

ON UNIPEDS AND ASPARAGUS

and not to mention penguins

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WHILE researching recently in the library of the Royal Geographical Society in London on the early Irish and Norse voyages, and settlements in North America, I came across a peculiar little item which may be thought of some interest.

The Icelandic collection of Sagas known as the *Flateyrbók*¹ contains various accounts of these voyages. The best known of them is of course the Saga of *Eirík the Red*, who sailed to, and explored, parts of the New World around the year 1,000 A.D. Less well known perhaps is the *Saga of Thorfinn Karlsefni*, an Icelander who in 1010 carried out a voyage of exploration from Iceland to the shores of what are now Greenland, Baffinland, Labrador, Newfoundland, and New England. (The last-named three regions, or parts of them, constitute in the opinion of many scholars the famous *Vinland* of the Norsemen. However there are still considerable differences of view as to the precise extent of *Vinland* and the actual spots where the Norse landed, brought their cattle, and where, for a very long period of time probably, as many as several thousands of them had their dairy farms and their settlements in America, centuries before the arrival of Columbus.)

These Greenlandic and Icelandic Sagas contain detailed accounts of the Norsemen's frequent encounters and fights with both the kinds of native peoples who were already in what we today call Greenland, Canada, and the USA, namely the Eskimos and the Red Indians. The Norsemen were entirely familiar with them and invariably described them by the same somewhat derogatory term *Skraelings*.²

The Uniped

On one occasion, however, in the *Saga of Thorfinn Karlsefni*, we read that, as the Vikings were sailing along a part of the North American coast, they met a mysterious *something else*, and it is to this that I now wish to draw attention:

"One morning . . . , they saw something glittering in a clearing above them, and they shouted at it. As it moved, they saw it was a Uniped. It darted down towards them. Thorvald Eiríksson was at the helm. The Uniped then ran back northward, having shot an arrow³ into Thorvald's vitals. He drew out the arrow, saying: 'There is fat about my entrails. We have found a good land, but we shall hardly be able to make use of it'. A little later he died of his wound.

"The others ran after the Uniped, catching occasional glimpses of him, but at last he jumped into a pool⁴ and vanished. They returned, and sailed back northward, thinking they had come to the Land of the Unipeds and being unwilling to risk losing more men."

For this puzzling passage which crops up right in the middle of a perfectly straightforward factual account of a Norse voyage to North America, geographers and Old Norse experts, understandably embarrassed, generally clutch at the handy explanation that it is a piece of mythology which has somehow crept in here through a scribe's error. There was of course already a well diffused belief in a (mythical) single-horned animal, the *Unicorn*, so that the emergence of a parallel set of beliefs about a *Uniped*, a mythical creature with only one foot, might no doubt be quite understandable. On the other hand, while we do know today precisely which existing animal it was that gave rise to the idea of the *Unicorn*,⁵ however hard we search in the existing or recent fauna of the North American Continent it is not a bit easy to theorize as to what on earth the Norsemen could possibly have had in mind when they talked of a *Uniped*!

What caught my attention in this story was the statement that the Norsemen, coasting along in their longboat, saw "*something glittering* in a clearing above them." In our investigations into the mysteries of the UFO Phenomenon, we are quite used to hearing about "*something glittering*" which is also in the habit of landing in clearings. And the strange name *Uniped* inevitably at once recalled to mind an extraordinary account of a meeting with *one-legged UFO entities* given in one of the recent books by Coral and James Lorenzen.⁶

Described by the Lorenzens as "a flesh-crawler"—and it certainly is—the affair is alleged to have occurred in Peru between 4.00 and 5.00 p.m. one afternoon in February or March of 1949, at a spot called Lomo de Ballena, about six miles south of Lima, Capital of Peru, and beside the Pan-American Highway which in this region runs in a north-south direction roughly parallel with the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

For quite understandable reasons the percipient in this case, Señor C. A. V., a Peruvian (at the time aged 30) employed by a large oil corporation,

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has been most unwilling that his identity be revealed. However, he came forward quite voluntarily, in October 1967, and told the whole story to Mr. Richard Greenwell, an English businessman domiciled in Lima, where he was at that date engaged in importing industrial machinery. Mr. Greenwell (the Lorenzens mention that he speaks Spanish like a native) was, in 1967, APRO's representative in Peru, and is today working with Mrs. Lorenzen at the APRO headquarters in Tucson, Arizona.

Mr. Greenwell interviewed Sr. C.A.V. for several hours, the whole conversation being tape-recorded. Mr. Greenwell states that he found the percipient honest and sincere and that he is quite unable to believe the man invented the story. The only alternative explanations are consequently either that the episode was a hallucination or that it was a true experience.

