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The gilded bronzes of Cartoceto

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The Cartoceto Bronzes: from enigma to orthodoxy

Abstract

The Cartoceto Bronzes are enigmatic. Various attempts have been made to identify the individuals represented, though none have proven conclusive. The intended destination and precise display setting of the statue group also cannot be known for certain. This paper examines the structural framework that surrounds the Cartoceto Bronzes, to understand their display, and to disclose the message of their group arrangement. We argue that the four statues represent members of a single family that was part of Rome's ruling class, the senatorial aristocracy. They were probably meant to be set up as a public honorific, rather than in a 'private' or funerary context. We also argue for a late republican instead of an early imperial date for the statue group. The Cartoceto Bronzes represent a departure from Roman republican conventions in the sense that they promote a group rather than a single individual. The inclusion of female figures is particularly noteworthy in this regard. The statue group's symbolism thus reveals both traditional values of the old republican aristocracy and innovation in aristocratic representation. The statue group bear witness to the omnipresent dynamic of increase that characterized Roman political culture by the mid-first century. The Cartoceto Bronzes exemplify, and perhaps fell prey to, the volatile political environment of the late Republic.

The memorial turn has altered the landscape in the Humanities over the past two decades. Since the publication of the first volume of Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* (1984), the cultural practices of shaping, creating and representing collective memories have become an object of intense research. Scholars continue to investigate the communicative potential of all sorts of 'places of memory', both real places–physical sites and monuments, urban topographies or battlefields–and metaphorical: narrative places such as epics, memorial days and anniversaries, among other symbolic acts of commemoration. With this shift toward memory, scholars came to understand how commemorative symbols and monuments not only represent the political culture of any given society, but also how they themselves embody that culture. The study of social memory practices aims to reveal a group's shared attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to the political process. Doing so, this field of scholarly activity attempts to disclose the transformation of memory into meaning–and hence to decode the underlying assumptions of social coherence and power.

The monumental group which is conventionally called the 'Cartoceto Bronzes' sheds much light on the categories, concepts, and contents of this debate, although it has yet to be investigated from this perspective (fig. 1). As will be shown, their history grants exciting insights into the Roman mechanics of communicating collective ideals. But at the same time, the bronzes do of course appear to be an enigma. Who were those individuals that were cast in gilded bronze? Where were those statues displayed–if they were ever set on display–and what was the context of that display? And finally, how did they end up in their resting place, a pit off the beaten track, with no evident topographical point of reference to them? This paper attempts [16] to offer various answers, even

though many of those answers will actually have to skirt around some of the questions that have just been raised.[1]

History and archaeology are puzzling disciplines. They are driven by a quest not only for answers, but more specifically, for questions. What is it that we would like to know? What are the archives of the past willing to reveal; what would we want them to reveal; and what will perhaps be concealed forever? Also, there is a great discrepancy between past and present modes of understanding. As L.P. Hartley famously remarked, "the past is a foreign country, they do things differently there". It is tempting to investigate this foreign country, but since one cannot travel to the past and discover how exactly things were done, a broader approach is needed that allows room for uncertainty, loose ends, and maybe even dead ends. A set of questions needs to be established, but again, since 'the past' is too large and too remote a country, historians are forced to embrace a highly dispersed, if not fragmented approach. The body of sources itself invites a more in-depth analysis of some subjects than others. As a consequence, scholars tend to zoom in on this or that topic, while other aspects, by implication, are screened out. The decisive moment, hence, is when historians set out to make the pre-selections that determine the course of their inquiry. The final product, the story they choose to present, all depends on the basic assumptions of the investigation.

As will be seen, the enigma of the Cartoceto Bronzes is again paradigmatic of this. The first section of this paper re-addresses the questions which scholars tend to pose, many of them obvious (some of them trivially obvious). In the following chapter the focus will be on the little that is in fact known about the statues. However, as the reader will soon discover, this knowledge is rather limited. In the third section, therefore, a different approach will be applied. The investigation switches registers and follows another avenue of inquiry in the sense that it poses a different set of questions, hoping that this will increase current understanding of the bronzes and extract more answers from them. In turn, this will inevitably lead to more questions.

I

It should come as no surprise that scholars, ever since the first discovery of the statues, have been obsessed with trying to identify precisely what individuals are represented. The earliest attempt to connect the group with a Roman family was that of Sandro Stucchi who, in 1988, argued that the statues represent Tiberius and Nero Caesar, a son of Germanicus, accompanied by Livia and Nero Caesar's wife.[2] A few years later, John Pollini suggested that the bronzes represent prominent family members of the house of the Domitii Ahenobarbi, notably Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 32 BCE) and his father, plus their respective [17] wives.[3] In 2000, Viktor Böhm concluded that the

[1] On the Cartoceto Bronzes, see: Bergemann 1988; Bergemann, 1990a 50-54; Bergemann 1990b; Böhm 2000; Braccesi 1988; Braccesi 1999; Coarelli 1998; de Marinis 1998; de Marinis and Quiri 2007; Gattai and Poma 1987; Giorgetti 1987; Knauer 1990; Luni 1998; Luni 2007; Luni and Motta 1998; Palano 2007; Pollini 1993; Stucchi 1960; Stucchi 1988; Stucchi et al 1987.

[2] Stucchi 1988: 57-87; see also Stucchi 1960: 15-35.

[3] Pollini 1993: esp. 439-445.

bronzes were of the brothers Marcus and Quintus Tullius Cicero.[4] Filippo Coarelli thinks that one figure can be identified with Marcus Satrius, a highly decorated general in Gaul and later among the conspirators who killed Caesar. Satrius is epigraphically attested in the region of the *ager Picenus*, which adds some appeal to this identification.[5] Most recently, some scholars seem to be flirting with the idea to identify the statues as Brutus and Cassius, while others toss around the idea of Caesar and Pompey, despite the great iconographic problems such an identification poses.[6] Some of these attempts are more plausible than others,[7] but none of them is truly compelling. The analysis of the bronzes by Johannes Bergemann rightfully reminds scholars that none of the surviving Cartoceto portraits can be identified with certainty, as they do not match with any of the suggested individuals whose portraits are well known. Thus, the physical attributes of the Cartoceto Bronzes do not allow for an unambiguous identification, and if anything, one should conclude in the negative: that the statues likely are not depictions of individuals whose appearance is otherwise attested.

Yet this sober assessment need not be the final word. There is a good reason to conclude that the statues represent members of Rome's ruling class, the senatorial aristocracy of the late Republic. Thus, while scholars may not be able at this point to say exactly who those four individuals were, one can be fairly certain that they came from one of a handful of the most prominent families in the Italian peninsula in the latter half of the first century BCE. The evidence for this is both iconographic and economic.

First, the date of the statue group should be (re-)considered, and especially the assertion that they represent late Republican, rather than early imperial elite. While Stucchi has argued for a manufacturing in the early decades of the first century CE, current scholarship favours a date between 50 and 30 BCE.[8] The surviving male head bears a stylistic similarity to two portraits of Augustus of the so-called Actium type, which places the statues c. 30 BCE. Pollini argues persuasively that the surviving male portrait of the group is the same individual as [18] depicted in a marble portrait, now housed in the Museo Gregoriano Profano in the Vatican Museums (Inv. 10473), which

[4] Böhm 2000, also arguing that the statue group came from Samos.

[5] Coarelli 1998.

