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# SPORT AND NATION IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: SLOVENIA AS LAND OF SKIING NATIONHOOD

**Abstract:**This paper explores the role of alpine skiing in Slovenian culture and society by taking into consideration how sports and ideas of nation and nationhood are intertwined. The analysis, which is based on historical evidence and ethnographic data, suggests that in Slovenia, alpine skiing, with its natural sceneries, amateurish background, sporting events, media attention and national heroes, is one of the main sports arenas in which the Slovenian nation-imagining, nationalism and national identity have been exercised throughout the twentieth century. The importance of alpine skiing for the image of the Slovenian nation was often acknowledged in the Yugoslav period and was further intensely reconfirmed after Slovenia's secession from the socialist country.

**Keywords:** sport, nation, alpine skiing, ethnography, anthropology

## On National Sports

Sports and nations are deeply intertwined from the end of the 19th century, as sports provide a venue for symbolic competition between nations. Arguably, this is why the sports that are not successful in the international arena cannot function successfully either as the nodes of national identification. National sport focuses substantially on national unity and identity, championing the dominant values, ideals, and resources of the nations in which they originate. Sports are a part of people's everyday life that allows national identification and nationalism to operate intensively without much reflection everywhere.

Given that modern sports emerged as part of a wave of *invented traditions* (Hobsbawm 1993: 1-14) in Western-centered cultures associated with nation-building at the end of the 19th century, it is not surprising that different disciplines, history, kinesiology, sociology, anthropology, sport studies, media studies, media-sport studies and other domains, which have incorporated the sports into their research agendas, have traditionally taken the nation-state and national identity as a key point of reference and context (e.g. in relation to Britain: Bar-

nett 1990; Whannel 1992; Hargreaves 1987; to Australia: Goldlust 1987; Mewett 1999; to Norway: Klausen 1999; to Sweden: Sörlin 1995; to United States: Chandler 1988; Pope 1993, 1997; to various countries or regions: Porter & Smith 2004; Bairner 2001; Wagg 2005). A great amount of literature which has considered the topic of national sporting identities in sustaining national, regional or group identities through different types of sport (Archetti 1999; Crolley & Hand 2002; Guilianotti 1999; Haynes 1995; Gruneau & Whitson 1994; Mangan 1996) confirms that sports have helped shaping national identities, and, further, that national cultures have shaped contemporary sports. A succession of authors who did sociological or other kind of research on the link between sports issues, societies, media and political, national or class ideologies (Barnett 1990; Hargreaves 1982; Hoberman 1984; Vaugrand 1999; Brohm & Bambuck 1992; Dunning 1971; Bourdieu 1978: 819-840; Blanchard 1995; Sands 1999) have comprehensively shown that national mythmaking through sport is common across continents. Also, discussion of sport, national identity, nationalism and the role of media is in constant interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary grow, intersection and transformation today (Rader 1984; Goldlust 1987; Rowe 1999; Wenner 1989, 1998; Whannel 1992).

Although the anthropology has perceived sports as a research object with certain disciplinary delay, today we know that it can contribute importantly to the sports issues by producing original ad fresh understandings on sports whose significances can be best understood when we locate them through ethnographic enterprise. The appearance of few anthropological works and articles on sports (Blanchard 1995; Sands 1999; special issue "Anthropology and sport" of the *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 2002, edited by Catherine Palmer; Philip Moore 2004: 37-46) is a promising in a sense that the link between the anthropology and the sport is possible and even productive. Thus, anthropological studies on sport have widened noticeably the field, firstly, by stressing the ubiquitous nature of sport (Blanchard 1995), and secondly, by showing that sport is culturally conditioned imaginary or social category that, along with material artifacts, social customs, and ideologies, is transported across cultural lines (Sands 1999). Also, by flavoring each and every national community, sport has become, as shown by Richard Lapchick's volume (1996), its own medium of communication, and has important ramifications for national, international and multicultural relationships.

