



Associazione Culturale

Nebbie del Drago

History for lower Lodigiano



OPPIDUM PICELEONIS

Viscontean fortifications in Pizzighettone

Pizzighettone (Cremona, Italy), May 10-11th, 2008

What: medieval fortification.

Where: Pizzighettone (Cremona, Italy).

How: thematic itinerary (Italian language).

When: May 10th and 11th, 2008.

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On May 10th and 11th 2008 it has been proposed to the public the **thematic itinerary** entitled ***Oppidum Piceleonis. Viscontean fortifications in Pizzighettone*** [**Oppidum Piceleonis. Fortificazioni viscontee a Pizzighettone**], which has offered the opportunity of ‘discovering’ a particular aspect of the ancient place of **Pizzighettone**, small town in Cremona territory on the sides of the Adda River.

The undertaking has concentrated on the **fortifications** made built between the XIV and the XV Century by the **Visconti** family of Milan. It dates back to this period – from the first settlement of the Viscontean seigniorship in Pizzighettone (1321) and its definite consolidation (1334) till duke Philip Mary’s death (1447) – the establishment of a powerful **fortified centre** among Cremona, Lodi and Piacenza, equipped with numerous defensive edifices.

First of all, the **Castle**: till the beginnings of the XVIII Century it represented the defensive ‘core’ for all Pizzighettone’s fortifications. Already existing in 1342 – at the times of archbishop John Visconti – it was located on the East bank of the Adda and it



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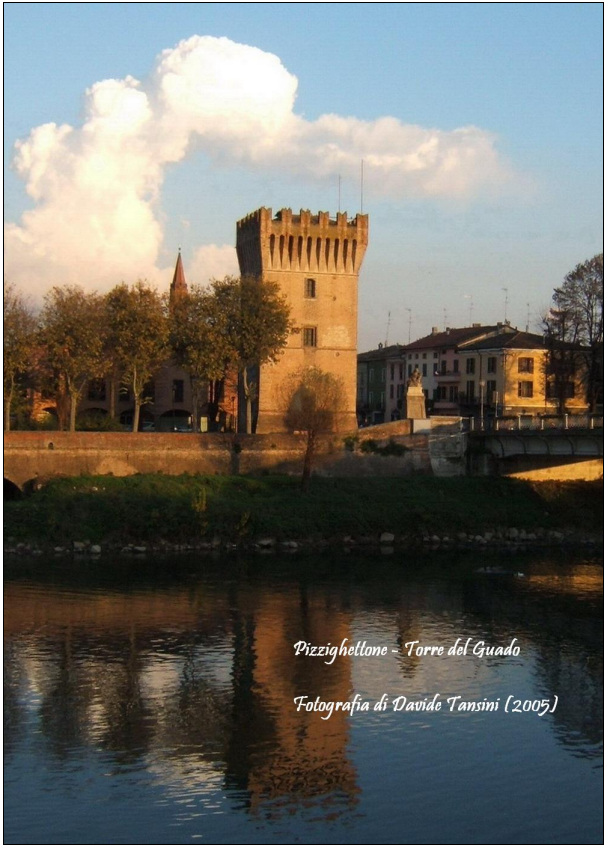
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was linked to a bridge on the same river. Its structure's partially recognizable in the **Tower of the Ford** [**Torre del Guado**] and in the fortifications near the outlet of the Serio Morto Drain, but the original articulation – set up just in the XIV Century – had been executed according to modalities utilized for military citadels of other Viscontean towns (Como, Pavia, Piacenza, Vercelli).

Then, the **Rocchetta of the Bridge** [**Rocchetta del Ponte**]: it rose at the present district of Gera, on the West side of the Adda. Although destroyed in 1500 and recognizable only through building clues and written evidences – the oldest testifies it in 1449 – it had the important task of defending the western head of the bridge on the river.



Pizzighettone - Torre del Guado

Fotografia di Davide Tansini (2005)

Again, the **Bastion of the Becco** [**Bastione del Becco**]: staunch stronghold in the North-East side of the medieval fortifications – it's already testified in 1427 – it represented the main datum for the fortification works undertaken by Philip Mary Visconti in Pizzighettone between Twenties and Thirties of the XV Century.

