



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

“Fusion of Fire and Culture: Pabalugala as a Centre for Ancient Glass Bead Production in Early Historic Sri Lanka”

By

Professor Mangala Katugampola

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 174 of the National Trust

Thursday 30th October 2025 at 6.00 pm

**at the Auditorium of the Sri Lanka Association for the
Advancement of Science, 120/10 Vidya Mawatha
Colombo 7**

(Link to join online <https://www.youtube.com/live/sUkrksJ9H74?si=CJeCluYMnXWkSRFX>)

Glass beads trace a two-millennia-long history in South Asia, revealing ancient technological skill and cultural dynamics. Beads vary in shape, size, and colour. Coloring was achieved by adding minerals and metallic oxides during the production process. Beyond ornament, beads served decorative and functional roles in jewellery and textiles and also circulated as currency in long-distance trade. Pabalugala, in Northwestern Sri Lanka, emerges as a key bead-production center. Excavations yield substantial evidence—furnaces, raw materials, pottery, unfinished and finished beads—indicating a sophisticated workshop complex. Radiocarbon dating indicates that peak activity occurred between the **2nd and 5th centuries CE**, within the **Early Historic Period (EHP)**. Findings suggest that Pabalugala played a pivotal role in local ornamentation and broader regional and international trade networks that linked South Asia with the ancient world. This study examines production technologies, craft personnel, and the cultural significance of glass beads in early historic Sri Lanka, with emphasis on settlement patterns and anthropology. A collaboration between Sichuan University, China, and the University of Kelaniya.



Professor Mangala Katugampola, is a distinguished archaeologist with over 25 years of experience in research, heritage management, and higher education. He integrates traditional field archaeology with advanced GIS and spatial analysis, and leads major international projects such as Mantai and Pabalugala, while mentoring emerging scholars. Consultant Director, CCF and Advisor, Sri Lanka’s National Department of Archaeology. Previous Head, Department of Archaeology and Department of Information Technology, University of Kelaniya, and Director, Centre for Heritage Studies.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.

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