

## ABSTRACT

### Toubert or Not Toubert: Reconciling the Narratives of *Incastellamento* in Archaeology and Text

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During the Middle Ages, castles spread across the Italian countryside in a process called *incastellamento*, during which the population moved from dispersed settlements to concentrated and fortified sites atop hills and plateaus. The French historian Pierre Toubert spearheaded intensive study of this phenomenon in 1973 with a landmark work outlining its mechanisms and chronology. However, archaeologists took issue with several of Toubert's key findings, calling his research into question and exemplifying the inherent tension between textual and material sources. In this thesis, I analyze Toubert's monumental work and examine archaeological critiques of it. I then formulate my own definition of *incastellamento* before exploring how it is observed in the archaeological data, using several examples of sites from archaeological excavations and applying the analysis to the ongoing excavation in San Giuliano, Italy. Ultimately, this study acts as an illustration of the importance of interdisciplinary studies in the analysis of archaeological sites moving forward.

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TOUBERT OR NOT TOUBERT: RECONCILING THE NARRATIVES OF  
*INCASTELLAMENTO* IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND TEXT

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Medieval castles are ubiquitous across Italy, acting as tourist attractions and the backdrop of many a Hollywood blockbuster. What forces drove the construction of these castles in the first place, however, is a question that few tourists or theatergoers think to ask. The study of *incastellamento* is one that attempts to find an answer to this question. *Incastellamento*, or castle-building, describes the movement from dispersed settlement to fortified and elevated castle sites, primarily in Italy and to a lesser extent in France and Spain, in the Middle Ages. Although study on this transition in settlement types existed before 1973, a French historian named Pierre Toubert spearheaded the intensive study of this movement in his 1973 work entitled *Les structures du Latium médiéval: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. His was the first detailed study of not only *incastellamento*, but also of the Lazio region in central Italy itself. Though his work has not been broadly translated, having only an Italian translation and the original French, it nevertheless remains the most influential work in the study of *incastellamento*.

Toubert's publication made waves within the academic community; soon after, the study of castle-building became more popular, particularly in Lazio and Tuscany, for historians as well as archaeologists who strove to corroborate Toubert's findings. Archaeologists took issue with some of Toubert's arguments almost immediately after publication, heightening the tension between historians and archaeologists and thus

between textual and material sources. At the time of Toubert's study, archaeological research of the region had been rather sparse, but excavations done after his publication resulted in evidence that contradicts and even disproves some of his key findings. After his work sparked conversation around the topic of *incastellamento* and the process of changing settlement patterns, the number of archaeological excavations in the region increased dramatically, allowing for a greater wealth of material evidence in order to better understand past societies.

Both historians and archaeologists were therefore studying with greater frequency how and why people moved between sites and how these changes show up in the written and material records. The study of *incastellamento* is a significant topic of study because it allows for a more thorough understanding of how societies in the past were organized and how they evolved. Through the study of *incastellamento*, we can also see how changes in past societies are manifest in changes to the material structures themselves. Our understanding of the phenomenon is shaped by how we recognize such forces and structures in both the textual and archaeological record. This study allows for a better understanding of the past purpose of these structures, as we explore questions such as why they were built, why populations moved there, and what outside stimuli drove these changes.

Throughout this thesis, I acknowledge and trace an underlying tension between the use of textual and material sources. Toubert, whose work was so monumental to the study of *incastellamento*, presents a study based nearly entirely on textual sources. However, archaeologists use material data to argue against some of his key claims, setting the stage for the ongoing tension over which type of source offers a more



complete knowledge of past societies. I argue that it is important to utilize both textual and material sources in the study of the past. Each type of data has its weaknesses.

Textual sources have a concrete and narrow window of understanding, and the purview of written sources is restricted to the literate and thus can ignore large swaths of the population completely, which narrows the field of comprehension considerably.

Additionally, the information that textual sources leave behind is limited to that which contemporary individuals felt valuable enough to write down, and even then the text is undoubtedly shaped by undefined personal biases and is subject also to the biases of the interpreter of the document. On the other hand, archaeological sources are difficult to put into context and often rely on the interpretation of the archaeologist to give them significance within the larger trends of the region as a whole. Material data is limited by what people left behind and the preservation of the materials, and the data rarely give a comprehensive view of the site itself. I find that the strengths of one type of source often at least partially compensate for the some of the weaknesses of the other. Thus, taken together, an analysis involving both types of sources is stronger than an analysis that favors just one.

