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Evolution of the Kandyan Vina of Sri Lanka with Special Reference to the Contemporary Usage

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ABSTRACT

The string instrument, the Kandyan vina (Uḍaraṭa Vīṇā), once portrayed in the book by John Davy as "Venah", shares close resemblance with the Coconut shell fiddle instruments in India, in terms of their inherent form, structure, cultural peculiarities and playing posture. Such similarities serve to confirm that the prototypic musical instrument – the Kandyan vina, originated from the Coconut shell fiddle instruments of India. According to sources, the prototype instrument of the Kandyan vina arrived with the gypsy groups who migrated to Sri Lanka from Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu during the Kandy period of 1600-1750 AD. Since then, until 1980-1990 AD, the prototype instrument was developed by the influence of the Western musical instruments and musical intelligence, available material, creative methods inherent in the aristocratic, villagers, beggars, Veddas, and gypsy communities. Therefore, the rise of the Kandyan vina is proven to have originated within Sri Lanka as a unique native string instrument. Research objectives of this study are: firstly, to re-introduce a native string instrument according to its true historic trails; secondly, a modern Kandyan vina is constructed using the modified knowledge discovered through exploring the ancient Kandyan vina instruments; and thirdly, to assimilate knowledge of a musical instrument based on its historical literature and archaeological data from an Archaeomusicological perspective. With this in mind, Frescoes/murals, artefacts, legal documents and primary books were used as the primary sources, while journal articles and secondary books were used as secondary sources.

1. Introduction

Davy (1821) has described a specialized Vina instrument for the very first time. Moreover, other similar records were written in the period of 1843 to 1990 by Bennet (1843), Mahawalathanna Bandara (1908), Dholapihilla (1956), Nandadewa wijesekara (1965), Nandasena rathnapala (1996), Devar suryasena (2008), C. de S Kulathilaka (2000; 2001; 2014) and J.A Will Perera (Suryasena, 2008). However, after a careful examination of Davy's (1821) description, Kulathilaka (2000; 2001) has named this ''*Venah*'' as Kandyan vina (*uḍaraṭa vīṇā*) in his description. Further, Kulathilaka has clearly stated the origin of the Kandyan vina and its period of origin. These conclusions are highly significant because they had been discovered from a historiographical perspective, and to date, it is the only recognized statement regarding the origin of the Kandyan Vina. To prove his assumption, Kulathilaka (2000; 2001; 2014) quotes poetic verses from classical works of poetry, i.e. *Kowul* and *Paravi Sandeshas,* and *Guththila Kavya,* written by the Buddhist monk Vaththave, and concludes that the Kandyan vina had been used since the Kotte period.

"idimiya novī ṇaya-dakvā śilpa vīṇaya
samaga upavīṇaya-rægena dæḍikoṭa sadā vīṇaya" (*Guththila Kavya*: verse 136)

Kulathilaka (2014) has quoted the words *"dæḍikoṭa sadā"* in the above verse, which means that both *''vīṇaya''* and *''upavīṇaya''* are strongly made. According to that meaning, he has supposed *''vīṇaya''* is a string instrument and *''upavīṇaya''* is a bow. Also, he has assumed that the verse of *Guththila Kavya* mentioned here is a clue about the Kandyan vina. As well, Kulathilaka (2001; 2014) has quoted verse 32 from *Paravi Sandeshaya* to assume that contemporary people had been playing Kandyan vina by holding it on their lap.

"nūnā væḷaňdi sirimohu tiḷiṇa yasa sa ka
gānā sadehi suraňgana veṇa tabā æ ka
nānā desa vænena nelenatu nidasaru ka
pānā væni satosa salamin hisanisa ka" (*Paravi Sandeshaya*: verse 32)

He goes on to state that the origin of Kandyan vina evolved from the Chinese *Huqin* string instrument, which was used in Sri Lanka during the time when King Parakumba VI of the *Kotte* period received the military cooperation of the Emperor of South China as a result of the mutual relationship between China and Sri Lanka (2014). According to Kulathilaka (2014), the *Huqin* string instrument is also the prototype instrument of the Kandyan vina. Within this framework, the present study examines the problems of the origin of the Kandyan vina, how it is developed and utilized in contemporary society. Research objectives of the current study are: to re-introduce a native string instrument according to its true historic trails; construct a modern Kandyan vina for the present usage by modifying the knowledge discovered through exploring the ancient Kandyan vina instruments; to assimilate knowledge of a musical instrument based on its historical literature and Archaeological data from an Archaeomusicological perspective.

2. Materials and Methods

The Grove dictionary of music and musicians has mentioned how a musical instrument should be analyzed with sociobiological components (Figure 01) (Sadie, 2001a, p. 419). Data collection and analysis were carried out under the qualitative methodology. The primary, and secondary, sources were used in the process of data collection. Frescoes/murals, artefacts, and primary books were used under the primary sources. Journal article and secondary books were used under the secondary sources. Olsen has pointed out that the holistic approach should be associated with Archaeomusicological research (2007). Accordingly, his methodology was used for the present study to establish the evolution of Kandyan vina in the Sri Lankan music genre.

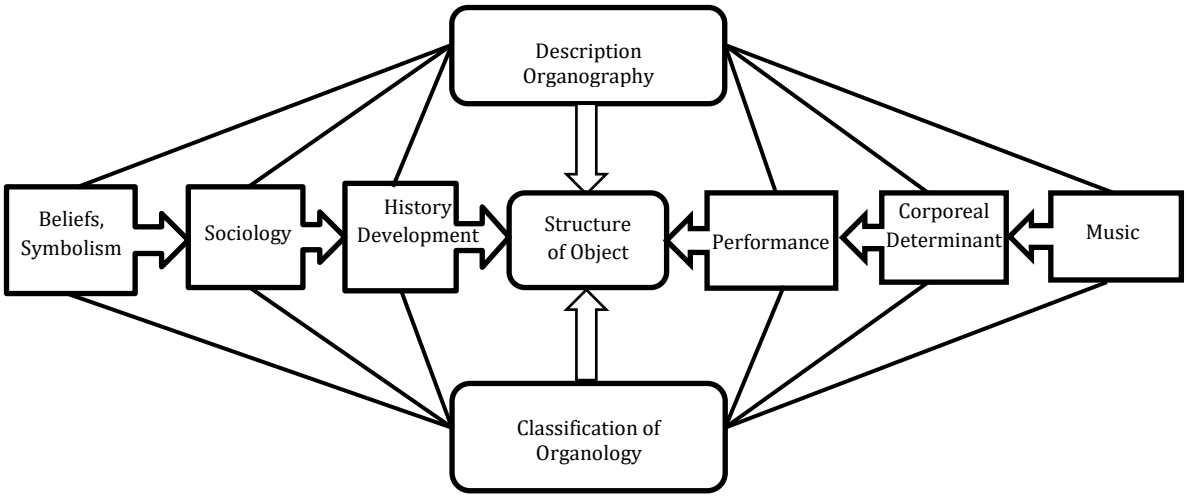

Figure 1. The sociobiological components of musical instrument

3. Results and Discussion

To commence this study, the first stage was to identify the prototype/archetype musical instrument by comparatively studying the cultural peculiarities, forms of musical instruments and their structures, and playing postures. One of the oldest paintings of the Kandyan vina is depicted in the new shrine room of the ancient *Thotagamuwa Rathpath Rajamaha Viharaya* in *Thelwatta* in the Southern Province, Sri Lanka, built in 1805 AD (Manju Sri, 1977) (Figure 02).

