

Editorial

By Lars-Eric Jönsson

In late April we received the news that professor emeritus Nils-Arvid Bringéus had passed away. He was 97 years old. He was born in Malmö but grew up in the small town of Örkelljunga in the south of Sweden. He defended his PhD thesis *Klockringningsseden i Sverige* ("The Bell Ringing Custom in Sweden") in 1958 and was appointed professor of ethnology at Lund University in 1967.

He retired 1991 but remained thereafter a very active scholar. His bibliography is longer than most. It includes books such as *Människan som kulturvarelse* ("Man as a Cultural Being", 1976), *Livets högtider* ("Festivals of the Life Cycle", 1987), and *Bildlore* (1981). There is of course a lot more to be said about the work and contribution of Bringéus (see the obituary by Gösta Arvastson, Jonas Frykman, and Orvar Löfgren in this volume).

To me, an ethnologist whose main interest is in historical studies, Bringéus was of particular importance. I met him the first time when he was president of the now dissolved Swedish Society of Cultural History, the publisher of *Rig*, the Swedish journal of cultural history. I was then about to succeed Birgitta Svensson as editor in chief. Since I was a newcomer in Lund I must have appeared like a loose cannon to Nils-Arvid. Nevertheless, I passed the test and had the fortune to edit a few texts from his pen.

Bringéus' general importance is of course also related to the fact that he started *Ethnologia Scandinavica* in 1971. Furthermore, he was its first editor in chief. As such and as initiator of the journal he had a major influence on the development of the discipline on a Nordic basis, an aspect of our discipline that not only con-

cerns our empirical interests but also has collaborative aspects. Today more than ever, Nordic scholars in ethnology benefit from such collaboration.

I prefer to see *Ethnologia Scandinavica* as one of the important institutions in this collaboration. The journal is an arena for the presentation of our investigations and the dialogue between writers, reviewers, and critics. This is one reason why we keep an extensive review section. However, the article section is also, of course, of fundamental importance to us. This year we start with the timely piece from Elias Mellander on the theme of "preppers" and prepping cultures. More specifically, this is studied through the lens of fear and similar emotions. It is situated in a time when the belief in the welfare state is partly abandoned in favour of self-reliance, where the responsibility for one's own welfare is placed on the individual rather than society. However, Mellander also shows how prepper cultures is a sign of caring and collective responsibility.

From prepping we move to the related practices of reduction of food waste, investigated as a form of everyday resistance against consumerism. Liia-Maria Raippalinna shows how this resistance is grounded in cultural positions as consumers, but also as citizens, professionals, and activists. We are given several examples of everyday practices that go beyond political programmes, and ideals. The food theme is further developed by Maria Vanha-Similä and Kaisa Vehkalahti, who take autobiographical writings by rural Finnish women born in the 1950s as both a starting point and a main source. They show how food and food production appears as a central topic in these writings. Memories of be-

longing, not least during times of social change, may have been relevant for how these memories were brought to the fore during the pandemic, with questions on prepping and storage of food.

This is followed by Birgitte Romme Larsen's article, which brings the reader to a small Danish town where a state institution was relocated 2019. The state institution moved into the local town hall, which had until recently been the municipal centre but had now lost that function. This does not mean that it had lost its meanings. The tension between national cohesion and the local history of a sovereign past was materialized in the town hall itself. Local municipal identity was still strongly connected to the building and its furniture, that is, its materiality and its preservation.

Evelina Liliequist takes her starting point in experiences of queer parenthood and the sharing of photographs from parenthood in social media. She takes the reader through a visual landscape of same-sex nuclear families. The stories told are about openness and visibility and not primarily about making statements. Instead, Liliequist finds claims of ordinariness, claims that at the same time recognize differences. Displaying ordinariness is, as Liliequist concludes, a way of widening the frames of normality.

Line Steen Bygballe and Astrid Pernille Jespersen follow with an investigation of the changing modes of volunteer work, not

least its increasing role in supporting welfare systems. The authors show how tacit knowledge, socio-material objects, and habits are central parts of volunteer work and experiences.

Maja Povrzanović Frykman, Eleonora Narvselius, and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa take on a problem that many departments, not least in the humanities, are dealing with right now: language. They show how social status in academia is decoupled from linguistic integration, at least if we understand status in terms of academic titles. Feelings of insufficiency and incompleteness are, however, prevalent, even among those whose Swedish proficiency is objectively very high. The authors underline the value of language, how competence in English, Swedish, and other languages is crucial for academics' possibilities to work and build careers.

This article section in this volume is wrapped up with Barbro Blehr's methodological reflection on participant observation. Via articles and reviews in *Ethnologia Scandinavica* she tracks the meaning, frequency, and implications of the method during a period that witnessed increased interest in and legal regulation of investigations involving humans. Blehr concludes that participant observation has gained its place in ethnology in a rather tacit way. From a few critical comments in the 1970s and 1980s, it soon became a normalized and common method in the ethnologist's toolbox.