

INVESTIGATIONS ON *GEREONIUM* (MOLISE, ITALY): SEED REMAINS FROM THE CASTLE'S KITCHEN (14TH CENTURY AD)

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Key words: Medieval, Crops, Weeds, Farming calendar, Palaeoenvironmental reconstruction

The site of Gerione has a very long history. The original name, *Gereonium*, comes from a village mentioned in the works of Hannibal's war historians. A castle was built at Gerione at the beginning of the Middle Ages which was then destroyed by the earthquake of 1349. The archaeological excavations, by a team from Bologna University since 2003, are discovering various phases of occupation of the site.

The archaeobotanical analyses began in 2006. The aims of the carpological (seed) research are the study and identification of the various remains, wild or cultivated and the most frequent parts found (caryopses, rachis fragments, seeds, cotyledons, fruits, etc.), observation of the annual crop weeds to reconstruct the farming calendar, study of possible evidence of pests of stored products to find out about how foodstuffs were stored, observation of the autochthonous plants (which grew on the spot) and the remains from other vegetation associations, analysis of the wild component to study the palaeoenvironment, and planimetric analysis to investigate potential areas with a particular use.

The seed analysis at Gerione mainly concerns the castle's kitchen where the archaeologists found the situation in situ after the earthquake. The remains in the kitchen are pulses (horse bean, pea, chick pea and vetch), cereals (wheat and barley even if fragmented) and many flax seeds, probably used for food and oil. Various edible fruits have also been found, but there is a chronological difference: olive and grape remains are more frequent in the older samples (11th - 12th century AD) while there are more walnut and fig fragments in the later samples (14th century AD).

Lastly, there are a few remains from herbaceous vegetation, mainly crop weeds such as *Lolium* sp. L., *Bromus* sp. L., *Plantago lanceolata* L., *Silene alba* (Miller) Krause, *Fumaria officinalis* L. and *Galium* sp. L., and some medicinal plants such as *Malva alcea* L. and *Physalis alkekengi* L.

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