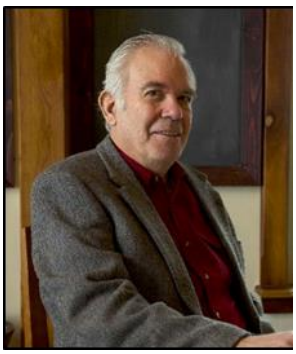
Book Review

Yeti: The Ecology of a Mystery. By Daniel C. Taylor. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. ©2017. ISBN-13: 978-0199469383. 416 pp. $45 (hardcover).



Some will recognize the connection between this book and a previous work by this author titled, *Something Hidden Behind the Ranges: A Himalayan Quest*, under the name Daniel Taylor-Ide, published in 1995. This was my first introduction to Taylor and his personal search for the yeti (then still a lower case "yeti"). Indeed, there is overlap between these two works, as the latter is the continuation and apparent culmination of Taylor's 60-year quest for the mysterious hominoid, the Yeti (now capitalized, the significance of this intentional alteration to become clearer hereafter). In *Yeti,* Taylor eloquently expresses the voice of the naturalist, the conservationist, the philosopher, even metaphysicist. There is a level of contemplation, which draws one into both the explicit initial aim of his quest, and the subtler ultimate implications culminating from his life-long search. There is an added charm in the telling, as portions of the initial narrative are related through the perspective of Jesse, his then young son, with a Winnie-the-Pooh allusion, no less. As a father myself of six inquisitive boys, I fully appreciate how a sense of wonder and also stewardship, can be rekindled when sharing experiences afresh through the youthful eyes of one's posterity. A matured introspection is apparent in Taylor's latest writing.

Taylor's Himalayan quest evolves over time, the quarry taking on an iconic role as a metaphorical vicar for wildness in an increasingly tamed world – hence, the now capitalized "Yeti." There is the assertion, perhaps resignation, that the mystery of the yeti has been solved – it is concluded to be a bear; but the spirit of the Yeti epitomizes the ecology of the Himalaya, which is ultimately the motivation behind his role in the creation of two national parks in Nepal. In his words, the quest for the Yeti is not so much a search for the wildman, but a search for the wildness in man. Poetic indeed, and perhaps insightful, but some will perceive this as something of a cop out. For them, the question of a novel species of relict hominoid inhabiting the high valleys of the Himalayas remains.

For the purposes of this review, intended for the pages of the *RHI*, I will focus on Taylor's initial quest, which began in 1956, when as an 11-year-old, his fascination was piqued by a newspaper photo of the enigmatic footprint attributed to the abominable snowman, discovered by mountaineers Eric Shipton and Michael Ward, in 1951. I couldn't help but note the parallel to my own experience as a 10-year-old, transfixed by the premier showing of the Patterson-Gimlin film at the Spokane Coliseum, in 1968, revealing on the silver screen a Bigfoot in the wilds of northern California. I am sure we were both captivated by the mysterious figure of a wildman, or in my case, a *wildwomen*, from opposite sides of the world. Subsequently, while in fifth grade, Taylor wrote a research paper on the yeti, which informed and fueled his curiosity; my school report on sasquatch was written and

presented to my classmates in the sixth grade. In both cases, those papers marked the start of initially parallel – but ultimately divergent – lifelong pursuits.

Rightfully, Taylor states that the question boils down to the "test of footprints" – something is leaving tracks in the Himalayan snow. I concur. To this point, my research expertise centers on the evolution and adaptations of the bipedal hominoid foot, and therefore the footprint evidence of relict bipedal hominoids, especially sasquatch, occupies center stage in my mind as well. Indeed, short of a corpse or a definitive DNA sequence, the trace evidence of footprints provides the assurance of a physical entity, albeit an unknown one. Taylor's quest pivots upon the discovery of a line of footprints on a snowy ridge in the Barun Valley of eastern Nepal, in 1983; mine was brought into focus as I examined a long line of fresh 15-inch footprints, ascribed to sasquatch, on a muddy track near the Blue Mountains of southeastern Washington, in 1996 (see Meldrum, 2006).

In this quest, documentation is critical, as experience has taught me that many witness descriptions of footprints are ambiguous, often naïve, and largely unreliable. Individual perception can be rather subjective and when, for example, the author remarks that the geomorphic "footprint" in the Dumjanje Stone (p. 17) is exceedingly similar to the Shipton/Ward footprint, I have to ask myself just how incisive, how reliable are his subsequent comparisons. Herein arises the pervasive flaw in the basis of Taylor's conclusion – a shortcoming in terms of wanting scientific acumen and precision. There is an implicit expectation that the reader accept his assessment of footprint evidence, without his meeting an obligation to figure it explicitly; he fails to present it for our inspection in such a manner that we can objectively evaluate his arguments.

Consider the case of the tracks discovered by Taylor himself, which he returns to repeatedly throughout his narrative, and which mark a seminal juncture for this entire quest. I must give Taylor credit for including the gently critical admonishment from his mentor Bob Fleming upon returning from his find. To quote, "Bob goes on, why are you sure there are no hind foot overprints? Did you take enough photographs? From your description, you are more than exhausted. What? You found the long-sought tracks and didn't use a whole roll of film – then back that up using another full roll in case something was wrong with the first roll?"

In spite of the pivotal significance placed on these prints and their interpretation, they are *not* even figured in this volume. One has to refer to his unmentioned previous book to examine a *single* photograph of one print, without proper scale included (Fig. 1). A perennial criticism of the Shipton/Ward photos is that they only photographed a single print up close. And controversy surrounds the presumed photos of a track line, its association called into question. As a result, it is impossible to determine conclusively whether unusual features are consistent and real, or anomalous and artifactual. In Taylor's case, we are expected to accept his interpretation that the single print depicts inferred features, such as a divergent inner digit (the hallux), without any other prints for comparison to establish that morphology.

An overarching assumption and flaw in logic is gradually revealed, in the aftermath of the discovery of his "yeti" footprints. The unfolding implications of the perception of this discovery extend throughout his narrative. Taylor was initially convinced, albeit under trying circumstances, that these prints were attributable to the yeti. Eventually however he became convinced through comparison with dried ursine appendages that these were actually superimposed bear tracks. But no images of said paws or prints are ever provided for comparison.

Early on during our correspondence, Taylor

shipped me his casts of the footprints of *Ursus arctos thibetanus* to illustrate his determination that the prints in the snow were actually from a bear (Fig. 2). Also, in a recent on-line published interview,[1] Taylor supplied photos, taken by him, of the hind paw of a bear (Fig. 3). I have juxtaposed the images for ease of comparison of the form of each to better assess his interpretation (Fig. 4). The similarity is apparent.

Once Taylor realized that his "yeti" footprints were made by a bear, then he begins to generalize that *all* tracks attributed to the yeti are to be rationalized and dismissed merely as bear tracks, including the iconic Shipton/Ward footprint. It should be apparent, however, that taken on its face this generalization is a fallacious syllogism. It would be like saying: this object before me I will accept as an apple, but in reality it is an orange, therefore, all alleged "apples" are truly oranges. No experienced tracker would think the prints found by Taylor were anything but bear tracks – it was Taylor himself, who conflated the matter with the yeti. Once recognizing his error, is he justified in concluding that *all* tracks attributed to yeti were similarly misidentified bear tracks? Based on my extensive review of the footprint data, in many cases, yes, he is. But in *every case*? In his opinion, apparently so. I am not so sure.