Figure 2. A sylph plays a Kandyan vina with divine orchestra.

According to this fresco, the Kandyan vina player holds the instrument horizontally with the resonator against the chest. Moreover, evidence of this playing posture and the Kandyan vina can be found in the Archaeological data (frescoes) in upcountry and low country. They are; *Rathpath Rajamaha Viharaya* (Figure 02), *Mulgirigala Rajamaha Viharaya* mid-19th century (Manju Sri, 1977) (Figure 03), *Kotikagoda Rajamaha Viharaya* 1829 AD (Figure 04), *Jayawardenapura Kotte Rajamaha Viharaya* 1853-1886 AD (Manju Sri, 1977) (Figure 05), *Hanguranketha Potgul Maliga Maha Viharaya* 1888 AD (Vogs, 1990c) (Figure 06), *Suriyagoda Rajamaha Viharaya* 1850 AD (Somathilaka, 2013) (Figure 07) and *Hindagala Rajamaha Viharaya* 1917 AD (Vogs, 1990a) (Figure 08) *Panadura Rankoth Viharaya*, *Dodamduwa Shailabimbarama Maha Viharaya* 1830 AD (Bandaranayaka, 1986), *Mirissa Samudragiri Viharaya* 1880 AD (Vogs, 1990b).

"The Venah, or Venavah, has two strings of different kinds, one made of a species of flax, and the other of horse-hair, which is the material also of the string of the bow, which with bells attached to it, is used as a fiddle-stick. The hollow part of the instrument is half a cocoa-nut shell polished, covered with dried skin of a lizard, and perforated below." (Davy, 1821, p. 242)

Figure 3. A devil woman plays a Kandyan vina with dancers and musicians

Figure 4. A sylph plays a Kandyan vina with divine dancers

Figure 5. A villager plays a Kandyan vina

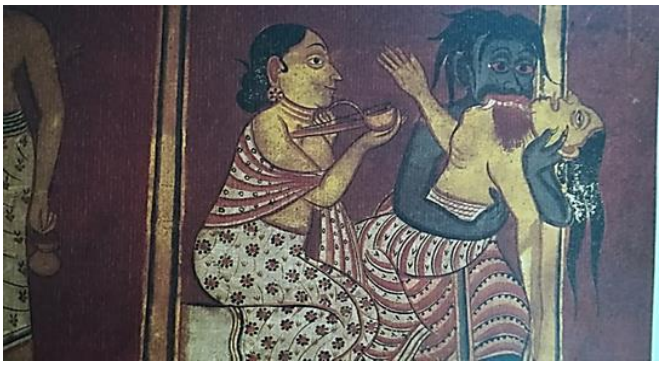

Figure 6. A devil woman plays a Kandyan vina

Figure 7. A ballerina plays a Kandyan vina with dancers.

Figure 8. A god plays a Kandyan vina with divine orchestra

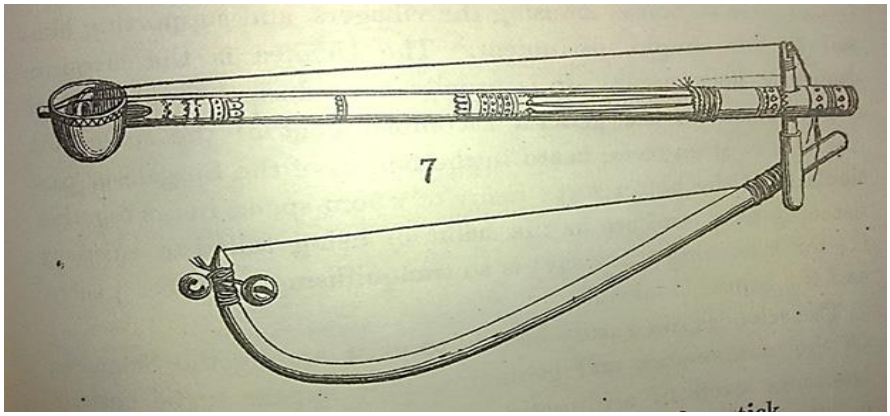

Figure 9. An ancient Kandyan vina drawn by Davy.

"The only stringed instrument that I have seen among the Singhalese is the Vinah, but it is altogether different from the Hindu instrument of that name. The Singhalese Vinah is formed of a neatly carved or polished coco-nut shell (of which about a third part is cut off) and covered with guana skin (Lacerta Iguana); to this is fixed a solid handle of about an inch in diameter, which is generally lackered with various colors, and, on the opposite side of the shell a sort of peg is fixed, to which two strings, one of horse-hair, and the other of fine bow-string hemp (Sensivierra Zeylanica) are attached; these strings are passed over a wooden bridge, upon the centre of the covering, one horizontally, and the other upon an inclined plane, the slope commencing from within three inches of the extremity of the handle, where it is perforated large enough to receive a strong peg of nearly half its circumference, and of about a fourth part of its length having at the point a notch for the reception of the strings, which, by turning the peg, are kept in a state of tension, like the strings of a violin. This instrument is played upon with a bow, convexing largely from about two-thirds of its length from the point, near which a couple of small brass bells, something similar to horse bells, are attached. The only itinerant Vinah player that I recollect, usually took his post at the bridge leading to the Bazaar at Point de Galle, where the poor lepers, who usually congregated there for charity,

appeared the most delighted of his auditors." (Bennett, 1843, p. 103).

