Remains of Sauropoda (Reptilia, Saurischia) in the Lower Cretaceous (Upper Hauерerivian/Lower Barremian) Limestones of SW Istria (Croatia)

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Key words: Dinosauria, Sauropoda, Titanosauriformes, Diplodocimorpha, Upper Hauferivian-Lower Barremian, Cretaceous, Istria (Croatia).

Abstract
Remains belonging to sauropod dinosaurs have recently been discovered in Upper Hauferivian/Lower Barremian (Lower Cretaceous) limestones of SW Istria (Croatia). The material consists of a complete cervical vertebra, a nearly complete cervical centrum, fragments of possible cervical ribs, three partial dorsal and five more or less incomplete caudal vertebrae, parts of caudal neural spines, a chevron, the distal part of a furcula, the proximal portion of a rib and other fragments of bones. The bones were collected randomly from the sea bottom, therefore despite the fact that they come from the same outcrop, the same level and probably the same bed, they cannot be assigned with certainty to the same taxon. Their vastly different sizes indicate the presence of several individuals while different morphologies suggest the probable presence of more than one taxon. The complete cervical and the anterior to mid-caudal vertebrae present a more strict affinity with Brachiosauridae, a proximal cervical centrum resembles that of "Chondrostoeosaurus", and a caudal neural spine is similar to those of the camarasaurs. The dorsal vertebrae have peculiar features (a very tall neural arch, well developed laminar complex, etc.) and characters suggesting their assignation to basal Titanosauriformes and, possibly, to Diplodocimorpha. A posterior dorsal vertebra testifies the presence of a new Diplodocimorph similar to Rebeccasaurus but more primitive.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dinosaur tracks of Cretaceous age are relatively common in the Istrian peninsula (NW Croatia), and have recently been reviewed by DALLA VECCHIA et al. (1993), DALLA VECCHIA & TARLAO (1995) and DALLA VECCHIA (1997a, b, c). They are preserved in Upper Barremian, Upper Albian and Upper Cenomanian limestones at several sites along the coast of the peninsula, and on the islands (Mann Brijuni/Brioni island, Fenoliga islet, etc.).

The first discovery of dinosaur bones, on the Adriatic sea bottom at the Kolone locality near Bale/Valle village, south of Rovign, was reported by BOSCAROLLI et al. (1993), and was followed by preliminary notes concerning the fossils and their stratigraphic and palaeoenvironmental context (DALLA VECCHIA, 1994a, b; DALLA VECCHIA et al., 1993; TUNIS et al., 1994; KOZARIC et al., 1996). Some specimens were identified as sauropod bones (DALLA VECCHIA, 1994b, 1997a, b, c; DALLA VECCHIA & TARLAO, 1995) but never described in detail. This paper presents a detailed description of the identifiable and attributable remains of the sample.

All of the material comes from the same outcrop, from the same stratigraphic level and, probably from the same bed (see below). However, most were collected randomly as scattered fragments on the beach and on the sea bottom, where the fossiliferous layer crops out. No systematic attempt had been made to collect the numerous bones still embedded in the rock. Since the fossiliferous bed, which seems to be particularly laden with bony remains (D. BOSCAROLLI, pers. comm.), lies below sea level, its excavation is difficult. However, this outcrop promises to be one of the most rich and interesting of present Europe.

2. DEPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND AGE

The age and depositional environment of this deposit are discussed in BOSCAROLLI et al. (1993), TUNIS et al. (1994) and DINI et al. (1998). The fossiliferous outcrop is characterized by the presence of beds of oncitic rudstone with bone debris, and thinly laminated limestones with plant, shrimp and fish remains. Some bones (for example, the complete cervical vertebra WN-V1, the small dorsal MPCM-V1, the mid-caudal Nos IG-1 and other fragments) were preserved wholly in a yellow, thinly laminated limestone or with a side of the fossil in this laminated limestone and the other side in a grey, hard oncitic rudstone. This seems to indicate that the preservation of complete bones is due to deposition in a relatively protected, low energy environment (laminated limestones) and to the probably rapid covering by the rudstone which testifies a high energy environment. However this should be confirmed by a detailed sedimentological and taphonomic study of the fossiliferous beds which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The stratigraphic sequence of the outcrop at Bale is composed of subtidal, intertidal and lacosunate limestones. The lower section is of Late Hauferivian/Early
Barremian age due to the presence of the foraminifer *Campanellula cupensis* DE CASTRO; the upper section is probably Lower Barremian (BOSCAROLLI et al., 1993; TUNIS et al., 1994). Therefore the bones described here are the oldest record of dinosaurs currently known in Istria (DALLA VECCHIA & TARLAC, 1995) if possible sauropod tracks in the Berriasian of Fantazija Quarry (LOCKLEY et al., 1994) are excluded. The bones are approximately coeval with the theropod *pes* and sauropod *manus* prints found in a quarried limestone block from the Cansiglio Plateau (Northeastern Italy, Pordone) described by DALLA VECCHIA & VENTURINI (1995). The sauropods of Bale are a rare case of dinosaur bone remains that are dated in correlation with the marine biochronology.

### 3. DESCRIPTION AND COMPARISON

The sample consists of more than 200 specimens, most of which are just bone fragments. The collected material was exposed to recent marine and shore weathering and was encrusted (and sometimes pierced) by living marine animals and algae. It was cleaned and prepared by the preparators of the Gruppo Speleologico Monfalconese A.D.F. at the Museo Paleontologico Cittadino of Monfalcone (Gorizia). Most of the bones are crushed, sometimes strongly, but otherwise the state of preservation of the bones still imbedded in the rocky matrix is very good. Only bones attributable to sauropods are described here; several specimens are too fragmented to identify the skeletal element to which they belonged, other fragments belong obviously to long and large bones which remain indeterminate.

The specimens will finally be stored or exhibited in a Museum dedicated to the local dinosaur remains in the village of Bale (Istria, Croatia). At present they are without the definitive number of this Museum therefore I will report here the numbers used during preparation (MPCM-V = Museo Paleontologico Cittadino di Monfalcone - Valle). The specimens that were not numbered during preparation and were at the Museum in Bale during the final version of this paper are identified with the abbreviation WN-V. Two bones are presently in the collection of the Institute of Geology, Zagreb (Nos IG-1 and Nos IG-2).

Because of the way the specimens were collected it is impossible to be immediately sure that they belong to the same taxon, or to a precise number of different taxa. In some occurrences, for example in some levels of the Morrison Formation (Upper Jurassic) of North America, six sauropod genera were found together (see CURTICE & WILHITE, 1996). Therefore each bone is compared with the corresponding bones of described sauropod taxa, in order to determine affinities particularly with the better known forms (*Brachiosaurus RIGGS*, *Haplocanthosaurus HATCHER*, *Camarasaurus COPE*, *Diplodocus MARSH*, and *Apatosaurus MARSH*) and the Neocomian-Barremian ones.

### Acronyms:

- **CD** = caudal rib, **CDL** = centrodiasphysal lamina, **CPR** = centroprezygapophysial lamina, **CO** = condyle, **COPR** = condyloprezygapophysial lamina, **DP** = diapophysis, **Has** = articular surface for the hypopophosse, **HL** = horizontal lamina (= diapre-prezygapophysial lamina, diapre-postzygapophysial lamina), **HP** = hypophyse, **HPD** = hypapanch, **IDL** = infradiapophysial lamina, **IHPNL** = infraprehypoplenal lamina, **IPDL** = infrapostdiapophyseal lamina, **IPDRL** = infrapre-apraaphyseal lamina, **IPPL** = infrapreparaphyseal anterior lamina, **IPPLb** = infraparapophysial posterior lamina, **IPRL** = infraprezygapophysial lamina, **IPZL** = infrapostzygapophysial lamina, **ISPZL** = inner suprapostzygapophysial lamina, **ITZPL** = infrapostzygapophysial lamina, **LIPPL** = lateral infraparaphyseal lamina; **LIPZL** = lateral infrapostzygapophysial lamina, **NA** = neural arch, **NC** = neural canal, **NS** = neural spine, **OSPZL** = outer suprapostzygapophysial lamina, **PL** = pleurocoel, **PP** = parapophysis, **PR** = prezygapophysis, **PRL** = prezygapophysial lamina, **PRSPL** = prespinal lamina, **PSPL** = postspinal lamina, **PZ** = postzygapophysis, **SCL** = "core" lamina of the neural spine, **SDL** = supradiapophysial lamina, **SIPRL** = subinfraprezygapophysial lamina, **SPRZ** = supraprezygapophysial lamina, **SPZL** = suprapostzygapophysial lamina.

### AXIAL SKELETAL ELEMENTS

#### Cervical vertebrae

**WN-V1** (Figs. 1 & 2; photographs in DALLA VECCHIA, 1994b, fig. 3, and DALLA VECCHIA, 1997c, fig. 2): two cervical vertebrae were preserved nearly in anatomical articulation. The posterior of the two is entire while only a posterior fragment (with the cotyle and the left postzygapophysis) of the other is preserved. The following description concerns the complete vertebra (Figs. 1 & 2). This is crushed laterally, the neural arch is bent to the left side and the left diapophysis with the corresponding horizontal lamina are crushed and bent to the centrum. The right side has been exposed to erosion on the sea bottom in recent times and was strongly weathered.

