Chapter 6
The Problems of Evidence

I don’t expect much from such an orthodox anthropologist.
Boris Porshnev on John Napier

Contrary to the popular misunderstanding of the idea, a scientific theory is not a blind guess. It is a notion about how the universe operates, which is based upon a considerable body of factual and circumstantial evidence and ties those facts together. Without an explanatory theory a mountain of facts means little. In its simplest form, science works by gathering evidence and formulating theories. The problem Grover Krantz and other academic monster enthusiasts had stemmed from having theories, but not enough facts to support them, or at least facts the mainstream accepted. Superficially, the *Gigantopithecus* theory made sense, seemed logical, and could explain how such a creature came to be and how it came to inhabit the areas witnesses said it did. Monster hunters had three types of evidence in the form of eyewitness accounts, footprint casts, and photographs and films. Despite the physicality of the last two, all of these generated suspicion from a scientific point of view. In the absence of a Sasquatch body, Krantz tried to establish his theoretical work as best he could. He found fellow travelers in an unlikely place. The monster hunters of North America and England found allies in Russia, where similar creatures, commonly called Almasti, had been reported for years, drawing the attention of a group composed of both academic and amateur investigators. The Russians, however, employed a very different explanatory theory.

The Importance of Being Erectus

Like any good scientist, Grover Krantz worked to build up layers of theoretical foundations to support his overall thesis that
Gigantopithecus represented the progenitor of Bigfoot. Applying a form of multiregional or continuity theory to the explanation for Sasquatch allowed Krantz to have a sound theory to explain the creature’s existence. His views on the history of Homo erectus are crucial to understanding how Krantz came to accept continuity. If Homo erectus had the history Krantz believed it did, his Sasquatch theory made that much more sense. In Krantz’s view the evolutionary history of Sasquatch began with Homo erectus, which branched off from a common ancestor—probably Australopithecus. Once they had evolved into their new form, Homo erectus populations then spread around and out of Africa. As they roamed about the globe the different environmental pressures they encountered forced them to continue evolving. It is in this transition stage, Krantz believed, that while they had yet to achieve modern human status, these erectus populations began to take on some of the characteristics of later human races. Finding homes in various parts of the world, erectus populations continued to evolve until they had become Homo sapiens. In this way they were all subspecies of Homo sapiens, all related, and all human regardless of being African, Asian, or European. Krantz went one step further; he added at least one additional lineage to Homo erectus.

While all this branching occurred during the erectus phase, another population, responding to yet another set of environmental pressures in Asia, evolved from Homo erectus into the larger form of Gigantopithecus. This population had not achieved the human-like qualities of the other erectus groups. They remained closer to their primate antecedents. They retained bipedal stance, but did not acquire rudimentary speech or higher cognitive abilities like their cousins. They veered away from the path toward human and increased in their overall bulk. As is the nonstop pace of evolution, at least one Gigantopithecus population, likely in the region of the Himalayan Mountains, evolved into the Yeti. Then either another Gigantopithecus population spread into the Americas and became the Sasquatch or a Yeti population moved further east to become Sasquatch. This was the chain. This history made Sasquatch a relation to Homo sapiens but not an ancestor. If Krantz could articulate this point persuasively he could convince his colleagues. He delved deeply into erectus studies and from his student days at Berkeley began producing scholarship on the subject. He laid a foundation of erectus publications and data which he later could draw upon to explain Bigfoot. It did not prove quite so easy.

Mainstream anthropology, the primary audience for Krantz’s work, either dismissed it or thought his methodology questionable.