The weaknesses in Toubert's research are revealed most prominently by archaeology, and it is therefore again necessary to use both historical and archaeological texts in researching the phenomenon in order to gain a more nuanced understanding. As his general arguments have been largely disproved, or at least challenged, both inside and outside of his field, there is the question of whether it is valuable to continue referencing Toubert's work as a source in the study of *incastellamento*. I argue that it continues to give a worthwhile understanding of the broader context surrounding castle-building as

well as the macro movements and forces that surround the phenomenon, even if his arguments relating to particulars are not as pertinent. His work still gives a valuable perspective on the mechanisms of the process of *incastellamento*.

In Chapter Two, I will begin my analysis by outlining in detail Toubert's research, explaining the aspects of his work that are crucial to his overall arguments, including the claims that *incastellamento* marks a rupture with previous settlement patterns, that the dominant agent in the phenomenon is monastic lords, and that *incastellamento* functioned outside of the institution of feudalism. In Chapter Three, I will then describe the academic response to Toubert's work in the time since its publication from both historians and, more particularly, archaeologists. I will explain the key differences in the arguments of Toubert and archaeologists, most notably that the archaeologists take issue with his timeline for *incastellamento*, his emphasis almost exclusively on ecclesiastical lords, and his argument that *incastellamento* marks a sharp break from previous settlement patterns, going into detail about their critiques and their own arguments. Then, in the Fourth Chapter, I will explore how *incastellamento* appears in the material record, analyzing the specific archaeological data used to identify castral sites, using the examples of Ponte Nepesino and Casale San Donato to show two different types of *castra* (the settlement driven by *incastellamento*). After developing a working definition of *incastellamento*, I will apply this analysis to the ongoing excavation at San Giuliano in Italy to determine if its castle was built inside or outside the influence of *incastellamento*. I conclude that the structure atop San Giuliano is indeed an example of a castle from late-stage *incastellamento* and that Toubert's analysis gives valuable context to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Ultimately, this study of *incastellamento* and how it is seen in both textual and material sources acts as an illustration of the importance of interdisciplinary studies in the analysis of archaeological sites in research moving forward. Starting from the groundbreaking work of Toubert and analyzing the arguments that followed, this thesis offers an understanding of the bigger picture of *incastellamento* and the changing landscape of settlements, allowing for the opportunity to better understand societies that preceded our own. Both the understanding of the broader context and mechanisms of *incastellamento* that is offered by Toubert's historical analysis and the analysis of the ways that *incastellamento* can appear in the material record contribute to the knowledge of shifting settlement patterns and the habits of medieval societies, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the past.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Curtis to Castrum: Pierre Toubert and the Study of Incastellamento*

In his two-volume work entitled *Les structures du Latium médiéval : Le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1973), historian Pierre Toubert opens scholarly discussion on the topic of *incastellamento*, a term that denotes the shift in settlement patterns from dispersed settlements to elevated, fortified sites within a concentrated community. The study of *incastellamento* offers the opportunity to understand more about the development within societies during the Middle Ages, specifically about societal growth, the development and change of social relationships, the interaction between different classes, and the changing power structures. Studying the forces that pushed and pulled the populations in certain organizational directions is valuable in discerning the underlying structural and relational shifts in societies that resulted from, or grew in tandem with, *incastellamento*. Toubert's work acts as a foundational launch pad from which further scholarship focusing on *incastellamento* evolved.

Toubert's work on *incastellamento* has long been regarded within the fields of both history and archaeology as monumental. As the first to publish an in-depth study of the settlement phenomenon, Toubert filled a void within society's collective understanding of the past. Because of this, Toubert's work has strongly influenced subsequent academic study of *incastellamento*. In fact, his arguments quickly became topics of debate and discussion, augmenting the quantity and quality of the study of

medieval castle building. Toubert's study is additionally notable as he achieves a thorough analysis of medieval Lazio from multiple perspectives, including economic, historical, judicial, and demographic.

