

Breaking News

500-Year-Old Jewish Skeleton Found in Brazil

16th Century Man Buried in Shroud With Arms at Side



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

New World: Sephardic Jews fleeing the Portuguese inquisition founded this synagogue in Recife, where archeologists have unearthed a 500-year-old Jewish skeleton.

By JTA

Published July 19, 2013.

[PRINT](#) [EMAIL](#) [SHARE](#) [Tweet](#) [+1](#) [Gosto](#) 40

Related

- [Brazil Gets Racism Primer as Soccer's World Cup Looms](#)
- [Brazilian Jews Take to Streets To Join Massive Push for Change](#)
- [Brazil Grapples With Crisis of Expectations](#)

Brazilian archaeologists unearthed what they said are the 500-year-old remains of a Jewish man in Recife.

A report Thursday in the online edition of the Rio de Janeiro-based O Globo described the discovery earlier this month as a perfectly-preserved skeleton of a male adult. The skeleton was found during earthwork in Recife in northern Brazil, where Portuguese Jews in 1636 built the first known synagogue in the New World.

Marcos Albuquerque of the Federal University of Pernambuco, who oversaw the dig around the skeleton, told O Globo he had no doubt the man was Jewish and that he was buried sometime in the 16th century.

"In Christian tradition, it is customary to bury the dead with their hands crossed over their chest, but this man was buried with hands laid alongside his body before rigor mortis set in," Albuquerque said. "Furthermore, the body was buried in simple shroud without jewellery or any other private belonging and without casket."

The body was found five feet underground, O Globo reported, during the construction of a tunnel, Tunel da Abolicao, in Recife's central neighborhood of Madalena. The tomb is situated approximately 1.5 miles east of the Kahal Zur synagogue, which Jews who fled the Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions built in Recife, which was then still a Dutch colony.

Determining exactly when the man was buried would require the removal of a piece of the skeleton for carbon dating. "But out of respect to the religious issue, we left the body where it was found," Albuquerque said.

[PRINT](#) [EMAIL](#) [SHARE](#) [Tweet](#) [+1](#) [Gosto](#) 40

Join

The Forward depends on your support.

New Episode

The Sheyn Show
"TESTS"



Has Shane found a cure for the common cold?

Click to watch this hilarious new episode in Yiddish with English subtitles.

FORWARD

Most Read

Most Emailed

- Jewish Baby's Rare Immune Disorder Attracts Support
- Barry Manilow Goes Back To His Roots
- Eating Salad as a Gluten-Free Experiment Dedicated To Mom
- Welcoming Intermarried Couples Is New Normal
- Judge Deals Setback to Ex-Students Suing Yeshiva

Instantly watch unlimited TV episodes & movies

amazonPrime

START YOUR FREE TRIAL >