The centrum is olisthocoelous, very elongate and tubular. Its length is 350 mm, its height at the posterior end is 50 mm, the length/height ratio is therefore 7:1; maximum depth of the neural arch as preserved is 100 mm. The centrum has a cavernous, cancellate structure with thin external walls and relatively small, irregular internal cavities bordered by bone septa and ridges; the septa and walls are comparatively thicker than in the posterior cervical vertebra MPCM-V2 described below. The inner cavities are, at least in the anterior part of the centrum, antero-posteriorly elongated. A small pleurocoel, also antero-posteriorly elongated, is identifiable on the middle ventral part of the lateral side of the centrum (Fig. 2). "Pleurocoels" are also present anteriorly on the centrum, just above or at the base of the parapophysis. They actually are deep depresions and do not appear to communicate with the inner part of the
Fig. 1 Cervical vertebra WN-V1. Views: A) left lateral, B) dorsal, C) ventral, D) posterior. E) Reconstruction in posterior view. Acronyms: ASPZ = additional suprapostzygapophyseal lamina.
centrum (they do not pierce the external wall) and are probably the Aussenkaverne reported in the cervicals of Brachiosaurus brancai JANENSCHE by JANENSCHE (1947, fig. 1). Small, rounded or oval (4 - 10 mm) shallow depressions are present in the anterior part of the centrum, and are most prevalent on the lateral side of the neural arch. Ventral excavations are not present. The "pleurocoels" and the depressions on the centrum are figured in Fig. 2.

The cotyle (the posterior articular cavity on the centrum) is deep and oval (main vertical diameter = 50 mm) but the shape is probably biased by compression, and the condyle is well developed, ball-like and small (maximum diameter = 35 mm).

The neural arch occupies nearly the entire dorsal surface of the centrum. The neural spine is low and not bifid. The parapophysis lacks the distal part and is oriented in the vertical plane; despite any compressional effects it is unlikely that this was originally oriented in the horizontal plane. The diapophysis is triangular in dorso-lateral view and tapers at the distal tip, which is broken and shows a circular outline of the section and a hollow inside. The tip of the diapophysis and the posterior margin of the anterior horizontal lamina are rough. From the diapophysis a well developed wing-like horizontal lamina is directed anteriorly to the prezygapophysis and posteriorly to the postzygapophysis. Where the posterior horizontal lamina begins a strong infrapostdiapophyiscal lamina is also obvious (Fig. IC); this ends as a lamina at the dorsal-posterior third of the centrum and continues as a ridge with the relief tapering caudally, ending before reaching the caudal margin of the centrum. Where the infrapostdiapophyiscal lamina attaches to the diapophysis, the posterior side of the latter becomes wider and presents a shallow depression (this part has therefore a somewhat spoon-like aspect). There is a double, V-shaped inner centrodiaepophyiscal lamina (Fig. IC), with the point placed in correspondence to the narrowing of the tip of the diapophysis. The two branches of the lamina end at the dorsal-lateral part of the centrum; the anterior one is wider and very thin. There is a well developed centroprezygapophyiscal lamina, crushed against the anterior horizontal lamina, with a wide basal attachment on the dorsal-anterior part of the centrum, just caudal to the condyle. There is also a short condylopseudazygapophyiscal lamina. The supraprezygapophyiscal and suprapostzygapophyiscal laminae are thin, well developed and separated (right from left) by very deep infra-supraprezygapophyiscal and infra-suprapostzygapophyiscal cavities (Fig. 1B). The supraprezygapophyiscal laminae are thinner than the suprapostzygapophyiscal laminae. The ventro-posterior part of the medial side of the suprapostzygapophyiscal lamina presents a deep cavity bordered medially by a very thin vertical lamina (ASPZ = additional suprapostzygapophyiscal lamina).

There are two thin, parallel and short vertical laminae just above the bony arch surrounding the neural cavity. The intrapostzygapophyiscal lamina reaches these laminae medially forming a Y-shaped structure. The short vertical lamina, infrapostzygapophyiscal lamina and intrapostzygapophyiscal lamina surround a large, deep cavity (Fig. 1E). Right infrapostzygapophyiscal lamina and intrapostzygapophyiscal lamina are crushed against one another and the corresponding cavity bordered by the two laminae is nearly closed.

The prezygapophysis is long and projects well beyond the anterior tip of the centrum. The articular surface is drop-shaped, facing medio-dorsally (orientation possibly partly modified by crushing). The postzygapophysis is similar to the prezygapophysis in that the articular surface faces ventro-laterally. The well developed, thin and wide (wing-like) horizontal lamina connects the prezygapophysis and postzygapophysis to the diapophysis.

**Comparisons** - elongated, "tube-like" cervical centra are present in Brachiosaurus brancai, Diplodocus and Barosaurus lentus MARSH (McINTOSH, 1990a, b). Cervical centra of the camarasaurs are relatively short and wide (OSBORN & MOOK, 1921; McINTOSH, 1990a, b). Diplodocids and Comarasaurs have bifid neural spines in the cervical vertebrae (McIN-
TOSH, 1990a, b; in Diplodocus and Camarasaurus they are bifid from cervical 3 onwards) whereas they are single in Brachiosaurus. The distribution of the "pleurocoels" in WN-V1 is similar, but not the same, as that of the anterior cervical vertebrae of Brachiosaurus brancai (JANENSCH, 1950, figs. 20, 23, 26, 29). In fact, the size of the posterior pleurocoel of the centrum is much smaller in the described specimen. Also the overall shape of the vertebra, the anterior elongation of the prezygapophysis, and diapophysis distally narrowing in a bottleneck manner, are similar to those of the anterior cervicals of Brachiosaurus brancai (JANEN-SCH, 1950, figs. 20, 23, 26, 29). The internal cavities are probably the same as the "longitudinal pneumatic tubes" observed in a presumed specimen of Mamenchisaurus YOUNG by RUSSELL & ZHENG (1993, p. 2089) and are present also in "Chondrosteosaurus" (e.g. HULKE, 1879, p. 756) and in another cervical centrum described below.

MPCM-V5 (Fig. 3A): this is the posterior part with the cotyle of a small centrum, with a basal-posterior fragment of the neural arch. The specimen is strongly crushed; it is 114 mm long and its height at the cotyle is 70 mm.

Comparisons - it is similar to the same region of the vertebra WN-V1 and represents another cervical vertebra belonging to a relatively small sauropod.

MPCM-V6: this specimen is probably the anterior portion (110 mm long) of a right infrapostdiaphyphial lamina from a rather large vertebra: the corresponding part on the complete cervical WN-V1 is no longer than 20 mm.

MPCM-V7 (Fig. 3B): an incomplete posterior part of a postzygapophysis (48 mm long, 60 mm wide) clearly belonging to a vertebra much larger than the complete cervical vertebra WN-V1.

Fig. 3  A) MPCM-V5 posterior part of a small cervical centrum, right lateral view; B) MPCM-V7 incomplete postzygapophysis of a cervical vertebra, lateral view. The scale bar is in centimetres.

MPCM-V2 (Figs. 4 & 5): a nearly complete centrum, rather short, wide and low (length=300 mm, height=105 mm, and width=175 mm at the posterior end) (Fig. 4). Its low profile is only partly due to dorso-ventral crushing (the specimen, mainly in its anterior part, is crushed because of its extremely cavernous internal structure). A small part of the base of the neural arch is also preserved in the posterior part. The neural arch, the parapophyses, and the external bony wall in the cranial half have all been weathered away.

The posterior cotyle is rather deep and probably had an elliptical shape, wider than high, with a ratio W/h = 1.67. Its ventral side projects posteriorly more than the dorsal one.

There are three large pleurocoels on both lateral sides (Fig. 5A). The external margins of the anterior pleurocoel (APL) are weathered away, therefore what we see now is probably slightly different to the original external shape. It is the shallowest of the three openings and is separated from the posterior (PPL) and lower pleurocoel (LPL) by thin bony laminae.

The posterior pleurocoel is the largest and deepest opening (about 40 mm), elliptical, cranio-caudally elongate, extending along most of the caudal half of the centrum. Though deep, the posterior pleurocoels do not occupy the whole inner part of the centrum, and are not separated from each other only by a medial lamina (as in the dorsals of Camarasaurus or Brachiosaurus). In fact the interior of the centrum of MPCM-V2 is wholly composed of small, honeycomb-like chambers. The dorsal and ventral rims of the pleurocoel are thick and lip-like. The anterior pleurocoel is elliptical and also anteroposteriorly elongated. This pleurocoel is deeper posteriorly and becomes more and more shallow ventro-anteriorly. It is separated from the posterior pleurocoel by a thin lamina. The lower pleurocoel opens latero-ventrally in the mid-anterior part of the centrum and is more developed ventrally (Fig. 4D). Its true outline has probably been affected by weathering on the lateral side where it possibly extended on the para-
Fig. 4 MPCM-V2, posterior cervical centrum. Views: A) right lateral, B) left lateral, C) dorsal, D) ventral, E) posterior. Acronyms: APL = anterior pleurocoel, LPL = lower pleurocoel, PPL = posterior pleurocoel.
pophyses. Its present shape is elliptical and antero-posteriorly elongate. The left one is partly subdivided into cells by thin bony septa.

The weathered dorsal surface of the centrum shows the cancellate structure of the inner vertebra. More or less irregularly shaped cells are separated by very thin septa; in some places (as in the left upper-mid part of the centrum) these cells are regularly divided by vertical septa into a "honeycomb" pattern. A regular "honeycomb" pattern, with antero-posteriorly elongated, tubular cells, is evident in the weathered anterior condylar part (Fig. 5B).

The trace of the neural canal on the dorsal side of the centrum shows that it is very expanded at both extremities: maximum posterior (at the exit from the neural arch) width is about 50 mm, maximum anterior width is 55 mm, minimum width is at midlength (about 25 mm); height in correspondence to the posterior exit from the neural arch is about 35 mm. The posterior opening of the neural canal is therefore elliptical, wider than high.

The ventral side of the centrum is very flat and without longitudinal depressions or ridges. In the anterior third the external, compact wall is weathered and the inner tubular, "honeycomb", cancellate structure is exposed (Fig. 5B). In the mid-anterior part there is a median, anteroposteriorly elongate, large (length = 45 mm) and deep (about 40 mm) hole. In the mid-anterior part of the centrum, the ventral external bony wall narrows because of the lower pleurocoel; here the medial margin of the opening is rimmed by the relatively thick wall.

