

## **Abstract:**

The aim of this work was to characterize the diet of a Merovingian population sample and examine if apparent differences in grave good assemblages of Merovingian burials and transformation of this funerary rite during 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries were reflected in diet. Dietary composition was assessed using a carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis of 74 bone collagen samples from adults buried at an early medieval cemetery of le-Norroy-le-Veneur, France. Results showed diet based primarily on C<sub>3</sub> plants, supplemented with animal protein in a range similar to other contemporary sites. No significant contribution of C<sub>4</sub> plants (e.g. millet) or marine-derived protein has been detected and neither has  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  dependency on status, sex or datation been found. However, persons with rich grave good assemblages had significantly higher  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  than low-ranking individuals. Also, during the time of use of the cemetery there has been a population-wide decrease of 0,33 ‰ in mean value of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ , independent of social status or sex. Results indicate that dietary differentiation stemming from social stratification was only in its early phase of formation, slowly following a progressive rise in power of the Merovingian nobility, and the general subsistence was affected by another independent change in society, most likely not connected to ongoing christianisation.