

Description

Bishop Teodomiro was a 9th-century ecclesiastical figure credited with one of the most consequential religious discoveries in Christian history: the tomb of St. James the Apostle. Long considered semi-legendary, a 2024 interdisciplinary study confirmed with 98% probability that remains found in the Santiago de Compostela necropolis belong to the bishop. Radiocarbon dating placed his death between 820 and 850 C.E., which aligns with the 847 C.E. date inscribed on his rediscovered tombstone. Isotope analysis revealed he followed an austere monastic diet of terrestrial and marine proteins, reflecting a life spent in the coastal settlement of Iria Flavia.

According to historical tradition, Teodomiro investigated celestial signs over a field in the forest of Libredón sometime between 820 and 830 C.E., eventually declaring the site to be the final resting place of the Apostle. This declaration prompted the first pilgrimage by King Alfonso II and established the Camino de Santiago — one of the most significant pilgrimage routes in the Christian world, still walked by hundreds of thousands of people every year.



Historical depiction of Bishop Teodomiro of Iria Flavia.

Image by Froaringus

His genomic profile revealed a complex ancestral background that included significant North African ancestry, which surprised researchers. These findings suggest his ancestors were likely Roman citizens who migrated from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula, possibly during the 8th-century Umayyad conquest of Spain. His genetic markers showed closer affinities to Roman Iberians and Visigoths than to modern Europeans. The man who established the Camino de Santiago carried within his DNA the biological traces of Roman North Africa and early medieval Iberia — a record of the diverse ancestral migrations that shaped the clergy of 9th-century Spain.

Modern population	Distance
Spanish (Canary Islands)	2.899
Portuguese	3.115
Spanish (Extremadura)	3.479
Spanish (Galicia)	3.579
Spanish (Castilla y Leon)	3.800
Spanish (Murcia)	3.820
Spanish (Andalusia)	4.054
Spanish (Castilla la Mancha)	4.219
Spanish (Balearic Islands)	4.561
Spanish (Valencia)	4.733

Source

Date: 847 CE

Y-DNA: R-BY3268

mtDNA: T2b9

Location: Spain

Research:

Unveiling Bishop Teodomiro of Iria Flavia? An attempt to identify the discoverer of St James's tomb through osteological and biomolecular analyses (Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain)

Sample(s): NCS200