Comparisons - the large pleurocoels are very different from the titanosaur condition, and are characteristic of brachiosaurids, camarasaurs and diplodocids (mainly Diplodocus). Brachiosaurids and Diplodocus-like diplodocids seem to be excluded by the relative shortness and width of the centrum and its dorso-ventral flatness (McIntosh, 1990b). The overall morphology of MPCM-V2 and the size and position of the pleurocoels strongly resemble cervical 10 of Camarasaurus supremus COPE (Osborn & Mook, 1921, figs. 7 & 32) and also the cervicals called Chondrostenosaurus gigas by Owen (1876, see Pls. II-V). The latter are more or less coeval with MPCM-V2, being from the Barremian Wessex Formation (BLOWS, 1995) of England and have centra of the same proportions, overall outline, shape of articular surfaces, ventral aspect, very similar anterior pleurocoel and posterior pleurocoel and the particular, regular cancellate, "honeycomb" bone texture, mainly in the condylar region (see Pls. II, IV and V of Owen, 1876 and the description by HULKE, 1879, p. 756-57). On the other hand, the cancellate texture is not present in Camarasaurus (P. Upchurch, pers. comm.). The size of MPCM-V2 is between that of the two specimens of C. gigas described by Owen (1876, see Pl. V). They could differ in the presence and shape of the lower pleurocoel, but the shape and actual position of this opening in MPCM-V2 is effected by weathering which rubbed out completely the paraphyses, as reported above. Also variation of position of the posterior, lower and anterior pleurocoels may account for the differences. Therefore MPCM-V2 at the present state of knowledge should be referred to this taxon, whose validity, however, is doubtful (see below). C. gigas was based by Owen (1876) on only a complete and a weathered cervical centrum. HULKE (1879) added at least another cervical centrum (n. 144, coll. H of Hulke, 1879) (actually he made a mistake in reporting the name and attributed it to C. magnus). C. magnus (= Bothriospondylus magnus Owen, 1875 but type of Ornithopsis hulkei of SEELEY, 1870) is represented by two dorsal centra found in the same formation and locality of the cervicals called C. gigas (Owen, 1876, p. 7). It appears plausible that C. magnus belongs to the same taxon of C. gigas as partly realized by Owen himself, who referred them, "provisionally", to distinct species on the base of the incorrect statement that they are both dorsal elements and that dorsals cannot be so different in the same species (p. 7). C. magnus was based on a vertebra (BMNH 28632) which Owen (1875) had called Bothriospondylus magnus before recognizing its resemblance to the vertebrae of
C. gigas. Vertebrae of C. magnus (= Ornithopsis hulkei) have the same honeycomb-like texture in the condylar region as C. gigas (OWEN, 1875, PI. IX). BMNH 28632 was indicated as one of the two types of Ornithopsis hulkei by SEELEY (1870) but OWEN (1876) rejected the name as “misleading” because of its Greek meaning which seems to suggest it is a bird bone. HULKE (1879) considered Eucamerous HULKE and Ornithopsis to be synonyms because the type of the first (BMNH R2522, a partial neural arch), BMNH 28632 and a “mutilated centrum, retaining enough of the arch and superstructures” (p. 755) present an “extremely large-celled cancellous tissue” (p. 755). LYDEKKER (1888) accepted the synonymy of Chondrosteo saurus (both species) and Ornithopsis but suggested that Pelorosaurus MANTELL should be synonymized in his recent review of Ornithopsis BLOWS (1995) does not include in O. hulkei the cervical vertebrae of C. gigas but considers it, as SEELEY (1870) did, as a lectotype of O. hulkei one of the two dorsal centra (the syntype of SEELEY, 1870, BMNH28632 - see LYDEKKER, 1888) called C. magnus by OWEN (1876). C. gigas was recently considered valid and tentatively assigned to the Camarasauridae by McIntosh (1990b, p. 387) because of its close resemblance with cervical 10 of Camarasaurus. P. Upchurch, who is reviewing the British sauropod material, considers C. gigas a nomen dubium and probably a member of the Titanosauriformes (Brachiosaurus + Titanosaurus) (P. UPCH- URCH, pers. comm.).

MPCM-V4 (Fig. 6): this is a part of a larger bone and has a peculiar and somewhat puzzling shape and structure. Its identification is rather difficult but it appears to be part of a laminar system of the neural arch of a cervical or dorsal vertebra of a sauropod. In fact, even if it is strongly crushed and its original shape was deformed by compression, the specimen is a lattice-work of bone bridges and laminae, with pleurocoel-like openings. This frame, linked to the extreme lightening of the skeletal elements, is typical of sauropod cervical and dorsal vertebrae.

I chose an arbitrary orientation (see the caption of Fig. 6) of the specimen to describe it and I identify the main lamina-like structures which compose it with the acronyms S1, S2, etc. That which follows should be considered a tentative description.

S1 is the upper, longitudinal, lamina-like structure which is strongly crushed but not very deformed. Its outline in the anterior part, where it is possibly formed by two thinner laminae now strongly crushed one against the other, is rectangular in side view. At the anterior third, S1 becomes rib-like (ar), the profile becomes inclined, the upper part enlarges and its dorsal margin is sharply acute. The back side of S1 is nearly vertical; here the structure is divided into a rib-like arch (br) which reaches S2 and a thin, central and inner lamina (il). S2 was originally nearly perpendicular to S1 but now is parallel to it because of crushing and defor- mation. S2 resembles a thick lamina, thicker posteriorly than anteriorly, and hollow inside. A large, oval pleurocoel opens in its present side surface, revealing the hollow inside. S3 is the left side structure corresponding to S2 but was mostly weathered away. If so, S1, S2 and S3 originally formed an upside down Y or T-shaped structure. S4 is a lamina clothed against S1, with a strong, rib-like upper margin (um) and the remaining part (ts) which is a thin sheet of bone crushed against il. The rib-like upper margin um begins in the dorsal margin of S1 where the latter becomes rib-like; therefore the two rib-like structures form (and formed before crushing) a V-shaped structure with the acute part pointing forward and downward. S4, now parallel to S1 was originally diverging from the latter posteriorly.

Comparisons - the shape of the structure S1 resembles one of a low neural spine of a cervical vertebra. However, the relation with the structure S4 cannot be recognized exactly in any described vertebra of Haplocanthosaurus, Diplodocus, Apatosaurus and Camarasaurus (pers. obs.). The shape of the specimen mostly resembles one of the bifid cervical neural spine of Apatosaurus (GILMORE, 1936). As reported above, in my opinion it is part of a complex laminar structure of a neural arch of a rather large and bizarre cervical or dorsal sauropod vertebra, but nothing more can be said until a more complete part of this structure is found.

Cervical ribs? (Fig. 7)

Seven rod-like bone fragments (among them is MPCM-V8, the others now on exhibit at Balc/Valle are without number), with oval or elliptical cross sections (about 10.5 x 14.5 mm in the longest fragment, the lower one in Fig. 7, 195 mm long). They have the same transverse sizes for all their lengths and are straight or slightly curved; they are not hollow and their surfaces present thin longitudinal striae. One surface is usually flatter (less convex) than the other.

Comparisons - They could be segments of the distal part of the shaft of long cervical ribs. They resemble the very characteristic, elongate rod-like shafts of the cervical ribs of Camarasaurus, Brachiosaurus, Euheleopus ROMER and Mamenchisaurus. On the other hand, McIntosh (1990a) indicates short cervical ribs as a diagnostic feature of Diplodocidae. The identification as part of rib shafts is supported by the presence in the outcrop of similar bone fragments more than 500 mm long and perhaps as long as 1200 mm (D. BOSCAROLLI and F. BACCIA, pers. comm.). If the identification is correct, their large size excludes them from belonging to a vertebra of the same size as the complete cervical vertebra WN-V1; they belong to a much larger vertebra of a large individual. Despite this, the fragments are very similar to the ossified tendons which strengthen the tail and the back of iguanodontids. However these skeletal elements are usually smaller and flatter. If the described specimens are ossified tendons there are two possibilities: 1) also iguanodontids are
represented in the fossiliferous outcrop but we do not have other evidence of this, 2) there are sauropods with ossified tendons in the neck (calcified muscles are preserved in *Camarasaurus* - D. CHURE, pers. comm. in McINTOSH, 1990b) or in the tail.

**Dorsal vertebrae**

**MPCM-V1** (Figs. 8 & 9): the specimen consists of a partly preserved, small centrum and corresponding neural arch without most of the spine. The neural arch is strongly crushed antero-posteriorly, due to the action of lithostatic pressure on the extremely hollow structure. The whole vertebra is in fact just a very complex latticework of thin bone laminae. After complete preparation it seems clear that in previous papers I wrongly identified the posterior part as the anterior (see DALLA VECCHIA, 1994b, fig. 4b). The anterior side of the vertebra was strongly weathered and to identify the original structures is not possible or at best very difficult.

The centrum has a kidney-like outline in posterior view, wider than high (about 80 x 55 mm) and the articular face is concave. It is a cylinder, therefore it has convex lateral sides.

On both lateral sides there is evidence of a very large pleurocoel, probably with an ovate outline (but see below) occupying most of the lateral side of the centrum (Figs. 8D & 9C). The pleurocoel is not a hole piercing the lateral wall of the centrum and in connection with its hollow inner part (Fig. 8B). It is just a deep depression rimmed ventrally (lip-like ventral margin), opening dorsally and partially (just in the ventral part) divided internally by a small, rib-like vertical septum (as in the dorsals of *Euca merotus* sensu BLOWS, 1995 and many other sauropods). The inner structure of the centrum is extremely cavernous, cancellate, with thin
vertical septa (mainly antero-posteriorly oriented but some smaller ones are transversely oriented) and reinforcing struts (Fig. 8B). The inner septa are as thin as less than 1 mm, whereas the external wall is thicker.

The neural canal is oval, large, about 29.5 mm wide and 21 mm high in posterior view, 25 and 16 mm respectively in anterior view.

The neural arch is comparatively very tall: the ratio $H/h$ ($H=$ distance between the base of the postzygapophysis and the top of the centrum, and $h=$ centrum height) is 1.83; the preserved part of the neural arch is 2.8 times the height of the centrum. The neural arch is formed by very thin, long laminae which are difficult to identify because of the strong crushing; their original position is tentatively reconstructed in Figs. 9C and 10B.

