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Indigenous Voices Within the Majority-Minority Discourse in Sri Lanka

Staroselski glasovi v razpravi o večini in manjšini na Šrilanki

Prejeto: 6. maj 2019
Sprejeto: 17. julij 2019

Received: 6th May 2019
Accepted: 17th July 2019

Ključne besede: Ljudstvo Veda, Šrilanka, glasba manjšine, vzdržnost, etnomuzikologija

Keywords: Vedda people, Sri Lanka, minority music, sustainability, ethnomusicology

IZVLEČEK

Obseg šrilanške staroselske manjšine ljudstva Veda se iz leta v leto krči zaradi pritiskov sodobnega sveta, kamor sodijo politične odločitve, socialnokulturne okoliščine, vprašanja tehnologije in podobo. Bi lahko sodelovanje, ki bi se osredinilo na krepitev zavedanja skupnosti in samozavedanja posameznikov ter izboljšanje odnosa do izročila in vprašanj identitete koristilo ogroženim skupnostim?

ABSTRACT

The presence of Sri Lanka's indigenous Vedda minority is subject to continuous shrinking due to imposed views of modernity, including political decisions, sociocultural circumstances, technological and other issues. Could the collaborative work on strengthening communal and individual self-perceptions and attitudes towards heritage and identity issues benefit the endangered community?

1. Background

Sri Lanka, a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual island country in South Asia, was for decades perceived as the arena of mutually confronted interests of the two largest groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Beside them, the population of about 20 millions includes several minorities, which have not received much scholarly attention. This article provides a critical overview of ethnomusicological writings about Sri Lankan musics, and points to the underresearched musical practices of Moors, Malays, Burghers, Veddas, and other minorities. Special attention is paid to the indigenous Vedda people, who presently count to as little as few thousand individuals. The Vedda leaders are concerned about the prospect of their disappearance and search for solutions that would strengthen their identity and provide sustainable strategies for survival. The problems and dilemmas they are facing resemble, in various ways and to various extents, the problems discussed by ethnomusicologists and other scholars working with the indigenous peoples.¹

2. Sri Lankan Vedda People

The name of the Vedda people originates from the Sanskrit term *vyadha*, which means hunter.² The Veddas were originally hunters and gatherers.³ “Wanniyala-Aetto” is the other commonly used name for Veddas, which means “forest-beings”.⁴ According to a popular myth, supported by the historical source *Mahāwansa*,⁵ the ancestors of Sri Lanka's current Sinhalese majority, who came to the island from North-East India in the 5th century BC, brutally destroyed the native Yakkha and Nāga population.⁶ According to this myth, Vedda people emerged from the offspring of the Indian prince Vijaya and

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- 1 In the other parts of the world: Ken S. Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); including Americas – Michelle Bigenho, *Sounding Indigenous: Authenticity in Bolivian Music Performance* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) and Beverley Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Asia – (Christian Erni, ed., *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples in Asia. A Resource Book* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2008); Australia – Karl Neuenfeldt and Kathleen Oien, “Our home, our land... something to sing about: an Indigenous music recording as identity narrative,” *Aboriginal History* 24 (2000): 27–38, and Europe – Richard Jones-Bamman, “Greetings from Lapland: The Legacy of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001),” in *Ethnomusicological Encounters with Music and Musicians*, ed. Timothy Rice (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 97–110.
 - 2 More in Nandadeva Wijesekera, “Vanishing Veddas,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, New Series* 26 (1982): 1; Shiran U. Deraniyagala, *The Prehistory of Sri Lanka: An Ecological Perspective 2* (Colombo: Department of Archaeological Survey, 1992), 392; E. M. Rathnapala, *Lankāwē Veddo* (Warakapola: Ariya Publishers, 2003), 3, 4.
 - 3 More in James Brow, “The Incorporation of a Marginal Community within the Sinhalese Nation,” *Anthropological Quarterly* (George Washington University: Institute for Ethnographic Research, 1990): 11.
 - 4 See in Wiveca Stegeborn, “The Wanniyala-Aetto (Veddahs) of Sri Lanka,” in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, eds. Richard B. Lee and Richard H. Daly (New York: Cambridge University Press: 1999), 269.
 - 5 The *Mahāwansa*, the 5th century chronicle of the Sinhalese indicates that Veddas are descendants of prince Vijaya (6th-5th century B.C.) who came to the island from eastern India. According to the source, Vijaya is the first recorded king of Sri Lanka (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedda> – accessed 25 February 2019)
 - 6 “The present day historians claim that ‘the Yakkhas and Nāgas could be the aborigines of the island’” (C. de S. Kulatillake, *Ethnomusicology and Ethnomusicological Aspects of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers, 1991), 19.

a Yakkha woman named Kuveni,⁷ while another interpretation suggests that Yakkha and Vedda are in fact the same indigenous people. According to Sri Lankan archaeologist Shiran Deraniyagala, the Veddas are related to the *Balangoda mānavaya* (Balangoda humans), who lived in the island in the period 11,000-500 B.C.⁸ In Michael Roberts' words, "Sinhala mythology recognises the fact that there were autochthonous inhabitants in the island when Vijaya, the eponymous ancestor of the Sinhalese, is said to have arrived in the fifth century B.C. Subsequently Sinhala folklore refers to the Vedda people and these folk are deemed to be the lineal descendants of the original autochthonous peoples."⁹ The current Vedda leader believes that the ancestors of the Veddas inhabited the island since prehistory.

Veddas of Sri Lanka count to those inhabitants of the planet who are associated with the concepts of indigeneity,¹⁰ ancientness, aboriginality,¹¹ and firstness, but also with racist notions of being backward,¹² wild men,¹³ culturally deficient or uncivilized,¹⁴ primitive,¹⁵ and scantily dressed, timid,¹⁶ unclean, ill-mannered and aggressive.¹⁷ They are those "contemporary ancestors" in whose musical legacies comparative musicologists used to search for the origins of music. A Vedda song that uses two pitches, for instance, is the first example in Karl Wörner's *Geschichte der Musik. Ein Studien- und Nachschlagebuch*¹⁸, pointing to the most primitive form of music. In his book *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim to Place-As-Homeland in Comparative Focus*, Michael

