

"These failures must tell us something." (p. 186) "Their absence must tell us something." (p. 187)

Sagan can be incisive, clear-headed, fair-minded; I wish those qualities could be applied to the whole book rather than to only a third of its chapters.

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Additional Comments on Carl Sagan by Zan Stevenson

Carl Sagan died — too young — on December 20, 1996. We must acknowledge that he was not averse to the scientific study of anomalies nor to the purposes of the Society for Scientific Exploration. In 1988 he addressed the Society's Seventh Annual Meeting (at Cornell University) on the topic of "Critical Thinking."

In the book reviewed here we find on page 302 an exemption from his strictures for three lines of investigation. He wrote: "...there are three claims in the ESP field which, in my opinion, deserve serious study: (1) that by thought alone humans can (barely) affect random number generators in computers; (2) that people under mild sensory deprivation can receive thoughts or images 'projected' at them; and (3) that young children sometimes report the details of a previous life, which upon checking, turn out to be accurate and which they could not have known about in any other way than reincarnation. I pick these claims not because I think they are likely to be valid (I don't), but as examples of contentions that might be true."

Reports of two of the three lines of investigation that Sagan believed "deserve serious study" have figured prominently in the pages of this Journal. He would have approved of that.

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In the Footsteps of the Russian Snowman, by Dmitri Bayanov. Cryptologos Publishers, 12, Bloc 3, Osenny Boulevard, Moscow, 121 614 Russia, 1996, 240 pp., ISBN 5-900229-18-1.

This is the world's first English-language book on the searches, conducted throughout the lands of the former Soviet Union, for the elusive relict hominoids known popularly as "snowmen." Although a number of books by foreign authors have been written, at least in part, about snowmen in Russia, this is the first one written entirely by Russian researchers on the subject.

The simple fact that this book could even be published in Russia speaks vol-

umes about how freedom of expression has evolved there since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Earlier, as is well known, the Soviet state controlled all publishing and other communications and media activities, and only those elements of information and opinions and other lines of thought which met with government approval could hope to see the light of day in print.

In 1958, the Soviet Academy of Sciences became interested for a time in the subject of the Himalayan yeti, and a major expedition was undertaken into the Pamirs in an effort to establish the existence of yetis or other "snowmen" there. Unfortunately, this expedition failed to bring back any meaningful evidence. As a result, in a great scramble to protect reputations and to save face, the Soviet scientific establishment promptly declared research on "snowmen" to be a pseudo-science, to be classified along with astrology and parapsychology. This meant that any further publication on the topic was banned, a ban which lasted until the dissolution of the Soviet state.

One small and carping criticism which I might make of this book relates to its title: The use of the term "snowman" is derived from the expression "abominable snowman," which has been used to designate the yeti of the Himalayas. It is generally held, however, that the yeti is *not* a hominoid but, rather, is quite likely an as-yet unidentified species of ape.¹ In consequence, the yeti technically does not merit the designation of "man" or "snowman." On the other hand, the creatures described in Bayanov's book are clearly hominoids, and thus deserving to be called some sort of "man." However, because of the association of the term "snowman" with the yeti, I have here used the expression "wildman" to designate the hominoids reported by Bayanov.

Properly speaking, Dmitri Bayanov is both author and editor of this work; he has assembled and edited a variety of reports by various Russian researchers, all of whom are respected scientists in their own fields, and he has also contributed a number of sections describing his own, original field research work.

The contents of the book are well-organized, well edited, and provide fascinating and colorful reading both for the scientist and the interested layman. There are numerous illustrations, including photographs, drawings and sketches, and the reports are well referenced. Moreover, the quality of printing and binding of the book is surprisingly good, considering the unsettled and chaotic conditions prevailing when it was produced.

In summary, the book is a compilation of much of what is known about the hairy, bipedal, man-like creature, known variously as "snowmen," "wildmen," "men of the forest," *etc.*, which apparently have been encountered in various regions of Russia, Central Asia and Siberia throughout most of recorded history. The creatures have appeared regularly in art and writings, in travelers' accounts and scientific reports, for at least the past 2500 years.

¹ Heuvelmans, B.(1995). *On the Track of Unknown Animals*. London: Kegan Paul International Ltd.

The material is presented separately by major geographic regions, and then in chronological or historical order within each region. The major regions covered are scattered across the lands of the former Soviet Union: the Caucasus, the Pamirs and the Tien-Shan Mountains, Siberia, European Russia, and the Russian Far East.

