A biographic foreword to Axel Sommerfelt’s 1967 paper – from a daughter’s point of view

Tone Sommerfelt

To cite this article: Tone Sommerfelt (2022): A biographic foreword to Axel Sommerfelt’s 1967 paper – from a daughter’s point of view, History and Anthropology, DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2022.2034625

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2022.2034625

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 21 Feb 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 231

View related articles

View Crossmark data
A biographic foreword to Axel Sommerfelt’s 1967 paper – from a daughter’s point of view

Tone Sommerfelt

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Axel Sommerfelt’s paper for the symposium organized by Fredrik Barth ahead of the publication of Ethnic Groups and Boundaries is given a broader readership in this issue. This biography provides some background to the perspectival differences between Axel Sommerfelt and Barth, that revolve around issues of political inequality, experience and historicity. Axel Sommerfelt shared Barth’s anti-essentialist view on ethnicity, but did not fully embrace the instrumentalist underpinnings of Barth’s perspective. He was theoretically influenced by the Manchester school, and directed attention to political domination from the point of view of the dominated, a focus that grew out of his ethnography from Ruwenzori in Uganda. Judicial institutions constituted an important arena for the negotiation of ethnic boundaries, and specifically, Toro-Konzo relations were partly shaped in judicial contexts that Toro controlled, under British protectorate supervision. His interest in resistance was also influenced by his upbringing in Norway during Nazi occupation.

KEYWORDS

Ethnicity; historicity; political domination; political subjectivity

Soon after its publication, Fredrik Barth’s Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (EGB, ed. 1969) became compulsory reading in many anthropology and social science circles. Its introduction has remained a pivotal reference for scholars and students of ethnic processes, beyond Europe. My father, Axel Sommerfelt, presented a paper at the preparatory 1967 Wenner-Gren Symposium organized by Fredrik Barth (see Jakoubek this issue), but his paper was not among the chapters in the publication that followed.

In 1993, after two years of other studies, I gave into my curiosity and took up anthropology studies at the University of Oslo, where my father taught. I remember quite vividly, how more seasoned anthropology students in the department approached me to ask about the real reason why Axel’s paper was not included among the chapters in EGB. Rumours abounded. Axel was recognized as a fine lecturer, so why was his contribution to the workshop absent from the legendary publication? Had he been consciously excluded by Fredrik Barth? Inexperienced as I was in anthropology’s tendency to cultivate reputation, which has certainly not diminished as years have gone by, I was puzzled by...
the celebrity-like interest in my father. In the petty bourgeois area where my parents settled and I grew up, Axel’s brown corduroy jackets and knitted ties had stood out ever-so unfashionably, and did not merit similar attention.

Thankfully, the storm in Oslo students’ teacups has subsided, or rather, new storms have gained strength in other cups. Having recently returned from nine years in Rhodesia and Uganda, Axel had been busy making a new anthropological and personal life in Oslo, and did not make the deadline for submitting a written manuscript for the publication. But indeed, theoretical frames of mind were different, which may have contributed to the paper’s exit into a dead end.

When Marek Jakoubek got in touch and asked for the paper in 2018, I was well aware that it was hiding somewhere in my father’s packed-to-the-rafters library. I took a shortcut and asked a friend for help. This former student located Axel’s paper in a box of documents in his garage in Oslo.1

I had seen another copy of ‘Inter-etniske relasjoner i Toro: Noen momenter’ many years earlier, in a pile of papers that had made an excursion out of my father’s desk drawers and otherwise well-locked archive. I read it back then, sometime in the mid-1990s, and recall thinking that Axel’s regular personal declarations as a hard-boiled empiricist rang true. Throughout his active years of teaching and supervision at the University of Oslo and elsewhere, he continued to stress the importance of thorough, ethnographic ground work. I also recall thinking, as I read through his paper back then, that his use of the ‘tribal’ was dated, regardless of the particular organizational meanings he, and different anthropologists of the Manchester school, associated with this term.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in the Kingdom of Toro in Uganda and additionally, in the then Belgian Congo from January 1958 to June 1960, Axel’s paper has an interest as a historical ethnography. In the years following 1961, the area became less accessible to anthropologists due to a violent opposition from Konzo in Uganda against Toro dominance (see Doornbos 2018). In Congo-Kinshasa, independence in 1960 transitioned into national chaos. Beyond its historical interest, though, how does Axel’s seemingly dated paper differ from Barth’s perspective, and what spurred the difference in emphasis? Rereading it now, I am left with the thought that Axel’s paper speaks to debates – and more implicit tensions in anthropological orientations – across anthropological generations.

