

# SOCIOLOGY OF THE IBERIAN LANDINGS

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IN a recent publication, we presented a catalogue of one hundred Type-I observations in the Iberian Peninsula, and we analysed these cases with respect to time and space.\* The present article will address itself to a deeper study of the sociological patterns associated with the phenomenon. In particular we shall attempt to answer questions such as:

“What is the age distribution of witnesses?”

“In what proportion of the cases are they known by name?”

“How many of the sightings come from single witnesses?”

“What were they doing when they saw the object?”

“What is their intellectual level?”

## 1—The witnesses

The distribution of the number of witnesses in our current catalogue of Iberian landings is given by Table 1:

43	cases	with	1	witness
22	“	“	2	witnesses
11	“	“	“several”	witnesses
8	“	“	3	witnesses
8	“	“	4	witnesses
6	“	“	5	“
2	“	“	6	“
2	“	“	7	“
3	“	“	“a dozen”	witnesses
1	case	“	“about 300”	witnesses

Table 1:

Let us note immediately that this leads to a total of approximately 562 persons, of whom 89 are known by name. It is noteworthy that, of 38 witnesses of known sex who were alone at the time of observation, 31 were male and 7 female.

## 2—Age distribution

The ages of only thirty-two of the witnesses are known precisely to us. Although the sample is small, we have attempted a rough estimate of a “pyramid” for these ages, leading to the graph of Figure 1.

We note that reporting a landing is not typical of any particular age group, although there is a paucity of reports from adults 30 to 50. Because of the small sample, we have not attempted separate distributions for male and female witnesses.

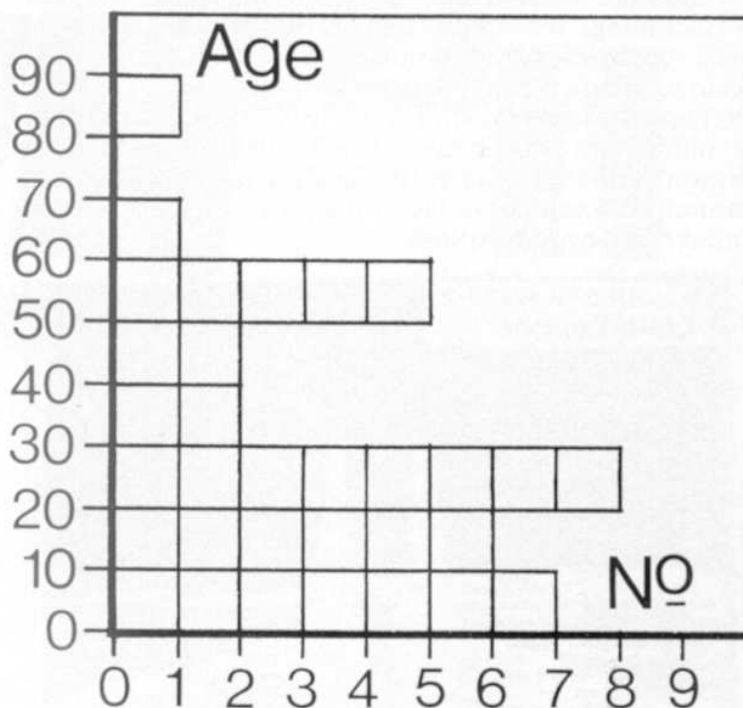


Figure 1:  
Distribution found for 32 witnesses of known age

## 3—Intellectual level

Intellectual level is naturally difficult to estimate. However, our reports often provide information on the occupation and status of the witness, and such information can be used as indicator of education and intellectual environment (although not of mental ability). We have used such indicators to define twelve convenient categories, as follows:

- Illiterate.** Two cases mention that the witnesses could not read or write.
- Farm workers, shepherds, etc.**
- Drivers** of trucks, farm equipment, buses, cabs.
- Guards** and military personnel.
- Sailors** and fishermen.
- Industrial workers.**
- Businessmen.**
- Artists** and entertainers.
- Medical and engineering students.**

\* See FSR Special Issue No. 4, *UFOs in Two Worlds*. [This interesting and valuable publication is still available, and readers may obtain details from our advertisement on page 2—EDITOR.]

