

# News of Science

## Where Is Peking Man? Anthropologists Are Still Speculating about the War-Lost Specimens.

The whereabouts of "Peking man," the world-famous anthropological collection that disappeared during World War II, is still the subject of hopeful speculation. Composed of specimens that are among the earliest traces of mankind, the collection was excavated from the floor of a limestone cave at Choukoutien, about 40 miles southwest of Peking, China, between 1928 and 1937.

Peking man is believed to have lived in eastern China during the Middle Pleistocene, some 300,000 years ago. By 1929, the skeletal remains recovered had definitely established him as a new type of fossil man, which was named *Sinanthropus pekinensis*. In 1937, the individuals represented in the *Sinanthropus* collection numbered approximately 38. Braincases, jaws, teeth, and some limb bones were included. Cutting and scraping implements, made chiefly of quartz, were found with the bones.

### Peking Man Disappears

According to the best information available, the remains of Peking man escaped the first onrush of the Japanese forces in North China in 1937 because they were stored in an American institution, the Peking Union Medical College. An agreement had been reached with the Chinese that the *Sinanthropus* material should remain in China permanently, and there be available to scholars of all nations for study. A few weeks before the United States became involved in World War II, negotiations were completed with Chungking for shipping the specimens to the United States for the duration. Peking man and all other associated specimens were packed in three cases and turned over to the U.S. Marines, who were being evacuated from Chinwangtao on the American Dollar liner *President Harrison*. On 8 December 1941, the liner was run aground in the Yangtze Kiang River near Shanghai, and the Marines were captured, and with them the three cases of *Sinanthropus* material. From that point on there is no definite knowledge about what happened to the remains.

Frank Whitmore, chief of the Military Geology Branch, U.S. Geological Survey, has been accused many times during the past decade of knowing more than he would tell about the whereabouts of *Sinanthropus*. Recently, he reaffirmed an earlier statement that denied any secret knowledge. He believes, as do many others, that the collection is at the bottom of the Yangtze.

### Postwar Search

In 1942, the Japanese anthropologist Haseba Kotohito went to Peking to study *Sinanthropus*; but when the vaults at the college were opened, only plaster casts were found. A year later, Japanese police made a thorough search, questioning everyone known to have had any connection with the collection, but all to no avail.

Among those associated with the recovery of the *Sinanthropus* material were the late Davidson Black, anatomist of Peking Union Medical College, who started the excavations that led to the discovery of Peking man; the late Franz Weidenreich, another anatomist, who succeeded Black at Peking; Ralph W. Chaney, paleobotanist of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the University of California at Berkeley; and Pei Wen-chung, Chinese paleontologist. According to Pei, the missing packing cases went to Tokyo and some day will reappear there.

In 1945, Whitmore was detailed from Headquarters, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, to examine "certain fossils and archaeological material from Choukoutien, China" at Tokyo University. However, most of the material that he was shown was from the upper Choukoutien cave, belonging to an age much younger than that of *Sinanthropus*. In a statement about these specimens, Whitmore says in part:

"Most of the material recovered was from the Upper Cave, which is much younger than the strata in which *Sinanthropus* was found. There are a few stone implements of questionable nature from Locality 15, which is probably Paleo-

lithic and is older than the Upper Cave material. From Locality 1, which includes the strata in which *Sinanthropus* was found, there are only three questionable stone implements and no bone remains. This material was returned to the Cenozoic Laboratory (in Peking) in early 1946. Nothing was learned of the fate of the missing *Sinanthropus* specimens."

According to Whitmore, the best hope for restoring Peking man to anthropologists at firsthand lies in a resumption of excavations at Choukoutien cave. Although excellent plaster casts of the skeletal material are available, these obviously do not have the same value for researchers as the original specimens.

## International Oceanographic Congress

The AAAS, in cooperation with UNESCO and the Special Committee on Oceanic Research of the International Council of Scientific Unions, is organizing an International Oceanographic Congress to be held from 1 August to 12 September at the United Nations Building, New York.

### Abstracts and Manuscripts

As many more abstracts have been received than were anticipated, a change has been made in the requirement that manuscripts be submitted on 30 April. It is now requested that a 500-word summary in English, with a 200-word abstract in another language of the congress (French, German, Russian, or Spanish), be prepared for submission on that date.

Three copies of summary and abstract must be sent to: Dr. Mary Sears, Chairman, Committee on Arrangements, International Oceanographic Congress, c/o Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Mass. If these materials are not received by the 30 April deadline, they cannot be included in the bound, multilithed volume to be issued to registrants.

It will no longer be necessary to submit a completed paper unless the convenor of the seminar specifically requests that this be done. Some seminars will be organized in the conventional way, with presentation of a series of papers followed by a discussion period. Others—those that have a relatively small number of participants—will be arranged so that the completed papers are circulated among the participants in advance. In these sessions, the proceedings will be confined to a discussion of the papers.

It is hoped that the participants within the United States may be able to arrange for any duplication needed for the "discussion-type" seminar. Because of diffi-