Axel’s paper concerned ethnic processes mainly in relations between the Konzo minority and the majority Toro under British colonial rule. Axel shared Barth’s insistence on the ethnic interface as essential to processes of identity and group formation. His centring of socio-political inequalities and resistance, however, strayed him away from the more instrumentalist underpinnings of Barth’s introduction to Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (EGB). Political domination, from the point of view of the dominated, was a main prism through which Axel addressed the themes that occupied his anthropological interests – mainly in processes, reasoning and values in legal contexts; and in witchcraft, political relations and social organization. This prism conveyed both theoretical inspiration from the Manchester school and his childhood and adolescence in Norway during Nazi occupation. My biographical note provides some background to the perspectival differences between Axel and Fredrik Barth, that revolve around issues of subordination, experience and historicity.
Entering anthropology

My father (b. 1926) took up studies in ethnography in 1948 at the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Oslo, and was the only student at the time. He came to ethnography from archaeology, and was eventually joined by a handful of other students. These included Fredrik Barth, who returned from Chicago, and Harald Eidheim, another contributor to the 1969 publication of *EGB*. Axel describes the student years in the attic of the museum as a time of rebellion – as rebellious as academia allows for – during which they carved out a space for modern, empirically based social anthropology in Norway. This was a project in opposition to teachers of archaeology and ethnography, Professor Gutorm Gjessing in particular who, in the opinion of Fredrik Barth, Axel and their fellow students, taught an ethnography coloured by speculative evolutionist and ethnological traditions. Gjessing was influenced by German ethnology and American four-fields anthropology (see Eriksen 2018, 5–6), and Axel still refers to the ethnography he taught critically, as U.S.-inspired, ‘encyclopaedic cultural history’. Observing the independence battles in the colonies from a distance, in particular the British brutality in the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, and gnawing at the ignorance of these developments in Norwegian media and public debate, added to their progressive self-consciousness.

Inspired by Max Gluckman’s extended case method (1955), and with an interest in conflicting loyalties in ‘stateless’ societies, Axel devoted his M.Phil. thesis (1956, published in 1958, see 1958a) to a critical re-analysis of Fortes’ Tallensi ethnography (1945, 1949). In addition to assessing political ‘cohesion mechanisms’ according to a structural-functionalist agenda and in a undeniably synchronic perspective, Axel zoomed in on Fortes’ accounts of political conflict, dispute, discord and warfare in (intra- and inter-) clan relations in Taleland. Axel criticized the argument that bonds of clanship produce conflict, as, he held, Fortes’ generalization that persons pull their fellow, loyal clansmen into conflict did not hold true. Using a case approach, and reinvestigating Fortes’ empirical material, Axel found that conflicts and alliances took other forms and did not necessarily follow clan lines. ‘A strong point’ said Meyer Fortes when Axel met him in Uganda in 1959. Axel also used the study of Fortes’ ethnography as an occasion to develop a Norwegian vocabulary for social anthropology, which he saw as essential to the coming of age of the discipline in academia in Norway.

An interest in conflict and political domination preceded his inspiration from Gluckman. Axel was 13 years old at the time of the Nazi occupation of Norway. His mother held the home and house afloat throughout the war years, while his father was part of the exiled Norwegian government in London. Axel joined the resistance movement (MIORG) through the boy scouts, in 1942. Nine of his MIORG companions were killed during the last year of the war. His memories of the early war years – before his recruitment to MIORG – are coloured by forms of miniature acts of opposition: social ostracism of Nazi sympathisers among his peers in school, dressing in Norwegian ‘flag red’, and the classic exercise of wearing a paper clip on the lapel to annoy members of the uniformed Nazi paramilitaries (*Hirden*).

