

THE ROLE OF CHARLES GODAKUMBURA IN THE FIELD OF HISTORY

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As a Commissioner of Archaeology, Charles Godakumbura has rendered a great service to the field of Archaeology. The main objective of this study is to review the contribution of Charles Godakumbura to the field of History. He was one of the personalities who represented various fields as far as the 20th Century Sri Lankan history (1907-1977) is concerned. Blessed with the mentorship of Senarath Paranavitana, he had a chance to associate himself with many national and international scholars. With the knowledge that he obtained in archaeology and literature, Godakumbura rendered a great service to the field of history by editing history books, interpreting inscriptions and writing academic scripts on history. Three of his important books are *Śāstreya lipi hā kathā*, *The Kotawehera at Dedigama*, and *Sinhalese Literature. Epigraphia Zeylanica- Vol. V* was an excellent book on the inscriptions that he completed along with Prof. Paranavitana. He was an expert on epigraphy and Sinhalese prosody. Charles Godakumbura said that the “Ceylon history and archaeology were almost synonymous.” Many of his historical writings particularly depended on archaeological evidence discovered by himself. He had a vast knowledge on the island’s history and its literature, epigraphy and fine arts. He wrote many other books well suited to both the educated and the ordinary readers. Godakumbura wrote about the local history of this island with a focus on the *Sathkoralaya*. Buddhism and common cultural identities were the main factors that made him attracted towards Burma. He wrote many research articles about the Burmese culture, society and religion with a focus on the commonalities between Burma and Sri Lanka. Godakumbura found many uncommon historical literary works from foreign countries, which were very useful for scholars and others. The epistle of *Jayatu bhavañ Sirivikkama Rājaseeha Maharajā* is one such example. He identified ‘Theories,’ ‘Grammar,’ and ‘Etymology’ as three of the main methodologies that are useful in the editing of manuscripts. Occasionally he adduced controversial interpretations too. The controversy regarding the place where King *Sirisangaboo* donated his head can be mentioned as an example. He viewed his country as *Sinhaladeepa* and gave priority to *Sinhalakama*. Charles Godakumbura can be viewed as a unique individual who uplifted the identity of Sri Lanka while using his valuable knowledge for the advancement of the discipline of history.

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