

# THE ?IHK'ALS

By Brian Stross

ONE evening towards the end of November 1967—if my memory serves me aright the date was the 24th—I saw what I believe was a flying saucer. I do not claim that there was any particular significance in the sighting itself, but as you will see, and as I am sure you will agree, it led to a conversation which should be of interest to all readers of the REVIEW.

I am an anthropologist from Berkeley, California, presently engaged in studying the customs of the Tzeltal Indians of Tenejapa in Chiapas, Mexico. So it happened that on that evening I walked from where I live in a Tenejapa paraje to San Pedro Chenalhó in the hope that I might catch a ride to San Cristobal las Casas. I was sitting in the back of a stationary pick-up truck with my Indian assistant waiting for the owner of the truck to come back from dinner. This was in Chenalhó. It was a little after six o'clock and the sky was just dark enough to see the first few stars, and quite free of clouds. I looked up and saw what appeared to be a bright star moving rapidly across the sky. It had a powerful light that dimmed a little every once in a while, and was going in the opposite direction from the path that the sun takes (i.e. from west to east). I watched for about fifteen minutes, during which time it went from horizon to horizon in this mountainous country. Once in the middle of its course it made a rapid and very obvious zig-zag and then returned to its course. This zig-zag, combined with absolutely no noise, made me feel that it couldn't have been either an airplane or one of the U.S.'s or Russia's satellites. And anyway the light was too bright for the object to have been either.

## Creature reports

My assistant watched it with me and then said that he and friends had seen the same kind of thing several times while talking late at night. He then told me a few more stories about his friends' experiences with the ?ihk'al, the little black being.

There are many tales in Tenejapa about the ?ihk'al, a 3ft. tall, hairy black humanoid, that has had encounters with the natives here. About twenty years ago, or less, there were many sightings of this creature or creatures, and several people apparently tried to fight it with machetes. One man also saw a small sphere following him from about 5ft. After many attempts he finally hit it with his machete and it disintegrated, leaving only an ashlike substance.

The ?ihk'als are said to live in many of the caves around here, and for this reason the natives don't enter these caves. Some people have seen these beings at the entrances to the caves. Occasionally people have been paralysed when they have encountered the ?ihk'al, but the paralysis is only temporary.

In addition to the flurry of ?ihk'als sighted about twenty years ago, others have been seen (but less frequently) on up to the present time. They are believed to be beings from another world, and some have been

seen flying with some kind of rocket-like thing attached to the back. With this rocket they are said occasionally to have carried off people. It is said that two people can be carried by the ?ihk'al and his rocket at one time. Occasionally, too, other kinds of vehicles have been seen with the ?ihk'al, and in or near caves.

One man, drunk, met an ?ihk'al that jumped all around and kept tickling him. He tried to hit it with a stick, but couldn't. Finally he was exhausted and fell to the ground. The ?ihk'al left soon thereafter.

Interestingly enough, on the night that I sighted the moving light I found, when I reached San Cristobal, that an American woman had seen a light much closer to the ground that darted rapidly up and down flashing a brilliant light on the ground below. She is convinced that it was a flying saucer. She was in San Cristobal at the time and said that the craft was apparently in the direction of Tenejapa. This was the same night that I saw the light over Chenalhó.

## Middle American Creature Reports By Gordon Creighton

Mr. Creighton is a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute (FRAI) and we have therefore asked him to comment on the article describing the ?ihk'als.

### From the Viewpoint of Anthropology

THE TZELTALS belong, like their neighbours and close relatives the Tzotzils and the Mayas, to the Maya-Soke Linguistic Group (see sketch map of Middle America), and the words *ik*, *ikal*, or words very similar, are found in all these languages.

The Tzeltal words *ihk* and *ihk'al* (the adjectival form) simply mean "black being" or "black". Linguistic specialists who wish to be very correct write them, as Mr. Stross does, *?ihk* and *?ihk'al*, but non-linguistic mortals can dispense with the initial sign, which is of course used here as a conventional guide to pronunciation, and not as an interrogation.