[6] For the identity of the rider as Julius Caesar, see Knauer 1990: 296; Hofter 1988: 310-311; Hofter 1989: 337-338. If one accepts that the rider is Caesar, then it is a short path to speculating that the second, mutilated horseman was Cnaeus Pompey, especially given Pompey's connection to the region of Picenum (de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 24-25). The identity of the riders as Cassius and Brutus was humorously suggested in a conversation with Prof. John Fossey, Curator of Archaeology, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. When the Cartoceto Bronzes were displayed at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the exhibit played with the theme of *damnatio memoriae*: the room where the bronzes were set up included a bust of Alexander Severus and a bust which had been earlier identified as possibly Cassius by Prof. Jane Francis (Concordia University): but see her revised opinion in Appendix 1.

[7] Most notably the approach of Coarelli, if indeed geography is the key to the history, identity, and significance of the bronzes.

[8] See, for example, Bergemann 1988; Bergemann 1990a; Luni 2007: 31-32; de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 25; however, Pollini 1993: 439 is less confident, arguing for a date somewhere between the late first century BCE and early first century CE.

was probably sculpted c. 45 BCE.[9] The detail of the articles of clothing worn by the two men points to the same direction. The preserved rider is dressed in a tunic and most likely a military cloak (*paludamentum*), yet absent from his clothes is a *sinus* (a large overfold below the right arm) and an *umbo* (an accumulation of drapery drawn up from under the left arm). Both items became predominant with Augustus' dress reform of 18 BCE, which provides another, independent *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the group.[10] Thus, it is safe to conclude that the statues were cast sometime in the late first century BCE, probably around 40/30 BCE, and so they should be considered in a late Republican or very early Augustan context.

It is also reasonable to conclude that the persons depicted are members of Rome's senatorial elite. Again, clothing and other details of adornment provide a clue. The two riders are shown in military garment, and so at the very least represent members of the equestrian class. It is true that the surviving rider's tunic does not appear to have a *latus clavus* attached to it, the standard purple stripe worn to denote a person's membership in the senate. This is unusual in the sense that the *latus clavus* was a dress code that signalled distinction and authority. But one should not overemphasize this absence in light of the presence of another such status symbol: on his feet, the same rider is wearing high-laced shoes with double knots and four laces (*corrigiae*), indicating patrician or senatorial footwear (fig. 2).[11] The better preserved female figure–indeed, the statue is nearly complete–wears a cloak and veil; she also has a ring on her left hand.[12] Her clothing, posture, and jewellery signal social distinction and high status.

If, as noted above, the rider in the Cartoceto group is the same man as the one depicted in the marble portrait in the Vatican–again, the visual evidence is convincing–then there is more reason to assume that the persons are from the Roman aristocracy, rather than the members of the local elite of some or other Italian town. The provenience of the Vatican bust is unknown, but one can guess that it probably came from somewhere around Rome, perhaps Latium or southern Etruria; whatever its origins, it is not likely to have come from the area of [19] Cartoceto itself. Meanwhile, the Cartoceto Bronzes were probably cast in the vicinity of Rome, broadly speaking, and transported to the *ager*

[9] For the identification of the Cartoceto rider with the marble head in the Vatican Museum: Pollini 1993: 430-434. The head in the Vatican museum is stylistically similar to a portrait from Tusculum of Julius Caesar, housed in the Archaeological Museum in Turin, and thus dated to the mid-40s BCE; see Pollini 1993: 429; Johansen 1967: 34-35; Giuliani 1986: 202; H. von Heintze, in Helbig[4] (1966) II.818.

[10] Suet. *Aug*. 40.5; see also Cass. Dio 54.14.4-5. Cf. Goette 1990: 3-4, 20-42, The more elaborate toga typical of the Augustan period is worn by several figures depicted on the north and south friezes of the *Ara Pacis* (13-9 BCE): see Galinsky 1996: 141-155; Christ 1997: 26-28. For the identification of the outfit worn by the Cartoceto rider as a *paludamentum*, see Stucchi 1988, 57, 77, 99; *contra* Pollini 1993: 439 and Goette 1990: 106, who argue for a toga rather than a military cloak.

[11] The footwear of the riders: Stucchi 1988: 77; Bergemann 1990a: 52; Goette 1990: 449-457; for a more general discussion of Roman aristocratic footwear, see Goette 1988: 449-464.

[12] Palano 2007: 28-30 misidentifies the woman's ring as the famous gold ring worn by members of the equestrian class. However, such status symbols were restricted to men, so the woman's ring cannot be seen as evidence that the family were *equites*. This does not mean, however, that the woman's jewelry does not signify more generally the family's wealth and thus point to their status.

Picenus (though whether or not that was to be their final destination is discussed below).[13] For the moment, it is not critical to determine whether the Cartoceto Bronzes were made in the area of Rome or in one of the towns near their find spot. What is important is that there seem to be two portraits of the same person found in different areas of Italy. As Pollini notes: "Generally speaking, the survival of two or more portraits in geographically separated areas is a good indication that the individual portrayed is not some municipal worthy. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that both the Vatican and Cartoceto portraits represent an aristocrat of the city of Rome rather than a member of a prominent local family from the area of Cartoceto."[14]

A final reason to believe that the Cartoceto group is a senatorial representation is the combination of the agenda (i.e., the display of social hierarchy) and the sheer value. It is true that the bronzes are not artistic masterpieces–this is perhaps unsurprising of larger statues meant presumably for display outdoors, as opposed to smaller, more finely wrought figures that were set up inside a house or another building. Yet the figures are rendered competently, the bronze casting is of high technical quality, and the statues were covered in gold leaf with an average thickness of a mere 4.8 microns.[15] The finished product is, therefore, not only pleasing from an aesthetic perspective, but also indicative of a high standard of workmanship.[16] Their cost must have been enormous: 900 kilograms of gilded bronze, plus the production and transport costs, as well as the expenses for an accompanying rostrum and inscription. Only a family of the highest social and economic stratum could afford this. It is safe to assert that the Cartoceto Bronzes represent outstanding members of the Roman nobility in the second half of the first century BCE.

It is tempting to ascribe an exact value to the statue group, despite the multiple uncertainties regarding the costs of objects in the ancient world, the shifting relative and absolute value of gold, silver, and bronze coinage in the late Republic, and economic conditions such as inflation or regional differences in cost. Still, it is possible to estimate in very broad terms how much this statue group was worth, and the calculations are impressive. For example, 900 kilograms of bronze equates to about 2,750 Roman pounds, in theory equal to 2,750 *asses* or about HS 700 in the late Republic.[17] But in reality Roman bronze coinage weighed far less than its theoretical value: from around 140 BCE, the *as* typically weighed only an ounce, and [20] at times was reduced in

[13] The chemical analysis of clay residue found in the core of the bronzes suggests that they came from Campania or Lazio, though this admittedly does not confirm where the statues were cast. It is possible that the raw materials were transported from the area of Rome to one of the workshops that were common along the mid-Adriatic coast. See Stuchi, et al 1987: 127; Stuchi 1988: 122-123; Pollini 1993: 425; de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 21; Luni 2007.

[14] Pollini 1993: 434. It is, of course, possible that both portraits came from the area of Cartoceto, and represent a local grandee, but it is unlikely in such a case that the marble head would have found its way to Rome. A Roman origin for both the marble head and the bronzes is, overall, the most plausible scenario.

[15] de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 21-22.

[16] Such is the overall evaluation of de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 23-24.