Huqin is the generic term for erhu-type instruments which include also the *banhu*, *jinghu*, *sihu*, *leihu*, and *zhuihu* (Huehns, 2002, p. 76). In general, *Huqin* instruments belong to the category of spike fiddle stringed instruments. According to the data gathered in the present study, *Huqin* instruments have a narrow cylindrical, hexagonal or octagonal resonator box, and a tubular rod attached to the top of the resonator. These instruments also have two-to-four strings; and when attaching the main string to the end of the resonator box from the tuning keys on the upper end of the rod of the instrument, the strings are set parallel on the bridge. The instrument is positioned vertically on the player's thigh while playing (Figure 10). The bow used for the instrument is made of horsehair, and the horsehairs are positioned in between the strings of the *Huqin* instrument so that the bow and the strings are inseparable, thus forming a unique feature of *Huqin* string instrument ("Huqin musical instrument", 2012). There is no evidence that this unique feature of traditional *Huqin* instruments was seen in the ancient Kandyan vina.

However, Bennett (1843) has made an important observation as to how the strings of the ancient Kandyan vina had been attached, thus revealing the ancient form of the Kandyan Vina. Accordingly, the two strings of the Kandyan vina are connected to the end of the resonator through the bridge with one string horizontal and the other string inclined. The slope of the inclined string starts between three inches from the upper end of the rod. No such technique has been established in *Huqin* string instruments. Especially, the resonators of *Huqin* string instruments are made of bamboo or timber, but the resonator of Kandyan vina uses a Coconut shell. Davy (1821) drew a sketch of Kandyan vina (Figure 09) and gave detailed description. Bells were depicted on the bow in the image he painted, and it is also clearly stated that they are attached to the bow. According to Bennett (1843), the upper end of the bow has bells. Additionally, these can also be clearly seen in the fresco of the *Jayawardenapura Kotte Rajamaha Viharaya* (Figure 05). According to the available data, the bells are not attached to the bow of the *Huqin* string instrument. Thus, none of the unique features revealed by the sources indicate any similarities between the two instruments. In addition, Kulathilaka (2001; 2014) assumes that the Kandyan vina played according to the verses 32 in the *Paravi sandheshaya* was placed on the lap of the musician during their performances. However, none of the murals depicting the Kandyan vina show postures associated with playing the instrument on the lap. Accordingly, the *Huqin* string instruments do not match the unique features of the Kandyan vina form, structure, and playing posture. Therefore, Kulathilaka's (2014) statement of the origin of the Kandyan vina, which is associated with China, can be negated.

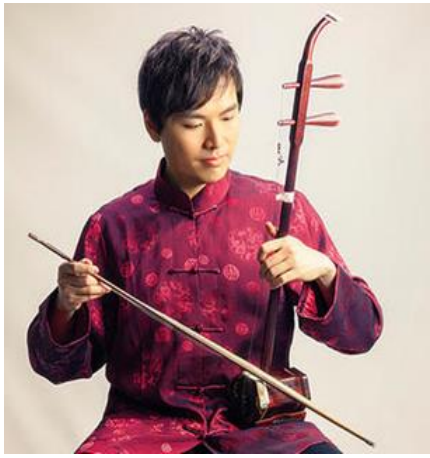

Figure 10. *Erhu* Player

The instruments, which are almost identical in form, structure, and playing posture to the Kandyan vina, are the Coconut shell fiddle instruments of India. The fundamental Coconut shell fiddle instrument in India is the folk string instrument called *Ravanahatta* (Figure 11), used in *Rajasthan*, *Gujarat*, and

the North West regions of India. Its basic form and structure consist of a Coconut-shell (covered with skin), bamboo (using either a solid rod or a cylindrical rod with a hollow interior), one or two pegs, and two strings with the first string from horsehair and the second string from plaited metal. In modern times it has been developed further by inserting three to sixteen sympathetic thin steel strings and pegs (Sadie, 2001b). The bells are attached to the upper end of *Ravanahatta* bow, and the bells chime when the player handles either side of the bow. Furthermore, the *Ravanahatta* player holds the instrument horizontally with the resonator against the chest (Figure 12).

""Fiddle" also refers generically to any bowed, stringed instrument with a neck (bowed lute), especially the violin. If the neck appears to skewer the body, the instrument is called a spike fiddle." ("Fiddle", 2019b)

Ravanahatta instrument was used in South India under the names *Ravanahastha/ Ravanahasthram/ Ravanahastham*. There is evidence that the *Ravanahatta* instrument was popular in *Kerala* and *Tamil Nadu* under the name of *Ravanahastham* in ancient times, though not in present day South India (Sadie, 2001b; Kumara, 2016). Further, the string instruments similar to the form, structural features, and playing posture of the *Ravanahatta* string instrument are identified by different names in different states of India.

"Similar instruments are distributed throughout the subcontinent, including the kokā (Mahrashtra), the tenkaya burra (Andhra), the pena and iha (Manipur and Nagaland), and the vena (or rāvaṇā vīnā, Sri Lanka); in some areas they are designated by the wider generic terms cikārā (Rajasthan) or kēndrā (the majhi kēndrā of Orissa). These are all played in the inverted position, as are the fiddles of the east-central ādivāsī belt (such as bana, banam, kēndrā and kikir), most of which, like the pena and iha, have no tuning-pegs." (Sadie, 2001b, p. 864)

"Similar instruments of eastern and northeastern India made with a coconut resonator and a bamboo neck are called bānam (Orissa), kenrā (Bihar), and pena (Manipur). Cikārā or cakārā are names of both short-necked and spike fiddles in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Kashmir." (Arnold, 2000, p.345)

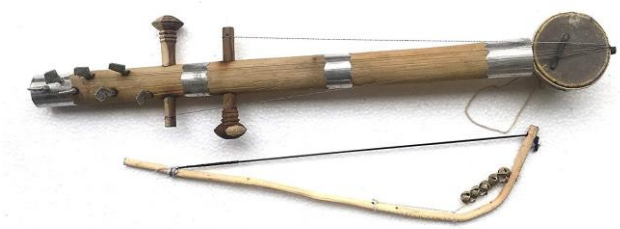

Figure 11. *Ravanahatta* string instrument and the bow

Figure 12. *Ravanahatta* player

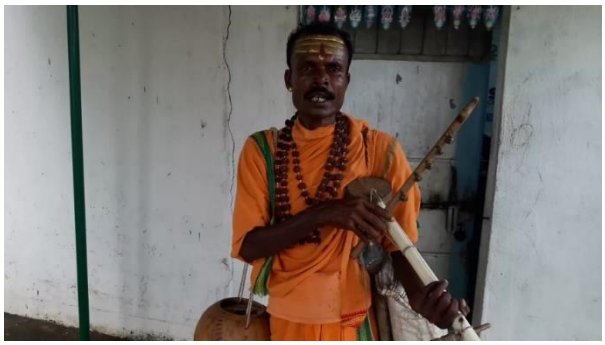

Figure 13. *Kēndrā* string instrument

Figure 14. *Pena* string instrument

Figure 15. *Huka banam* string instrument

Those fiddle instruments have common features such as using a Coconut shell for resonator (covered skin), a solid rod (with or without a hollow interior) or a bamboo rod attached to the resonator, one to four strings, bells attached to the bow (or not). Therefore, the instruments with the above features can be named as Coconut shell fiddle instruments in general. Evidently, the Kandyan vina shares characteristics of the *Ravanahatta* string instrument and other Coconut shell fiddle instruments from India. Though Kulathilaka (2000; 2001) has acknowledged these similarities, without analysing the similarities, it has been assumed that the *Huqin* string instrument is the ancestral musical instrument of the Kandyan vina.

