

*Book Reviews*

**DALADA ITIHASAYA SAHA SANSKRITIYA**

(History and Culture of the Tooth Relic)

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The Tooth Relic which was brought to Sri Lanka in the reign of king Sri Meghavarna (301—328 A.D.) played an important role in the history of Sri Lanka. From the later Anurādhapura period onwards it has been the most respected and venerated object of worship for Sri Lankan Buddhists. Moreover, it had been the symbol of sovereign power. The possession of the Tooth Relic legitimized and strengthened the position of the rulers. The political history of Sri Lanka thus revolved round this remarkable religious object for centuries, and wherever the capital city was established, a special building was erected to provide shelter for it. This building which has come to be called the *Daladā Mūlīgōva*, the palace of the Tooth Relic, possibly in more recent times, testifies to its political importance.

The Tooth Relic was so significant in the history of Sri Lanka that a number of books, both in Sinhala and Pali, was written on this subject in ancient times, elaborating the various aspects of its history and ritual. The most notable treatises of them are the *Dāthāvamsa* written in Pali in the thirteenth century and *Daladā Sūtra* written in Sinhala in the fourteenth century.

In recent times here in Sri Lanka and abroad a number of monographs has been published depicting the history of the Tooth Relic, ritual connected with it and the colourful procession which has developed into a cultural pageant over the centuries.

Venerable Dr. Vajira's *Daladā Itihāsaya saha Sanskritiya* is a notable contribution to our knowledge of this important subject. It is the most comprehensive work published so far on the Tooth Relic. In six chapters, the author traces the history of the Relic by a thorough study of the relevant sources of information, both literary and archaeological, and goes on to examine the customs and rituals, the procession and other aspects connected with it. The concept of relic-worship and in particular, the significance of the introduction of teeth as relics has been treated in great detail.

The book contains six appendices. The first deals with the relationship between the *Ādāhana maluva*, the place where the relic casket is kept on the final day of the procession and the Tooth Relic. The other appendices give the texts of some historical documents belonging to the Kandy period. These documents which were hitherto unpublished are of vital importance for the reconstruction of the history of the Tooth Relic during the Kandy period. The author deserves credit for publishing them for the first time.

In the study of the history of the Tooth Relic, the principal source is the *Dāthāvamsa*. The author of the present monograph has paid due attention to this chronicle and has made full use of it. The *Dāthāvamsa* was written in the thirteenth century A.D., though it claims to rest on an older Sinhala chronicle. As the story of the Tooth Relic begins with the passing away of the Buddha in the sixth century B.C., the historicity of the narrative in the *Dāthāvamsa* has to be examined carefully, as this work is removed from the events it deals with by several hundred years. The author has dealt with this problem adequately.

The popular belief is that the Tooth Relic in the *Daladā Mūlīgōva* in Kandy is the only tooth relic extant in Sri Lanka. History tells a different story. This monograph provides information that Sri Lanka is in possession of at least three tooth relics. The origin of the Tooth Relic procession is discussed and the validity of the theories put forward by various scholars in this regard has been examined. Even though the scope of this study is too wide for a dissertation like this, the author seems to have handled it with patience in a scholarly manner. His close connection with the *Savīgha* as a member of the Order seems to have facilitated this study.