As a historian, Toubert relies primarily on textual sources for evidence, with a particular use of sources originating in religious institutions. Toubert's ecclesiastical bibliography is eclectic, drawing on hagiographies of numerous saints, papal biographies, archive documents, and documentation from collections both in and out of the Vatican as well as libraries around Italy. However, he primarily utilizes sources from monasteries. The disproportionately strong representation of archival records is partially due to the general lack of narrative sources in Lazio at this time.<sup>1</sup> As monastic scribes were those primarily concerned with recordkeeping during the Middle Ages, it is logical that Toubert derives his textual evidence from manuscripts and reports originating from these ecclesiastical institutions. Toubert demonstrates a particular reliance on textual sources from the abbey of Farfa, found in the Sabina, now in northern Lazio. Farfa offers an extensive textual record ranging from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and its location in the north allows for a perspective between Rome and Viterbo, two major centers for the storage of records and archives.<sup>2</sup> Toubert also employs, although to a lesser extent, the records from the abbey of Subiaco, located in Eastern Lazio. In instances of the study of private acts that are outside the scope of the monasterial archive, Toubert often shifts to

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1973), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 29 n.2.

the records of secular notaries.<sup>3</sup> Notably, Toubert relies minimally – if at all – on archaeological or material sources.

While Toubert's study focuses on the Lazio region of Italy, the phenomenon of *incastellamento* occurred throughout Italy as well as in other parts of Mediterranean Europe, most notably in France. According to Toubert, the bulk of *incastellamento* in Lazio occurred during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> He focuses his analysis on the Lazio region specifically – with a particular emphasis on Northern Lazio – both because of the preponderance of written sources available and because the region previously lacked the holistic, overarching metanarrative study that he strove to undertake.<sup>5</sup> Though there had been numerous specialized studies of the region at the time of publication in 1973, no one had yet endeavored to craft a study as broad and inclusive of different perspectives as his. Moreover, the geographic diversity of the region allows for the conclusions he draws about Lazio to apply to many other regions. In fact, Toubert writes that Lazio's interior diversity "offer[s] a sort of recapitulation of nearly the entire array of morphological, climatic, pedological, biogeographical, and human types that peninsular Italy as a whole presents."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the internal variances that run throughout Lazio are a testament to this idea of the generalizability of research focused on this region. Lazio itself is characterized not by unity but instead by a crucial geographic diversity shaped in part by

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., XXXIV.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 137. "*Le Latium semble ainsi offrir comme une récapitulation de presque toute la gamme des types morphologiques, climatiques, pédologiques, biogéographiques et humains que présente l'Italie péninsulaire dans son ensemble.*" (All translations of this work are my own).

a long history of volcanic activity.<sup>7</sup> The climate of the region is the typical Mediterranean climate, with hot summers and mild, rainy winters, though the amount of rainfall varies both annually and geographically, creating more internal variances.<sup>8</sup> His focus on the Lazio region therefore allows his work to be applicable beyond the geographic confines of Lazio itself.

Toubert identifies *incastellamento* less as a long-distance movement, such as immigration, than the result of a reorganization of local populations coupled with an existing population expansion.<sup>9</sup> This demographic growth of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which Toubert tracks through the multiplication of the habitation centers and the expansion of agricultural sites, provided the foundational peasant population needed to institute the drastic shift in settlement and, therefore, the establishment of *incastellamento*.<sup>10</sup> *Incastellamento* itself encompasses a dual transformation: the centralization of settlement within a perimeter and the consolidation of the cultivated space.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the borders of the community were thereafter clearly defined and the fertile farmland, once separated by settlements, now stood together surrounding the castled center without obstruction. Toubert reserves a large portion of his text for an analysis of the different agricultural products grown before, during, and after *incastellamento*, emphasizing how the phenomenon not only denotes movement on top of the soil, but also shifts in the usage of the soil itself. The fertile areas of the hinterlands that surround the castle

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 136, 138.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 654.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 332; 337.

therefore contribute to an understanding of *incastellamento*, as their agricultural activity played a role in the establishment of the castral social organization and in the survival of the elevated site.

