

Re-reading Gananaths Obeyesekere's

View of the Vedda people

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Abstract

This paper examines Gananath Obeyesekere's study of the Vedda people. Obeyesekere is one of the most prominent anthropologists to have studied the Vedda, with a particular focus on their identity. His writings are compared with those of other major researchers and writers on the Vedda, including C. G. Seligman (1873–1940), Brenda Seligman (1873–1940), R. L. Spittel (1881–1969), and Nandadeva Wijesekera (1909–1999). The methodology employed is partly hermeneutic and partly based on a comparative reading of texts. The major works by Gananath Obeyesekere analyzed in this study include *Where Have All the Veddas Gone?* (2002) and *Colonial Histories*

and Vedda Primitivism: An Unorthodox Reading of Kandy Period Texts (2002). These are compared with selected writings that address similar themes. The approach is informed by a hermeneutic-theoretical framework, with special emphasis on the meanings of the texts. Central to Obeyesekere's argument is the concept of the "Show Vedda," which is critically re-examined in this paper.

Keywords: Gannath Obeyesekere, Nandadwawa Wijesekra, Seligman, R.L. Spittle, The Vedda people.

Introduction

As historians have pointed out, for the first time in Ceylon, the educated middle class emerged under the Colebrook reform in 1833 (Mendis, 1995, 74-99). The Colebrook report mentioned the clear dividing line between the past and present of Ceylon (Mendis, 1995: 74). The changes made to the middle class in the country gave birth to colonial English literature. K.M. de Silva has examined the nature of the influence of the reforms on socio-cultural and

economic backgrounds (Silva, 2005: 338-359). The extended examination of his works has depicted a wider picture of the rise of the middle class in the 19th century with new educational institutions (Silva,2005:411-446). The prevailing middle class came to the stage with a strong Western influence, with the empowerment of English knowledge. Gooneratne, who made her observations on English education after the 1833 reform, has discussed how the education system attempted to enrich the English proficiency among the students at that time. She says that “Comments on the standards of English teaching in the schools of the period need to be weighed carefully for the reason that much of the evidence lies in reports of verbal tests put to students by visitors and examiners. George Pettitt reported in 1850, for example, that the students at Cotta ‘read and wrote English remarkably well, and speak it idiomatically (Gooneratne, 1968:23). Further, Goonaratne has revealed how the English schools and texts for the English students were

prepared. “The two most complete lists of subjects and textbooks studied in the English schools relate to the practice of the Colombo Academy and to Trinity College, Kandy, in the 60s. They may, of course, be regarded as applying generally to the whole of the later period under discussion; and evidence has been drawn from letters and other sources that establishes the fact that some, at least, of the texts listed here were continually used throughout the period (Gooneratne,1968:29). The public of English readers and writers was born in that educational process. A few of them were cultivated as researchers or writers with a research perspective. They were influenced by colonial intellectual discourse. It aimed to study the rural and forest people with an understanding of their social and cultural contexts. The thought of that study came from the contemporary Western intellectual discourse. The 19th century and the early part of the 20th century were the periods of anthropology, the subject paid attention to primitive societies. The anthropological discourse in

Western society was able to apply its knowledge to vast areas. Edmund Leach has brought the nature and the background of the subject as below.

“The gentlemen scholars of Western Europe and the United States who turned out to be the founding fathers of modern anthropology began to see themselves as a distinct academic species sometime around 1840. Even at that date, their interests were very diverse. We can distinguish four major types anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists, and philologists (Leach, 1982:15).”

As pointed out by Leach the studies under the subject of modern anthropology began in 1840. It had four major types. The studies of the Vedda in Ceylon, one of which this type. The anthropological studies were pursuing most parts of the world. The scholars who participated in the subject were facilitated to journey to the far distant areas of their motherlands. The colonial governments provided the funds for them. On the other hand, at that time,

some civil servants and government officers had a keen interest in those studies. The studies of the Vedda were a major subject in that intellectual discourse. Physical anthropologists and cultural anthropologists are interested in them. Wijesekera summarized the studies as,

The Veddas have formed a subject of continuous study by anthropologists, sociologists, and several other specialists. These studies, no doubt, formed the basis of ethnic findings of a later day. Among the most notable scholars who made special contributions to the understanding of the Vedda society and the evaluation of their culture is Virchow (1881), the Sarasin brothers (1886), and Seligmanns (1911). In more recent years, Dr. R. L. Spittle has been the best exponent of Vedda lore which he interpreted and presented in the form of several interesting novels having the romantic jungles of Ceylon as the background (Wijesekera, 1964:xiii)."

