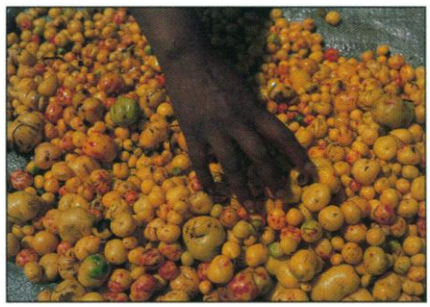
High-Altitude Tubers

I congratulate *Science*'s staff and contributors on the special issue on Plant Biotechnology (16 July). I also wish to point out a minor but significant mislabeling of a picture related to the plant biotech feature. On page 370, the picture titled "**Spuds of the Andes**. Yellow potatoes in Ecuador." is not a picture of potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum* and related spp., Solanaceae). What is shown is a little-known tuber, *Ullucus tuberosus*, belonging to the Neotropical family Basellaceae. *Ullucus* tubers are a widely consumed tuber vegetable in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia and are also known as *papa lisa* (smooth-skinned potato) because of their resemblance to true potatoes. However, they lack starch. Together with Andean potatoes (*Solanum andigena* and related species) and several other tuberous species (*Oxalis tuberosa, oca*; *Tropaeolum luberosum, mashua*), *Ullucus* is part of a fascinating complex of high-altitude tuber crops domesticated in the central Andes of South America and grown at a range of up to 3000 to 4100 meters above sea level. They are thus some of the highest-altitude crops known to humankind.



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A little-known tuber, *Ullucus tuberosus*, from the Andes

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Polite Disagreement

We were appalled to find that the extraordinary lapse in standards of scientific discourse represented by Erik Trinkaus's bizarre Internet attack on us was featured in *Science* ("Patrimony debate gets ugly," Random Samples, 9 July, p. 195). Our crime was nothing more than polite disagreement (*1*) with the highly controversial notion of Trinkaus and his colleagues (*2*) that an infant skeleton found at Lagar Velho, Portugal, belonged to a Neandertal–modern hybrid population. Yet we find ourselves pilloried in an unreviewed forum for a catalog of alleged personal and professional deficiencies ranging from ethics to competence.

There is no doubt that the Internet is poised to become an essential tool of scientific communication, but precisely because of the possibilities of unfettered communication that it offers, its credibility depends on responsible restraint by those who use it. It is in the interests of the entire scientific community to encourage such voluntary restraint.

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References

1. I. Tattersall and J. Schwartz, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* **96**, 7117 (1999).
2. C. Duarte *et al.*, *ibid.*, p. 7604.

Artiodactyl Nuclear DNA Study

Recently (News Focus, 25 June, p. 2081), a short article by Elizabeth Pennisi appeared discussing the 1999 meeting of the American Genetic Association. Pennisi reports on an artiodactyl nuclear DNA study