The right postzygapophysis is nearly completely preserved. It is connected to the pedicles by a strong, straight, vertical lamina (infrapostzygapophyseal lamina). There is no suture between the basal pedicles and the upper part of the arch. Between the two infrapostzygapophyseal laminae the arch is depressed. Perhaps the two infrapostzygapophyseal laminae were connected by a thin, horizontal infrapostzygapophyseal lamina but crushing prevents further clarification. The cross-section of the postzygapophysis shows pneumatic cavities inside; the part with cavities is found dorsally with respect to a 5 mm thick layer of spongy bone which is just above the articular surface. The latter faces ventro-laterally and slightly anteriorly. There is no hypophyseal process above the postzygapophyseal arch, and in the middle of the concavity there is the basal part of a rib-like (probably broken) postspinal lamina (Fig. 8A).

The articular surface of the prezygapophysis was probably borne by a large, triangular, dorso-laterally directed (in front view) structure, possibly formed by a thick, rib-like infraprezygapophyseal lamina at the lateral margin and a thinner prezygapophyseal lamina at the dorsal one (Figs. 8B & 9B). This apophysis is strongly crushed against the other laminae which comprise the neural arch. Nothing is preserved of the part of the prezygapophysis bearing the articular surface. Another triangular structure (indicated with the acronym AS in Figs. 8B and 9B) seems to start just above the neural canal, tapers dorsally and ends against the presumed prezygapophyseal lamina. As in other vertebra this structure, which has been very damaged by weathering, is composed of a latticework of very thin laminae.

Above these structures there is the base of the neural spine. The rib-like trace of a possibly bidual (U-shaped in cross-section, Fig. 10) prespinal lamina can be recognized, with also the basal part of both supraprezygapophyseal laminae. The latter taper toward the top and have a thickened margin in the upper half of the preserved part.

The pattern of lateral laminae is very complex (Figs. 8D, 9C & 10).

A wide and very thin lateral infraprezygapophyseal lamina starts from the lateral side of the base of the pedicle and reaches the posterior horizontal lamina just anterior to the postzygapophysis (Figs. 8D & 9C).

The thin infradiaphyseal lamina seems to start from the same point as the lateral infraprezygapophyseal lamina (or a little above) and ends at the diaphyseal "knob". Most of the diaphysis is completely weathered, and is recognizable only as a knob or strut, composed in its proximal part by the confluence of the laminae connected with it. The natural, unbroken outer margin of the infradiaphyseal lamina is preserved in its basal part and shows that the infradiaphyseal lamina was upwardly and laterally directed; this
Fig. 8 MPCM-V1, anterior dorsal vertebra. Views: A) posterior, B) anterior, C) left lateral, D) right lateral. Acronyms: AS = anterior structure between prezygapophyses.
lamina appears to have been a wide, wing-like structure projecting laterally (Fig. 9A).

Anterior to the described laminæ there is evidence of a complex, laterally projecting structure placed at the base of the neural arch. In my opinion this structure could be the parapophysis or part of it. The position of the articular surface of the parapophysis is not clear. It is either the narrow facet shown in Figs. 8D and 9C as the parapophysis, or it was placed anteriorly and was weathered away. Two extremely thin laminæ (infra-parapophyseal laminæ, IPPLa,b, Figs. 8D & 9C) are present at the base of the structure; they join dorsally forming an upside down V and border the upper part of a vacuity connected with the pleurocoel. The resulting structure is a drop-shaped deep depression (Fig. 9C). The posterior lamina starts from the upper latero-posterior side of the centrum, the other probably from the upper latero-anterior. The two laminæ meet at the presumed articular surface of the parapophysis. The latter continues dorsally as a short lamina which unites to another lamina (subinfraprezygapophyseal lamina) coming probably from the upper latero-anterior part of the centrum. In posterior view two more or less circular deep cavities are visible respectively at the base and at the top of this laminar system. These cavities are probably true features of this part of the arch even if they were partly altered by crushing. In lateral view, just above the presumed parapophysis, two laminæ bifurcate: a infraprediapophyseal lamina (posteriorly) and the very thick, rib-like infraprezygapophyseal lamina (anteriorly). At the bifurcation the infraprediapophyseal lamina begins relatively thick and hollow inside, but rapidly tapers to become a thin, compact single sheet of bone. It was probably connected with the diapophyseal "knob", but this part of the lamina is displaced because of strong crushing. There is a thin horizontal lamina between the prezygapophysis and the diapophyseal "knob", and from this to the postzygapophysis. A thin supradiapophyseal lamina can be identified but it is very crushed between the other laminæ. The final part, extending to the diapophyseal "knob", cannot be identified with certainty. The inner core of the spine is an antero-posteriorly directed, relatively thick lamina ("core" lamina of the neural spine, SCL), forming an L-shaped structure with the supraprezygapophyseal lamina, suprapostzygapophyseal lamina, postspinal lamina and prespinal lamina (and, of course, with the lateral insertion of the supradiapophyseal lamina) (Fig. 10).

Comparisons - the probable low position of the parapophysis and the absence of the hypophene (see below) suggest that this specimen is an anterior element, but not the first: it may be the 2nd to 4th since the parapophysis is not on the centrum. The small size of specimen MPCM-V1 would indicate that it belongs to a juvenile individual. Lack of fusion of the neural arches to the centra is considered an important diagnostic feature of immaturity (e.g CORIA, 1994; MARTIN, 1994; CURTICE & WILHITE, 1996) and has been observed in individuals of many genera: Camarasaurus (OST-ROM & MCINTOSH, 1966), Haplocanthosaurus (HATCHER, 1903), Diplodocus (CURTICE & WILHITE, 1996), Patagosaurus BONAPARTE (CORIA, 1994), Phuwiangosaurus MARTIN, BUFFETEAUT & SUT-ETHORN (MARTIN, 1994). The pedicels of the neural
arch of MPCM-V1 are fused without evident suture to the centrum, therefore there is no evidence of immaturity except the small size.

Drop-shaped pleurocoels are present in the anterior dorsals of *Camarasaurus* "supremus" (OSBORN & MOOK, 1921, figs. 8 & 9) and *Camarasaurus grandis* MARSH (OSTROM & McINTOSH, 1966, pl. 23) and, less markedly, also in the mid-posterior dorsals of *Diplodocus carnegii* HATCHER (HATCHER, 1901, pl. VII), *Apatosaurus louisae* HOLLAND (GILMORE, 1936, pl. XXV), A. *excelsus* (MARSH) (GILMORE, 1936, pl. XXXII) and in some dorsals vertebrae of *Haplocanthosaurus priscus* HATCHER (HATCHER, 1903, pl. 1). However the shape, size and position of pleurocoels in dorsal vertebrae are not always very reliable taxonomic features, since they change in the different elements even in the same individual, and in the same segment of the vertebral column (e.g. GILMORE, 1936, pls. XXV & XXXII; HATCHER, 1901, pl. VII, 1903, pl. I; OSTROM & McINTOSH, 1966, pls. 23-25).

The specimen presents a peculiar, very high, neural arch. The anterior dorsal vertebrae of an immature *Camarasaurus grandis* figured in OSTROM & McINTOSH (1966, Pl. 23-24) and the dorsals of *Rebbachisaurus garasbae* LAVOCAT (RUSSELL, 1996, fig. 30) have also a rather tall neural arch, and *Haplocanthosaurus priscus* is the sauropod with the highest subzygapophyseal part of the neural arch of the dorsal vertebrae. The ratio H/H (H = distance between the base of the postzygapophysis and the top of the centrum, and h = centrum height) in the dorsal 6 of *Haplocanthosaurus priscus* (HATCHER, 1903, pl. 1), dorsal 5 of *Camarasaurus" suprema"* (OSBORN & MOOK, 1921, fig. 8) and an anterior dorsal of the immature *Camarasaurus grandis* is 1.60, 1.37, 1.22 respectively. In the Diplodocimorph (sensu CALVO & SALGADO, 1995) *Rebbachisaurus tessonei* CALVO & SALGADO (CALVO & SALGADO, 1995), in which the tall neural arch is a diagnostic feature, H/h is 0.55 in an anterior dorsal and 1.1 in the posterior ones, whereas in the dorsal of *R. garasbae* figured in RUSSELL (1996, fig. 30) it is at a maximum 1.3. The arch of MPCM-V1 is the highest in every case. Additionally in the figured anterior dorsals of *H. priscus* and *C. grandis* the shape of the centrum in posterior view is not kidney-like, the pleurocoel is smaller and the laminar pattern in the neural arch is different (HATCHER, 1903; OSTROM & McINTOSH, 1966). Unfortunately the most anterior dorsal vertebrae of sauropods are not as well known and described as the mid-posterior ones.

The absence of the hypophose-hypantrum articulation in the dorsals is reported by SALGADO et al. (1997) for *Tornieria* and *Ornithopsis* (= Eucamerotus sensu BLOWS, 1995; but *Ornithopsis* has hypophose-hypantrum, cf. HULKE, 1880, Pl. IV), in *Rebbachisaurus lavocat* (CALVO & SALGADO, 1995; RUSSELL, 1996) and is common among titanosaurs (SALGADO et al., 1997). The absence of hypophose-hypantrum articulation in the posterior dorsals is a synapomorphy of Titanosauridae sensu SALGADO et al. (1997). However the neural arch of the Titanosauridae is lower and the pleurocoel is much smaller and of a different shape (BONAPARTE & CORIA, 1993; BONAPARTE, 1996), therefore they are excluded. Following McINTOSH (1990b, p. 362) the hypophosphyse-hypantrum seems to be generally absent in the anteriormost dorsals of sauropods. It is absent on the dorsal 1 (which has a cervical-like aspect) in *Haplocanthosaurus priscus* but dorsals 2-5 are unknown and it is present in the other dorsal vertebrae (HATCHER, 1903). In *H. uterbacki* HATCHER the hypophose-hypantrum is first seen on the dorsal 6 (HATCHER, 1903, p. 34), while in *Camarasaurus* only dorsals 1-2 are without the hypophose (OSBORN & MOOK, 1921, p. 302). The dorsal vertebra 4 of *Brachiosaurus brancai* has a well developed hypophose (JANENSCH, 1950, fig. 54), while in *Diplodocus carnegii* a hypophose is present from dorsal 4 onwards but dorsals 1 and 2 are cervical-like. In *Apatosaurus excelsus* the hypophose is present from dorsal 3 onwards (GILMORE, 1936) and the parapophysis of 1 and 2 remains on the centrum. There is some similarity with dorsal 2 of *Apatosaurus excelsus* and *A. louisae* but the position of the parapophysis and its laminae are different. Furthermore the shape of the neural spine was probably narrower (GILMORE, 1936).

