



*Legends of People*

---

*Myths of State*

---

Violence, Intolerance,  
and Political Culture in  
Sri Lanka and Australia

---

**Bruce Kapferer**

Smithsonian Institution Press  
Washington and London

---

# Contents

Preface xi

## Chapter

1

*Cultures of Nationalism: Political Cosmology and the Passions* 1

## Part I

*Evil and the State: Sinhalese Nationalism, Violence, and the Power of Hierarchy*

2

*Ethnic Violence and the Force of History in Legend* 29  
Legends, History, Political Rhetoric, and Scholarship 34  
The Demystification of Myth: Rationality and Legitimation 39

3

*Evil, Power, and the State* 49  
The Legend of Vijaya 50  
Dutugemunu and the Rebirth of the State 57  
Myths of History, Myths of Evil 65  
The Suniyama: From the Womb of the State 72  
Ideology and Ontology 79

4

*Ideological Practice, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Passions* 85

Ethnic Nationalism and New Meaning 90

Ethnic Unity and the Fetishism of Culture 93

Ethnicity and the Violence of the People 99

The Anguish at the Shrines and the Anger of the State 103

Buddhism, Sorcery, and State Hegemony 108

Nationalism, Hierarchy, and the Passions 112

Part 2

*People against the State: Australian Nationalism and Egalitarian Individualism*

5

*When the World Crumbles and the Heavens Fall In: War, Death, and the Creation of Nation* 121

Anzac and the Cosmogogenesis of a Nation 125

Nationalism as Religious Form 136

Australia as a Model of the Western Nation-State 139

Nationalist Ideology: Cynicism and Compassion 144

6

*But the Band Played "Waltzing Matilda": National Ceremonial and the Anatomy of Egalitarianism* 149

Nation, People, and State 151

The Authority of State and the Power of the People 154

Of People, Power, and Drink 155

Drink and the Practice of Being Equal 158

Autonomous Society and the Order of the People 161

Egalitarianism and the Idea of Nation 167

Heroes and the Natural Order 170

Egalitarianism and Inequality 173

7

*Ethnicity and Intolerance: Egalitarian Nationalism and Its Political Practice* 183

Nationalist Individualism as Text 185

The Arithmetic of Nationalism 190

Inegalitarian Equality 191

Ethnicity and Unbalanced Opposition 196

Ethnicity and Class Populism 197

On Making Australians 200

Moral Pragmatism 202

Where the "Facts" Lie 204

Egalitarian Difference 205

The Dangers of Nationalist Egalitarianism 207

8

*Nationalism, Tradition, and Political Culture* 209

Notes 219

References 245

Index 259