

## The Portuguese Identity of the Afro-Sri Lankans

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*L'identité portugaise des Afro-Sri Lankais*

*A identidade portuguesa dos afro-sri lankanos*

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## THE PORTUGUESE IDENTITY OF THE AFRO-SRI LANKANS

The Afro-Sri Lankans are an ethnic minority who have long been overlooked and have received little academic attention. They are a marginalised group, part of a culture which is undergoing rapid assimilation, and any information that we have at present about them may be lost if it is not recorded. There is as yet no adequate history of the Afro-Sri Lankans. The three waves of European colonisers (Portuguese, Dutch and British) that came to the shores of Sri Lanka brought Africans with them to this island in the Indian Ocean. This paper focuses on the largest Afro-Sri Lankan contemporary community. Since Sri Lanka regained its independence, the Afro-Sri Lankans have had to cope with the socio-political changes that have occurred in postcolonial Sri Lanka. The Portuguese identity of the Afro-Sri Lankans is expressed through language, religion, music, song and dance.

### *L'identité portugaise des Afro-Sri Lankais*

Les Afro-Sri Lankais constituent une minorité ethnique qui a été longtemps négligée et à laquelle les universitaires n'ont pas accordé une grande attention. Ils forment un groupe marginalisé, appartenant à une culture qui est en train de subir une assimilation rapide. Toutes les informations que nous possédons actuellement à leur sujet pourraient être perdues si elles ne sont pas recueillies. Il n'existe pas encore d'histoire adéquate des Afro-Sri Lankais. Les trois vagues de colons européens (portugais, hollandais et britanniques) qui ont atterri sur les rivages du Sri Lanka ont amené avec eux des Africains sur cette île de l'Océan Indien. Cet article s'intéresse à la plus importante communauté afro-sri lankaise contemporaine. Depuis que le Sri Lanka a regagné son indépendance, les Afro-Sri Lankais ont dû faire face aux changements sociopolitiques qui sont intervenus dans le Sri Lanka postcolonial. L'identité portugaise des Afro-Sri Lankais se traduit à travers la langue, la religion, la musique, le chant et la danse.

### *A identidade portuguesa dos afro-sri lankanos*

Os afro-sri lankanos constituem uma minoria étnica desde há muito esquecida, à qual os académicos não têm dado grande atenção. Constituem um grupo marginalizado que faz parte de uma cultura que se encontra em fase de rápida assimilação. Qualquer informação de que disponhamos de momento sobre esse grupo poderá ser perdida se não for registada. Ainda não existe uma história adequada dos afro-sri lankanos. As três ondas de colonizadores europeus (portugueses, holandeses e britânicos) que desembarcaram nas costas do Sri Lanka levaram africanos para esta ilha do Sri Lanka, no Oceano Índico. O presente artigo debruça-se sobre a maior comunidade afro-sri lankana de hoje. Desde que o Sri Lanka recuperou a sua independência, os afro-sri lankanos têm enfrentado as mudanças sócio-políticas que aí ocorreram no período pós-colonial. A identidade portuguesa dos afro-sri lankanos é assinalada pela língua, pela religião, pela música, pelo canto e pela dança.

The Afro-Sri Lankans have their roots in several African countries (de Silva Jayasuriya 2003). The fate of the Africans who went eastwards (as willing or unwilling migrants) to lands in the Indian Ocean region was different to fellow-Africans who travelled westwards from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean (de Silva Jayasuriya & Pankhurst 2003, de Silva Jayasuriya 2004a).