To begin with, the Tzeltals and all these other Indian peoples of Middle America have numerous stories and legends and beliefs about little black creatures. For example the Tzeltals think that the Earth (flat, of course) is supported on four thick columns, at the bases of which there dwell certain dwarfs, black and only 1ft. high—their blackness being due, by the way, to the fact that they are constantly getting badly scorched by the Sun when He passes close by them every night as He travels through the Underworld.<sup>1</sup>

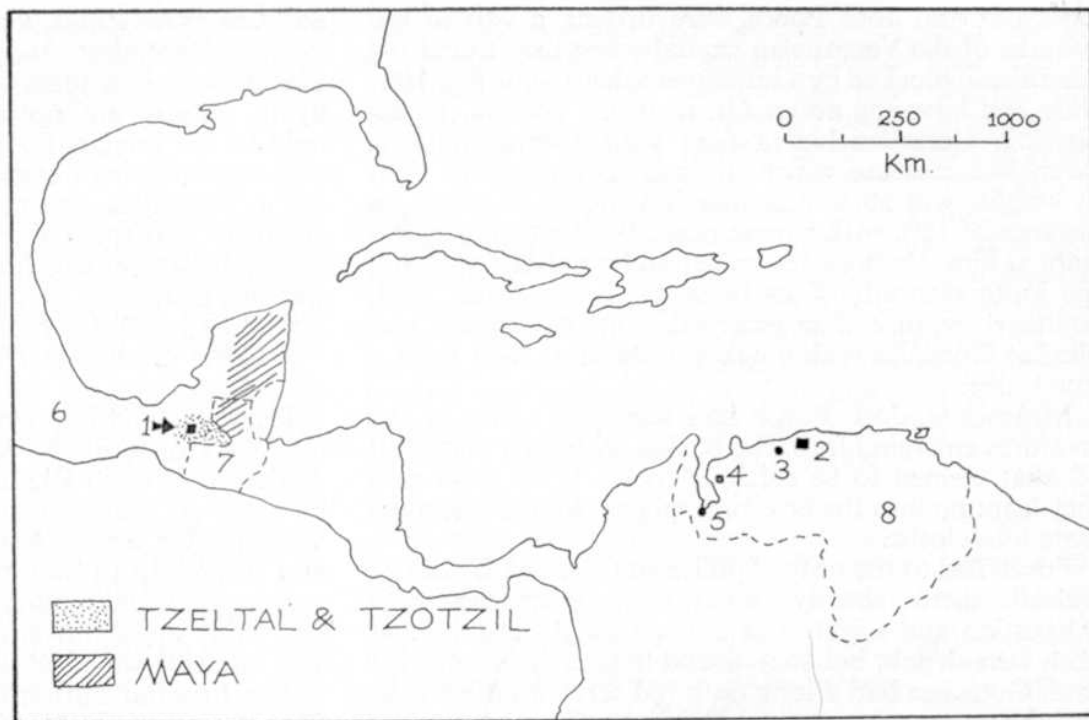
In the Maya language, we find that *ik* means air or wind, and *ikal* means a spirit, while *ek* means black.<sup>2</sup>

The Kekchi Maya, in the Alta Vera Paz region of Guatemala, talk of a *kek*.<sup>3</sup> The *kek* (meaning *black* in the Kekchi dialect of Maya) is said to be a centaur-like being that guards his patron's house at night, and

Based on author's sketch of Middle America

Key:

1. San Cristobal
2. Caracas
3. Valencia
4. Carora
5. San Carlos del Zulia
6. Mexico
7. Guatemala
8. Venezuela



frightens people at dusk. Black, ugly, hairy, he is half-human, with human hands but the hooves of a horse.

According to K. Sapper, who has studied these matters, the *kek* is an evil spirit (often in the form of a cow) that bewitches fields and crops, and harms people whom it meets alone at night.

Among the neighbouring Tzotzils, who resemble the Tzeltals closely in culture, we find the same words for black, *ik* and *ik'al*. *Ik'al* is the commonest form of the god of death. He is a little black man about 3ft. high,<sup>3</sup> and <sup>4</sup> who usually dresses in mestizo style—black trousers, shirt and a wide-brimmed hat. His clothes are dirty and smell of crow. He carries a machete, and announces his presence with a whistle. He eats raw human flesh, with a decided preference for human heads, but is not averse to other food too. His dwelling is a cave in some high mountain. Various caves are indeed designated locally as the lair of an *ik'al*, but he is also said to reside in the tower of a church at Chamula, and in the tower of the Church of Santo Domingo in San Cristobal Las Casas itself!

