



PRESERVATION OF KANDYAN TRADITIONAL CLOTHING (DRESS FORMS, DRAPING METHODS AND THEIR USAGE IN CONTEXT) IN THE UNESCO WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE KANDY IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

This paper describes an ongoing research project about preservation of Kandyan traditional clothing in the context and, its dress forms, draping methods and their current practice in context. This study presents an up-to-date overview about preservation of Kandyan traditional clothing with the aim of sorting and describing the main approaches developed till now. The formal definition of preserving cultural heritage by using digital media, the literature, video documenting on traditional Kandyan clothing which exerted in the religious bureaucracy. It seems that performing daily rituals of the Temple of Tooth Relic and ritualistic cultural and social performances like specific processions, as well as how well the clothing regulated in the specific social strata (elite male and female dress) with so called guidelines will be presented. The research process focuses on visual language of methodology of wearing traditional dress form into new-media in order to reach larger target audience. Research design involves field surveys, on field observations, interviews and discussions to gather data and information. A qualitative analysis of the data will be performed using the literature review and theoretical models. The outcome of the project is to establish the potentiality of virtual new-media to digitally preserve the tangible traditional dress form after transferring into new paradigm and create an avenue to preserve the vernacular with their socio-cultural context the intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Traditional Clothing, Draping, Cultural Preservation, Elite Dress, Digital Preservation

Introduction

This is an ongoing research project and mainly based on the preservation of the Kandyan traditional dress through virtual media. Historical notions of cultural value in the heritage sector have been determined by holders of curatorial expertise based at institutions with large collections of artifacts. However, the rise of new digital technologies has facilitated not only active two-way engagement with heritage, but also a broadening of what we mean by heritage and how it can be accessed, through the co-production of exhibitions, oral histories, and other forms of display and archive based on personal remembrance, recollection and interactivity. Since the late 1990s the potential



of the digital world for generating new ways of engaging with heritage, broadly defined, has been a key focus of both academic work and cultural practice. At times, the emphasis has been on how the internet can provide a 'shop window' for the sector, and how this might be translated into physical visits to sites. Elsewhere, the literature explores how the digital sphere can be exploited to provide a dynamic space for two-way engagement with heritage culture, aimed at providing a complementary experience to the physical visit through a range of phenomena (online communities). Aim of the research work focuses on preservation of Sri Lankan cultural dress wearing methodology by contextualizing the current practice in society.

The formation of Kandyan dress can be considered as a unique sculpting technique, where fabric moulds on the body defining its three dimensional form. The Kandyan Dress is an elaborate tradition blended with an important visual and cultural expressions and a distinctive craftsmanship which is considered as one of the living cultural heritages in Sri Lanka. Though the Kandyan traditional dress is the mostly exploited icon for representation of Sri Lanka and its natives and culture at present, the existence of this inheritance is being challenged and becoming a threat to cultural sustainability at various levels with the increasing influence of the free market forces; the institutional and family-based continuity of this tradition is eroding while appropriation of some aspects of the Kandyan dress for some purposes bring about severe changes to the traditional form of the dress. On the other hand, increasing secularization of the society alienates Kandyan dress from their earlier context, and thereby aggravates the risk of this distinctive dress form being carried to the next generations in its original form - visual and functional features of it.

2 .Literature Review

Draping is a stylistic specific method of arranging the lower body cloth which fit to the human body. Coomaraswamy (1984) states that 'needless to remark, there is much art in wearing garments which are not fastened by any stitch, pin or knot'. In reality the relation between the human body and its drapery is somehow always more complex. Anthropological and educational value of Kandyan traditional dress can be identified with living culture in the Kandyan region is a rich blend of indigenous, Indian and Western cultures. Kandyan traditional dress has been an important aspect of the Kandyan cultural life. Today, it is also considered to be the most important form of traditional dress and has largely been used to express the country's identity and heritage. The dress is a unique mix of movements, gestures, postures, and rhythms and craftsmanship for décor and adornment of the body. However, faced with the challenge of survival it is adopting new ways. In this new challenge, it is forced to metamorphose into a form of entertainment-oriented and identity-expressive social activity. This new mode is a marked departure from its earlier and traditional purpose of being a highly religious expression of devotedness and a healing ritual. Whereas museology intervention is more informative, communication design intervention creates a bottom-up inductive approach of interactive story-telling process to impart knowledge about cultural heritage. According to Walter Benjamin being contextually deracinated from time and space any physical and digital replicas does not possess the 'aura' of the original artifact (Benjamin, 1970). This dilution of impact can be addressed by exploring the potentiality of new-media beyond documentation, replication and archiving. New Paradigm for preservation of cultural heritage Yehuda Kalay in his book 'New Media and Cultural Heritage' divides the pedagogical attributes of new-media in cultural heritage in three attributes management or documentation, representation techniques, dissemination of knowledge and awareness generation (Kalay,etal 2008). Through this project, these attributes are tested and accomplished in the light of Sri Lankan context of traditional art and socio-cultural aspects.