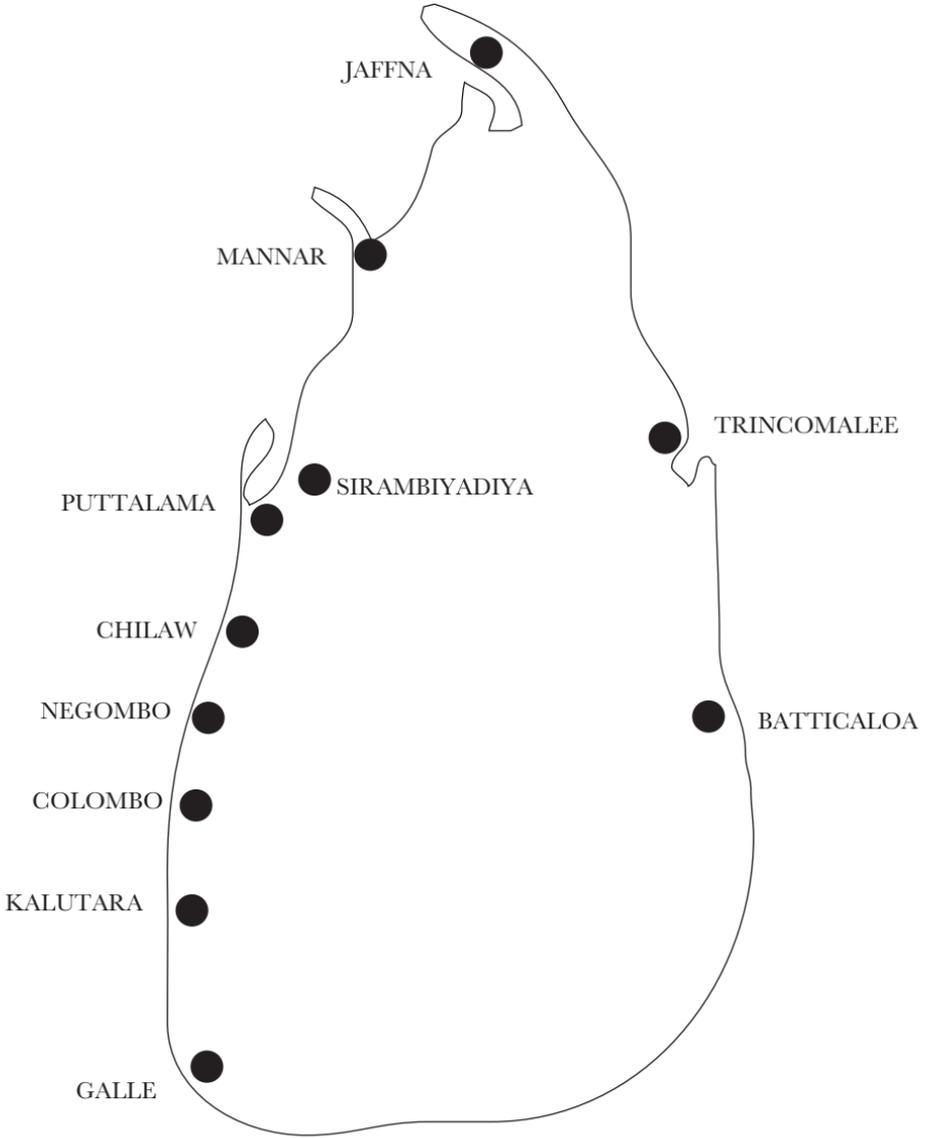
The Afro-Sri Lankans were employed as mercenaries, musicians, road-builders, railway-line constructors, watchers in salt-pans, brick-layers, palanquin-carriers, domestic servants, divers in pearl fisheries, nannies, nurses, village officials and bodyguards. Although there was a significant Afro-Sri Lankan presence on the Island, there is no written history of the Afro-Sri Lankans. In Asian literature, people of negroid African descent are called *Habshi*, *Sidi* or *Kaffir/Cafre/Caffre* (de Silva Jayasuriya & Pankhurst 2003). In 17th century Sinhala literary works, the Abyssinians are referred to as *Abisi* (de Silva Jayasuriya 2001a). In modern Sri Lanka, people of negroid phenotype are called *Kaffirs*, a carry over from the colonial days. The Portuguese word *cafre* is a borrowing from the Arabic word *kafir* ('infidel') which the Arabs used for non-Muslims. The word *Kaffir* may convey negative connotations to those who do not know its etymon. In Sri Lanka it is merely an ethnic label. It is not a racial epithet.