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- 7 According to Nandadeva Wijesekera, "The ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka explain the origin of the Veddas as the descendants of a brother and sister who were the children of prince Vijaya and Kuveni, the Yakkha woman" (Wijesekera, "Vanishing Veddas," 2). According to James Brow, "Vijaya cohabited with the aboriginal Kuveni, who bore him two children from whose own subsequent union the Veddas are believed to be descended" (Brow, "The Incorporation of a Marginal Community within the Sinhalese Nation," 12).
- 8 Shiran U. Deraniyagala, "Early Man and the Civilization in Sri Lanka: The Archaeological Evidence," *Vedda.org*, accessed 25 February, 2019, <http://vedda.org/deraniyagala.htm>. More in Wijesekera, "Vanishing Veddas," 10; Deraniyagala, *The Prehistory of Sri Lanka*, 392 and Rathnapala, *Lankāwē Veddo*, 6-8.
- 9 See in Michael Roberts, *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim to Place-As-Homeland in Comparative Focus* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005): 15.
- 10 For concepts and definitions of indigeneity see Francesca Merlan, "Indigeneity: Global and Local," *Current Anthropology* 50, no. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009); Richard K. Wolf and Frank Heidemann, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Indigeneity, Performance, and the State in South Asia and Beyond," *Asian Ethnology* 73, no.1-2, (2014); and P. J. Jonathan Stock, "Indigeneity," *Music and Arts in Action* 6, no. 2 (2018).
- 11 "In Sinhala Vedda means an aboriginal tribe living in the forest [...]" (Wijesekera, "Vanishing Veddas," 1) and "The Veddas are the present-day aboriginals of Lanka" (see in Deraniyagala, *The Prehistory of Sri Lanka*, 397).
- 12 "A Veddah [Vedda] is a person who is scantily dressed and unclean, 'backward', and incapable of understanding what is in his or her best interest; the term applies to someone who is ill-mannered and aggressive [...]" (In Stegeborn, "The Disappearing Wanniyala-Aetto of Sri Lanka: A Case Study," *Nomadic Peoples, New Series* 8, no. 1 (2004): 44.
- 13 "In this land are many of these wild men; they call them *Veddahs* [Veddas], dwelling near no other inhabitants" (see in C. G. Seligmann and Brenda Seligman, *The Veddas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 6; "Wild Veddas", who as migratory hunters and gatherers lived in the jungles [...]" (Peter Kloos, "Review Report on 'Vedda Villages of Anuradhapura. The Historical Anthropology of a Community in Sri Lanka'. Publications on Asia of the School of International Studies No. 33 by James Brow," *Bijdragen tot de Tal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 139, 4de Afl, (1983): 487; "The 'wild' Veddas were still scantily clad than their neighbours, for they wear no cloth, but only a small apron of plaited leaves [...]" (Paul Streumer, "The Leaf-Clad Vedda: An European Contribution to Sri Lankan Folk-Lore," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 42 (1997): 61.
- 14 James Brow states that "Vedda means something like 'culturally deficient' or 'uncivilized'" (more in Brow, "The Incorporation of a Marginal Community within the Sinhalese Nation," 11).
- 15 This adjective was often used in scholarly writings in the past. It is strange that some academics in Sri Lanka still use it when writing about the Veddas. This will be discussed later in the article.
- 16 "They are a group of timid human beings who loved the jungle" (Wijesekera, "Vanishing Veddas," 3).
- 17 For more, see Stegeborn's "The Disappearing Wanniyala-Aetto ('Veddahs') of Sri Lanka: A Case Study," 44.
- 18 Karl H Wörner, *Geschichte der Musik. Ein Studien- und Nachschlagebuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 28.

Roberts considers “indigenous peoples of Australia, Malaya, Sri Lanka and other parts of the world, whose problems started with their political and cultural subordination following the occupation of large chunks of their space by foreign intruders. It is not only that they lost land and clout, as time passed they were overwhelmed numerically.”¹⁹ Ken S. Coates suggests that “The creation of a global movement of indigenous peoples has had profound effects on long-ignored and marginalized peoples, who have found common cause and political voice with comparable societies around the world.”²⁰

3. Geography and History

Sri Lanka is an island country situated in the Indian ocean, bordered by the bay of Bengal in the East and the Arabian sea in the West (Figure 1). It is located some 40 km south-east of India.



Figure 1: Map of Sri Lanka (author's drawing)

The history of Sri Lanka is marked by the successive colonial rules of Portuguese (1505–1658), Dutch (1658–1795), and British (1796–1948). None of them made systematic effort to affect the way of life of the Vedda people. The island proclaimed

19 Comp. Roberts, *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim*, 13, 14.

20 Coates, *Global History of Indigenous Peoples*.

independence from the Great Britain in 1948, then, the subsequent governments started to interfere in various ways in Veddas' lifestyle. Following quotes show its starting measures,

[...] it is especially in the 20th century that the Wanniyala-Aetto [Veddas] have been displaced from their equatorial forests. [...] Between 1951 and 1955, Sri Lankan government evacuated several Wanniyala-Aetto settlements, forcing them to yield to the socio-economic needs of the dominant population. [...] At that time, minister of finance J. R. Jayewardene put an extremely negative light on the Wanniyala-Aetto [Veddas] when he mentioned that the aim of the government was to: [...] lead them away from the hunter stage to the agricultural stage. We want to bring about a stage when the backwardness, the primitiveness of the Vedda [...] will disappear [...] and make them full citizens of Lanka'. [...] To expedite the development process, the government established 'The Backward Communities Welfare Board', which focused on the Wanniyala-Aetto [Veddas] of the Eastern and Uva provinces. This board facilitated the government's plan to move Wanniyala-Aetto [Veddas] to make way for the dominant Sinhalese and Tamil, who needed more rice-paddy land. The government argued that the hunters and gatherers should change their ways, and that the new life would be better. The Wanniyala-Aetto [Veddas] would benefit from living in permanent settlements and becoming agriculturists.²¹

4. Demography

The official census records from 1881 up to 1901 recognised six ethnic categories of the island's population.²² These were: Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Sri Lankan Moors, Sri Lankan Malays, Burghers/Eurasians, and Others. From 1911 on, the Tamils became bisected into Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils and the same was done with the Moors, creating the distinction between Indian and Sri Lankan Moors. Due to the steady decrease of the European and indigenous (Vedda) populations over the years, these two categories became included under Others from 1963 on.

Despite their [Veddas'] numerical insignificance, they remained a census category in British time and were counted: numbering 5,332 in 1911 and 2361 in 1946, figures that could not even make up 0.0 percent of the population. Since then their number has dwindled because the vast majority have become Sinhala-speakers and Buddhists, while yet others in Eastern province have become Tamil and Tamil-speakers.²³

21 Comp. Stegeborn, "The Disappearing Wanniyala-Aetto ('Veddahs')," 53-54; K.N.O. Dharmadasa and S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe eds., *The Vanishing Aborigines-Sri Lanka's Veddas in Transition* (Norway: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1990): 159-60.

