
A Longobard osteobiography. A multi-proxy life history of an elderly woman from Castel Trosino (Italy)

Histoire de vie multi-proxy d'une femme âgée de Castel Trosino (Italie)

Sara Bernardini, Ileana Micarelli, Carlotta Zeppilli, Flavia Strani, Samuel Bédécarrats, Robert R. Paine, Lawrence Bliquez, Valentina Gazzaniga, Kerry L. Sayle, Gwénaëlle Goude, Giorgio Manzi et Mary Anne Tafuri



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- 1 The Longobard cemetery of Castel Trosino (Central Italy, c. 6th-8th CE) was excavated at the end of the 19th century, with more than two hundred burials recovered. Currently only 19 crania and a few mandibles are preserved. Among these crania, a case of trepanation is documented on an elderly woman (c. 50 y.o.): the medical treatment, or the condition that led to it, likely influenced her life history. A multidisciplinary investigation of the only available skeletal remains (cranial and dental elements) was conducted to explore her history, and her possible privileged status. A paleopathological assessment together with a high resolution multi-stable isotope analysis assisted the reconstruction of changes in the nutritional intake and highlighted short-term physiological stresses that may have occurred. Following bioarchaeological ethics and for conservation purposes, a Micro-CT scan of a healthy tooth (ULM1) was performed prior to sampling. This provided a deeper insight into the biological profile of the woman. Her condition during early and later life is discussed in light of the archaeological context and Early Middle Ages literature. The events of her first years of life show parallels with Middle Ages customs (i.e. particular nursing practices; early-life displacements), while the dietary intake of her later years reflects that of the other adults from the cemetery (n=18). Isotopic assessment shows she received a consistent protein intake. Her skeletal defeat profile documents a continuous communal care. Despite the limited amount of remains available for study,

a multi-proxy approach in assessing her bio-life history has successfully shed light on her health experiences.

AUTEURS

SARA BERNARDINI

UMR 7269 LAMPEA, Aix Marseille Univ, CNRS, Minist Culture, Aix-en-Provence, France ;
Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
bernardinis90[at]gmail.com

ILEANA MICARELLI

Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy ; McDonald Institute of
Archaeological Research, Cambridge University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CARLOTTA ZEPILLI

Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

FLAVIA STRANI

Department of Earth Sciences, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

SAMUEL BÉDÉCARRATS

UMR 6273 CRAHAM, CNRS, Université de Caen Normandie, France

ROBERT R. PAINE

Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

LAWRENCE BLIQUEZ

Department of Classics, University of Washington, Seattle Washington, USA

VALENTINA GAZZANIGA

Department of Medico-Surgical Sciences and Biotechnologies, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

KERRY L. SAYLE

Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre, Scottish Enterprise Technology Park, East
Kilbride, United Kingdom

GWÉNAËLLE GOUDE

UMR 7269 LAMPEA, Aix Marseille Univ, CNRS, Minist Culture, Aix-en-Provence, France

GIORGIO MANZI

Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

MARY ANNE TAFURI

Department of Environmental Biology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy