



Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917-39

Anders, Dr Ahlbäck

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When Finland gained its independence from Russia in 1917, the country had not had a military for almost two decades. The ensuing creation of a new national conscript army aroused intense but conflicting emotions among the Finns. This book examines how a modern conscript army, born out of a civil war, had to struggle through social, cultural and political minefields to find popular acceptance. Exploring the ways that images of manhood were used in the controversies, it reveals the conflicts surrounding compulsory military service in a democratic society and the compromises made as the new nation had to develop the will and skill to defend itself.

Through the lens of masculinity, another picture of conscription emerges, offering new understandings of why military service was resisted and supported, dreaded and celebrated in Finnish society. Intertwined with the story of the making of the military runs the story of how manhood was made and remade through the idealized images and real-life experiences of conscripted soldiers.

Placing interwar Finland within a broad European context, the book traces the origins of competing military traditions and ideological visions of modern male citizenship back to their continental origins. It contributes to the need for studies on the impact of the Great War on masculinities and constructions of gender among military cultures in the peacetime period between the two world wars.

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