Using dress as an expression of social and cultural character gradually developed from many countries. Research conducted by many scholars around the world (Farber, 2010; Kuma-Kpobee, Power, & Otieno, 2007) revealed that there is a link between dress and social differentiation. Furthermore clothing, as a statement of signs, may transmit meanings of individual character or social character of the wearer (Rosenfeld & Plax, 1977). Clothing may be a sign of the social, political, economic, and professional status of a person (Beals & Hoijer, 1959). In spite of the impact of dress, dialogue on traditional dress at national level seems to be lacking in Sri Lanka, desire to preserve national culture and historical heritage. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake immediate actions to preserve the national traditional dress, its meanings, significance in relation to uplift cultural identity. Thus, Sri Lanka will only be in a position to adopt a holistic notion for preservation of their cultural dress artifacts, by first establishing the relationship between traditional dress and salient values and meanings.

Certain styles of dress, which are still practiced in the Temple of the Tooth Sri Lanka in ritual performances for the Buddha daily, convey both the religion and the culture of the wearer, and may transmit such a solid message that all forms, colour, silhouette, lines are regarded as a means of ritual dissemination of religion and culture of today. Dresses are a key aspect of identity presentation, representing a visual declaration of an individual's role performance. As Hall et al. (1997) say clothes are also held as signs. They compose a meaning and bear a message'. Culture and dress are symbolic agents of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life. These symbolic forms are the means through which "social actions of sharing, systems of behavior and outlook within a community are transmitted" (Abdullah, Laily Ramli, & Rafek, 2017; Hannerz, 1969; Nyihana & Astuti, 2018).

3. Materials & Methods

The process of the research involves ethnographic survey to video documentation the socio-cultural heritage of the Kandyan dress and it is duly meant for the knowledge preservation, such as method, material and the key features of the dress. The project, therefore, addresses the author-driven methodological approach to preserve and propagate the cultural heritage value of traditional dress forms Sri Lanka by documentation and translation of tangible traditional visual paradigm into an easily accessible contemporary virtual paradigm.

The research is an ethnographic study. Ethnography is the art and science of helping to define a group of culture (Fetterman, 2009). Ethnography is associated with the full engagement of the researcher in the everyday lives or culture of that understudy (Sangasubana, 2011). Ethnography can gather a large number of materials to characterize what people believe and how they behave in everyday situations (Roper & Shapira, 2000). A qualitative research method was adopted for the research and the data will be performed using the literature review and theoretical models. Primary data will be accumulated from traditional Kandyan dress forms to identify existing nature of traditional Kandyan dress forms in its context. The first phase of research will be conducted as field visits and observations, interviews, and discussions with folks (The main purpose is to identify the highly endangered traditional Kandyan dress forms that need to be preserved as a matter of urgency). Primary data on the actual lives of the people of the study were collected through participant observation. Interviews and direct conversations were held for data gathering. Archival materials were observed, recorded for confirmation of the data. Data analysis began while the data was collected. Data were coded for descriptive labels and categorized according to the setting, types of activities, events, and methodology of wearing each dress. The pattern or connected



findings were unfolded while reviewing the literature related to the subject. By triangulating data, the reliability has been confirmed.

