

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 126, No. 11, September 15, 1984

E. G. Sherburne Jr. Publisher
Joel Greenberg Editor
Dietrick E. Thomsen Senior Editor/
Physical Sciences
Laurie Jackson Phillips Managing Editor
Wendy McCarron Production/Design
Director
Bruce Bower Behavioral Sciences
Deborah Franklin, Joanne Silberner Biomedicine
Julie Ann Miller Life Sciences
Janet Raloff, Ivars Peterson Policy/Technology
Jonathan Eberhart Space Sciences
Susan Welch Assistant to
the Editor
Steven I. Benowitz, Christine Mlot Science Writer Interns
Jane M. Livermore Books
Donald R. Harless Business Manager
Scherago Associates Advertising
Fred Dieffenbach, Sales Director
1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036

Copyright © 1984 by Science Service, Inc.,
Editorial and Business Offices,
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS
without written permission of the publisher is
prohibited.

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50;
3 yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is
required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be
addressed. Include zip code. For new subscriptions
only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second
class postage paid at Washington, D. C. Title
registered as trademark U. S. and Canadian Patent
Offices. Published every Saturday by SCIENCE
SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D. C.
20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Nothing new under the sun?

The tree peony article ("Peonies," SN: 7/28/84, p. 57) gives one the impression that European awareness of the Chinese plant began in 1880. A report of *Paeonia moutan* was first published in 1655 by Martinus Martini, a Jesuit missionary who was in China from 1643 to 1652. In *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, Martini reports that "Meutan" is found in its wild state in the mountains of the southwestern part of Shensi. Tree peonies were grown by gardeners and then shipped over 1,000 miles to Canton by river boats in open baskets without soil. In Canton

This Week

- 164 Liquid Carbon: The Melting of a Diamond
- 164 Genes of AIDS-linked virus cloned
- 165 Infant death tied to dopamine excess
- 165 A mathematical surprise: Proving the Bieberbach conjecture
- 166 Of fibers clear, and pearls and beer
- 166 An enzyme commits chemical suicide
- 167 Litigation a threat to vaccine supply?
- 167 Alzheimer's report: Mapping cell damage
- 167 Sugar/water switch allows dry life
- 173 Dreams may be gone but not forgotten
- 173 Satellite planned for first extreme ultraviolet sky survey

Research Notes

- 172 Chemistry

Articles

- 168 What Mean These African Stones?
Cover: Venus rises over stones at the Namoratunga II site in Kenya. The 15-minute exposure shows the almost vertical (at an angle of 3.412°) trajectory of the planet. The virtually vertical rise of celestial bodies at the location is an important part of the argument that Namoratunga II was used by the ancient Cushites to determine their calendar. (Photo: Scott Davis)
- 170 In Search of Speedier Searches

Departments

- 163 Letters

Science Service Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.
Board of Trustees—President, Glenn T. Seaborg; Vice President, Gerald F. Tape; Treasurer, Willis Harlow Shapley; Secretary, Julius Duscha; Joseph W. Berg Jr.; Edward Bliss Jr.; Bowen C. Dees; David A. Goslin; Milton Harris; Hilleary F. Hoskinson; Elizabeth F. Neufeld; O. W. Riegel; H. Guyford Stever; John Troan; Deborah P. Wolfe.
Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver; Business Manager: Donald R. Harless.

they were potted and sold, the price depending on the number of buds per plant. After flowering, the plants were thrown away, as the climate at Canton is too hot to allow winter rest.

Sir Joseph Banks, of Kew, England, had sailed as naturalist with Captain Cook to the Far East. Having seen Chinese drawings and having read earlier accounts, perhaps the report by the Jesuit missionary Pierre Martial Cibot published in 1778, Banks became interested in tree peonies. He engaged a British surgeon, John Duncan, to produce a Moutan in Canton. On April 4, 1787, Mr. Duncan sent a tree peony back to England aboard the *London*. The peony survived the voyage, and was planted in the Royal

Botanical Gardens at Kew in 1789. The plant, originally named *Paeonia moutan banksii*, lived until 1842 when it was destroyed in a building operation.

Rob Moir
Curator of Natural History
Peabody Museum
Salem, Mass.

Correction: Cotton top tamarins are South American monkeys, not South African, as incorrectly stated in "Animal briefs" (SN: 8/18/84, p. 108).

SEPTEMBER 15, 1984

163