

MEINANDER, HENRIK, AND J. A. MANGAN, EDS. *The Nordic World*. Sport in the Global Society Series. London and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass & Co., 1998. Pp. 213. Prologue and epilogue, notes, selected bibliographies, notes on contributors, and index. \$60.00 cb., \$27.95 pb.

This collection of essays by Scandinavian scholars attempts an explanation of why sport has come to play such an important role in Nordic society. Each author has taken a representative "word" from which to launch his or her analysis. Thus Henrik Meinander (Finland) has chosen the term "Word" to discuss "The Power of Public Pronouncement: The Rhetoric of Nordic Sport in the Early Twentieth Century." Mats Hellspong's (Sweden) word is "Time" in "A Timeless Experiment: Swedish Agrarian Society and Sport in the Pre-industrial Era." Jørn Hansen (Denmark) used "Border" as his launch word for "Politics and Gymnastics in a Frontier Area post 1848." Per Jørgensen (Denmark) discusses "From Balck to Nurmi: The Olympic Movement and the Nordic Nations," under the rubric "Olympic." Matti Goksøyr's (Norway) word is "People" for his "The Popular Sounding Board: Nationalism, 'the People' and Sport in Norway in the Inter-war Years." Johan Norberg (Sweden) uses "Organization" as his key to an explanation of "A Mutual Dependency: Nordic Sports Organizations and the State." Else Trangbaek's (Denmark) "Gender" opens her discussion of "Gender in Modern Society: Femininity, Gymnastics and Sport." "War" is Erkki Vasara's (Finland) theme in "Maintaining a Military Capability: The Finnish Home Guard, European Fashion and Sport for War."

The two "Words" frequently mentioned and sometimes partially analyzed which are conspicuously absent from the terms that launch these essays are "Nationalism" and "State." It would, of course, be too much to expect these essays to cover the entire subject of Nordic sport and society. Still, it is curious that no one has taken up what, at least to most non-Nordics, is the quintessential Scandinavian sport of skiing.

Mats Hellspong shows clearly that traditional sports continued in Sweden until the mid nineteenth century. Only when the elite, especially the military Captain (at that time) Viktor Balck, systematized games, did modern sports take hold in Sweden. This was a clear-cut distinction and refutes Richard Holt's thesis that traditional sports changed gradually. In Sweden there was no foundation in the old games even, surprisingly, in such an activity as skiing.

Jørn Hansen's border area between Denmark and Germany after the European upheavals of 1848 makes an instructive case out of what constitutes identity of a people. For Schleswig-Holstein, like many such border regions running north to south in a line stretching from Belgium through Alsace to Savoy, identity has been one of the important—for some the most important—factors of life. Hansen analyzes the anti-German bias of Danish nationalism found in gymnastic clubs and, later, in football (i.e., soccer) clubs.

Viktor Balck looms large in Per Jørgensen's study too, as the administrative symbol (Nurmi is the athletic symbol) in relationships with the International Olympic Committee. Jørgensen illuminates the amateur "problem" as well. Balck, with his Social Darwin-

ian speechifying, also holds pride of place in Henrik Meinander's article on rhetoric. Meinander shows how the Viking heritage was reinvented by romantics from the mid nineteenth century to about 1910.

Influenced by the writings of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, Matti Goksøyr maintains that as political nationalism became less important in Norway, cultural nationalism rose to take its place. At the same time that religious affiliation declined "we may be able to speak of sporting nationalism as a cultural phenomenon," he suggests. Big concepts here that require further investigation of those elusive folk called "the people."

Anyone interested in sports administration should read Johan Norberg's analysis of the cooperation between government and sports organizations. Nordic policies, imbued with welfare-state philosophies, have funded sports organizations while allowing local authorities to retain most of their authority. In a Europe undergoing political structural change, this study is most instructive.

Else Trangbaek's Danish women gymnasts and handball players framed their own femininity while breaking away from the masculine-dominated sports arena. Her contribution adds to the growing literature on women's sports.

Erkki Vasara's study of "sport for war" shows, surprisingly, that Finland was not a skiing nation and that the government used sport as a means to prepare for war in the 1920s and 1930s. Recent research has shown that other nations had tried that route prior to the First World War.

There is also one essay by the series editor, non-Nordic Tony Mangan. "Sport in Society: The Nordic World and Other Worlds" seems almost totally out of place. Mangan begins his article almost as a critical review of his contributors and then heads off into the world which he knows so well of the British Public School and Imperial ethos which, from time to time, he relates to the contributions.

These carefully worked essays, without exception in excellent English, serve as openers into the relationship of sport and Scandinavian society. Although Henrik Meinander's prologue sets the scene, readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of Nordic history, may find the lack of political, social and economic background a disadvantage. It is rare to have in hand so much scholarship on such various aspects of the Nordic sports world in English. The editors and contributors are to be applauded.

—E. JOHN ALLEN
Plymouth State University