The research question in this project addresses that the probability of preservation and propagation of the cultural heritage value through Sri Lankan traditional dress by video documentary. The design process focuses on the visual language of the methodology of wearing traditional dress form into new-media in order to reach a larger target audience. The aim was to establish the potentiality of virtual new-media to digitally preserve the tangible traditional dress form after transferring into a new paradigm and create an avenue to preserve the vernacular with their socio-cultural context in the intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. There are 3 objectives will be achieved in the project as below,

Objective 1: Preservation of Kandyan traditional dress through video documentation. The video documenting of Kandyan traditional dress forms in three formats/forms. This will be focusing on video-documenting the existing forms of Kandyan dress and its craftsmanship, wearing practices, functions, and usage in context. Furthermore, it also creates an online archive for Kandyan dress using the video documentary. This documentary will be created a reading an online database of the Kandyan dress, its practitioners, families, maps, and other relevant details. Besides, video documents will take place in complete ritual processes where traditional dress forms are endangered and happening. The outcome will be achieved by making the standard video documentaries on selected dress forms, as an example *Rajakariya* (duty) Temple of Tooth Kandy, ceremonies at the temple of the Tooth Relic, dancers at the rituals, and traditional elites/ families. However, there will be a short video clip (raw quality) on selected dress forms to be put up on an online platform for open access preservation of Kandyan traditional dress through video documentation. A video documenting of Kandyan traditional dress forms in three formats/forms. This will be focusing on video-documenting the existing forms of Kandyan dress and its craftsmanship, wearing practices, functions, and usage in context. Furthermore, it also creates an online archive for Kandyan dress using the video documentary. This documentary will be created a reading an online database of the Kandyan dress, its practitioners, families, maps, and other relevant details. Besides, video documents will take place in complete ritual processes where traditional dress forms are endangered and happening. The outcome will be achieved by making the standard video documentaries on selected dress forms, as an example *Rajakarya* (duty) Temple of Tooth Kandy, ceremonies at the temple of the Tooth Relic, dancers at the rituals, and traditional elites/ families. However, there will be a short video clip (raw quality) on selected dress forms to be put up on an online platform for open access.

Place of execution	Dress	Nature of functioning	Fulfillment of the traditional process
<i>Rajakarya</i> (duty) Temple of Tooth Kandy	Dresses of <i>Nilapangu</i> Temple of Toooth Dresses of external officials (<i>Pitahakattalaya</i>) Dresses of internal officials(<i>Athulatha(Kattalaya)</i>)	Obligation habitual, Convention	Diluted, or Misrepresented



Kaarthika Perahera Temple of Tooth Kandy	Kaarthika Perahera- (oil distributing procession) November	Ritual	Full (satisfactory)
Traditional Dance rituals and folks	Dresses of Dancers Drummers <i>Kohomba</i> <i>Kankariya</i>	Ritual, entertainment	Shortened, disappeared
Traditional elites/ families	Dresses of Elite families	Habitual, Convention	Shortened, disappeared omitted due to ignorance

Table. 1: The categories of dresses

Objective 2: Explore the draping techniques of Kandyan Dress and utilize in the creative phase of the Fashion Design Methodology relating it to the technical garment construction. The draping techniques or the unique formation of the Kandyan dress are being explored and utilized in fashion design methodology that favors the innovation in the fashion design, as it can be seen in the works of world famous fashion designers such as Madeleine Vionnet, Christobal Balenciaga and John Galliano who were masters in the generation of new garment forms, pattern making and creation of new volumes and shapes in garment construction through draping.

Objective 3: Setting up an online platform (database) for public to be accessed through internet. This platform also includes a database which contains visuals and other relevant details of the traditional Kandyan dress forms, the processes of creating and wearing the dresses, related performances, events and festivals, its wearers and practitioners, families and communities. In this context, the preservation of traditional Kandyan dress has to take place very soon as the present generation is clearly the last generation of practitioners. The need for conservation of this traditional dress form is documented video format is necessary for future generations of the country to witness the current tradition faced with the risk of extinction. Visual exploration and preservation of traditional art on this contemporary paradigm are necessary for awareness building before the tradition and contexts fade away along with the immense treasure of our cultural heritage. Therefore, the objective is to preserve traditional dress practices in the context of UNESCO world cultural heritage, Kandyan city in Sri Lanka.