The views of Day (1891), Popley (1921) and Suryasena (2008) in this regard are significant. According to Day (1891) and Popley (1921), the stringed instrument named *Ravanahatta* is related to King *Ravana* who is believed to have ruled Sri Lanka thousands of years ago. They are of the view that it is difficult to say whether the *Vinha* (Kandyan vina), which is used in Sri Lanka today, is the primitive *Ravanahatta* of the present *Ravanahatta* in use in India, but they agree that there is a very strong resemblance between the two. Suryasena (2008) examines the connection between the legend of *Ravana* and the instrument of *Ravanahatta,* and questions whether the present Coconut shell vina is a decadent relic of an ancient instrument used in the past. These researchers point out, directly and indirectly, that the only surviving instrument, the Kandyan Vina, may have been the instrument used by King *Ravana* of Sri Lanka. According to them, the Kandyan vina is the ancestral musical instrument of the *Ravanahatta* string

instrument. However, no archaeological or written evidence has been found to suggest that the Kandyan vina existed in Sri Lanka prior to the Kandy period. Also as pointed out by Kulathilaka (2014), an instrument named *Ravanahatta* is not mentioned in *Thupavansa, Dabadheniasna, Saddharmalankara,* or any other literary work.

3.1 The arrival of the ancestral musical instrument

The second stage of the current study is to look into the ethnological and geographical specifics of the social group in which this ancestral musical instrument is used. According to above findings, the map below shows the major states of India that the Coconut shell fiddle instruments have been spread (Figure 16).

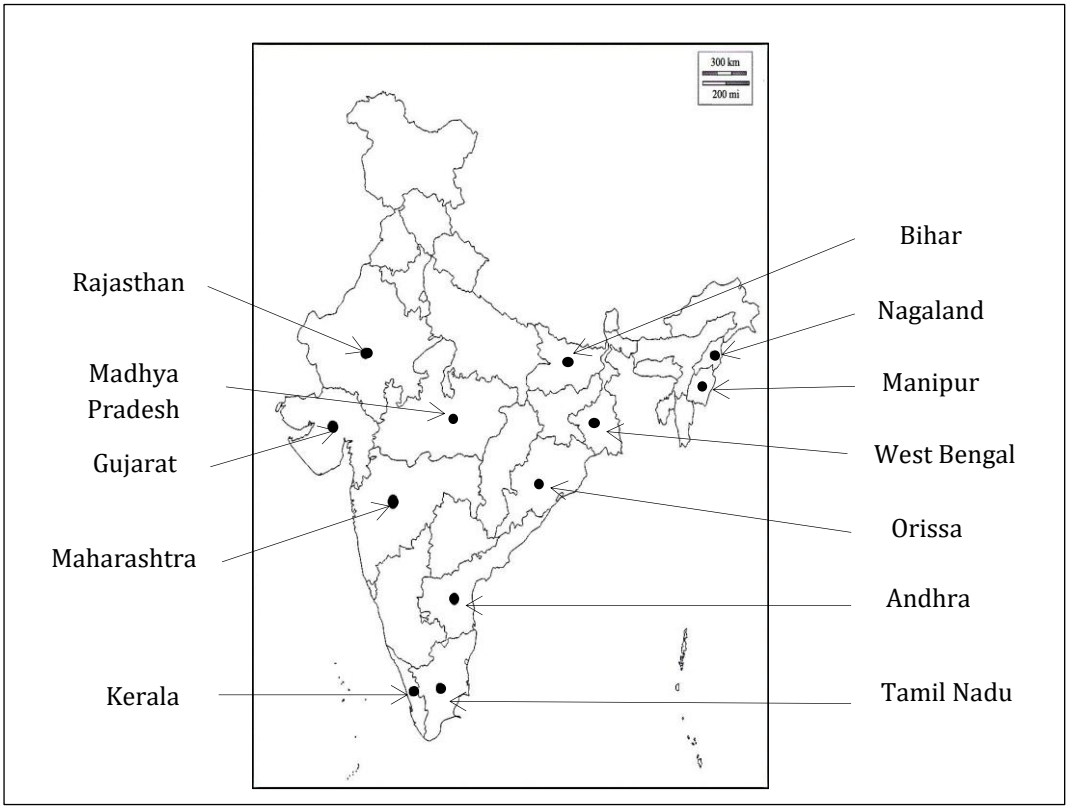

Figure 16. Major states in India where the Coconut shell fiddle instruments have been spread.

All Coconut shell fiddle instruments in India are played by nomadic and semi-nomadic groups such as gypsies, tribes, and beggars, but additionally, the *Pena* string instrument (Figure 14) is used by professional musicians for their traditional music in *Manipur* and *Nagaland*. Therefore, the Coconut shell fiddle instruments may have spread throughout the states in India with nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. In *Rajasthan*, where tribes are the nomads or vagabonds who wear clothes and jewelry in various colours and styles, there are two groups of nomadic tribes or gypsies, namely *Kalbelia* and the *Bhopa*. The *Bhopa* tribe has made singing and playing the *Ravanahatta* their profession, while the

Kalbeliya tribes are practicing to be dancers and snake charmers (Kumara, 2016; Toth, 2016). The *Bhopa* people still play the *Ravanahatta* string instruments as part of their living as tribal groups or gypsies (Kumara, 2016; Sadie, 2001b).

The gypsy community living in present day Sri Lanka is believed to have migrated from *Andhra Pradesh* of India to *Mannar* with white cattle. They were not allowed to return to their land by the ruler of Sri Lanka (Dissanayaka, 2013). A similar statement has been discovered in a discussion with gypsy community by another researcher named Ganga Dissnayaka. Accordingly, she mentions that the recently arrived groups of gypsies have come with white cattle from *Rameshwaram* across Adam's sand dunes (Dissanayaka, 2015). And it has been observed that, the biological and sociological characteristics of the Sri Lankan gypsies are similar to the nomads of South India (Ranasinghe, 2003; Dissanayaka, 2015; Hettiarachchi, 1965).