Large, coarse cavitations in the internal structure of the centra is considered a brachiosaurid feature by BLOWS (1995), and a Titanosauriformes one by P. UPCHURCH (pers. comm. and in press). Following POWELL (1986) the great development of cavernous...
osseous tissue is a diagnostic character of Titanosauridae. ASTIBIA et al. (1990, p. 463) consider the “cellular bony structure of the vertebrae” an “autapomorphic titanosaurid feature”. However SALGADO et al. (1997, p. 26) consider that the “phylogenetic relevance of the relative development of cavernous osseous tissue is unclear”. In the dorsal vertebrae of Brachiosaurus and Camarasaurus the inner centrum is camerate (large cav-
spine. The bone was strongly crushed antero-posteriorly and this affected mainly the laminae visible in lateral view (i.e. horizontal lamina, infradiapophysial lamina, supradiapophysial lamina, etc.) which are therefore deformed and artificially approached.

The specimen is composed of a latticework of thin laminae, above all the axial part of the arch. Also the thickest and strongest parts (i.e. zygapophyses) are cavernous. For example, a large deep cavity divided by a thick septum (Fig. 11F) opens medially at the base of the prezygapophysis, just below the articular surface for the hypophene.

The prezygapophyses are large, with wide articular surfaces facing dorso-medially. There is a wide, more or less quadrangular articular facet for the hypophene bordering the upper part of the hypaprum, and articulating with the hypophene. At the ventral end of this facet the prezygapophysis narrows forming a step-like structure, (i.e. the articular surface for the hypophene is on a low, ventro-medial projection of the prezygapophysis) and the prezygapophysis assumes a hammer-like shape. A thin lamina starts from the base of the articular surface for the hypophene to reach the axis of the arch in the middle of the hypaprum. The hypaprum is very wide, deep and with an isosceles trapezium outline.

The postzygapophyses are united to the hypophene forming a very strong, Y-shaped articular structure (Fig. 11B). The postzygapophysis articular surface is very wide and elongated. The hypophene is triangular and dorsoventrally elongate, but unfortunately the posterior portion is strongly weathered. The hypophene originally was probably much more developed posteriorly. In fact there is no clear indication of the presence of the accessory articulation, which should fit in the corresponding step-like structure of the prezygapophysis, nor a complete articular facet corresponding to the articular facet in the prezygapophyses (Has, Figs. 11 & 12). The infrahypophenal laminae start from the ventral end of the hypophene and are ventrally and slightly laterally directed. The ventral cross-section of the specimen shows that the axial core of the neural arch is formed of a latticework of thin laminae (Fig. 11F). It is possible that there was something like an infrahypophenal cavity entering the hypophene from inside the neural arch.

The parapophysis stalk is preserved but weathered at the outer end, on the right side, just behind the prezygapophysis. On this side there is also a knob which is probably the proximal part of the “core” of the transverse process (= diapophysis) since all laminae are confluent to it (Fig. 11C). On the left side, the position of the parapophysis and diapophysis is shown only by convergence of the laminae, since the processes have been completely removed by weathering (Fig. 11D). The position of the transverse process seems to be near the postzygapophysis in the left side, while it is midway between the postzygapophysis and parapophysis in the right one.
Two laminae start from the base of the prezygapophysis. The thin anterior lamina reaches the para-
pophysis anteriorly or in the middle, and is therefore an 
infra-parapophyseal lamina. It borders posteriorly a very 
depth lateral depression excavated into the prezygapophy-
ysis. The posterior lamina is very thick, rib-like, reach-
es the parapophysis posteriorly (Fig. 11C), and is here 
identified as a lateral infra-parapophyseal lamina. The presence of a very thin infradiaphyseal lamina is clear 
on the left side (Fig. 11D) while the right one is very 
strongly crushed.

The thin horizontal lamina was somewhat short-
ened, deformed and bent to a S-shaped structure by 
antero-posterior compression (Figs. 11C-D).

The supraprezygapophyseal lamina is a thick lami-
a. It has a wide base (about 70 mm) in front view and 
tapers quickly toward the top of the preserved part, 
where it is at least 20 mm wide, and therefore does not 
end against the prespinal lamina. Interpretation of the 
actual morphology of this lamina is difficult since the 
right one seems different from the left one, perhaps 
because of weathering and crushing. It was probably 
antero-laterally directed (Fig. 12A), with a thick, lip-
like anterior margin which rims the deep, axial depres-
sion formed by the two supraprezygapophyseal laminae, 
at the bottom of which the prespinal lamina starts. No 
bony struts or laminae seem to connect the supraprez-
ysapophyseal lamina to the supradiaphyseal lamina. 
The prespinal lamina is weathered and appears more as 
a rib than a lamina. It probably did not project beyond 
the level of the supraprezygapophyseal lamina. It starts 
at the base or very near the base of the neural spine, 
becomes wider and stronger toward the top and perhaps 
was bifid (but this aspect could be due to weathering), 
at least at the base.

The suprapostzygapophyseal laminae, which are 
more affected by weathering, mimic the supraprezy-
ysapophyseal laminae but are thicker above all at the 
base where they are confluent with the postzygapophy-
sis. The left one bifurcates just above the postzy-
gapophysis and becomes single again soon after (Fig. 
11D-E). A complex latticework of transverse laminae, 
thin in the basal part of the neural spine, thicker and 
strut-like above, connects the suprapostzygapophyseal 
lamina to the supradiaphyseal lamina. The postspinal 
lamina is similar and preserved like the prespinal lami-
na but its width is constant. The supradiaphyseal lamina 
is thinner than the supraprezygapophyseal and 
suprapostzygapophyseal laminae. There is a relatively 
short “core” lamina of the neural spine that means the 
spine was narrow in lateral view and roughly of rectan-
gular appearance in cross-section (Fig. 12A), at least 
at the apex of the preserved part. It seems narrow also in 
antero-posterior view but it is impossible to know if it 
widened again above the preserved part or not.

Comparisons - the presence of a medial prespinal 
lamina in posterior dorsals is considered a synapomor-
phy of the Titanosauriformes [Brachiosaurus brancai + 
(Chubutisaurus insignis DEL CORRO + Titanosauria)]
sensu SALGADO et al. (1997) and its development 
down to the base of the neural arch is considered a 
character of derived titanosaurs. However, Titanosau-
ridae sensu SALGADO et al. (1997) lack a hyppantrum-
hyposphene complex in the posterior trunk vertebrae. A 
prespinal lamina in posterior dorsals is also present 
convergently in the Diplodocidae (op. cit.). Eucamero-
tus foxi BLOWS, considered a brachiosaurid by ELO-
WS (1995), does not present a prespinal lamina in the 
prespinal dorsals (see HULKE, 1880, pl. IV, fig. 5).

The development and morphology of the preserved 
supraprezygapophyseal-prespinal laminae and supra-
postzygapophyseal-postspinal laminae is similar to tho-
se of the Diplodocidae (see posterior dorsals of Diplo-
docus, HATCHER, 1901; Apatosaurus, GILMORE, 
1936, pls. XXV & XXXII; Amphicoeliias COPE, OS-
BORN & MOOK, 1921, figs. 119 & 120) and Haplo-
canthosaurus priscus (HATCHER, 1903, pl. i). A nar-
row neural spine of the dorsal vertebrae is also a feature of the Diplodocidae.

The infradiaphyseal lamina and corresponding 
cavity are structures which seem to be present only in 
the Diplodocidae (CURTICE et al., 1996) but appar-
tently the posterior dorsals of Eucamerosus foxi also have 
them (see HULKE, 1880, pl. IV, fig. 7).

The step-like structure on the medial side of the 
prezapophysis seems to be present also in the holotype of Eucamerosus foxi (BLOWS, 1995, fig. 1C). The 
whole prezygapophysis-hypantrum complex appears to 
be somewhat similar, on the basis of BLOWS (1995, 
fig. 1C) to that of the holotype of Eucamerosus foxi. 
However, the hypantrum-hyposphene articulation is also 
similar to that of some basal titanosaurs, and in 
particular that of the anterior dorsal of Argentinosaurus 
huinculensis BONAPARTE & CORIA, where the step-
like structure has been called “accessory articulation of 
the hypantrum” (cf. BONAPARTE & CORIA, 1993, 
figs. 4 & 6); and is considered a diagnostic feature of 
the genus (BONAPARTE & CORIA, 1993, p. 272). As 
suggested by the authors themselves (p. 276, 280) the 
development of these structures is related to the large 
size of the individuals, and is therefore very probably a 
homoplastic character.

The presence, absence or shape of lesser laminae on 
the neural arch of sauropod dorsals probably lacks great 
taxonomic value because of the variability existing in 
the same individual (cf. Diplodocus in HATCHER, 
1901, and Apatosaurus in GILMORE, 1936).