The above paragraph correctly depicts the nature of the studies and their orientations. It provides a broader vision

for the subject areas. All aspects and ways of the Veddas have been included in it. The twentieth-century intellectual discourse pays special attention to the Vedda people. The researchers have attempted to identify and examine the differences between the concepts “civilized” and “Savage” with special attention to the tribal people outside of Europe. The Vedda people have been introduced as,

“One of the least-known peoples in the literature of anthropology. As a “savage race” of “primitive” hunters and gatherers living close to the civilized Sinhalese but remaining distinct from them” (Brow, 2011:5).

The extract part says that the anthropologists who came to Ceylon, wanted to conceptualize the Vadda in a broader intellectual sense. Here, Brow stresses that the Vedda are very close to the Sinhalese people; however, they are trying to protect the distance that is making those differences. Obeyesekere ‘s reading of the Vedda questions the differences with special reference to the

concept “Show Vadda”. The idea of the “Show Vadda” “was made by tracing the literature on the Vedda in the early twentieth century. His major argument is that “the constructed wild man” by the researchers and writers pretends to be the authentic Vedda. According to him, the authentic Vedda have never been in the country, and the concept of authenticity is only “constructed “by the people who desire the authenticity of Vedda. Obeyesekere has explored his views as follows “Many Europeans wanted to see the Vadda as a specimen of the wild-man, or a copy of the primitive Australian aborigine, from the comfort of the Government rest (Guest) House, because it was widely believed, on the flimsiest evidence, that the Vaddas were genetically and physiologically related to the Australian aborigines as were indeed other primitive peoples of India to a lesser degree (Obeyesekere, 2022:23-24). It remarks that he attempted to demonstrate that the authenticity comes from the European reading of Vadda. The concept of “Wild Man” or “Primitive Australian

Aborigine” has been applied to understand the Ceylon or Sri Lankan Vedda, which contributed to that authenticity. Such a kind of reading gives birth to the “Show Vedda”. The word “Show Vedda” means the people (mostly the people who have been related to Vedda or one of them) are pretending to be authentic Veddas in their physical appearance for the outsiders of the Vedda’s regions. These people are attempting to earn money or valuable goods from the visitors who are eager to see an authentic Vedda in remote areas. To support his argument, Obeyesekere has questioned the previous readings of the Vedda and emphasized that they were part of a fictional discourse. I can agree with part of his argument and disagree with part. To build my argument, I use the literature on the Vedda in comparing the readings of Obeyesekere.

Methodology

For this research, a hermeneutic theoretical approach was used to reveal the meanings of texts through comparison.

The hermeneutics has come from the phenomenological philosophical school. It appeared as an ideological reaction to the positivistic school. As Uyangoda has explored “Phenomenology was also the first systematic attempt to propose a philosophical and methodological alternative to positivism” (Uyangoda, 2017:187). This movement has given birth to two other movements in 20th century social science discourse. These have been demonstrated as follows: “Phenomenology also inspired two other movements in the 20th-century social sciences, hermeneutics and ethnomethodology” (Uyangoda, 2017, 188). Further, he has elaborated on hermeneutics as follows: “As a new discipline, it should provide philosophical and methodological foundations for all disciplines that focus on understanding the art, action, and writings of humans (Uyangoda,2017,156). According to that, the approach is the most appropriate one for comparing the selected texts of anthropology, because the anthropological writings are bound by the human being.

They are part of cultural studies. Further, they are very close to literary and language studies. To reveal the meanings of the selected people is the major objective of the subject. The latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were the periods that created a way to investigate the outside people of civilization with immense curiosity. The intellectual desire for that purpose was prevailing all over the world. It was related to the political, cultural, and social projects of the British Empire. As Ranjani Obeyesekere discussed in her article “The Bilingual Intelligentsia: Their contribution to the intellectual life of Sri Lanka in the twentieth century”, the rise of nationalism and political independence took place in colonial states, and the discourses that were regarding those activities were documented by the sociologists and historians (Obeyesekere, 1984:73). The anthropological discourse was another part of that discourse. The nature of the latter has been scrutinized by Adam Kuper in his work “Anthropology and Anthropologists” in 1983.