Historical documents reveal several instances in which ordinary people, aristocrats, and kings of Sri Lanka had paid special attention to white cattle that came from India at different periods. In the Kandyan era, Davy (1821) notes that a person with the designation of "*Hoodooharakpantia Mohandiram Nilame*" was appointed among designations of the Kandyan Royal palace for the care of the King's herd of white cattle. Davy (1821) further states that these cattle were valued because of their colour. In 1592, an independent regime was established in the upcountry of Sri Lanka. During the period of King Weera Paraakrama Narendrasinghe (1707-1739 AD), relations with South India intensified. Thus, it can be concluded that the groups of gypsies with white cattle may have migrated from South India during or after the reign of King Weera Paraakrama Narendrasinghe. Accordingly, the prototype instrument of the Kandyan vina belonging to Coconut shell fiddle instruments of India could have arrived in Sri Lanka from *Andhra Pradesh* or *Tamil Nadu* during this particular period.

3.2 Kandyan vina and the contemporary society

The third stage of the current study is to examine new knowledge by comparing the archaeological and literary data of the musical instrument. Thereby, examining the expansion of the musical instrument in contemporary society, how it has been used, and identifying its development and cultural identity. According to Davy (1821), the Kandyan vina is seldom seen in the hands of anyone other than a disabled or a blind person. Bennett (1843) also notes that the Kandyan vina was used by beggars. However, Mahawalatenna Bandara (1908) states that the Sinhala aristocracy had also used a *Vina* and an *Udakki* drum for ceremonies. Government agents and the elite (*Adhikarams* and *Nilames*) maintained private music groups in their palaces at their own expense (Bandara, 1908). Furthermore, Kandyan aristocrats, great *Adikarams,* trained to play musical instruments, and the aristocratic communities usually used musical instruments for entertainment (Peries, 2001). According to Suryasena (2008), beggars had been playing Coconut shell vina in the village fairs. Nandadeva Wijesekara (1965) states that around 1955, toy model of the Vina instruments were made with strings, oil paper, or even using a piece of leather. Furthermore, Dolapihilla (1956) states that in 1956, the low quality Coconut shell vina instruments were sold on the Colombo pavements.

Nandasena Ratnapala (1996) describes a group of beggars named "*Vadaka*" (Player/Playing) who begs for money while providing entertainment to others by playing an instrument or singing a song. He further states that Coconut shell vina, Mandolin, and Harmonium were used for a particular purpose, and in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s there were schools that instructed beggars in playing these instruments and improving

begging skills (1996). Yet, there is no data stating that the Kandyan State Music Corporation had used the Kandyan vina. The evidence that the Kandyan vina string instrument was not played in religious ceremonies, and was not assigned by the duty system (Raajakaaripangu), is confirmed by the assignee document of the 1870 AD system of duties (Documents of Kandy, Kurunegala, and Kegalle districts; Department of Archive, Kandy branch). According to Davy (1821), except *Vina* and *Udakki,* all traditional musical instruments were used in temples and in processions. Murals in the temples depict Kandyan vina players and events to represent moments of enjoyment associated with music. Artists of these temples have also painted drums such as *Gataberaya, Yak beraya, Daula, Thammattama, Maddalaya* for religious events.

3.2.1 Analysis of the different development features and technologies of the ancient Kandyan vina instruments

The Kandyan vina belongs to the category of Spike lutes (321.31) or Spike bowl lutes (321.311) under the Hornbostel & Sachs classification (1961). The three names *uḍaraṭa vīṇā* (Kandyan vina), *yācaka vīṇā* (beggar's vina), *polkaṭu vīṇā* (Coconut shell vina) have been used according to the locality, social strata, and material used. The relative chronology suggests that the period of origin is around 17th and early 18th centuries (1600 AD-1750 AD).

General Features of Kandyan Vina-

- A Coconut shell for the resonator.
- A skin (Iguana, Snake, Goat or Cow) to cover the resonator.
- Between one and four strings.
- Bridge.
- Pegs to attach the strings and tune the pitch.
- Arch shaped bow.

Davy's (1821) research points out a Kandyan vina that has been developed, at least among the begging community. Davy's (1821) painting of the Kandyan vina depicts a similar design to the *Ravanahatta* string instrument. According to Bennett (1843), a solid rod was used for the Kandyan vina. It is a developed feature. In addition, Bennett (1843) outlines a number of important points regarding string positioning and tuning key. Accordingly, the two strings of the Kandyan vina are connected to the end of the resonator through the bridge with one string horizontal and the other string inclined. The slope of the inclined string starts between three inches from the upper end of the rod. Additionally, the bridge of the Kandyan vina painted by Davy (1821) is also with a sloping angle position on the resonator skin (Figure 09). According to the details and diagrams given by Davy (1821) and Bennett (1843), the ancient Kandyan vina consisted of two strings and one tuning peg. In particular, a horizontal string is attached to the upper end of the tuning peg (key), while the inclined string is bound to the rod by threads. The below sketch can show a hypothesis model regarding how the strings, bridge, and peg were located in the ancient Kandyan vina as Davy and Bennett have pointed out (Figure 17).

Another phase of the investigation is to look in to the development features of the Kandyan vina in the museums through its social divisions. Although museum artefacts cannot reveal the order of constructing features in the Kandyan vina during a certain time frame, it can nevertheless indicate how a unique identity from the ancestral string instrument came into being. Relics of two Coconut shell vina, and a bow used by the *Veddas* before 1982 are preserved at the Anthropology Division of the National Museum (Accession number-2634-3680; 3634 and 3635). The document also states that it was used by children of the *Vedda* community for entertainment. Another Coconut shell vina and a bow used by the *Veddas* in the 1950s are in an exhibition stall of the Anthropology Division of the National

Museum (Accession number- 17347-1796; 51.34.244.1791). This Coconut shell vina is 77 cm long and the bow is 31 cm long. The resonators of all the instruments used among the *Veddas* are covered with cow skins. The rods are made from bamboo or wood, and the Coconut shell is relatively small. All the Coconut shell vinas used by the *Vedda* community mentioned above are similar to the Ravanahatta instrument and similar to the Kandyan vina illustrated in Davy (1821) and Bennett (1843) research.