According to Toubert, *incastellamento* represents a sharp break from previous settlement patterns rather than an extension of them. He posits that “*incastellamento* of the 10<sup>th</sup> century ... marked less a ‘renaissance’ ... than a qualitative rupture imposed by the seigneurial class on the forms of an older growth.”<sup>12</sup> The dispersed and decentralized settlements that were widespread prior to the wave of castle-building therefore denote, to Toubert, an organization of population that is distinct from the concentrated and fortified settlements resulting from *incastellamento*; the new settlement pattern and its dominance represents a subjugation and replacement of the older patterns. Toubert leaves no room for interpretation in this issue, stating that “10<sup>th</sup>-century *incastellamento* thus appeared as a profound rupture in the forms of settlement and in the agrarian structure itself.”<sup>13</sup> The nature of the new highly concentrated settlement is therefore a key characteristic of *incastellamento* and an important distinction from previous settlement patterns.

The sparsely populated settlements that were dominant prior to the start of *incastellamento* in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century included several different types of habitation. The *curtis* (plural *curtes*; also called the *curticella*) is one such type of settlement and denotes a large, dispersed estate.<sup>14</sup> The *domus culta* is the pontifical version of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1356. “l’*incastellamento*’ du X<sup>e</sup> siècle ... marquait moins une ‘renaissance’ ... qu’une rupture qualitative imposée par la couche seigneuriale aux formes d’une croissance plus ancienne.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 330. “l’*incastellamento*’ du X<sup>e</sup> siècle apparaît donc comme une rupture profonde dans les formes de peuplement et dans la structure agraire elle-même.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 328.



*curtis*,<sup>15</sup> while the *massa* is another near-synonym to *curtis* that describes “a *geographic zone* where a large property owner may possess particularly dense but not necessarily contiguous groups of land.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the term *casale* sometimes designates a *curtis* that is smaller in scale, and sometimes the unit of settlement tenure itself, while the *villa* is the more general term for this type of dispersed settlement.<sup>17</sup> However, the vocabulary used to describe these settlements is anything but static. For instance, the term *massa* “took on various meanings over time” and was even used after the onset of *incastellamento* to describe the range of castral territory before retiring from usage around the year 1000.<sup>18</sup>

The terms, though sometimes similar, can describe different aspects of the dispersed settlement. For example, both the *curtis* and *casale* refer to “*le grand domaine dans son ensemble*,” or the estate as a whole, while the *domus culta* (plural *domus cultilis*) refers to both the estate’s exploitation center as well as the surrounding lands.<sup>19</sup> The different terminologies also designate different management structures in the land. The *domus culta* describes “an area of direct seigneurial management,” while the term *casa* more generally describes an area of land controlled by small farmers lacking landowning rights.<sup>20</sup> The *casa* (plural *casae*) – another term for the dispersed settlement

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 455 n.2. “une zone géographique où tel grand propriétaire possède des ensembles fonciers particulièrement denses mais point nécessairement jointifs.”

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. “*massa s’est chargé avec le temps de sens variés.*”

<sup>19</sup> Toubert, 456.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 458; XXXIV. “*un secteur de gestion seigneuriale directe.*”

– in this period can be further broken down into *casae colonicae* and *casae massariciae*,<sup>21</sup> the former an area where “groups of rural dependents” cluster and the latter large areas that contain several *casae colonicae*.<sup>22</sup> The organizational structure of the region shifted during *incastellamento* from these previous forms of dispersed settlement to fortified *castra* on hilltop sites.<sup>23</sup> The term *castrum* (plural *castra*) denotes the new elevated settlement as a whole, and not exclusively the castle that is central to the formation of a new castral site.<sup>24</sup> The shift to these new fortified castral settlements – marking the start of *incastellamento* – began in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

As Toubert argues that *incastellamento* sites were new places of settlement rather than a previously occupied site, the result of this movement to centralized settlement was the desertion of previously populated lowland sites in favor of elevated areas.<sup>25</sup> There were several conditions for picking an appropriate site upon which to settle during this period of castle-building, including the proximity to and propensity of running water, the defensive characteristics of the site, hygienic conditions, fertility of the soil, and the diversity of crops suitable for cultivation on the surrounding lands.<sup>26</sup> The new centralized and fortified settlement resulting from this shift is known as the *castrum*. Though the *castra* were only rarely founded on the same site as an immediately preceding settlement, their development sometimes included the repopulation of more ancient habitation sites