This *ik'al* of the Tzotzils flies through the air. Sometimes he steals women, and the women so taken are remarkably prolific, and may bear a child once a week, or once a month, or even daily. The offspring are black, and they learn the art of flying inside their father's cave.

Finally, to complete these notes on what I can gather or recall about legends and tales of small black creatures in Central and South America, I would mention the numerous references made by Lt.-Col. P. H. Fawcett,<sup>5</sup> to a dreaded race of *small, black, hairy and cannibalistic* creatures known in Portuguese as "Os Morcegos", the "Bat People", in the far interior of Brazil. Fawcett says these negroid troglodytes are an autochthonous species dating from the days before South America had its present conformation, and that pockets of them still remain, dwelling in natural caves and caverns, or in burrows or holes, with mouths about 12ft. wide, which they dig in the ground, and roofed over with branches

and vegetation. These "Bat People" have an incredibly acute sense of smell, enabling them to hunt down men and animals at night with such uncanny skill that tradition holds them to be telepathic—which they may well be, in common with many of the tribes of forest Indians.

### From the Viewpoint of Ufology

Let me say right at the outset that it is extremely heartening for us to learn now that a professional anthropologist, Mr. Brian Stross, is taking a serious interest in our subject and particularly in THE HUMANOIDS. Ivan Sanderson, the noted British zoologist, has long been a student of the UFO problem, and has just written an excellent book<sup>6</sup> on it, but so far as I can recall Mr. Stross is the first *anthropologist* who has let us know of his interest.

Mr. Stross will find in THE HUMANOIDS no fewer than four cases, and possibly five, concerning aggressive hairy black dwarfs that possess a method of flight and that attack people whom they meet at night.

These cases, Nos. 9, 11, 12, 14 and 15 in my article, *The Humanoids in Latin America*, relate to creatures of this kind that were all allegedly encountered in Venezuela (a country very close to the traditional home of the *ihk'al*), and all within the span of less than twenty days in November-December of 1954. That was more than thirteen years ago. Mr. Stross's Indian informants are quoted as having told him that there had been a great spate of sightings of *ihk'als* "about twenty years ago or less". and in fact twenty years would take us back to 1947, a most important year in UFO studies.

For the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with them, I quote here from THE HUMANOIDS these five cases<sup>7</sup> which seem to me to be so relevant to Mr. Stross's report:

**Caracas, Venezuela** (Latin American Humanoids, Case No. 9)

At 2.00 a.m. on November 28, 1954, Gustavo

González and José Ponce were driving a van in the suburbs of the Venezuelan capital when they found the road ahead blocked by a luminous sphere some 8 to 10ft. wide and hovering about 6ft. from the ground. Investigating, González had a fight with a bristly, hairy, dwarf-like creature which, though seemingly very light in weight, was so strong that it knocked González a distance of 15ft. with a mere push. With glowing eyes it leapt at him. He drew his knife and he stabbed at it, but the knife glanced off its body as though from steel. Another creature then emerged from the sphere and blinded González with a beam of dazzling light from a small tube.

Meanwhile, José Ponce had seen two more of the creatures emerging from the bushes with their arms full of what seemed to be earth or rocks. With great ease they leapt up into the hovering sphere. All the creatures wore loin-cloths.

Ponce fled to the nearest police station, and González arrived there shortly afterwards, overcome with exhaustion and fright. The police thought at first that both were drunk, but soon found that such was not the case. González had a long deep red scratch on his side, and the two men were given sedatives and placed under medical observation for several days.

One of the doctors treating them admitted later to them that he knew their story was true, as he had been driving back from a night-call at the time and had actually seen the fracas. According to the APRO representative in Caracas, this doctor subsequently went to Washington to discuss the case with American authorities.

#### **Floresta, near Caracas, Venezuela (Case No. 11)**

At 6.30 p.m. on December 10, 1954, a Caracas doctor and his father were driving from La Carlota airfield to the Avenida Miranda. They halted in order to watch two little men who were running into a thicket, and shortly afterwards they saw a luminous disc rise from behind the thicket and dart off into the sky at great speed, making a sharp sizzling sound.