[17] After about 140 BCE, one *sestertius* was valued at four *asses*.

weight to half of an ounce.[18] If one (Roman) ounce, equivalent to about 27 grams, was the standard weight of a late Republican *as,* then the bronze used in the Cartoceto group would have weighed the same as more than 30,000 *asses*, or around HS 8,000. This total reflects merely the cost of the metal, and does not include the cost of workmanship. Even more costly would have been the gold required to plate the four statues. One can estimate the value of the bullion that went into the process, and the sum is significant: in the neighbourhood of HS 11,000 to HS 13,500,[19] again not including workmanship costs. Thus, the total cost of the raw materials for the statues may well have exceeded HS 20,000.

More than that, the process of casting and gilding the statues would have been very time consuming and will have required skilled labour, no doubt at a costly rate. Comparative evidence from the imperial period suggests that around 40% to 60% of the cost of metal statues–at least those made of bronze or silver–was taken up by the expense of workmanship.[20] For gold statues, the proportion of cost given over to workmanship was probably less, because of the high value of the raw material itself. Also, with very large statues or statue groups, workmanship probably accounted for a smaller proportion of the overall cost. It is not unreasonable to think that the total labour costs would have at least equalled that of the raw materials, or at least HS 20,000. Finally, the statue group would have been set up on a large base or set of bases; given the opulent nature of the statues themselves, a marble base might be expected, but one made of limestone is also a possibility. An inscription from Numidia in the imperial period specifies the cost of a statue to Baliddir (HS 3,600) and its limestone base (HS 400);[21] thus, the base cost more than 10% of the total value of this rather modest statue.[22] If we assume a similar ratio

[18] Hollander 2007: 24-30.

[19] The statues were gilded using the "gold-leaf" method; the average thickness of the gold plating was 4.8 microns; 24 carat gold was used (de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 22). According to E. N. Marieb, *Human Anatomy and Physiology*[3] (Redwood City, CA 1995) 13, the average surface area of the human body is between 1.5 and 2 m^2. The more extant female figure stands 194 cm tall (Palano 2007: 26), and is shaped more or less like a cylinder of between 60 cm and 75 cm from the feet to the shoulders; such a shape would yield a surface area of more than 3 m^2, without considering the folds in her clothing, which would increase the surface area. For the sake of rounding, a very conservative estimate would be 2 m^2 for each of the six figures (four humans and two horses), or a total surface area of 12m^2. This yields a (conservative) estimated volume of 57.6 cm^3. The density of gold is 19.3g/cm^3, so the total estimated weight of gold used to plate the statues is around 1080 g (1.08 kg). A late Republican *aureus* generally weighed around 8-10 grams, so theoretically gold used to plate the statues was worth between around 110 and 135 *aurei*, or HS 11,000 to HS 13,500. The actual surface is certainly much greater, so it would have taken even more gold to cover the bronze statues, but even this low estimate illustrates how valuable the statue group would have been.

[20] Following Duncan-Jones 1982: 126-127. For example, the gift of a silver chariot in the second century CE, made out of 100 lbs of silver, cost HS 100,000 (*ILS* 6282). Mid-second century costs for the metal would have been between HS 42,000 and HS 55,000, so the manufacture would have represented 45% to 58% of the cost. A small bronze statuette weighing about HS 60 worth of bronze cost a total of HS 112 (*CIL* 7.180); in this case manufacture took up 46% of the cost.

[21] *CIL* 8.19122.

[22] Duncan-Jones 1982: 78-79 notes that the median cost of statues from North Africa in the Imperial period was 5000 HS, so this particular statue and base appear to have been somewhat less fancy.

[21] for the Cartoceto Bronzes, the cost of the base would have been about HS 5,000 or higher, if the base was made out of marble. This brings the estimated total cost of the statue group, including raw materials and workmanship for the statues and the base, to around HS 45,000. This total does not consider related expenses for such things as transportation or upkeep. The cost to the individual or family that commissioned the bronzes thus may well have come close to c. HS 50,000.

Much of the preceding paragraph is speculative, but there is value in trying to ascertain estimates for the cost of these statues. If the figure of c. HS 50,000 is generally of the appropriate scale, it is remarkable. Such an expenditure would have been on par with some of the costly statues dedicated in the imperial period, without accounting for inflation.[23] While it is, theoretically, possible that an Italian *municipium* commissioned bronzes in honour of some patron or Roman aristocrat with local ties (see below), it is far more likely that the statues were commissioned by the individuals themselves. If so, only members of the Roman senatorial elite, whose family perhaps had ties to the town where the statues were intended to be set up, could be expected to afford such an outlay of cash for a single monument.

II

The foregoing discussion operates on the silent assumption that the Cartoceto figures were members of one family. This assumption seems to be justified on various grounds, but it is worth considering the basic implications. More generally, the symmetry of styles and postures insinuates a certain group identity. As this symmetry also includes females (whose postures are in themselves similar), the group alludes to categories other than the usual *fama*, *honos*, or *gloria* that are portrayed on victory monuments. The details of the statues are revealing. The modelling of the horses shows an attempt to depict them in a very similar, yet not identical style. The topknot of their manes and the saddle blankets are much alike and differ only in minor details (fig. 3). Form and decoration of the harness are even more intriguing. The pectoral belts of the harness are decorated with tritons in their centre accompanied by other marine symbols. The one set of tritons holds a shield upfront. The other one depicts the same scene, yet the shield is turned around so that it faces the viewer with its flat front. The disks on the bridle and [22] headstall, too, attest to similar iconographies. The sides are decorated with figures

[23] Following Duncan-Jones 1982: 78-79, 93-99, 126-127, 162-166. The prices are known for 138 statues and statue groups from the African provinces; the median average statue price is only HS 5000. The highest price was for a group of sixteen statues donated in Lepcis Magnus: HS 1,000,000, or over HS 60,000 per statue. The next highest prices were for two marble statues from the second half of the third century CE: HS 50,000 and HS 33,200. A five-statue group in Thamugadi cost HS 50,000 and a four-statue group in Lepcis Magnus cost HS 36,000; these two groups are perhaps the most comparable to the Cartoceto Bronzes, ignoring inflation. The prices for statues in Italy during the Imperial period seem to have been higher, though the exact price is known for a smaller sample (fifteen statues or statue groups). The most expensive Italian statues were indeed spectacular: for example, a statue group at Patavium costing HS 550,000, a statue of Minerva at Formiae worth HS 100,000, and a statue of Hadrian in a four-horse chariot whose 1500 lbs of silver cost HS 700,000 in bullion alone (the exact cost is unknown). However, of the fifteen statues/statue groups whose exact cost is known, only two cost more than HS 100,000; five were worth between HS 20,000 and HS 60,000; another five cost between HS 2,000 and HS 10,000; and the final three cost under HS 1000.

most likely of Hermes and Roma, yet in reverse order. On the front, Mars has been identified on both horses, while the deity on the forehead is not clear. In any case, they are virtually identical (fig. 4).[24]

The metallurgical study conducted by Franco Gioetti lends additional support to the contention that the bronzes represent an effort to promote a group identity. The samples from each of the four statues indicate that the composition of the bronze was the same. This suggests that the statues were cast from the same source of bronze, probably at the same time in the same workshop. While not conclusive, this strongly implies that the statues were part of the same job, commissioned by a single patron, and thus belonged to a uniform display program.[25]