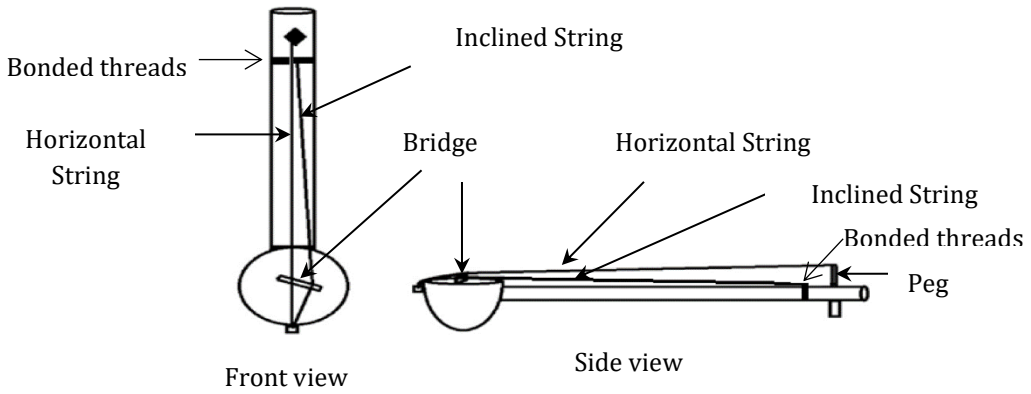

Figure 17. Hypothesized model of the ancient Kandyan vina.

Another Kandyan vina instrument, 55 cm in length, has been in use before 1923 (Accession number- 297-563; 513). This is preserved in the Anthropology Division of the National Museum since it is a rare instrument compared to the Kandyan vina displayed at Kandy Museum. According to officials of the Anthropology division, at present, the resonator (coconut shell) of this rare Kandyan vina has decayed. But the debris of its strings are in good condition. The remaining metal strings confirm that four metal strings and four pegs were used. Comparing the characteristics of the Ravanahatta instrument with the Kandyan vina reported in Davy (1821) and Bennett (1843) research, it can be assumed that this artefact has been developed further by its users. According to folklore, another variant of the Kandyan vina, played by plucking a finger or with the help of a piece of wood, without the aid of a bow, was used among the gypsies and beggars. The Kandyan vina fresco at Mulgirigala temple depicts such an instrument played with the aid of a wooden piece (Figure 03).

"Every musical instrument, needless to say, requires a long period of development-usually trial-and-error experimentation by generations of craftsmen-before arriving at its final perfected form." (Jaynes, 1996, p. 203)

After the arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka in 1505 AD, the performing art *"Baila Kaffrinha"* became popular. The mandolin instrument called the *"Bhandarina"*, the Rebec instrument called the *"Ravikinjiya"* and the guitar called the "*Viyole"*, etc. were introduced to society through *Baila Kaffrinha* (Ariyarathna, 2017). The violin, an evolution of the Rebec instrument, was also popular in

Sri Lanka during British rule. In Bennett's (1843) view, the Kandyan vina is similar to the violin. Suryasena (2008) quotes J. A. Will Perera's view that the Kandyan vina is certainly not the same as Indian Vina, although resembling a European instrument model like the guitar and mandolin. From the above data, it is clear that the ancestors of the Kandyan vina were not European instruments like a guitar or mandolin. But Perera may have made his assumption based on the fact that European instruments have had a direct influence on the development process of the Kandyan vina string instrument.

The three Kandyan vina string instruments being displayed in the Kandy Museum in Sri Lanka (Figure 18), (Figure 19), and in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in United States (Figure 20), (Figure 21). Those instruments have subtly been developed by the European inspiration and belong to the 19th century.

Figure 18. Front view of the Kandyan vina and the bow on display at the Kandy museum

Figure 19. A Side view of the Kandyan vina and the bow on display at the Kandy museum.

Figure 20. Front view of a Kandyan vina and the bow, in the collection of musical instruments, the Boston museum (Accession number- 17.2168a-b).

Figure 21. Front views of a Kandyan vina, in the collection of musical instruments, the Boston museum (Accession number- 17.2169).

Kandyan vina at Kandy Museum,

- Length of the instrument- 53-55 cm
- Length of the bow- 25-27 cm
- Diameter of the Coconut shell- 7-9 cm

Kandyan vina at Boston Museum (Fiddle and Bow, Accession number- 17.2168a-b),

- Length- 64.7 cm
- Width- 13.4 cm
- Depth- 12 cm

Kandyan vina at Boston Museum (Fiddle a, Accession number- 17.2169),

- Length- 87.6 cm
- Width- 16.5 cm
- Depth- 12.3 cm

The following outline (Figure 22) is useful for discussing the above instruments. These instruments consist of three or four metal strings (No. 5) which belong to the European string instruments. The technique of bridge and strings fitting in Kandyan vina which Davy and Bennett mention was not used in the Kandyan vina which is displayed in Kandy and Boston Museums and it is an important developmental feature. The Kandyan vina of Kandy museum has a narrow curved shape bridge inspired by Western string instruments (Rebec, Violin) (No. 4). The

covering of the resonator using animal skin is a distinctive feature of oriental fiddle string instruments, and also a characteristic feature of all Kandyan vina archaeological sources. Coconut shells (resonators) (No. 1) of the Kandyan vina in the Boston and Kandy Museums are larger than the Coconut shells of all the above Kandyan vina museum sources. However, for the resonator, one of Boston Kandyan vina used a gourd shell (Figure 21). For all the instruments displayed in these two museums, tuning pegs and pegs box are designed to be very similar to the tuning pegs and box inherent in European instruments (No. 3). According to Davy and Bennett, the bells are attached to the bows of the instrument, but the bells of the bows displayed in the Kandy and Boston museums have been removed. Instead, the Bow is designed in a semi-curved shape similar to the European string instruments' bow (No. 6). To generate the musical notes from these instruments, one has to place fingers on the strings or fingerboard. The backside of the Kandyan vina rod displayed at the Kandy Museum is well polished and designed in a semi-curved shape to be comfortable for the player's palm (No. 2).