In his introduction, Taylor suggests the mystery has been solved over the course of 1956 to 1983, the latter the year of his discovery of the footprints on the ridge in the Barun. He references his find going worldwide in the news media in the 1980s, presumably referring to the alleged discovery of a new bear in Nepal. However, he acknowledges that to his surprise this revelation did not solve the yeti question. Throughout his narrative, he equates the explanation of his footprint discovery with the explanation of *all* so-called yeti footprints and by default all *other* evidence, presumably laying to rest the mystery once and for all.

A past student of mine held an interest in forensic anthropology (and relict hominoids). She sought an opportunity to learn more about footprints, so I set her to work assisting me in researching and cataloging the photographic evidence of any and all footprints attributed to yeti. We assembled numerous published photos of footprints, and were able to track down several unpublished or little known photos, as well. We discovered, as Taylor notes from lining up the various stories in his yeti scrapbook, that "the evidence was a jumble." What we ultimately realized was that the majority of footprints were largely unintelligible due to melting and sublimation, and therefore *indeterminate*. Indeed, a significant fraction were blatantly bear tracks, and only a very few pointed to a potential hominoid trackmaker. Foremost among the latter are the Shipton/Ward and the McNeely/Cronin footprints. Obviously, a thorough appraisal of all the footprints attributed to yeti is beyond the scope of this review (although underway elsewhere), but a consideration of the instances most pertinent to the hominoid-hypothesis, in contradistinction to the bear-hypothesis, is warranted in light of their particular mention and treatment by Taylor.

The Shipton/Ward Footprints

The Shipton/Ward footprint has stood as *the* iconic, but enigmatic image of a yeti footprint since its discovery in 1951 (Fig. 5). There have been numerous interpretations offered to account for its unusual appearance. Given the crispness of the outline, in particular the toes and the snow ridges between them, it is difficult to image much distortion by melting or sublimation, and even more difficult to imagine anomalous distortions manifesting consistently over the mile-plus in which the track line was followed, if this print is

[1]https://www.livemint.com/Sundayapp/JTWrN8uAW18PeDmRXmSNJL/The-Yeti-hunter-of-Mussoorie.html

representative. The atypical proportion of the toes has given pause. Since close-ups of only one footprint were taken, it cannot be determined whether this is an accurate representation of the anatomy, or an artifact unique to this particular print. It has been suggested that the large second toe is an adaptation for rock climbing, serving as a piton of sorts. I am struck by the similarity of a condition known as macrodactyly, one that often afflicts the first and/or second toes (e.g. Chang et al., 2002). It might seem a case of special pleading to appeal to such a pathology to account for the seeming anomalous toes, but the resemblance is nonetheless striking (Fig. 6).

One who took an anatomist's approach to interpreting the Shipton/Ward footprint was Wladimir Tschernezky of the Zoology Department, Queen Mary College, London. He explained, "The clearness of the tracks of the 'Snowman' shown in the photograph taken by Eric Shipton has enabled me to make a reconstruction of its foot. This has been used to produce imprints in snow which show a great similarity to the natural tracks, suggesting that the model is accurate."

Using an enlargement of Shipton's photo to natural size, Tschernezky modelled a plaster cast of the inferred foot responsible for the imprint (Fig. 7). The accuracy was gauged by imprinting the model in the snow and comparing the resulting footprint to that in the photo. His analysis was notably published in *Nature* (Tschernezky, 1960). An editorial in the *New Scientist*, May 12, 1960, reported that "Tschernezky has convinced me that the Snowman must be taken seriously. The Shipton footprint, as he shows, is markedly different from those made by men, gorillas, langurs or the Himalayan black bears."

I had a different take on the inferred foot. An impressive feature of the 12-inch footprint was the broad rounded heel, suggesting considerable body mass. However, the presence of a raised crest and bits of snow directly where one would expect the greatest compression beneath that broad heel was inexplicable. Even Taylor seems to note a related aspect of this footprint topography, although his example is misapprehended. He suggests that "the Shipton footprint is *concave*, whereas if a bipedal hominid had made them the print should be *convex*. Bipedal walking requires an arch to launch the toes in each stride in their pivotal role. No arch shows in Shipton's print" (p. 331). Of course, an arch is *not* required for bipedalism – our hominin ancestors strode on flat flexible feet for millions of years before the emergence of the longitudinal arch. Toes serve a prehensile function as well, if not more than a propulsive role. The weight of compression will create concavity in the print where the body mass is successively conveyed – heel, midfoot, and forefoot. What has been interpreted as the outside edge of the heel (highlighted in blue in Fig. 8) is actually revealed a crescent-shaped melted area in snow and ice. When the full photographic print is examined, a similar, even more obvious icy crescent is present below the primary print, adjacent to what some have interpreted as a questionable second footprint. This reinterpretation makes sense as the center of the heel imprint should be concave as just mentioned, produced by the heel pad beneath the weight-bearing calcaneus. With this perspective in mind, it becomes apparent that the heel print is super-imposed over this melted crescent. The crest at the inner edge of the crescent marks the true *outer* edge of the foot, and the actual long axis of the foot (dotted line in Fig. 8) is actually located more medially than previously assumed. The deepest point beneath a tapering heel falls along that repositioned long axis running through the second digit. The resulting reconstruction has some similarities to that of Tschernezky's, but differs in the outline of the heel, lending it a more tapered hominoid-like appearance – or some might argue a more

ursine one (Fig. 9). However, the shift of the long axis of the foot medial-ward renders the hallux more proximal and more like the divergent hallux of a hominoid, rather than a bear.

It has been rumored that Shipton was something of a practical joker and somewho knew him, including Hillary, have insinuated that the whole thing was a prank gotten out of hand. In this connection, Taylor makes an inexplicable remark, asserting that in all of Michael Ward's writings, as a medical scientist, he does not discuss the footprint discovery, as one might expect of such a notable find. The statement is patently incorrect since Michael Ward has published at least twice at length on the discovery, once in the *Alpine Journal* and again in *Wilderness and Environmental Medicine*, as well as deliberations in television interviews. One might think that if it were indeed a practical joke gotten out of hand, that Ward would be reluctant to perpetuate it with further discussion, as Taylor implies. Instead, the physician mountaineer explores possible explanations for the enigmatic footprint and presumed anomalous toe proportions, providing as an example of a potential explanation, a photo of a Sherpa with a marked foot deformity (Fig. 10).

Ultimately, for Taylor the suggestion of the Shipton/Ward footprint being an overprint of a bear fore and hind paw is the certain explanation. He offers examples of the paws of *Ursus arctos thibetanus* printed separately in snow at the beginning of Chapter 14 (p. 305) (Fig. 11). He inexplicably cites as noteworthy what he sees as similarities between the outer three toes on the front paw and the outer three toes of the Shipton print, minus the claw marks. Turning to the hind paw print, Taylor notes by his estimation, the "broad" base. But here is the pivotal point – "…what is most important about the rear foot is the nail mark on the upper left with the second nail mark beside it. The base of the foot shows strong similarities to the base of the Shipton print, but more crucially the two left nails on that rear print are identically placed to marks in the middle of the Shipton print." Unfortunately, no figure is provided to explicitly indicate these features as interpreted by Taylor.

Taylor continues by suggesting that the most determinative feature about the Shipton/Ward print, the feature indicating it was made by a bear, is what Napier called the curious V-shaped notch. Taylor concludes that this is a nail mark of the left hind paw of a bear. He argues that given the hind end of the bear is heavier than the front, the rear foot therefore pressed more deeply into the snow to show nails where the front foot did not. Apparently, examples of superimposed bear tracks were casted and collected to illustrate the appearance of this fore-and-hind-paw register. In *Yeti*, Fig 14.5, Taylor offers an obtuse photo of one of those casts. That original cast still resides in my lab and is presented in Fig. 12. However, it appears to depict a single isolated hind paw print.

