

Emma Rabino Massa: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEEDING BEHAVIOUR AND PATHOLOGIES
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The anthropology of alimentation deals with human feeding behaviour in a perspective that goes well beyond the consideration of strictly nutritional aspects, since it also analyses its social and adaptive role.

In the last few decades, feeding behaviour in industrial societies has undergone both qualitative changes (higher consumption of saturated fats, animal proteins, simple carbohydrates) and quantitative changes (excessive nutrition).

Correct feeding contributes to the state of well-being, while an unbalanced diet can cause a series of morbid states.

In recent years, the importance of a correct diet, i.e. the correct input of nutrients and mineral salts, has been re-evaluated, especially in relation to the health status and longevity of subjects.

In this paper, we will present examples of the relationship between feeding behaviour and pathologies in immigrant populations in the Turin area. Our recent studies have demonstrated the correlation of vertebral paradysmorphisms with dietary deficiencies in young nomads and vitamin and oligoelement deficiencies in young Maghrebians.

In particular, we will present the results of clinical screening for hyperkyphosis and scoliosis in 101 young gypsies. The incidence of paradysmorphism was significantly higher in the nomads than in a control group of young Turinese. These paradysmorphisms are probably due to idiopathic factors and perhaps to the particular diet and the stress induced by exposure to the elements characteristic of a nomadic life-style.

We also examined the feeding behaviour of 33 Moroccan families that have immigrated to the city of Turin. The results revealed imbalances (deficiencies or excesses) in the diet of the families. In particular, there were considerable deficiencies of some nutrients, such as vitamins and oligoelements, and a preference for foods rich in lipids and proteins. This alimentary imbalance indicates that, even some years after immigration, the group still has a certain difficulty in fitting into the host society, even though the reuniting of nuclear families certainly has improved the living conditions.

Finally, we will present our ongoing research project dealing with the analysis of feeding habits in Alpine populations. In these strongly endogamic populations, we studied the relationship between the feeding behaviour and the risk factors and onset of cardiovascular pathologies.

Since the study of feeding behaviour is relevant to programs for health improvement and for epidemiological monitoring, the results of our research can be applied to programs involving preventive interventions.