Whoever commissioned the bronzes was eager to proclaim a strong group identity and pinpoint the close relation that tied the members of the group together. Now, different Roman *gentes* favoured different deities or heroes. Some clans even claimed descent from specific gods or goddesses. In the late republic, the propagation of such divine genealogies was a commonly accepted feature, and the close association of a leading family with some sort of patron deity was not unusual.[26] The fact that the Cartoceto Bronzes invoke the same set of deities (Mars, Hermes, Roma) and that they share in a joint symbolism of marine victory should lead to the conclusion that they stem from the same family background. The presence of women, as integrated parts of the arrangement, highlights this message, as it shifts the focus away from mere military *gloria* and *honos* towards more cooperate values of a Roman aristocratic family.[27]

As mentioned before, geography was thought to hold some clue as to which family this may have been. The statues were discovered in a pit next to a farmhouse near Cartoceto di Pergola (fig. 5). The location is neither in, nor even on the outskirts of any ancient Roman settlement. Rather, it is a totally 'clean' zone in the middle of the *ager Picenus*. The site is about 30 km away from the *via Flaminia* and the Metaurus river, and the closest ancient settlement was Forum Sempronii, founded in the later second century BCE. The region is relatively well attested in the sources, since it was not only a central theatre of the Second Punic War, but also one of the notoriously disputed areas of Roman colonization in Italy. The main land owners there in the last decades of the first century BCE were the Acilii Glabriones, whose estates were clustered around Sena Gallica. It is tempting to think that the statues represent members of this family, perhaps Marcus Acilius Glabrio, *consul suffectus* in 33 BCE, whose political peak fits with the timeframe of the statues.[28] But such a suggestion must remain an enticing yet [23] unverifiable

[24] Palano 2007: 34-35 speculates that the figure on the horses' foreheads is Venus. See Bergemann 1990a: 53-54 for complete discussion and references.

[25] For the metal analysis: Giorgetti 1987.

[26] Hölkeskamp 1999

[27] The significance of the female figures within this group display will be discussed below at greater length.

[28] Dondin-Payre 1993; Andermahr 1998: 99, 128-131. Maenius Acilius Glabrio (cos. 67 BC) is probably too early to be associated with the statue group.

speculation. There is simply not enough evidence to tie the bronzes to the location where they were found. As archaeologists have indicated, the metal bears only few marks of corrosion. Also, the absence of traces of lead tenons in the feet of the horses and female figures, used for holding erected statues in place, implies that the group was never set up properly.[29] Thus, the statues may simply have been en route along the *via Flaminia*, perhaps to Ariminum and then north to a destination along the *via Aemilia*. Geographical evidence from the *ager Picenus* and historical topography of Cartoceto di Pergola provide no further insight into the enigma of the bronzes.

The state of the statues when they were found is puzzling. The bodies of the horses are extremely fragmentary, while one of the two women is completely extant; over three hundred fragments were found, ranging from very small to very large; the fragments were carefully stacked on top of each other.[30] It has been proposed that the statues were destroyed as the result of a *damnatio memoriae*, where the depicted persons would be subject to memory extinction through the eradication of all public visual references to them. Even though this theory has been frequently repeated, the absence of any sign of intentional bashing or hacking should raise doubts. Moreover, in an act of *damnatio*, one would expect that the human and animal bodies remained largely intact and only their heads cut off so that the statues may be reused. If anything, their value invited defacement rather than an act of memory erasure. More likely, brigands made off with the statuary cargo, perhaps with the intention of melting down the figures and extracting the gold from their surfaces. To facilitate the transport of their stolen goods, they quickly broke some sections up into smaller pieces while on the crime scene, while other parts of the group remained largely intact–somehow fitting onto the thieves' vehicle. Both the seclusion of the find spot and its relative proximity to the *via Flaminia*, and the careful stacking of the fragments fits this hypothetical reconstruction, as the brigands may have carefully stockpiled their booty in a hiding place not too far from the main road. But note, it is equally conceivable that the statues were stolen somewhere completely different–anywhere from the workshop where they had been produced to their final destination.

Be that as it may, there is no firm evidence that the group was destined to be set up in the vicinity of where they were found. Therefore, one cannot use the area of the find spot to draw conclusions about the identities of the persons depicted. What can be inferred is that the statue group was an investment of great cost, commissioned by a member of a Roman senatorial elite to glorify himself and his family, intended to be displayed in a town where the aristocrat in question had some connection. But even this seemingly mundane conclusion has interesting implications for the understanding of Roman aristocratic self-representation in the late Republic.

To disclose the underlying message the commissioner of the statue group wished to promote, one needs to consider not only the subject matter of the group (the individuals, their dress, pose and gesture), but also how the statues were to be displayed. Of course, the answer to this question will always be obscured to some degree, because

[29] Stucchi 1988: 124-126; Pollini 1993: 425.

[30] Stucchi 1988: 126; Pollini 1993: 96-97; Palano 2007: 14; Luni 2007: 31-33.

the location where the statues [24] were to be set up is unknown, and so is the specific topographical context within that location. Nevertheless, some general points can be made, especially on the arrangement of the group.

What was the original display design? When the Cartoceto Bronzes were on travelling exhibit at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Montreal, the group was presented with the two horsemen riding in parallel, accompanied by the female figures on either side (see fig. 1). This is a plausible arrangement, but it should be noted that it is not the only possible grouping of the figures. Pollini has suggested a similar arrangement, however with the female figures presented in reverse order. When the group was on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Ancona, the organizers had switched the women around and presented the horsemen in reverse order. As Bergemann demonstrated, other arrangements are conceivable; for instance, the horses facing each other up front or the two horsemen parading in sequence.[31] Whatever arrangement one accepts, if the statues were destined for public display, then they were meant to be elevated on a statue base with an inscription in front, which was the typical means of display.

Perhaps the elevation was even more significant than a mere rostrum. Could the statues have been displayed on some sort of arch? In Ancona, 50 kilometres from Cartoceto, a famous arch was dedicated to the emperor Trajan. It was topped by bronze statues of Trajan, his wife Plotina and sister Marciana (fig. 6). It has been suggested that an earlier phase of this monument existed, which means that Trajan's arch was a rebuilding of a previous structure–perhaps a republican monument–on a far grander scale.[32] One might be inveigled to imagine that the Cartoceto Bronzes were intended to be set up on this late republican monument, or on another arch monument in the region. In this case, the group would have been part of a complex honorary context.

There are two other display contexts that should be considered. It is conceivable that the group was not meant to be set up in public, but rather designed for display in a domestic environment, such as the garden or *porticus* of a villa owned by an aristocratic family. Honorific statues, set up in domestic space, were not uncommon in the Imperial period, and this includes equestrian statues.[33] If the group was meant for such a setting, it should of course be considered at least semi-public in nature; that is, the bronzes clearly were not intended to be simple objects of art, designed for the consumption of the family owning the house. Rather, their target audience would have been the friends, guests and clients who frequented the owner's villa.

Or, one might wonder if the Cartoceto Bronzes adorned an elaborate family tomb. Indeed Roman republican honorific statuary usually commemorated individuals rather than groups, with very few exceptions; likewise, the public, honorific statues of women were also unusual, though not unprecedented, in the Republican period. Funerary art, on the other hand, often contained group portraiture–including depiction of women–which

[31] For the various proposed arrangements, see Stucchi 1988: fig. 102; Bergemann 1988; Bergemann 1990a: 51-52; Pollini 1993: 424 and fig. 1; de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 18-19 and fig. 5-6.

[32] Luni 2007: 46-47. See also fig. 7, which indicated that such an arrangement was not inconceivable in the republican context.

[33] Eck 1992.

called attention to the family's history, [25] corporate success record, and group identity. However, a series of factors speak against the idea that the Cartoceto Bronzes are extraordinary examples of funerary portraiture.