Axel accredits his interest in political resistance to this experience, though his early years in an intellectual and deeply engaged home quite obviously also shaped this orientation. His father, Alf Sommerfelt, was Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oslo. Before the outbreak of the war, Alf countered Nazi racial thoughts and theory through
a public lectures series in Oslo. Axel remembers well how Hirden took position outside the University aula by Oslo’s main street, in a protest demonstration against Alf’s lectures. Alf continued the commitment through work in UNESCO (see Kyllingstad 2008, 259ff.). Axel’s mother, Aimée Sommerfelt (born Dedichen), was an author of children’s books and novels for young adults. She wrote stories about youth resistance during the war, and eventually, as one of the first in the Norwegian context, about discrimination, multiculturalism, migration, ethnic minorities and solidarity work.

The war experience made Axel critical of anthropological analyses that represented domination as effortless (cf. Simonsen and Flikke 2009). A number of studies had been devoted to the functioning of African kingdoms, and to the ways in which rulers had established control over neighbouring groups, but few focused on the social and political dynamics of the groups under domination. Axel often mentions Audrey Richards’ publication of East African Chiefs (1960) as an example, where she described relations of dominance, and the ease with which kingdoms like Toro could rule so-called stateless societies. A critical appraisal of this trend, along with readings of Gluckman, motivated his application for funding from the Norwegian Research Council, for doctoral research on political and judicial processes among Konzo in Uganda. Konzo were neighbours of Amba, whose areas – alike Konzo – had been incorporated into the kingdom of Toro (Winter 1956).

Axel travelled to Kampala with his then wife, Kirsten Alnæs, and their daughter, in November 1957. He became associated with the East African Institute for Social Research (EAISR) in Kampala as a research fellow, just after Aidan Southall had taken over the directorship from Lloyd Fallers (see Mills 2006, 92f.). The informal connection provided a scholarly arena and a large network, and Axel returned for workshops at EAISR during fieldwork, and benefited from field visits by close friend Jaap Van Velsen, and in 1959, by Max Gluckman.

As he completed fieldwork in 1960, Axel took up a lectureship in Salisbury (Harare) at the Department of Sociology at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. There, he re-joined Jaap van Velsen and a thriving anthropological milieu. Along with colleagues, he regularly visited the Rhodes Livingston Institute (RLI) in Lusaka. The anti-colonial current of the RLI anthropologists continued and intensified in Salisbury (see Kapferer, in Berthelsen 2012, 186–187). Clyde Mitchell led the department. Axel and Jaap, among ‘the more overtly radical members of … [Clyde Mitchell’s] staff’, according to Bruce Kapferer (Berthelsen 2012, 187), actively resisted the racial policies of Ian Smith’s regime. During a London conference in 1966, Ian Smith had argued that he would test the African stand on the independence question. Upon leaving London, he was asked by journalists how the African stand was to be tested, and answered that he wished to consult anthropologists and other specialists in Rhodesia. Eight or nine members of the academic staff – Axel, van Velsen, economic historian Giovanni Arrighi among them – immediately issued a statement that the only way to determine public opinion related to independence, was one man, one vote. This did not sit well with the Smith regime. Axel and van Velsen were arrested along with the rest of the signatories in July 1966, on grounds that they were likely to pursue activities that would endanger the security of the nation. They were expelled from Rhodesia eight days later (see Muzvidziwa 2006, 100–101). Ahead of his arrest, Axel had applied for a position at the anthropology
department at the University of Oslo, and took up a lectureship in September 1966, five months ahead of Barth’s Bergen symposium.

**A shared anti-essentialist take on ethnicity**

Axel’s perspective on Toro ‘intertribal relations’ – in the jargon of RLI and the Salisbury department – echoed the anti-essentialist foundations of Barth’s perspective on ethnicity, as communicated ahead of and during the Wenner-Gren Symposium, and later in the *EGB* publication (Jakoubek, this issue). Barth emphasized that it is the cultural features that actors choose to amplify or under-communicate, rather than the sum of seemingly ‘objective’ cultural characteristics, that come to signify an ethnic category at any given time. This, as has been pointed out by Eriksen and Jakoubek (2019) and others, conveyed Barth’s reading of Erving Goffman’s *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In spite of a conspicuous absence of a reference (cf. Jakoubek 2021, 4), it was also an inspiration from Edmund Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) (cf. Eriksen 2010, 43f.), in which Leach accorded primacy to individual strategic behaviour in the analysis of societal dynamics. Moreover, Barth’s perspective opened for a view of the changing cultural faces of ethnic groups and the flexibility and porosity of ethnic boundaries.

