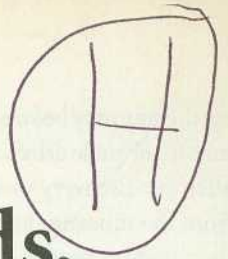


HUMANOIDS



Unipeds, Sciapods, and Peg Leg Jack

by Dale Gilbert Jarvis, B.Sc.

In Search of the One-Legged Man

Five hundred years before Columbus “discovered” America, the Vikings sailed to these shores, gave them the name *Vinland*, established bases, and interacted with the natives they called *skraelings*—thought to have been the ancestors of the Beothuk and Mikmak Indians. One of the Viking camps, at L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, has been excavated by archaeologists and recognized as a World Heritage Site. What is less known is that the Norsemen had a strange and fatal encounter in North America with what they called an *einfaetingur*, or “Uniped”—a strange, human-like creature with only one leg.

Shot By a Monster

According to the medieval Icelandic account known as *Eirik’s Saga*, the Uniped was encountered by one Thorvald Ericksson. Thorvald Ericksson was no less than the son of Eirik the Red (the discoverer of Greenland), and brother of Lief the Lucky (discoverer of Vinland). However, the luck that Lief inherited from his father seems to have skipped over Thorvald.

Thorvald was a crew member on a long westward journey sometime around A.D. 1009. The route may have been from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, to the area west of the Gaspé peninsula of Quebec, but the

exact location is wide open to debate and interpretation. The saga relates:

“One morning Karlsefni and his men saw something glittering on the far side of the clearing, and they shouted at it. It moved, and it proved to be a Uniped; it came bounding down towards where the ship lay. Thorvald, Eirik the Red’s son, was sitting at the helm. The Uniped shot an arrow into his groin. Thorvald pulled out the arrow and said ‘This is a rich country we have found; there is plenty of fat around my entrails.’ Soon afterwards he died of his wound.”

The leader of the expedition, Thorfinn Karlsefni, and his men chased the Uniped to the north, catching glimpses of it as it ran like the wind over the rough ground. Eventually it vanished into a creek and the pursuers turned back.

The *einfaetingur* that brought about the end of poor Thorvald Ericksson somewhere in the wilds of the New World was just one of many one-legged creatures hopping through the minds and imaginations of peoples across the Western world. During the Middle Ages, Europeans believed that the edges of the known world were populated by strange and often dangerous things, including one-eyed creatures or humans with the heads of dogs. One-legged men were par for the course.

Eirik’s Saga was written in the early 13th century. Although the author is unknown, academics believe that he was a learned man in the medieval scholastic tradition. His inclusion of the story of the Uniped may mean that the author was familiar with medieval traveler’s wonder tales about other one-legged creatures.

A contemporary one-legged creature appears on the 13th-century *Mappa Mundi* drawn around 1290. This map was probably drawn by Richard de Bello, Prebendary of Lafford in the diocese of Lincoln. The *Mappa Mundi* features a host of mythological races, beasts, and amazing cryptozoological phenomena. Among these curious beasties is something called the “Sciapod”—an extraordinary being who sheltered himself from the heat of the sun with his single enormous foot. They were also known as Monoscelans. Richard Barber and Anne Riches’ *Dictionary of Fabulous Beasts* defines Sciapods as:

“Men with one foot so large that they could lie on their back and use it as a sunshade. They were usually described as one-legged, and very swift, though a four-legged species which used one leg as a shelter while walking is also reported. They lived on the fragrance of fruit only, and carried fruit with them when they travelled for this purpose; if they breathed corrupt air they died.”