In their book the Lorenzens mention plans to have Sr. C.A.V. go to the United States to submit himself for psychiatric analysis and tests with a view to getting to the bottom of the matter. The percipient was quite willing to co-operate in such a course, but so far I have not heard whether anything has come of the scheme.

Mr. Greenwell's account is lengthy. The following is the barest substance of what Sr. C.A.V. claims befell him.

Lomo de Ballena incident

He was driving northwards to Lima on the Pan-American Highway between 4.00 and 5.00 p.m. On his left was the Ocean, and on his right a great expanse of desert and sand-dunes. The Pan-American Highway had far less traffic in 1949 than it does today, and he saw no other vehicles on the road at the time.

Suddenly, away on his right over the desert, he saw a greyish, shining metallic disc suspended a few feet above the ground. He stopped the car and ran over to it. No door or porthole or other opening on it was to be seen, until suddenly an opening appeared and from it came three "mummy-like" creatures about 5ft. tall, with humanlike profiles and arms and torsos, but with legs joined together "like twin bananas" and ending in a single large foot. No mouth, nose, ears or other facial features were visible, "except for an oblong substance like jelly, with a sort of bubble in the centre,"⁷ located at about the height where one would have expected to find eyes. This "jelly substance" was "a sort of transparent plastic, or jelly, with a bubble in the middle that moved around." The "bubble" was about 2 cms. wide and of almost the same transparent shade of colour as the rest of the "jelly".

The three beings (one of them a little shorter than the other two) wore no clothing, but were covered in a strange "towely skin." Their bodies, which he touched several times (he even hugged one of them in an attempt to detain it!) were hard and "biscuity". He got the impression that they had no bones, but were all cartilage.

They "spoke" to him, in English, the "voice" seeming to be mechanical and to come from somewhere other than the head. They seemed at first not to know where they were and asked him (in English) if it was North America. When C.A.V. explained that it was *South America*, the voice at once switched to Spanish. Neither the English nor the Spanish bore any trace of accent or "localisms," whether of "American English," "English English," "Spanish Spanish," or "South American Spanish." It all sounded "as though learnt."

The creatures at once began asking C.A.V. to "take them to his Chief." He explained that his particular 'Chief' was the President of the Republic of Peru, and that it would not be all that easy for him to arrange this sort of thing.

They said that they came from a planet in orbit around a certain star, and named the star, though the word meant nothing to C.A.V. They explained that they knew all about us and our primitive ways and had had our planet and our species under observation for a long time, but were now extremely concerned as to what we might do to jeopardize not only our own planet but the entire Universe, since with atomic energy we were "playing about with a new substance that could endanger it all" and could "create some sort of chain reaction."

They said they extracted humidity from the atmosphere and drew all their power and energy from their Sun. They said they had long ago overcome all the wretched defects and weaknesses that beset us, *and no longer even had sex*. They were in fact immortal and eternal, reproducing themselves by simple division,⁸ and in fact before the weird meeting was over one of them stretched out on the ground and did just that, so that from then on there were four of them.

No feeding problems

Among the many other strange things that they told him was this: that they were able to transmit liquid food from one to another simply by standing shoulder to shoulder.⁹

Next they invited C.A.V. into the disc and took him for a flight down the coast. He heard them talking among themselves: it sounded "like microphone noises."

Inside the disc he was astonished by many things. First by the fact that all the walls were transparent and he could see the surrounding countryside perfectly, and he could no longer see any trace of the outline of the door through which they had just entered.¹⁰ Secondly, he was amazed to find no sign of any instruments or buttons or levers or other equipment whatsoever.¹¹ The whole space in the disc apparently contained nothing but a sort of padded ledge, at the height of one of our tables, which ran right round the inside of the compartment. And they told him that they possessed some method of accumulating energy from the Universe into this ledge, and it was by means of this ledge that they propelled their craft.

Such, in brief, are the main details of Señor C.A.V.'s mind-boggling story. We must make of it what we can, though perhaps only a few amongst us will fall for the "E.T. theory" spread, as usual, by the creatures themselves. But I think that at this point I should also recall the no less fantastic story of Fred Reagan to which I have referred in a recent article.¹² In July 1951, Fred Reagan was allegedly flying a Piper Cub light aeroplane somewhere over one of the southern states of the U.S.A. when his machine was struck by a large, pulsating, lozenge-shaped UFO and he was sucked up into the interior of the latter, where he found that his hosts were some "small glistening beings about 3ft. high" that "looked like huge sticks of metallic asparagus" and also displayed an uncanny facility in the English language. In my view both the Peruvian and the Reagan cases, if genuine, relate to some of the many species of "Earth Elementals", and to look outside our planet for their source could be futile.

