

COLUMBUS' ORIGIN THROUGH POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINES FROM DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. A TEXT SELECTION



1. Luis Arranz: “A certain Christopher Columbus, Discoverer”. *The Adventure of History*. Year 8, n. 91, pp. 58-65 (check PDF in the “Spanish Magazines” section)

2. The Spanish Empire. More than 300 years where the sun never sets”, in *History of Old Iberia*, n. 82: pp. 23-31.

“In that same year, 1492, the Genoese Admiral –or wherever he was...- Christopher Columbus set out on a voyage which would lead to the “accidental” discovery of America: his intention was to reach Cipango – present day Japan- surrounding the planet and, from there, to draw up the route to the Indies, it is to say, to adventure to lands already old through unexplored paths until that time.”



1. Cay Rademacher: “Christopher Columbus, 1492. Beyond the horizon”, in *GEO-EPOCHE*, 2006, n. 24, pp. 20-46.

“Cristoforo Colombo was born on an Autumn day in 1451 -the exact date is not known- in Genoa, as the eldest of four sons of a wool weaver. The town is near Venice, the most important naval power in Italy”.



1. Felipe Fernández-Armesto: “Columbus - Hero or Villain?”, in *History Today*, 1992, n. 42, pp. 4-9.

“It is commonly said that the traditional Columbus myth –which awards him personal credit for anything good that ever come out of America since 1492- originated in the War of Independence, when the founding fathers, in search of an American hero, pitched on the Genoese weaver as the improbable progenitor of all-American virtues.

[...]

After fulfilling his destiny to the great profit of his detractors he was returned to a wilderness of what seems to have been a general campaigning against Genoese employees of the Crown in

the late 1490s, he was ‘blamed as a foreigner’ and accused of ‘plotting to give the island of Hispaniola to the Genoese’

[...]

Columbus’ own model of colonial society seems to have derived from Genoese precedents: the trading factory, merchand quarter and family firm”.

2. David Armitage: “Christopher Columbus and the Uses of History”, in *History Today*, 1992, n. 42, pp. 50-55.

“The construction of the Columbus' image began, of course, with the explorer himself. The transformation of the son of a Genoese weaver into the Grand Admiral, Viceroy and Governor was an effort into which Columbus put almost as much work as he did into his less clearly successful voyages of discovery”.



1. “The Mystery of Columbus”, in: *Världens Historia [History of the World]*, 2009, n.4, pp. 15-21.

“Columbus travel to America in 1492 is one of the most documented discovery journeys of all times. In spite of this he is still a mystery himself. He put out smokescreens hiding his background and lied about his family – one theory holds that being a Jew himself he tried to find a new land for his people.

Where did he come from?

20 Spanish and 15 Italian cities claim to be the birthplace of Columbus. Researchers dispute his nationality.

[...]

Some historians have suggested that the reason why Columbus continuously put smoke screens on his past, was he had Jewish roots. According to this theory, Columbus had Jewish relatives who had been forced to escape from Spain to Italy, due to the persecution of the Jews in the country. This could explain the fact that Columbus, even before his arrival in Spain, spoke and wrote in Catalan. It could also explain why Columbus made everything possible to hide his origin- since the persecution of the Jews was more intense in 1485, when he arrived in Spain”.



Jaworski, Rafał, “Christopher Columbus, or a Tale of King Władysław on a Remote Island”, in *Mówią wieki [Centuries Say]*, 2013, n. 2, pp. 22-25.

“Speculations on Columbus’s origins are perhaps the most classic example of amateurish works in which incompetence is hidden behind the veil of noisy enthusiasm and unshaken confidence in one’s infallibility. Until now, that is before the publication of Rosa’s work, apart from the classic Genoese (Italian) hypothesis, seven other theories concerning the origins of Columbus have been put forward: Greek, Castilian, Costa Rican, Norwegian, Portuguese,

Scottish and Jewish (or rather Spanish-Jewish). Now time has come for the ninth, Polish or, to be precise, Polish-Portuguese theory.

Let us state it clearly that Rosa's objective was not to illuminate the Polish origins of Columbus, but to prove that he was Portuguese. This theory is neither original nor new. It was postulated at the beginning of the twentieth century by Patrocínio Ribeiro and later developed by a number of scholars. Rosa has only enriched the theory with his own ideas and popularized it. He devoted the first sixteen chapters of his book to Columbus the Portuguese. Only the last and the shortest one addresses the issue of the Polish or, to be precise, Jagiellon descent of the explorer. This is a conclusion of the earlier-presented argumentation. Since the author believes he has managed to determine that Columbus was Portuguese, he should now provide him with a name and a surname.

Rosa expects a lot from his hero. He must have possessed excellent, if not ingenious, knowledge of sailing, astronomy, geography and cartography. Columbus must have been on good terms with the political elite of Portugal, including the royal court, but at the same time he must have been completely unknown to his contemporary historians. The one who fits into such a description is, according to Rosa, prince Sigmund Henry, Segismondo Henriques de Sa Colona – a son of Władysław III of Varna, king of Poland, Lithuania and Hungary, who lived in Madeira, where he stayed as a voluntary exile, having escaped from Varna on November 10, 1444. The alleged king lived on the Atlantic island as Henrique o Alemão (Henry of Germany).

Rosa makes no references to historiographical sources. He does not bother to undermine the credibility of the source texts, either Christian or Turkish, which specify the circumstances of the king's death and even the name of the killer and the subsequent fate of the body of the deceased ruler. He dismisses the whole issue with a nonchalant statement that: Historians decided that Władysław III died in the battle of Varna, despite the fact that his body was never found. We should realize that it is only certain that the king disappeared during the battle. Therefore, it is inaccurate to state that he died in it (p. 395). Following this "logic", one might assume that only 333 passengers died in the catastrophe of Titanic, since such was the number of bodies found. The remaining ca. 1200 people "disappeared" in the catastrophe. The statement that the king, who was saved at Varna, abandoned his throne raises similar doubts".