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COMITATO ITALIANO PER IL CONTROLLO DELLE AFFERMAZIONI SUL PARANORMALE

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## Press Release (21st June 2005)

Crop Circles: *Journal of Scientific Exploration* publishes a new scientific article authored by Italian researchers

The latest issue of the **Journal of Scientific Exploration** (JSE), issue 19(2) Summer 2005, contains a paper titled *Balls of Light: The Questionable Science of Crop Circles* and authored by **Francesco Grassi**, **Claudio Cocheo** and **Paolo Russo** of **CICAP** (*Italian Committee for the Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal*).

This paper shows the insubstantiality of the hypotheses contained in three papers respectively authored by W.C. Levensgood (1994), W.C. Levensgood & N.P. Talbott (1999) and by E.H. Haselhoff (2001). These three papers suggested the involvement of some kind of electromagnetic radiation during the creation of crop circles and are actually considered as the "scientific reference point" for the crop circles phenomenon.

Because of the sensational scientific contents of those findings and the great impact exerted on worldwide public opinion, a more exhaustive inspection of the data handling and the statistical analyses seemed to be mandatory to CICAP's committee, according to the accepted rule that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proofs.

Grassi et al. discuss the methods and conclusions of the three articles, pointing out the misrepresentation of the experimental protocols, the misleading application of statistical procedures, the arbitrary discarding of unwanted results and the weakness of the proposed physical models to the suggested hypotheses. In particular, they show that both Levensgood & Talbott and Haselhoff's conclusions are unsubstantiated and do not prove the involvement of an electromagnetic radiation source in the creation of crop circles.

The paper of Grassi et al. reveals also another important development which happened before the JSE publication. **Physiologia Plantarum**, the journal that published the three papers mentioned above, played a crucial role in promoting them as the "scientific reference point" of the subject and giving them scientific support and credibility. While *Physiologia Plantarum* agreed with the paper of Grassi et al. about the pseudoscientific contents of the three articles (*Physiol. Plantarum*, communication to the authors, 2004) at the same time it refused to publish the paper with the surprising motivation that "*there is not a scientific discussion going on the crop circle subject*".

After a long and exhaustive discussion, the paper of Grassi et al. concludes that the claims put forward by Levensgood, Talbott and Haselhoff in their three papers are not supported at all by the available evidence which on the other hand demonstrates nothing but a mere difference in the stem elongation between the flattened plants lying inside the circles and those standing outside them, as one should expect when whatever kind of mechanical force flattens the plants.

CICAP invites readers to visit [www.cicap.org/crops/en](http://www.cicap.org/crops/en), where it is possible to download not only the original JSE article but also other articles and information about crop circles.

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