In the afterword, Taylor also suggests that his Figure a.2 depicts a new, never before published photo of the Shipton/Ward foot-print, this one depicting Michael Ward's boot alongside the print (Fig. 13). He asserts that this new photo provides additional details. First, are two nail marks at the top of the presumed lower partial print – nail marks exactly of the expected dimension between the second and third digits of *Ursus arctos thibetanus*. Second, between the familiar primary print and now the presumed partial print seen below are three scratch marks. He suggests these marks were made by the bear's front foot just before it put that foot down. The allegation that the print-beside-the-boot photo has never before been published is inexplicable as this image is familiar to most all investigators of the yeti, having appeared in a number of venues. The identification of the lower feature as a footprint remains

problematic and questionable, at odds with the pattern of melted crescents alluded to previously by me, and acknowledged in part by Taylor. Why errant claw marks would be evident in the absence of any clear claw marks associated directly with the primary footprint is yet another incongruence, regardless of the relative depth of the impressions.

The McNeely/Cronin Footprints

Next, we consider what *should* have replaced the Shipton/Ward footprint as the "type specimen" of yeti footprints – the McNeely/ Cronin footprints discovered in 1972, by a biological survey expedition in the Upper Barun Khola of Nepal. Full accounts of the discovery are found in "The Yeti," in *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1975); Cronin's book *The Arun: A Natural History of the World's Deepest Valley* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), and in McNeely's *Soul of the Tiger* (Doubleday, 1988). Furthermore, Cronin, along with his colleagues Jeffrey McNeely and Howard N. Emery, wrote of their discoveries in "The Yeti – Not a Snowman," in *Oryx* (1973, 12: 65-73).

The tracks were pristine, having been laid down overnight – no opportunity for melting or sublimation in the sun (Fig. 14, 15). There was no issue of distortion, only a question of interpretation. Taylor experienced some surprise when two highly respected naturalists expressed positive opinions about the hominoid nature of the McNeely/Cronin footprints. First, his good friend and mentor Bob Fleming accepted the evidence saying, "I'm not putting you guys off. I doubt the yeti is *bun manchi*, or a hominoid, but six years ago McNeely and Cronin showed me a plaster cast of the footprint they found. It was made by no Himalayan animal I know, was similar to a gorilla's footprint with a primate-like thumb. McNeely and Cronin's other field discoveries have held, like their honeyguide, which was then a new bird for Nepal, so I doubt this is a hoax." (p. 135). Taylor went on to acknowledge George Schaller's opinion of the enigmatic tracks, saying that the tracks offered uncertainty. Bob and George "had talked at this dinner table. George was the one who said the prints were similar to a mountain gorilla's and George knew large mammals, having knocked off definitive studies of the mountain gorilla, lion, and tiger. He'd come to Nepal to add to that list a quest for the snow leopard" (p. 136).

The footprints were followed for miles. They presumably maintained a bipedal gait – no reported evidence of distinction of fore paws vs hind paws as in a quadrupedal bear trackway, even when ascending a steep incline through deep snow. Not only were multiple photographs taken of the prints, but a plaster cast was made and photographed as well. Unfortunately, the cast was seized by customs at the Nepal border and is now unaccounted for.

Using the combined photos of the cast and footprints, I undertook an exercise much like that of Tschernezky with the Shipton/Ward footprint photo. I built up a model in clay of the inferred foot responsible for that footprint. Like Fleming and Schaller, I interpreted the footprint as a hominoid – not a bear (Fig. 16, 17).

The Hutchison Footprints

An additional example, worthy of mention due to its seeming resemblance to the foregoing footprints, is the track documented by Robert A. Hutchison, at Donag Tsho at over 15000 feet in the Dugh Kosi valley near the border with Tibet. Hutchison had selected the region due to its history of "yeti activity," particularly in 1954 when British journalist, author and adventurer Ralph Izzard visited the lake. He reported seeing the tracks of yeti, which he described in his book, *The Abominable Snowman Adven-ture* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1955).

Hutchison describes the circumstances of his track find – "We erected our tents about 250 metres above, in the lee of a house-sized rock with a walled-in overhang used by herders as a shelter. A few nights later, I was in the rock overhang when startled by the sound of a large animal scampering down a rock corridor to my right, heading towards the lake. As there was no snow in the corridor, no tracks. Nothing more for a couple of days, until we discovered a set of tracks heading southwards from our campsite. Evidently, two animals made these tracks as they separated so the pair could work their way around different sides of a large rock about 200 metres from our tents, joining up again on the far side. Judging by the size of the imprints one animal was smaller than the other." (Hutchison, personal correspondence).

Hutchison observed that the tracks continued southwards towards the herder settlement of Macherma, another 5 or 6 km away. They went in a straight line from one topographical feature to another, as an animal might that did not want to be seen, taking cover wherever possible. Beyond Macherma lay the forests and pastures of Dolle and Phortse. This seemed to confirm his suspicion that the trackmaker was not a "snowman," but prefer the comforts of forest cover. The clearest footprints exhibit notable resemblance to the McNeely/Cronin footprints (Fig. 18).

The Smythe Footprints

There is some selectivity in Taylor's rehearsal of historical accounts of "yeti" footprints. One of the better documented is the case of Frank Smythe, who found "yeti" prints at 20,000 feet. Taylor notes that Smythe photographed the footprints extensively and although due to the altitude initially considered them of necessity made by a yeti, but in hindsight concluded the tracks were made by the Asiatic black bear. I often wondered why, if Smythe had photographed them so extensively, had he not published them widely? His photos and measurements were dispatched to London and were examined by no less than Julian Huxley, Martin Hinton, and R.I. Pocoack at the Natural History Museum. These experts concluded that the tracks were those of a bear, *Ursus arctos isabellinus*, in spite of the adamant assertions by the Sherpas to the contrary. In order to determine whether there was more light to be shed on the matter, I contacted Smythe's son, Tony, who was kind enough to share proofs of his father's photos (personal correspondence, 12 August 2002).

Examining these photos, there is no room for ambiguity as to their identification as bear spoor (Fig. 19). Furthermore, any discussion of the appearance of bipedalism is rather inexplicable since the photos clearly depict a quadrupedal track line. No need to invoke the explanation of overstep register of fore and hind paws, as both are clearly visible, separate and distinct. The explicit testimony of the photos might explain the omission of any photos from Smythe's narratives, such as in his book, *The Valley of Flowers*.

This goes back to my, and Taylor's observation that clearly, many alleged "yeti" footprints are merely misidentified bear tracks. Some are so obvious that it is rather embarrassing for those involved that the yeti moniker was ever applied to them in the first place. But does this acknowledgement justify the conclusion that since some misapprehended "yeti" tracks are in reality left by bears, then *all* alleged yeti footprints are made by bears?

Sasquatch Sidebar

Taylor notes that media interest in his "little bear" discovery spawned follow-up questions about sasquatch. Although tangential to the principal topic of this review, Taylor's sidebar treatment of the sasquatch question is enlightening – and disappointing. His selection and evaluation of resources on this

subject are troubling. He states that primatologist John Napier "famously debunked the Saquatch in a book titled *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality"* (*Yeti*, p. 185). This is simply and utterly false. Quite the contrary, Napier was one of the first and few academics to offer an objective and affirmative assessment of the evidence for sasquatch. In his conclusion he states, "I am convinced that the Sasquatch exists, but whether it is that it is cracked up to be is another matter altogether. There must be *something* in northwest America that needs explaining, and that something leaves man-like footprints. The evidence I have adduced in favor of the Sasquatch is not hard evidence; few physicists, biologists or chemists would accept it, but nevertheless it *is* evidence and cannot be ignored" (p. 205). It was the prospects for the yeti that he held in low regard, saying "The Yeti of the Himalayas has little going for it" (p. 204).