Task	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Ethnographic Survey														
1 Pilate Survey - Identify possible areas, places to visit, rituals and occasions to observe and people to interview		■	■											
2 On field survey		■	■	■	■									
3 Data Processing and Data Analysis			■	■										
Vedio Documentation														
4 Pre-production for video documenting					■	■								
5 Video documenting the selected events and occasions				■	■	■								
6 Recording other footage					■	■	■							
7 Narrating & Editing								■	■	■				
Database and website														
8 Designing the database and the website										■	■			
9 Preparing video documentary										■	■			
10 Uploading video materials to website											■	■		
Report writing														
11 Publication and report writing												■	■	■

Table:2: The chronology of Operation framework with time estimation in months

4. Results & Discussion

A historical notion of cultural value in the heritage sector has been determined by holders of curatorial expertise based at institutions with large collections of artifacts. However, the rise of new digital technologies have facilitated not only active two-way engagement with heritage, but also a broadening of what we mean by heritage and how it can be accessed, through the co-production of exhibitions, oral histories, and other forms of display and archive based on personal remembrance, recollection and interactivity (Adair, Filene and Koloski 2011). Since the late 1990s the potential of the digital world for generating new ways of engaging with heritage, broadly defined, has been a key focus of both academic work and cultural practice. At times, the emphasis has been on how the internet can provide a ‘shop window’ for the sector, and how this might be translated into physical visits to sites. Elsewhere, the literature explores how the digital the sphere can be exploited to provide a dynamic space for two-way engagement with heritage culture, aimed at providing a complementary experience to the physical visit through a range of phenomena (online communities,).

This research project is mainly based on the analysis and preservation of the Kandyan traditional dress through virtual media. The formation of Kandyan dress can be considered as a unique sculpting technique, where fabric molds on the body defining its three-dimensional form. The Kandyan Dress is an elaborate tradition blended with important visual and cultural expressions and distinctive craftsmanship which is considered as one of the living cultural heritage in Sri Lanka.

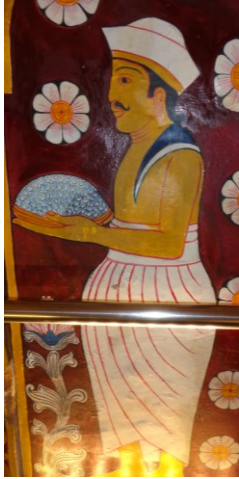


Fig.1

Fig.2

Fig.3

Fig.4

Fig:1 - Kaththiyana rala in white *tuppottiya* & jacket Fig.3 : Panikki in mural offers flowers to the Tooth Relic

Offering meals to the Tooth Relic

Fig.4: Panikki offers flowers to the Tooth Relic

Fig.2 - Kaththiyana rala depicted in mural

Dress encompassing everything that concerns the body such as body beautifications include clothing and accessories. Through social association of the individuals and their dress, identities, outlooks, cultural values and canons are announced or communicated Eicher and Roach-Higgins (1995) states that significance of dress to culture is evolving with time and by changing the using of dress and is never rooted to the past. Various researchers argue that ethnicity holds the strength of groups' ideas. In these way members of a group distinguishes their position from non-members of a group. These members share a collective heritage including dress, beliefs language, and the way of life. Ethnic dress signifies the common ways of dress and identify group of people who stake a common background and heritage (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1995).



Kandyan traditional dress has been so far preserved and carried forward by a group of people such as traditional families of elites, dancers, drummers, who were bound for the traditional professions under the caste-based feudal system that ended with the colonial rule. The changing socio-economic forces in the country bring about the rapid disappearance of caste-based professions and this transformation affects the prevalence of traditional families and *rajakariya* a system that transmits the Kandyan traditional dress from generation to generation. Since the introduction of the open market economic system to the country in 1970s this situation has aggravated and the descendants of these people and families do not adhere to their traditions any more. This illustrates the danger of the current situation of the Kandyan traditional dress is faced with.

This situation is a clear indicator that the existence of these dress forms is at high risk after the present generation of wearers and practitioners. Besides the alarming lack of young professional traditional dressmakers, there is also a marked loss of traditional dressmaking knowledge of the present generation. On the contrary, some dress forms have now been either shortened or filled with innovations since the traditional forms have been wholly disappeared, there are no any initiatives for conservation of traditional clothing from both, museum and visual documentation intervention in the country.