Within each region, the unfolding story begins with ancient artifacts, such as carvings and gold and silver works from the pre-Christian era, as well as Middle Eastern and Oriental writings and drawings from olden times, all illustrating hairy, man-like creatures. The story progresses through tales of long-ago encounters with such creatures, and moves on into modern times with detailed eyewitness reports of encounters and sightings, a number of these having occurred just in the past few years.

There would appear to be at least two distinct family types of these hairy hominoids: One is the creature of the Caucasus, studied extensively by Dr. Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, and known by its name in the Kabardino-Balkarian language as "almasty." The other seems to be somewhat larger, and to bear more than a passing resemblance to the sasquatch of the Pacific Northwest of the North American continent.

Indeed, this latter leads Bayanov to ask, with tongue in cheek, "Does Russia also have its own 'sasquatchski'?"

The reports of earlier encounters as well as recent eyewitness reports all are consistent in their description of the creatures: they are bipedal, they walk erect, they are covered with hair that is generally brown to light gray in color; they are extremely powerful, with proportionately longer arms than in man; they are remarkably fast runners, and can climb steep slopes and cliffs with astonishing ease; they have no speech, but make mumbling, whistling sounds. The sasquatch-like hominoids stand two meters or more in height, and many eyewitnesses report that their eyes glow brilliantly at night. They are said in general not to be hostile to man but, rather, to retreat from the presence of man.

One cannot fail to be impressed by the abundance of indirect evidence for the existence of these creatures which this book presents: detailed eyewitness reports, plaster cards of footprints, droppings, tufts of fur and hair, observation of nests, *etc.*, and, in one case, even the discovery of bones, not human but also not belonging to any known animal.

Most telling of all are the carefully screened and selected eyewitness reports, which come across with eminent credibility: Marie-Jeanne Koffmann alone has assembled and checked out more than 500 such reports. These reports come from two categories of witnesses: first, there are reliable local people (country people), such as villagers and elders, shepherds, farmers, hunters, fishermen, reindeer herders, who have little formal education and little knowledge of the world at large, but whose knowledge of nature and whose faculties of observation are beyond reproach. Then, there are the serious and objective outsiders; people such as government officials, veterinary physicians, military officers, engineers, geologists, professors, and scientists, whose business led

them to the remote areas where they experienced chance encounters with "wildmen."

In the late 19th and early 20th century there are a number of reports of "wildmen" being killed or captured. In some instances the captured creature succeeded in escaping, while in others it was confined and ultimately domesticated to a certain extent. Several reports tell of female "wildmen" being trained to do simple household tasks, although no language ability ever emerged. Perhaps more astonishingly, there are also reports of crossbreeding between female "wildmen" and human men. The offspring were reported to have a strange combination of physical and mental traits — some human, some not. In one instance, the grave of such an offspring was found long after its death, and the skeleton exhumed. The skull was reported to show both ancient features as well as features of modern man. This, of course, would suggest that the "wildmen" are very close relatives of our own species.

In general, all of the enormous body of evidence accumulated for the existence of "wildmen" in Russia is indirect and circumstantial; the "clincher" still eludes us — we still do not have a verifiable specimen, either living or dead, nor do we even have so much as a complete hide or skull. Nevertheless, the indirect evidence assembled by Bayanov and his colleagues is so extensive and abundant, and so convincing, that one cannot avoid the conclusion that these creatures do indeed exist. Thus, it would seem only logical to pursue field research to the point where one or more living specimens have been captured unharmed, examined thoroughly by qualified zoologists, and the findings announced to the world.

Overall, the eyewitness reports over the past century show a pattern of modern man extending his territory steadily outwards, and pushing his primate rivals farther back into increasingly remote and inaccessible mountain fastnesses. Earlier, observations of man-like creatures occurred across great expanses of remote parts of Russia, but, beginning in the early part of the 20th century, these have declined steadily in frequency, which suggests that human pressure is pushing the "wildman" population steadily back and back, toward the edge of extinction.

Will this happen before we are able finally to establish firm and verifiable contact with our cousins — to make their acquaintance, to establish links with them, and so be able to provide them with shelter and protection?

For hominologists, cryptozoologists and other scientists, for amateur zoologists and the interested layman, this book is fascinating and highly recommended reading.

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