Taylor remarks upon one of the most compelling pieces of evidence for sasquatch, the Patterson-Gimlin film, just passing its 50th anniversary (not four decades) in 2017. He offers a mere one-line acknowledgement of the affirmative evaluations offered by zoologist Bernard Heuvelmans (in Heuvelmans' case, contra Taylor, not so affirmative), physical anthropologist Grover Krantz, and anatomist/physical anthropologist Jeff Meldrum, without further consideration or discussion. Instead, Taylor turns to a lengthier rehearsal of the demonstrably vacuous allegations and arguments of professional skeptic Greg Long. Long's book, *The Making of Bigfoot: The Inside Story*, was sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) and career debunker Kal Korff, whose "meticulous analysis [according to Taylor]…most importantly revealed inconsistencies between the feet on the animal when the movie was made and the footprints photographed separately" (p. 191). Long's book is rife with inconsistencies and Taylor's characterization of Korff's evaluation is baseless. As one who has spent more time and directed more expertise to the evaluation of the film subject than many, especially its associated footprints, I can assure all that Taylor placed his confidence in the wrong sources, exhibiting either remarkable bias or questionable powers of discernment along his "*quest for footprints*" (p. 191).

Ecology of a Mystery

Along the theme of ecology, there are some limited perspectives offered worth noting. Well-known bear biologist John Craighead suggests that rather than searching in the jungles, Taylor should do the math that it requires a population to sustain a species – "you're not looking for one individual but for a population, a minimum viable population, and you need a habitat of adequate area to support such a population." He suggests that the whole Barun valley can support up to three dozen bears, which are leaving an impressive amount of sign. If a minimum viable population of yeti – assumed about two dozen – were present, where then is the sign? However, to equate bear population variables to those of a large-bodied, long-lived hominoid is an ill-conceived assumption indeed. Factors such as social structure, diet, foraging strategy, range, longevity, reproductive intervals, to list just a few, all play a role in establishing minimal viable populations, itself an elusive concept to pin down with precision. Furthermore, the Barun is not a closed system, to be considered in isolation. The potential population dynamics of a rare, solitary, far-ranging, large-bodied hominoid should be considered within a much broader context than a single valley. In spite of this, Taylor assertively concludes, "Minimum viable population mathematics pretty well debunks the Yeti as a hominoid." (p. 333).

Conclusion

Taylor concludes, "Two yetis exist – each has a different identity. The maker of the footprints is a bear; that identity is certain. Beyond the footprint maker, though, is a second Yeti, one asking existential questions about *Homo sapiens'* relationship with the wild and those questions each person needs to answer individually." (p. 371). What *is* certain is that numerous tracks attributed to the yeti over the years were in fact left by bears. That observation is self-evident. In stark contrast to the situation of the sasquatch question with hundreds of alleged footprints, we are left with only two or three sets of relatively poorly documented, potentially *hominoid* yeti tracks, left in snow. The rampant misidentification of bear tracks and indeterminate tracks as "yeti" has clouded an enigma already steeped in the mystique of the Himalayas, with perceptions often entwined with the folklore of an extreme and exotic environment, and highly sensationalized by the media and to varying extent by the mountaineers, adventurers, and professional guides themselves.

Can all yeti tracks be accounted for as bear? This is the thesis explored by several recent authors in addition to Taylor – including renowned mountaineer and explorer Reinhold Messner, and Oxford geneticist Bryan Sykes. Ultimately, there are shortcomings in each of these treatments of the question and the evidence, and in my opinion, none offers the *final* word. Like Taylor's, their messages are somewhat obscured by occasional mis-statement, superficiality and overgeneraliza-tion in the treatment of some assertions, allegations, and more essentially – in the evaluation of the evidence.

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Figure 1. Taylor's "yeti" print in the Barun Valley, 1983 (Taylor-Ide, 1995).

Figure 2. Plaster casts of the fore paw (right) and hind paw (left) of the bear, *Ursus arctos thibetanus*, made by Taylor.

Figure 3. Photos of the hindpaw of *Ursus arctos thibetanus* (Credit: Daniel C. Taylor).

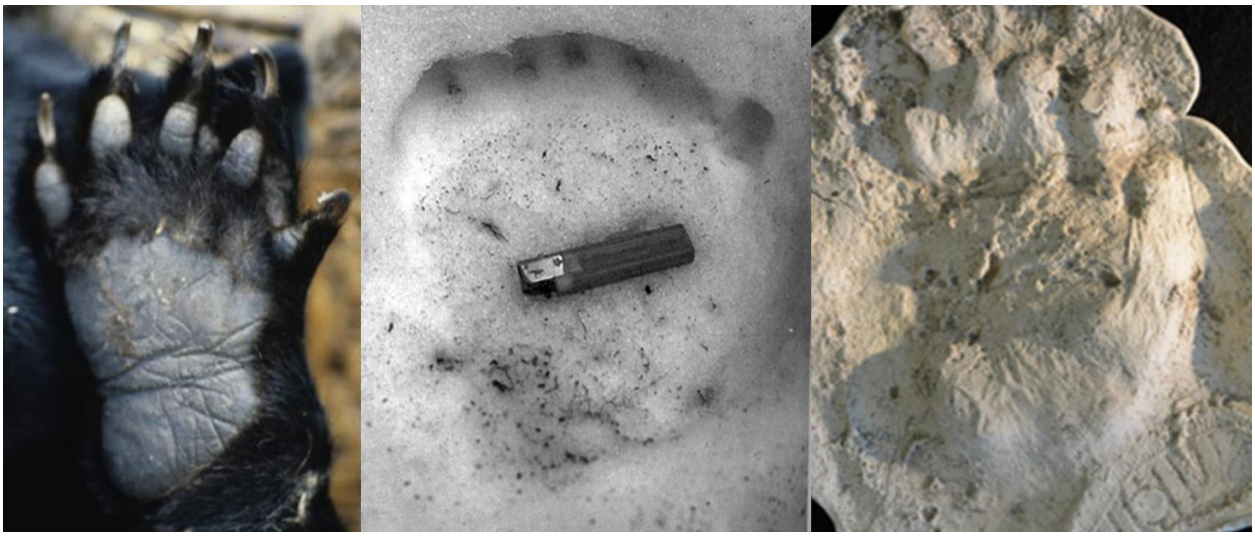

Figure 4. Side-by-side comparison of the paws and cast of footprint of *Ursus arctos thibetanus* with the footprint (center) found by Taylor on the Barun.

Figure 5. Full frame photo of the Shipton/Ward footprint.

Figure 6. Three example of infants' feet exhibiting forms of macrodactyly.

