

*Castel Pizigolo. Struttura dell'insediamento fortificato e sfruttamento delle risorse naturali.* (Storie di Paesaggi Medievali 6). Edited by Nicola Mancassola. 17 × 24 cm. 213 pp, 128 b&w pls and figs, 24 Tavole, 3 tables. Sesto Fiorentino (FI): All'Insegna del Giglio, 2022. ISBN 978-88-9285-080-4; epub: 978-88-9285-081-1 (ISSN 2531-8330). Price: €32.00 pb.

The remains of Castel Pizigolo occupy an eroded, lowish but sheer height controlling a gorge of the Dolo river in the Apenninic uplands south of Reggio Emilia. At its medieval peak, the site comprised a tower with associated church of San Tommaso and a presumed dependent *borgo*. It was important enough to see conflict, being besieged in 1269 and 1338 in conflicts between the municipalities of Modena and Reggio; and while first documented in 1035 as belonging to the bishopric of Parma, in 1164 Emperor Frederick Barbarossa ceded it to the monastery of San Claudio of Frassinoro (see Chapter 2 of this volume). Potentially the site was important for controlling access to the saltwater and thermal springs of the Dolo (as argued in Chapter 1). The valley and its trackways feature a small number of other defended sites, marked, for example, by extant tower remains at Gova to the south and Massa di Toano to the north-east.

Excavation trenches at Castel Pizigolo in 2015 and 2016 (described in Chapter 3) uncovered the razed traces of both tower (5.8 × 5.8 m) and church (with burials, including two infants—see Chapter 4) and part of an additional structure, each part built onto the bedrock. Building styles (detailed in Chapter 5 and with mortars analysed in Chapter 6) and related finds (only 119 common-ware sherds) secure primarily 13th- and 14th-century dates (these supported also by 30 coin finds, including a small savings hoard and by the metal objects, featuring arrowheads, buckles and a spur—Chapters 11 and 10), while demolition and robbing debris accord with documented tower and church losses in c 1400 and in the 1500s respectively. One sherd of *pietra ollare* (soapstone) and a section of walling underlying the church could point to a pre-tower phase, perhaps in the 10th/11th century. As the editor notes in the short concluding chapter to this tidily presented and clear volume, the exposed archaeology offers good support to the castle's and church's documented history, although much more could be learnt of the related borgo community which used San Tommaso.

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