



Christopher Røhls bårtale

Taler

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borgerrepræsentationen og
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Venstre

Dato

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Sted

Refshaleøen, København

Kære alle sammen,

Dear everyone,

Thank you all for coming for this event!

Thank you Reffen, for giving me the opportunity to say a few words.

I was asked to do this speech in English, as Reffen is known to attract a lot of tourists. Just a day like this 10-15.000 people are expected to drop by. And there is a lot of tourists to attract as we have seen an increase of 88% over a period of 10 years here in Copenhagen.

If you are here as one of the almost 10 mio. tourists visiting Copenhagen, you might think:

What is all this about?

Why do they lit such a large bonfire?

Why does that guy - me - suddenly start to talk and disturb our cozy conversation?

And later all the Danes might start to growl silently or even sing out loud with our weird National tongue?

Well, you might even ask this if you are settled in Denmark as an expat for instance if you are working here at Reffen as one of the 400 employees with 25 different nationalities.

Even as a Dane you might ask all these questions.

Why is that guy speaking?

Why the bonfire?

Why the singing?

You can consider me as your tour guide.

I will guide you through this tradition:

The bonfire. The singing. The [Sct.] Hans tradition.

But I will eventually also guide you through our wonderful city of Copenhagen as I am a local elect of the city council of our great capital.

The day is among other reasons a Christian tradition.

We are celebrating Sct Hans tonight. Or John the Baptist from whom the name of the day comes from.

He was the cousin of Jesus, who was also baptizing Jesus.

There are not really any activities marking John himself, so I was wondering how we could celebrate him properly besides the bonfire, the singing, well, and naming the day after him.

I came to think, that you could celebrate John - The baptist - by jumping into the harbor. The nice weather and clean water is definitely inviting. If not at this very moment then most of the hot summer days here in the city.

I should, as your tour guide for the tradition of Sct Hans mention that this is not at part of the tradition, but I am not fund of the dogmatic approach.

We should be able to develop our traditions, so as a Dane I invite you to feel free to expand this one.

The whole area, Reffen, and Refshaleøen, is also born out of the ashes from an old industrial area.

Renewing one of the old, abandoned parts of the city.

As your tour guide and representative of the city I should also warn you that it is only legal to swim at the bathing zones here in the city such as the one at La Bachina. Otherwise you may get a fine, if you just jump into the water.

Going back to the actual tradition of Sct Hans. The day is celebrated today, as the birthday of John the Baptist, which was six months from Jesus at the longest day of the year or the day, when days begin to shorten. While Jesus was born close to the shortest day, when days begin to get longer.

The celebration of John's birth is the celebration of the new things to come. The bonfire is marking this celebration, but it is also supposed to keep evil spirits away.

For this reason many Danish people also burn a witch at the bonfire to send them to Bloksbjerg in Germany. Thinking about it, it doesn't seem very nice of us to export our problems across the border. However, tonight is about forgetting our troubles.

Here at Reffen that is done by playing nice music. You have probably already enjoyed the DJ set before I started to talk, and you will hopefully enjoy the nice music playing live after my speech.

I believe back in the days, Danes would have a lot of reasons for escaping evil.

Lack of rain. Poor harvest. A lot of rain. Poor harvest. Bacteria in the water. Stomach disease. Well, various problems. Every day.

Today, the population as a whole experiences little evil. We are actually rather hunting for the next wonderful experience than getting away from multiple poor ones.

It makes good sense that we are one of the happiest countries in the world.

Here at Reffen you don't have to hunt for good experiences. I already talked about the music, the swimming opportunity, but of course the food and the beverages are also everywhere.

You don't have to hunt, but you can just turn around yourself a few times, with closed eyes and start walking. Then you will bump into a bar or a desk serving you drinks and food from all over the world.

Hence, no need for burning witches anymore. And if you meet any, just talk politely to them and ask them to behave. It's your tour guide speaking.

As a part of the Danish tradition with Sct Hans, celebrating the baptist, starting bonfires and burning witches, it has also been an old saying that herbs and spring water is more effective at this time.

Bringing this into a modern tradition, I don't think the herbs at Christiania is better tonight, than any other nights. As your tour guide, I should also stress that they are not legal, like swimming outside the bathing zones.

However, I am sure the spring water - in this case drinks from the local bar - is definitely better today. Whether they are curing, like people thought in the old days, I have to say, my experience tells me the opposite.

But it is the perfect night for buying a drink, a soda or a bottle of rosé, enjoying the view at the city harbor. Celebrating the longest day at the local clubs here at Refshaleøen Werkstatt, Hangaren or Copenhagen Distillery.

Back in the old days, people with diseases would travel far to get to so-called water fields with the holy spring water. If you know Bakken at Klampenborg just outside Copenhagen, this was actually initially such a field. Today, Reffen may also act like one such field, making people travel from the Center of the city or their local neighborhood to this place with healing drinks and healthy - or greasy - food.

Today, Sct[.] Hans, is about celebrating the good times to come. Or as your tour guide for the tradition and this city I would just recommend, you celebrate the good time and the great place you are visiting right now in this very moment.

Celebrating the great food of Copenhagen with restaurants receiving international recommendations. Not only the Alchemist, which has raised from the 18th to the 5th best restaurant in the world this week, but also the many local food offers you'll find here and around the city.

Celebrating all the great music with the band playing here later, Copenhell held in this neighborhood last week or Copenhagen Jazz Festival starting next Friday. All the local venues around the city such as Mojo, Montmartre, Culturebox or Hotel Cecil.

Celebrating the great museums such as Copenhagen Contemporary with modern art around the corner, the National Museum for our history, Thorvaldsen as our local hero or the Design museum for the well-known Danish Design.

Celebrating this city like the international architecture festival does this year, like the large street party Distortion recently did or the international skateboard festival Copenhagen Open. A lot of great activities are to come, but the very moment, right here. Right now. That is what I would suggest we celebrate tonight.

For the long and living summer days and summer nights. For this very moment.

Happy Sct[.] Hans - This is what the Danes are singing for and about.

Have a great evening and enjoy your night and stay here at Reffen and in Copenhagen.

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