



ADVERTISE



Spain Lays Claim to Columbus' Remains

By Daniel Woolls
Associated Press
posted: 19 May 2006
04:00 pm ET

MADRID, Spain (AP)—Spanish researchers said Friday they have resolved a century-old mystery surrounding Christopher Columbus's burial place, which both Spain and the Dominican Republic claim to be watching over. Their verdict: Spain's got the right bones.

A forensic team led by Spanish geneticist Jose Antonio Lorente has compared DNA from bone fragments that Spain says are from the explorer—and are buried in a cathedral in Seville—with DNA from remains that are known to be from Columbus' brother Diego, who is also buried in the southern Spanish city.

"There is absolute matchup between the mitochondrial DNA we have studied from Columbus' brother and Christopher Columbus," said Marcial Castro, a Seville-area historian and high school teacher who is the mastermind behind the project, which began in 2002. Mitochondria are cell components rich in DNA.

He spoke a day before the 500th anniversary of Columbus' death in the northern Spanish city of Valladolid.

Castro and his research colleagues have been trying in vain for years to convince the Dominican Republic to open up an ornate lighthouse monument in the capital Santo Domingo that it says holds the remains of the explorer.

Juan Bautista Mieses, the director of the Columbus Lighthouse—a cross-shaped building several blocks long—dismissed the researchers' findings and insisted Friday that Columbus was indeed buried in the Dominican Republic.

"The remains have never left Dominican territory," Bautista said.

The goal of opening the lighthouse tomb was to compare those remains to the ones from Diego in Seville and determine which country had buried the man who arrived in the New World in 1492, landing at the island of Hispaniola, which today comprises the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Castro stressed in an interview that, although his team is convinced the bones in Seville are from Columbus, this does not necessarily mean the ones in Santo Domingo are not. Columbus' body was moved several times after his death and the tomb in Santo Domingo might conceivably also hold part of the right body. "We don't know what is in there," Castro said.

Which cube
can be made
from this
shape?



LIVE SCIENCE Store
Products for the Inquirer



All Hazards Alert
Monitor with Cradle
\$39.00

BUY NOW

Chem C2000
Chemistry Set

Castro said that in light of the DNA evidence from Spain, the objective of opening the Santo Domingo tomb would be to determine who, if not Columbus, is buried there.

"Now, studying the remains in the Dominican Republic is more necessary and exciting than ever," he said.

Columbus died and was buried in Valladolid on May 20, 1506. He had asked to be buried in the Americas, but no church of sufficient stature existed there.

Three years later his remains were moved to a monastery on La Cartuja, a river island next to Seville. In 1537, Maria de Rojas y Toledo, widow of one of Columbus' sons, Diego, sent the bones of her husband and his father to the cathedral in Santo Domingo for burial.

There they lay until 1795, when Spain ceded Hispaniola to France and decided Columbus' remains should not fall into the hands of foreigners.

A set of remains that the Spaniards believed were Columbus's were first shipped to Havana, Cuba, and then back to Seville when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898.

In 1877, however, workers digging in the Santo Domingo cathedral unearthed a leaden box containing bones and bearing the inscription, "Illustrious and distinguished male, don Cristobal Colon." That's the Spanish way of saying Christopher Columbus.

The Dominicans say these were the genuine remains and that the Spaniards took the wrong body back in 1795.

Lorente is the director of the Laboratory of Genetic Identification at the University of Granada. He usually works on criminal cases but has also helped identify people killed under military regimes in Latin America. His lab works regularly with the FBI.

Castro says the team is now focusing their DNA tools on another Columbus mystery: his country of origin. Traditional theory says he was from Genoa, Italy, but another line of argument says Columbus was actually from the Catalonia region of northeast Spain.

One piece of evidence supporting this latter idea is that when Columbus wrote back from the New World in Spanish—not Italian—he used words and phrases that reflected influence from the Catalan language, Castro said.

The new team has now collected DNA samples from more than 350 men in Catalonia whose last name is Colom—the Catalan way of saying Columbus—and from 80 in Italy whose last name is Colombo. The material is obtained by wiping the underside of their tongues with a cotton swab.

The idea is to compare the genetic material with DNA from another authenticated Columbus relative, his son Hernando, who is buried in Seville. In this case, another kind of DNA is focused on—genetic material from the y-chromosome, which men receive only from their fathers.

DNA from y-chromosomes is much more scarce than the mitochondrial kind and deteriorates more rapidly. The team is using Hernando's because that of his alleged father is in bad shape.

Lorente and company want to see if the DNA pattern in Columbus' y-chromosome still shows up in men in either Catalonia or Italy, which would suggest he is from one place or the other, Castro said.

It is not known when the results of this second study will be available because the data from Italy is still scant.

"The people whose last name is Colombo are cooperating less than the Coloms in Spain," he said.



NEW! LiveScienc



LiveScience Re
Favorites



Amazing Image
Your Cool Pictu



The Biggest Po
Myths



The Mysterious
Castle: A Fanci



Vote Now: The
Modern Minds

IMAGES]



Tourists walk by the alleged tomb of Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus in the Cathedral of Seville, Spain in this photo from 2002. On May 19, 2005 scientists said the purported Columbus bones buried inside a cathedral in Seville are in fact from the explorer. AP Photo/Cristina Quicler

> [Click to View](#)



ADVENTURE



EXPERIENCE YOUR OWN TRAVEL ADVENTURE

France

Destinations:

iExplore France - Paris Extension

Brittany and Normandy Biking

Tour de France - the World's Greatest Bicycling Race



TRAVEL

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)

[Advertise on this site](#)

[The DNA Ancestry Project](#)

Discover your ancestry with DNA. Find ethnic and geographic origins.

www.dnaancestryproject.com

[Caribbean Business News](#)

Find the latest in regional and international news & business.

www.Caribbean360.com

Sponsored Links

Science Fiction Book Club

Avian Ancestor
Dinosaurs that
Fly

Top 10 Useless
(and Other Vestigial
Organs)

World Trivia: Challenge
your Brain

EXCLUSIVE: Sa
Sleuth Closes in
Noah's Ark Mystery

Get 5 books for 50¢ each, plus a FREE gift with membership. Choose from the best science fiction, fantasy, horror and more!

