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Swedish Mentality

Åke Daun

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Swedish Mentality Åke Daun

Is there a distinctly Swedish national character? Are Swedes truly shy, unemotional, conflict-avoiding, melancholy, and dour? *Swedish Mentality*, the English translation of the hugely successful book published in Sweden in 1989, considers the reality behind the myth. The author, Åke Daun, is a respected ethnologist who is sometimes referred to as the "guru" of Swedish character. In recent years, it has become popular to discuss Swedishness and Swedish identity. The advent of the European Union and the increasing presence of immigrant refugees in Sweden have fueled public debate on the distinctiveness of Swedish culture. Daun, however, goes beyond stereotype, drawing upon statistics gathered over more than a decade of research. The result is an entertaining and engagingly written book. Throughout, Daun quotes from interviews with native Swedes and immigrants as well as from travel accounts, folklore, and proverbs. We learn why some Swedes might prefer to walk up a flight of stairs rather than share an elevator with a neighbor and why some gain satisfaction from walking alone in the woods or going fishing. Daun describes a range of factors influencing Swedish character, including population composition, rural background, and even climate. He recognizes behavioral variations related to gender, age, class, and region, and he considers subtleties of individual character as well.

Swedish Mentality should interest a wide array of readers, whether of Swedish descent or not.

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