

THE MYSTERIOUS GIANT FOOTPRINT

The Legend of Big Foot has long been recounted in the state of Penang. In Batu Maung, a fishing village near the south end of the island there is a rock with a large footprint that many believe belongs to Bigfoot. Nevertheless, the origin of this 33-inch long footprint has never been determined and is steeped in myth and folklore.

According to some of the local Indians, the footprint belongs to the Indian God Hanuman, who while leaping over the ocean took a thunderous step in Penang. It is said that he was searching for medicine for Lakshmana, the brother of the legendary Rama who was wounded in the Great War depicted in the Ramayana epic. Others believed he was on his way to secretly meet Ramayana's wife Sita in Lanka. This is based on the beliefs of the Indonesian people who say Lanka is located in Sumatra. Interestingly enough, the footprint faces the sea towards the southwest, in the direction of Sumatra.

The local Malays also have a different belief. According to them over 100 years ago there lived a strong giant named Gedembai that was greatly feared. One day, while cutting some bamboo a villager inadvertently caused a long piece to fly high into the air. Gedembai seeing this from afar mistook the bamboo for another

giant. Frightened, he bolted, thumping heavy steps on the earth. He was never seen again, but his footprint remains at the very spot the local Malays call Tapak Gedembai.

As for the local Chinese, they believe the footprint belongs to the famous Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho (Sam Poh) who visited Malacca in the 15th century. Today, the print is carefully enshrined in a small temple built by the local Chinese community and is officially called "Sam Poh Footprint".

Regardless of the print's origin, it has left a permanent mark in the hearts of several cultures by bearing the faith and beliefs of a people through time.

At present, Batu Maung, located in a secluded district on the southeastern tip of Penang, offers an idyllic place to get away from the bustling city with its quaint wooden coffee shops, village houses, an old Chinese temple and a jetty.



The Chinese Temple that houses the Sam Poh Footprint

The giant footprint in Batu Maung