The incoming Africans were familiar with oral traditions, but not with literary traditions. It is therefore important to document their oral history. The Afro-Sri Lankans who were creolized in Sri Lanka, nevertheless, remain an identifiable ethnic group. Their position weakened as the Portuguese period of colonization faded into the past.

The Portuguese policy of colonization included the fortification of several towns including Puttalama (Abeyasinghe 1966). The last community of Afro-Sri Lankans, in Sirambiyadiya (near Puttalama in the North-Western Province) has been marginalised due to the absence of Portuguese power in the Island and also due to the end of European colonisation [see map for geographic location]. Currently there are about 50 Afro-Sri Lankan families in Sirambiyadiya (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2001). The availability of government-subsidized education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to all Sri Lankans since the 1950s has resulted in Afro-Sri Lankan children attending the Puttalama Maha Vidyalaya (the main school in the area), where they receive instruction in Sinhala, the mother-tongue of most Sri Lankans and the language of interethnic communication.

The Afro-Sri Lankans are a small minority in a multiracial country which consists of Sinhalese (of Aryan descent), Tamils (of Dravidian descent), Moors (of Arab descent), Malays (descendants of Malaysians and Indonesians), *Burghers* (descendants of the Dutch and the Portuguese), and others such as *Veddhas* (an Aboriginal group) and *Kaffirs* (Afro-Sri Lankans). The ethnic composition of contemporary Sri Lanka is: Sinhalese 73.95%, Sri Lankan Tamils 12.70%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.05%, Indian Tamils 5.52%, Malays 0.32%, *Burghers* & Eurasians 0.26% and Others 0.20%. The Afro-Sri Lankans are not mentioned as a separate group in the recent census reports as their numbers have dwindled.

According to M.J. Elyas, a retired *Graamasevaka* («village official») in the last Afro-Sri Lankan community in Sri Lanka, their ancestors were brought to Sri Lanka in batches by the European colonisers. They were gradually weaned from their



African customs and European traditions were superimposed on them by those transporting them to Sri Lanka. In what follows, the cultural traits – language, religion, music, song, dance – of the Afro-Sri Lankans have been considered in order to draw attention to their Portuguese identity.

### Language and Religion

Language and religion are generally accepted as the most important elements in the culture set. The Afro-Sri Lankans spoke Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole, the language which played the crucial bridging role in facilitating communication in a multilingual environment outlasting three waves of colonial rule. The robustness of the language and its survival without obliteration by the Dutch and the British, the two European colonizers following Portuguese rule, is remarkable. The successive colonial rulers had to learn Portuguese Creole in order to communicate effectively in Sri Lanka. Only after three and a half centuries did Creole give way to English, which became – and remains – the *lingua franca* for external communication and trade. There are now only 500 Creole speakers on the Island.

According to Anthonisz (1908: 31), Dutch was spoken and written in polite society, in offices and at pulpits, while Creole Portuguese was the domestic language in Dutch households, as it was the language of gossiping and of most intimate relations. However, all attempts to popularise the use of Dutch failed, an issue requiring full research. Even within the homes of the Dutch, Creole seems to have shared equal status to their native tongue. Dutch women, in particular, preferred Creole to Dutch and, since the home was their particular sphere of influence, attempts to penalise speaking Creole, by, for example, shaving half the heads of the servants, were unsuccessful. According to Percival, who wrote in 1805, Dutch women considered the Dutch language «rather calculated for men and too harsh for the mouth of a lady» (Percival 1805: 161-162).

An important feature of contact languages (Pidgins and Creoles) is that we can pinpoint the time they originated. Therefore it is worthwhile considering the origins of this bridging tongue. When the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka as traders and crusaders, in 1505, the country was divided into three kingdoms: Kotte, Kandy and Jaffnapatam. The Portuguese era ended in 1658 when the Dutch, a more powerful naval power, displaced them. Portuguese attempts to gain control of the whole Island failed as the Sinhalese Kings were able to defend the Kandyan kingdom (save for Batticaloa and Trincomalee on the east coast) due to its surrounding hills. The Portuguese, nevertheless, gained control of the kingdoms of Kootte and Jaffnapatam and erected fortresses on the coast and inland. Unlike in other territories in Portuguese Asia, they penetrated into the hinterland of Sri Lanka (Subrahmanyam 1993). Therefore Portuguese influences in Sri Lanka were not limited to the coastal areas and were more widespread (de Silva Jayasuriya 2001b).

