

Davidson Black Encyclopedia Article

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1884-1934

Canadian anatomist and paleoanthropologist credited with the discovery of the hominid fossil known as Peking Man in the 1920s. Black received medical training in Canada and then studied with one of England's leading anatomists, Grafton Eliot-Smith, in 1914. Under Eliot-Smith's tutelage Black became interested in human origins and finding the earliest humans. He, along with many other scientists, believed that the first humans had appeared in Central Asia. In 1919 Black was offered a position at the Peking (Beijing) Union Medical School in China. In 1926 several fossil human teeth were discovered outside Peking at Zhoukoudian. Black examined the site briefly, but no more material was discovered. Convinced more fossils waited to be found, he received a grant to continue work there in 1927. By 1929 another tooth and skull fragments were unearthed. When enough material was recovered, Black determined that it was an unknown type of hominid and labeled it *Sinanthropus pekinensis* (Peking Man). It was later determined that Peking Man was a member of the group *Homo erectus*.