



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

Kotte: An Ancient Capital Under Destruction

By

Prasad Fonseka

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 146 of the National Trust

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Link to join the Zoom meeting:

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Apart from Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, Kōṭṭe was the other main royal Capital City during Sri Lanka's pre-colonial period. In 1565 it was destroyed by the Portuguese, abandoned, and extracted building materials for their requirements in Colombo. When the Dutch allowed the people to settle down there again by 1650, the ruins became the metal quarry of the builders. However, the people did not settle in the areas where there were ruins. By 1900, Mudalier de Fonseka acquired the palace and the surrounding area, and removed and sold ancient material up to the foundation level. With the rapid urban expansion, and later Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte becoming the administrative capital, almost all the historic sites currently occupied by private individuals, gradually erasing most of the historical evidence of this once powerful City. With the help of historical descriptions, maps, and surviving archaeological and historic evidence, the lecture will take us back in time to show the might of this Capital, as well as to highlight the continuing destruction of surviving evidence. It will emphasise the urgent action needed by the Government authorities, heritage professionals and the general public, at least to preserve the surviving remains to prevent the whole scale erasing of this important heritage site.



Mr. Prasad Fonseka is an independent researcher on history and heritage since 2005. He has published several books and articles and delivered lectures at the Royal Asiatic Society, Archaeological Society, Archaeological Department, ICOMOS, etc. on subjects such as Brāhmī inscriptions, chronology, and the heritage of Kotte. In 2015 the National Trust published his book, 'Kotte; the Fortress'. In 2019 he published a new edition of the oldest chronicle of Sri Lanka: The Dīpavamsa in Sinhala. Several of his other research work on Brāhmī Inscriptions, the Chronology of the kings of Sri Lanka, etc. are also ready for publishing. He was the editor of the felicitation volumes of two prominent scholars of Sri Lanka: Prof. K D Paranavitana and the late Prof. Vini Vitharana. He also edited the first book of the 'Archaeology and Architecture Series' by the late Dr. Roland Silva. Mr. Fonseka is the founder-president of the Kotte Heritage Foundation and also functions as the Secretary of the Scientific Committee of the National Trust Sri Lanka since September 2013.

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. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929