

Politics and the Caste System Pertaining to the Sacred Tooth Relic (during the Kandian Period)

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The politics and the caste system which had a special bond with the sacred tooth relic, was an important component of the Sri Lankan Society during the Kandian period, it can be assumed that, this tradition evolved from Anuradhapura period up to the Kandian period of the History of Sri Lanka. Apart from political conditions the development of a caste system pertaining to the rituals of the sacred tooth relic was evident by the Kandian Period, which is the historical field for this study from the very beginning, assuring the smooth functioning of the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. Moreover, it dictated who the ruler would be and what were his responsibilities. Therefore, Sri Lanka rulers worshiped the sacred tooth relic as if it was the Lord Buddha himself. What is very clear during the Kandian Period is that there was a certain group of people who rendered their services to the sacred tooth relic. Especially, there was a particular caste group which served the sacred tooth relic under the system of Rajakariya. A noted trend was the assigning of the Kavikara Maduwa to the service of this sacred object. This clearly shows that from then onwards a caste system centered around the sacred tooth relic began its formation, as a result of certain castes under the traditional caste system being assigned to serve the sacred tooth relic. Further, the system continued even after the Kandian Kingdom had become a British colony. The research problem was what was the impact of the Sacred Tooth Relic on Sri Lanka's politics and the caste system? Earlier research on the same research area seem to have focused on caste relations only. However, this research attempts to identify the political impact too.

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