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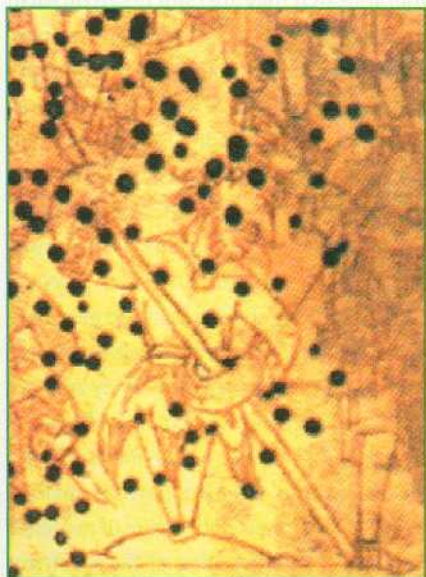
The Notorious Peg Leg

A much less pleasant one-legged monster was the *Fachen* of Irish legend, also known as *Fachan* or *Fachin*, and in Scotland as *Direach Ghlinn Eitidh*. In English, he was known as Peg Leg Jack. Descriptions of Peg Leg Jack were fairly consistent. It was pitch black in color and covered with feathers, with a tuft of them which grew like a comb on a cock's head. It had one hand that grew from the center of its chest, one leg that grew out of its body at an angle, one eye set in the middle of its forehead, one toe, one finger, and so forth, all perfectly centered on its body.

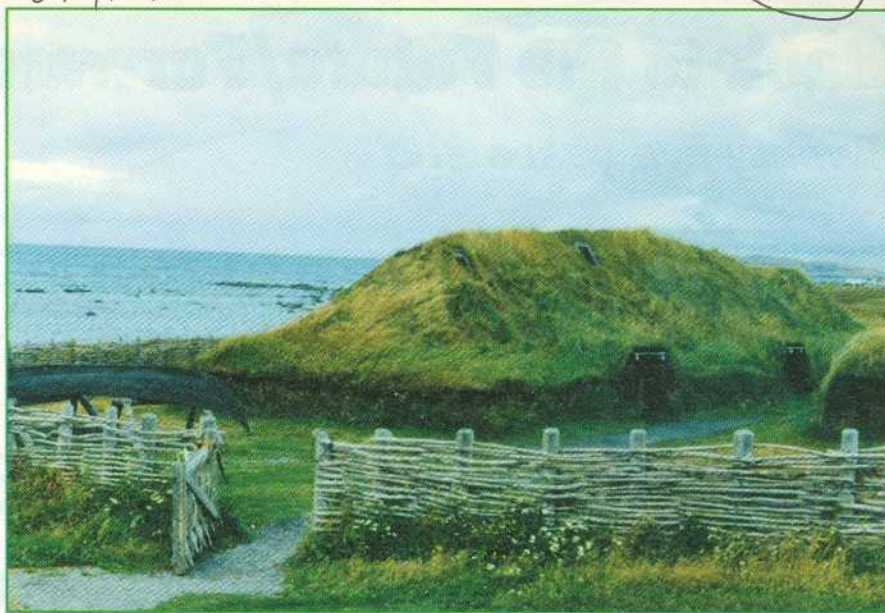
In order to look more menacing, Peg Leg Jack would ruffle up its blue feathers before attacking its victims. Apparently this was so effective that the sight of it alone was said to cause heart attacks. When its appearance did not kill outright, Peg Leg Jack would pursue and mutilate travelers, eventually killing them. The creature was said to wield a chain or spiked club, which it could use to destroy an entire orchard in a single night.

A wonderful description of the charming fellow was given in an unnamed Irish manuscript, and reprinted in 1890:

"...[H]e held a very thick iron flail-club in his skinny hand, and twenty chains out of it, and fifty apples on each chain of them, and a venomous spell on each great apple of them, and a girdle of the skins of deer and roebuck around the thing that was his



Uniped from *Physiologus*, 1200



Sod house and fence, L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland

body, and one eye in the forehead of his black-faced countenance, and one bare, hard, very hairy hand coming out of his chest, and one veiny, thick-soled leg supporting him and a close, firm, dark blue mantle of twisted hard-thick feathers, protecting his body, and surely he was more like unto devil than to man."

Mythological beasts with one leg were well known all across northern Europe, dating back to the seventh century. While some, like Peg Leg Jack, lived in the mountains of Scotland and Ireland, most Unipeds were said to live in Africa. Indeed, the 13th-century Icelandic author of *Eirik's Saga* was probably familiar with the theories current in his time that Vinland possibly extended all the way to Africa.

What is interesting is the fact that certain African groups have their own legends about the Uniped. One such group is the Bakonjo people of Uganda. The Bakonjo are a Bantu group found in the district of Kasese, Uganda. The Bakonjo believed in a being called "Kalisa." Kalisa was a monster—a half-man with one arm, one eye, one leg, one ear, half a nose and half the rest of the body, very similar to the descriptions of Peg Leg Jack.