The African migrants to the Indian subcontinent would have spoken distinct African languages as they belonged to several ethnic groups. Since the voyage from Africa to India took several months, a Portuguese Pidgin could have developed on board the ships. Pidgins evolve within a very short period of time in order to fill the communication gap between people who come into prolonged contact. We know that there was an African Portuguese Pidgin. Clements (1999)

argues for the existence of an Asian Portuguese Pidgin, but does not include Sri Lanka in his model. Further academic exploration of the Sri Lankan experience is clearly required.

The consensus among linguists is that a Creole, unlike a Pidgin, is the mother-tongue of a speech community. Miscegenation would have provided a pool of Indo-Portuguese mother-tongue speakers in coastal India. If the Afro-Sri Lankans had spent several years in Goa (the headquarters of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* – «State of India» – which extended from Mozambique to China), they would have spoken the Indo-Portuguese of Goa. On the other hand, if Afro-Sri Lankans had spent a considerable time in Bombay, they would have spoken Indo-Portuguese de Norte which was spoken in Bombay and the surrounding areas to the north of Bombay. There were both female and male Afro-Sri Lankans and endogamy led to the birth of Afro-Sri Lankans who would have been mother-tongue speakers of the Indo-Portuguese of Ceylon (the former name of Sri Lanka). Even if the Afro-Sri Lankan parents spoke another variety of Indo-Portuguese or an Asian Portuguese Pidgin, they would soon have learnt the bridging tongue. The *mestiços* («people of mixed descent» – Portuguese and Sri Lankan in this context) were also mother – tongue speakers of Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole (the modern appellation for the Indo-Portuguese of Ceylon). These two groups of mother-tongue Creole-speakers with diverse ethnic roots enhanced the Creole and facilitated interesting linguistic outcomes such as borrowing and grammatical variation that occur when languages come into contact. A comparison of the Creole spoken by the two groups would be an interesting avenue for further research. In addition, Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole serving as the language for trade and external communication became the *lingua franca*. Hence Sri Lankans spoke the Creole as a second/third language. It was particularly fashionable among the Sri Lankan elite who emulated the Europeans and aspired to speak the language of the colonizers.

Contact with Sinhala, the substratum language, has resulted in the grammatical variation of the Creole spoken by the Sirambiyadiya *Kaffirs*. The word order in Sinhala is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV); it is a verb-final language. European Portuguese, the superstratum language, and all known Creoles to-date, are of the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order; they are verb-medial languages. De Silva Jayasuriya (1999a) discusses the substratum influence on Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole (SLPC). For example:

	<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese</i>	<i>English</i>
(i)	<i>Mo (eo) casa tanda</i>	<i>Eu vou a casa</i>	I go home/ I am going home
	S O V	S V O	
(ii)	<i>Nos te cume aros</i>	<i>Nos comemos arroz</i>	We eat rice/ We are eating rice
	S V O	S V O	

Preverbal markers to denote Tense, Mood and Aspect are a typical feature of Creole languages and Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole is no exception. It employs an aspect particle to mark the present – «*te/ta*» (as in ii), a tense particle to mark

the past – «*ja/ya*» (as in iii), and a modality particle to mark the future» «*lo*» (as in iv) (de Silva Jayasuriya 1999b; de Silva Jayasuriya 2004b). This is in contrast to Standard Portuguese (SP) which employs verbal inflections to denote Tense, Mood and Aspect. The absence of verbal inflections, omission of prepositions (as in iv), zero copula (as in v) and the absence of plural marking in nouns (as in vi) are observed in the Creole. The Creole genitive is distinct from that of the Portuguese; it could be based on an English model as is illustrated in (vii), but other models (Praakrits, Dutch and Malay, for example) have also been proposed.