Many abovementioned western-centered studies focused on nation and sports often presuppose the nation as a fixed, independent, ready-constituted and self-evident organizational form which exploits its social resources, among them also sports to achieve its national goals and unity. There, it can be found an inherent tendency confirming the fact that great nations and well established national milieus as historically long-continued and well fixed social categories dominate in producing great national sports issues. However,

this frame does not fit those cases, such as the Slovenian one, where the sustenance of the nation-state as well as the nationalization of sports was never depended on its own independent social formation. For instance, Slovenia's contemporary political form is the outcome of turbulent events that infused the people of the Balkans with nationalist aspirations in the 1990s and resulted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The mere geographic and territorial situation provoked, if I borrow words from Slovenian anthropologist Gregor Starc (2004: 6), constant national struggles which the inhabitants of this region have been facing ever since the concept of the nation and of the national identity emerged and spread through Europe in the late 18th and especially in the 19th century, and was later in the 20th century incessantly reestablished (Anderson, 1991 [1983]; Gellner 1987; Smith 2001, 1986; Thiesse 1999).

Alpine skiing with its attractive mountainous landscape in countries such as Austria or Switzerland or regions such as the Italian Dolomites, the French Alps, the American and Canadian Rockies, as well as Slovenia, addresses a collective identity. In the Alpine countries of Europe and in Scandinavia the skiing has been developed as tremendously significant and distinctive television sport. According to Otmar Weiss, half of Austria's tourism is based on alpine skiing (1997: 571). Also the central role of skiing, particularly of its Nordic type in Norwegian, Finnish or Swedish society is made well noted (Sörlin 1995: 147-164). Due to these examples, the Slovenia's case is maybe less known but certainly not insignificant and negligible (Kotnik 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Starc 2004, 2005). In Slovenia, alpine skiing with its natural scenery, tradition, rich amateur background, sporting events, media attention and national heroes is one of the main sports arenas in which Slovenian nationhood and national sporting identity were imagined and negotiated. After Slovenia's political secession from Yugoslavia with the so called "ten-days-independence-war" in 1991, the new nation-state needed new symbols of national identification. Among sports practiced on the (inter)national level in Slovenia, skiing certainly took the most prominent role in constituting the nation, the newly established nation-state and its symbols. Also, many tourist resorts, natural monuments, sights and places that had been perceived as symbols of Slovenian identification from at least the 19th century, were now successfully re-created or revitalized in accordance with newly established emancipatory ideologies. For example, Slovenian ski centers, particularly Kranjska Gora and Maribor, internationally recognized as ski resorts hosting World Ski Cup races, became intensively involved during winter seasons after Slovenia's independence in building national sporting iconography.

In Slovenia, skiing has been represented as the prototype of "Slovenianness". Skiing allegedly already existed as early as the 16th. There is a documented story, well-known to all Slovenians, which says that traditional Slovenian downhill skiing was born in the region of the Bloke plateau, south-west of Lju-

bljana. Since the 19th century the traditional Bloke skier has become the proto-skier of Slovenian modern skiing, and has gained new meaning and accentuation in recent media. In the 1990s in particular, details of this story had been often referred to by TV anchors, sports journalists, field reporters, studio commentators and sports analysts with an obvious passion and attention. They invoked the baron Johann Weikhard von Valvasor (1641–1693), a Carniolian scholar, who wrote precise reports on skiing activities in Carniola, (present-day Slovenia) in the 17th century. Carniola (Slovenian: Kranjska; German: Krain), a traditional and historical region of Slovenia, became in the 19th century constitutively important for creating the Slovenian national territory. As part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the region was crown land until 1918, officially known as the Duchy of Carniola (Slovenian: Vojvodina Kranjska; German: Herzogtum Krain). In 1689 in his nationally renowned book *Die Ehre Deß Herzogthums Crain* [*The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*], Valvasor, nobleman, scholar, and polymath and member of the London Royal Society, described skiing by Carniolian peasants as *smukanje* – an archaic Slovenian term for, literally, "downhilling". His comprehensive book is a description of Carniolian geography, nature, history, customs, and language of the time. In this monumental work he presented skiing as an "odd practice of sliding down snow-covered slopes" by the peasants on the slopes around Turjak, the Bloke Plateau and in surroundings (Valvasor 1977[1689]:94; Badjura 1956). This text was, in the past, usually perceived among Slovenian researchers and sports journalists as a key historical document revealing an indigenous status of skiing on Slovenian soil, proving that skiing was an ancient Slovenian tradition. But if we read it through the perspective of landscape, then it can serve also as a reference to a traditional correlation between skiing and the rural environment. In the period of Slovenia's integration into the Yugoslavian Socialist reality, Slovenian skiing and its attachment to the specific natural setting, that is the alpine landscape, was often represented as an identification point of "Slovenianness" and was used particularly to identify divisions between "us" and "others", between Slovenians and other Yugoslavs. Thus, we can see this sport inscribed into the Slovenian national landscape perhaps more deeply than any other sport practiced in this country because of its attribution to naturalist agendas.