■ American Dad on DVD April 25th

From the delightfully twisted creative minds behind Family Guy, American Dad features CIA operative Stan Smith, his outrageous family, and Roger, the alcoholic extra-terrestrial!

MORE HEADLINES]

IT CAME FROM SPACE.COM]

- 🔗 [Toward Immortality: The Social Burden of Longer Lives](#)
- 🔗 [Whales Hunt Like Bats](#)
- 🔗 [NOAA Predicts Busy 2006 Hurricane Season](#)
- 🔗 [New Glasses Require Piercing Bridge of Nose](#)
- 🔗 [Menstrual Period Now Optional](#)
- 🔗 [Al Gore Takes 'Inconvenient Truth' to Cannes](#)
- 🔗 [The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Sperm](#)
- 🔗 [How We Smell](#)
- 🔗 [BLOG: Our New Look](#)
- 🔗 [Sniff and Swim: How Sperm Find Eggs](#)
- 🔗 [When Healthy Food is Not](#)
- 🔗 [Ozone Hole Might Heal by 2050](#)
- 🔗 [Dairy Products Might Cause More Human Twins](#)
- 🔗 [New Clues to the Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald](#)
- 🔗 [Michigan Cougars Not Extinct, Animal Droppings Indicate](#)
- 🔗 [Claw From Possible Dino-Bird Found](#)
- 🔗 [Wham! Wham! Wham! Now Get Some Sleep, Ma'am](#)
- 🔗 [Land Speed Record: Mountain Moves 62 Miles in 30 Minutes](#)
- 🔗 [Spain Lays Claim to Columbus' Remains](#)
- 🔗 [Frog Hops Back into Existence](#)
- 🔗 [Fickle Female Fish Force Males to be Flashy](#)
- 🔗 [Light Travels Backward and Faster than Light](#)
- 🔗 [In the Tool Shed, Apes Plan Ahead](#)
- 🔗 [Discovery of 'Hobbit' Questioned](#)
- 🔗 [Bleak Outlook for Snowy Peaks](#)
- 🔗 [Nearly Extinct American Chestnut Trees Found](#)
- 🔗 [Human and Chimp Ancestors Might Have Interbred](#)
- 🔗 [Starving Bacteria Cooperate to Make 'Superstrain'](#)
- 🔗 [Age Doesn't Always Cure Bed-Wetting](#)
- 🔗 [Giant Slab of Earth's Crust Found Near Core](#)
- 🔗 [Some Americans May Get Too Many Nutrients](#)
- 🔗 [Monkeys Use 'Code Words' to Warn of Predators](#)
- 🔗 [Possible First Major New Class of Antibiotics in Decades](#)
- 🔗 [What's Up, Doc? I'm Sorry, But...](#)
- 🔗 [Women Get Drunk, High and Addicted Easier Than](#)
- > [Space Tourism: A Multimedia Special Report](#)
- > [Planets Found in Potentially Habitable Setup](#)
- > [Spaceports: Building up the Space Travel Industry](#)
- > [A Wealth of Errors Led to DART Spacecraft's Failure, Chief Investigator Says](#)
- > [How to Spot a Crumbling Comet](#)

Men

- 🔗 [Mona Lisa Turns 500, and Other Unproved 'Theories'](#)
- 🔗 [Day Care Providers No Substitute for Mom](#)
- 🔗 [How Children Learn About God and Science](#)
- 🔗 [New Eye on Hurricanes Could Improve Forecasts](#)
- 🔗 [Newfound Ships from Revolutionary War Sunk on Purpose](#)
- 🔗 [Predator Panic: Reality Check on Sex Offenders](#)
- 🔗 [When a Rolling Stone Bounces](#)
- 🔗 [Less Health Care Can Be Better for Elderly](#)
- 🔗 [Real Doc Ock: New Robot Has Robotic Tentacles](#)
- 🔗 [New U.S. Tourist: Arctic Harp Seal](#)
- 🔗 [Tattooed Mummy With Jewelry Found in Peru](#)
- 🔗 [Why We Lie](#)
- 🔗 [Multimedia Babies: What's a Parent to Do?](#)
- 🔗 [Dragonflies Migrate Like Birds](#)
- 🔗 [Snowy Mountaintops in Africa to Disappear](#)
- 🔗 [Ray-Gun Reality: Inside Two 'Star Wars' Projects](#)
- 🔗 [Report: 48 Million Refuse to Buckle Up](#)
- 🔗 [Bears Eat Monkey at Zoo](#)
- 🔗 [Nancy Reagan Urges Senate to Pass Stem Cell Bill](#)

[Animal Domain](#) | [Health SciTech](#) | [Forces of Nature](#) | [Environment](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science of Fiction](#) | [History](#)

[Site Map](#) | [Image Galleries](#) | [Video](#) | [Reader Favorites](#) | [Image of the Day](#) | [Amazing Images](#) | [Blogs](#)

[Animals](#) | [Birds](#) | [Fish](#) | [Weather](#) | [Nature](#) | [Memory](#) | [Science](#) | [History Info](#) | [Environment News](#) | [Robots](#)

 [About us](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Terms of service](#) | [Privacy](#)
© 1999-2006 Imaginova Corp. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.