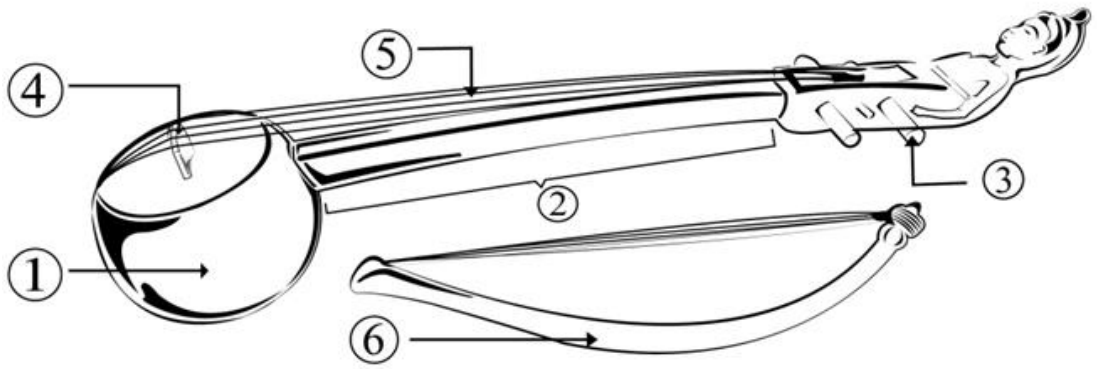

Figure 22. The parts of a European inspired Kandyan vina string instrument.

"There are, say, three peoples: one poor in material culture, but gifted as artists and socially well organized; the second, rich in material civilization, but poor in artistic imagination and social refinement; a third, well organized, but unskilled in handicraft. Which is the most primitive? And even if such an order could be established, would all peoples of the same cultural standard have the same instruments, notwithstanding their different mentality, social organization, and the materials available in their countries? Peoples, like individuals, respond differently to emotion." (Sachs, 1968, pp. 68-69)

In this way, Curt Sachs (1968) points out that the comparison of musical instruments with one another in a progressive or regressive way is difficult. The mentality of the people, the organizational factors that people have acquired in society, the raw material that exists in that territory, and the musical emotional response affect the construction and development of musical instruments. This is applicable to the Kandyan vina as well. Both progressive and regressive tendencies have arisen in the development of the Kandyan vina by various social strata. Archaeological facts, museum documentation, and historical data support the notion that the Kandyan vina is an instrument developed and used by the aristocracy, villagers, beggars, gypsies, and *Veddas* outside the Buddhist Religious Corporation and State Music Corporation.

The Kandyan vina developed within different social strata of Sri Lanka as per existing musical intelligence, available raw materials, and creative methods.

3.2.2 The beliefs and rituals associated with the ancient Kandyan vina

The top of the Kandyan vina instrument rod on display at the Kandy Museum (Figure 23) (Figure 24) has a three-dimensional figure (Totem) depicting a god. A club, sword or torch is in the right hand of the figure (Figure 23) and in the left hand the figure is holding a fly whisk (*cāmaraya*) (Figure 24). Especially, the figure's ''Headdress and Fly whisk'' are ornaments that belong only to Kings and Gods (Kumaraswamy, 1962). On either side of the main entrance to temples there are statues of divine guards holding such swords or clubs. They are called *doraṭu pālaka* (gatekeeper) (Kumaraswamy, 1962). The ''Torch'' is often seen among minor deities (*alpēccha devivaru*). In addition to the position of gatekeeper at the temple entrance, there are also ''Divine statues of fly whisk bearers (*cāmaradhārī*)'', which show an attendant position, in the Shrine room (Atabage, 1997). Thus, the maker of the Kandyan vina instrument displayed at the Kandy Museum has attempted to attribute a divine meaning to the Kandyan vina instrument under the terms of Sri Lankan cultural symbols.

Figure 23. Front view of the totem on Kandyan vina at the Kandy museum

Figure 24. A side view of the totem on Kandyan vina at the Kandy museum

The Kandyan vina instrument, popular with the low country society under the name of *Polkatu Vina* (Coconut-shell vina), is used symbolically for the *viṇā peḷapāli* (Vina

Parade), performed at the *doḷos peḷapāli* (twelve parade) of the Low Country *Gammaḍu śāntikarma* (Obeysekara, 1984). During the *Gammaḍu śāntikarma*, offerings are made to the three main deities, ''*pattini, devol* and *vāhala*''. Furthermore, a group of deities named the Twelve Gods are also worshiped at the *Gammaḍu śāntikarma*. Twelve Parades are held for these twelve Gods and twelve objects are offered to these twelve Gods (Kariyawasam, 1990). In one of the Parades, the Coconut shell vina and their sound are made as an offering.

Thus, the low country communities have resorted to associating a divine meaning to this instrument by symbolizing the worshiping and communication with deities. It should be noted that the Coconut shell vina does not represent the Indian Vina string instrument during the Vina Parade (Kariyawasam, 1990). Even today, the present generation continues to use the coconut-shell vina for the vina parade in *Gammaḍu śāntikarma*.

Furthermore, the Coconut shell vina was used for the *Maṁgara Nāṭyaya Peḷapāliya* which belonged to the *''Mahasohon samayama''*. However, today, a replica of a Coconut shell vina made from banana leaves is used instead (Kottagoda, 2013). Researchers thus far quoted in the current research are of the view that the Kandyan vina is a simple instrument. However, the study of the archaeological sources confirms that the developments made to the ancestral instrument by different social strata are not simple.

The very existence of any cultural object depends on social acceptance, practice, and its appropriation to the social class. Thus, the Kandyan vina instrument too has evolved over time through contribution of the aristocracy, villagers, beggars, *Veddas*, and gypsy people; giving birth to the Kandyan vina as the unique indigenous instrument with independent features.

3.3 Modifying the ancient Kandyan vina for present usage

For the purpose of the current research, a modern Kandyan vina is constructed using the characteristics of the ancient Kandyan vina instruments mentioned above and modified with the help of modern technology, methods and theories of modern music. The three Kandyan vina instruments preserved in the Kandy (Figure 18) (Figure 19) and Boston (Figure 20) (Figure 21) Museums are at the peak of development trends among the Kandyan vina instruments. As mentioned above, the Violin and Rebec string instruments have primarily inspired the development process of Kandyan vina. Thus, the modern Kandyan vina is constructed based on the Kandy and Boston Kandyan vina artefacts and Violin. All practical technical assistance in constructing this Kandyan vina was obtained from a technician, named M. H Sugathapala who has over thirty years of experience in constructing violin instruments and repairing various stringed instruments.

The present modification is constructed using an ebony wood for the basic body, a Coconut shell for the resonator and a goat skin to cover the resonator. The strings in the violin or Rebec instruments were used as the strings for the Kandy and Boston instruments. Therefore, the four main strings of the violin were used for this modification. Historical artefacts in Kandy and Boston museums reveal that the bridge and pegs were closely similar to the violin model. However the elements of the tailpiece, end button, and fingerboard were not systematical in the ancient Kandyan vina, instead the elements of the violin have been applied to this modern Kandyan vina. In addition, the god's figure on the Kandyan vina of the Kandy Museum and that cultural face has been embossed to this modern Kandyan vina. In the earliest evidence of the Kandyan vina, the playing posture as well as the method of generating musical notes is similar

to that of the violin. For this reason, the present modification targets Sri Lankan violinists. Their strings can be tuned from the violin tuning techniques of North Indian classical music and Sri Lankan applied music under the Equal Temperament system.