The idea of a national sport is based on ideologies of indigenism, autochthonism, purism but is also unavoidably related to ideology of hybridism. The idea of national purity in sports confirms, as shown by the endeavors from David Mayall's volume (1998), firstly, that sport largely employs ethnicity, and secondly, that ethnicity matters in sport. Eduardo Archetti (1999), for example, found the process of hybridization one of the most crucial mechanisms that turned football, polo, and tango into Argentinean national sports. But as far as the Slovenian case is concerned, I observed with Starc findings right the opposite side of this phenomenon. Namely, Slovenian state-building discourse has al-

ways negated the hybridism of skiing and has tried to turn it into a 'pure', 'non-hybrid', 'authentic' and 'autochthonous' Slovenian sporting practice (Starc 2004: 12, 2005: 67). Such discourse has affected also TV, radio broadcasting and press. Due to this ideological matrix, certain sports, for example football or certain features of certain sports, for example cross-country skiing (also known as Nordic skiing) or Telemark skiing, were perceived as somewhat 'alien' to Slovenianness. This was not of course the case for alpine (also known as downhill) skiing which is treated as traditional type of Slovenian sporting practice. The idea of downhill skiing as indigenous Slovenian sport is usually contested by another idea telling that skiing was born in northern Europe, in Scandinavia. From Norway, Nordic type of skiing was exported and introduced into Central Europe at the close of the 16th century where Nordic techniques were adapted for the steeper alpine slopes, and alpine version of skiing was born. As early as in the first half of the 18th century, alpine skiing was developed as a form of recreation of moving down snow-covered slopes. Alpine skiing technique that evolved during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the mountainous terrain of the Alps in central Europe is ascribed to Austrian ski inventors who pioneered the idea of competitive modern alpine skiing. In Slovenia, this part of skiing history is rather unnoticed and therefore kept away from any potential confrontation with the Slovenian version which says that downhill skiing originates from the Slovenian soil. As well preserved isolated island in the middle of Europe, the Slovenian myth of the indigenousness of downhill skiing therefore could go national without any objection.

Richard Gruneau and David Whitson for example remark that ice hockey has often been portrayed as having an *"enduring link to the idea of 'Canadianness'"* (Gruneau & Whitson 1993: 7). The idea that hockey is Canada's national game – represented as 'the ubiquitous Canadian pastime', 'the Canadians beloved game', 'the Canadian specific', 'our common passion', or 'the language that pervades Canada' – is essentially the product of a myth of national origins. As authors signalize, the myth of hockey as Canadian national sport was "invented" and sustained by the needs and alliances of certain agencies and institutions, such as professional hockey league and modern communications industry. Hockey's association with media, particularly television, seems to be of crucial importance which provides strong and effective articulation of a collective sporting national imagining. This idea of hockey representing a unified Canadian identity is, Gruneau and Whitson demonstrate, mythical in Roland Barthes' sense (2000 [1957]: 109-159); it is about stories the Canadians tell themselves about themselves.