In the late Republic, statues on tombs were rare. The famous tomb of the Scipios along the *via Appia*, which in Coarelli's reconstruction is adorned with multiple life-size statues of the leading family members, seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.[34] Only the most opulent tombs had sculpture in the round, while even extremely ornate sepulchres, such as the tomb of Eurysaces near the Porta Maggiore, contained portraits in the form of reliefs.[35] Moreover, most funerary portraits in relief depict only the bust, not the individual's body full length. Thus, in Diana Kleiner's study of Roman group portraiture in the late Republic and early Empire, out of 92 funerary reliefs, only eleven show one or more individuals in full figure.[36] Cost may have been one reason why Romans chose tomb reliefs over statues, but the Roman senatorial elite was certainly wealthy enough to adorn a family tomb with statues–as mentioned above, the individual who commissioned the Cartoceto Bronzes possessed significant financial resources.[37] Rather, the decision to portray the dead in relief (usually only bust length relief) appears to have been rooted in tradition. Thus, it is not inconceivable that a Roman aristocratic tomb would bear a statue group, but the infrequency of full figure tomb statues suggests the Cartoceto Bronzes served another purpose.

The fabric would also be unusual for a funerary monument. Typically, tomb portraits were made out of stone, including marble. Again, the deliberate decision to use stone rather than metal may have been cost related, but there may have been another practical concern. Since Roman tombs lay outside of a city, they may have been in greater danger of defacement and robbery. A group of four gilded statues, even elevated on the top of an elaborate tomb, might have attracted unwanted attention from thieves, especially if the area outside the city walls was not well policed.

Finally, the iconography of the Cartoceto Bronzes does not match well with Roman funerary portraiture from the republican period. As discussed above, both male figures are depicted on horseback; the better preserved male figure is dressed in a military cloak, and presumably the second male was similarly outfitted. Their clothing and the gesture of the first male figure represent the men portrayed as victorious

[34] Coarelli 1972; Wachter 1987: 301-342; von Hesberg 1992: 76f.; Flower 1996: 160-180; Zevi, *LTUR* 4 (1999) 281-285; Hölscher 2001: 204f.; Holliday 2002: 33-43; Hölkeskamp 1987: 225; Radke 1991; Kolb 1995: 173.

[35] Zanker 1975: 280-281; Stewart 2003: 84.

[36] Kleiner 1977: 76-80 and catalogue no.1, 8, 11, 12, 13, 37, 64, 65, 66, 81, 83. On Roman tombs in general, see von Hesberg 2002.

[37] Again following Duncan-Jones 1982: 79-80, 127-131, whose study of burial costs in Italy and Africa during the imperial period is illustrative. Only 11% of Italian tombs and no African tombs cost more than Hs 100,000; only about 8% of Italian tombs and 4% of African tombs cost between HS 50,000 and HS 100,000. Only one of the 91 Italian tombs belonged to a career senator, and his burial cost only HS 10,000. The burial costs of eight Italian city magistrates ranged from HS 4,000 to HS 100,000. In other words, the costs of a "typical" burial for a member of the imperial aristocracy, without taking into account inflation, appears to have been well within reach of a Republican senator.

commanders, perhaps having returned [26] from a triumphant campaign.[38] This imagery is rather at odds with the typical iconography of Roman funerary portraits. Turning again to Kleiner's survey of funerary portraits (depicting over 250 individual portraits, both men and women), men are almost always depicted wearing the toga, and are never shown or implied to be on horseback; in general, one hand is shown clutching the fold of the toga, but no portrait shows a man saluting in the manner of the rider in the Cartoceto group.[39] One might even contrast the Cartoceto rider with the famous Togatus Barberini, which shows a standing, togated man, holding in each hand a statue head presumably of the man's relatives.[40] The exact function of the Togatus Barberini is unclear, but it appears to be related to a funerary context–it may be a tomb statue or a "domestic funerary"[41] statue originally set up in the private sphere to commemorate the dead. Once again, the iconography of this funerary-related statue differs significantly from that of the Cartoceto Bronzes. Overall, therefore, one can conclude reasonably that the Cartoceto Bronzes were not part of an elaborate aristocratic tomb display. Also, while it is possible that the statuary was supposed to be set up in a domestic context, that too seems less likely. The most plausible position–and indeed the most intuitive–is to assume that the bronzes were honorific, an extremely costly statue group designed to be set up in a secured site in the public sphere, perhaps as a *fornix* monument or on an elevated platform in the forum of some or other *municipium*.

III

On the basis of these orthodoxies, what are the questions that should be raised, and what sort of information may be extracted from the bronzes? The group presentation is a good point of departure for a fresh look at the monument. Late republican display culture was determined by the persistent competition [27] between the members of the

[38] The rider holds his "right arm raised in the typical *adlocutio* or *adventus* gesture" (de Marinis and Quiri 2007: 23). For a discussion of the meaning of these gestures, see Brilliant 1963:*passim*, esp. 55-58, 165-170, 173-177; Aldrete 1999: 112-113, 190 nn.19-20. The Cartoceto rider's hand gesture is nearly identical to the bronze equestrian statue of an imperator, in Naples, and is similar to the gesture by a mounted Octavian on the reverse of a coin type struck after Actium. Brilliant (1963: 57) describes Octavian's gesture as a "military *adlocutio*, perhaps marking a provincial *adventus*." The context of the coin is clearly one of recent military victory. Both the *adventus* and *adlocutio* gestures remained common motifs in imperial iconography. The *adventus* especially represented the return from a presumably successful venture, increasingly synonymous with military victory; the raised hand signalled a greeting, benevolence, and power. The Cartoceto Bronze riders may be understood, then, as victorious generals returning to Italy or addressing their troops, or perhaps (and less likely) they are meant to depict the generals arriving in their province at the start of a command.

[39] Other types of reliefs appear occasionally on funerary monuments, including naked youths drawing on Hellenistic inspiration, but these examples occur infrequently; see Stewart 2003: 93-97; Kleiner and Kleiner 1975.

[40] The heads being held recall the famous Roman ancestor masks, though they clearly represent statue heads and not masks.

[41] Stewart 2003: 83-84; Lahusen 1985: 281-282; Neudecker 1988: 80-83; see also Pliny the Younger (*Ep*. 4.7.1), who mentions that his associate Regulus commissioned statues and images (*statuas et imagines*) of his deceased son made in various media, including both stone and precious metal, presumably to be set up in his house.

senatorial elite–competition for values, artistic styles, and most of all for messages and meanings that were conveyed through the display of statues. Statues signaled the *honos*, *virtus*, or *gloria* of the persons displayed. They were usually accompanied by an inscription, beautifully carved letters and painted in red, which provided a short narrative that recalled the context in which *virtus* was performed. The competition was again increased by the strict limitations on available space. Whereas the republic grew, the city did not, at least not in its urban centre. As early as 179 BCE the censors ordered that all trophies be removed from temples and other buildings because the public space had been over-decorated with aristocratic offerings.[42] Some twenty years later (in 158 BCE), the first clearing away of statues was stipulated. In its course, all statues were removed from public grounds that had not been authorized by the senate or the people.[43]

Yet those statues were nearly always representations of single individuals. From the fourth to the second centuries BCE, the competition among noblemen to secure personal representation in the public sphere led to a steady increase in the number of such displays. Only occasionally, it seems, did these monuments commemorate more than one individual. For example, Livy (8.13.9) reports that both consuls in 338 BCE, C. Maenius and L. Furius Camillus, celebrated triumphs and were voted equestrian statues in the *Forum Romanum*. Livy does not specify the arrangement of the statues, but it is possible that they were set up in close proximity in a programmatic or 'group' fashion.[44] But even if this was the case, it is important to note that the statues only depicted the individual *triumphators* and no one else: statuary monuments of consuls and senators did not include other family members, let alone women.

