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ABSTRACTS

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Sri Lankan Kaffir Music Tradition and Its Transformation

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An African originated people known as *Kaffir* are living in Sri Lanka since 16th century. They are descendents of East Africans who were brought to Sri Lanka from Mozambique as labourers and soldiers by Portuguese. Now, the majority of *Kaffirs* live in Puttalam. *Kaffir* music tradition, also called *Manja*, is sung in Creole language. These *Manja* songs, start with a slow rhythm, repeat short lyrics and speak of joyful themes. Clapping and dancing according to the gradual increase of the tempo, also become a compulsory part of the song.

Today, as these *Kaffirs* are assimilating with local culture and ethnics, their life style is changing rapidly. As a result, their music tradition is slightly changing too. Thus this research expects to identify the transformation on performing and preserving of *Manja* music tradition.

As the *Kaffir* music is a community based music tradition, the major methodologies of the research were discussions and interviews with *Kaffir* members. Observations were also an important method of collecting data for this research. And also written materials such as books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and websites; audio-visual recordings were used as secondary sources.

Kaffirs used to practice *Manja* in social gatherings and in their leisure time, and was performed only within *Kaffir* community. Thus the purpose of their music tradition was entertaining themselves and their primitive musical instruments such as spoons, coconut shells and wooden board etc., were enough to fulfil that requirement. Nevertheless, now they bring their music tradition in front of an audience instead of bordering and practicing it among the community. Consequently, they have structured their music tradition according to the requirements of the performance while maintaining original musical characteristics. Although their ancestors preserve the music tradition orally, present *Kaffirs* engage with the technology to preserve their music tradition. Accordingly it is becoming exposing to the outer world and it is moving out of its original context. Thus, the purpose of *Kaffir* music tradition is gradually changing from entertainment purpose to monetary purpose.

Keywords: Kaffir community, *Manja* tradition, Musical characteristics, Transformation, Kaffir music

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