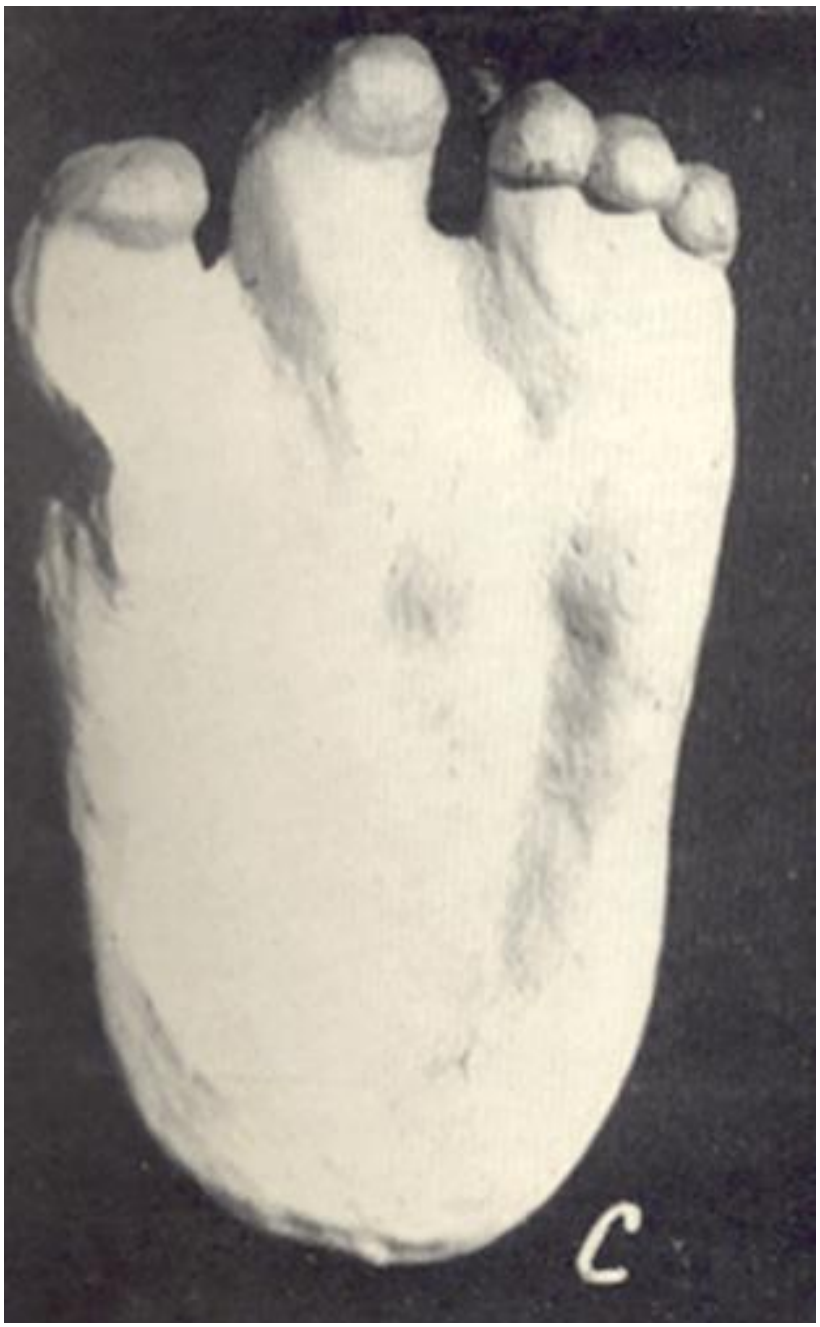

Figure 7. Tschernezky's modelled reconstruction of the foot of the Shipton/Ward trackmaker (Tschernezky, 1960).

Figure 8. Crescent-shaped areas of melted snow/ice indicated with blue. Dashed line indicates the position of the long axis of the foot, passing through the revised heel and second toe.

Figure 9. Meldrum's reconstruction of the foot of the Shipton/Ward trackmaker, based on an alternate interpretation of the footprint photo (reversed for ease of comparison). Note the hominoid like tapering heel and possible macrodactyly of the first and second digits.

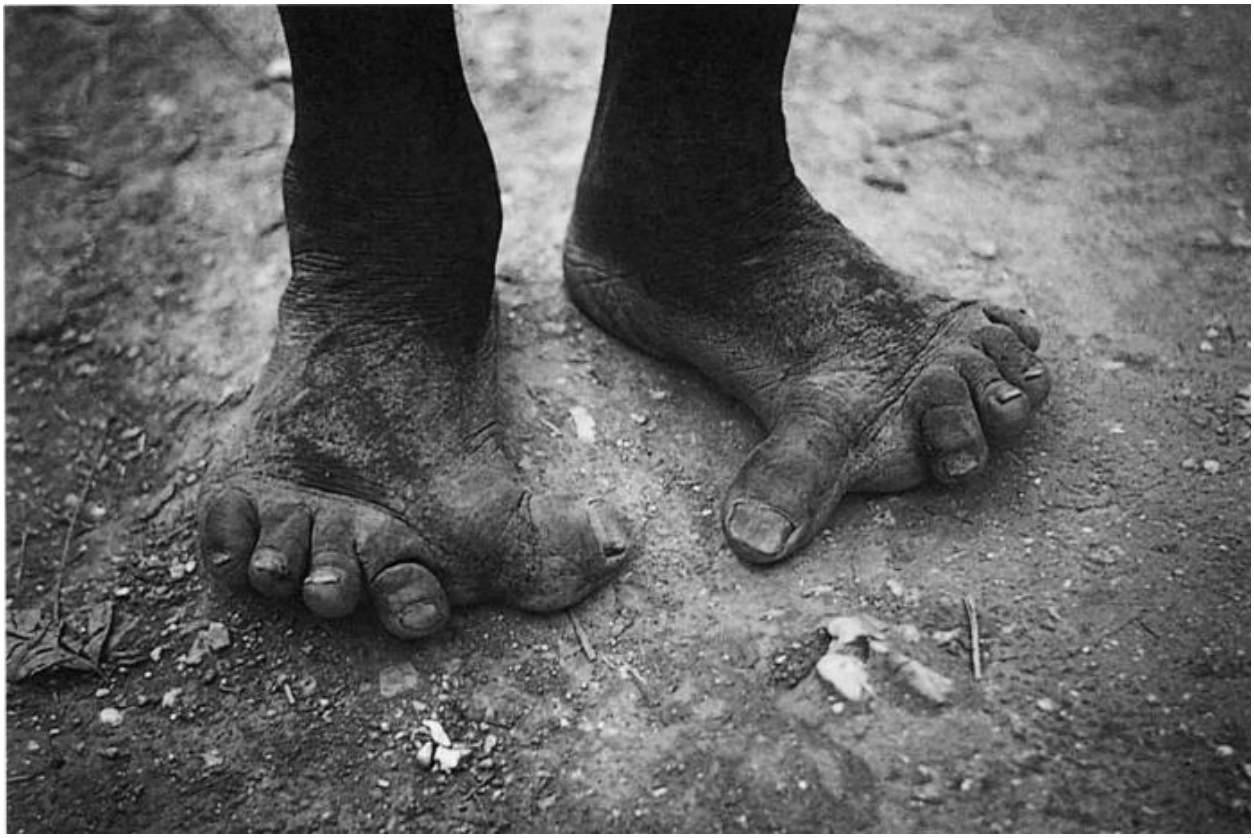

Figure 10. Example of foot deformity offered by Ward as possible explanation for Shipton/Ward footprint anamolies (Ward, 1999).

