



I MEETING NAZIONALE DEL GRUPPO ITALIANO DI PALEOPATOLOGIA (GIPALEO)

L'AQUILA, SABATO 22 MARZO 2014

ORE 9:00

INGRESSO LIBERO

**PALAZZETTO DEI NOBILI
PIAZZA SANTA MARGHERITA**

Segreteria Scientifica:

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Dott. Luca Ventura (L'Aquila)
Dott.ssa Nadia Rucci (L'Aquila)
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For the history of cholera in Italy. The pandemia of 1854-55 in Tuscany and the cholera cemetery of Benabbio (LU)

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The cholera, endemic in Bengal, in the early 19th century spread in the West thanks to the revolution in transportation resulted from the steam engine. Tuscany was struck in 1835 and then, even more violent, in 1854-55. Thanks to Pietro Betti, Superintendent for health of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, we have a detailed description of the epidemic and a precise estimate of the deaths. 26,327 individuals died in 1855. The disease penetrated in Tuscany by Liguria in July 1854; from the ports of Avenza and Livorno spread towards the Interior of the region, until Florence, and quietened down in December 1854. Then cholera rekindled in devastating form in March-April of 1855, starting from the area immediately west of Florence, a district rich in activities related to the water cycle, and retraced the route in reverse order made last year, always following the way of the Arno and the new railway line opened in 1848: in august-september the cholera was spread to all the Tuscany. The area of Lucca

is one of the hardest hit in the region. Between 2007 and 2010, the Division of Paleopathology of the University of Pisa undertook the archaeological exploration of the cholera cemetery of Benabbio, a mountain village near Lucca, where cholera lashed between August and October of 1855 causing 46 deaths in a population of around 900 inhabitants. The excavation made it possible to detect for the first time the material characteristics of a cholera cemetery. The findings provide a new source for anthropologically reading the reaction of a community facing the mortality crisis, between acceptance of regulations imposed by the authorities and local strategies.

References

- Tognotti E. *Il mostro asiatico. Storia del colera in Italia*. Bari: Laterza 2000.
 Tognotti E. *Lessons from the History of Quarantine, from Plague to Influenza A*. Emerging Infectious Diseases 2013;19.

Archaeoanthropology of the italic-roman necropoleis near L'Aquila (Abruzzo region)

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The ancient people modulated their livelihood models to the environment in which they lived, often turning it radically; at the same time, the environment exerted a marked influence on human groups, influencing their life conditions and health status.

In this context, we present the results of the paleopathological analysis and demographic characteristics derived from a research conducted on 1022 adult individuals found in the necropoleis of Fossa, Bazzano and Capistrano distributed within a radius of 12 Km in the Aterno River plain (Abruzzo region).

The results highlighted a concrete correlation between the sites of Fossa and Capistrano. In both there is a deep respect of earlier burials that are not affected or disrupted by the subsequent ones, but preserved and remembered. From the paleopathological analysis, what emerged in Fossa is a social structure with a working class engaged in agriculture, whereas

a leisure class, perhaps more addressed to trade and art, is represented in Capistrano. The social picture from Bazzano appears much more turbulent, in a certainly more aggressive context, with a lower life expectancy, and an economy perhaps not exclusively agricultural. According to the high incidence of facial and cranial traumas, possibly produced with bats and edged weapons, many individuals were to be devoted to military activities.

In conclusion, the differences observed between the three necropoleis in terms of demographics and pathocenosis do not appear linked to geographical and environmental factors. In fact, the environmental homogeneity of each area did not prevent the establishing of so obvious differences between the necropoleis. Probably the differences detected in life conditions of these human groups are related to the existence of different historical and social conditions, regardless of their geographical location.