Scipio Africanus appears to have been the first to break away from this practice. In 190 BCE, the works for the *fornix Scipionis*, the arch of Scipio were completed. Erected on the top of the *clivus Capitolinus*, in full sight of the forum, it was known for its architectural refinement and, most notably, for the seven bronzes statues that adorned it. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, those statues most likely represented the seven consular members of the Cornelii Scipiones, from the founder of that family branch, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus to Scipio Africanus. The *fornix Scipionis* thus celebrated the achievements of the most recent consul of the Cornelii Scipiones and, at the same time, paid homage to the honour, dignity, and success of the previous consuls of that family. The arch cast the sum of the achievements of all family members in stone, and presented them in one single monument. It was a powerful reminder of Scipionic merits, and it impressively captured the symbolic capital of that one family, which had produced consul after consul in a straight line of four generations.[45]

[42] Liv. 40.51.3.

[43] Plin. nat. 34.30 (= Calpurnius Piso *FRH* 7.40 Beck/Walter = F 37 Peter).

[44] Eutropius (2.7) claims that both statues were placed on the rostrum, though it is likely that Maenius' statue was placed on top of the *Columna Maenia*. See Plin. nat. 34.23; Asconius p. 14 C; Sehlmeyer 1999: 48-52; E. Papi, *LTUR* 2 (1995) 229.

[45] See Beck 2005: 328-367 esp. 329-334 for discussion and references.

It is striking just how rarely Republican honorary monuments called attention to family rather than individual achievement. Everything in Roman memory practices was geared towards the proclamation of family fame. The atrium of the aristocratic house was the storage space, as [28] it were, of a family's *memoria*. Decorated with spoils of war, ancestor masks and family trees that pointed out the high office holders, the atrium comprised the symbolic capital of a Roman aristocratic family.[46] But, surprisingly enough, the practice of displaying whole families in the public space developed only slowly. The Cornelii Scipiones, as mentioned above, seem to have been a major exception in this regard. A few decades later, the grave inscription on the family tomb of the Claudii Marcelli heralded that "three Marcelli held nine consulates" (*III Marcelli novies coss*).[47] This, too, alluded to the collective family achievement which was presented as a perpetuated line of consulates. But note that such attempts were not copied in the second century BCE, and of the few monuments that did follow that pattern, none included female members of a family.

This last point merits additional discussion. Honorific statues of women appear to have been rare before the rise of Octavian, when the nature of political competition, as well as its related visual language and symbolism, changed dramatically. To be sure, there had been occasional statues honouring women. Pliny the Elder makes reference to three statues set up in Rome honouring women. First, he says that there was an equestrian statue of Cloelia clad in a toga (nat. 34.29); Dionysius (ant. 5.35.2) says that the senate voted the statue.[48] Second, Pliny mentions a decree that he read about in certain annals, granting a statue in honour of a Vestal Virgin who had made a gift of the "field by the Tiber" (*campanum Tiberinum*) to the Roman people (34.25).[49] It should be noted that in the same passage, Pliny comments on how great a compliment it was for a statue to be decreed in honour of a woman, underscoring its rarity. Third, Pliny discussed the famous statue of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, which was set up in the *porticus Metelli* (34.31). The statue is also referenced by Plutarch (*Gaius Gracchus* 4), and its historicity appears to be confirmed by a statue base housed in the Capitoline Museum, bearing the renowned inscription *Cornelia Africani f. Gracchorum*.[50]

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[46] Flower 1996: 32-59; Blösel 2003; Flaig 2004: 49-50.

[47]Asconius p. 11 C; Cic. *div*. 2.77; *de vir ill*. 45.7. For discussion, see Beck 2005: 302-327 esp. 304.

[48] On Cloelia and the alternate Valeria tradition: Plin. Nat. 34.29; Dion. Hal. 5.35.2; Liv. 2.13.11; Plut. *Publ*. 19.2, 5; *de vir ill*. 13.4. It has been argued, however, that the "Cloelia" statue described in early Roman sources actually represented some female divinity, perhaps Venus Cloacina, and/or that the Cloelia statue was set up only later under Augustus, thus codifying the legend. See Sehlmeyer 1999: 98-101; Flory 1993: 289; Coarelli 1983: I.82-86; E. Papi, *LTUR* 2 (1995) 226.

[49] Pliny does not claim to have seen this statue, and even though he quotes word for word from the so-called "annals" (*meritum eius ipsis ponam annalium verbis*), he gives two names for the woman (Taracia Gaia or Fufetia), which suggests confusion in his sources and may imply that that the statue had disappeared by the time his sources were written. On the statue: Flory 1993: 288; Sehlmeyer 1999: 82; C. Lega, *LTUR* 2 (1995) 363-364.

[50] Coarelli 1978 believes that the inscription was re-cut in the Augustan period. On the Cornelia statue: Flory 1993: 290-292; Sehlmeyer 1999: 187-189; M. Sehlmeyer, *LTUR* 4 (1999) 359.

This short list comprises all of the known examples of honorific statues dedicated to women during the republican period, at least prior to the last half of the first century BCE. It is possible that there were other instances, which have not been recorded in the surviving sources. Indeed, Pliny the Elder may imply as much: in his brief discussion of the statue of [29] Cornelia, he mentions that Cato the Elder made speeches during his censorship against the practice of statues being erected in the Roman provinces in honour of women. Pliny concludes by saying that Cato was unable to stop the practice, not only in the provinces but also in Rome, citing the Cornelia statue as an example. But even if one accepts that there may have been other such statues, it is clear that the cases were few and far between.[51] Honorific statues dedicated to women do not appear, therefore, to have been a typical part of Roman political culture before the very late republic.

But what of Pliny's curious reference to Cato inveighing against statues of women set up in the provinces? Epigraphic evidence indicates that Roman magistrates and their families, including wives or daughters, were honoured in Greece and Asia Minor with statues by the early first century BCE.[52] If Pliny's report about Cato is accurate, then the practice may have traced back to the early second century BCE. In the light of this, is it possible that the ruling class of some eastern provincial city, or even an Italian *municipium* commissioned the Cartoceto Bronzes, to curry favour with a high-ranking Roman magistrate or patron? The idea is not impossible, even though it was noted above that the statues were most likely commissioned by a member of the Roman senatorial elite. But even if the latter was indeed the case, this does not deny a possible link to provincial display practices. The depiction of women along side Roman aristocrats–possibly triumphal commanders–could be an example of the adoption of eastern provincial honorific practices by members of the senatorial elite and their adaptation within the Italian context.

In the late republic, the context for honorary monuments changed dramatically. Two developments are striking: First, the political climate was set by an omnipresent dynamic of increase. As clients, commands, and armies shot up in numbers, displays and dedications hit new heights of extravagance. Paul Zanker has pointed out the contradictions in the imagery of the late republic. While some displays continued to embody traditional expressions of honour, the overall visual language of statuary set a diverse tone. Some Roman generals were depicted like Hellenistic monarchs; their pose and nudity likened them to images of Greek heroes. Other portrayals were characteristic of incongruities of style, overburdened symbolism, ambiguity, or even obscurity.[53] Second, some Roman generals and would-be dynasts began to experiment by exploiting representations of women in the public sphere. Thus Julius Caesar supposedly placed a

[51] Livy (22.52.7) says that the Roman senate voted honours for a woman named Busa, from Canusium, because of her service to the legions after Cannae. The nature of the honours is not specified, but a statue is not an unreasonable guess.

