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International man of mystery

Embarking on whole new world of forensics, scientists trace claims of Columbus across much of Europe

THE WASHINGTON POST

May 16, 2006

He gives new meaning to the phrase "world-class celebrity," but like Garbo, Christopher Columbus had little interest in talking about himself and dismissed queries about his origins with a rhetorical shrug: "Vine de nada" - "I came from nothing." For centuries, scholars have wondered about this enigmatic mariner whose compulsion to travel east by traveling west altered the course of Western civilization.

He may have been born in Genoa, but he wrote in indifferent Latin or in good Spanish - never in Italian. He had French connections, married a Portuguese woman, may have been Jewish, may have lived in Catalonia and died May 20, 500 years ago this week, in the Spanish city of Valladolid.



The goal is to determine whether Columbus, as traditionalists hold, was the son of Genoese wool weaver Domenico Colombo or a Spaniard named Colon; or a Catalan Colom, from Barcelona; or a French Coulom or Colomb; or perhaps Corsican or Mallorcan.

"We'll get something, but it will be complicated," Lorente said in an interview from his University of Granada office.

"The trick is to differentiate between the Columbuses from different places - and there's no guarantee." Lorente's original idea was to examine purported Columbus remains in Seville, Spain, and at the Faro, a Colon monument in

To commemorate this event, researchers led by Spanish forensic pathologist Josi Antonio Lorente Acosta are comparing the DNA of Columbus' out-of-wedlock son, Fernando, with DNA from hundreds of possible Columbus descendants in at least three countries.

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Archives	Dominican Republic, to find where he was actually buried.
>CONTESTS	
Producers DVD	His bones were allegedly taken from Santo Domingo in the late 18th century and sent to Seville, but Dominican workmen later found a lead box in the Santo Domingo cathedral with Columbus' name on it.
Hoobastank Contest	Either he never went to Seville, or his bones are in both places, or the Dominican box holds somebody else's remains. Lorente sought to compare DNA in both places with DNA from Fernando and Columbus' brother Diego.
Nickelback winner	
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New York News from amNY.com	But there were not enough Seville remains to provide DNA samples, and the Dominican government refused to let a team examine the bones there, telling Lorente he was authorized to evaluate the "state of preservation of the admiral's remains," but not take samples.
WB11	In the Columbus wars, those who hold the upper hand never relinquish it. Why would the Dominican Republic allow a Spaniard to compare their Columbus remains with Spain's?
Star Community Publishing	"People want him to be theirs," said Peter Dixon, a Columbus scholar. "If you're Spanish, you want him to be in Seville. If you're Italian, you want him to be Italian."
Island Publications Tourism	Theories abound on Christopher Columbus' birthplace. Here are some.
Parents & Children	
LI Weddings	Cuba
Hoy - News in Spanish	Columbus married a Portuguese noblewoman and had a son, Diego. Some Portuguese historians go further, saying he named the island of Cuba after the Portuguese town where he was born.

Spain

Cristóbal Colón, as he's known here, journeyed to America with Spanish sponsors and three Spanish ships. He and his Spanish mistress had a son, Fernando. He's supposedly buried here. Yet, some say his last name is Cataloni, making him Cristòfor Colom.

France

Speculation is that Frenchmen with the names Colomb or Coulom may be descendants. And if he was Corsican, say he hid his roots because of the island's seedy reputation at the time.

Italy

The Italians have no doubt: He is a son of Italy, or, specifically, son of a Genoa wool weaver. Family statements and DNA will seem to back this, but doubts still linger. Another curiosity: He wrote in Spanish, never Italian.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

But wait, the New World stakes a claim to Columbus too. Dominicans say his remains were found in a cathedral in the nation's capital, Santo Domingo.

SOURCE: "EXPLORERS AND DISCOVERIES OF THE WORLD"; ANSWERS.COM; "THE LAST VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS"

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