As for the Norsemen's *Uniped* with which we started out, it is so odd that the only conceivable explanation would have to be bracketed in the same category. Whatever it was, I find the story intriguing, so I have made this brief record of something that is surely curious however we look at it.

Is it possible, for example, that the "glittering" thing first noticed by the Norsemen was *not a creature itself but its craft*? Señor C.A.V.'s creatures seemingly did not glitter, but their machine did. In Fred Reagan's case both the machine and the creatures glittered, and although we are not actually told that the latter had only one leg each, the fact that he described them as like "large metallic sticks of asparagus" makes it sound quite possible that they too qualified for the title of "Unipeds".

As regards the scene of Thornfinn Karlsefni's encounter with the "Uniped," this was somewhere either in Newfoundland or Labrador or the more icy regions to the north. As all students of our subject know, there is plenty of evidence in our own days of UFOs frequenting both Polar Regions of our planet and there have been many UFO reports from these northern areas of Canada.

Penguins and Commonsense

Whatever the Norsemen's "Uniped" was, I do hope at any rate that nobody will write to me saying that it has all been explained: that the glittering thing seen by the Vikings was simply *the white shirt-front of a penguin* which then dived into the water, while the "arrow" shot into poor old Thorvald Eiriksson was merely a sharp nip from the beak of one of these birds. (Unfortunately for such a theory, no member of the family of the Penguins, *Sphenicidae*, inhabits the northern Polar or Sub-Polar regions, and none is in fact found further north than the Galápagos Islands, which lie on the Equator, at 89° West.)

On the other hand I readily concede that the Galápagos Islands are not too far to the north-west

of the coast of Peru where Señor C.A.V. allegedly had his hair-raising experience. So, if you don't like the Elementals as an explanation but are hell-bent on "commonsense" answers, then perhaps we might have to agree that what Señor C.A.V. met *really* was a party of Emperor Penguins (*Apterodytes Fosteri*), or King Penguins (*Apterodytes Longirostris*), wrapped in some old towels that bathers had left behind on the local beach. Anyway, it is probably as good a "commonsense explanation" as we shall ever get for the Peruvian case, though some readers may feel as I do that it has not quite accounted for Señor C.A.V.'s UFO. Nor has it told us precisely how one of our penguins managed to stretch out and unzipper itself down the middle.

NOTES

1. There is a copy in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.
2. To tell the sad truth, they seem to have had no *Race Relations Board* in those less "progressive" days, and this splendid-sounding word *Skraeling* covered a wide band of meanings such as "miserable", "wretched", "barbarous", or just plain "scruffy".
3. Is this bit about the "arrow" perhaps a conventionalization of something a lot more complex? In other words, was poor Thorvald Eiriksson 'clobbered'—as the Brazilian Inácio de Souza was, in August 1967—by a ray from a landed UFO? (See Charles Bowen's *A Fatal Encounter*, in FSR for March/April 1969.)
4. Could it have been not the *Uniped* but the UFO itself that vanished into a pool? In our own days we have seen not a few reports of UFOs splashing down into lakes and reservoirs as well as into the open sea.
5. All our stories of the *Unicorn* derive from the Greek historian Ctesias (Vth century B.C.) who attempted, in his books on India and the other fabulous lands of the East, to reproduce somebody else's description of a *rhinoceros*, an animal quite unknown to the Greeks of that time.
6. See *UFOs Over The Americas*, by Jim and Coral Lorenzen. Signet paperback, May 1968. (pp. 122-148).
7. This lone optic sounds horribly like a spirit-level! Compare with the One-eyed Humanoids at Belo Horizonte (FSR Special Edition No. 3, *UFO Percipients*, pp. 28-32).
8. *Mitosis*, cell-division, is of course a familiar feature at present in our world, but only on the lowest levels of existence.
Enthusiastic advocates of our current *swinging* and permissive trends will unquestionably be horrified by the mere thought of the possibility that—as at least one "Contactee" is claimed to have learned from an "Advanced Space-Brother"—our own sex-ridden and sex-raddled species is scheduled to revert, in the not too distant biological future, to this somewhat "austere" way of life.
One feels the *frisson* sweeping through the ranks of the compulsive addicts of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, and one sympathizes with them.
9. Very handy when you are in line at the cafeteria.