

F-05: Animal remains found at Aligala archaeological excavation site

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The animal remains found at the Aligala cave archaeological site, (Sigiriya project of Cultural Triangle) were studied, to identify them and to determine how they were related to the life of the people who lived in such cave habitats.

Thirty samples of animal remains were obtained from the 1990 excavation. The layers in which the animal remains were found (Context 24) had been dated as $3,780 \pm 75$ to $4,645 \pm 75$ years old by C^{14} method. Animal samples, which included the remains of snails and mammals, were identified up to the species level where possible. The shell remains of the aquatic snail *Bellamya dissimilis* and the endemic land snail species *Acavus phonix* and *Acavus fentosus*, and the teeth or antler or bone

remains of sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), spotted deer (*Axis axis*), domestic cattle (*Bos* sp.), porcupine (*Histrix indicus*), giant squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*), the endemic toque monkey (*Macaca sinica*) and domestic cat (*Felis domesticus*) and a limb bone fragment of *Canis* sp. (probably dog) were found in the samples.

Since these animal species usually do not inhabit caves, the fragments found may have been either the remains of animals brought mainly for food and of those kept by the cave dwellers. These findings perhaps indicate that the cave dwellers used snails, both land and aquatic, as food. The remains of the domestic cattle, domestic cat and dog (?) indicate that the early cave dwellers were probably hunters who had family units and kept pets.

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