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(iii)	<i>Yo (eo) casa ya/ja foy</i>	<i>Eu fui a casa</i>	I went to the house
(iv)	<i>Yo (eo) markat anda fatu pa toma lovi</i>	<i>Eu virarei ao mercado e levarei os fatos</i>	I will go to the market and I will bring clothes
(v)	<i>Yo (eo) aros ta cume</i>	<i>Eu como arroz</i>	I eat rice
(vi)	<i>Unha midda aroskuruwa dos rupia</i>	<i>Uma media de arroz custa duas rupias</i>	A measure of rice costs two rupees
(vii)	<i>Minha nome Miseliya. Minha Pappas nome Peter Manuel, Mammas nome Dominica</i>	<i>O meu nome é Miselia. O nome do meu paié Manuel e o nome da minha mãe é Dominica.</i>	My name is Miseliya. My Father's name is Peter Manuel and my Mother's name is Dominica

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According to Miseliya, an octogenarian who died a few years ago, there were Muslim Afro-Sri Lankans also. She recalls that the Africans who came during World War II included both Muslims and Christians. She states that there was concubinage between the indigenous women and the Muslim Africans. These Africans had not settled down on the Island. On checking the validity of Miseliya's recollections, I learnt from a Sri Lankan Muslim that people of African descent had lived in Wellawatte (a suburb of Colombo) and that there had been unions between them and the Sri Lankan Muslims. He added that their children have assimilated to the Island's Muslim population and are not distinguishable as a separate ethnic group.

The Africans brought from Goa by the Portuguese would have been converted to Roman Catholicism. They may have spoken an African Portuguese Pidgin when they arrived in India but would have switched to an Asian Portuguese Pidgin afterwards. Learning the Indo-Portuguese of Ceylon would have been an easy task for them as it is related to the Indo-Portuguese varieties in India (de Silva Jayasuriya 2001c). Miseliya states that there were *Kaffirs* who belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Bertolacci (1817: 60) stated that if slaves were married in the Dutch church (for which they required their master's consent), their children were free, and they were also free after the death of their master and his wife. Slaves could not be sold after marriage. The master had to comply with an Adoption Act, where he was considered the guardian of the christened slave.

The Dutch government did not, however, allow the children of slaves married in Catholic Portuguese churches to be set free. There were many slaves who had been christened in Catholic churches and had therefore remained slaves. The Portuguese clergymen refused to baptize slave children unless their masters set

them free. The Dutch government had bowed down under this pressure and had instituted formalities to give the master's consent for slaves to marry in Catholic churches and to give these slaves the same privileges as those married in Dutch churches. However, the formalities introduced by the Dutch government (i.e. registering and attesting marriages) had been discontinued when the British took over the Island's coastal areas, and slaves who married in Catholic churches did not enjoy these privileges. As Bertolacci pointed out this was an inconsistency and a defect of good policy. Bertolacci (1817: 61) had not known of any slaves who had been married in the Church of England in Sri Lanka. The religious affiliation of the Afro-Sri Lankans is, therefore, further complicated by slavery and changes in colonization.

The British Government had purchased African slaves (men, women and children) from the Portuguese settlement of Goa, who had rejoiced in the change of status and had promised to become brave and hardy soldiers. They were nominally Roman Catholics and had no knowledge of any other religion. On Sundays they had marched to the Portuguese church which was situated two miles from the Colombo fort. Roman Catholicism has been a binding force for the Afro-Sri Lankans. The Sirambiadiya Afro-Sri Lankans come under the purview of St Mary's Parish Church, Puttalama.

Fernando (1894) states that the Afro-Sri Lankans intermarried with the Portuguese *Burghers*. This is not surprising given that they had a language (Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole) and religion (Roman Catholicism) in common. The Afro-Sri Lankans assumed a Portuguese identity with respect to these two important cultural traits.

