Ling, Branting, Georgii, or Dally: Who Was the Real Father of Kinesiology?

The American Academy of Physical Education (AAPE), founded in 1930, changed its name into American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education (AAKPE) in 1993. In 1886, Swedish baron Nils Posse (1862-1895) introduced the term kinesiology in the U.S. He claimed that a new science had been developed by Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) and his followers who named it kinesiology (kinesis: motion; logos: science) "...which in true translation means the science of gymnastics." However, the term is never mentioned in any of the established historiographies of Ling and his Swedish gymnastics system. Therefore both Franjo Prot and Roland Renson have considered not Ling, but the French "homme savant" Nicolas Dally (1795-1862) as the true father of kinesiology. Dally published in 1857 his magnum opus Cinésiologie ou science du mouvement dans ses rapports avec l'éducation, l'hygiène et la thérapie.

In 2003, Anders Ottoson, a Swedish historian, has drawn our attention to a handwritten - but not signed - (auto) biography of Lars Gabriel Branting (1799-1862) probably written in 1856, in which the term kinedynamik is
mentioned once and kinesilologi twice. Branting claims that he invented the term in 1828 to identify the doctrine to classify gymnastic exercises. When this biography appeared - in a much shortened version - in the Swedish biographical lexicon of 1858-59, the term was now spelled kinesiologi (with an o). Chronologically, however, the English spelling kinesiology of this combined Greek term had already appeared as such in the Biographical sketch of the Swedish poet and gymnasiarch Peter Henry Ling, published by Carl August Georgii (1808-1881) in 1854. Amazingly enough the term does not appear in Georgii's earlier 1847 French publication Kinésithérapie ou traitement des maladies par le mouvement selon la méthode de Ling, which he wrote during his stay in Paris from 1846 till 1848. It seems that Georgii thus was the first to adopt the neologism kinesiology to identify "...a rational system of gymnastics, embracing the entire range of kinesiology and the principles of an accurate and harmonious development of the human body." Because of lack of further evidence, it can be hypothesized that Branting had used the Swedish term "rörelseläre" (movement science) from 1828 onwards and that he later recuperated Georgii's Greek terminology kinesiology, meaning exactly the same namely "movement science." Another hypothesis is that Dally became familiar with the term during Georgii's "mission" in Paris and that he adopted and adapted it with a French touch as cinésiologie.