

THE HUMAN SKULL COMPOSED OF COAL

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The human skull reputedly fossilized in brown coal has been found to be an artistic fabrication. An appreciation of the status of this artifact removes an obstacle to our arriving at a better understanding of man's relationship to other organisms in the creation, as shown by the fossil record.

Introduction

The significance, for a proper understanding of creation and evolution, of a human skull composed of coal, hardly can be over estimated. In presenting a brief for evolution in 1959, geneticist Prof. J.B.S. Haldane¹ published the following:

. . . one can make a list of dozens of discoveries, any one of which would go far to disprove the theory of evolution. For example, if the skeleton of a man or a horse were discovered in the Cretaceous, or that of a reptile or a bird in the Devonian, I, for one, would regard most of my life's work as having been as futile as that of an astrologer. (p. 711)

A human coal skull without apparent doubt belongs in the evolution-disproving category; for according to uniformitarian geologists, coal was formed many millions of years before man was on earth.

For those who hold a flood geology position which includes a concept of coal formation and deposit of all fossils within the last 10,000 years, such a skull presents no problem. In fact, according to this position we might expect to find a variety of such fossils which truly are anomalous according to a concept of geological ages. If no human remains have been found in coal beds, man may not have been present when and/or where the coal was formed. Therefore an understanding of the status of an artifact such as a coal skull is a help in our determining the pattern of creation.

Background Literature

The existence of a coal skull in Germany was brought to public attention recently by Whitcomb and Morris²; and others such as Heil³ have mentioned it subsequently. The work describing the skull in English is by Otto Stutzer,⁴ who said:

Animal remains in coal beds are extremely rare. The animals which once inhabited the great coal swamps were terrestrial forms, the bodies of which decomposed after death just as rapidly as do the bodies of animals living in existing primitive forests and moors. In the coal collection of the Mining Academy in Freiberg there is a puzzling human skull composed of brown-coal and manganese and

phosphatic limonite, but its source is not known. This skull was described by Karsten and Dechen in 1842. (p. 271)

The 1842 paper was authored by a Mr. Kersten⁵ (journal editors were Karsten and Dechen) who described briefly a seven pound skull about as hard as talcum. This skull had been obtained by a mining engineer named Mr. Leschner from the estate of a deceased pharmacist, and the skull had been shown by Leschner at a meeting of a local mining club.

Kersten analyzed the skull's chemical components and reported that pieces which crumbled off the skull showed it to be composed of approximately one half brown iron ore (iron and manganese oxides rich in phosphoric acid) and one half organic brown coal (lignite). The organic matter of the skull was closer to lignite than to peat. Under a magnifying lens there was no trace of bone substance.

Kersten concluded that all animal matter had disappeared from the original substance of the skull, and he suggested that the skull in some way had come into a brown coal mine or similar location and that here the changes took place. He gave his opinion about the chemical processes which could have been involved, but did not suggest when this may have occurred.

Professor Stutzer's Work

The German professor Otto Stutzer lived from 1881-1936. In 1923 the second edition of his book entitled *Allgemeine Kohlengeologie (General Coal Geology)* was published. In a footnote on page 274 the puzzling coal skull is mentioned.

Four years later Stutzer⁶ published a more detailed write-up on this skull. This reference was obtained through the generous help of Dr. W. W. Howells, Harvard Professor of Anthropology, and his German friend, Dr. G. Smolla. Translation was done by Mr. Wolfram Graber of the German Department at The King's College. A translation of the entire report follows:

The "brown coal skull" in the geological collection of the Academy of Mining, Freiberg (Saxon). In the geological collection of the Freiberg Mining Academy a brown coal skull has existed for almost a century, already having been described as early as the year 1842 in Karstens *Archiv* (vol. 16, pages 372-375). In my *General Coal Geology* (2nd ed., p. 274) this "puzzling" piece also has been mentioned in a footnote.

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The head has the shape of a human skull. It consists of brown coal matter, limonite and triplite. Our institution received the piece from the collection of a deceased pharmacist; the original source is unknown. The description which was published more than 80 years ago assumed that the skull somehow fell into a bog* in which its cavities were filled with peat. At the same time the bone substance was replaced by phosphorus containing limonite and triplite. The organic embedding mass is brown coal and not recent peat; the analysis performed at that time led to this conclusion.

Naturally it would be valuable to investigate the object for its authenticity and its age, since it indeed could be the valuable remains of a primitive man. However, a close examination revealed unfortunately that this skull is a skillful fake. For the sake of safety the head was sent to the ethnographic division of the Zwinger Museum in Dresden with the request for expert opinion. This competent institution immediately ascertained that it is a fake, which is to say a skull molded from brown coal mixed with limonite and triplite, Dr. Otto Stutzer, Freiberg (Saxon).

In 1936 Professor Stutzer visited the United States, and he discussed translation and established plans for cooperating with chief translator, Dr. Adolph C. Noe, in preparing an English edition of his *Allgemeine Kohlengeologie*. However, Professor Stutzer died later that same year. Dr. Noe proceeded with the translation, but he died in 1939 before its completion. The manuscript was finished by scientific associates of Dr. Noe. The University of Chicago Press published the work and their files indicate that Dr. Gilbert H. Cady was the last person with whom they corresponded with regard to the book. In the preface of the English translation, an explanation is offered that the book is:

. . . in part a translation of the second edition of Kohle (*Allgemeine Kohlengeologie*) by Otto Stutzer and in part a translation of a revision and abbreviation of certain chapters of that edition by Professor Stutzer. (p. v)

If the 1940 translation contained revisions of the 1923 edition, the question arises, how is it that a report published in 1927 bearing the name of Otto Stutzer could designate the skull as a fake, while his later book mentions it only as a "puzzling human skull"? We are led to wonder if the 1927 report could be spurious, but I have not discovered any reason to question the authenticity of this account.