Although there can be noted many differences in comparing the Slovenian and the Canadian case, I would name only two ironies which seem to be an enduring companion of national sports narratives imbued with contradictions. The first irony of Canadian identification hockey currency resides in the fact that,

probably for economic reasons, professional hockey's venues are located for the most part in U.S. cities and not in Canadian cities. As indicated by Gruneau and Whitson (1993), this phenomenon has less to do with an evolving Canadianness than with imperatives associated with selling hockey game to a non-Canadian audience. The second irony is that this Americanization of the Canadian imaginary is perhaps what makes hockey a quintessentially Canadian product even more. In the Slovenian case, the first irony is in the fact, that the Slovenians cannot follow even nearly the success of other nations in professional competitive skiing – for instance, Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Sweden or Norway – which participate in the World Ski Cup races and some of them count their wins in hundreds. The second irony is that successes of other nations which usually go in parallel with the decrease or the lack of Slovenian ski wins always fortify nationalistic mechanisms which turn sport's disadvantage into nation's advantage with instantaneous magic power. In disadvantageous moments, press sports journalists, TV commentators, sports news presenters, field reporters and radio announcers immediately start delivering, between the lines, an explanation which would go like this if appropriately translated into our analytical language: the Slovenian skiing is the matter of innate talent of Slovenians for skiing and not only the matter of forcibly learned competitive skills. This attitude is more fruitfully explicit in words of one regular consumer of ski telecasts, one of my informants who enlightened me like this:

> "Look, I will tell you now what is the mystery and mastery of the entire Slovenian skiing story. Skiing is truly the 'real Slovenian thing' not only because of our professional racers and their success but because it is in our blood. You see, the Slovenian skiing is something what is beyond all wins and defeats of our skiers who compete for medals, wins and money. They are important but they are not all that. They maybe lose but Slovenian skiing doesn't … they can be beaten in the process but our skiing tradition cannot be."

Hence, the reference to blood and ground ideology which persuades that the Slovenian skiing exists by nature and not by training, is quite difficult not to see. It is obvious that this biologically founded ideology takes skiing as the genetic feature in/of nation.

Due to all this, a national sport can be roughly defined as a sport which is considered to be a culturally intrinsic part of a particular country or national milieu. Although it is difficult to find official parameters towards defining why skiing in Slovenia is perceived as national sport, there can be outlined some general characteristics because of which the Slovenians feel attached, in a such special way, to this particular sport. Firstly, the rules and objectives of this sport are, in opposite to the demanding nature of its bodily technique and TV realization, so simple that they can be taken with easy. Here maybe lies a part of the answer why skiing has become so popular right at the moment

when becoming televised. Secondly, skiing is widely practiced in Slovenia as it is seen as the best recreational pastime for most Slovenians in the winter. Or, if I quote one Slovenian sport broadcast director, one of my informants:

> "You know, the essence of the Slovenian alpine skiing is hidden in this simple sentence 'let's go ski on Saturday or Sunday'. Don't you agree that it seems fairly unusual if there is someone who can't ski? It is naturally presupposed that all Slovenians can ski. You know, I'd like to say that everything began in a family context. 'Let's go ski on Sunday' was and still is a regular family ritual during the winter season in Slovenia. So, without knowing this context you can't understand the success of our skiers Mateja Svet, Bojan Križaj or Rok Petrovič. Roughly said, their professional careers and successes began with this simple "let's go ski" when they were children. […] Look at the Croatian family Kostelić today, it is the same principle. It's all about the family. You see, the father as the first trainer."

This indicates how deeply this sport is rooted in the collective consciousness, and how vigorously is determined by national ideology which teaches that the Slovenians are born skiers. If in Brazil football is considered the national obsession and "opium of the Brazilian people" (Lever 1969: 36-43) then in Slovenia skiing is considered the national virtue[1]. And thirdly, probably the most reasonable explanation for the eminent social position of skiing is in its long-term presence on the Slovenian soil with its privileged role in Slovenian nationalist processes. Besides having a long history of popularity, skiing has been throughout the second half of the 20th century tremendously reinforced by the rise of new media, particularly by the development of TV technology, radio and the rise of press. However, national sporting identities are articulated and encoded as constantly changing and self re-creating cultural practices. Soccer, this global game, is probably the best example that all national sports – as this particular sport is treated as national in so many countries – are not necessarily indigenous practices. However, in many countries, where this sport is perceived as national, there can be found tendencies to present it as indigenous and authentic. In the case of (alpine) skiing, there are at least three nations, the Slovenians, the Austrians and the Norwegians, which share similar pretensions to treat this sport as their own indigenous sport.