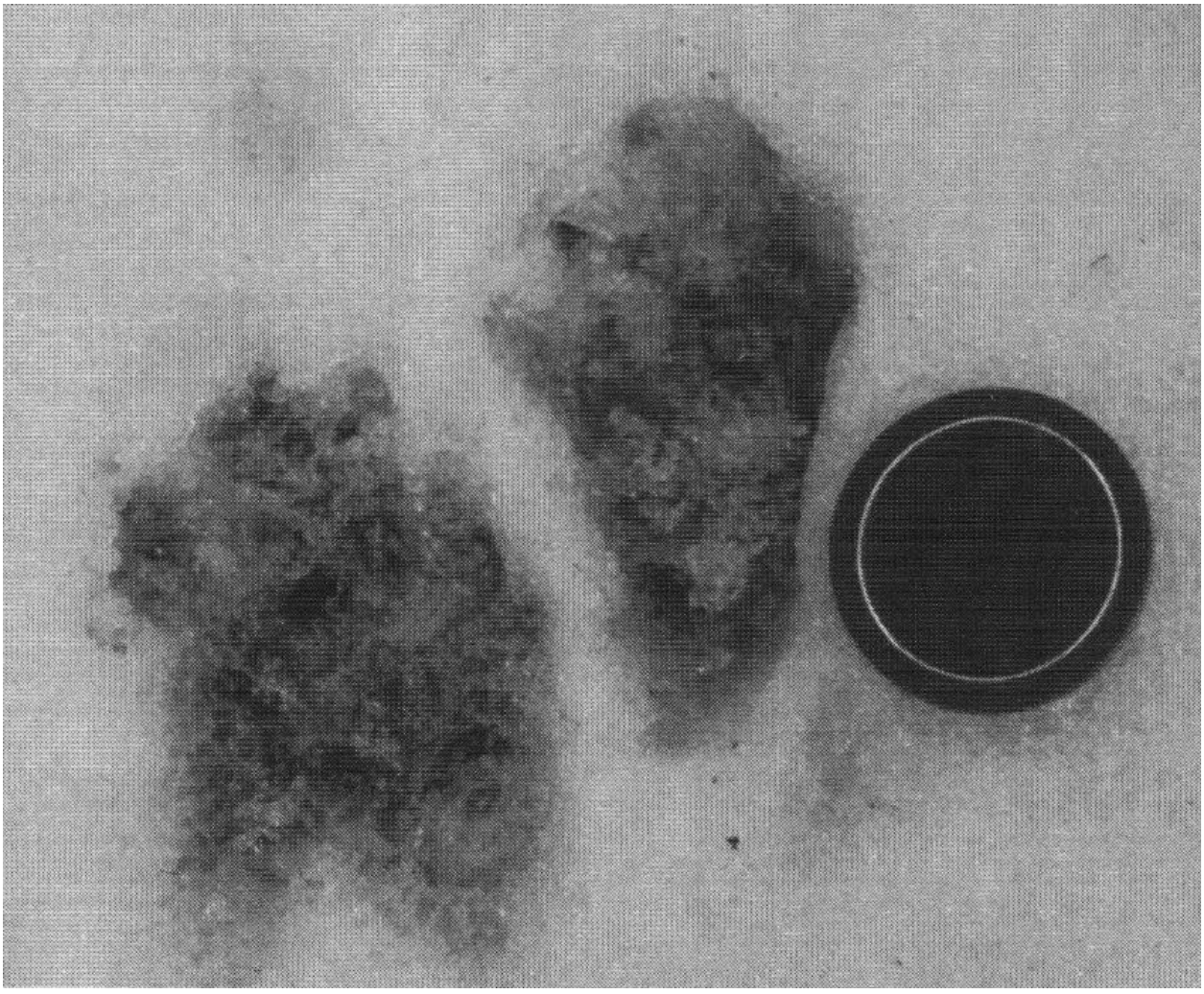

Figure 11. Footprints in snow of *Ursus arctos thibetanus*, identified by Taylor as fore foot (right) and hind foot (left). Lens cap is 52 mm, with 56 mm exterior dimension. [*Yeti,* Fig. 14.1].

Figure 12. A cast of an "overlapping fore and hind paw," which Taylor suggests closely approximates the Shipton/Ward footprint, but which appears to depict a single hind paw. (cf *Yeti*, Figure 14.5).

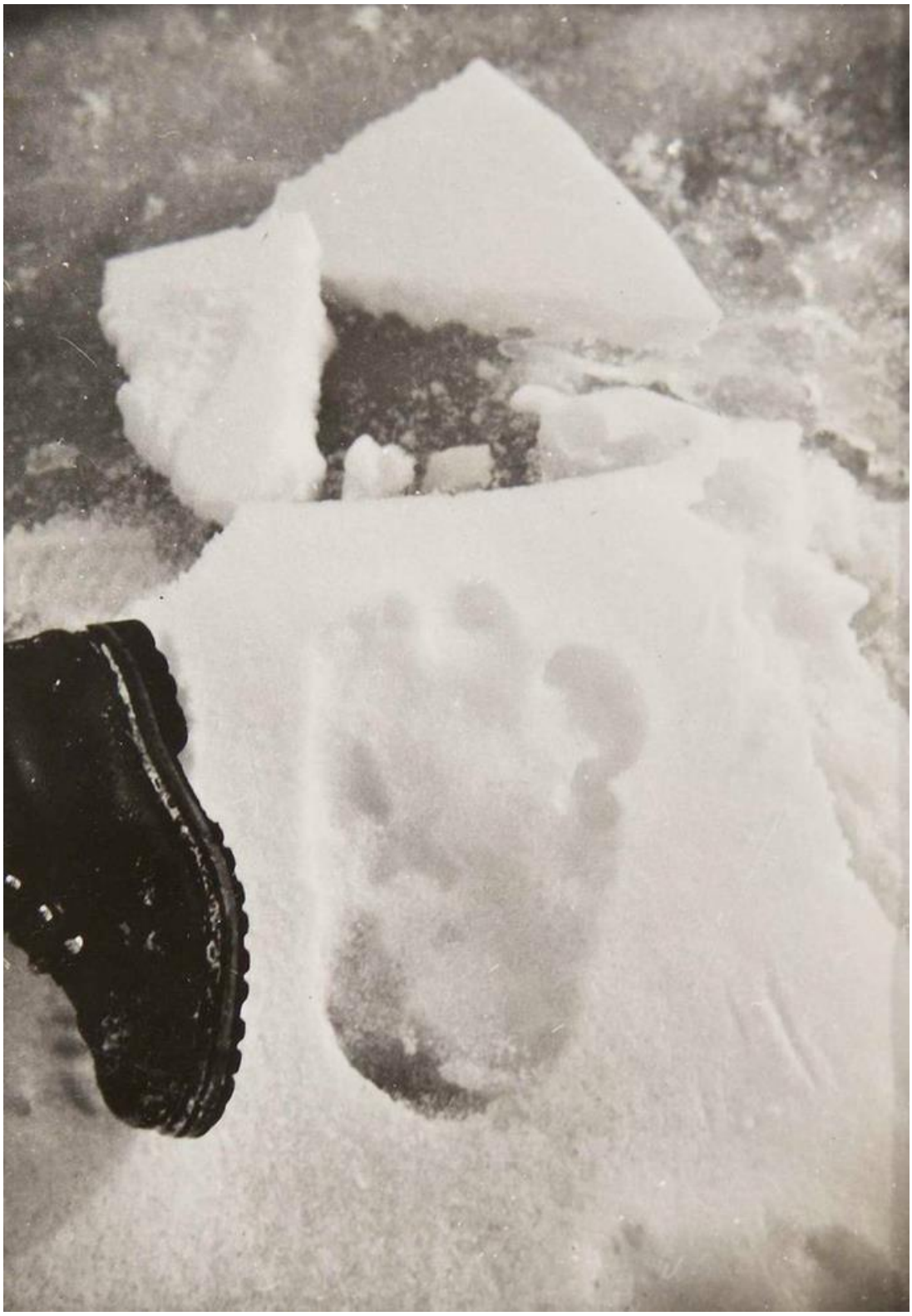

Figure 13. The second close-up of the Shipton/Ward footprint alongside Ward's boot for scale.

Figure 14. McNeely/Cronin footprints.

