

A TINY GUIDE TO SRI LANKA'S FIRST

# LAMBAKARNA KINGS



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In a  
Word  
or Two

# THE LAMBAKARNA DYNASTY

66 CE – 436 CE. FIRST PERIOD

The Lambakarna were Sri Lanka's second recorded royal dynasty, carrying the country into what historians call "the common era" and helping to more deeply embed a unique Singhalese culture across the entire island.

## GUARDIANS

In 1929, as Wall Street crashed and the roaring twenties came to an abrupt end, archaeologists digging in faraway Trincomalee uncovered the remains of a once-lofty temple, built a stone's throw from the Indian Ocean, sometime after 307 CE.

Beneath earth, trees, and jungle, stretching out to the shores of a great lake, the Velgam Vehera's many scattered ruins were brought back to sight for the first time in centuries: brick stupas, stone inscriptions, balustrades, buildings, moon stones – and mura gals.

These mura gals – or guard stones – are especially moving, standing in silent upright pose, guardians of the flights of steps that had led a multitude of forgotten people out of the everyday and into the sacred temple itself.

The steps they protect have worn down to just a few flights, the moonstone they encompass is almost entirely rubbed away; the temple beyond is now just an outline of ancient bricks, and the guard stones themselves are plain, almost stumpy, but still doing their ageless job as sentinels of the site.

Similar guard stones stand in many other parts of the island, easy to see if you know what you are looking for, silent guardians of the state within.

For to be a guardian is no little thing.

Guardian is an emotive word in Sri Lanka. It can be found incorporated by health and education providers, insurance companies, the army, the priesthood, the home guard, air force, a news website, hotel and even a wedding business. But long ago it was also the meaning given to the Lambakarnas, the dynasty that succeeded the founding Vijayans.

## FAMILY

Originating possibly in India, it is likely that the Lambakarnas claimed descent from Sumitta - a prince who formed part of the escort that had brought the Bodhi-tree from India in 250 CE. From this botanical pilgrimage, they would go on to become one of the island's great barons, alongside other such families as Moriyans, Taracchas and Balibhojaks.

The Lambakarnas' own power derived from their position as hereditary guardians or secretaries to the king. They took a prominent part in religious ceremonies. But there was more to them

than merely carrying coronation parasols and flags. They were connected to the military, to weapon manufacture and, as writers, must have been involved in much of the important administration of the kingdom.

## MONARCHS OF THE ANURADHAPURAN KINGDOM

The Lambakarnas managed the transition from one of several aristocratic families to ruling family with what at first appeared to be consummate ease. After the ruinous excesses of the last Vijayans, the new dynasty seemed to grip the one fundamental axiom of kingship: govern well, live long.

They were to rule all or much of the island (depending on the period) over two distinct periods. The first of these was to last for 369 years through the reigns of 26 monarchs, from 67 CE to 436 CE.

It took the dynasty a blissfully long 126 years before regicide, that most corrosive of leadership viruses, to catch up with it in 193 CE.

The sickness lasted for six decades, during which time being a king most typically meant an early and random appointment with reincarnation. But at last things stabilised from 254 CE. For 116 more years kings came and went with calm succession.

And then, once more, the regicide virus reappeared - but this time with a more comprehensively terminal and malign impact.

For six more decades the country drifted as kings most typically succeeded one another at the point of a sword or a draft of poison.

## INVASIONS

The invasion, when it came in 436 CE, put a one-year sell by date on the Lambakarna's last king. King Mittasena was to enjoy his crown for just a year.

Decades of focusing on the succession rather than the defence or betterment of the country had left the kingdom so insufficiently capable as to be the perfect sitting target for the country's fourth invasion from Tamil Nadu.

It was the first Tamil invasion the Lambakarna dynasty had to face – the previous three being catastrophes that the previous Vijayan rulers had endured. But it was to be their last too.

Facing an implacable Tamil army, the dynasty imploded, ceding their kingdom to seventeen years of foreign occupation and several more years of interregal anarchy.

## THE DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

Despite the Lambakarnas having ruled their kingdom for just over half the length of the Vijayans, their 369 year innings was no small achievement.

