

*Christen Johannes Finbak*

*1904-1954*

Christen Johannes Finbak was born as the son of a farmer, on 4 June 1904 in Korgen, a small place in the northern part of Norway. He graduated from the University of Oslo where he afterwards taught for twelve years. From 1948 he was Professor of Theoretical Chemistry at the Technical University of Norway, Trondheim, until his death on 26 February 1954.

Finbak's earlier work was devoted to the study of the orientation disorder phenomena in crystals often referred to as 'rotation' of molecules and ions. It was from these studies that he was able to explain the low melting entropy and the large freezing point depression of a number of organic compounds.

This work naturally led him to the study of the structure of liquids using monochromatic X-rays. Particularly his studies on aqueous solutions of salts, acids, and bases were of considerable importance.

Finbak's contribution to the method of electron diffraction in gases gave a great impetus to this subject. He was one of the independent inventors of the 'sector', and his early design of a sector electron diffraction camera contributed much to the modern development of the field. Finbak obtained the most distinguished Norwegian scientific reward (Fridtjof Nansens belønning) for this work.

Finbak was an unusually inspiring teacher. He was able to create a scientific atmosphere from which crystallography and molecular structure work in Scandinavia still benefit very much.

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