He has pointed out that the discourse was dominated by the theories like functionalism and evolutionism (Kuper,1983:16-30). Those theoretical approaches were questioned. And new theories were introduced. The object of the new discourse is to reveal the meanings of the texts as a part of the discourse. The central part of the new discourse is to examine the “Constructed objects” in every subject. As part of the new discourse, “wild man” and “Show Vadde” are constructed concepts. However, I attempt to argue that these concepts are not merely constructed ones, for Obeyesekere. That is why I have selected the hermeneutic approach here.

Discussion

Many discussions on the Vedda in the present have questioned and sarcastically criticized the documents written about the Vedda people in the colonial period. Those who have expressed this view argue that the writers of that period created a mysterious discourse on the people, which has been maintained for years by other

scholars. Gananath Obeyesekere, has paid major attention to the concept of “wild man” and how it has been constructed in relation to the Vedda people. His works on the Vedda do not demonstrate the information and lifestyles of the people. They strongly pay attention to the concept of “Vedda’. They try to interpret the concept of the Vedda in contrast to the previous studies such as those by Seligman and other selected scholars. Obeyesekere has pointed out a few observations in his research. The major one of his is “Are there true Veddas in history or has the concept of Vadi been constructed by scholars and others who have written about the people?” Further, he has raised questions regarding Vadda's purified identity and the reasons behind that identity. According to Obeyesekere, the concept of Vedda has been constructed following the concept of the wild man in Western society since the 17th century. The creators of the concept “Wild Man” were people who sailed to non-Western countries. Robert Knox (1641-1720) who wrote his popular book, A Historical

Relation of Ceylon (1681) after having spent 19 years in the Kandyan kingdom in Ceylon under the dictatorship of Rajasinghe 11 (1629-1687). Knox mentions that he saw Veddas people on his return from the kingdom and describes their physical features and characteristics. In referring to that work Obeyesekere has argued that Knox tried to recreate the Western concept of wild man in his book. He states that Knox made the concept of Vedda one kind of wild man, following the concept in Western society.

The intervention of Knox regarding Vedda had been developed by others who wrote about Vedda for years. Those writings have created the modern discourse on Vedda. Further, Obeyesekere has shown that the concept of Vedda as similar to the wild man is different from the authentic nature of Vedda. To develop his thesis, Obeyesekere has referred to the oriental sources from Sinhala and Pali in addition to his long-time fieldwork “*Vadi Rata*” (The Country of Veddas) in the Uva and

Eastern provinces. Further, he has presented the *Sinhala Kadayim Poth* (The Sinhalese boundaries books) to argue that the Vedda were part of the elite in the medieval period in the Sinhala kingdom (Obeyesekere,2022). The information on close relationships between the Sinhala kings and the Vedda people was discussed by referring to the intermediate books. Obeyesekere expresses that he wants to bring a new methodology by introducing intermediate texts as major sources to bring about historical relationships between the Vedda and Sinhala kings.

“The historical methodology I adopt is as follows. It is impossible to deal with the long historical run of the Vedda presence in Sri Lanka without understanding their presence in more recent times. Thus I will focus on the Kandy period literature, particularly between the late 16th and the early 19th centuries, a period for which we have reasonable historical records” (Obeyesekere,1922: 26-27).

Obeyesekere is reinterpreting the intermediate texts to determine the identity of Vedda's people after the 16th century. His methodology as he mentioned regarding the Vedda's history is reinterpreting the texts that have been considered not to be included in the classical Sinhalese literature. He has emphasized that the works were not highly Sinhala style by reputed authors and they were written by common people. The works have recorded that the Veddas during this period played prominent roles among the Kandyan elite and the people built new communities with their intervention. The kings supported them. They were respected for their authentic obedience to the country and the kings. By referring to those texts, Obeyesekere has pointed out that the surnames of the people are similar to those of the present Kandyan elite, such as "*Herath Mudiyansele*", and other surnames that are being used by the Kandyan elites. In addition to those intermediate texts, Obeyesekere has paid attention to his fieldwork to find some significant things in the

present lifestyle of Veddas. His article titled “Colonial Histories and Vedda Primitivism: An Unorthodox Reading of Kandy Period Texts” says that his interpretation of the concept of “Wild Man” follows historical sources from both the East and the West. Another of his attempts regarding the Vedda people is “Where have all the Veddas gone?” The article by Obeyesekere discusses the Vedda’s history and present referring to the *Mahiyangana Vadi Perahara* (the procession of Mahiyanganaya, included the Vedda people and their rituals), the scattering of the people under colonial and post-colonial development projects and their fate in modernization. All the above discussions by Obeyesekere focus on the central concepts of the theme. This is the “Vedda people is a constructed concept by academics and various writers who have written about them.

