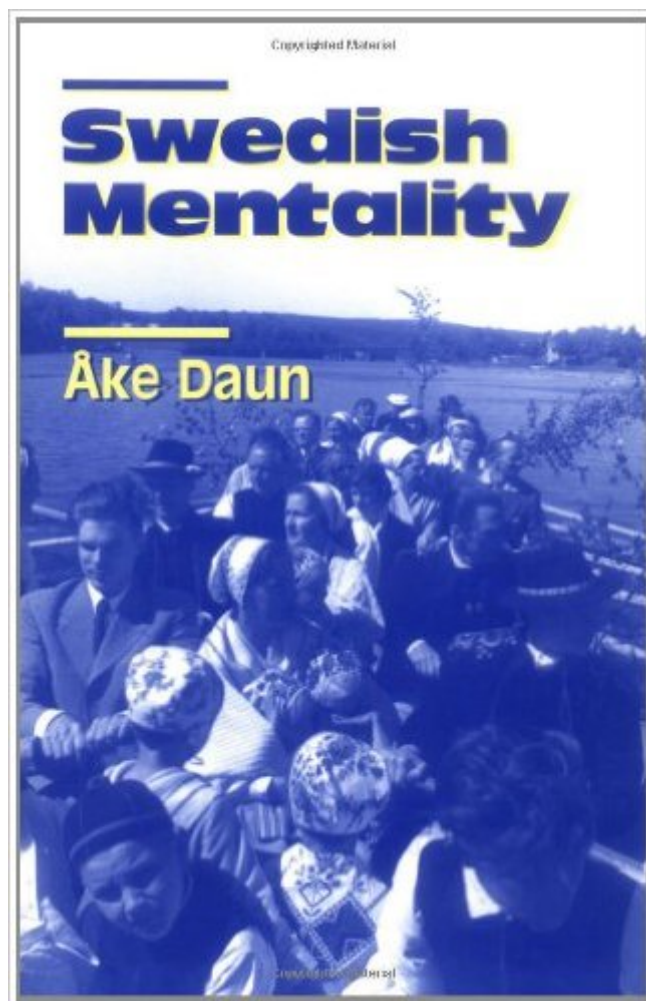


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Swedish Mentality



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was a very interesting book that enjoyed reading a lot. However, I do not entirely agree with

previous reviewers who summarized the content of the book as saying that Sweden is dull and that Swedes has distaste for novelty. However, I still found all the other reviews helpful. Maybe I am biased because I am Swedish myself, but his book is a little bit more nuanced than that. The book was not anti-Swedish and not self-congratulatory. In general I would be suspicious of any book that tries to claim or identify national or ethnic characteristics. Such books are often either self congratulatory or hateful, especially those which claim not to be. Secondly it is a very hard subject to study objectively. If you do it by surveys the answers will be affected by local beliefs and prejudices, and local interpretation of words will distort the results. However, Åke Daun still succeeds in doing what seems to be an objective assessment of Swedish Mentality. I am impressed by his efforts and he convinced me. I can add that even though I am deeply affected by my Swedish Mentality I have partially escaped it and become a lot more tolerant of those who do not share it. That is a result of me living abroad for so many years. However, we are all "affected" and perhaps "damaged" by our culture and our childhood environment. That is true not just for Swedes! If I were to summarize this book in just a few words I would say that Swedes are on average more pragmatic, quiet, non-aggressive, conflict-avoiding, rational, honest, diligent, punctual, orderly, and yes envious too. It should be noted that, this are the kind of personality traits that make the Swedish welfare system possible.

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