22 "Demographics of Sri Lanka," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 10, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Sri_Lanka.

23 More in Roberts, *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim*, 15, 16.

Table 1 shows the dynamics of change during the second half of the twentieth century and in the two most recent censuses (2001, 2012) pointing to the inclusion of the two new categories (Chetti²⁴ and Bharatha²⁵) expanding ethnicities upto eight categories.

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Ethnic Group	1953	1963	1971	1981	2001²⁶	2012
All ethnic groups	8,098	10,582	12,690	14,847	16,930	20,359.4
Sinhalese	5,617	7,513	9,131	10,980	13,876	15,250.1
Sri Lankan Tamil	885	1,165	1,424	1,887	732	2,269.3
Indian Tamil	574	1,123	1,175	819	855	839.5
Sri Lankan Moor	464	627	828	1,047	1,339	1,892.6
Indian Moor ²⁷	48	55	27	-	-	-
Europeans ²⁸	7	-	-	-	-	-
Burghers & Eurasians	46	46	45	39	35	38.3
Malay	25	33	43	47	55	44.1
Veddas ²⁹	1	-	-	-	-	-
Sri Lankan Chetty	-	-	-	-	-	5.6
Bharata	-	-	-	-	-	1.7
Others	32	21	16	28	37	18.2

Table 1: Ethnic Groups of Sri Lanka³⁰

5. Research

As ethnomusicologists, we should pose the following important question: is the unquestionable multiethnicity, multireligiosity and multilinguality, which led sociologist Neluka de Silva to name Sri Lanka “a hybrid island” (2004), reflected in music research? If we take a look into some pioneer publications about Sri Lankan musics, it appears

24 Chetty is a Tamil term for all trading groups in South India. Sri Lankan Chetties are a class of Tamil-speaking traders who migrated from South India under Portuguese and Dutch rule from 16th to mid 17th century (“Sri Lankan Chetties,” *Wikipedia*, accessed March 25, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Chetties).

25 Bharatha ethnic group is considered a caste of the Sri Lankan Tamils. They are descendant of Tamil-speaking *Paravar* of Southern India, who migrated to Sri Lanka under Portuguese rule. They live mainly on the western coast of Sri Lanka (“Bharatha people,” *Wikipedia*, accessed March 25, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharatha_people).

26 Note that 2001 census enumeration did not cover the North-Eastern part of the country (Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts) which was considered a war zone at that time (“Population Census and Statistics,” accessed February 10, 2019, <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Pocket%20Book/chap02.pdf>).

27 Indian Moor ethnicity is under “others” in the years 1981, 2001, 2012 (“Population Census and Statistics.”)

28 Europeans are under “others” from 1963 onwards (“Population Census and Statistics.”)

29 Veddas are under “others” from 1963 onwards (“Population Census and Statistics.”)

30 Source of data: Department of Census and Statistics. (“Population Census and Statistics,” 8.)

that domestic learners, researchers and writers, simply understood “Sri Lankan” and the majority “Sinhalese” as synonymous, with a fairly characteristic lack of sensitivity for the minorities. Pioneers of folk music research in the island, such as Devar Suryasena (1899–1981), W. B. Makuloluwa (1922–1984), and C. de S. Kulatillake (1926–2005), paid considerable attention to local music cultures and to their carriers with whom they shared language, religion, and ethnicity.³¹ This is in concordance with the notions and activities of folk music and dance researchers in Europe, such as for instance Zoltán Kodály or France Marolt. In Sri Lanka, it was foreign researchers who brought in a variety of new research topics, relating music to gender, cultural policy, war, popular music, and media (for instance, Jim Sykes,³² Anne E. Sheeran,³³ Hege Myrland Larsen,³⁴ Max Peter Baumann,³⁵ Caitrin Lynch,³⁶ Shakuntala Rao & Pradeep N’ Weerasinghe³⁷). Sensitivity to the “other voices” – and not only to those of the Sinhalese majority – is increasingly present, partly as a consequence of the lessons learned from the three-decade long civil war, which ended up in 2009. The questions posed by the younger generation of ethnomusicologists trained abroad testify to the value of comparative insights and raised sensitivity.³⁸

The rest of my article is entirely dedicated to the island’s indigenous Vedda people. Map 2 (Figure 2), points to the concentration of traditional Vedda settlements in the hilly and heavily forested central part of the island. Their community settlements were present in about one third of the island in 1950s. A much more recent map (Figure 3) (2018) suggests that the Veddas still live in some of these areas, but their habitat clearly shrunk and is currently limited to the following eleven settlements: Rathugala, Pollebadda, Dambana, Hennanigala, Laggala, Nilgala, Dalukana, Sorabora, Dimbulagala, Kukulagala, and Vakara.

31 Kulatillake later did research on Veddas and published some articles about them, which will be mentioned later.

32 Jim Sykes, “Culture as Freedom: Musical ‘Liberation’ in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka,” *Ethnomusicology* 57, no. 3 (2013): 485–517.

33 Anne E. Sheeran, “White Noise: European Modernity, Sinhala Musical Nationalism, and The Practice of a Creole Popular Music in Modern Sri Lanka,” PhD diss., (University of Washington, 1997); and Anne E. Sheeran, “Baila Music: European Modernity, and Afro-Iberian Popular Music in Sri Lanka,” *The Hybrid Island: Culture Crossings and the Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka*, ed. Neluka Silva (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association, 2004).

34 Hege Myrland Larsen, “Buddhism in Popular Culture – The Case of Sri Lankan ‘Tovil Dance’,” (PhD diss., Norway: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, 2009).

35 Martina Claus-Bachmann and Paul Green guest-edited the thematic issue 46, no. 3, *Women and Music in Sri Lanka* of the journal *The World of Music*, 2004.

36 Caitrin Lynch, *Juki Girls, Good girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka’s Global Garment Industry* (Brand: Cornell University Press, 2007).

