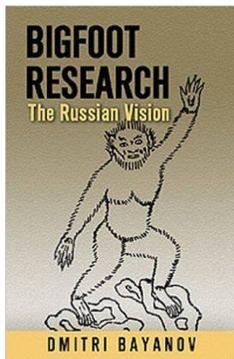


Book Review

Bigfoot Research: The Russian Vision. By Dmitri Bayanov. Compiled by Christopher L. Murphy and edited by Roger Knights. Surrey, B.C. Canada and Blaine, WA, USA: Hancock House. ©2011. 431 pp. ISBN 978-0-88839-706-5. \$29.95 (paper).



The contribution of Russian investigators to the subject of unidentified living hominoids has been long and influential. Probably no other single Russian investigator has had Dmitri Bayanov's impact. Due to his persistent energy and prolific writings about relict hominoids, Bayanov has been a major influence in the field for decades.

“Bigfoot Research: The Russian Vision” is a compilation of Bayanov's writings over the years and a showcase of his thoughts and findings. It traces his involvement in bigfoot research from his first interest, in 1964, in the work of Russian Professor Boris Porshnev, and his subsequent field research with Dr. Marie-Jeanne Koffman in the Caucasus Mountains, to his interactions with fellow investigators worldwide in the present day.

Aside from his notable enthusiasm for his subject, Bayanov has made his mark with his engaging writing style. Trained in philosophy, sociology and anthropology, he has approached Bigfoot research through the methods of field investigation, scientific corroboration and, distinctly, a wide ranging exploration of folklore and legend which

suggests the reality of living unknown higher primates. In the course of this research, Bayanov became convinced of the close biological relationship of Bigfoot creatures to humans, more so than to apes. He coined the name “homins” to describe them, and terms their study hominology. As the taxonomic Family name for living and extinct higher primates, including humans, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans is Hominidae, hominology is arguably an apt label, covering a wide range of possible identities.

In Bayanov's own words in the Prologue, his viewpoint is characterized by three specifics: “It is based on the combined evidence regarding these primates obtained in different parts of the world, such as Russia, North America, China and Australia in past centuries and in modern times; it regards these humanlike beings as relict hominids (hominins by latest primate classification), i.e., the closest relatives of man, *Homo sapiens* (amazingly, the bottom line is that Bigfoots may even be humans); and it firmly takes the existence of these still enigmatic bipeds for a biological fact, not a popular myth or a scientific hypothesis.”

In the course of charting his journey in Bigfoot research, Bayanov navigates three general eras, well documented with

eyewitness encounters, his own field observations, and compelling historical accounts and chronicles. He dedicates “Bigfoot Research: The Russian Vision” to the memory of Boris Fedorovich Porshnev (1905-1972) his self-described mentor. A philosophy professor, Porshnev introduced Bayanov to the subject of possible living relict hominoids. He himself suspected that they may be living Neanderthals, and he was active in establishing a scholarly Russian study group for the subject. This group continues today at Moscow’s Darwin Museum, with Bayanov at its head. This initial era, with participation by academics like Porshnev, Marie-Jeanne Koffman and Pyotr Smolin, laid the groundwork for the future of Russian hominoid research. From the beginning a major characteristic of their approach has been the integration of myth, legend and historical documentation into the subject matter.

Bayanov participated in field investigations and developed the viewpoint that relict hominoids are responsible for much of the world’s lore regarding demons, fauns, satyrs, trolls, and the like. He uncovered sufficient folklore in worldwide cultures to form a reasonably consistent picture of hairy bipeds who live in the woods, avoid humans, yet sometimes interact with them in remarkable ways. His exploration of this aspect of the matter is always engaging. Unlike many American investigators, who tend to take a strictly anthropological or zoological approach while relegating native legends to a subset of investigatory interest, Bayanov sees European, Eurasian and indeed worldwide anecdotal evidence as valid and culturally consistent. He believes that native and historical anecdotal contributions, including Linnaeus’s seminal

description of *Homo troglodytes*, are to be taken seriously and are evidence of a very long history of interaction between modern humans and our closest living relatives.

Following his initial exposure to, and immersion in, the subject, Bayanov and his colleague Igor Bourtsev expanded their influence beyond Russia. The catalyst for this was the notorious Patterson-Gimlin film of 1967. The Russians became very involved in the study of the film and at this point cemented their relationships with investigators in North America, including Rene Dahinden, John Green, Dr. Grover Krantz and others. In fact, despite a continuing emphasis on the role of folklore, they were the first to actually undertake a scientific biomechanical analysis of the P-G film subject. Their conclusion, provided by Russian biomechanical expert Dr. Dmitri Donskoy, and later repeated in England by Dr. Donald Grieve as well, was that the subject is a natural being and not a man in a costume. Bayanov and Bourtsev offered a \$100,000 reward to anyone who could definitively disprove the film. The reward remains unclaimed. They were also active in the organization in 1982 of a scientific society, the International Society of Cryptozoology, for promoting research into the subject of “hidden animals,” including unknown hairy bipeds.

During this second phase of study, Bayanov became further convinced that the reported creatures were hominins, members of the human clade, and not apes. Embracing a morally humanistic viewpoint, he promoted a “no-kill” ethic that brought him into conflict with hard scientists like Grover Krantz and those investigators, like John Green, who felt that the anecdotal evidence from North

America supported the idea that a big unknown ape, not a wild man, was at large.

Here the matter rested in unresolved limbo until the dawn of the 21st Century and the emergence of an accumulative body of anecdotal evidence from North America regarding so-called “habituated” Bigfoot creatures. People were claiming that these beings sometimes persisted in proximity to remote farms and ranches and that some degree of contact was possible. Drawing on the experiences of chimpanzee researcher Jane Goodall and gorilla researcher Dian Fossey, Bayanov encouraged careful investigation of these alleged events as they were uncovered. He felt that the resulting reports correlated well with the Russian and Eurasian tales of Rusalkas and Domovoys which he had chronicled. In this third era, advances in DNA science were applied to various biological samples as well, and acoustic science was enabling analysis of audio recordings alleged to have been made of Bigfoot vocalizations. The possibility of gaining greater knowledge of what, exactly, Bigfoot creatures are seemed plausible under the combined efforts of these initiatives.

The Russian position has at various times been that the rules of courtroom evidence would long ago have validated the reality of Bigfoot creatures. That is, the preponderance of anecdotal, trace, and physical evidence (footprints, hairs, audio recordings, the P-G

film) has proved the case by legal standards for their being actual living beings. Perhaps, but science is not the courtroom and it demands a type specimen of any living thing in order for it to be recognized as part of the natural world. So despite the preponderance of evidence, such as it may be, many scientists refuse to recognize the possibility of Bigfoot’s reality, while some of their fellows are willing to take the evidence seriously and hope for, and sometimes participate in, attempts to settle the matter.

Controversial at times, witty and compelling, “Bigfoot Research: The Russian Vision” is a wide ranging survey of Dmitri Bayanov’s personal immersion in the science, politics, and lore of the fascinating subject of possible unclassified living hominoids. It offers an unmatched compendium of lore suggesting avenues for further investigation. Little is left unexplored, including reports of alleged telepathy and the possibility of Bigfoot speech. The Russian Vision encompasses wide possibilities and leaves few stones unturned. For Bayanov, in the end, there can be no doubt – wildmen are real, and mainstream science has a duty to acknowledge it as soon as possible.

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