

## **A review of Vedda research in Sri Lanka from the 1800's to the present**

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Sri Lanka has been home to several tribal groups, some of which are still in existence today. Veddas can be considered an especially important ethnic group among them. According to chronicle sources the Veddas are the descendents of the offspring of Prince Vijaya and the Yakka princess Kuveni. During Lord Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka there are said to have been several tribal groups residing in the island, i.e. Yakka, Naga, Deva. The exact identity of these groups is still highly debated.

The excavations carried out by the Swiss anthropologists Paul and Fritz Sarasin in the early 1900's at Nilgala cave revealed skeletal fragments of humans as well as those of either a dog or fox (Sarasin, 1907). During this excavation the area was populated by the Vedda people.

There have been several researches to discover whether the Veddas were descended from prehistoric people. Therefore the aim of this paper is to review the various scholarly researches based on the Veddas from the 1800's onward.

The key question which will be discussed here is if the Veddas are in fact the descendents of the prehistoric people of Sri Lanka or a tribe which is in existence from the historic period onward and also to which extent they have racially amalgamated with other ethnic groups in the country.

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