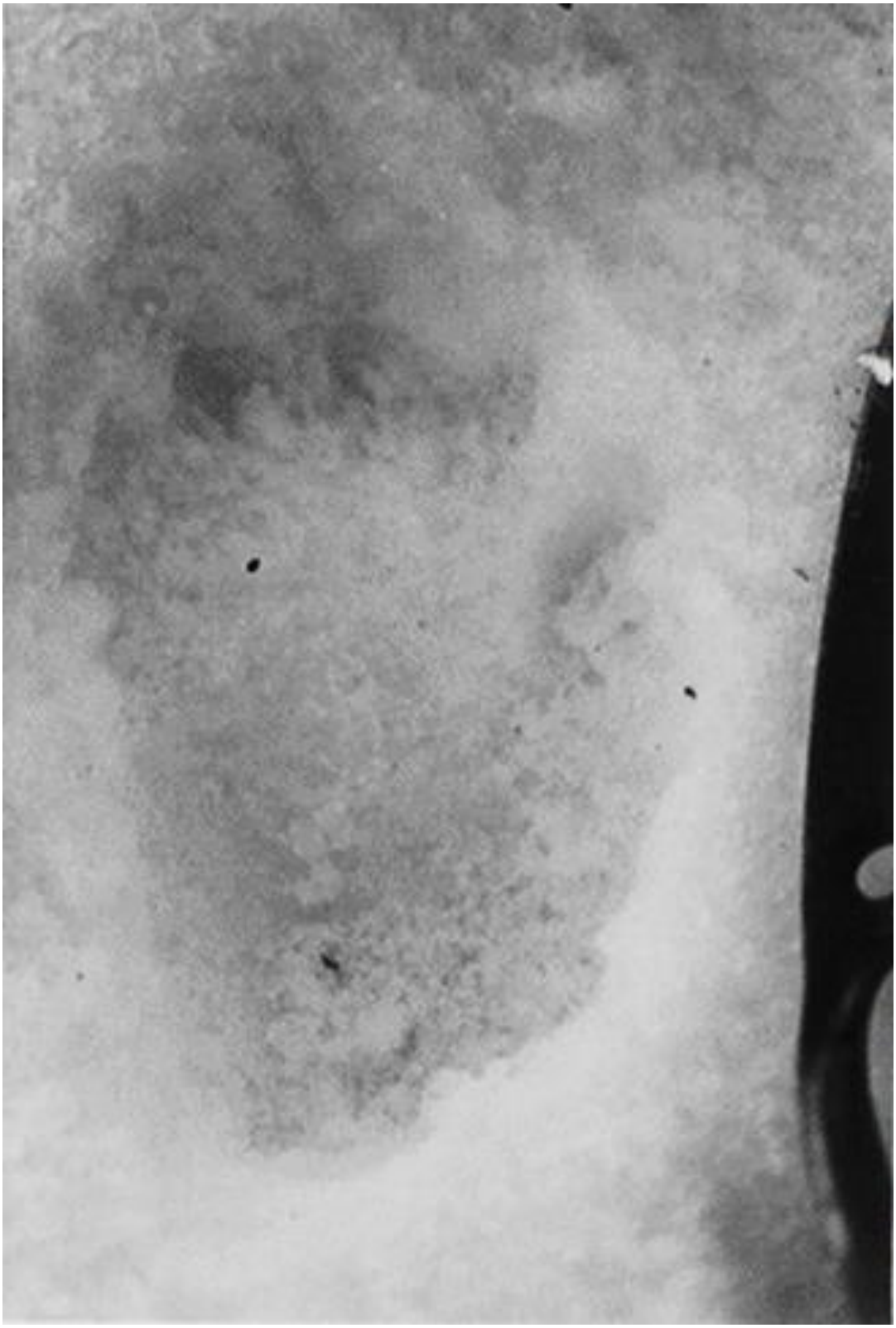

Figure 15. Close-up of McNeely/Cronin footprint.

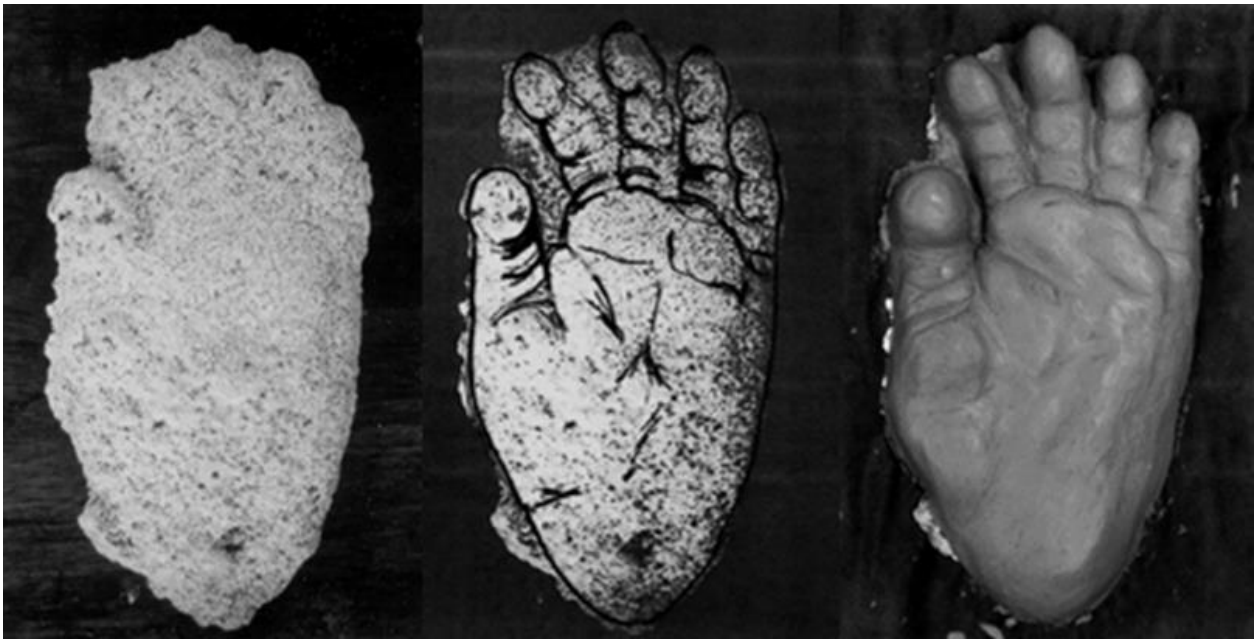

Figure 16. Meldrum's interpretation of surface topography (center) and inferred reconstruction (right) based on photo of the cast of the McNeely/Cronin footprint (left).

