

Skull found in shop may be 1 million years old

September 7, 1999
 Web posted at: 10:21 AM EDT (1421 GMT)



NEW YORK (AP) -- A fossil skull, presumably of a Homo erectus believed up to 1 million years old, has been found in a Manhattan shop, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

MESSAGE BOARDS:

Paleoanthropologists have concluded that the skull is a genuine specimen from Indonesia that could be critical in determining the place on the human family tree of the East Asia branch of Homo erectus.

Such information could be central to the understanding of where and how modern humans, Homo sapiens, evolved, the newspaper said.

The skull was delivered in March to the Columbus Avenue shop Maxilla and Mandible Ltd., whose window display boasts bleached bones, mounted insects and animal sculptures, among other natural-history curiosities.

The shop's owner, Henry Galiano, said the fossil was dropped off by a mysterious man who claimed to represent the estate of a collector. Galiano, in cleaning the skull, realized it could be ancient and valuable.

The dark gray skull, anywhere from 100,000 to 1 million years old, probably belonged to a male in his 20s, scientists said. The individual's brain was about half the size of that of Homo sapiens but within the range for Homo erectus. He had a humanlike high forehead.

Casts of the inside of the skull indicate differential development of the two sides of the brain and swelling in a region of the brain known as the Broca cap, which suggest the Homo erectus was developing the potential for language and speech, scientists said.

"It's a very interesting specimen because it's not like any other Homo erectus we know from Indonesia or anywhere else," said Dr. Eric Delson, a City University of New York paleoanthropologist.

Scientists from Indonesia and the United States who studied the skull -- an almost complete cranium but missing the upper and lower jaws -- are preparing to publish their findings.

The shop's owner has presented the skull, which was traced to the Poloyo village on the Solo River in Central Java, to an Indonesian paleoanthropologist for its return home. Experts estimate it might have commanded \$500,000 on the open market.

- MAIN PAGE
- WORLD
- ASIANOW
- U.S.
- LOCAL
- POLITICS
- WEATHER
- BUSINESS
- SPORTS
- TECHNOLOGY
- NATURE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- BOOKS
- TRAVEL
- FOOD
- HEALTH
- STYLE
- IN-DEPTH

- custom news
- Headline News brief
- daily almanac
- CNN networks
- CNN programs
- on-air transcripts
- news quiz

CNN WEB SITES:

- myON.com
- CSI
- allpolitics
- fn

- EN ESPAÑOL
- em português
- SVE / SKA
- NORGE
- danmark

TIME INC. SITES

Go To ...

MORE SERVICES:

- video on demand
- video archive
- audio on demand
- news email services
- free email accounts
- desktop headlines
- pointcast
- pagenet

DISCUSSION

- message boards
- chat
- feedback

SITE GUIDES:

- help
- contents
- search

FASTER ACCESS:

- europe
- japan

WEB SERVICES:

3.9% Intro APR