#### **Trans-Andean Highway, Carora, Venezuela (Case No. 12)**

On the same night, December 10, 1954, two youths, Lorenzo Flores and Jesús Gómez, were hunting near the Trans-Andean Highway between Chico and Cerro de las Tres Torres, when they saw a luminous machine, about 9 or 10ft. wide, hovering about 2ft. from the ground. It was shaped "like one huge washbowl placed upside down on top of another", and flames were shooting from its base.

Four little men about 3ft. high emerged and tried to drag both youths into the craft. Flores struck with his unloaded shotgun at one of them as they were dragging Gómez away. It "felt like striking rock", and the gun broke into two pieces.

It was too dark for them to see the creatures well, but they were immensely strong and had abundant hair all over their bodies.

Gómez fainted with fright, and had amnesia afterwards. Both youths managed to reach a police post, where they were found to be covered with deep scratches and bruises, and their clothing in shreds. Visiting the spot, the police found signs of the struggle. Doctors who examined the youths found them hysterical with fright.

#### **San Carlos del Zulia, Venezuela (Case No. 14)**

"On December 16, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a press-conference, said in essence that flying saucers are not from Outer Space<sup>8</sup> and exist only in the imagination of the viewers. On that same night a young man named Jesús Paz, in San Carlos del Zulia, Venezuela, was set upon by small hairy man-like creatures and spent the rest of the night in a hospital having treatment for shock. What had happened to him was not imagined: he had the physical marks to prove it, and he has not forgotten the experience."

—Coral Lorenzen: *The Great Flying Saucer Hoax*, p. 10.

Jesús Paz and his two friends were travelling by car near the Exposition Park of the Venezuelan Ministry of Agriculture, when Paz asked the driver to stop so that he could go into some nearby bushes to relieve nature. Suddenly his friends heard a piercing scream from him and rushed up to find him unconscious on the ground and to see a small hairy man running away towards a flat, shiny object hovering a few feet from the ground. The machine vanished with a deafening whistle.

The hospital authorities found that Paz had long, deep scratches on his right side and down the spine, as though he had been clawed by a wild beast.

#### **Between Valencia and Caracas, Venezuela (Case No. 15)**

Early on the morning of December 19, 1954 (i.e. three days after the case of Jesús Paz just quoted), an eighteen-year-old jockey named José Parra was doing a training run along the highway when he saw six little men pulling boulders from the side of the road and loading them into a disc-shaped craft hovering less than three metres from the ground. He started to retreat, but found himself glued to the spot by a violet-coloured beam from a small device which one of the entities pointed at him. He stood there, helpless, while the creatures leapt aboard the disc, which vanished rapidly in the sky.

Several other people saw the disc or a similar craft between midnight and 3.15 a.m., hovering a few feet off the ground near the Barbula Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Valencia.

Detectives examined the spot indicated by Parra and found a number of footprints which they were unable to identify as either animal or human.

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So much then for the five cases to which I wish to draw attention. Let it be noted, too, however, that UFO literature offers a good many other cases in which small dark or black creatures were allegedly seen, but in none of them, so far as I know, is hairiness or violence mentioned, and I therefore exclude them from consideration as presumably relating to other types of beings than our putative *ihk'al*. (For such non-hairy, small, dark, reportedly non-violent creatures, see for example Cases 6 and 56 of my *Humanoids in Latin America*.)

Mention should also be made of the Persian "abduction attempt" reported by me in FSR, March/April 1967. In the Persian case, it is true, the witness is only reported as having said that the creature seen by him inside the UFO "appeared to be a small man dressed in black clothing and wearing on his head a strange mask shaped like the trunk of an elephant". Nothing

is said about hairiness or skin colour, but as evidently he could not see the creature very well and he *did* think it was bent on *abducting* him, I suggest that we bear it in mind as a possible *ihk'al* case too.

### Conclusion

First of all, both folk legends and modern reports from Middle America tell us of the *ihk'al*, a black, hairy humanoid 3ft. high which flies, attacks people whom it encounters alone at night, paralyses people, and, in the modern reports, abducts people using a rocket-like attachment on its back.

Secondly, our "bellicose dwarf" reports of 1954 from Venezuela (a country very close to the source of the *ihk'al* reports) speak specifically of aggressive, hairy, humanoid creatures about 3ft. high that fly and that attack people whom they encounter alone at night, use a violet-coloured or dazzling white beam to blind or to paralyse, and are apparently bent on abduction.

These similarities are so startling that I hope Mr. Brian Stross and other researchers will go to work without delay and follow up these pointers.