But it was a troubled epoch, a dynasty whose sword was double edged.



Just under half the Lambakarna monarchs were to die at the hands of their successors, victims to a predilection for assassination that ran like a malign monomeric thread through their DNA.

Even so, the nation they left behind was bigger, richer, more complex, developed and built out that it had been on its inheritance by them back in 67 CE.

Stupas, monasteries, reservoirs, canals, temples, and dwellings filled out the land. The mores of society progressed.

Agriculture flourished and technical advances from construction through to medicine bestowed its benefits on the kingdom.

It was strong enough to weather repeated religious schisms, as well as succession crises; and – ultimately – its 16 year occupation by Tamil kings to enable the country to bounce back, albeit this time under yet another new dynasty.

# KING VASABHA

40th King of Anuradhapura.

46th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya.

1st monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty (1st Period).

19th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Reign: 67 - 111 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

KING  
PANDU  
VASUDEVA

Nephew of Prince Vijaya.

2nd King of Tambapanni and  
Upatissa Nuwara.

3rd monarch of the Vijayan  
Dynasty.

Reign: 504 - 474 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

2nd reigning Sri Lankan  
monarch to have died a natural  
death.

# KING VANKANASIKA TISSA

Son of King Vasabha.

41st King of Anuradhapura.

2nd monarch of the  
Lambakanna Dynasty (1st  
Period).

47th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya. 20th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Reign: 111 - 113 CE.

Nature of Death:  
Natural

# KING GAJABAHU I

Son of King  
Vankanasika Tissa.

42nd King of Anuradhapura.

3rd monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

48th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

21st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have  
died a natural death.

Reign: 113 - 135 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING MAHALLAKA NAGA

Father in law  
of King Gajabahu I.

43rd King of Anuradhapura.

4th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

49th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

22nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 135 - 141 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

KING  
BHATIKA  
TISSA

Son of King Mahallaka Naga.

44th King of Anuradhapura.

5th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

50th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

23rd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 141 - 165 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING KANITTHA TISSA

Brother of King Bhatika Tissa.

45th King of Anuradhapura.

6th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

51st recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

24th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 165 - 193 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.



# KING CULA NAGA

Son of King Kanittha Tissa.

46th King of Anuradhapura.

7th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

52nd recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

27th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 193 - 195 CE

Nature of Death: Murdered.

# KING SIRI NAGA

Brother in law  
of King Kuda Naga.

48th King of Anuradhapura.

9th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

54th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

25th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 196 - 215 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

KING  
VOHARIKA  
TISSA

Son of King Siri Naga.

49th King of Anuradhapura.

10th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

55th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

28th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 215 - 237 CE

Nature of Death: Murdered.

KING  
ABHAYA  
NAGA

Brother of  
King Voharika Tissa.

50th King of Anuradhapura.

11th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

56th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

26th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 237 - 245 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING SIRI NAGA II

Nephew of  
King Abhaya Naga.

51st King of Anuradhapura.

12th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

57th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

27th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 245 - 247 CE

Nature of Death: Natural.

KING  
VIJAYA  
KUMARA

Son of King Siri Naga II

52nd King of Anuradhapura.

13th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period)

58th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

29th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 247 - 248 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered

KING  
SANGHA  
TISSA I

53rd King of Anuradhapura.

14th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

59th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

30th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 248 - 252 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

KING  
SIRI SANGHA  
BODHI I

54th King of Anuradhapura.

15th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

60th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

31st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have  
been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 252 - 254 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.



# KING GOTHABHAYA

56th King of Anuradhapura.

16th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

61st recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

28th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 254 - 267 CE

Nature of Death: Natural.

KING  
JETHHA  
TISSA I

Son of King Gothabhaya.

57th King of Anuradhapura.

17th monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty  
(1st Period).

62nd recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

29th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 267 - 277 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING MAHASENA

Son of King Gothabhaya  
and brother of King Jettha Tissa I

58th King of Anuradhapura.

18th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

63rd recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

30th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 277 - 304 CE

Nature of Death:  
Natural.