In view of the fact that both author and chief translator died during preparation of the English

manuscript, it is plausible that there was a transfer of information from the German book of 1923 to its English edition of 1940 without benefit of the 1927 report.

Present Status of the Skull

Dr. Gilbert H. Cady, who worked mainly as an editor on the American edition of Stutzer's book, did not feel that he could be of any help regarding the book's reference to a "puzzling human skull." However, in order to help me obtain further information about the skull he suggested that I write Professor G. Roselt at the Freiberg Mining Academy. (Note: His address is Prof. Dr. G. Roselt, Abteilung Kohlengeologie des Instituts für Geologie der Bergakademie 92, Freiberg, Saxon, D.D.R. (East Germany).) Professor Roselt, who is a coal geologist and biologist, informed me by personal letter that this skull was one of the first pieces to become part of the coal collection at their mining academy. He says that it still is in the collection.

Professor Roselt and an associate, Professor Bach from the Institute for Anthropology at Jena (Note: His address is Prof. Dr. Herbert Bach, Institut für Anthropologie und Volkerkunde, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, 69 Jena, Kollegengasse 10 D.D.R.), both have observed the skull and have indicated in personal letters (early 1968) that, according to their studies so far, the skull is not a fossil but rather a falsification.

In a letter written to me in the spring of 1968, Professor W. W. Howells, referred to previously, indicated that he had no further information than that which he sent in a 1959 letter. In the letter he said that Dr. G. Smolla points out that since the head was made before 1842 (which was before human evolution became a popular issue), it hardly could be a counterfeit human skull. Dr. Smolla feels that it simply is an artistic effort, likely of the Rococo Period.

How old is the coal contained within the skull? Depending upon its source, according to most authorities,^{47,89} this brown coal would have been formed some time during Eocene to Miocene, or 60,000,000 to 20,000,000 years ago. Brown coal is thought to be considerably younger than anthracite (hard coal) and bituminous coal (soft coal). Brown coal appears to be somewhat intermediate between soft coal and peat.

At the present time the earliest of human fossils is *Homo habilis* from Bed I in Olduvai Gorge with a suggested antiquity of less than 2,000,000 years.^{10,11} Some have felt that *Ramapithecus* (*Kenyapithecus*) should be classified as hominid and that the hominids were distinct 14,000,000 years ago.^{12,13} The above dates may be open to doubt, but at any rate, it does not appear that

*Kersten actually said, "a brown coal mine or similar place."

authenticated human fossils have been found yet in material having the suggested antiquity of coal.

Editor's Note: Time estimates given above are based on acceptance of radioisotope dating, and usual geological time scales. For a discussion of reasons many members of the Creation Research Society question these suggested dates see the September, 1968, *Quarterly* "Radiocarbon Dating," "Radiological Dating and Some Applications," and "Radiocarbon Confirms Biblical Creation."

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SQUARE PEGS IN ROUND HOLES OR RIDICULOUS "CONVERGENCES"

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An extensive presentation is made of a remarkable series of identical biochemical entities which are found in organisms widely separated taxonomically. Enough data are provided to illustrate that one can propose the most unlikely relationships based upon biochemical information, when employing the idea that resemblance means relationship—the assumption upon which the theory of evolution is based. What do biochemical affinities really mean—relationship by descent from a common ancestor, parallel variation, or are they examples of God's quotation of His previous work?

If such biochemical entities as the serological blood groups are good criteria in evolutionary phylogenies—and in this day of molecular biology we are beginning to pay more attention to biochemistry than to anatomy in taxonomic studies—I am equally interested in other biochemical species and genus markers. What do they say? Do they thunder as faintly as the blood groups about our "prehuman" parents? Or is their language unequivocal and congruent with blood group findings? If not, which shall we believe—or shall we discard evolutionary taxonomy on the molecular level?

Fundamentally the theory of evolution is based on the idea that resemblance means relationship. This is as true among the insects as the primates, but means more to us in the latter connection because the concept bears directly upon the origins of mankind. We may accept this axiom or not—but we can scarcely have it both ways at once. The evolutionist is uncomfortable

here—or was till he invented the term "convergence." Now he has an "out" wherever resemblances bear down embarrassingly hard on his theory. Still there are too many biological facts, if he looks closely enough, which do not fit into the phylogenies he has carefully drawn up against an evolutionary backdrop.

Let us see what enzymes and tissue fluids add to the picture.

Glands Producing Defensive Secretions

Glands of this type are so variable in every way as to demonstrate that they have arisen independently in the course of "evolution."¹ Should we insist that they are vital to phylogeny?

Arthropods of very diverse types may produce similar components in their defensive secretions. Thus the spray trans-2-hexenal occurs in Hemiptera, cockroaches, a myrmecine ant and many plants. Formic acid is secreted by ants, carabid beetles and notodontid caterpillars. The p-benzoquinones are found in beetles, earwigs, millipedes, a cockroach and a phalangid spider.

On the other hand, the defensive glands in the

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