WN-V6 (Fig. 13D-E), is a nearly complete dorsal 
vertebra still under preparation, showing mainly its 
right and posterior side. The specimen will be stored at 
the Museum of the Municipality of Bale and is at pre-
sent without number. It is less crushed than the other 
presacral vertebrae found in the outcrop. The right pedi-
cel of the neural arch is detached from the centrum and 
this could mean that it was not completely fused to it 
(but crushing should be considered the main cause of 
this detachment) and that the specimen does not belong
to a fully mature individual. The overall morphology and the relative position of the diapophysis and parapophysis indicate that it is a posterior dorsal vertebra. It is larger than MPCM-V1 and smaller than MPCM-V3 and has a characteristic tall neural arch, with long diapophysis extending sharply upward (the angle is about 45°). There is a hypostrophe-hypantrum complex and the neural spine is undivided (but only the lower part is preserved). The neural arch is a latticework of thin and wide laminae. Each suprapostzygapophyseal lamina is double. The relatively narrow inner suprapostzygapophyseal laminae taper rapidly, coming together to form a postspinal lamina. The outer suprapostzygapophyseal laminae are wide and antero-posteriorly directed. They run parallel to the main axis of the spine, tapering upward, and abutting nearly perpendicularly the supradiapophyseal lamina (Fig. 13E). A similar suprapostzygapophyseal laminar pattern is sometimes present in the diplodocid *Apatosaurus* (see GILMORE, 1936, Pl. XXV; here Fig. 13B). The diao-postzygapophyseal lamina (= horizontal lamina) ends in the middle of the transverse process without reaching the diapophyseal articular surface. The centrum is relatively small and elongate (its maximum dorso-ventral height is about 150 mm, and length is more than 200 mm), the articular facets are circular and a large pleurocoel is
present antero-dorsally on the lateral side. The inner structure of the centrum is not cancellate (i.e. it is finely spongy).

**Comparisons** - the overall morphology is reminiscent of the mid-posterior dorsal vertebrae of *Haplocanthosaurus* (Fig. 13A) and *Rebbachisaurus* LAVOCAT (reference is made mainly to *R. tessonei* CALVO & SALGADO, Albian-Cenomanian of Argentina (Fig. 13C)), because the only prepared dorsal vertebra of *R. garasbae* LAVOCAT, Aptian-?Cenomanian of Morocco, was never figured and was only poorly described by LAVOCAT, 1954). Reference to Dicraeosauridae is excluded by the presence of the pleurocoel (the absence of pleurocoels in the dorsal vertebrae is considered an important apomorphy of dicraeosaurids, see McINTOSH, 1990b). *Haplocanthosaurus*, which shares with the vertebrae under examination the high inclination of the diapophysis and the presence of the hypophene-hypantrum, has, on the other hand, a postspinal lamina with a very different morphology, single suprapostzygapophyseal laminae, a taller subzygapophyseal portion of the neural arch, and is known presently only in the Upper Jurassic of North America (McINTOSH, 1990b). *Rebbachisaurus* does not present an outer suprapostzygapophyseal lamina (see CALVO & SALGADO, 1995, fig. 9; here Fig. 13C) and, most important, does not present a hypophene-hypantrum complex in dorsal vertebrae (CALVO & SALGADO, 1995). The neural spine of *R. tessonei* is more slender in antero-posterior view than that of the specimen here described. However, the spine of *R. garasbae* is wider than that of the South American species. The preserved part of the neural spine of WN-V6 is most reminiscent of the neural spines of some dorsal vertebrae of *Apatosaurus louisae* (Fig. 13B).

Characters present mainly in the Diplodocimorpha (sensu CALVO & SALGADO, 1995) indicate that the specimen belongs to this clade: 1) the neural arch is three times the dorso-ventral centrum height (the height of the only partially preserved neural arch is 2.85 times the dorso-ventral centrum height), 2) the suprapostzygapophyseal laminar pattern is relatively complex, with inner suprapostzygapophyseal laminae which are confluent to form a postspinal lamina, and outer suprapostzygapophyseal laminae parallel to the axis of the spine and tapering upward, 3) the tall neural spine is relatively narrow in antero-posterior and lateral view.

The Early Cretaceous diplodocimorphs are represented mainly by a group of Gondwanian taxa (*Rebbachisaurus garasbae*, *R. tessonei*, and the Neocomian *Amargasaurus cazaux* SALGADO & BONAPARTE from Argentina) with extremely tall neural spines and upwardly directed diapophyses in the dorsal vertebrae. This suggests a Gondwanian affinity of the Istrian sauropod fauna.

WN-V6 represents a new diplodocimorph taxon because of the combined presence of an hypophene-hypantrum complex, a well-developed outer suprapostzygapophyseal lamina running parallel to the axis of the spine and a high (about 45°) inclination of the long diapophyses. It is very probably related to *Rebbachisaurus* but is less derived because of the presence of the hypophene-hypantrum in dorsal vertebrae. The name *Histriasaurus boscarollii* is proposed for this new taxon, in honour of the discoverer of the site, mr. Dario Boscarolli, and referring to the region where the specimen was found (*Histria* = Latin name of Istria).

**Caudal vertebrae**

**WN-V3** (Fig. 14). The specimen was figured in BOSCAROLLI et al. (1993, figs. 25-27). The centrum is 100 mm long and 120 and 115 mm high respectively at the anterior and posterior articular side. The shape of the articular facets is roughly elliptical, with the longer axis (150 mm in the anterior facet) horizontal. The posterior is nearly flat, the anterior is a little weathered and was originally flat or shallowly concave. The ventro-posterior part of the centrum projects downward and slightly backward; this projection is related to the chevron articulation, but there is no clear mark of the articular facet, only a thin, transversally flat area. There are no pleurocoels and not even longitudinal ridges or grooves on the ventral side. The ventral side is slightly depressed but the cross-section of the centrum is not "heart-shaped". The proximal part of the coalesced caudal rib is placed high on the dorsal-lateral side of the centrum and is laterally and backwardly directed. The rib is spine-like and slightly dorso-ventrally flattened. The neural arch is only partly preserved. It is tall and placed anteriorly on the centrum, so the distal third of the latter is not covered by the arch. The circular neural canal is very large. The pedicles are slightly medially inclined. The postzygapophysis is far above the base of the neural canal and is posteriorly elongate. The articular facet is a shallow depression, anterodorsally-posteroventrally elongated, facing laterally and only slightly ventrally, placed on the ventral part of the postzygapophysis. The prezygapophyses are not preserved but the position of the articular facet in the postzygapophyses suggests it was anteriorly and upwardly directed. The neural spine is not preserved but its base was rather far above the base of the neural canal. Shortness of the centrum and the presence of a strong rib identify this as an anterior caudal element.

**MPCM-V14** (Fig. 15), is a centrum lacking the posterior half and with the basal part of the neural arch. The centrum is more broad than high (about 115 x 70 mm), with a kidney-shaped, concave anterior articular surface. The left rib (only the anterior, basal part is preserved) placed on the dorsal-lateral side of the centrum, is strong and probably latero-posteriorly directed. There is a shallow depression in the centrum just below the rib. The neural canal is subcircular to oval and very large, of greater height than width (26 x 20 mm) in posterior view, the opposite in front view. The neural arch is fused without suture to the centrum. The pedicles are strong and inclined medially. The prezygapophyses
lack the distal part with the articular surfaces. They start at the base of the neural arch and rise from the anteriormost part of the centrum, are forwardly inclined at about 45° in side view, and are flattened laterally with the outer side which faces laterally, upward and backward. Only the basal anterior part of the neural spine is preserved. It is not far above the base of the neural arch. The basal parts of the prespinal and supraprezygapophysial laminae are preserved. The neural spine appears to be caudally inclined, at least in the basal part and its base was antero-posteriorly narrow.

The evident shortness of the centrum and the presence of a strong rib placed down on it identify it as an anterior caudal element.

**MPCM-V15** (Fig. 16) comprises most of a relatively short centrum with a fragment of the right basal part of the neural arch. The right side of the centrum and, partly, the posterior articular surface are sufficiently preserved for description. The centrum is elliptical, of greater width than height (about 127 x 105 mm) in posterior view, short (75-80 mm), and with a practically flat posterior articular surface. Its shape was spool-like,
with a marked oval to semicircular depression in the dorsal lateral half just below the rib. The right rib (only the basal segment is preserved) is placed in the uppermost, dorso-lateral side of the centrum at the attachment of the neural arch. It is strong, slightly flattened dorso-ventrally and directed latero-posteriorly.

The shortness of the centrum and the presence of a strong rib identify it as an anterior caudal element.

Nos IG-1 (Fig. 17, photograph in DALLA VECCHIA, 1997c, fig. 4). The centrum is nearly complete (the left side was weathered) and there is part of the neural arch without most of the neural spine. The centrum is typically spool-shaped and relatively elongate (length l = 120 mm; height at the extremities = 90 mm; L/h ratio = 1.33), and amphicoelous with the anterior facet shallow and the posterior one slightly deeper. These facets are elliptical and slightly greater in width than height. There are moderately developed, separate facets for the chevron on a relatively shallow ventro-posterior projection of the centrum. Pleurocoels, ventral ridges and grooves are absent. There is no true caudal rib or transverse process, only an antero-posteriorly elongate knob (LK in Fig. 17) at the base of the neural arch. The latter is placed on the anterior half of the centrum and its base is 48 mm long. The zygapophyses are
badly and incompletely preserved. The postzygapophysis is far above the base of the neural canal, the articular region faces laterally and slightly ventrally. The prezygapophysis is lower on the arch and probably antero-dorsally elongate. Only the basal part of the spin is preserved.

A relatively elongate centrum, lacking a caudal rib but possessing a knob at the base of the arch, together with a well developed neural arch, indicate that this is a mid-caudal vertebra (approximately posterior to the 15-16 caudal because of the absence of a rib, see Mcintosh, 1990b).