When exploring national sports and questions such as how such kinds of sports came to be so intimately connected with the nation, we have to bear in mind a phenomenon which is one of the constitutive elements in creating national sports, including alpine skiing as Slovenian national sport, i.e. the phenomenon of national purity and non-hybridism of national sport. All national sports are shown to be profoundly ideological formations whose artificiality is matched exactly by their drive to affirm their supposedly organic purity. All

[1] On virtue and grace in sport see John Carroll, 1986, pp. 91-98.

in all, it can be established that people living on the territory of today's Slovenia developed their own sense of particular ethnic, cultural and national identity. We could say that this skiing identity is the outcome of many contingent socio-historical events that influenced people's communal imagining and consequently enabled them to build and fixate their specific homogeneous national feelings, belonging and identity.

## Yugoslavian Skiing *versus* Slovenian Skiers and Medals

The Slovenians lived under the rule of the Habsburg dynasty from the  until 1918, with the exception of 's 4-year tutelage of parts of modern-day Slovenia — the Illyrian provinces. While the elites of these regions mostly became Germanized, the peasants strongly resisted Germanization influences and retained their unique Slavic language and culture. In 1918, after World War I, the Slovenians joined with other southern Slav peoples in forming the  (October 29, 1918) and then the  (December 1, ) under King , renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. After the World War II, the country has been part of the SFR of Yugoslavia from 1945 until gaining independence in 1991.

In Slovenia, skiing was called particularly to build divisions between 'us' and 'others' which usually varied according to particular historical periods and contexts: for instance, in the 19th century, the Others were mostly Hapsburgs and Austrians, in the first half of the 20th century, the Others were Germans and Italians, in the second half of the 20th century the Others were sometimes Serbs, sometimes Croats, or both.

In the entire Yugoslav period, skiing as a relatively popular sporting pastime became perceived as a traditional Slovenian sport that was revived after three centuries. Because of its alleged long-standing tradition and precise territorial origin, downhill skiing was presented as an exclusively Slovenian sport, i.e. a non-hybrid, authentic national sport. Its reputation as the Slovenian national sport was further legitimized by the fact that it was poorly practiced in other parts of Yugoslavia. Thus, it remained exclusively attributed to the Slovenian people, a perception circulated all over the Yugoslav federation. Due to this, skiing became a signifier of Slovenianness. Even within the discourse of brotherhood and unity that successfully united the Yugoslav nations until the 1980s, skiing preserved its "Slovenian character" and was posited as one of the most distinctive signifiers upon which Slovenianness was built without much objection:

"Look, the myth on "Yugoslav skiing" as the Slovenian national sport has been built not only by the Slovenians but also with the help of other Yugoslav nations. It was not only the Slovenians who believed in the ethnically determined talent of the Slovenian nation for skiing. It is really interesting how people from the other parts of Yugoslavia

shared a similar belief on this. […] As far as I can remember, we, as Slovenians, were named as skiers by other Yugoslavs. Since our competitors in skiing achieved better and better results, this perception of course created even bigger impression about us as skiing people … Certainly, radio and TV direct broadcasts of skiing which became so popular during the 1980s, fortified the Slovenian superiority in skiing. Television in particular permeated enormous and multiple identifications with this sport."

