Discovery of a 4th Century AD Perforated Crocodile Tooth Ornaments from Sri Lanka

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A wealth of archaeological data from Sri Lanka and other parts of the world indicates that body parts of animals such as bird feathers, mammal and reptile bones, shells, corral, horn, ivory and animal teeth has been worn as ornaments by man for several thousand years. Several perforated shells of marine and fresh water mollusks and shark teeth have been discovered from many parts of Sri Lanka, which are dated from 6,000 to 37,000 Year Before Present. We repot for the first time the discovery of forty one drilled teeth artifacts belonging to eight vertebrates (including seven unidentified teeth fragments) discovered during standard archeological excavation procedures conducted at the Jatawanarama monastic site, Anuradhapura. These included ten perforated teeth of a marsh crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*).

Although the use of perforated teeth ornaments had commenced during the Neolithic Period in European countries, no such artifacts belonging to the Neolithic Period have yet been discovered from Sri Lanka. Hence, this discovery of 41 perforated teeth belonging to 4th century AD belonging to eight vertebrate species from Sri Lanka is unique in several ways:

1. This is the first discovery of perforated terrestrial vertebrate teeth, especially that of a crocodile
2. These would have been possibly used as a necklace, arguably worn by a hunter
3. Another possibility is that the particular hunter, who had killed these animals would have made a wow and placed these hunting trophies on the offering alter to lord Buddha that he will not commit such actions in the future.
4. The delicate perforation method of how these holes have been made from both sides so that the hole at the center is narrow suggests not only the skill but also the high standard of technology used to perforate.