37 Shakuntala Rao and Pradeep N’ Weerasinghe, “Covering Terrorism,” *Journalism Practice* 5, no. 4 (2011): 414–28.

38 For instance, see, Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, “Indo-Portuguese Songs of Sri Lanka: The Nevill Manuscript,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 59, no. 2 (1996): 253–67; M.S.B. Alawathukotuwa, “An Ethnomusicological Study of Gypsy Music in Sri Lanka,” abstract, *Peradeniya University Research Sessions: Proceedings and Abstracts* (2005): 31 and “A Study of the Western Impact on Sri Lankan Song”, abstract, *Peradeniya University Research Sessions: Proceedings and Abstracts* (2006): 26; W.W. Jinadasa and Ruwin Rangeeth Dias, “The Changing Pattern on Classical Song on the Impact of Electronic Media with Special Reference to Radio and TV media in Sri Lanka,” in *Research Symposium of the Faculty of Graduate Studies: Proceedings and Abstracts* (Peradeniya: Faculty of Graduate Studies, 2010); Lasanthi Manaranjanie Kalinga Dona, “Music and War in Sri Lanka,” *Militärmusik im Diskurs, Band 3*, ed. Michael Schramm (Bonn: Bundesamt für Wehrverhaltung, 2009), 93–106; Svanibor Pettan and Lasanthi Manaranjanie Kalinga Dona, “Cultural Policies and Minority Musics in Kosovo and Sri Lanka. What Can We Learn from a Comparative Study?” *Voices of the Weak: Music and Minorities*, eds. Zuzana Jurkova and Lee Bidgood (Prague: Slovo21, 2009), 24–33; and Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda, “Musical Instruments in Local Taxonomies: The Case of Sri Lankan String Instruments as perceived through Internet Sources,” *Música em Contexto* 12, no. 1 (2018): 21–33.

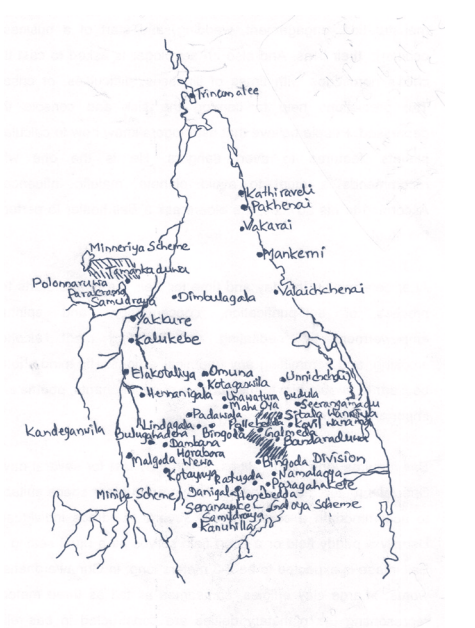


Figure 2: Map of Vedda Settlements in the Early 1950s (author's drawing)



Figure 3: Map of Vedda Settlements Today (author's drawing)

In his book, *The Veddas*, C. G. Seligman categorizes Veddas into three distinctive groups:³⁹

- Gal* Veddas/cave or rock Veddas, living in caves and forests, associated with hunting and gathering;⁴⁰
- Gam* Veddas/village Veddas, living in mud huts and associated with *chena* cultivation⁴¹ and farming;
- Muhudu* Veddas/coastal Veddas, living in coastal areas and associated with fishing, boating, etc.

Out of three distinctive groups of the Veddas described in the literature, the first one is widely seen as a root source for the remaining two. It is currently obsolete due to the governmental policies that from the 1950s pushed towards their removal from the forest habitats. One of the measures made the Veddas subject to punishment if hunting beyond the officially set limitations. In Ken S. Coates' words, "The indigenous societies

39 Seligman, C. G. and Brenda Seligman, *The Veddas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911): 81-87.
 40 More in James Brow, "The Changing Structure of Appropriations in Vedda Agriculture," *American Ethnologist* 5, no. 3 (1978a): 450.
 41 *Chena* cultivation refers to dry farming, "which involves clearing small plots of land from the forest, cultivating them by hand for one or two years. By Western standards, *chena* appears untidy, a jumble of diverse plants raised between the trunks of incompletely burned trees" (more in Stegeborn, "The Disappearing Wanniyala-Aetto," 46, 60; and James Brow explains *chena* cultivation as "[...] may thus be described as a nonmarket mode of production organized on a household basis. Neither land nor labor is here marketed, and production is for use rather than exchange" (Brow, "The Changing Structure of Appropriations in Vedda Agriculture," 451).

identified closely with their specific setting and developed cultural forms, habits, movements, and harvesting activities which permitted them to sustain life in a particular ecological niche.”⁴² As those “who share a complex moral universe with visible and invisible fellow beings in an environment where everything is alive”,⁴³ Gal Veddas have lost much more than a simple space.

How they live under the changed circumstances? How do they cope with the challenges of a very different mediatised world? How do they interact with the non-Vedda visitors? Where is the place of music under the changed and changing circumstances? These were some of the questions that motivated me to organise a fieldwork expedition with my Sri Lankan students in 2005 to one of the Vedda major settlements near Dambana (marked with a black square on Figure 3), which is also the seat of Mr. Ūruvarige Wanniyaletto, the leader of all Sri Lankan Veddas.⁴⁴ He can be seen on Figure 4, sitting in his house with an axe over his left shoulder.



Figure 4: Ūruvarige Wanniyaletto, *The Vedda Leader*⁴⁵

As it is often the case with the indigenous peoples, there is a belief, shared by insiders and outsiders, that they – thanks to the knowledge about natural remedies – can be helpful as healers.⁴⁶ Ūruvarige Wanniyaletto is known as the community leader, adviser, care-taker, priest and healer. His knowledge about native medicine, healing skills and methods

⁴² Coates, *Global History of Indigenous Peoples*, 49.

⁴³ More in Stegeborn, “The Disappearing Wanniyala-Aetto,” 44.

⁴⁴ His first name, Ūruvarige, refers to his family lineage. According to Nandadeva Wijesekera, “The Vedda society was divided into several clans (*varuge*) [*varige*]. About 12 were known but only a few are remembered now. [...] Ūru and Monara are the best recognized. [...]” (Wijesekera, “Vanishing Veddas,” 9). Current Vedda leader belongs to Ūru clan.

⁴⁵ Photographed by the author during her field research in the Dambana area on August 18, 2007.