This project is based in the region of Kandy and its vicinities. Kandy is the last kingdom of Sri Lanka heralds a history of long and preserved traditions that date back to the times of the last indigenous King of Sri Lanka. The city and its arts and traditions have been recognized as a UNESCO cultural heritage site since 1988. One of the most important living cultural heritages in this area is the Kandyan traditional clothing and long-established dress related practices that have not been studied or preserved in a pedagogical or hypothetical manner. The formation of Kandyan traditional clothing is mostly based on draping techniques (*moulage*) that works with material directly on the body by wrapping, taking the best benefit of the draping characteristic of the material and the function of the dress. Anthropologically and historically this dress is most imperative as it is diverse, original and responded to a well-formed socio-economic structure. It is in terms of fashion design, aesthetic, artistic value, intense, visually as a priority, and has a wide range of product types and garment construction methods.

The outcomes of the research results will have on the wider scientific community and society. This project proposes to collect and document in digitized video format the Kandyan traditional dress forms and draping techniques along with their usage, crafts and craftsmanship in creating the costumes, décor, ornamentations and the processes and methods of wearing the dresses in its original settings or contexts (with the existing forms of festivals, rituals, and practices). These videos and accompanying material will be archived in the Department of Textile & Clothing Technology, University of Moratuwa. The archives will conserve records the full process and the paraphernalia involved in the Kandyan traditional dress forms such as accompanying rituals, accessories, and décor used, the process of making and wearing the dress.

This archival database will be used as teaching and learning materials for the Bachelor of Fashion Design Degree Course at the University of Moratuwa. Online video documentaries and databases have public accessibility. Traditional families, performers, practitioners and institutions that make use of the traditional Kandyan clothing dress forms get higher recognition and can have a network that in turn can encourage them to remain in traditional practices. This unique dress form will get more national and international interest and awareness.



5. Conclusion

It was observed, that there are some modifications of the dress features due to the globalization and technological advancement the community experiences and economic changes that affects loosing purity and authenticity in traditional dress. Furthermore it is also revealed that the physical features of the dress are modified. It was also found that some dress may have new form while keeping with the traditional culture. The study revealed that traditional dress is considered as part of a dynamic culture. The dress is accountable to be pretentious by the changes that happen inside culture. Meanings and usage of traditional dress therefore change with the passage of time, reconstruction and re-packaging of ideas about culture.

Though the Kandyan traditional dress is the most exploited icon for the representation of Sri Lanka and its natives and the culture at present, the existence of this inheritance is being challenged and becoming a threat to cultural sustainability at various levels with the increasing influence of the free market forces; the institutional and family-based continuity of this tradition is eroding while appropriation of some aspects of the Kandyan dress for some purposes bring about severe changes to the traditional form of the dress. On the other hand, the increasing secularization of the society alienates Kandyan dress from their earlier context, and thereby aggravates the risk of this distinctive dress form being carried to the next generations in its original form - visual and functional features of it.

This paper considers the significance of traditional clothing and to identity perspective of cultural heritage. The traditional elite male clothing is known as *Thuppottiya* or *Mul Enduma* is a power referring traditional dress is being practiced in the UNESCO world cultural heritage site Kandy and its vicinities in Sri Lanka. Carried out preliminary fieldwork in Kandy (August 2018) the author discusses referring to the currently observed traditional practice and its conceptual development in which dress regulated as a sense of national identity, pride, and unity. It is necessary to reformulate cultural values and valuing processes, in order to better understand the Kandyan culture and its meaning in material objects such as dress.

This study identifying dress as an intangible heritage value material cultural objects which signifying and expressing subtle cultural values and social relationships. The wearing of *Thuppottiya* in particular, offers to an elite male as a means of communication in power conscious and historically stratified society. Anthropological and educational value of Kandyan *Thuppottiya* is a rich blend of indigenous, Indian and Western cultures. The *Thuppottiya* lies at the core of ethnic identity and has assumed a higher level of significance among consumers and tourists who collect symbolic items. The author concludes by outlining some of the challenges that heritage regimes face in contemporary society and culture and seek potential strategies for preserving, safeguarding its mixed cultural resources.

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