Kalisa was regarded as being very important by the Bakonjo with respect to hunting. Since hunting was a cherished occupation among them, the power and importance of Kalisa is easily understood. To

honor Kalisa, the Bakonjo would construct shrines made of bamboo sheaths, too small for a man to enter, though the larger huts were slightly over three feet high. A food offering of chicken or *matooke* was placed on stakes between huts.

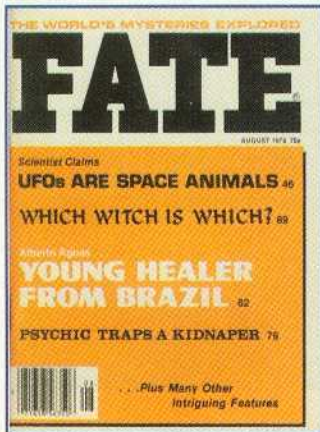
Whether known as Kalisa, Uniped, or Peg Leg Jack, one-legged monsters seem to be nearly universal, with examples found in Europe, Africa, Siberia, and China. Does he spring from our collective consciousness, some sort of mythic archetype? Or does a one-legged version of Sasquatch—a true "Big Foot"—lurk somewhere in the wilds? Having kept his secrets so long, it is unlikely he is about to reveal himself anytime soon.

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Back to the Future/Forward to the Past

Twenty-five years ago



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Biological UFOs

The Critters Who Live in Space

Trevor James Constable claims he has discovered—and photographed—extraterrestrial life dwelling in the earth's upper atmosphere.

by John White

THE TERM "the UFO experience" lumps together a wide variety of dissimilar phenomena but nevertheless UFOlogists—those scientists who continually study and pursue the UFO enigma—have made enormous strides toward solving the riddle despite public ridicule, insufficient funds, official harassment and even official suppression. They have labored long and hard to crack the riddle, taking even greater "giant steps for mankind" than those of the astronauts.

Now the mountain of evidence offers a number of plausible explanations for UFOs. The UFO experience is complex and no single explanation, even the common notion of interplanetary spacecraft, will cover all of the phenomena. Dr. J. Allen Hynek, perhaps the world's foremost UFOlogist, noted in his 1972 book *The UFO Experience*, "The solution of the UFO phenomenon... might not be easy to accept. It might well call for a rearrangement of many of our established concepts of the physical world that will be far greater even

than the rearrangements necessary when relativity and quantum mechanics entered our cozy little world."

An important contribution to UFO data comes from Trevor James Constable of San Pedro, Calif. A merchant marine radioelectronics officer, Constable is a longtime researcher in borderland science, primarily in the traditions of Rudolf Steiner and Wilhelm Reich. Constable claims to have done what thousands of astronomers, biologists and exobiologists may gasp to hear: *discovered and photographed extraterrestrial life, right here on earth!*

"Not all UFOs are spacecraft from another world," Constable says. "Quite simply, many UFOs are living organisms. They are biological aeroforms living in the sky unknown to official science. I know. I have seen and photographed them."

Astronomer-exobiologist Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell University, in his testimony before Congress during the 1968 Symposium on Unidentified Flying Objects, said, "A bona fide example of extraterrestrial life, even in a very simple form,

would revolutionize biology.... It would be truly immense."

Constable's tacit reply to Sagan is: "The revolution is here."

The full story of this momentous discovery is told in his book *The Cosmic Pulse of Life*, in which Constable claims to "demonstrate conclusively through photographs that they are right down on earth and not out in the farthest reaches of space upon which astronomical telescopes are ranged." Constable's "they" refers to *animals* that live in the sky! Pictures of them taken on infrared film show plasma-bodied creatures—organisms, Constable maintains, consisting essentially of heat-substance at the upper border of physical matter. Neither solid, liquid nor gas, these elemental creatures live invisibly like fish in the ocean of atmosphere. They are normally beyond the range of sight for three reasons. First, their native habitat is the stratosphere at distances beyond unaided sight. Second, their native state of existence is in the infrared portion of the spectrum beyond the range of visible light. Last, they