[52] Examples include a statue dedicated at Troy in 89 BCE to a daughter of L. Julius Caesar, and to the wife or daughter of Q. Mucius Scaevola on Cos in 98/7 BCE or 94/3 BCE; see Flory 1993: 291; Payne 1984: 374 no. 81; Tuchelt 1979: 151.

[53] Zanker 1988: 5-25.

golden statue of Cleopatra next to the cult statue of the goddess in the Temple of Venus.[54] More famously, in 35 BCE public statues were granted to Octavia and Livia, most certainly at [30] Octavian's initiative.[55] Augustus continued to honour the female members of his household publicly, as did subsequent emperors: the senate passed a decree in 9 BCE granting Livia further public statues (Cass. Dio 55.2.5); Augustus decreed a statue to a slave woman of his household, set up on the *via Laurentina* and inscribed (Gell. 10.2.2); Tiberius ordered statues for Livia upon her death (Cass. Dio 58.2.1; 58.2.6).

While the efforts to produce extravagant displays skyrocketed, the potential of those monuments to signal social authority and provide a lasting legacy decreased. The inflation of social meaning of public displays had already begun with Sulla. It was triggered by a first wave of proscriptions in and after 82, when at least 1,500 senators and knights seem to have fallen prey to Sulla's reign of terror.[56] Since condemnation to death was based on the naming of these individuals as enemies of state, their statues were removed from the public space, their residences plundered–again, statues and other values were robbed and turned into public property (i.e., statues were melted). Many senatorial families did survive this first wave of violence. In the years of recovery they produced more, and more expensive, statuaries. But the next wave of violence came with Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon; then came Octavian's proscriptions of 43 and then the radical 30s.

This, then, is the historical context of the Cartoceto Bronzes. No matter who commissioned the statues, and no matter how and where they were intended to be displayed: the bronzes bear witness to the omnipresent dynamic of increase that had become characteristic for Roman political culture by the mid-first century. Their symbolism attests to traditional values of the old republican aristocracy, but it was also innovative in the sense that it focused on the achievement of one family, including its female members. Indeed, the Cartoceto Bronzes remind us that the 'winners' in the changing landscape of the late Republic, the great dynasts such as Caesar and, ultimately, Augustus, were not the only members of the Roman aristocracy to experiment with means and media of self-promotion. But the statues were, of course, exposed to the volatile nature of late republican politics that they themselves exemplify. By the time the bronzes were crafted and ready for display, it seems as if the political tide had already turned against their commissioner. Maybe they were removed from Rome to be safeguarded in the villa of their owner. Maybe they were shipped to the *ager Picenus* for public display and then the tide turned. Or maybe the tide hadn't turned at all, and the bronzes simply fell prey to brigands.

It is fascinating, yet fruitless to speculate about such alternatives. The quest for the bronzes' lost history is captivating. But the writing of history is not a hunt for sensationalism. At times, such a hunt is even counterproductive in the sense that it

[54] Cass. Dio 51.22.3; App. *BC* 2.102.

[55] Cass. Dio 49.38.1.

[56] App. *BC* 95; Plut. *Sull*. 31.3-4.

distracts from other important information that can in fact be extrapolated from the sources. The current paper tried to shed light on the structural framework that surrounds the Cartoceto Bronzes, to understand their display, and to disclose the message of their group arrangement. Doing so, it highlighted the implicit assumptions of the bronzes rather than surrender to their enigma. The riddle remains, and maybe it will never be solved. In the meantime, a revision of the orthodoxies will have to suffice.

Hans Beck and Michael Fronda

McGill University
Montreal, Canada
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Addendum.

Professor Beck's presentation of this paper at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Montreal was complemented by an endnote, which is printed here at the request of the editor.

"Those of you who have followed HBO's 'Rome' series are familiar with a picturesque portrayal of late Republican history. I, too, was fascinated by this, and I know that many of my students were as well. I can see why. Rather than pointing to the complex processes of aristocratic discontinuity and the falling apart of societal values, HBO enriched our lives by presenting us with a coherent, captivating narrative on the fall of the republic. Season one, episode three paints a vivid picture of the year 49, when, after Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, many senatorial families decide to abandon their homes and seek refuge in the countryside. While the ruling elite is trying to save as much of their valuables as they can, Pompey orders the state treasury to be removed from Rome on a simple cart, with only a few men to safeguard it.

This is yet another moment in which the two ordinary heroes of the play, Lucius Vorenus and Titus Pullo, pull the strings of world history. By chance, Vorenus and Pullo bump into the convoy; without knowing about its cargo, they take over the cart and kill everyone. But they disappear from the scene, which leaves the state treasury abandoned, in the middle of nowhere. It is only when Pullo returns to the convoy that he discovers the treasury which is covered in tarpaulin. Honorable and loyal as Pullo is, he takes the cart to Caesar's camp, not without using some of it to satisfy his consuming desires (those of you who have seen the series know what Pullo's favorite desires are). Imagine a similar setting somewhere on the east coast of Italy. Many senators had estates in the *ager Picenus*, and many will have sought refuge there and wait until the battle between Pompey and Caesar was decided. On the way to Sena Gallica, one convoy was attacked by Caesar's soldiers and plundered–Caesar's army had passed through this region only a few weeks earlier. Unlike Vorenus and Pullo, the thieves were mean men–no honor, less loyalty to their commanders. They load their pockets, but the life-size statues which they secured are too heavy to be carried away. Besides, a cargo of that size would trigger suspicion. They quickly demolish the statues (the unwieldy horses in particular), pull them away from the crime scene and bury them in a pit close to the lower slopes of a nearby hill. But their robbery does not go unnoticed–they are caught, put to trial and killed. The victims of their crime are eager to regain their property, but the search is hopeless and quickly abandoned. The bronzes remain in the pit, until they are discovered by two farmers, 1995 years later, that is. This is a great story, and its structural data is even authentic. The narrative superstructure is purely fictional. The Cartoceto Bronzes are an enigma. Their riddle cannot be solved–which makes it even more attractive to speculate about their secret history."

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Fig. 1. The Cartoceto Group.

Fig. 2. One of the male equestrian statues. Detail. High-laced shoes with double knots and four laces (*corrigiae*), representing *calcei patricii* or *calcei senatorii*.

Fig. 3. Disks on the bridle and headstall: Mercury and Roma (?); on the front: Mars.

Fig. 4. Pectoral belts, decorated with tritons in the centre and marine symbols on the sides, maybe dolphins or sea-snakes.

