



Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual, and Politics in Sri Lanka (Studies in Dance History) (with DVD)

Susan A. Reed

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Around the globe, dances that originate in village, temple, and court rituals have been adapted and transformed to carry secular meanings and serve new national purposes. In stage performances, dance competitions, and festivals worldwide, dance has become an emblem of ethnicity and an index of national identity. But what are the “backstage” stories of those dances, and what have been the consequences for their communities of origin? In *Dance and the Nation*, Susan A. Reed brings to light the complexities of aesthetic politics in a multi-faceted exploration and analysis of Kandyan dance in Sri Lanka.

As the national dance of Sri Lanka, Kandyan dance is identified with the majority Sinhala ethnic group and heavily supported by the state. Derived from an elaborate village ritual performed by men of the hereditary drummer caste, the dance was adopted by the state as a symbol of traditional Sinhala culture in the post-independence period and opened to individuals of all castes. Reed’s evocative account traces the history and consequences of this transition from ritual to stage, situating the dance in relation to postcolonial nationalism and ethnic politics and emphasizing the voices and perspectives of the hereditary dancers and of women performers.

This book comes with a DVD that provides unparalleled footage of this vibrant dance in ritual, stage, and training contexts, and features the most esteemed performers of the Kandyan region.

Dance and the Nation was awarded the Outstanding Publication Award by the Congress on Research in Dance (2011) and a Special Citation by the Society of Dance History Scholars (2011).



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