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**EVOLIUCINĖ MEDICINA:
ŽMOGAUS RAIDOS PERSPEKTYVOS IR SVEIKATA
BESIKEIČIANČIOJE APLINKOJE**

**EVOLUTIONARY MEDICINE:
PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH
CONSEQUENCES IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

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CHILDHOOD, DISEASE, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN LATE MODERN ITALY: A NORTH–SOUTH COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MUMMIFIED NON-ADULTS

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This study investigates the social history of disease in late modern Italy through a comparative analysis of 43 non-adult preserved remains from the Capuchin Catacombs of Palermo (Sicily, 1787–1880 CE) and six infant specimens prepared in nineteenth-century Lodi, Lombardy, by Paolo Gorini (1813–1881). Integrating radiographic, anthropological, and contextual evidence, the research examines how morbidity patterns, socioeconomic inequality, and preservation technologies shaped the post-mortem biographies of children in different Italian regions. In the Sicilian assemblage, non-adult individuals display predominantly acute mortality profiles, with limited evidence of chronic skeletal disease and occasional indicators of metabolic stress. Both natural mummification and embalming are documented, revealing variation in mortuary treatment. Funerary artifacts and preservation quality suggest that embalming and public display were closely linked to family wealth and social status, making socioeconomic inequality visible in death. The Lombard assemblage consists of very young infants subjected to experimental embalming techniques developed by Paolo Gorini. Radiographic analysis shows exceptional soft-tissue preservation together with developmental immaturity and metabolic disorders, indicating early-life physiological stress. Preservation in this context was driven by scientific experimentation rather than familial status. Together, the two assemblages reveal distinct patterns of childhood morbidity in late modern Italy. Acute mortality predominates among the Sicilian non-adults, whereas developmental and metabolic conditions are more evident in the Lombard infants. In Palermo, preservation reflected familial wealth and social prestige, while in Lodi it served scientific purposes. Childhood in late modern Italy emerges as a biocultural category shaped by biological vulnerability, social inequality, and regional cultural practices.

Keywords: anthropology, bio-history, collection, paleopathology, Italy