In late socialist Slovenia, in the 1980s, when antagonisms between Slovenianness and Yugoslavness arose, alpine skiing was used as a tool of socio-political mapping between the "Slovenian sporting identity", showing its closeness to the "Western European identity", and imaginings of the Balkan communities of the other Yugoslavs, nick-named "the Southern Brothers". Distinctions, such as "Slovenians embody individualism" (behind this is the reference to the mono-ethnic nature of sport, such as skiing, gymnastics), "southern Balkan brothers are better in collective sports" (here is the reference to pluri-ethnic sports, among them soccer, basketball, handball, and other popular collective sports), paved the road from pre-Yugoslav and Yugoslav sporting body to emancipated Slovenian skiing identity noticeably. Given the absence or bad results, respectively, of skiers from other parts of Yugoslavia, and taking into account the successes of the Slovenian ones, the Slovenian media and public embraced the belief that skiing talent must be an ethnically, i.e. genetically determined feature in the nation itself. Also, the Slovenian superiority in competitive skiing was fully confirmed on the international level. Skiing in Slovenia was marked also by the strong presence of consuming audience (for instance, bigger interest in alpine skiing among people; production of national sporting heroes; visiting ski resorts as synonym for spending winter holidays; commercialization of winter sports, for example, through Elan, the main and very much nationally valued Slovenian producer of skis, which was instrumental, although not exclusive, for Slovenian mass skiers and their national imagining). So, these markers of competing symbolic geographies noticeably paved the way from the pre-Yugoslav and Yugoslav sporting body to the emancipated Slovenian skiing identity (Starc 2005: 64–88).

In a turbulent late Yugoslav political reality, skiing not only kept a privileged position in the national imagination of Slovenianness but growing international successes of Slovenian skiers during the 1980s gave it epic proportions. Alpine skiers, such as Bojan Križaj, Mateja Svet, Boris Strel, Rok Petrovič, Jure Franko and Nataša Bokal were the athletes who were presented with small crystal globes for the season's best runner in particular ski discipline on several World Ski Cup podiums, World Championships podiums, and titles and Olympic medals made material the myth of skiing as the Slovenian national sport. Their astonishing accomplishments were promptly transformed by radio broadcasting, the press, and particularly by TV, into a matter of national pride and symbolic of the nation's cohesion, which reminded of the important social

position of skiing (*Dnevnik* 1984; Mal 1983; *Delo* 1987). During the 1980s, Križaj and Svet became Slovenian as well as Yugoslav heroes beyond all comparison. Križaj became perceived as the beginner of the successful Slovenian ski story and as one of the greatest legends of Slovenian skiing who, in his best times, was one of the greatest rivals of the legendary and almost unbeatable Swedish skier Ingemar Stenmark. Svet was perceived as Slovenia's most successful female alpine skier by far. As one of the world's best female skiers in the late eighties, she was one of the greatest opponents of the brilliant and infallible Swiss skier Vreni Schneider (Kancler 1987). Both were also awarded the title "Best Yugoslav Athlete". One ski fan, one of my informants elaborates:

> "I take the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo particularly important for the Slovenian people because these Olympics further strengthened the Slovenian superiority in skiing. The entire nation, I mean the entire Yugoslav federation, was forged on couch in front of TV sets during this event. After these Olympic Games, our southern Balkan brothers related us to skiing even more."

The press and television were in socialist Yugoslavia two venues aimed at mobilizing masses of multinational country for the Slovenization of Yugoslav professional skiing.

After Slovenia's separation from Yugoslavia, skiing immediately became a euphemism for independence and as an all-encompassing symbol of the Slovenian struggle for independence. All earlier skiing victories were perceived as Slovenian, not Yugoslav, even though they were accomplished under the Yugoslav flag. One of my informants, a Slovenian ski broadcaster, explained this situation as follows:

> "After the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenia was not only faced with the situation that called for a clear definition of its identity, but also had for the first time in history a unique opportunity to present its specifics to the world. For example, before the world knew only of the successes of Yugoslav skiers. But the irony of this multinational country was that there were no Yugoslav skiers. There were actually only Slovenian skiers who represented abstract Yugoslav identity. Thus, Yugoslav medals were actually Slovenian ones. Also, Yugoslavia was often introduced as an alpine country due to its participation at skiing competitions, but this was due to the Slovenian Alps."

