”The postage stamp needs to be an all-country stamp...”

Danish Postage Stamps and National Identity, 1940-1945

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Research tradition and sources:

Inge Adriansen: ”National Symbols in the Danish Realm, 1830-2000”

Adriansen points towards two main points in the production, showing: “[1.] ... Danish peculiarity, culture, nature and history, and [2.] underlining the will to participate in Nordic and international cooperation.”

Written Sources from P&T:

This presentation is based on sources from P&T’s own archive, presenting an only sparesly used way to understand and investigate the postage stamps.

The aim is to understand what the Danish postage stamps was supposed to show and do, during the German occupation from 1940-1945.
The Imagined Community and definitions:

Benedict Andersons definition of the nation:

"It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."

- Nations needs states – only states a sovereign.
- The nation is a construction.
- Nationalism is a feeling like, f.ex. kinship and religion.

JC:

Nationalism is the concept used to gather around the nation which is kept together by the state and its institutions. The postal service (P&T) is a part of the states institution, and so it represents the state in the maintenance of the nation.
Print Capitalism and Official Nationalism:

Andeson on Print Capitalism:

- Few languages, read by many = more books sold.

- Books are sustainable and travels (in time and space).

- Books and newspaper spread the content to more people who didn’t knew each other, but read the same things, thus making them imagining they belonged to the same community.

Anderson defines the purpose of "Official Nationalism“ as a way of “[...] stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the Empire.”

Anderson defines this construction, as “[...] something emanating from the state, and serving the interests of the state first and foremost.”
The opportunities of postage stamps:

JC on Postage Stamps:

- Stamps are images, symbols and only little text = easy to read and decode.

- Stamps are sustainable and travel around the nation and the world; primarily as postage and secondly as collectors objects.

- Stamps have the opportunities of spreading messages on behalf of the state, who controls the stamp production.

- As so, postage stamps are a possibility for the state to construct the wanted picture of the (imagined) community; that is official nationalism.

- During the German occupation, the government needed to tie the nation together to secure the country against the occupying power. And to keep the people calm, despite resistance against the collaboration policy.
1851: Postal Reform = Postage Stamps and unity postage.
The Danish Realm 1814-1864: The Danish (speaking) kingdom.

Copenhagen, the capital.

The German (speaking) duchies.

Map stolen from: http://www.museum-sonderjylland.dk/SIDE_RNE/Museerne/Dybbol-Banke/10-Krigen-i864.html
1854: KGL POST F.R.M 8 S.

Danish: Kongeligt Post Frimærke Fire RigsBankSkilling

German: Königliche Post Freimarke 8 Schilling
Danish Postage Stamps, 1851-1940

1864: Crown and scepter, simple symbols of the state

1870: The name ”Danmark” appears for the first time

1882: Coat of Arms – the State is on the Stamps

1905: Waves, hearts and lions – State and geography
1904: Christian IX – first regent on a stamp
1913-28: Christian X – King from 1912-1947
Danish Postage Stamps, 1851-1940

Cathedral of Roskilde,
The ancient, royal, Christian Denmark.

Sønderborg Castle,
The re-united Denmark.

Kronborg Castle,
The ancient, royal, famous Denmark and the defence of the territory.

1920-21: Re-unification with Slesvig.
Danish Postage Stamps, 1851-1940

Hans Christian Andersen’s first fairytales, 100 years.
The Reformation, 400 years.
The removal of adscription, 150 years.

Bertel Thorvaldsens return to Denmark, 100 years.

1930’s: Commemorative stamps
The German Occupation and the Postal Service, 1940-1945:

9. April 1940: Germany occupies Denmark
Cooperation to prevent German interference in administration.
All communication abroad is stopped.

23. April 1940:
P&T informs about the introduction of censorship on all abroad communication.
The German Occupation and the Postal Service, 1940-1945:

October 1942: The European Postalunion.


K.J. Jensen (Director General) represents the P&T at det board of civil servants.

5. May 1945: Germany capitualates

9. May 1945: Sovietunion ”occupies”/”liberate” the island of Bornholm. The Soviets leave in april 1946.

Norway 1942: Quisling and the first Norwegian stamp, celebrateing the European postalunion.
**The Postage Stamps of 1940-41:**

- **Queen Alexandrine, 1940**
  - 5 øre surtax for The Red Cross.
  - Motif first printed in 1939.

- **Queen Ingrid & Princess Margrethe, 1941**
  - 5 øre surtax for Børnenes Kontor.
  - Motif first printed in 1943.

- **Surcharged definitive stamps, 1940.**
The Postage Stamps of 1941:

Vitus Bering, 1941.

200th anniversary for his death at the artic coastline in Russia.
The Postage Stamps of 1942-44:

Det Danske Luftfartsselskab, 1943.
25th anniversary.

Round Tower, 1942.
300th anniversary.
City of Copenhagen.

Round Tower, 1944.
5 øre surtax for the Red Cross.
The Postage Stamps of 1944:

Typical Danish village churches

10 øre: Ejby church (eastern DK),
15 øre: Øster Lars round church (Bornholm), 20 øre: Hvidbjerg church (western DK)
The Postage Stamps of 1944-1945:

Ole Rømer, 1944
300th birthday.
Very famous Dane!

King Christian X, 1945.
75th birthday, released in the autumn.
The Postage Stamps of 1947:

The resistance movement, 1947.

15 øre: Torch, laurel wreath and the movements armband.

20 øre: Railway sabotage. 40 øre: Flag on its way down the ocean.

5 øre surtax for Frihedsfonden (The Freedom Foundation).
Three trends among the stamps, 1940-1945:

1) An absolute consciousness about, that postage stamps was an opportunity to gather the population. By avoiding disadvantages among the regions, P&T secured that nobody felt outside the national (imagined) community. The postage stamps had to be unifying, not divisive.

2) The postage stamps had to help preserve and secure what is Danish. It’s a re-conquering of what is Danish in a time where being Danish was optimistic in the light of the German occupation.

3) The stamps also had to communicate abroad and show that Denmark have completed great things, both regarding discoveries, science and aviation. The stars and holdings of the past had to insure a continuing prosperity in the nation; although the Germans were putting they’re mark on the country.
Conclusions:

• National symbols = legal to use; nobody has a copyright on the nation and its content.

• The postage stamp carries historical person, events, nature and culture into the construction of the national community and the user of the stamp will, as everybody else, see the motive as a part of the imagined community.

• Celebrating the resistant movement in 1947 helped place the resistance in the national memory; the state helped constructing via the stamps, eventhough at was against the states own policy.

• There is a new consiousness about the creation of the stamps during the occupation, than before – eventhough it also existed before 1940.
Conclusions:

• The attention regarding what motifs that was issued, shows full consciousness about the stamps possibilities.

• It was therefore an actively working official nationalism, eventhough P&T had to follow the collaboration policy.

• If P&T was bonding the national “stars” to specific parts of the country, other parts of the country would fell outside and the stamps therefore wouldn’t be unifying the among the population.

• The postage stamp need to be an all-country stamp!