In line with Barth’s emphasis on the ethnic boundary as constitutive of groups (Barth 1969a, 15), Axel’s analytical agenda too, questioned how boundaries were maintained and transgressed. In the Kingdom of Toro, ethnic identities were reproduced in the economic arena, in exchanges of goods and services, and particularly in competition over education and employment, between Konzo, Amba and Toro. Boundaries were to a large extent also maintained in legal processes that involved Konzo councils of elders, local Toro courts and British authorities. This legal context contributed to Axel’s anti-essentialist view of ethnic relations. His perspective was inspired, for instance, by the way that an educated, elite minority among Konzo – in attempts to be assimilated into Toro society and to get access to positions that required education – made strategic use of co-existing, formal legal institutions and informal conflict mediation bodies. Elite Konzo did so by bringing their disputes directly before the courts of the Toro administration, without passing through the ad hoc Konzo councils of elders that were a usual first stop. Importantly, Axel’s perspective was also influenced by ethnic boundary maintenance in legal processes that were shrouded in secrecy. In the informal Konzo councils, elders reached convictions and imposed fines, commonly in the form of payments in goats. The councils of elders did not have the authority to collect the fines, however, and consequently, many disputes were forwarded to the Toro local courts that were formally controlled by the British District Commissioner. In these processes, Konzo elders prepared and choreographed the cases before forwarding them, by summoning witnesses they knew would support the party that they had jointly ruled in favour of. Convictions in the Toro courts thus often echoed previous verdicts by the Konzo elders, verdicts which generally achieved far more legitimacy among Konzo. However, Toro judges were unaware of the past lives and trajectories of these cases. This gave rise to intense secrecy in Konzo communities about the history of particular disputes and the work of Konzo’s many informal councils of elders. Moreover, secrecy became a marker, and a source of the recreation, of the ethnic boundary between Toro and Konzo (see Sommerfelt 1993) – not to mention a source of much frustration for Axel (see Eriksen, this issue).
Moreover, Axel’s relational approach to the constitution of identities and groups in Uganda conveyed a shared interest with Barth both in the analysis of social process and a methodological emphasis on individual persons (actors in Barth’s vocabulary) and their constraints. In Axel’s case, however, Goffman was not the source of inspiration; the gaze sprang out of Manchester-style situational analysis of complex events and extended cases, in which the study of the same persons in different situations – and over longer periods – was the methodological way in (Handelman 2006, 99; Van Velsen 1979, 143). Rather than ‘abstract reconstructions in the ethnographic present’ (Myhre 2013, 5), Gluckman’s case approach focused on real persons in real time, over time, and traced persons’ activities beyond the confines of familiar categories like ‘the tribe’.

Axel has always encouraged strong empirical arguments, an insistence that took more inspiration from Gluckman and Isaac Shapera than from Goffman and Edmund Leach. Famously, Gluckman accused Leach of having become ‘bored with ethnographic fact’ (2006 [1961], 21). Axel shared the opinion that Leach made sweeping generalizations on frail grounds. However, he appreciated the processual element of his theories, and moreover, the stress on societal dynamics was shared across these differences.

Axel’s paper also picks up Barth’s focus on ethnic groups’ occupation of different ecological niches. The ecological concern cannot be said to be a take-away from EAISR, RLI or Salisbury. Manchester school anthropologists rather pursued ethnicity in connection with labour migration and urban interaction, as exemplified by Clyde Mitchell’s The Kalela Dance (1956) (see also Kapferer 2006, 119; Werbner 2020, 106). Axel’s ecological framing of relations between groups in Bwamba did, however, link up with an analysis of different economic adaptations and competitive relationships, which echoes Gluckman’s studies of political dominance and economic competition in heterogeneous societies (Gluckman 1958 [1942]). Moreover, it was the extended case approach that captured Axel, and as I turn to below, his relational perspective differed in emphasis from that of Barth.

**Underdogs and overlords: the stuff of relations of dominance**

Axel’s take on ethnicity as part of social process encompassed the political and broader regional ramifications of intertribal relations (cf. Myhre 2009). He was, and is, fundamentally concerned with aspects of power and experiences of subordination. Whereas Barth’s perspective encompassed the view that it is the ‘ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses’ (Barth 1969a, 15), my father’s relational emphasis, I immodestly underscore, was balanced by ‘stuff’. That stuff was political.