I have suggested on many occasions, in articles and in lectures, that if we hope to get to the bottom of the "UFO business" we must first go with a very fine-tooth comb through the whole of our accumulated records in the fields of Anthropology, Archaeology, Religion, Folklore, Psychical Research, Fairy Lore, Witchcraft, Demonology, and so on. Mr. Brian Stross's exceedingly interesting item indicates, in my opinion, that we may be upon the point of making an extraordinary discovery and that the overlapping regions of Anthropology and Folklore may have provided us with a valuable key regarding the nature of, at any rate, one category of the mysterious "UFO entities"!

Another point upon which I have repeatedly dwelt is this: that not all so-called "UFO entities" are *necessarily*

extraterrestrial, and that we may yet find, to our enormous surprise, that some at least of them may be creatures that share, and always have shared, this Earth with us; creatures that are totally unknown to most of us; regarding which Science has not a single word to say; but about which our own written and oral traditions, in all our civilisations, speak volumes.

Naturally, some of the alleged craft and the alleged occupants *may* be from Outer Space. It is our task, as investigators, to ascertain the truth of this, as well as of the enormous and most important question of all, namely, are some of them true human beings, who wish us well, and are perhaps our kith and kin? The *ihk'al*, whatever he may be, does not look like a possible candidate for this category at any rate!

### NOTES

See, for general background, *The Popul Vuh, the Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiche Maya*, by Adrián Recinos (in Spanish), Mexico City, 1947. English translation by Delia Goetz and Sylvanus G. Morley, Hodge, London, 1951.

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### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Thompson, J. Eric S. *Maya Creation Myths*, Part I (Estudios de Cultura Maya, Vol. V, Mexico, 1965, U.N.A.M.).

<sup>2</sup> Cruz, Pacheco. *Compendio del Idioma Maya*, Mérida, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, J. Eric S.: private communication to Gordon Creighton.

<sup>4</sup> Holland, Wm. R. *Medicina Maya en los Altos de Chiapas* (quoted by Thompson in private communication).

<sup>5</sup> Fawcett, Lt.-Col. P. H., D.S.O., F.R.G.S. *Exploration Fawcett*, Hutchinson, London, 1953, pp. 215, 246, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Sanderson, Ivan T., F.Z.S. *Uninvited Visitors*, Cowles Educational Corp., New York, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> All five of these cases appeared originally in Mrs. Coral Lorenzen's *The Great Flying Saucer Hoax*, William-Frederick Press, New York, 1962.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE

\* Yes, and how true the first part of this statement may be! Can one really believe—as so many would have us do—that when President Eisenhower made this statement he knew absolutely nothing whatsoever about the subject? We would do well to ponder the numerous occasions on which governments or official agencies have declared with such emphasis that "there is NO evidence of objects or of craft arriving here from Outer Space".

## OCCUPANTS OBSERVED AT NORCO

### A Californian Case of 1955

BY DONALD B. HANLON

IN the issue of FLYING SAUCER REVIEW for September/October 1967, Gordon Creighton presented the assembled facts on an occupant case, which is now thirteen years old, in his excellent article *The Extraordinary Happenings at Casa Blanca*. I was particularly gratified with the re-emphasis of this incident, as also with the current investigation by Dr. Philip Seff of APRO, for I had felt that it had been too long overlooked by most researchers. It will be especially interesting to hear what the principal witnesses have to say about their alleged experience now that they have matured into adults.

Since the California area has again been brought into focus by Mr. Creighton's article, I feel that the following incident, which is likewise of early vintage and which has received little or no publicity, will be of particular interest.

I have received the details of this occurrence from one of the witnesses through a series of letters. I had first heard of it while gathering information on the Casa Blanca incident.

The witnesses, who shall be referred to as Mrs. J. and her daughter, prefer to remain anonymous.<sup>1</sup> They did not report their sighting at the time it happened due to fear of public ridicule, and to complete disenchantment with the official Air Force investigative methods at that time (ca. 1954).

Although the details of the occurrence remain vividly impressed upon their memories, the precise date is forgotten. Best reckoning would place it in the late Spring of 1954.

Mrs. J., her husband, and her five-year-old daughter had just sat down for their mid-day meal in their home, a one-storey cottage on the outskirts of Norco, Cali-