

Our bioarchaeological itinerary is ready

The investigation of ancient human remains can today be shared by the entire community. The path of bioarchaeology in Valcuvia intends to present itself as a model of valorization of our bioarchaeological heritage.

From unknown contexts, to bioarchaeological research campuses to being recognized today as museum sites, the churches of San Biagio in Cittiglio, Sant'Agostino in Caravate and Santi Eusebio and Antonio in Azzio can now be considered valorized in the midst of their bio historical peculiarities.

The project "*The landscapes of Valcuvia. Environmental redevelopment through an archaeological path: valorizations, protection and use*" intended to conclude the bioarchaeological investigations on the sites, where our Biotechnology and Biological Sciences students have participated for years, and make the discoveries accessible through the implementation of a valorization plan.

From the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, our route will therefore allow you to visit unique burial contexts told through the exhibition of funerary evidence as well as the human remains of the ancient inhabitants of Valcuvia.

However, the project has neither a beginning nor an end.

These sites have always attracted the artistic interest of the population but today the biological and paleodemographic analyzes represent a unique way to analyze the relationship between man and the landscape over the centuries.

There are many historical monuments worthy of this attention, or this transformation capable of enhancing the site already at the moment of exploration.

From bioarchaeological point of view, it is interesting to focus our investigations especially in places characterized by profound transformations, from natural landscapes to anthropic landscapes.

Let's think, for example, of the cases of pathologies associated with certain dietary strategies of a place to understand the risks and benefits related to different ancient subsistence systems and their diffusion in different cultures and populations in cases where the same (or similar) conditions are replicated economic and environmental and the anthropic modifications to the landscape.

There are many bioarchaeological discoveries that will once again become accessible through both the physical and virtual display of the finds. Just to name a few. The Cittiglio Tomb 13 medieval murder case. The skeletal remains now on display inside the church will be accompanied by electron microscope images and 3D reconstructions that can be downloaded and visible via QRCode. In this way the story of this violent episode of the past, reconstructed by our anthropologists, will be accessible to everyone.

The same goes for the cold case and the burials of the Franciscan friars of Azzio discovered inside a seventeenth-century crypt. The anthropological stories will again be available thanks to the visit of the funerary structures, the explanatory panels, as well as the digital systems for the collection of images obtained on the osteological samples during scientific investigations.

The only documented paleopathological case of ocular osteomyelitis comes from the medieval site of Caravate. The study, which is now displayed on the Sant'Agostino website, makes us understand the suffering and the system of care that was developed around him by his family.

Also from this site, cases of trauma to the skulls of female individuals are not uncommon.

These skeletons together with many others from various sites in the Province of Varese are now kept in the Caravate Biological Archive, a space generously donated to the project by the Municipality itself, which decided to transform the library space into the “Insubre Bio-Archive”.

Another necessary tool to communicate our research is the creation of a website bioarcho.it where the bioarchaeological discoveries of the area will be continuously updated.

Fundamental support for the realization of the project is the Superintendency of Archaeology. Special thanks go to the Diocese of Como for supporting our initiatives on the relevant ecclesiastical assets.

The contribution of bioarchaeology could therefore have repercussions not only in the study of human remains of the past; the analysis of the interactions between territory and population, also studied thanks to the contribution of paleopathology and modern investigative techniques, could constitute a further aid in understanding the man-environment dynamics.

This issue, still partly dedicated to the realization of our bioarchaeology journey in northwestern Lombardy, also welcomes other contributions regarding biological anthropology, archaeobotany and zooarchaeology, fundamental disciplines of bioarchaeological research.

Marta Licata

Editorial in Chief

Journal of Bioarchaeological Research