



TORRE DEI SICCONI

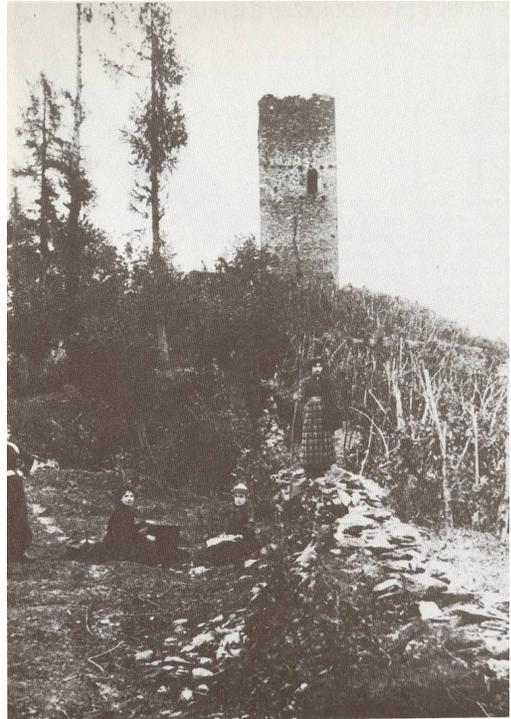
Caldonazzo - Monte Rive



Torre dei Sicconi Caldonazzo, Monte Rive

Until 1915, the tower known as the "Torre dei Sicconi", the last bastion of the *castrum* enfeoffed to Geremia, Lord of Caldonazzo and his brother Alberto in 1201, stood at the top of Monte Rive. Numerous documents mention the castle during the 13th and 14th centuries: between 1342 and 1408 it was linked to the figure of Siccone II, who was very influential in the affairs of the era. In 1385, due to disputes with Siccone, armies from Vicenza and Verona launched a major assault against his fortifications in the Valsugana, including the castle on Monte Rive. Did the castle survive? In a document dating back to 1391, the Caldonazzo – Castelnuovo family was invested with *de dicto dosso cum Castro Caldonzii, palatio, turri et aliis suis fortilitiis...* ("the said hill with the castle of Caldonazzo, the palace, tower and other fortifications..."): thus it would appear that most of the structures were still functioning and therefore not seriously compromised by the assault in 1385.

In 2005 the municipal authorities of Caldonazzo started up a project entitled "The Garden of Torre dei Sicconi". Supported by European funding, this provided for the creation of a themed garden as part of a historic itinerary, with the scope of recovering the identity of the site. At this point the carrying out of archaeological investigations was inevitable in order to establish how much of the old castle complex had been conserved. Between 2006 and 2008 the Archaeological Heritage Office of the Autonomous Province of Trento thus carried out exploratory excavations at twenty-two points on the hill on different occasions. Initially these surveys were carried out alongside earth-moving procedures necessary for the preparation of the botanical gardens, while subsequently it was decided to carry out brief excavations to explore two particularly significant points at the top of the hill. Further checks were also linked to planting work or the creation of infrastructures.



Torre dei Sicconi just before it was knocked down

The stratigraphy brought to light in these surveys showed the remains of the ancient castle clearly. There was evidence of the tower, first of all, together with stretches of the walls along the south-westerly slope. These must have completed the defensive system at the bottom of the hill, where it is still possible to see a stretch of the impressive walls.

There are also the remains of a building, probably two storeys high, in the area to the east of the tower: the palace? On the "ground floor" there are traces of a fireplace (the kitchen?). The structure must have

backed onto the internal “herring-bone” pattern walls, of which a considerable stretch can still be seen.

The structures documented in the surveys are essentially relatively typical of Trentino castle complexes, including those in the Valsugana. The topographical and geomorphological characteristics of the site also reflect a standard pattern which is widely reflected in the valley: the site is sufficiently high up to allow good visual control of the underlying valley, but not excessively, otherwise it would have been too far away from the towns and main road (the difference in level as compared to Caldonazzo is around 200 m, while

the town is around 800 m away as the crow flies); the slopes are mainly steep (the access route was perhaps from the west?).

The findings made during the excavations date back to a chronological period between the 13th and the 15th centuries, hence in line with the documentary sources. The same sources illustrate the economic dynamics characterising this part of Trentino, a “roadside area” with a wealth of resources in terms of woods and pasture. Thus it is not by chance that the castle of Monte Rive was constructed in this area and it was probably designed precisely to govern the area in



3D Reconstruction

various ways.

Certain pottery fragments dating back to the pre-protohistoric era and late antiquity have also been found on the hill. It is therefore strongly suspected that the site was frequented long before the medieval era. Unfortunately these findings are totally without context, which seriously limits their interpretation, leaving only limited signs of settlement with a wealth of unanswered questions. These include the possible occupation of Monte Rive in the Roman period and the consequential inevitable relationship with the road

system in Valsugana. The presence of the road can be deduced from traces of settlements dating back to this era in the valley, settlements which were certainly present, although their characteristics and dimensions have not yet been defined. One of these could have been an agricultural estate, situated at nearby Calceranica, as suggested by the mention of an *actor*, the figure responsible for the accounts in large Roman farms, in an inscription on a small altar dedicated to Diana, now conserved in the church of S. Ermete (2nd-3rd century AD).



The site seen from above



Epigraph from the Colle di Brenta, on display in Caldonazzo, in the parish church of S.Sisto

This role could perhaps have been maintained during subsequent centuries, also during the Early Middle Ages. The area was indeed organised and exploited for agricultural purposes, in this case by the dominant aristocratic class. One member of this aristocracy may



Stone balls for medieval weapon

have been buried around the 7th century AD in the small necropolis at Bosentino – not far from Monte Rive – accompanied by his funeral objects, all in iron: a long double-edged sword, known as a *spatha*; a leaf-shaped spearhead, equipped with tube to fix it to the shaft; a small knife complete with lamina sheath; a shield boss, which represented the central reinforced section of the shield and the grip, a long rectangular bar attached to the edge of the same shield. It should not be forgotten that a Lombard coin, a gold tremissis minted under Cuniperto (686-700), also came from Bosentino.

Other figures of a certain importance were also likely to have been buried on the Colle di Brenta in the 6th centuries AD: a fragment of the cover of a sarcophagus (or stone tomb), found in 1872 comes from here.

It is decorated with large cross in relief and has a three line inscription with the names of those for whom the tomb was destined (*“Flaminino fece per sé e per Iusta”*). (*“Flaminino made for himself and for Iusta... [his mother? wife? sister? daughter?]*).

How to get to Monte Rive

The site can be reached from Caldonazzo - piazza Municipio on foot in about 50 minutes (distance 1,2 km, difference in altitude 200 m).

From Centa San Nicolò - frazione Campregheri on foot in about 30 minutes (distance 1,2 km, difference in altitude 100 m).



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