Similarly to the focus of Eidheim’s chapter in *EGB* (1969), Axel was interested in how the constitution of groups was shaped by structures of governance. Konzo experiences with Toro bureaucracy and British colonial criminal authorities was a facet of what Trouillot later explored in terms of the everyday encounters with statecraft (2001). Axel made comparative reflections on these encounters. During the second half of 1960, he conducted fieldwork on the Congolese side of the border. In Congo, Konzo – known as Banande – was not a minority. During one of our conversations in July 2021, Axel elaborated on the differences in legal procedures in Congo and Uganda, and emphasized that convictions were far easier to enforce among Konzo in Uganda than in Congo, because of the role played by Toro legal bodies in Uganda. Toro courts had the authority to collect
fines and impose prison sentences that Konzo informal councils lacked, and prison sentences were central to the penal repertoire. As noted, elders who made judgements in the ad hoc Konzo councils in Uganda could easily call on witnesses and produce convictions, which in turn were implemented by Toro and led to prison in the district headquarters in Bundibugyo (Sommerfelt 1959). Distrust of both Toro and British was intense, and secrecy was key to Konzo legal process and sociality more broadly (Sommerfelt 1993).

Immediately across the border to Belgian Congo, on the other hand, the tribunals (at the time of Axel’s fieldwork) were far more independent from the colonial authorities than in Uganda. Legal processes were managed by a headman (kapita), who took the role as a judge, assigned by the Belgian colonial authorities directly and recruited from the group of elders. The assignment was not salaried; and as the headman was a Konzo and fellow member of the local settlements, no secrecy surrounded the processes he led. In contrast to in Uganda, verdicts were not registered, and fines were the main means of punishment, though informal sanctions were also common. In one case in Congo that Axel told me about, a man had beaten his wife and injured her leg. In the events that ensued, the headman asked the man whether he thought of his wife as an elephant. When the man replied that he did not, the headman lectured the husband (‘You can slap her, but not injure her’), and convicted him to carrying his wife to the hospital a few kilometres away. The man soon turned to Axel to ask if he could bring him and the wife to hospital in his car. Axel asked the headman for advice, who accepted the motorized shortcut. In Uganda, similar cases were solved by bringing convicts to prison with police escort, alternatively with a fine. Moreover, in Uganda, though Konzo manipulated the (potential) effects of Toro rule, legal processes and encounters with statecraft reproduced Toro-Konzo distinctions as relations of dominance and subordination, or Konzo and Toro as ‘Underdogs and Overlords’, a phrase Axel often mentions as a title of his unfinished draft to a work on Konzo in Uganda (see also Simonsen and Flikke 2009).

Axel’s focus on political domination was, indeed, partly inspired by Fredrik Barth’s study of Swat Pathans (Barth 1969b). However, Barth’s study of the Swat valley focused on the dominant group, and did not include the subjects of domination. Additionally, Axel found Barth’s reliance on game theoretical perspectives (1966), which influenced EGB, limiting. In Axel’s opinion, the emphasis on utility and calculating games was too cynical to enable an understanding of the human experiences of subordination, struggle and frustration. Pure instrumentalism tallied poorly with his concern for the depth and content of resistance. Its instrumentalist underpinning is a recurrent topic in critiques of EGB (Eriksen and Jakoubek 2019, 13). That said, subordination, everyday frustrations and resistance – or subaltern subjectivities in contemporary lingo – produced a different ‘cultural stuff’ than the primordial cultural stuff that Barth opposed. It encompassed values and moral judgements, conveyed in secrecy as well as in deeply emotionally engaged accusations both within Konzo society and in relation to Toro and British authorities.