⁴⁶ See for information, Bernd Brabec de Mori, “What Makes Natives Unique? Overview of Knowledge Systems among the World’s Indigenous People,” *Taiwan Journal of Indigenous Studies* (2016): 43–61.

are rooted in the oral tradition and were transmitted to him by the elderly ancestors. According to Beverley Diamond, “indigenous knowledge is bound to the knowledge of place and environment”.⁴⁷ Until recently, he used his traditional medicinal knowledge to treat the Veddas after animal attacks, against various diseases and epidemics. During my second visit to the Dambana settlement in 2007, he sadly commented that young Veddas nowadays often prefer to seek instant remedies in the hospitals rather than using his traditional medicinal practices and products. They do visit him occasionally and seek advices, mostly for their elderly family members. The bottles next to him on Figure 4 contain liquids with medicinal qualities, meant for communal use and for selling to the outsiders. Photographs on the wall behind him display some of his visitors, from unknown ones to the President of Sri Lanka. For Sinhalese and other visitors from urban environments, Veddas look like an exotic curiosity.



Figure 5: Visitors with the Vedda leader⁴⁸

Visit to a Vedda settlement is reminiscent of a visit to an open-air museum or eco-park, in which the community leader patiently poses for pictures with his axe and sells liquid products of the indigenous knowledge, while community members sometimes respond to special requests to demonstrate traditional music and dance.⁴⁹ A house depicted on figure 6 is the Vedda leader's house made of natural ingredients; twigs plastered with clay, lime, water, cow dung, chopped straw, barks of trees and more, which are available in their natural environment.⁵⁰ The rest of the community lives in well-furnished, equipped and stylized modern houses comparable to those of neighboring Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims.

⁴⁷ Beverley Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

⁴⁸ Photographed by the author during her field research in the Dambana area on 18 August 2007.

⁴⁹ Wijesekera mentions that “The dance is a simple movement of a few steps. It is artless and simple. Musical instruments are not known to the Veddas. Time is kept by beating the thighs with the palms of the hands. Veddas sing simple songs. These are chants and lullabies. [...]” (in Wijesekera, “Vanishing Veddas,” 8.)

⁵⁰ More in Wijesekera, “Vanishing Veddas,” 3, 11.



Figure 6: Veddha Leader's House made of Natural Ingredients⁵¹

Opening of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the regional Sabaragamuwa University in 2006 is certainly a positive initiative, which reflects the government's awareness of its responsibility for the survival of Sri Lankan Veddhas. Due to a mixture of political, economic and social issues, Veddhas became deprived from their dignity and choice to continue traditional life style in the environment they consider their own. Increasing encounters with the non-Veddha individuals, their religious beliefs, mediatized languages, values, habits and technologies, inform young community members of a reality in which they increasingly wish to participate. Hiding any connections with the indigenous minority commonly associated with "backwardness" is easier in modern urban settings. Will the mentioned University Centre be able to change this trend? The unknown's author's Figure 7 depicts the Centre at its opening in 2006 and Figure 8 from 2019 demonstrates its present look.



Figure 7: University Officials with the Veddha Leader and some Members on the Inauguration Day⁵²



Figure 8: The Center's Current Look⁵³

51 Photographed by the author during her field research in the Dambana area on August 18, 2007.

52 Unknown photographer on December 18, 2006.

53 Photographed by the author on March 22, 2019.

The aim of the centre mentioned at the University web is as follows: “providing facilities for those who are interested in postgraduate studies in indigenous knowledge and community studies”.⁵⁴ The main objective of the programme is “to continuously produce professional researchers that are well equipped with theoretical and applied aspects of indigenous studies to contribute to the world of indigenous knowledge”.⁵⁵ The centre has initiated an e-journal called *Ākyaṇa* (Narrations) and so far it has three volumes available online.⁵⁶ Below are the excerpts of the author’s interview with the current director of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies, Prof. Suranjan Priyanath at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages of Sabaragamuwa University, on 22 March 2019:

Q: *What is your area of specialization?*

A: *I am an economist.*

Q: *When were you appointed as the director to the centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies?*

A: *In 2018.*

Q: *Is there an ethnomusicologist engaged in the Centre?*

A: *Neither an ethnomusicologist nor any other employee has been appointed. Director is appointed to be in-charge of the Centre and a clerical staff member is shifted from another department to maintain the Centre and do the paperwork.*

Q: *What is/are current role/s of the Centre?*

A: *To accept postgraduate candidates for their higher studies (About 20 postgraduate candidates register each year at the centre for M.Phil and PhD studies).*

Q: *Do you have some research projects connecting Veddas, their rituals, customs and cultural values?*

A: *Yes, generally candidates focus on Veddas’ culture, history, religion, language, sport, livelihood activities, indigenous health system and indigenous knowledge about climate, environment and social changes, economic, legal and anthropological views, traditional technology, agriculture, medicine, management, fishery and fine arts, but so far there is no focus on ethnomusicological perspectives.*

Q: *What are your postgraduate candidates’ attitudes about Vedda community?*

A: *They are familiar with Vedda problems. They say that “real Veddas live only in forests, not in villages, only about 40 families. They do speak pure Vedda language and keep their tradition with their way of living, attitudes and values. In villages, Veddas just speak, behave, live and do all activities like us and whenever visitors come, they try to show their identity with an axe holding on a shoulder, speaking the language and acting as Veddas, nothing is genuine. Otherwise, they live with modern technologies, speak Sinhala and do business like us, no difference to be noticed.*

Q: *What are your initiatives for the Veddas’s sustainable future?*

54 “Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies (CIKCS),” accessed March 20, 2019, <http://www.sab.ac.lk/cikcs/>.

55 “Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies (CIKCS) / Courses,” accessed March 22, 2019, <http://www.sab.ac.lk/cikcs/courses.php>.

56 “E-journal of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies,” accessed March 22, 2019, <http://www.sab.ac.lk/cikcs/ejournal.php>.

