

## ANTHROPOLOGY

# Syphilis Evidence Debated

Two authorities disagree on the "evidence" of syphilis in the bones of human remains. It is still a mystery where the disease originated.

A SURGEON and an anthropologist are having a friendly battle over "evidence" of syphilis found in remains of humans who lived on the American continent before the landing of Columbus and his men.

Dr. Charles W. Goff, assistant clinical professor of orthopedic surgery and lecturer of anatomy, Yale University School of Medicine, has reported finding evidence of syphilis in America prior to Columbus.

He said two skulls had been found in Guatemala in 1947, showing evidence of syphilis in the bone. He, himself, found one of the skulls; his friend, Dr. T. Dale Stewart, found the other.

Dr. Goff also said that through the southwest of the United States many examples of remains from pre-Columbian times have shown evidence of syphilis, although only a few could be accurately dated.

However, Dr. Stewart, curator of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., considers Dr. Goff's evidence of syphilis in pre-Columbian people inconclusive.

He said that the lesions found in the bone of remains is "presumptive evidence" since they could be caused by something other than syphilis. Lesions of the bone caused by syphilis would be similar to lesions caused by osteomyelitis, Dr. Stewart said.

Therefore the so-called evidence of syphilis

of the bone has always been presented as "suggestive" of syphilis, not proof, he said. He added that no serological tests yet devised have been adequate in proving syphilis in the bone.

Dr. Goff, on the other hand, believes he has proved conclusively that syphilis originated in pre-Columbian America and was brought back to Europe.

He told SCIENCE SERVICE that he examined what he is convinced to be the remains of Columbus in Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic. He said the lead coffin definitely identified the burial as that of Columbus.

Dr. Goff said that he found the remains of a big-boned, robust man above average height in the coffin. The person was between 50 and 60 years of age at the time of his death. His bones showed evidence of osteo-arthritis but of no other disease.

It has often been thought that syphilis was brought to the New World by the white man, beginning with Columbus' first arrival. Now some authorities believe the disease developed on the American continent and was taken back to Europe by Columbus' returning expedition.

Dr. Goff said that records in Barcelona, Spain, show that one Pinzon, who was the pilot of the Pinta, Columbus' ship on the return voyage, went with Columbus to

Barcelona where the pilot was treated for syphilis by a Dr. DeIsa in 1493. No evidence of syphilis has been found in Europe before 1494, he said.

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## SOCIOLOGY

## Television's Effects On British Family Life

TELEVISION in Britain brings many families closer together but disrupts others, a British scientist reported.

Dr. William A. Belson of the division of research, London School of Economics, said his evidence came from interviews with 150 London families and a survey of adults from 400 viewing homes in London.

He said that in about half of the London homes with TV, the only family room heated in winter is the TV room.

The persons interviewed indicated that they were not too selective or discriminating about what they looked at on TV. They said they often watched whatever programs others were already viewing.

Dr. Belson reported the following recurrent features of British families' viewing habits:

1. Divided attention.
2. Silence, often reinforced by shushing.
3. Brief talk, usually during commercials.
4. A tendency to hurry through meals if it is time to watch a program. Many meals are eaten in front of the set, and much "snacking" takes place during viewing.
5. The presence of children with adults.
6. Despite elements of discord, TV is an occasion for family gatherings, "some of them compact and cozy."

He reported his findings in *The Advancement of Science*, 16:349, 1960, published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science in London. The material reported is to be part of Dr. Belson's forthcoming book, *Television and Society*.

Science News Letter, June 11, 1960

## ANTHROPOLOGY

# Simultaneous Invention

WHEN TWO or more men make the same invention or other scientific advance simultaneously, the work may not be as independent as it appears, a Swedish anthropologist reported.

Dr. Tertius Chandler of Goteborg, Sweden, showed in a report in the *American Anthropologist*, 62:495, 1960, that three of the most famous examples of parallel "independent" advance—those of Darwin-Wallace, Newton-Leibniz and Adams-Leverrier—were not truly independent.

He said that Wallace had read Darwin's first book which fell only a little short of Wallace's conclusions about sexual natural selection. Both finally thought of natural selection while reading Malthus.

Newton and Leibniz wrote to each other while formulating infinitesimal calculus. Adams and Leverrier both calculated the location of the planet Neptune after Bouvard had told astronomers where to look.

Rediscovery of Mendel's genetic theories by three men independently is explained by an article praising Mendel and written in 1899 by Correns, Dr. Chandler said. This article could have caused Vries and

Tschermak to become interested in Mendel's work.

Other examples of "independent" discovery or invention which can be traced back to a common connection are cited by Dr. Chandler:

Three different Dutchmen have been credited with the discovery of the telescope in 1608. Now encyclopedias, including the Dutch, Winkler Prins, state that the telescope was invented by Della Porta in Italy in 1580.

Scientists who worked on anesthetics were all inspired by Davy's laughing gas, Dr. Chandler said. The periodic table is credited to both Mendeleev and Meyer, but they continued the work of Newlands who in turn got the general idea from Chancourtois. As for the telephone, Dr. Chandler states it was invented already in 1857 by Meucci.

Photography is called one of the few genuine cases of simultaneous invention by Dr. Chandler. Niepce and Daguerre were inspired by lithography. Independently, Talbot got his incentive from Wollaston's temporary-image star camera.

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## ANTHROPOLOGY

## Tools, 10,000 Years Old, Found in South America

MAN LIVED as a nomad in South America 10,000 years ago, perhaps a thousand years earlier than thought previously, two archaeologists of the University of Oklahoma Museum reported.

Prof. William J. Mayer-Oakes and Robert E. Bell reported to a meeting of the Society for American Archaeology at Yale University that they discovered stone tools and other man-made objects estimated to be up to 10,000 years old near Ilalo Mountain, Ecuador.

The objects included several styles of projectile points, scrapers, blades, graters, drill and cores made of obsidian. These show similarity to tools found in Fell's Cave, Chile, and also to some early types found in North America.

Previous estimates of the age of man in South America has been set at about 9,000 years ago.

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