

Historian: Columbus Was a Portuguese Agent

By Alexandra Vilchez

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina – The life of Christopher Columbus remains largely shrouded in mystery because he was in fact a James Bond-style secret agent for King John II of Portugal.

That is the thesis of the book “Colon: La Historia Nunca Contada” (Columbus: The Untold Story) by Portuguese historian Manuel Rosa, who lives in Durham, North Carolina.

Beginning this week, the historian will present his book in Badajoz, Spain, and will take part in several conferences in Portugal and Brussels.

Rosa began studying the discoverer in 1991 after reading a book claiming that Columbus married a woman of the Portuguese nobility.

“I realized that the whole story had been invented by historians, that in truth Columbus was a ‘secret agent’ like James Bond for King John II of Portugal, and that he fooled the Spanish royalty with the promise that he could reach India sailing west,” he said.

According to Rosa, the Spanish explorer convinced Spain’s King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to open a new route to the “false India” to clear the way for the Portuguese to round Africa and reach the real India, where there were deposits of gold.

Since a rivalry existed between Castile and Portugal to achieve hegemony over the Atlantic trade route, in 1483 Isabella planned the assassination of John II with the aid of two highly placed Portuguese nobles, nephews of Columbus.

This moved the Portuguese king to work out a conspiracy with the help of the admiral, who infiltrated the court of Castile accompanying his traitorous nephews.

For Rosa, the most controversial part of the story is where Columbus originally came from. Most theories accept the idea that he was born in the Italian city of Genova, and that he was a “very poor” weaver who rose to become a captain.

“Colon married Filipa Moniz 15 years before becoming famous, something that would not have been possible for a plebeian because she was a Portuguese noblewoman who lived in an exclusive monastery and was commander of the military order of St. James of the Sword in that

country,” he said.

The author adds in his book that Columbus was a Portuguese nobleman, son of Poland’s King Wladyslaw III, who lived in exile on the Portuguese island of Madeira after a battle with the Turks.

The historian presents in the book nine documents related to the discovery of America that were “overlooked” by Portugal, including the image of the document proving that Felipa Moniz was a member of the order of St. James.

Rosa followed closely the DNA analysis of Columbus’s bones, which was compared with those from blood samples of Portuguese individuals including Duke Duarte of Braganza.

The genetic identification of the skeletal remains showed that none of the Colombo family in Italy, France or Spain had DNA compatible with Columbus’ bones, so that it was “impossible that the admiral was the Italian Cristoforo Colombo, Genoese by blood.”

“He could not have been Italian because he never wrote a letter in that language, all were in Spanish with Portuguese phrases, which shows that it was his first language. And in a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella he called Portugal ‘the land of my birth,’” he said.

Some academics like Antonio Vicente, a professor at the University of Lisbon, say that Rosa’s book is the “first to be written about Columbus without being influenced by previous accounts and which develops each hypothesis point by point.”

The weightiest commentary comes from Joaquim Verissimo Serrao, a Portuguese historian and recipient of the 1995 Asturias Prize for Social Sciences, who wrote the book’s prologue.

“Rosa has woven a story about the discoverer of the New World, in a work of revision that deserves to be described as serious and diligent...he has given himself up completely to the greatest dream of his life. And that dream is the new biography of Christopher Columbus,” Verissimo writes. EFE