WN-V4 (Fig. 18). This vertebra consists of a nearly complete centrum. It is amphicoelous with shallow articular facets, spool-shaped and more elongated than the centrum of Nos IG-1 (length = 116 mm, height at the extremities = 70.5 mm, l/h ratio = 1.55). The articular facets of the centrum are more or less elliptical, slightly greater in width than in height. Pleurocoels, ventral ridges and grooves are absent. The facets for the chevron do not project. The only difference that may be found with the vertebra Nos IG-1, if we exclude elongation, is a shorter (40 mm) basal part of the neural arch. Only the basal part of both pedicels are preserved; the neural canal is narrow (11 mm minimum width). The neural arch is placed decidedly on the anterior half of the centrum. The resemblance with Nos IG-1 and its greater elongation and shorter base of neural arch (perhaps related to a smaller and lower arch) suggest it is mid-caudal but more distal than the vertebra Nos IG-1.

Comparisons - all five caudals present a centrum greater in width than in height, a feature also shared with the cervical MPCM-V2 and the dorsal MPCM-V1. This is not the most common state for sauropods even if it is present, for example, in Brachiosaurus brancai (Janensch, 1950), in the anterior dorsals of Diplodocus carnegii (Hatcher, 1901), sometimes in the dorsals of Andesaurus Bonaparte & Calvo (Bonaparte & Coria, 1993), in the dorsals of Eucamerotus foxi (BLOW, 1995).

A ball-and-socket articulation is not present, and the centra are amphicoelous or amphiplatyan. Therefore Titanosauridae sensu Salgado et al. (1997) are excluded, at least for the anterior elements sufficiently complete, since mid-caudals can be amphiplatyan or even gently amphicoelous in primitive forms of the Titanosauria. This is the case of Malawisaurus Jacobs, Winkler, Downs & Gomani (amphicoelous; Jacobs et al., 1993), an undetermined genus from Argentina (Salgado & Calvo, 1993), "andesaurid" titanosaurs (Bonaparte & Coria, 1993) and the Late Maastrichtian Magyarosaurus Huenne (pers. obs.).

In the two mid-caudals, and in the most complete anterior caudal, the neural arch is displaced toward the anterior half of the centrum, a feature which was considered apomorphic for Titanosaurids (e.g. McIntosh, 1990a), but is considered a synapomorphy of the wider clade Titanosauriformes by Salgado et al. (1997). There are no pleurocoels, no ventral sulcus (excavation) in the two mid-caudals and in the most complete anterior caudal; the ribs of the three anterior elements are not wing-like, and the centra are always short or moderately elongated. This excludes the Diplodocidae as diagnosed by McIntosh (1990a, b).

The shape of the centrum of WN-3 and Nos IG-1, and the postero-laterally directed ribs of WN-3, MPCM-V14 and MPCM-V15, are more reminiscent of the anterior to mid-tail vertebrae of Brachiosaurus brancai (Janensch, 1950). The anterior caudals of Camarasaurus are similar to the described anterior vertebrae but do not possess a posteriorly directed rib (Ostrom & McIntosh, 1966; McIntosh, 1990a, b). Also the position of the neural arch on the centrum, its overall morphology, the shape and position of the postzygapophysis, the orientation of the prezygapophysis and the shape of the caudal rib correspond to the anterior and mid-caudals of Brachiosaurus brancai (Janensch, 1950; McIntosh, 1990b).

The comparison with the caudals of this species (Janensch, 1950, Pls. II-III) and the l/h ratio (0.87) show that the vertebra WN-3 might be the 6-8 cau-
The mid-caudals Nos IG-1 and WN-V2 are comparable, considering mainly the elongation of the centra, respectively, to the 18-20 and 22-25 caudal (JANEN-SCH, 1950, ibid.).

MPCM-V14 differs from the anterior caudal WN-V3 because the base of the spine is lower on the arch.

Isolated caudal neural spines

MPCM-V13 (Fig. 19), is the basal segment (95 mm tall) of a neural spine probably from a small anterior caudal vertebra. It is rectangular in cross section, 30 mm wide in side view and narrow in front (12 mm) and back (15 mm) view. The anterior and posterior sides are wrinkled (rough). There seem to be very short (about 30 mm), small suprarezygapophysial laminae, which end just above a short prespinal lamina. There were probably corresponding small postzygapophysial laminae which however, are badly preserved. On the outer (lateral) sides there is a stronger lamina (lateral spinal lamina, LSL), antero-laterally directed, which tapers and ends at the upper broken margin of the spine.

Comparisons - it is very different from a brachiosaurid spine. A vaguely similar laminar pattern is present in the proximal caudals of Apatosaurus (cf. OST-ROM & McINTOSH, 1966, pl. 35; pers. obs.).

MPCM-V9 (Fig. 20). This specimen is the upper portion (90 mm) of a neural spine. It is club-shaped, "triangular" in antero-posterior view, rectangular in the ventral cross-section of the broken lower part, with flat, smooth outer (lateral) sides and flat and wrinkled (rough) anterior and posterior sides. The tip is rounded,
and is formed by the fusion, represented by a suture, of a semicylindrical element. The spine was inclined at about 15° with respect to the vertical.

Comparisons - it is very similar to the neural spines of the anterior (2?) and mid-caudals (12-13?) of “Morosaurus grandis” (= Camarasaurus grandis) figured in OSTROM & McINTOSH (1966, pls. 37-38). Also the anterior caudal vertebra of Aragosaurus ischiatricus SANZ, BUSCALIONI, CASANOVAS & SANTAFE from the Haurtuvian of Spain has a similar neural spine (SANZ et al., 1987). The tip of the spine is generally rectangular in diplodocids.

Haemapophyses

WN-V5 (Fig. 21). The specimen (175 mm long) is the only nearly complete element among the discovered chevron remains. It is Y-shaped, the proximal, articular part is not preserved, the distal shaft is straight and spatulate.

Comparisons - haemapophyses are of poor taxonomic value. Only Diplodocidae (Diplodocus) and some sauropods from China (Shunosaurusinae) have haemapophyses with a characteristic shape on the middle segment of the tail but this is not the case in our specimen which is similar to the mid-tail chevrons of both Camarasaurus (OSBORN & MOOK, 1921) and Brachiosaurus (JANENSCHE, 1950). No remains indicating the presence of the typical diplodocid mid-caudal chevrons have been collected up to now in the outcrop.

APPENDICULAR SKELETON ELEMENTS

Femur

Nos IG-2 (Fig. 22), is the distal, condylar part (not the “proximal quarter” as reported by KOZARIČ et al., 1996, p. 745) of a quite large right femur, 375 mm long and about 300 mm wide in antero-posterior view. The fragmentary bone is partly very crushed and weathered. Its main recognizable feature is the presence of an undeformed condyle with a lumpy surface which indicates a well developed cartilaginous covering. This condyle is asymmetrical in side view (Fig. 22B), with an articular surface more developed posteriorly (cf. OSTROM & McINTOSH, 1966, pls. 71-73), and is slightly splayed outward in front view. The preserved condyle appears to occupy less than half the width of the femur in antero-posterior view and is identifiable as the tibial one (cf. OSTROM & McINTOSH, 1966, pls. 71-73). Lateral to the condyle (Fig. 22A) the bone is very crushed in correspondence with the sulcus intercondyloideus and the fibular condyle, which is nearly completely eroded.

Comparisons - the bone obviously belonged to a large animal, and is here attributed to a sauropod, because of its size and comparison with the femora illustrated by GILMORE (1936), HATCHER (1901), OSBORN & MOOK (1921) and in OSTROM & McINTOSH (1966, pls. 71-73). It is very similar to the femora of Camarasaurus grandis figured in OSTROM & McINTOSH (1966, pls. 72-73) and Camarasaurus in OSBORN & MOOK (1921, figs. 107-109), but the preserved part has no taxonomic value.

Tibia

MPCM-V16 (Fig. 23): this is the proximal part of a left tibia. The specimen is 220 mm long, and is damaged in the anterior part, therefore the enemial crest is partly missing. The latter structure was proportionally rather small (cf. SALGADO et al., 1997, fig. 11). The proximal articular part is spongy in aspect, and there is a moderate caudal projection in this region. In the lateral side there is a marked groove for the accommodation of the proximal part of the fibula; there is also a small and shallow depression on the medial side. The proxi-
mal tibia is flattened medioanteriorly-posterolaterally and expanded proximally, and narrows sensibly below the cnemial crest (the anterolateral-medioposterior width at the base of the cnemial crest is only 75 mm). This suggests that the tibia under examination had a shaft more slender than those of most sauropods (cf. McINTOSH, 1990, figs. 16-17, and SALGADO et al., 1997, fig. 11).

Comparisons - Diplodocids (Diplodocus carnegii and Barosaurus lentus in McINTOSH, 1990, figs. 16-17) have the most slender tibiae among sauropods, probably because of the relative elongation of the hind limbs. The specimen is very similar to the proximal end of tibia of the Late Jurassic “Gigantosaurus megalonyx” (see GLUT, 1997, p. 439).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Sauropod systematics are chaotic and in a state of flux, as the very different classifications of JANENSCH (1929), McINTOSH (1990a, b), BONAPARTE (1986), UPCHURCH (1994, 1997) and SALGADO et al. (1997) demonstrate. In most classifications the sauropod families are based mainly on just one more or less well known genus and the other members are tentatively included, “weighting” the characters shared with
those well known forms. In this way *Haplocanthosaurus*, which is one of the best known sauropods, but lacks the skull and has “mixed” characters, is included in the Cetiosauridae by Mcintosh (1990b), in the Diplacodontidae by BONAPARTE (1986), in the Camarasauridae by Upchurch (1994) and finally considered, in a cladistic analysis, the sister-taxon of the Neoaurodida (Brachiosauria + Diplodocoidea) by Upchurch (1997).

Early Cretaceous sauropods appear to be widespread and diversified but they are not well known since most species and genera are based on scarce or undiagnostic remains. This was underlined by McIntosh (1990) who stated that most sauropod genera “might be termed *nomina dubia*”, “as they can be distinguished from the 12 well known genera but not from each other because they are based on fragmentary post-cranial skeletons or teeth” (Hunt et al., 1994, p. 263).

