

## Music: Links between Music in Sri Lanka Today and the Portuguese Conquest Period

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Looking at two kinds of ongoing musical activity in Sri Lanka - Catholic church music and baila-kaffringha, I seek to trace a connection between them and the Portuguese conquest period.

In baila-kaffringha there is no original Portuguese material except the word *baile*, dance and musical instruments such as violin, mandoline, guitar and rabana (drum). Tracing back today's popular Sinhalese and English baila, one passes through the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Portuguese Burghers (an ethnic group with mixed Portuguese, Kaffir, and local blood, who survived by mechanical work such as shoemaking) held song and dance parties with music called cafferina, accompanied by Portuguese-derived instruments and with Portuguese style dresses). Further backwards in time, the Portuguese Burghers and Kaffirs seem to have developed baila music. How this happened is conjectural. Was it based on Portuguese folk music which might have been prevalent among the Portuguese soldiers? Or was it invented by the Portuguese and Kaffirs, just as, more recently, the Afro-Americans invented Blues in the US and Reggae in the West Indies.

Catholic church music in Sri Lanka today consists of chants, hymns, pasan, music of passion plays. The Westernised local people use Latin and English words in their chants in hymns they use English words set to Western musical melodies and harmonies. The less-westernized people have their church services in Sinhalese or Tamil. Here the words and music have been vastly changed from the original Portuguese material so as to be in line with the people's cultural way of life. These "inculturating" changes took place under the influence of priests as well as laymen. Leading names of the priests concerned are Fr Pedro Francisco in Portuguese times, Jacome Gonsalves, a Goanese priest of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Fr Marcelline Jayakody of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the impoverished and maltreated remnants of Portuguese people, the Portuguese Burghers remained faithful to their religion, Catholicism. The music which they used consisted of melodic chants. Two of the best known chants were the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria.

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