In his tracing of the ways in which people in Bwamba were differentiated and joined forces at different societal levels in careful and complex ways, Axel’s focus anticipated Aidan Southall’s point in the 1970 article entitled ‘The illusion of tribe’. Southall argued forcefully, that: ‘To hammer home the importance of interlocking, overlapping, multiple and alternative collective identities is one of the most important messages of social and cultural anthropology’ (1970, 44).
Moreover, Axel’s anti-essentialist perspective on ethnicity was shaped far more by political and judicial processes on the ground in Uganda and Congo, than by his later anti-apartheid engagement in Rhodesia, he says when I ask him. Detailed accounts of genealogies, court cases and disputes, and reflections on legal reasoning characterize his extensive fieldnotes. As mentioned, early works by Gluckman, not only of ‘reasonable man’, inspired his anti-essentialist take on ethnicity. Generally not acknowledged (Werbner 1984, 161), Gluckman addressed issues of culture and value in interethnic relations. ‘Changing sociological relations’, wrote Gluckman, ‘find expression in changes in culture’ (1958 [1942], 63), and further, that ‘customs tend to become endoculture values for the members of each culture-group to express the independence of the group and this is part of the values of the cultural differences’ (ibid, 65). Konzo values and sense of group identity were intimately shaped by subordination to and resistance against Toro dominance. It is an example of the importance of the production of ‘stuff’ at each side of ethnic boundaries (Eriksen and Jakoubek 2019, 12–13).

Historicity

The stuff of politics and values re-emerged in Axel’s interests in history. He wrote about Konzo uses of history, and the emergence of the Konzo history society in Bwamba. In an early paper on his first impressions from the field (1958b), he argued that county chiefs:

choose to take up an interest in Konjo history (...) as an attempt to create political consciousness among the Bokonjo. If the history society achieves this, the Bakonjo are likely to demand greater participation in the government of Toro as a whole – and those who are the most active in creating an esprit de corps among the Bakonjo will also be the most likely candidates for political and administrative positions. (1958b, 7)

Axel pursued the Congo–Uganda comparison in accounts of different versions of Konzo history, emphasising that perspectives on the past reflect the present in a way that requires critical scrutiny of oral history (1998, 2009). Similarly, van Velsen argued that anthropologists have been blind to the ‘element of bias’ in informants’ accounts of past events (1979, 144). Differences in myths of origin and renderings of political history among Konzo on both sides of the border thus reflected the work of political context, and that different political circumstances produce divergent ideological perspectives on the past. However, Axel also stressed that histories of raids and violence linger in memory (1998, 15). Differences in myths and history are effects of different pasts that work their way into the present, becoming part of personal and collective selves.

Axel’s approaches to history were thus multifold: he explored temporal courses analytically, investigated history as an ideological tool in nation building; as imaginations of the past that convey biases of present political circumstances; and as effects of the work of collective memory in the present. The latter, a more interior concept of history as constitutive of self and subjectivity, conveyed the importance he accredited to experience, and experience of subordination and resistance in particular. In this sense, Axel’s perspective points toward works that foreground the affective aspects of politics (e.g. Hage 2009) and the role of emotions in legal processes (Werbner and Werbner 2019). It has inspired my own interest in moral politics of recent ‘tribalist’ discourses in The Gambia (Hultin and Sommerfelt 2020) and of public moral outrage in Mali (Sommerfelt 2018). His more
interior approach to the past – and pasts in the plural – links up with contemporary debates of temporality and future, that encourage a focus on ‘how the future resides in or draws in the present’ (Bryant and Knight 2020, 14).

It has never stopped puzzling me that my father – throughout much of his anthropological life – never stopped expressing his scepticism against anthropologists’ personal, emotional accounts in ethnography. After all, his personal experiences are an essence in his own orientation. It conveyed, nevertheless, his allergy to putting himself centre stage, and hidden punches to ‘unproductive ethnographic navel-gazing’ that did not put self-reflection into a broader context. He seldom pointed his finger to influence my anthropological orientation during my first years of study, but his self-characterization as a hard-boiled empiricist was perhaps the most explicit exception. He remains firmly committed to empirical groundings of anthropological arguments, and touts the message that ethnographic foundation is essential to any form of engaged anthropology.

Notes
1. The box of papers belonged to Carl Emil Petersen.
2. The Ethnographic Museum at the University of Oslo was founded in 1857. Gutorm Gjessing was appointed professor of ethnography and led the museum from 1947 to 1973.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to Marek Jakoubek for his persistent interest and efforts to digitalize many of Axel Sommerfelt’s texts, to Thomas Hylland Eriksen who, with Marek, has pushed the agenda, Carl Emil Petersen for locating Axel’s paper, Lynn P. Nygaard and Maryam Aslany for inspiration, and to Knut Christian Myhre and Jan K. Simonsen for input. Most of all, I thank my father, Axel, for conversations about the substance of this text, anthropology and life.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID
Tone Sommerfelt ☐ http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5150-5242

References