Therefore comparisons with the Istrien remains are in many cases practically impossible. This is clearly evident from the taxonomic list of Hauterivian - Barremian sauropods after McIntosh (1990b; this list of course follows McIntosh’s Iincon classification), completed here following Jacobs et al. (1993), Hunt et al. (1994), BLOWS (1995), and Bonaparte (1996). Most taxa are based on incomplete, fragmentary remains.

**Cetiosauridae** (mentioned by Hunt et al., 1994, but not in McIntosh, 1990b). Probably none of these taxa are actually “cetiosaurids”.

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**Fig. 21** WN-V5, haemapophysis. Views: A) anterior, B) left lateral.

**Fig. 22** Nos IG-2, distal end of a right femur in A) posterior view, B) medial view (tibial condyle). Acronyms: TC = tibial condyle.

*Cetiosaurus conybeari* MELVILLE (wrongly cited as *C. oxoniensis* by Hunt et al., 1994) (England, Valanginian - Barremian, vertebrae).

*Cetiosaurus breviss* OWEN (England, Valanginian - Barremian) in Lydekker (1888) are reported vertebrae, chevrons, metatarsals, phalanges and frag-
ments of long bones from the Wealden and attributed to this taxon; no other author mentions them.

*Cetiosaurus* sp. (Spain, Valanginian - Barremian).

**Brachiosauridae**

*Ornithopsis hulkei* (England, Barremian, dorsal vertebra, following BLOWS, 1995).

*Eucamerotus foxi* (England, Barremian, dorsal vertebra, following BLOWS, 1995).

*Pelorosaurus conybeari* MANTELL (England, Valanginian, following BLOWS, 1995, only a humerus is considered to belong to this species).

*Pleurocoelus nanus* MARSH (USA, Hauterivian - Barremian, isolated remains of more than 6 individuals, including skull elements).

*P. altus* MARSH (USA, Hauterivian - Barremian, tibia and fibula).

*P. valdensis* LYDEKKER (England, Valanginian - Barremian, teeth, dorsal and caudal centra).

*Cf. Pleurocoelus* sp. (Spain, Barremian).

**Camarasauridae**

*Aragosaurus ischiaticus* (Spain, Early Barremian, caudal vertebrae, scapula, fore limb, ischium, pubis).

*Chondrosteosaurus gigas* (England, Barremian, cervical vertebrae; *nomen dubium* following P. UPCHURCH’S pers. comm.).

**Titanosauridae**

Unnamed titanosaurid (= "Titanosaurus" *valdensis*) (England, Valanginian - Barremian, several caudal vertebrae).

*Malawisaurus dixeyi* JACOBS, WINKLER, DOWNS & GOMANI (Malawi, Early Cretaceous, premaxilla, dentary teeth, cervical, dorsal and caudal vertebrae, sternal plates, ischium). This taxon could be more recent than the others reported in this list (JACOBS et al., 1993).

*Macrurosaurus semus* SEELEY (England, Valanginian, isolated caudal vertebrae).

**Diplodocidae**

*Amargasaurus cazauri* SALGADO & BONAPARTE (Argentina, Neocomian, a nearly complete skeleton).

**Icertae sedis**

*Mongolosaurus haplodon* GILMORE (Mongolia, Berriasyan - Albian, teeth, basioccipital, 3 cervical vertebrae).

Unnamed sauropod (England, Hauterivian - Barremian, fore limb, epidermal impressions).

Following the list of HUNT et al. (1994) from this stratigraphic interval there are indeterminate or undescribed “brachiosaurids” also in Spain and the USA, diplodocids in England and Argentina and indeterminate sauropods in China, South Korea, Mongolia, Japan, Niger, France and England.

It can be observed that the record comes mainly from the Wealden of England and there is little information about Gondwanan sauropods and none (just undescribed bones from Niger) about northern African which are better known in the Albian - Cenomanian interval.

Of the abundant but scattered English remains a plethora of new taxa were created during the 19th century, and this led to inextricable confusion. Following BLOWS (1995) and P. UPCHURCH (pers. comm.) the Wealden sauropod fauna is dominated by brachiosaurids whereas camarasaurs are absent. Titanosauria and diplodocids are scarcely represented, as seen above. Unfortunately a satisfying recent revision of the English material has not been published yet and comparison with Wealden sauropods is still at best very difficult. The presence of "*Chondrosteosaurus gigas*" both in Istra and Southern England could have palaeogeographic significance but the diplodocimorph similar to *Rebbachisaurus* is more important under this point of view. This aspect should be investigated further.

The study of the described material suggests the following points:
1) On the basis of size, at least two "forms" are present: a large form (fragments of cervical vertebrae, cervical ribs, and laminae MPCM-V4, part of the neural arch of a dorsal vertebra MPCM-V3, distal part of the femur Nos IG-2) and a small one (cervical vertebra WN-V1, fragmentary cervical vertebra MPCM-V5, posterior cervical centrum MPCM-V2, anterior dorsal vertebra MPCM-V1, all the caudals and the fragmentary neural spines, the proximal tibia MPCM-V16). There is too great a difference in size among some remains, and no evidence of immaturity of small specimens (in all small vertebrae the neural arch is fused to the corresponding centrum), to support the idea that all the specimens belong to the same species. Even if we consider the Istrians sauropods as insular inhabitants with the typical intraspecific size variability of Pliocene insular mammals (KOTSAKIS, 1985) the size difference is still too great.

2) A new Diplodococephalopod similar to Rebbachisaurus but more primitive because it still retains a hyposphere-hypanthrum, is represented by a posterior dorsal vertebra.

3) The posterior cervical vertebra MPC-V2 is very similar to those of the coeval "Chondrosaurus gigas" of England, and in the shape and pleurocoels but not the bone texture, to Camarasaurus of North American Late Jurassic. It is very different from the cervical WN-V1 and probably belongs to a different taxon. The latter cervical is most reminiscent of the anterior cervicals of Brachiosaurus brancai.

4) Since long cervical ribs are not known in diplodocids (considering Mamenchisaurus does not belong to them, UPCHURCH, 1997) the fragments of rib shaft here reported, if correctly identified, belong most probably to a brachiosaurid or a camarasaurid (the state in Titanosauria sensu SALGADO et al., 1997 is not known).

5) All preserved cervical and dorsal vertebral parts (except WN-V6) are extremely lightened having a "honeycomb"-like, cancellate structure, a feature considered by most specialists typical of the Brachiosauridae (sensu McIntosh, 1990b) or the most inclusive Titanosauriformes (sensu Salgado et al., 1997), and B) neural arches made by a complex network of thin laminae.

6) The posterior cervical MPCM-V2, the anterior dorsal MPCM-V1 and all the caudals present elliptical, kidney-shaped or, at least, wider than high articular facets of the centra.

7) The articular facets of the anterior dorsal MPCM-V1 and the posterior cervical MPCM-V2 have a great difference in size which suggests that they belong to individuals of rather different size. Whether this is due to ontogeny, sexual dimorphism or because they belong to different taxa, is indeterminate from the few remains collected.

8) The anterior dorsal MPCM-V1 is peculiar in being very small, with the relatively tallest neural arch ever described in a sauropod, cancellate texture of the centrum and with a very developed laminar complex with peculiar structures. However, it cannot be stated with certainty that it does not belong to the same taxon as MPCM-V2, and therefore possibly to "Chondrosaurus gigas". This suggests to avoid the creation of a new taxon, pending the excavation of further material.

9) The developed prespinal lamina of MPCM-V3 suggests that it belongs to the Titanosauriformes sensu SALGADO et al. (1997) and most specifically to the advanced Titanosauria, or to the Diplodocidae. Other features exclude the Titanosauria.

10) The anterior and mid-caudals resemble mostly the Titanosauriformes sensu SALGADO et al. (1997) and Brachiosaurus brancai in particular, but they are not diplodocid or titanosaurid.

11) Surprisingly, the fragmentary caudal neural spine MPCM-V9 is very similar to those of Camarasaurus and Aragosaurus. Since the other fragmentary caudal neural spine MPCM-V13, which has a relatively well developed system of laminae, represents a different part of the spine, these two specimens could belong to the same taxon. Both broken spines are very different from the typically low spines of Brachiosaurus brancai.

HUNT et al. (1994) suggested that "isolated, but distinct, postcrania may be considered valid type specimens and disassociated specimens from the same bed should be grouped as much as possible. These usually questionable taxonomic procedures are only tolerated in sauropods because these immense animals are so often represented by such fragmentary or jumbled specimens." (p. 266). The adoption here of this procedure is prevented by the presence of individuals with very different sizes and bones with features suggesting that they belong to different families (sensu McIntosh, 1990b) (for example, all the caudals seem to be referable to brachiosaurids while the isolated caudal neural spines are not brachiosaurid spines, cervicals seem to belong to different families, etc.).

However, most of the bones seem to come from non-Titanosauria Titanosauriformes (sensu Salgado et al., 1997) sauropods.

Therefore both Titanosauriformes, Diplodococephala and, possibly, Camarasauridae are present in the site.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Gruppo Speleologico Monfalconese A.D.F. for its collaboration and the collecting of the specimens, Dr. Giorgio TUNIS of the Dipartimento di Scienze Geologiche e Ambientali, University of Trieste.
and Dr. Sandro VENTURINI (Ravenna) for their cooperation. I thank Dr. John McIntosh, Dr. Paul UPCHURCH and, above all, Dr. Brian CURTICE for the discussion, advice and critical review of this paper. I am indebted to the discoverer of the fossiliferous site, Mr. Dario BOSCAROLLI, for the precious information. I thank Dr. Alexander KELLNER and Dr. Mary DAWSON for their support respectively at the American Museum of Natural History of New York City and the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh. Without the help of Igor VLADOVIĆ, Institute of Geology, Zagreb, this paper could not have been published and I thank him very much. I thank also all the Croatian Institutions which helped me in my study of the material. This work was sponsored by a M.U.R.S.T. grant (40% Giorgio TUNISI) and has been part of my post-doctorate work at the Dipartimento di Geologia, Paleontologia e Geofisica, University of Padua.

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Manuscript received June 29, 1998.
Revised manuscript accepted November 23, 1998.