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An Ethnological Study of Dambana Veddas and Pandiggama Vanni Veddas

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Background: The Vedda tradition, Sinhala, and Tamil traditions can be observed in Vanni Vedda villages, as they are located in Nuwara Kalaviya. Pandiggama Vanni Vedda village is located in the Anuradhapura district. In this study, the Dambana Vedda culture is regarded as the ideological representation of the traditional Vedda way of life. By positioning Dambana as a cultural benchmark, the research systematically compares the cultural traits of the Pandiggama Vanni Vedda community with those of Dambana.

Objective: The research objective is to conduct an ethnological study of the Dambana Veddas and Pandiggama Vanni Veddas. The research problem is whether the Pandiggama Vanni Veddas can be identified as a Vedda group belonging to a sub-Vedda culture in Sri Lanka.

Methods: Two field methods were employed: participatory observation and interviews, including focus group interviews.

Results: Interviews were conducted with 30 people in Dambana and Pandiggama. The ritual of "Kande Yaka" is a unique ritual of the Dambana Veddas. A similar ritual can be seen among the Pandiggama Vanni Veddas. That is the ritual of "giving alms to the Vedda mountain" (Vedda Kandata Dan Deema), where offerings are made to honour deceased relatives, as similarly practiced in Dambana. Vedda Mountain is unique because hunting activities have been practiced since ancient times. Unique rituals to the Pandiggama, "Deviyan mayam weema" and "Pideni Shanthiya" are not found in the Dambana. There are several linguistic similarities between the Dambana and Pandiggama languages. Specifically, such similarities can be seen in the terms used for animals. On the other hand, as the Nuwara Kalaviya language has influenced the Pandiggama language, it shows specific differences from Dambana.

Conclusion: Due to the ecological background and location of Pandiggama, the unique features of its rituals, language, and social aspects are evident. Therefore, Pandiggama Vanni Veddas can be identified as a sub-Vedda culture of the island.

Keywords: Dambana, Ethnology, Pandiggama Culture