

Unpublished Documents on the Sri Lankan Intellectual History of the 19th Century

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The monks at Vidyalankara and Vidyodaya developed a nexus of links between local scholars and those of the world. They provided a major contribution to the development of Buddhist thought, not only in Sri Lanka, but in fact, to the beginning of an intellectual interest in Buddhism in the Western world. Outsiders with whom they linked sound like a Whose Who of Western World Buddhism. Thus, linked local Buddhist monk scholars amounted to around forty. The key nodal point was Waskaduwe Subhuti Thera whose Asian links included Japan, Burma, and Thailand, especially Thai royalty. He was proficient not only in Buddhist philosophy, but also in Western philosophy and several languages. He also took an interest in modern science and technology, being in fact, the first person in Sri Lanka to have an electric bell and a phonograph.

Some of the primary documents associated with Subhuti Thera have been published by Guruge (*Living Fountains of Buddhism*, 1984). There is a considerable body of correspondence available in his temple and in temples that were associated with him that throw light on the intellectual life at the time. The paper describes these hitherto unpublished documents and summarises the contents which is relevant, not only to Sri Lankan intellectual history, but also to that of wider world.

Key Words: Intellectual; History; Century

¹ Sri Subhuti Vihara, Waskaduwa and Dipaduttamarama at Kotahena