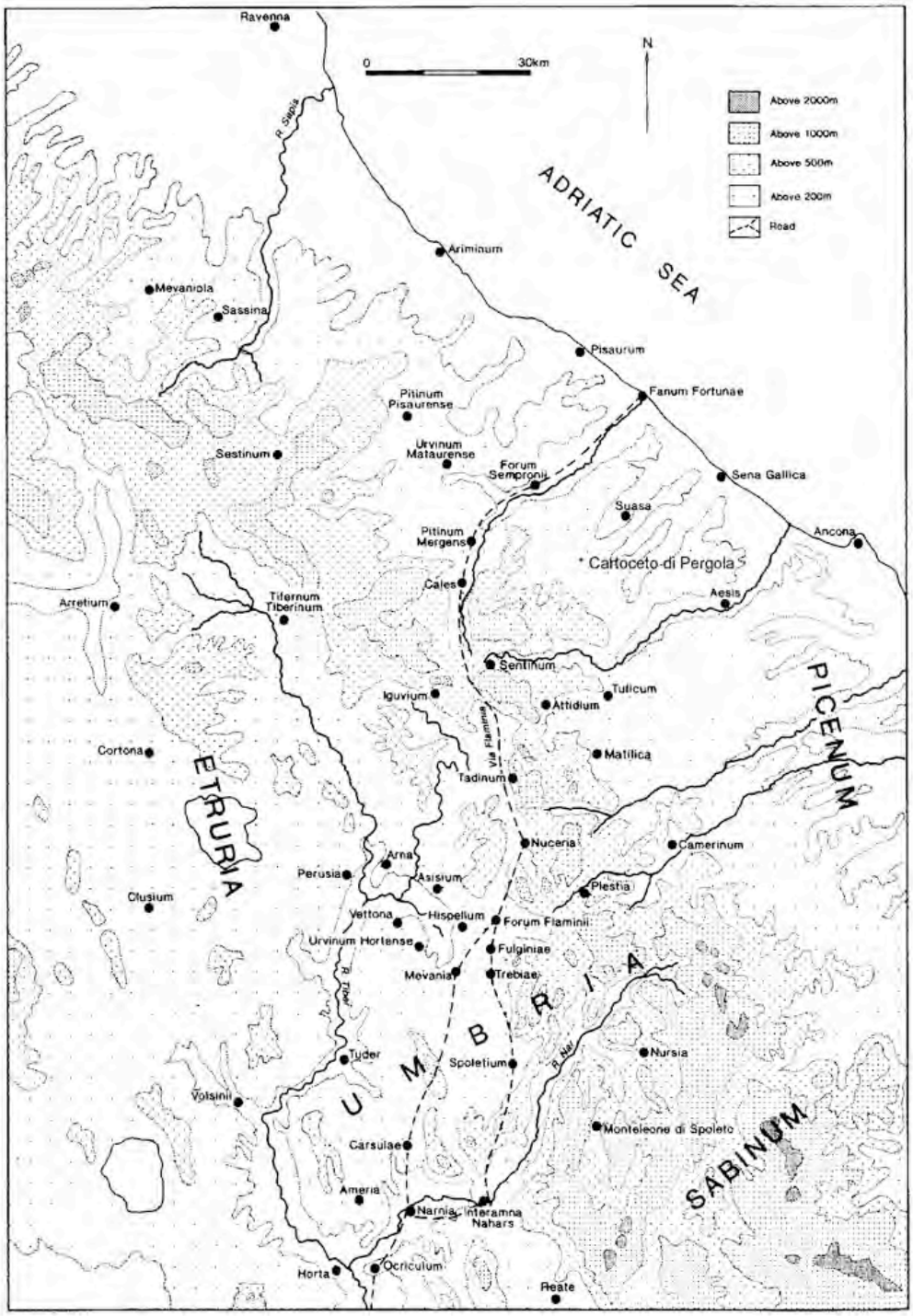

Fig. 5. Map of Picenum and surroundings (modified from G. Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*. Oxford 2000, page 2)

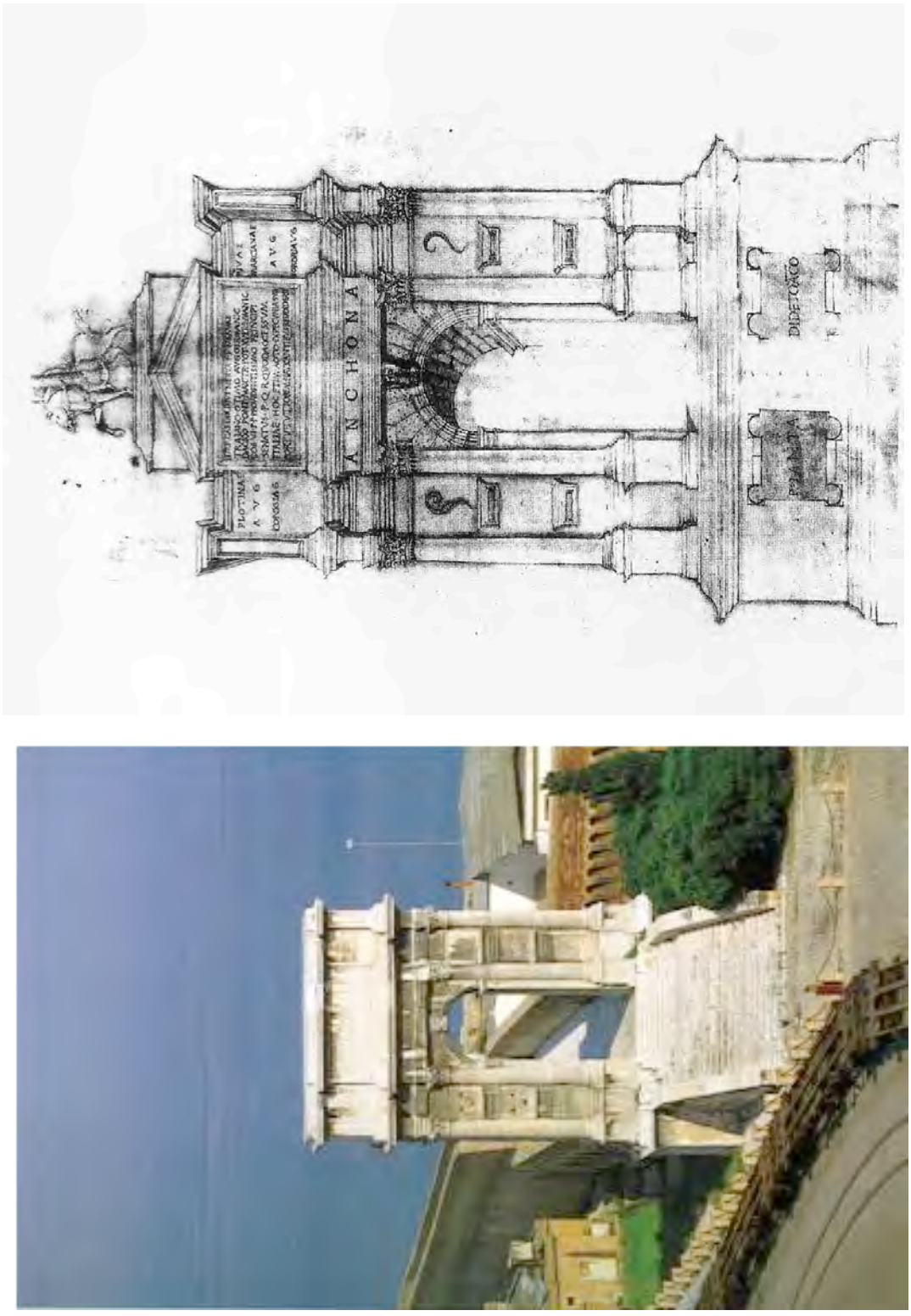

Fig. 6. The Arch of Trajan at Ancona (114-115 CE). It was topped by bronze statues of Trajan, Plotina and his sister Marciana. Right: drawing by Giuliano da Sangallo (1445-1516).

Fig. 7. M’. Aemilius Lepidus: Denarius (3.89 gr.), 114-113 BCE. Front: laureate, diademed, slightly draped bust of Roma; reverse: equestrian statue on triumphal arch, AE M ILIO, L E P between arches. [Cr 291/1]