After the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenia was faced with the situation that called for a clear definition of the Slovenian nation (Starc 2004: 75-76, 137-139, 165-167, 171). Represented as a vehicle promoting the story of "small nation, great issues", skiing saw a strengthened position as the Slovenian national sport and as the signifier of Slovenian nation. Thus, the nation-building process mobilized skiing as the "real Slovenian thing". In other words, a new coun-

try needed a positive self-image and a positive national story and in that respect skiing provided a perfect ingredient in Slovenian national consciousness.

The 1992 Winter Olympics were the first at which the Slovenian skiers competed as a team of independent Slovenia. The presence of the Slovenian skiers at this highly recognizable international sporting event was in Slovenian press as well as in TV sports broadcasts exposed as the Slovenia's journey from "the Balkans" into "Europe". Live participation of Slovenian audiences in this giant televised sporting event enabled national imagining in an enormous dimension. Press and TV discourses of skiing followed this omnipresent revitalization of affirmative nationalism in the 1990s, while presented as a continuation of much earlier developments. Culture as the guarantee of national survival and sport as the guarantee of international recognition were two essential domains walking hand in hand together in constituting the new social reality labelled as the "Slovenian transition".

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**Vlado Kotnik**

## SPORT I NACIJA U ANTROPOLOŠKOJ PERSPEKTIVI: SLOVENIJA – ZEMLJA NARODA KOJA SKIJA

Sportovi i nacije su suštinski međusobno povezani od kraja devetnaestog veka s obzirom da sport omogućava teren za simboličko nadmetanje između nacija. Moguće zbog toga sportovi koji nisu uspešni u međunarodnoj areni ne mogu uspešno da funkcionišu kao tačka susretanja za nacionalnu identifikaciju. Prikazujući ulogu alpskog skijanja u slovenačkoj kulturi i društvu, ovaj rad ustanovljuje kako sport i zamisli o naciji i nacionalnosti, nacionalnom, mogu da budu međusobno isprepletani. Analiza zasnovana na istorijskim podacima i etnografskoj građi ukazuje da je u Sloveniji alpsko skijanje (sa svojim prirodnim krajolikom, amaterskim bekgraundom, sportskim događanjima, medijskom pažnjom i nacionalnim herojima) bilo jedno od glavnih sportskih arena u kojoj su tokom dvadesetog veka ispoljavani slovenačko predstavljanje nacije, nacionalizam i nacionalni identitet. U Sloveniji je skijanje bilo predstavljano kao prototip "slovenstva", "slovenačkog". Skijanje je navodno već postojalo još u šesnaestom veku. Postoji dokumentovana priča, poznata svim Slovencima, koja navodi da je tradicionalno slovenačko brdsko (alpsko) skijanje nastalo u predelu visoravni Bloke jugozapadno od Ljubljane. Od devetnaestog veka tradicionalni smučar iz Bloka postaje proto-smučar slovenačkog savremenog skijanja, i on dobija nova značenja i pažnju u savremenim medijima. Posebno tokom devedesetih godina prošlog veka, detalje ove priče su često, sa očitom strašću i pažnjom, spominjali televizijski voditelji, sportski novinari, terenski izveštači, sportski analitičari i studijski komentatori. Značaj alpskog skijanja u predstavi o slovenačkoj naciji je često bio potvrđivan u jugoslovenskom periodu, a bio je dodatno potcrtan po odvajanju Slovenije iz multietničke socijalističke zemlje. Slučaj Slovenije potvrđuje zaključke koji pokazuju da se nacionalni sport suštinski usredsređuje na nacionalno jedinstvo i identitet podupirući dominantne vrednosti, ideale i resurse nacije iz koje potiču. Sport je deo ljudske svakodnevice koji svugde omogućava nacionalnoj identifikaciji i nacionalizmu da intenzivno deluju bez osobitog promišljanja.

**Ključne reči:** sport, nacija, alpsko skijanje, etnografija, antropologija