To make the argument he always extracts and mentions the work of Rober Knox (I have earlier mentioned in this section of the article) who reported that he saw wild men

in his escape from the Kandyan kingdom to Batticaloa via Anuradhapura through the thick forest area. Spittle mentions

“Ceylon being but a small island, the loneliest spot in it is no more than ten or fifteen miles away from some jungle village condition of things not adapted to the perpetuation of wild forest tribes. Propinquity to Sinhalese and Tamil habitations inevitably leads to miscegenation, that paramount factor in the obliteration of race. The Vedda woman who weds the Sinhalese chena dweller and the Vedda man who takes to himself a Sinhalese or Tamil wife, sooner or later, are weaned from their wandering ways”.

“It is then not to be wondered at that there are no pure Veddas in Ceylon. Many jungle communities called Vedda are only in name: in clothing, habits, and appearance they are Sinhalese or Tamil” (Spittle, 2001:69).

Obeyesekere (2022:13-25) frequently used the term “Wild Man” in the postmodern sense and attempted to bring the idea that the Vedda, the people in Ceylon, and Sri Lanka constructed wild identities in long-term historical intellectual discourse. In many paragraphs of his writings on the Veddas, he has redescribed the same idea regarding the identity of the wild man. His interest in the discussion has been exceeded by some prominent and remarkable pieces of evidence that have been earned through hard work by others. Making decisive remarks through statistical documents, he has revealed that in the present reality of the Vedda people, there are no proper, correct, and ideal criteria to identify the people. Further, he says that the correct path for this identification is that someone who likes to name themselves as Vedda who should be counted as Vedda. Obeyesekere has emphasized this fact as the original finding of his research. But such cases were earlier discussed by other researchers like Nandadeva Wijesekera. He raised that point in 1964 as follows. Wijesekera mentioned

“Whoever described himself as a Vedda, if he or she thought fit to do so, was returned as such. This appeared fairly satisfactory for the enumerators being generally the headmen in charge of the hamlets, who knew every one personally. The possibility of a false return, therefore, was not likely to occur frequently. The figures can be considered genuine from the Census point of view, but ethnographically the descriptions would be too vague and racially cannot be accepted as several poor peasants living in these remote areas might be added to the list” (Wijesekera, 1964: 49).

That discussion says that Wijesekera had developed an idea based on his empirical knowledge. He referred to the census and the procedure that was used to collect the data of the Vedda. What time do the collectors consider the Vadi identity in examining the ethnographical approach? And what kind of people were contributing to data collection? Certainly, the thought of the data collection was examined by Wijesekera.

The concept of the Wild Man and the literary discourse that has been developed with it is not a one-dimensional approach. It can be analyzed by tracing its history in Ceylon and outside of Ceylon. It has covered a few subject areas. History, anthropology, and literature are major disciplines among them. The conceptual similarities between the plot of *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East Indies* by Robert Knox and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) have been discussed. For example, in the discussion on *The Village in the Jungle* (1911), Wilfrid Jayasuriya has tried to highlight identify the similarities in a broader vision. The novel “*The Village in the Jungle*” is referred to as “it” below.

“It was addressed mainly to the native English-speaking audience in Britain and the colonies, who were the readers of colonial literature from *Robinson Crusoe* onwards. One of the earliest examples of this type of literature appeared in the seventeenth century when Robert Knox,

who had been a prisoner in the interior Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy, when the Dutch were ruling the west coast of Ceylon, published *A Historical Relation of Ceylon*. The book contained a narrative of his captivity and escape, as well as his observations, based on a stay of almost two decades, on the society, economy, and politics of the people. This account is the most authentic account available of Sinhalese feudal society in decay. It is an anthropological work; Knox's "main purpose was to recount the strangeness of his adventures and to give testimony of God's goodness to him" (Jayasuriya, 1994: 13-14).