- (j) Engineers.
- (k) High professionals (such as bank officials, attorneys).
- (l) University Faculty.

We wish to emphasise that the classification is, admittedly, an arbitrary one. It was drawn for the sake of convenience and intends to reflect the environment of the witness rather than his individual intelligence. Figure 2 shows the distribution we observe.

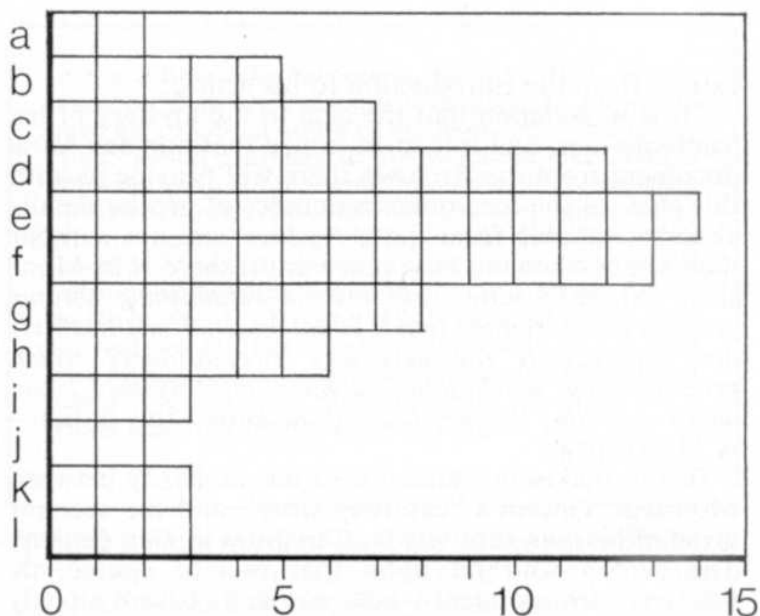


Figure 2:  
Distribution of intellectual level estimates

<b>37 ON A ROAD</b>	
Driving	32 cases
Riding a bike	3 "
Awaiting a bus	1 case
Riding a mule	1 "
<b>3 ABOARD SHIP</b>	3 cases
<b>6 AT HOME</b>	
Inside kitchen	1 case
Playing in garden	1 "
Tending garden	1 "
Near home	1 "
Asleep	1 "
Inside house	1 "
<b>2 AT WORK (non-rural)</b>	
Working	1 "
On guard duty	1 "
<b>15 IN FIELDS</b>	
Working	2 cases
Returning from work	2 "
Walking	3 "
Touring area	4 "
Watching animals	2 "
Hunting	1 case
Gathering wood	1 "
<b>1 OTHER</b>	
At the beach	1 "

Table 2:  
Occupation of witnesses at the time of landing

#### 4—Activity at the time of sighting

Most studies of UFOs (*pro* and *con* alike) ignore the

question of the activity of the witness immediately prior to the sighting. We feel this point is, in fact, a crucial one, as we can expect quite a different reaction to an unusual sight from people engaged in a routine activity than from people who are doing something unusual. For instance we would easily believe that a man from the city could be surprised by the sights and sounds of a seaside area he might be touring during a holiday while the same sights and sounds would not "fool" a man who has lived there all his life.

Careful tabulation of the activities of landing witnesses in Spain and in Portugal (known in 64 cases) leads to Table 2.

We find that in nearly two thirds of the cases, the witnesses were driving. One would be puzzled by the small number of reports from people at work if one forgot the effect of the "law of the times", according to which almost no type-I event is observed during daylight hours. Most of our cases took place between 8.00 and 11.00 p.m.

#### 5—Groups of witnesses

A further question of interest is the following: In multiple-witness cases, what was the relationship among people in the group? We have performed this analysis for two-witness cases, and also for three or more, arriving at the results of tables 3 and 4.

	WOMAN			
	Wife	girl-friend	mother	unrelated
Man with:	3	2	1	1
Woman with:	—	—	—	1
	MAN			
	colleague	brother	uncle	unrelated
Man with:	5	2	1	5
Woman with:	—	—	—	—

Table 3:  
Relationship among witnesses,  
Case 1: Two-witness sightings

	Children	Colleagues	Others
Man with:	1	9	11
Couple with:	9	—	2
Group of women with:	2	—	—

Table 4:  
Relationship among witnesses,  
Case 2: three witnesses and more

# POSTSCRIPT ON MONSIEUR VINCENT

*Aimé Michel*

AFTER I had written my article on Saint Vincent de Paul for *Flying Saucer Review*, I put a short article about him in *France Catholique*, a journal for French Catholics which appears weekly in Paris. In it I said that I hoped correspondents would send me further reference material on Monsieur Vincent, and I have received one such reference which is very useful, and details of which are as follows:

The late Fr. Fernand Benoît (who died not long ago) was the leading archaeologist on matters relating to Provence and occupied the post (an official one) of Directeur de la Circonscription Archéologique de Provence. He too thought that the story of Monsieur Vincent's having been a captive of the Moors looked highly suspect, and he wrote an article about it entitled *Le Mystère de la Captivité de Saint Vincent de Paul à Tunis* (published in 1931 by the Institut Historique de Provence, 2 rue Sylvabelle, 13 Marseille).

Benoît's argument is too long to be quoted in full here, so I will confine myself to giving the following

extract from the Introduction to his article:

"It is in Avignon that the clue to the mystery of his 'captivity' lies, and it is to be hoped that one day some document from the Archives there will provide us with this clue. In the meantime, a number of precise details already available from those Archives are not without their use in showing how much truth there is in Monsieur Vincent's letter, *but also in establishing serious grounds for presuming that it is not exact. Thus: truthfulness as regards the accessory circumstances which preceded and which followed upon the 'mystery'; and doubt regarding the very basis of the latter*" (my italics—A.M.).

Benoît makes no reference to the similarity between Monsieur Vincent's "captivity story" and the account given of his own captivity by Cervantes in *Don Quijote*. The person who hit upon that was of course my Lazarist correspondent whose name, as I have already related, I unfortunately failed to note and whom, alas, I have not yet managed to trace.

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## Sociology of the Iberian Landings

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### 6—Summary of findings

This article has been concerned with the witnesses of UFO landings in Spain and Portugal. We have attempted to formulate, document and clarify a number of new questions that had not previously been posed for this population, or indeed for any other set of UFO witnesses. The following points have become apparent:

A. The witnesses represent a cross-section of the Iberian rural population with a typical mix of intellectual levels and age groups.

B. They were engaged in their normal activity (most of them driving) when their attention was called to an *unexpected* object.

C. In multiple-witness cases, we have investigated the relationship among people in the group. We have attempted to identify any abnormal trend that might contribute to psychological effects, misperceptions, etc., often advanced as "explanations" for the reported object (such as "folie à deux", mass hallucination, suggestion). We found that witnesses of these landing phenomena were either with close relatives or with work colleagues at the crucial time of the observation. This finding, although it does not in itself invalidate a psychological explanation, certainly places bounds on the types of assumptions the theorist can employ to formulate it.

D. It has become apparent that the following working rule is once again satisfied: "The more sophisticated the witnesses of a UFO event, the less likely they are to report their observation." The proportion of witnesses with a high intellectual level is not small, but the above law has combined with the rural character of the landings to give a strong bias towards the manual professions. We also find that women are less likely to report a landing observation than men, and that we have few reports from adults of the age group 30 to 50.

E. The fact that groups of witnesses exhibit an almost identical proportion of close relatives, unrelated people and work colleagues (respectively 38%, 36% and 26%) indicates to us that the observation of a Type-I event is not due to certain preferred configurations or inter-personal relationships among witnesses, such as we would expect in the case of delusion, hoax and suggestion phenomena.

On the basis of these statistics, it seems to us that an adequate explanation for the phenomena described by the witnesses should now be sought in physical terms. The analysis of the ages, occupations and social status of landing witnesses, based on over one hundred carefully-evaluated incidents, does not appear to provide any support for the thesis that the reports were due to psychological or sociological motivations on the part of the percipients.

(Written July 5, 1971; revised September 18, 1971.)