### **Music, Song and Dance**

Music is a fine art that is concerned with the combination of sounds with a view to beauty of form and the experience of emotion; a song is a piece of music for voice or voices, whether accompanied or unaccompanied by musical instruments; dance generally accompanied by musical sound, finds expression in an infinite range of styles, forms and techniques.

It is music, song and dance which bind the remaining Creole speakers with the Creole community at large, which includes *Portuguese Burghers* (people of Portuguese descent) numbering 5,000. The music of the Sirambiadiya Afro-Sri Lankans signals their Portuguese identity. More remarkably, Marie Jacinta, a young Afro-Sri Lankan, has formed an Afro-Sri Lankan music group with ten musicians. A Former Sri Lankan President, R Premadasa, acknowledged Marie Jacinta's contribution to Sri Lankan music and awarded her a certificate in recognition of her talent.

The victory song, *Senhor Sanantoni*, apparently sung by the soldiers *en route* to Sri Lanka survives in the Creole. The soldiers who had lost a home found another in Sri Lanka by lighting candles to Saint Anthony, «the finder of lost articles». Evidently, the incoming Africans would have sung the song in another language, but the contemporary version is given below with my Standard Portuguese and English translations.

	<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese*</i>	<i>English*</i>
Male solo	<i>Senhor Santantoni sua vela namaoz</i>	<i>Senhor São Antoni sua candeia na mão</i>	Lord St Anthony's candle in the hand
Female chorus	<i>Senhor Santantoni suwa vela namao ya oya</i>	<i>Senhor São Antoni sua candeia na mão viram</i>	We saw Lord St Anthony's candle in the hand
The whole group	<i>Vela namao ya oya,</i>	<i>A candeia na mão viram,</i>	We saw the candle in the hand,
	<i>Canseiru namao ya oya</i>	<i>A lanterna na mão viram</i>	We saw the lantern in the hand
The whole group	<i>Ya ganha ya ganha</i>	<i>Ganharam ganharam</i>	We have captured, captured,
	<i>Ya ganha bandera</i>	<i>Ganharam a bandeira</i>	We have captured the flag
	<i>Ya oya ya oya –</i>	<i>Viram viram –</i>	We saw we saw
	<i>vela namao ya oya</i>	<i>a candeia na mão viram</i>	We saw the candle in the hand

\* my translation.

Jackson (1990) refers to *Kaffirs* in Puttalama singing this song. His English translation is different to mine (see below).

Jackson (1990: 84)	Jackson (1990: 84)
<i>Senhõ Saint Antõni</i>	Saint Anthony
<i>Sua vela na mão ya oyã</i>	I saw the candle in your hand
<i>Canseiro na mão ya oyã</i>	I saw the candlestick
<i>Ya ganha bandeirã</i>	I received the flag.

More interesting, however, is that the Sirambiyadiya *Kaffirs* sing *Manhas* (from the Portuguese word *Marchinhas* «little marches») at wedding ceremonies. The *Manhas* emanate from the Portuguese *Marchas* («marches»). In Lisbon, *Marchas* are performed during the feast of *Santos Populares* («Popular Saints») celebrating Saint Anthony, Saint John and Saint Peter. The music of a march has strong repetitive rhythms and an uncomplicated style. It accompanies orderly military movements and processions. In Sirambiadiya, the bride and groom cut the wedding cake, drink wine and sing *Manhas* together with relatives and friends. They hold hands and dance in a circle. M.H. Goonatilleke (1998)<sup>1</sup> who studied this community (Goonatilleke 1983), states that they migrated from Lisbon and that there is a document in the Lisbon Archives about them which I have not yet been able to locate.

*Manhas* are short compositions. The *Manha*, given below, is sung at weddings when the bridal couple are seated. The verse seems appropriate for an occasion on which the groom is explaining to his parents that he has chosen well. It could be paraphrased as: «I picked a woman to be my wife, in the hands she smells».

<sup>1</sup> Personal Communication.

