

Analysis of Copernicus putative remains support identity

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This Copernicus book in Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala University, contained some hairs that were DNA analyzed. Credit: Marie Allen

Swedish and polish researchers now publish results from the analysis of the putative remains of Copernicus. A DNA-analysis of shed of hairs found in a book from Museum Gustavianum, Uppsala University, was one interesting piece in the project.

The efforts to identify the remains of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), found under the cathedral in Frombork, was made in a collaborative project between Swedish and Polish scientists in a team consisting of archaeologists, anthropologists and geneticists. The results is published this week in the prestigious journal *PNAS* ([Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#)).

At Uppsala University a [DNA](#) analysis was performed of shed hairs

found in a book owned by Copernicus for decades, and now kept in Museum Gustavianum at Uppsala University.

"The analysis of several hairs resulted in interpretable profiles for four of the hairs. Of these, two of the hairs have the same profile as the putative remains of Copernicus", says Marie Allen, researcher at Uppsala University.

The Uppsala researchers also made tests of a tooth as well as [bone tissue](#) from the putative remains of Copernicus. Results from the analysis of the remains from the Institute of Forensic Research in Krakow and the Museum and institute of zoology in Warsaw and the Uppsala laboratory were identical.

"Although these results points towards the materials being from the same individual, there is a probability of random match", says Marie Allen.

The DNA material in this case was limited and also degraded. Therefore, a so called mitochondrial DNA test was performed, which yields a relatively low evidentiary value. This test is commonly used in criminal investigations, but as circumstantial evidence to strengthen the case.

"The DNA results should be looked at and evaluated in the light of, and together with the information from other disciplines as the archaeological, anthropological and facial reconstruction data", says Marie Allen.

Source: Uppsala University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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