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 456.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 482. “*les groupes de dépendants ruraux.*”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 314 n.1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 154–8.

that had been previously abandoned when the settlement patterns shifted to a focus on agricultural productivity rather than on defense.<sup>27</sup> By the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the fundamental structure of occupation that defines *incastellamento* – the *castrum* – had been definitively established.<sup>28</sup>

The agents that drove *incastellamento* were numerous, although the dominant one, Toubert argues, was that of the monastic lord. He even goes so far as to call the great monastic lords the “*principaux promoteurs connus*,”<sup>29</sup> or principal known promoters, of *incastellamento*. According to records from abbeys, pious donations played a large role in the centralization of land under the power of the church, a consolidation of land required for the movement to the castral sites.<sup>30</sup> Toubert’s proposed mechanism of *incastellamento* is thus one that is largely top-down, as the settlement shift was imposed by lords that dominated and profited from the ownership of land and the social hierarchy. The abbeys received land grants that expanded their own landholdings and counteracted the fragmentation common during the time, and this concentration of land set the stage for the development of *castra*.<sup>31</sup> One potential motivation for this ecclesiastical support of such an expensive and socially transformative endeavor is monetary, as the founders of the *castra* anticipated a high level of profit to stem from the new castral agricultural areas of extensive polyculture cultivated by the lower class.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., XXXV.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 340.

Another possible impetus was simply to expand the influence of the church. According to Toubert, the monastic lords within “the dominant class had a deliberate intention to channel the [population] growth and impose an order on it,” and the new castral settlement structure allowed these lords to control and advance the propagation of village churches within the new fortified sites, increasing the power of the abbey.<sup>33</sup> The expansion of these churches also increased the independence of the lower clergy relative to the ruling lords in both the realms of economics and social perception by increasing the churches’ area of influence.<sup>34</sup> In these ways, the benefits the abbeys reaped from the promotion of *incastellamento* justified the high cost of participating in the construction of a *castrum*.

However, Toubert’s analysis of the agents of *incastellamento* focuses specifically on the agency of the monastic lords at the exclusion of general community-wide security concerns or a state-sponsored movement. It is interesting to consider how much of Toubert’s analysis regarding the influence of abbeys in *incastellamento* is shaped, perhaps determinatively, by his heavy reliance of ecclesiastical sources. As Toubert gathers the lion’s share of his evidence from monastic archives, it reasonably follows that he focuses most on the agency of monastic lords. Granted, though he certainly emphasizes the role of abbeys in *incastellamento*, he also does acknowledge that some *castra* “were born and grew for a long while outside of all influence of the abbey,”<sup>35</sup> and were therefore under the influence of secular lords. Toubert notes that such instances are

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 791. “Nous y avons reconnu une intention délibérée de la couche dominante pour canaliser la croissance [de la population] et lui imposer un ordre à elle.” (All brackets have been added by the author for clarification.)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 894.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 320. “Ces castra sont nés et ont longtemps grandi en dehors de toute influence de l’abbaye.”

not as well represented in the monastic textual records upon which he primarily relies, making their analysis more difficult.<sup>36</sup> Despite this concession, however, Toubert doubles down on his argument of the primacy monastic lords in this population transformation, arguing that it was the Church that first played a role in this redistribution of settlement and reorganization of property.<sup>37</sup>

In order to trace this transition to *incastellamento* and to describe the nature of work and tenure, Toubert predominantly uses agrarian contracts as his source. Beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, before the start of *incastellamento*, the dominant type of contract in Lazio was the *mezzadria* contract, which was “tied to a still distended habitat and to a mobilization of exceptional labor.”<sup>38</sup> Though Toubert does not further clarify its exact meaning, this “exceptional labor” is most likely a form of intensification of the agricultural yields. These contracts included a requirement for the worker of the land to give the landowner half of their yields, and the workers were simply tenants of the land, as they were transferred no actual landowning rights.<sup>39</sup> Though the average duration of *mezzadria* contracts varied – and was sometimes not specified in the written contract itself but rather through an oral agreement– their duration was generally not long term; they commonly expired each year with the tacit agreement of an annual renewal.<sup>40</sup> The spreading of long-term contracts came with the development of the *castrum* and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 491.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 540. “[l]iés à un habitat encore distendu et à une mobilisation de main d’œuvre exceptionnelle.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 540 n.1.