<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole*</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese*</i>
<i>Nam papa naman cherure re</i>	<i>Mamã Pap' na mão cheir'</i>
<i>Panya mulamu</i>	<i>Apanhei meu mulher</i>
<i>Nam papa naman cherure ba</i>	<i>Mamã Pap' na mão cheir'</i>
<i>Panya mulamu</i>	<i>Apanhei meu mulher</i>

\* my transliteration.

The Sirambiyadiya *Kaffirs* play a pink three-stringed long-necked wooden mandolin with a trapeziform resonator, the drum, and home-made instruments such as a glass bottle with a metal spoon, two coconut halves and a wooden chair/stool or a metal vessel with two wooden sticks.

C.M. Fernando (1894), a Cambridge-educated Sinhalese lawyer and a pianist, who was the pioneer researcher of Portuguese music in Sri Lanka, commented that the fast music was called *Kaffrinha* and the slow music was called *Chicote* («whip» in Portuguese).

The *Kaffrinha* song *Singale Nona* was popular in the fashionable Colombo suburb of Cinnamon Gardens in the 1950s. It was the highpoint at bohemian parties of the Island's elite and was always the final song of the night. The Creole song *Singale Nona* is still sung in Sirambiadiya.

<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese*</i>	<i>English*</i>
<i>Singale Nona</i>	<i>Senhora Cingaleza</i>	Sinhalese Lady
<i>Singalee Nona!</i>	<i>Senhora Cingaleza!</i>	Sinhalese lady!
<i>Singalee Nona!</i>	<i>Senhora Cingaleza!</i>	Sinhalese lady!
<i>Eu kere Kasa</i>	<i>Eu quero casar</i>	I want to marry
<i>Porta ninkere,</i>	<i>Eu não quero uma porta,</i>	I don't want a house,
<i>Orta ninkere</i>	<i>Eu não quero uma terra</i>	I don't want land
<i>Figa namas da</i>	<i>D's sua filha somente</i>	Only give me your daughter
<i>Figa namas da, none</i>	<i>D's sua filha somente, Senhora</i>	Only give me your daughter, lady
<i>Figa namas da</i>	<i>D's sua filha somente Sinhalese Lady</i>	Only give me your daughter

\* my translation.

This is a contemporary version of *Singellenona* in the Group entitled *Cantiga De Purtigese – Kaffrein – Neger Song Portuguese* («Portuguese Songs – Kaffrinha – Portuguese Negro Songs») in the 19th century Hugh Nevill manuscript (given below) which is in the British Library, London (de Silva Jayasuriya 1996; de Silva Jayasuriya 2001d). These love ballads emanate from the troubadour tradition which originated in Provence, France, in the medieval age. They represent an important literary tradition that has survived in a Portuguese space in an Indian Ocean Island. These songs remind us that Luso-Asian voices still exist even though the sun has set on the Portuguese empire. The quatrain, is a common poetic structure for songs in rural Portugal and this tradition is illustrated in the Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole songs of the Nevill manuscript.

<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese*</i>	<i>English*</i>
<i>Singelle nona</i>	<i>Senhora Cingaleza</i>	Sinhalese lady
<i>Singelle nona</i>	<i>Senhora Cingaleza</i>	Sinhalese lady
<i>Veeanda lava</i>	<i>Vejo a andar para se lavar</i>	I saw her going to wash herself
<i>Sava nuthen bolsa nuthen</i>	<i>Sabão não tem bolsa não tem</i>	She has no soap she has no bag
<i>Korpuper roosa</i>	<i>Para pôr seu corpo cor-de-rosa</i>	To make her body pink

\* my translation.

*Coran Janita*, another *Kaffrinha* song in the Nevill manuscript and in the same group (given below) also illustrates how *Kaffir* Portuguese music influenced contemporary popular Sri Lankan music. A modern version of *Coran Janita* is in vogue today.