Adjustable pitches-
North Indian tunes- G^3 C^4 G^4 C^5
Sri Lankan applied music tunes- G^3 C^4 G^4 D^5

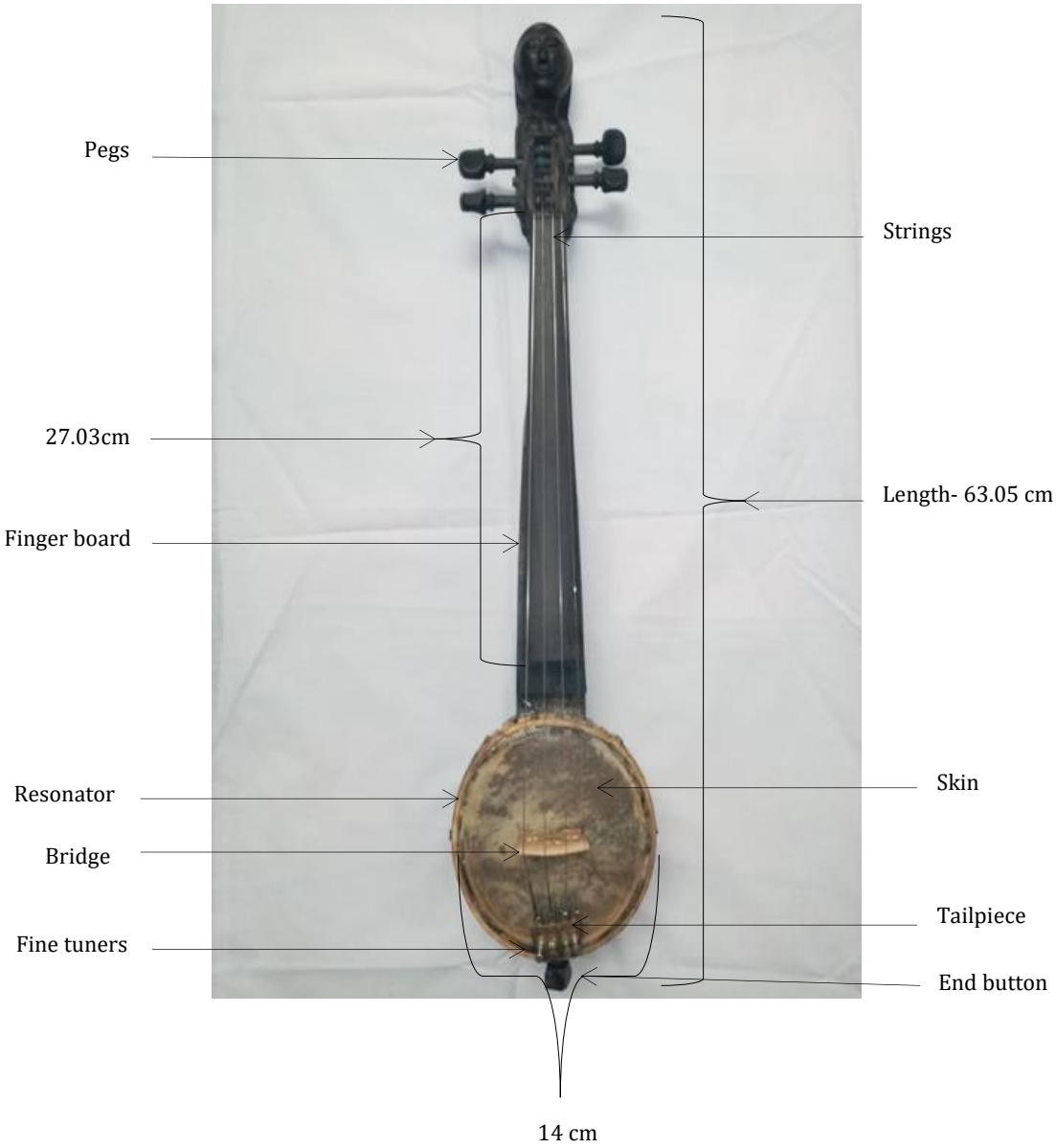

Figure 25. The dimensions and the parts of modified Kandyan vina

Figure 26. Front view of the modern Kandyan Vina

Figure 27. A side view of the modern Kandyan Vina

Figure 28. A back side view of the modern Kandyan Vina.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the data gathered through the first stage of the current research, the Kandyan vina was found to be extremely similar to the cultural peculiarities, inherent form, structure, and playing posture of the Coconut shell fiddle instruments in India. The Coconut shell fiddle instruments may have spread throughout states in India with nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. Moreover, all Coconut shell fiddle instruments of India are similar to the Ravanahatta string instrument. Thus it can be presumed that the prototype musical instrument of the Kandyan vina belongs to Coconut shell fiddle instruments in India. However, the playing posture, form, and structure of the Kandyan vina bear no resemblance to the Huqin stringed instruments. Thus, C de S Kulathika's statement that the origin of the Kandyan vina is associated with China can be negated. No archaeological or literary data has been found through this research to prove that the Kandyan vina was used before the Kandy period. The second stage of the current research indicates that the prototype of Kandyan vina came with the South Indian gypsies who migrated to Sri Lanka during the Kandy period of 1600-1750 AD from Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu. The third stage of the current research then examined how the ancestral musical instrument had developed until 1980-1990 AD, and revealed that its development took place based on the inspiration of the Western musical instruments and musical intelligence, available material, creative methods inherent in the aristocratic, villagers, beggars, Veddas, and gypsy communities; communities belonging to the ordinary society that are outside of Buddhist Religious Corporation and State Music Corporation in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the current research has examined the development of the Kandyan vina over a period of three hundred fifty years, thus highlighting that Kandyan vina originated as a unique indigenous instrument with independent features. The most prominent Kandyan vina instruments have been preserved in the Boston Museum in the United States and Kandy Museum in Sri Lanka.

Finally, the result of the above three stages was used to modify and construct a modern Kandyan vina that can be utilized in present day musical events. This modern instrument can be used with Sri Lankan applied music and North Indian music by tuning it under the Equal Temperament system. Currently, no indigenous string instrument has been identified and used in Sri Lanka before this research re-introduced an indigenous string instrument. Accordingly, the data revealed from the research, and the modern Kandyan vina instrument can fulfill the needs of a Sri Lankan indigenous string instrument.

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