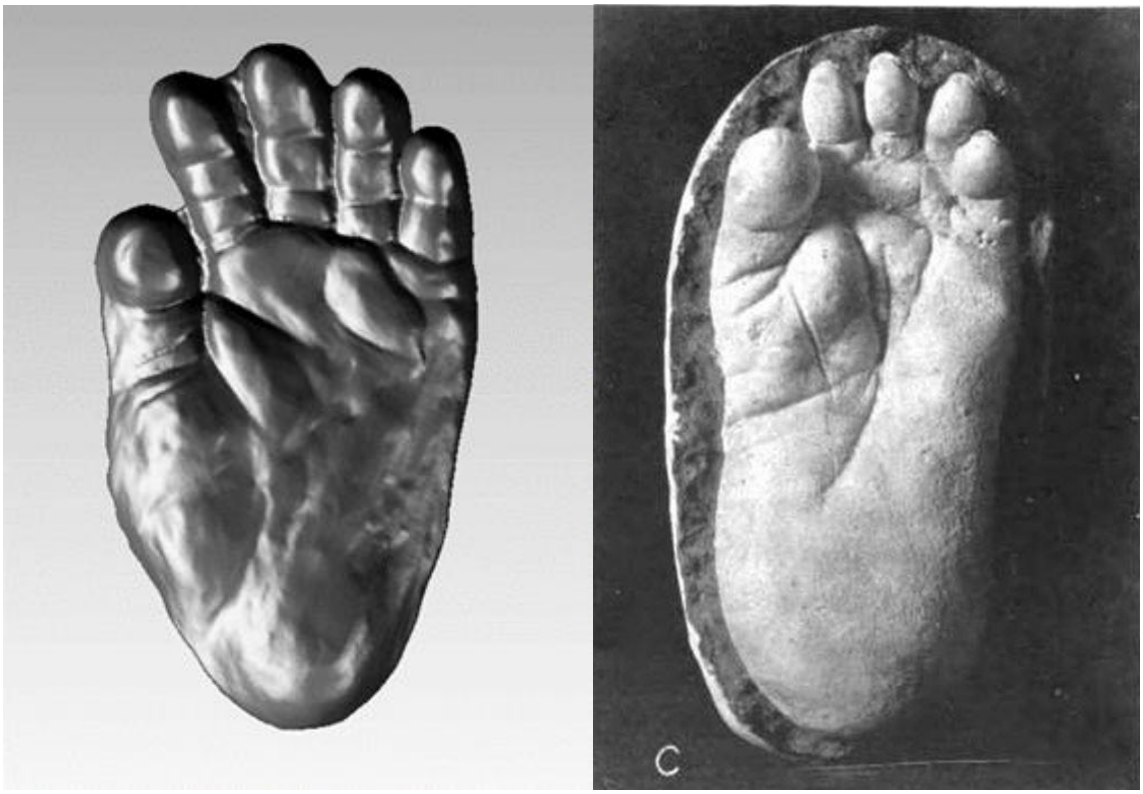

Figure 17. Completed inferential reconstruction of McNeely/Cronin trackmaker (left) compared to a gorilla footprint cast (right). Note the adducted position of the hallux and the flexed lateral toes in both.

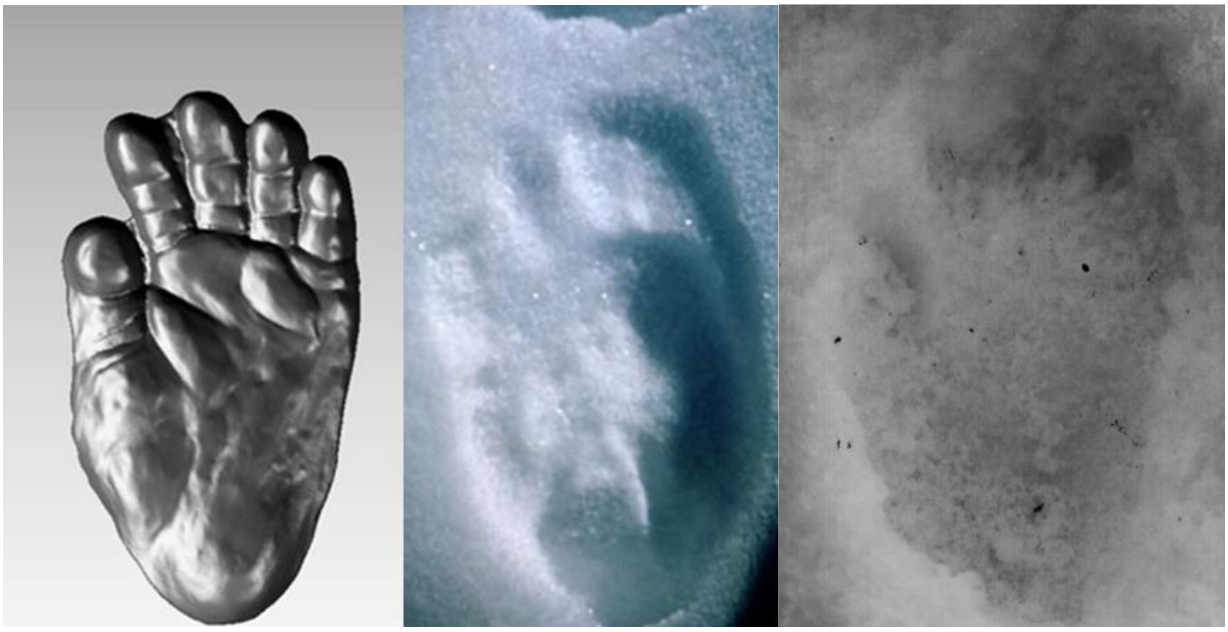

Figure 18. Comparison of the Hutchison footprint (center) with the McNeely/Cronin footprint and reconstruction.

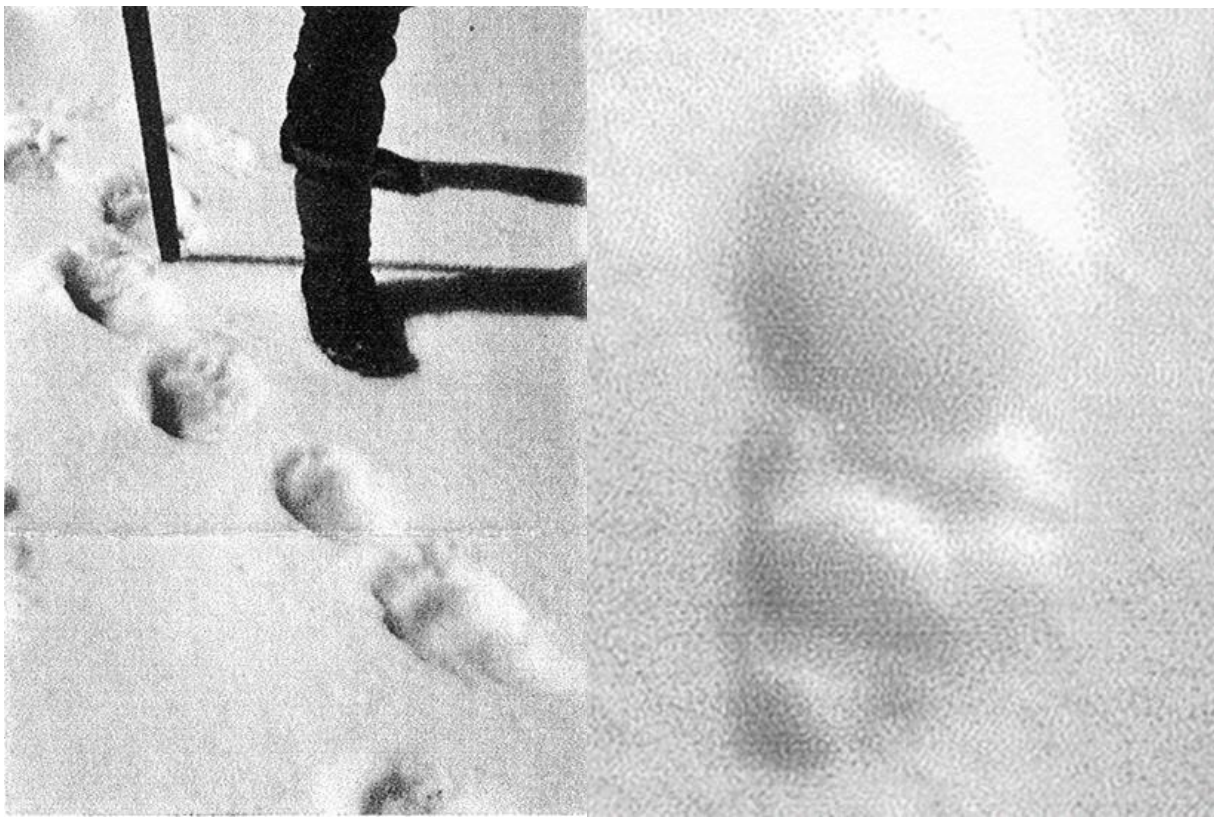

Figure 19. The Frank Smythe footprints. Note the quadrupedal pattern of the trackway (left) and the slight overlap of the fore and hind paws in close-up (right).