A: *Nothing at the moment.*

Q: *What are the Veddas immediate problems to be addressed?*

A: *Land limitation and they have to have their own police and a court to understand and address their sensitive problems.*

Q: *Does the Centre have direct connections to the Vedda community?*

A: *No.*

Q: *Do you organize some lectures, cultural shows or discussions periodically about indigenous Veddas?*

A: *No, nothing at the moment. I do not think that it would be useful to organize Vedda cultural shows in an exhibitional manner in the university environment.*

Q: *Do you have an archive, a documentation centre, with audio and video data and publications about Veddas in your centre?*

A: *There is no sizeable collection at the moment, but we started to collect books, articles and postgraduate dissertations. University has an e-journal online.*

Q: *Are there any professional musicians in the Vedda community?*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *What are your proposals/suggestions/ideas to develop capacities of the centre for the betterment of Veddas' sustainable future?*

A: *I would make changes at the university act to expand center's capacity; to make academics and leaders of the university to see its value, not only to accept postgraduate applications, but to lead candidates to do applied research for Veddas sustainable future, to introduce a postgraduate course unit/s about indigenous knowledge, culture and language, to invite Vedda leader and some intellectuals to run a course/s, and in that way encourage young Vedda members to study, to make them aware of their identity and value. In this way, there would be a mutual benefit. There should be a national awareness of indigenous knowledge and community studies as well.⁵⁷*

After we discussed the experiences from some other parts of the world, for instance from Brazil, the director added that "he could apply for funds to invite Veddas to lead a course for the students in the Centre, develop the center with audio-visual materials and library facilities".⁵⁸

6. Publications

What do the publications about Sri Lankan Veddas tell us about their everyday reality (Table 2)? Ranging from an early study published in 1911 to our days, marginality appears to be a common thread. Assimilation with the Sinhalese majority or with the Tamils in the areas in which they dominate reflects conscious search for a more privileged life style. A selection of publications is listed in Table 2:

⁵⁷ Suranjan Priyanath, in discussion with the author, at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages of Sabaragamuwa University, March 22, 2019.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Author	Name of the Publication	Year of the Publication
C. G. Seligmann and Brenda Seligman	The Veddass	1911
James Brow	Vedda Villages of Anuradhapura District: The Historical Anthropology of a Community in Sri Lanka	1978
Jon Anderson Dart	Ethnic Identity and Marginality among the Coast Veddass of Sri Lanka	1985
James Brow	“The Incorporation of a Marginal Community Within the Sinhalese Nation”	1990
K.N.O. Dharmadasa & S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe eds.	The Vanishing Aborigines-Sri Lanka’s Veddass in Transition	1990
E. M. Rathnapala	Lankan Veddass (in Sinhalese)	2003
Gananath Obeyesekere	“Where have all the Veddass Gone? Buddhism and Aboriginality in Sri Lanka”	2004
Michael Roberts	Firstness, History, Place & Legimate Claim to Place-As-Homeland in Comparative Focus	2005
Dayananda Somasundara eds.	Indigenous People of Sri Lanka (in Sinhalese)	2006
Dayananda Somasundara eds.	Sri Lankan Islanders and Indigenous People (in Sinhalese)	2007
Dayananda Somasundara and Herath Madaka Bandara eds.	Primitive Societies of Sri Lanka (in Sinhalese)	2009
Iranga Samindini Weerakkodi and Ruwan Premasiri	Coastal Veddass of Sri Lanka (in Sinhalese)	2013
Dayananda Somasundara	Indigenous Research (in Sinhalese)	2015
R. M. M. Chandraratne	“Some Ethno-Archaeological Observations on the Subsistence Strategies of the Veddass in Sri Lanka”	2016

Table 2: A Selection of Publications about Sri Lankan Veddass

The following four publications in one way or another include musical expressions of the Vedda people (Table 3).

Author	Name of the Publication	Year of Publication
C. de S. Kulatillake	The Veddahs Still Sing the Oldest Melodies on Earth	No publication year
James Brow and Michael Woost	“Vedda”. Encyclopedia of World Cultures	1996
Gananath Obeyesekere	“Where Have All the Vāddas Gone? Buddhism and Aboriginality in Sri Lanka”	2004
Uthpala Ekanayake	Shri Lankāwē Prāthamika Janathāwagē Sangeethaya [Music of Sri Lankan Primitive People]	2015

Table 3: Publications on Vedda Music

The earlier mentioned C. de S. Kulatillake, widely regarded as the “father of Sri Lankan ethnomusicology”, referred to Veddahs as to those who “still sing the oldest melodies on Earth”.⁵⁹ Brow and Woost provide some information about music in their encyclopedic entry about the Veddahs. The third listed source has musical reference in the title, pointing to Pete Seeger’s song “Where have all the flowers gone”. The fourth source is a book published in 2015 by a graduate from the University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo. The use of the term “primitive people” points not only to a lack of sensitivity, but also to a lack of familiarity with ethnomusicological standards where this term does not have space for several decades.

The ongoing disappearance of the Sri Lankan Veddahs raises a fundamental question, which was in a way anticipated by Marcello Sorce Keller at a recent symposium in Vienna.⁶⁰ He asked whether it would be acceptable to simply allow some musics to die, if their carriers do not show interest in them any more? Can the same question be posed in regard to Sri Lankan indigenous people in light of the choice of many among them to hide their Vedda roots and assimilate with the stronger ethnically defined communities?⁶¹ I have no direct answer to this question at the moment, but if some action is to be taken, this should certainly be done on a collaborative basis and with consent of the community generally perceived as endangered. At my latest telephone interview with the first Vedda degree

59 In his booklet, *The Veddahs Still Sing the Oldest Melodies on Earth*, C. D. S. Kulatillake has mentioned that, “One important feature is that all Vedda songs are in the mono-melodic form. The Sinhala people in very remote regions have the binary form in their recitation of the common 4-line verse or *seepada* style of folk song, which is widely distributed in the country. The Vedda song may have even 10 or 15 lines, but all lines of the song will be sung in the same single melody. Not a single line will take a second tune other than the first tune of the starting line.” (C. D. S. Kulatillake, *The Veddahs Still Sing the Oldest Melodies on Earth* (Ambalangoda: Bandu Wijesuriya, n.d., 10).

60 At the ICTM Joint Symposium of the Study Group on Music and Minorities and the Study Group on Music and Gender which took place in University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna on 23-31st of July 2018.

61 James Brow and Michael Woost explain this attitude as: “Especially among the younger and more educated villagers, one is likely to encounter stronger assertions of their Sinhalese identity and disinterest, even embarrassment, about their Vedda origins [...]”. See “Vedda,” *Encyclopedia of World Cultures Vol. III: South Asia*, eds. David Levinson et al. (New York: G. K. Hall and Company 1996), 12.

holder, T. M. Gunawardhena on 11 May 2018, I realized that he - being a village school teacher - tries his best to educate Vedda children, to make them appreciate traditional values, to teach Vedda language⁶² and to encourage them to use it for day-to-day needs, and in this way to protect his people from very real challenges leading to disappearance. He added that “teachers, who come from elsewhere first try to learn the Vedda language and customs, but our children refused that”.⁶³

