

The Museum  
of Statue Stele Lunigianesi  
"Augusto Cesare Ambrosi"

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Piagnaro Castle  
**PONTREMOLI**  
(MASSA CARRARA)



# THE MUSEUM OF STATUE STELE LUNIGIANESI

IN PIAGNARO CASTLE OF PONTREMOLI

## THE MUSEUM IN PIAGNARO CASTLE



The Museum of Statue Stele Lunigianesi displayed in the Piagnaro Castle of Pontremoli offers the possibility of an evocative travel through time to discover ancient testimonies carved in the stones.

The stele statues, recovered in the territory of historical Lunigiana, are still mysterious objects and the most recent statues date from the iron age, VIII-VI centuries B.C. The interpretations on their real meaning and function still remains a mystery. There are many unanswered questions but a visit to the museum offers the possibility of a solution: the statues in their immobility and silence, they have much to tell.

The Piagnaro castle, that accommodates the museum, dominates the city of Pontremoli and has been since its origins ( around the 10<sup>th</sup> century) a nodal point in the defence system of the ancient walled village defined in the Middle Ages "key and door of Tuscany". In fact the city is built at the feet of the castle following itself the ancient distance of Via



Francigena, covered throughout centuries with pilgrims, merchants and armies.

The strategic position of the castle makes it a fortification of fundamental importance for the protection of the walled village below and for the control of the roads and valleys that lead to the Apennine Passes.

This fortification, destroyed and reconstructed many times through the centuries, introduces a very articulated structure and it developed from the imposing keep that dominates the higher and most ancient part, in order to arrive to the massive 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> bastions.

The Piagnaro Castle, in the past centre of military governors, barracks and elementary school, accommodated from 1875 the Museum of the Lunigianesi Stele statues dedicated today to its founder Augusto Cesare Ambrosi.



### OPENING HOURS:

October-April: 9-12 a.m. 2,30-6 p.m.

May-September: 9-12,30 a.m. 3-6,30 p.m.

Closed on Mondays

### TICKET:

Full price: 4,00 euro

Reduced: 2,00 euro

(Groups over 10 people,  
and children from  
six to sixteen years)



### INFORMATIONS:

Ticket office

Phone 0187.831439



### HOW TO GET THERE:

#### BY CAR:

- Parma-La Spezia A15  
Motorway Exit Pontremoli  
- S.S. Cisa

#### BY TRAIN:

Line  
Parma-La Spezia  
Station: Pontremoli



In the river Magra valley a singular artistic phenomenon developed in the late prehistory and the proto-history: the stele statues.

They are anthropomorphic steles carved in the sandstone stone and raised (from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.) by the population that inhabited the Lunigiana in antiquity.

The human body representations distinguish between female (characterized from the breast presence) and male representation (characterized from the weapons presence), even if some stele statues do not introduce distinguishing marks of sexual identity.

It has still not been possible to establish if they represent sheer divinities - in that case female representations would seem to lead back to the cult of the goddess mater, life and fertility symbol - or if it is a matter of warriors who were wanted to be commemorative or to whom the protection of the territory or the places of interment was entrusted.

The first stele statue was recovered in the river Vara valley in 1827 and since then other finds followed and intensified until today: the seven stele statues recently recovered in Groppoli brought the total number of the finds up to seventy. A lot of stele statues were recovered during farm works, digging operations, or noticed because they were partially exposed in the soil. Other statues were found inside civil and religious buildings, used as re-employment material.

In the time that precedes the Romans arrival the stele statues offer us important information on the culture and religious practices: weapons, ornaments and inscriptions reveal to us a complex world rich in contact with different populations while many mysteries remain unsolved.

The Museum of Lunigianesi Stele statues wants to preserve and testify this singular phenomenon through the exposure of the original finds completed with explicative boards.

METALWORKS

Stele statues are divided in three main groups for the different technical elaboration and their name is due to the finding place.

### GROUP A

It includes the most ancient stele statues characterized by a very stylized elaboration, more similar to the stelae than to the statues: the head is hardly drafted and does not take off the body, the face is stylized, ornaments and attributes are very schematic.

Such characteristics are clearly visible in the Casola Stele in which the one distinction between the body and the head is a clavicular line from which the arms descend lightly down, the face has a typical U shape and tablet-shaped eyes. The stele also presents, at the bottom, a convex blade dagger with a semicircular hilt pommel.



### GROUP B

It is the most numerous group: the stele statues show more stylistic elaboration: the head is separated from the body and it is half-moon shaped.

The (always U shaped or circle marked) presents some particulars as eyes and, in some cases, ears.

The ornaments, as weapons and jewels, are more numerous



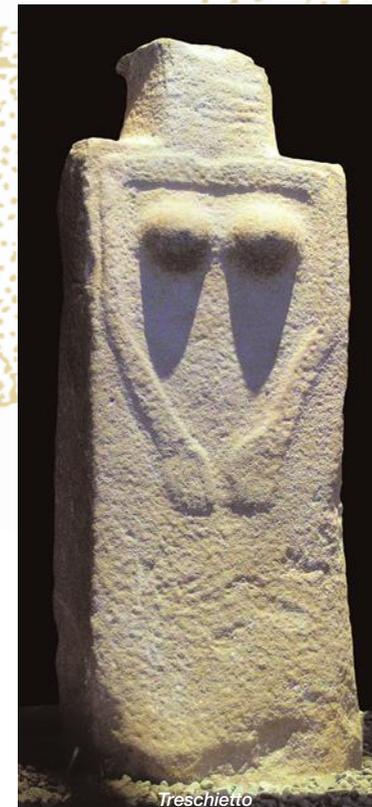
particularly used in the bronze age. But in this statue it is the breast definition to attract the attention because it is very well-finished with nipples.

Such evident female attributes brought some scholars to refer the female stele statues to the goddess mater cult, symbol of life and fertility. Many other statues of this group presents also unequivocal marks of their re-employment, during the centuries, as building materials. The Malgrate III statue, without head, has been rough-shaped and bushhammered

and different and present a better formal elaboration.

The Canossa Stele represents a squared dagger inserted in the sheath and decorated with 3 spires. On the other hand the Minucciano stele associates the dagger presence to a Similaun-type hatchet in which it is possible to distinguish the hilt blade that still seems lithic. Even the female representations shows more cared particulars.

The Treschietto Stele is decorated, on the neck, with a choker, an ornament



in the lower part to be re-employed as bracket in a private house where, then, it was recovered.

### GROUP C

It assembles the most recent stele statues which can be distinguished from the previous ones because of a further variation in the anatomical shapes or in the ornaments. The main characteristic is that they are three-dimensionally conceived as statues (for a global vision not only frontal).

The face, the arms, the weapons and the ornaments are different while some inscriptions appear.

The Bigliolo Stele contains all the characteristics of the most recent group. It is carved in a round shape; the shoulders are elaborated in more realistic shape and are no longer square. The face is defined in its particulars as the weapons are. It has an inscription on the chest, in Etruscan characters, its meaning is still uncertain.

The Montecorto Stele is another interesting stele: it is mutilated and squared, as a result of being used again in medieval building; also in this case it represents hilted weapons: a hatchet and a javelin.

Etruscans