<i>Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole</i>	<i>Standard Portuguese*</i>	<i>English*</i>
<i>Korra jonnathai soo rana</i>	<i>Cora Joanita Soberana</i>	Blush Joanita queen
<i>Surum bae korra jonnathai</i>	<i>De Suramba cora Joanita</i>	Of Suramba blush Joanita
<i>Sonthai iste mustases tha</i>	<i>Sonho esta mestiça</i>	I fancy this girl of mixed descent
<i>Java mamtha sangui tha meu corasan</i>	<i>Veio mandar sangue ao meu coração</i>	She came to send blood to my hear

\* my translation.

*Kaffrinha* (*Kaffir* + *nha* (which is the Portuguese diminutive) is associated with the *Kaffirs* and the Portuguese; it is sometimes called *Kaffrinha baila*. *Baila* (from the Portuguese word «dance») is a Lusitanian musical legacy in Sri Lanka. *Kaffrinha/Kaffrinha Baila/Baila* refer to popular music, song and dance in contemporary Sri Lanka (de Silva Jayasuriya 2004c, 2005).

Brohier (1973) visited the *Kaffir* colony in Puttalama, in 1923, on a Saturday evening when the colonists were having «a feast of merriment and sound, with music as its strongest impelling force». Those taking part were singing and dancing for their own enjoyment. Both young and old enthusiastically joined in the music and dance. These festive evenings were associated with christenings, birthdays, anniversaries of any kind or even a simple moonlit night.

*Kaffrinha* in contemporary Sri Lanka is not simply an Afro-Portuguese blend. It is the fusion of three cultures: African, Portuguese and Sinhalese. Ariyaratne (1999) draws attention to the Sinhalese component in modern *Kaffrinha* and states that the Sinhalese component must not be undermined. A comparison with Portuguese and African folk music would help to ascertain the Sinhalese input to contemporary *Kaffrinha*.

The *Kaffrinha* sometimes assumes a comical character, particularly in the Sri Lankan theatrical performance called *Nadagama* (a genre of Sri Lankan play with Portuguese influence). Sarachchandra, Sri Lanka's foremost contemporary literary figure, refers to the jester of *Rolina Naadagama* who sings a *Kaffrinha* dance tune as the opening song (1966).

The availability of «free» education in post-colonial Sri Lanka is producing literate and emancipated Afro-Sri Lankan women who subsequently deviate from the traditional role of managing the household, mothering and nurturing children. Some are emigrating for domestic work, a phenomenon which is not limited to the Afro-Sri Lankans, but a result of the socioeconomic conditions prevailing on the Island.

Self-expression of African identity through music, dance and song could be misinterpreted as slave resistance. The diverse ethnic backgrounds of the incoming Africans and their low numbers seem to have prevented revolts in Sri Lanka. There was an insurrection, though, during the Dutch era when the Afro-Sri Lankans became conscious of their increased numbers, but the Dutch authorities were able to suppress it. Slave resistance assumed a variety of forms, especially desertion. Slaves fled to the Kandyan kingdom which was under Sinhalese rule, and the Dutch did not know the reason for this. The dense forest vegetation and the politico-economic rivalries between the Dutch and the Kandyan kingdom provided an accessible safe-haven to the fugitives, who lived, in a similar manner to other marooned communities, on poaching, stealing and vagabonding (Hovy 1996). Attempts by the VOC (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) authorities to stop runaway slaves by introducing various measures such as severe whipping, prolonged chained labour, death penalty and treaties with indigenous rulers and headmen which included clauses for the exchange of slaves, were ineffective. The Dutch imported more slaves to fill the void left by the runaway slaves.

It is not surprising that Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole is becoming moribund. The younger Afro-Sri Lankans are not speaking Portuguese Creole and language will not be an identifier for much longer. Nevertheless, they have been able to remain as Roman Catholics, a religion that was introduced to Sri Lanka by the Portuguese and therefore which signals a Portuguese link. Portuguese Creole songs run deep in their blood and are a part of their group identity.

\* \* \*

Afro-Sri Lankans are a marginalised group, but they are partially assimilating to Sri Lankan culture. While the Portuguese hallmarks on linguistic and religious traits of the Afro-Sri Lankans are declining, their musical and choreo-graphic elements are vibrant and persistent, signalling their Portuguese identity.

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