In her keynote address, Michelle Bigenho⁶⁴ argues that,

*for indigenous people, modernity began when their lives were first interrupted by colonizers, when their land was invaded. The newness that comes with encounter is central to other definitions of ‘alternative’ modernities as well. Indeed, the very application of the concept of ‘modernity’ to indigenous cultures is part of a broad movement to decouple the idea of the modern from Euroamerican centrism. Indigenous modernities often differ from the ‘developmentalist’ narratives of ‘the West’ and emphasize the fragmentation, deterritorialization, and struggles for reclamation that are parts of indigenous experience in most parts of the world. Reclamation, recontextualization, and expansions of ‘traditional’ concepts to include new realms of experience are important elements of ‘modernity’.*⁶⁵

Beverley Diamond reminds us that,

*It is important to recognize, however, that local knowledge is neither homogenous nor isolated. Most modern people – indigenous and nonindigenous – have cross-cultural encounters, travel, or use various media and communication technologies that provide access to diverse social worlds. Powwow organizers, for instance, recognize the importance of the internet in circulating their protocols and descriptions of the meanings of various dances.*⁶⁶

In my telephone conversation with T. M. Gunawardhena, he made clear that almost every younger Vedda member uses phone, internet and other media for their own commercial purposes, while he would like to add educational means to their use. “Our lives today have become square typed with telephones, televisions, houses, rooms and mobiles.”⁶⁷

62 According to K. N. O. Dharmadasa, “[...] both Vedda and Sinhalese, favour categorizing Vedda as a dialect of Sinhalese” (more in “The Creolization of an Aboriginal Language: The Case of Vedda in Sri Lanka (Ceylon),” *Anthropological Linguistics* 16, no. 2 (1974): 80; and Nandadeva Wijesekera, “It is not possible to know the exact nature of the original Vedda language. Some words of an unidentified language can be detected. The view of language experts is that on structural and grammatical grounds the language of the Veddas is similar to Sinhala [...]” (see in Wijesekera, “Vanishing Veddas,” 4).

63 T. M. Gunawardhena, a telephone interview with the author, May 11, 2018.

64 Bigenho’s keynote address at the World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada (13–19 July 2011) on “The Intimate Distance of Indigenous Modernity”. Visit the online journal for more information about her speech: <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MC/article/viewFile/19993/21911> (accessed March 31, 2019)

65 See Beverley Diamond, Kati Szego, and Heather Sparling, “Indigenous Modernities: Introduction,” *MUSICultures*, Online Journal of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music. 39, no. 1 (2012): 2.

66 See Beverley Diamond, *Native American Music in Eastern North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

67 T. M. Gunawardhena, a telephone interview with the author, May 11, 2018.

Obviously, tradition and modernity could function to mutual benefit if there are means to make the former attractive to a generation which, for most part, refuses to look back. Consequently, I believe that collaborative efforts of scholars and community leaders could benefit the sense of self-respect among young Veddas, and familiarize them with the useful experiences of indigenous people in the other parts of the world.

7. Conclusion

The almost three decades long civil war on the island prevented research in the considerably large portions of the country. Time has come for a sensitive, collaborative research on music of Sri Lankan diverse communities, including the Veddas and other minority groups and individuals. In addition to Tamils and Muslims, scholarly attention should also be paid to smaller minorities, such as the Burghers (descendents of European colonists from 17th to 20th centuries). European-derived genres such as *baila* and *kaffrigna*,⁶⁸ which are a part of Sri Lanka’s musical soundscape should receive more attention, as well.⁶⁹

I am concluding the article with respect to Catherine Grant’s Twelve Factors in Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework (Table 4). While applying her system to test sustainability and resilience in the Vedda context, I do not refer to a specific genre but to their sonic/musical world in general.

	Twelve factors in Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework	Music/Cultural Practices of Vedda people
1	Intergenerational transmission	Intergenerational oral transmission is the efficient factor in regard to music-making related to ritual practices based on their belief in the power of “Ne Yakun” (dead ancestor spirits), also in regard to their customs and medicinal knowledge. ⁷⁰
2	Change in number of proficient musicians	Oral transmission and practice keep up the number of proficient musicians for local needs, while professional musicianship is non-existent.
3	Change in number of people engaged with the genre	The number of people taking part in ritual practices is decreasing due to the shrinking community numbers.

68 The verb “bailar” in Portuguese means “to dance” and *kaffrigna* is marked by Portuguese music and African 6/8 beat rhythms.

69 The relevant studies include: Sunil Ariyaratne, *Baila Kapiringna vimarshanayak* [An enquiry into Baila and Kaffringna] (Colombo: S. Godage Publishers, 2005); Sheeran, “White Noise,” 1997) and Sheeran, “Baila Music,” 2004); and Kalinga Dona Lasanthi Manaranjanie, “Sri Lanka: History, Culture, and Geography of Music”, *SAGE International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture* (New York: SAGE Publishers, 2019), 2070–73.

70 For more details see, Lasanthi Manaranjanie Kalinga Dona, *Music and Healing Rituals of Sri Lanka: Their Relevance for Community Music Therapy and Medical Ethnomusicology* (2013), 17, 40–42, and 55.

	Twelve factors in Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework	Music/Cultural Practices of Vedda people
4	Pace and direction of change in music and music practices	Negative attitudes about their “indigeneity” have negative impact on their participation in traditional practices. So far, there are no popular music performers among the Veddas (unlike e.g. among the Saami in Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland & western Russia), ⁷¹ Ainu in Japan, ⁷² and aboriginal performers such as Yothu Yindi & Troy Cassar-Daley and Narbalek band from Australia). ⁷³
5	Change in performance context(s) and function(s)	“Demonstrations” of ritual practices sometimes take place based on demands of individual and organised tourists. These coincide with somewhat lesser number of ritual practices.
6	Response to mass media and the music industry	Veddas in general are glad to have a voice in the media. The interest of national media in the Veddas is rather limited, sometimes with the sole focus on the International Day of the World’s Indigenous People on 9 August. But, a community radio station named, “Dambana Radio”, established in Dambana in 2010 under the SLBC (Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation), aims to give voice to the indigenous community. ⁷⁴ Advisors of the station are Mr. Ūruvarige Wanniyaletto (the Vedda leader) and Mr. T. M. Gunawardhena (the village school teacher, who gave the earlier addressed telephone interview to the author of this article). Dambana radio enables indigenous people to publicly discuss their community needs, receive regional and national news, and learn about the programs on indigenous culture and environmental protection in Vedda language.
7	Accessibility of infrastructure and resources	There is no infrastructure or resources beyond the community contexts and needs. The Centre for indigenous studies may provide infrastructure and resources not only for research and documentation, but also for performance and teaching in the future.
8	Accessibility of knowledge and skills for music practices	The leader and community members wish to keep the inherited knowledge and skills alive within the community. They make the musical part accessible also outside the original contexts and share it with visitors, too.

