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A History of Sri Lanka

K.M. de Silva

Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1169
Year	1984
Field	Social Sciences
DOI	10.5771/0506-7286-1984-2-278
Licence	CC-BY
Original source	Verfassung in Recht und bersee
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/ebbe2c51-023d-420c-bf51-e3d3596cfb05
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

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Cite as: K.M. de Silva (1984). A History of Sri Lanka. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-1169.

Abstract

This book presents the history of Sri Lanka from the earliest times to the present. Sri Lanka is an ancient civilization, shaped and thrust into the modern globalizing world by its colonial experience. With its own unique problems, many of them historical legacies, it is a nation trying to maintain a democratic, pluralistic state structure while struggling to come to terms with separatist aspirations. This is a complex story, and there is perhaps no better person to present it in reasoned, scholarly terms than K. M. de Silva, Sri Lanka's most distinguished and prolific historian. A History of Sri Lanka, first published in 1981, has established itself as the standard work on the subject. This fully revised edition, in light of the most recent research, brings the story right up to the early years of the twenty-first century. The book provides comprehensive coverage of all aspects of Sri Lanka's development - from a classical Buddhist society and irrigation economy, to its emergence as a tropical colony producing some of the world's most important cash crops, such as cinnamon, tea, rubber and coconut, and finally as an Asian democracy. It is a study of the political vicissitudes of Sri Lanka's ancient civilization and the successive phases of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial rule. The unfortunate consequences of becoming a centre of ethnic tension and Sri Lanka's long-standing relationship with India are also discussed. Exhaustively researched and analytical, this book is an invaluable reference source for students of ancient, colonial and post-colonial societies, ethnic conflict and democratic transitions, as well as for all those who simply want to get a feel of the rich and varied texture of Sri Lanka's long history.

Keywords: Sri Lankan history, ancient Sri Lanka, colonial rule, Portuguese colonialism, Dutch colonialism, Bri

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