

Godavaya - The river mouth of Walawe ganga



Walawe ganga

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Four of us (Journalists) had an unforgettable boat ride on Walawe ganga where we could see thousands of birds flying without any obstruction. It was the real paradise for peacocks and peahens where one could see their lovely dance.

Going along the Walawe ganga in the evening we saw thousands of bats hanging on the trees similar to a black carpet and cranes on the trees like a white carpet lying on the trees. The end of the Walawe boat safari was the river mouth and we entered Godavaya from where we crossed the river mouth. We got down from our boat and walked there. There were huge rocks.

The Godavaya area has been inhabited for about 7000 years. In August 2008, a human skeleton dating back to 3000-5000 BC (carbon dating has yet to be authenticated) was discovered in an abandoned stone quarry at Godavaya, together with tools of animal-bone and stone. The trade was an



The excavation site at Godavaya where a human skeleton dating back to 3000-5000 BC was found

important component in the economy of ancient Sri Lanka and Godavaya was an important maritime settlement, serving Tissamaharama in the kingdom of Ruhuna. The Godavaya port probably pre-dates a Brahmi script inscription of the 2nd century king Gajabahu I, which states that the customs duties obtained there were dedicated to the Buddhist monastery, the Godapavata Vihara.

However in the Mahawamsa's chapter on The 12 Kings, it is claimed that the vihara at Gotapabbata was one of the seven monasteries that Mahallaka Naga built after

which is a source of garnets. Until the 6th century AD, Godavaya was an important transit port. Ships carrying merchandise from the West exchanged commodities with ships from China carrying Silk. Hence, ships did not need to go further than Godavaya.

From 1994 onwards, a team of German archaeologists from the University of Bonn directed by late Prof. Helmut Roth conducted joint excavations at Godavaya with the Archaeological Department of Sri Lanka, under Director General Dr. W.H. Wijeyapala and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI).

They unearthed evidence to prove Godavaya's importance in the maritime Silk Route, revealing connections from China in the East to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean in the West.