	Twelve factors in Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework	Music/Cultural Practices of Vedda people
9	Official attitudes towards the genre	Academic interest in Vedda culture is an unquestionable fact, but the sonic features of what we would call music attract minimal interest, limited to researchers and curious individuals.
10	Community members' attitudes toward the genre	Like in most other cultures, young generation is more attracted to mediatised than to communal traditional expressions. Access to new technologies increases the gap in attitudes across generational lines, but respect for the elders still enables intergenerational transmission of traditional contents to the young ones.
11	Relevant outsiders' attitudes toward the genre	Showcases of interest in their culture by the outsiders in a range from academics to tourists sends a basically positive message to community members. The most relevant case may be the earlier mentioned Centre for indigenous studies, whose full potential is yet to be realised.
12	Documentation of the genre	A plenty of studies on Vedda culture is available in various formats, including books, articles, magazines, web pages, audio-visual materials and documentaries. The Centre for indigenous studies is expected to store and organise the data and collaborate in these processes closely with community members.

Table 4: Twelve Factors in Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework

- 71 Saami have created rock'n'roll musics featuring Saami musical elements and Saami dialects intermixing with modern western cultural idioms and instruments. More in Richard Jones-Bamman's "From I'm a Lapp' to 'I am Saami': Popular Music and Changing Images of Indigenous Ethnicity in Scandinavia," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 22, no. 2 (2001): 189-210 .
- 72 A group of young Ainu musicians and dancers form a band called "AINU REBELS", blend traditional strains and modern hip-hop to improve the status of Ainu people. More in: Yoko Kubota, "Japan's Ainu fuse tradition, hip-hop for awareness," accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-ainu/japans-ainu-fuse-tradition-hip-hop-for-awareness-idUST4893020071128>.
- 73 "Some aboriginal performers such as Yothu Yindi and Troy Cassar-Daley comfortably occupy spaces in the world of mainstream Australian popular music. Other groups, such as the Narbalek band from the northern territory, perform and record almost exclusively for regional aboriginal audiences, a feature common to aboriginal bands, particularly in remote areas" (more in Chris Gibson's "Declonizing the Production of Geographical Knowledges? Reflections on Research with Indigenous Musicians," *Geografiska Annaler Series B, Human Geography, Encountering Indigeneity: Re-imagining and Decolonizing Geography* 88, no. 3 (2006): 279.
- 74 D. B. Herath and et al. note that Sri Lanka was the first country that established a community radio for indigenous people in Asia; D. B. Herath et al., "Radio 'Dambana': A New Experiment of Community Radio in Sri Lanka," abstract, *Proceedings of the International Postgraduate Research Conference*, University of Kelaniya, (2015): 339.

Veddas or Wanniyala-Aettos are widely considered the oldest inhabitants of Sri Lanka and associated with the concept of “firstness”.⁷⁵ Their numbers are continuously shrinking due to a combination of factors, including the past governmental policies, development projects, urbanization, mixed marriages and modern technologies, despite the present policies marked by the growing attention to human and cultural rights. My analysis based on the application of Catherine Grant’s Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework suggests that there is a space for collaborative work involving scholars and community members to benefit the endangered community and strengthen the minority indigenous voices in Sri Lanka. The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the regional Sabaragamuwa University and a community radio station, radio Dambana point to the government’s interest in Vedda’s sustainable future. These two initiatives have potential to be further explored and developed. The growing field of applied ethnomusicology certainly contribute to the improvements thanks to its valuable theoretically and methodologically grounded world-wide practical experiences in relating music-centered interventions to various benefits on both communal and individual levels.⁷⁶ Using the tools developed within the realm of applied ethnomusicology at this critical point will be a challenge for all participants in the envisioned collaborative work, which has no alternative.

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⁷⁵ Roberts, *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim*, 2005.

⁷⁶ More in Jeff Todd Titon, “Music, the Public Interest, and the Practice of Ethnomusicology,” *Ethnomusicology* 36/3 (1992): 315–22; Svanibor Pettan, “Applied Ethnomusicology and Empowerment Strategies: Views from Across the Atlantic.” *Muzikološki zbornik* 44/1 (2008): 85–99; Klisala Harrison, Elizabeth MacKinlay, and Svanibor Pettan, eds. *Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010); Klisala Harrison, ed. “Special Section on Music and Poverty.” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 45 (2013): 1–96; Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2015.

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POVZETEK

Šrilanka je otoška država v Južni Aziji, kjer sobiva več etnij, religij in jezikov. Desetletja je država veljala za prizorišče, na katerem se za svoje interese borita dve največji skupini – Singalci in Tamilci. Poleg njiju pa 20-milijonsko ljudstvo sestavlja tudi več manjšin, ki v nasprotju s singalsko in tamilsko večino skoraj niso bile predmet znanstvenih raziskav. Članek obravnava staroselsko ljudstvo Veda, ki danes šteje še zgolj nekaj tisoč posameznikov. Njihovo število se vztrajno niža zaradi sklopa socialnih, političnih in ekonomskih ter kulturnih procesov. Starejši pripadniki ljudstva so zaskrbljeni zaradi obeta njihovega izumrtja in si prizadevajo, da bi poiskali načine za krepitev lastne identitete in dolgotrajne strategije za preživetje. Prispevek se mestoma naslanja na odkritja etnomuzikologov, ki se ukvarjajo z staroselskimi

skupnostmi v drugih delih sveta. Primer šrilanškega ljudstva Veda je predstavljen v okvirih dela *Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework* avtorice Catherine Grant. Obstajata dva primera, ki bi si zaslužila nadaljnjih raziskav: Center za staroselske vede in študije skupnosti (The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Community Studies) na Fakulteti za družbene vede in jezike na lokalni Univerzi Sabaragamuwa, ki je bil ustanovljen v letu 2006, in radijska postaja za skupnosti, Radio Dambana, ki deluje od leta 2010. Oboje kaže na to, da se vlada zaveda odgovornosti za ogrožena ljudstva Šrilanke in želi pripraviti plodna tla za skupna prizadevanja. Avtorica vidi v izkušnjah rastočega področja uporabne etnomuzikologije po vsem svetu, obetavno pot za načrtovanje vzdržne prihodnosti skupaj s šrilanškim ljudstvom Veda – in za njih.