

The musical culture of Ceylon Africans: A case study of *Maanja* tradition in the Sirambiadiya village, Sri Lanka

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The present research examines the musical culture of Ceylon Africans (Kaffir) in the Sirambiadiya region, in Puttalam district, in North-Western Province. They are a group of community descending from the post-colonial period of the country. Evidently, the Kaffirs of Sirambiyadiya village inherit a particular style of music called *Maanja*, demonstrating some unique characteristics that have also become part of Sri Lankan culture, especially by spreading the tradition of *Baila Kaffirinha*, which continue to be very popular in the country. However, the Kaffirs of Sirambiadiya call their music *Maanja*. These songs have only a few verses: five or six lines or less. These same lines recur in different tempo in their singing. The singing primarily starts in slow tempo and increases gradually indicating that the dance is incorporated into the ongoing music. They accompany some percussion instruments such as Dolak (Dolki or Dollakkiya), and Rabana as the principle beat keeper, yet they use with it some home utensils i.e., spoons, glass bottles, common furniture like polished coconut shells, along with some coins. The word '*Maanja*' is derived from the Portuguese word 'Marchas,' kind of song sung in the Portuguese wedding ceremonies and festivities. Most of these *Maanja* songs are based on six-eight (6/8) beats. It is revealed that the Sri Lankan *Maanja* demonstrates some connotation to Portuguese Marchas in a very locally customized manner in which the Portuguese descendants of the country acculturated themselves while introducing the Portuguese cultural affinities *vice versa*. Thus, the themes of *Maanja* songs range from appreciating nature, childhood, livelihood of people, identified as child flying a kite, love, the sea, the birds, and devotional songs etc. Within such a background, the objective of the present research is to identify the evidence of musical ensemble of Kaffirs in Sirambiyadiya such as musical structures, playing techniques, singing styles, melodic patterns, performance settings, and the instruments to examine the independent characteristics of *Maanja* tradition within the particular socio-cultural background, by preserving the value of one of the diminishing cultures in Sri Lanka right now. It can be concluded that identifying the *Maanja* music tradition of Ceylon Africans in the Sirambiadiya region is significant for them to evolve as a minor music tradition, yet, unique to the country. The present study follows the qualitative research methodology including on site data collection with recorded music and interviews with the community, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion. Data is also collected from the field study, scholarly studies, library and archival surveys, and discussions.

Keywords: Portuguese, Sri lankan music, Ceylon africans, Maanja tradition, Sirambiadiya, Kaffir