them the possibility of controlling education and knowledge production and which was regarded as a crucial step in their development (Jensen, Adriansen, & Madsen, 2016). Israel is another interesting case, which Cohen (2007) has analyzed for the role of the Hebrew University in nation-building in prestate Israel. He also showed the university's noteworthy contribution as a cultural force in nation-building, while recognizing that universities, their employees, and their students may not always have the same intensions as each other or as the nation. The relationship between universities and nation-building was far from straightforward in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. Significant academic networks and scholarly transfers between countries gave rise to a transnational academic space (Ellis, 2013; Jöns, 2008). Moreover, not all European countries were nation-states, so universities such as those in Scotland had a more composite role in relation to nation-building (Macdonald, 2009).

## Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have explored the value of universities for nation-building and analyzed geopolitical discourses about university establishment, showing what light a geographical approach can cast on university history. There is nothing new about studying universities through the lens of geography. Since the early 1970s, geographers have studied universities in hundreds of published papers on topics ranging from location criteria and catchment areas to the mobility of students and professors (for overviews see Freytag & Jahnke, 2015; Hanson Thiem, 2009; Meusbürger, 2015a). However, the history of universities and higher education in general tends to be written from a national standpoint (Ellis, 2013), with its authors beginning with

the present nation-state rather than its history. For that reason Danish university history neglects what happened from the creation of the University of Copenhagen in 1479 to the creation of Aarhus University in 1928. By analyzing the composite state instead and taking a geohistorical stance, one learns about another four universities—Oslo (Norway) in 1814, Serampore<sup>8</sup> (India) in 1845, Kiel (Germany) in 1864, and Reykjavik (Iceland) in 1918—and about the territorial reduction that deprived the Danish state of them within a century. Hence, a geohistorical perspective can be useful, especially in analyses of universities outside the capital, where a country's first university is usually located.

Discourses of geopolitics and nationalism are not important for understanding all cases of university establishment. The University of Serampore is an example. However, discourses of geopolitics and nationalism can be important, especially for comprehending the establishment and location of universities in borderlands and the role of universities in the era of nation-building. Craig's (1984) analysis of two universities in another contested border region, Alsace-Lorraine, showed how higher education became intertwined with nationalism and struggles for cultural identity and prestige in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Craig's estimation the universities in Alsace-Lorraine were exemplary in the transformation of the European university and in its adaptation to the emerging nation-states and their need for bureaucrats, teachers, political socialization, and technology. Although scholars have shown how national imperatives shaped the universities of the capitals and other old universities, Craig directed attention to universities on the periphery and their great importance for advancing the national cause. We have supplemented this work with the idea that the establishment of universities has been part of this national struggle, and we have shown how such creation has been part of geopolitical discourses before the era of the nation-states.

Despite the state's (and previously the church's) power in the founding and siting of universities, the initiative often comes first from local citizens who want to consolidate the power of a region by having a knowledge-producing institution there. The genesis of the universities in Oslo, Reykjavik, Tórshavn, and Aarhus illustrates this point. However, their university status had to be granted by the state, and in the first three of these cases the university was part of the struggle for independence from that very state. In the fourth case the struggle for a university was related to a new regional self-awareness in Jutland.

History has also shown that universities have a paradoxical function. On the one hand, they are important to the state. For instance, scholars serve as instruments of politics by providing rational arguments that can legitimate political decisions (Meusburger, 2012, 2015b). On the other hand, universities can be dangerous to the state because of their autonomy and capacity to become breeding grounds for

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<sup>8</sup>This university was founded in 1818 and was the first in present-day India. At the time, though, Serampore was part of the Danish colonies in India and owed its status to the Danish king, Frederik VI (1768–1839). The university's establishment had little to do with Danish politics, for it had been the work of British missionaries, who were intent on training missionaries and spreading the Christian word (see Gøbel, 2014; Østergaard, 2005).

subversive ideas and conspiracies against the social order (e.g., student rejection of nationalism; see Gevers & Vos, 2004). This paradox is also intertwined with geography and center–periphery location, as in the regional examples of Jutland and the two duchies Schleswig and Holstein. Likewise, Craig (1984) has shown how these opposing forces operated in Alsace-Lorraine.

A final tension for consideration in this chapter is the international versus the local character of the university. Internationalization is currently claimed to be paramount for higher education (see chapter by Knight in this volume, for instance), but as we have shown, universities have often been created out of a need for knowledge and teaching relevant to local or national interests. The European university, since its advent in the early Middle Ages, has been very international in terms of networks, curriculum, and medium of instruction (Pedersen, 1997), but over the past two hundred years it has become increasingly oriented to a national agenda. This national turn is not exclusively a European phenomenon. In Africa, for instance, the focus of universities has shifted from the wishes of the colonial powers to a postindependence national agenda (Jensen et al., 2016). Independence means not only political independence through sovereignty but also epistemological independence, or a decolonization of knowledge. Many scholars in the Global South contend that Western knowledge has been thought of as universal and has therefore been imposed on other societies and environments (e.g., Chen, 2010; Shiva, 1993/2012). Western knowledge, however, is not universal in an epistemological sense but rather a globalized version of a local and parochial tradition originating in Europe (Madsen, Jensen, & Adriansen, 2016; Thomas-Emeagwali, 2006). Attempts to decolonize knowledge through Africanization of the curriculum can stand in contrast to internationalization efforts.

The problematic choices with which internationalization confronts universities in the Global South seem similarly difficult to resolve in the North Atlantic universities we have analyzed in this chapter. Their legitimacy is intertwined with the national agenda of using the local language as a medium of instruction, educating students for local society, and conducting research on local nature and culture (see Körber & Volquardsen, 2014). Yet these universities will lose their international reputation if they are not engaged in international networks. The difficult process of balancing the responses to these options and expectations calls for improving the knowledge of the political geography of universities and the geography of science.

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