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Title

Pollen and non-pollen palynomorphs (NPP) as a tool to reconstruct local land uses practices during the Medieval and post-Medieval periods: case studies from the Ligurian Appenines, North-Eastern Italy

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Abstract

Palynological and non-pollen-palynomorphs (NPPs) analyses at several sites located in Trebbia valley, eastern Ligurian Appenines (north-eastern Italy), have been carried out during the last years by the Laboratory of Archaeology and Environmental History (LASA) of Genoa University and more recently in the frame of the research project "ANTIGONE - Archaeology of sharing practices: the material evidence of mountain marginalisation in Europe (18^{th}- 21^{st} century AD)" (ERC Stg 2019).

The main aim was the reconstruction of main vegetation dynamics and the identification of biostratigraphical information about the local management of environmental resources during medieval and postmedieval periods. Thanks to additional information from archaeological and archival sources, as well as from the observation of the present vegetation cover, these studies clarified how different kind of land-use now completely disappeared (woodland management, permanent and temporary "slash-and-burnt" practices, transhumance systems, etc) changed through time, also in relation to the organisation of local social groups and the transformation in the access right to common-lands. Furthermore, it was possible to underline the ecological, cultural and economic consequences of these changes. In particular, based on specific features of palynological diagrams, it was possible to conclude that - compared to the post-cultural phase - all the sites were characterized by: (1) lower pollen percentages of trees; (2) higher pollen amounts of herbs and shrubs, typical of landscapes with a predominance of open areas; (3) higher percentages of anthropogenic pollen indicators; (4) higher values of palynological richness and thus greater biodiversity; (5) higher amount of microcharcoal fragments in most case studies.

Thanks to an interdisciplinary research team (botanists, palaeoecologists, historians and archaeologists), the results of our investigations demonstrate the necessity of a long-term prospective in environmental reconstructions for the preservation of the cultural landscape. This research also represents a contribution to issues of habitat management and nature-conservation policy.

Track

4 - Ecosystems and biogeography from latest Pliocene to "Anthropocene"

Topic Areas

- Session 197: How can archaeology, palaeoecology, traditional knowledge, and more-than-human approaches contribute towards a more sustainable and culturally informed future?