Moreover, the northern **town walls**: they was edified from 1430 on a precise plant which's still today identifiable and which shows the expansion of Pizzighettone's fortifications operated in the first half of the XV Century.



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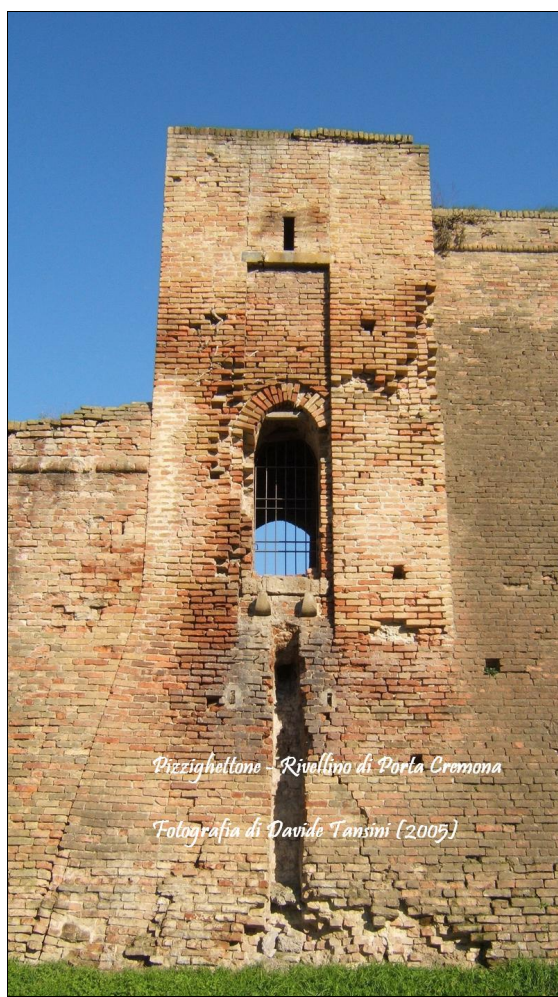
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Finally, the **Ravelin of Cremona Gate [Porta Cremona]**: its characteristic curvilinear perimeter hides the pre-existence of a *rocchetta* edified from 1429 and successively converted after 1441, in consequence of the conveyance of Cremona to Francis Sforza.

The carrying out of these structures converted Pizzighettone in a «**war-town**», strategic bridge-head to control and defend the Cremonese and the lower course of the Adda. Although Pizzighettone's fortifications underwent during years successive restorations and transformations – the place stayed active till the XIX Century, beyond the Italian Unity – the edifices built between *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* represent the still today recognizable foundation of **one of principal garrisons at one time existing in Lombardy** and in the Po Plain.

Around these architectures many **personages** alternate themselves for decades: from more-known, as the lords of Milan – the sanguine Bernabò or the suspicious Philip Mary Visconti, for example – to less-known, as castellans, soldiers, engineers, local or neighbour inhabitants. As from clamorous episodes as in «every-day life» – purposes, ideals, hopes and disappointments – it has come out a **complex 'world'**, very similar to ours and yet very



Pizzighettone - Rivellino di Porta Cremona

Fotografia di Davide Tansini (2005)



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different. The fortifications built «under the banner of the Viper» ‘witnessed’ or even ‘led’ all this: in short, **evidences of history**, not simple bricks.

Organized by the **Associazione Culturale Nebbie del Drago** of Castiglione d’Adda (Lodi, Italy) in collaboration with the **Gruppo Volontari Mura** of Pizzighettone, the itinerary has allowed to ‘discover’ an **articulate and fascinating context**, made not only by **architecture**, but also by **society, culture, events** and ‘**curiosities**’. Based on **personal studies and researches**, the illustration has been led by the historian and expert of fortified architecture **Davide Tansini**, associated of the **Istituto Italiano dei Castelli** and of the **Istituto per la Storia dell’Arte Lombarda**.

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