# KING SIRIMEGHAVANNA

Son of King Mahasena

59th King of Anuradhapura.

19th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period)

64th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

31st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have  
died a natural death.

Reign: 304 - 332 CE

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING JETTHA TISSA II

Brother of  
King Sirimeghavanna

60th King of Anuradhapura.

20th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

65th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

32nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 332 - 341 CE.

Nature of Death:  
Natural.

# KING BUDDHADASA

Son of King Jettha Tissa II

61st King of Anuradhapura.

21st monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

66th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

33rd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 341 - 370 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING UPATISSA I

Son of King Buddhadasa

62nd King of Anuradhapura.

22nd monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

67th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

32nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 370 - 412 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

# KING MAHANAMA

Brother of King Upatissa I

63rd King of Anuradhapura.

23rd monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

68th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

34th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Reign: 412 - 434 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.



# KING SOTHTHISENA

Son of King Mahanama

64th King of Anuradhapura.

24th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

69th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

33rd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 434 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

# QUEEN CHATTAHAHA JANTU

Stepsister to  
King Soththisena

3rd Queen and 65th Monarch of  
Anuradhapura.

25th monarch of the Lambakanna  
Dynasty (1st Period).

70th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

34th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 434 - 435 CE.

Nature of Death:  
Murdered.

# KING MITTASENA

66th King of  
Anuradhapura.

26th and last monarch of the  
Lambakanna Dynasty (1st Period).

71st recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

35th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have been murdered for the succession.

8th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have  
died in battle.

Reign: 435 - 436 CE.

Nature of Death:  
Murdered.

# KING PANDU

67th King  
of Anuradhapura.

The first of the Six Dravidian invaders of the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

72nd recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya.

35th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Reign: 436 - 441 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

# KING PARINDU

Son of King Pandu

68th King of Anuradhapura.

The 2nd of the Six Dravidian invaders of the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

73rd recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya.

35th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 441 CE

Nature of Death: Murdered.

# KING KHUDDA PARINDA

Brother of King  
Parindu and son of King Pandu

69th King of Anuradhapura.

The 3rd of the Six Dravidian invaders of  
the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

74th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

36th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death. (presumed)

Reign: 441 - 447 CE.

Nature of Death:  
Natural.

# KING TIRITARA

70th King of Anuradhapura.

The 4th of the Six Dravidian invaders of the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

75th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya.

9th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle.

Reign: 447 CE

Nature of Death: Defeated and killed by the future king, Dhatusena.

# KING DATHIYA

71st King of  
Anuradhapura.

The 5th of the Six Dravidian invaders of  
the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

76th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in  
the line running from Prince Vijaya.

10th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have  
died in battle.

Reign: 447 - 450 CE

Nature of Death: Defeated  
and killed by the future king,  
Dhatusena.



# KING PITHIYA

72nd King  
of Anuradhapura.

The last of the Six Dravidian invaders of the Pandiyan Dynasty of South India.

77th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka in the line running from Prince Vijaya. 11th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle. 36th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

Reign: 450 - 452 CE.

Nature of Death: Defeated and killed by the future king, Dhatusena.



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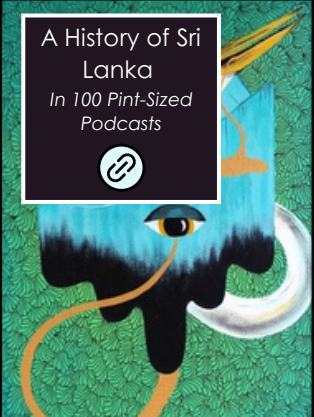
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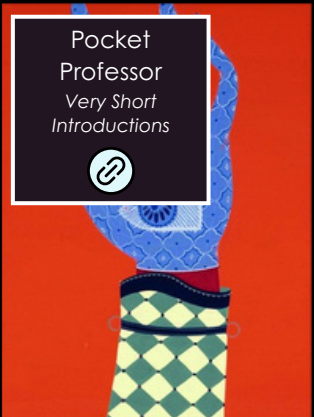
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