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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)

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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 defect 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.

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