

Bigfoot, Cyclops, Yeti or just hype?

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Article

New Sunday Times - 05/28/2006

YES, the Johor Government wants to get to the bottom of the Bigfoot mystery. Bigfoot has managed to evade capture and has instead captured headlines. So far, all evidence of Bigfoot's existence has been unpersuasive.

The Bigfoot mania is not new. Humanoid ape-like creatures have been sighted for centuries in many parts of the world. In the forests of North America, there have been sightings of Skunk Ape, Momo, Grassman and Woods Devil.

One of the earliest sightings of the footprints was in 1811 by a Canadian trader in Alberta. By the 1950s, the sightings were said to be almost regular. There are also similar tales of mythical giant apes in the oral traditions of Europe.



Austrian adventurer and Mt Everest climber Reinhold Messner, pictured with a stuffed bear in a Vienna museum, claimed in his 1998 book *Yeti* that the mythical creature that has terrified Tibetans for thousands of years was not a humanoid ape but a large bear. - Reuters file picture

In Asia, there is the Abominable Snowman, or the Yeti, in the Himalayas; and Australia, the Yowie Man. Could Bigfoot or Hantu Jarang Gigi (snaggle toothed ghost) be the Malaysian version?

While the National Geographic (Oct 23, 2003) reported that thousands of people claim to have seen the hairy hominoid, the evidence of its existence remains fuzzy.

There are few clear photographs of the oversized beast. No bones have been found. Instead, countless pranksters have admitted faking footprints. Still, some are convinced of its existence.

As the debate rages on, Malaysians were awakened to the possibility of another legendary creature — this one a one-eyed beast. In this case, it resembles the Cyclops, the creature in Greek mythology.

It is said to have a single eye in the middle of the forehead and belongs to a race of giants with a foul disposition. As primordial sons of Sky (Uranus) and Earth (Gaia), the first generation goes by various names, such as Brontes (thunderer), Steropes (flasher) and Argos (brightener). Volcanoes were believed to be the aftermath of their underground work, giving their names to their vocation as the first smiths and metal workers.

The most famous Cyclops perhaps is Polyphemus, the one-eyed son of Poseidon and Thoosa. He was left

blinded after fighting with Homer's Odysseus who was also king of Ithaca.

Homer described the Cyclops as barbarous and pastoral savages who ate humans. This is sometimes seen as an allegory of the barbarians, the non-Greeks.

The subsequent generation of Cyclops such as Telemus (seer), after losing the skill of metallurgy, became a band of lawless shepherds in Sicily.

One hypothesis about the origin of the Cyclops' single eye has its roots in the story that in ancient times, smiths wore an eye patch over one eye. This was to prevent them from being blinded in both eyes by flying sparks while working as smiths.

Yet another possible origin for the Cyclops legend points to the prehistoric dwarf elephant skulls — about twice the size of a human skull said to have been found by the Greeks in Crete.

Due to the large central nasal cavity (for the trunk) in the skull, it might have been believed that this was a large, single, eye-socket. This, however, could be a misidentification of the mundane creature.

Still, there is another type of Cyclops that belongs to the animated TV series, Futurama, where there is a she-character that resembles a Cyclops, named Turanga Leela.

Apart from her one eye, she is almost a normal human.

At another level though, the use of the word Cyclops is more real. It refers to species of crustacea related to lobsters, crabs and shrimps. These invertebrates with a hard outer shell are named after the Cyclops because, like the mythical creature, the microscopic animals have only one eye.

Given all the uncertainty over Bigfoot, it would be equally interesting to track down the Cyclops in our midst, just like the search for the Bigfoot. Interested anyone?

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