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Design and manufacture of beads in ancient Sri Lanka with special reference to beads found from Anuradhapura

H Pathirana*

Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Moratuwa

Beads have been a very important component of jewellery from ancient times and will continue to be of importance in the future. An attempt is made to discuss, some important aspects related to the art and design of the ancient beads of Sri Lanka. This paper takes into consideration only the beads those were found from the Abayagiriya and Jethavanarama archaeological sites. The design principles are discussed in terms of the art and technology displayed in their making. Each bead, that is found, seem to showcase a wealth of information about art, technology, trade, material skills, and other social, religious characteristics in a society. Beads used during the past in Sri Lanka have been found from several areas of the country, namely, Anuradhapura, Manthai, Tissamaharamaya, Ratnapura etc. The beads found from these sites vary according to their types and materials. Particularly, a large variety of over nine hundred thousand beads have been excavated from the Jethavanarama site itself, most of them, during the period of 1980-1990. The spectacular variety of bead objects found in a mass scale had led to the findings of very valuable facts about the industrial science and the skills of art of the ancient Sinhalese civilization. Therefore, it elevates the industry of jewellery and the significant role it had played in the life of the ancient people of Sri Lanka to a notable degree. The study would explore the principles of design and methodologies adopted in the design and manufacture of these beads.