The English readers who were reading the novel "The Village in the Jungle", were introduced to a narrative that the next generation had read, such as fiction like *Robinson Crusoe*. The origin of such kind of fiction based on colonial societies is rooted in the work of Robert Knox. While the critic is exploring the true nature of Knox's work, he is comparing the texts *Robinson Crusoe*, A

Historical Relation of Ceylon, and The Village in the Jungle. The critic wants to bring up the idea that the model of escaping Robert Knox influenced Robinson Crusoe. Further he remarks Knox's work is a very authentic contribution to reading the feudal society and that it has immense anthropological values of the society. However, Obeyesekere has used that discourse to build the argument that the concept of the Wild Man originated from that discourse, and the scholars who wrote about the Vedda, enlarged it to provide an interpretation of the Vedda's identity. As Obeyesekere reads the concept, the wild man of Knox, was exaggerated with rhetoric by some scholars, like Richard Bernheimer and Hayden White in their works. One of the works is "Wild Men in the Middle Ages" (1952) written by Richard Bernheimer (1907-1958), who significantly created the wild man concept in European thought. This says that the idea was made as a European one and subsequently used by writers and scholars to identify the Vedda.

This is partly true and partly false because the discourse had been developed with a definite historical background. The background had its features. The features attributed to the discourse make the meanings of that discourse. The studies of the Veddas were initiated by 19th-century European scholars. Dharmadasa has shown that anthropological views of the Veddas were earlier introduced as descendants of the late Stone Age cave dwellers. The pioneers of those studies were Sarassins and Seligmanns (Dharmadasa, 1990: 34). As he has correctly mentioned “The Veddas” of Seligmann can be considered the most comprehensive and analytical work published after dedicated fieldwork in the Eastern and Uva provinces of Ceylon. The introduction of the work emphasizes the ambition of the research and why they selected the Vedda people for their studies. It says on the four families of pure Vedda who met at the research. They defined “*Pure Vedda*” as the Vadi people who are still not involved in farming or other modern activities and depend on hunting

and gathering. According to Seligman's observations, the Veddas in *Danigala* who had come to farming and sometimes appeared as show Veddas for visitors, still are Vedda people who maintain some wild heritage (Seligman, 1911, Introduction). The concept of "Show Vedda" has been continuing for years. It has been made by the tourist agents or other villagers who led for both the Vedda and the visitors. This was a real part of the Vedda people, as they were unable to live without such kind of support of leading. The hunting and gathering were not always successful at every time of year, and there was a shortage of food and other essential goods. Most of them were fear and shy to move with villages and discuss those matters. However, selected members of the people were moving to the village and people started various relationships. Spittle paid his attention to such kind of cases by earning his experiences during his journey to the remote areas of Ceylon.

Savage Sanctuary (1941), is fiction but has been writ-

ten based on a true character, Wannakuge Tissahamy. Spittle mentioned in its forward that the writing of Professor A.S.Barnes to him inspired him to write fiction about the Vedda people. The anthropological treatise a few years ago dissected and dealt separately with the language, hunting, customs, etc... of such primitive races as the Veddas. This is entirely scientific, but it does not show us the life of the Vedda-what time Mrs.Vedda wakes up in the morning, if she washes herself or not, what she has for breakfast, when Mr.Vedda starts for business, and what he does and thinks. I sincerely hope you will give us as nearly as you can a “whole” view of Vedda life, as I am sure it will be a most valuable and entrancing story” (Spittle, 2000: forward, not mentioned page number). This indicates Barnes’s theoretical approach to this matter. It has been stressed as “the entirely scientific studies have not represented the authentic life of the Vedda and Spittle can write on the whole view of Vedda life. This further says that the scientific and authentic were

considered separate concepts. Barns also said that the scientific discourse in those days (sometimes even in the present) did not include all aspects and experiences of a selected field or population. Spittle was also a kind of field worker and he attempted to find the information about the Vedda by searching remote areas with dedicated long-term journeys. The best example of this is how he met the Vedda for the first time at the boundary between the Uva and the Eastern provinces. This is remarked as one incident in the fiction, “Savage Sanctuary”. However, it can be identified as a part of the experience in Spittle’s field journey. The chapter named “A seeker of Veddas” in that fiction says how Spittle and his friend went to find the *Vadi* people amidst immense disturbances. After reading the research of Seligman, Spittle voyaged from Trincomalee to Polonnaruwa via the Mahawali River to find the Veddas. After that, both of them spent a few days at Galmada, the village in the forest, to get some information on the Veddas. Spittle reported his experiences as follows:

They reached Nuwaragala only to find no Veddass there. Nor did they meet them in the hills of Sittala Wanniya, as Seligman had done. From a Sinhalese elder who lived near the rock, they learned that the Veddass of the place had died out or scattered long ago (Spittle, 2000: 79). Then they (in this context they mean “Spittle” and his friend) went to Bingoda and Galmada in search of the Veddass. There were empty places. But one of the Moors dwelt there. He said that he came to look after his cattle. However, Spittle and his friends were able to find that the Moor was a Ganja cultivator and he did not like outsiders who came from town.

“What are you, a Moor, doing in a place like this”?
asked the Doctor.

I have come here to rear cattle”

In this Jungle?

There are large glades not far away”

“Can we get a guide here who will take us to those Veddas of the hill?”

“I doubt that .Who can say where they are?

Did they not say where they came from?

“They mentioned Dhik-galge, but who knows where that is? There is one man of this place who may be able to take you there, but he’s away just now”

“When will he be back”?

“That I cannot say. Maybe this evening or perhaps to-morrow”

“You don’t seem very hopeful. Can’t you do something for us who have walked over a hundred miles to get them”?

(Spittle, 2000: 82-83)

Spittle was disappointed that the Moor was not supporting them in finding Vadda, because Spittle knew that he had

reached the correct place to see Vadda as Seligman had mentioned earlier. However, later Spittle was able to get the real picture of the incident. The thing was that the areas were controlled by the Moors who came from the towns for illegal business especially Ganja cultivation. Obeyesekere always paid attention to the intervention of outsiders to the Vadi inhabitants. As a result, they created multi-ethnic regions. Veddads were corrupted by capitalism. Similarly, Spittle was presented with incidents based on his experiences. Those were very close to Obeyesekere's observations. The difference between them is that Spittle has a fictional form and the other has an academic form. Spittle observed the reality of the Vedda people. He repeated similar incidents in his fiction "Savage Sanctuary" and "Vanished Trails". These repeated parts showed his fictional characteristics. However, Obeyesekere has also repeated similar incidents in some writings about the Vedda people. As examples, we can compare his two articles under the titles "Colonial Histories and Vadda

Primitivism: An Unorthodox Reading of Kandy Period Texts” and “Where Veddass have gone”. Both articles include similar incidents regarding the Vedda people. Like Spittle, Obeyesekere used them to convey similar meanings. Obeyesekere has revealed that the Veddass lived with Sinhalese and Tamil people in historical periods. Sometimes they were Sinhalese with social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. At other times, the Sinhalese or Tamils transformed into Veddass. This observation is sophisticated and effective for understanding the history of Sri Lanka. Obeyesekere brought it with him as part of his academic experiences in such kinds of studies. However, Spittle also showed a similar incident in his fiction. His observations are limited only to the incidents because he is concerned about them as a fictional writer.

Conclusion and Findings

By comparing the writings of Vedda of Spittle and Seligman, Obeyesekere’s voice is the most powerful

one regarding the imagination of the Vedda people. However, the comprehensiveness and organization of Seligman's study have made a profound impact on the Vedda discourse. They were able to see and meet the Vedda people, who were living without farming and depended only on hunting and gathering. I am not expressing that they are the people with authenticity or that they are the real wild men in Ceylon. However, that evidence explores the end of the 19th century and the very beginning of the 20th century. The Vedda's living conditions were different from the present. Further, the idea of the wild men of Ceylon is only imagined, and it has been made by imitating the concept that European wild men cannot agree. This is because people like Seligman and Spittle met the Vedda people in their journeys through remote areas with their own identities. These identities may be intermingled with those of the Sinhala and Tamil peoples. However, it does not imply that the Veddas' identity was nonexistent. My argument here is

that when we read Obeyesekere's writings on the Vedda, we should pay attention to others' writings on a similar theme. Their meanings challenge Obeyesekere's argument.

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