

Cultural Identity Formation Through Hybridization: Dressing Under Portuguese Intervention in Sri Lanka

KINIGAMA I. M. M. K.^{1*} and WEERASINGHE A²

¹Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
meenakkinigama@gmail.com

²Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
amaniweerasinghe@gmail.com

Abstract – Through the process of cultural hybridization form a unique identity by mixing elements from interaction of cultures which has occurred throughout the world since the past. Representation of this identity can be understood with the dressing styles of cultures. With the influence of foreign cultures by the exposure throughout history, Sri Lankan culture has formed a unique identity with the hybridization process. The beginning of colonialism with Portuguese intervention and European culture marked a pivotal point in Sri Lanka's cultural identity, which lasted to the present. This study is conducted with the association of hybrid community Portuguese burghers located in Batticaloa and their traditional practices that developed as a result of cultural interaction that occurred during the Portuguese era in the eastern coastal area that has been identified as a cultural exchange zone using the hybrid component identification methodology suggested by Historian Peter Burke in order to analyze the process of hybridity formation and the reasoning behind the cultural identity formation. The study will primarily focus on female dressing associated with the community's Marriage ceremony traditions to understand the dressing and cultural identity formation with hybridization through data gathering methods such as interviews, literature, and visual observation of documents. In order to formulate a conclusion for the research, the study examines the history, traditional practices, cultural influences, and current condition, as well as the discussion of findings. Through a careful analysis of historical context and utilizing the hybridity research method, it was evident that the formation of a unique Sri Lankan cultural identity involved intentional reasoning from the perspective of the Portuguese and oppression and intentionality from the Sri Lankan perspective. This hybrid identity, embracing elements from both Portuguese and Sri Lankan cultures, culminated in the emergence of the Burgher community. However, in the present day, this community faces challenges of counter-globalization and external cultural pressures, pushing them to assert their identity within society. Researchers can expand on the study of cultural hybridity and identity formation through dressing, with a focus on Portuguese intervention. They have the opportunity to investigate the dance practices of the Portuguese Burghers and the African-influenced Kaffir community using the same

*Contact: phone +94-705869926

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/IDR.2023.2>

Copyright © 2023, Integrated Design Research, Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

framework. Alternatively, they can explore other cultures' influence on Sri Lankan culture, utilizing this research's framework to gain deeper insights into the process of cultural hybridization and its impact on identity formation.

Keywords: Cultural Hybridity, Cultural Identity, Dressing, Portuguese Intervention, Portuguese Burghers, Traditional Practices



Fig.1 - Portuguese Burgher wedding in Batticaloa 1960s (Source - N. Seller, Historical document collection)