<sup>40</sup> David Routt, “Sharecropping in the Sienese Contado: Three Texts (1232, 1257, 1293),” in *Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 12.

represented a notable shift in the typical contract length.<sup>41</sup> The *mezzadria* thus lacks the potential for multi-generational bonds that are foundational to the contracts during the formation of *castra*. However, *mezzadria* contracts die out after the start of *incastellamento*, right as the phenomenon begins to change the settlement landscape and new types of contracts arise.<sup>42</sup>

Of these new contracts, the primary one by far in Lazio during *incastellamento* in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries was the *livello* (plural *livelli*), a long-term contract ranging from “twenty-nine years to three generations.”<sup>43</sup> The duration of the *livello* contract, lengthier than that of the former *mezzadria* contract, acted as one point of evolution in agrarian contracts. In fact, after the start of *incastellamento*, contracts lasting less than twenty-nine years became extremely rare,<sup>44</sup> a testament to the rapid increase in popularity of long-term contracts. It is important to note that the *livello* contract, like the *mezzadria* contract, *still* did not confer landowning rights to the worker, as the ownership of the land remained non-transferrable.<sup>45</sup> Over time, the *livelli* contracts with a longer duration – namely one spanning generations – became more common, and the *livelli* lasting less than twenty-nine years all but disappeared by 1040.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 518.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 518. “vingt-neuf ans à trois générations.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>45</sup> B. J. P. van Bavel, “Markets in Medieval City-States: The Centre and North of Italy, 1000-1500,” in *The Invisible Hand?: How Market Economies Have Emerged and Declined Since AD 500* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 105.

<sup>46</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 527.

There are two main categories of *livelli*, dependent upon the type and timing of payment. The first group requires an immediate lump sum payment as well as an additional yearly payment in exchange for the right to work the land for the duration of the contract; the second lacks the immediate payment and instead requires an annual payment in the form of a portion of the goods produced as well as the performance, if needed, of personal service to the lord.<sup>47</sup> Although both types of contracts were present during *incastellamento*, the former was drastically more common and constituted ninety percent of the *livelli* in the monastic written record that Toubert analyzes.<sup>48</sup> However, because it is possible that the second type of *livello* may have been primarily agreed upon orally and is therefore not part of the written record, this statistic may be artificially inflated.

The first type of *livello* was foundational to the onset of *incastellamento*. As it grants the land-owning lord immediate payment, it was particularly popular among ecclesiastical lords with the intention of funding projects that require large investments of capital,<sup>49</sup> such as the *castra*. This immediate payment – not found in either the earlier *mezzadria* nor in the other type of *livello* – helped to fund the expensive construction of *castra*, allowing the lords not only “to build or to rebuild abbeys and rural priories, but also to construct the fortified apparatus of the new villages, the new castral churches, etc.”<sup>50</sup> The availability of capital at the beginning of the contract unique to this type of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 521–22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 530.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 522.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 523. “... bâtir ou rebâtir abbayes et prieurés ruraux, mais aussi construire l’appareil fortifié des nouveaux villages, les nouvelles églises castres, etc.”

*livello* therefore played a key role in funding the construction of the architectural and organizational structures of *incastellamento*.

The timeline of the contract supports this view. Though the *livello* contract first appeared during the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it did not become widespread until centuries later, rising in popularity as *incastellamento* spread and meeting its end in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, roughly as the castral economy was also in decline.<sup>51</sup> Toubert argues that the more flexible system that existed before *incastellamento* was replaced by the rigidity of castral tenure, evidenced by the strict rules regarding tenure and payment established within the contracts.<sup>52</sup> Toubert associates the *livello* so closely with *incastellamento* that he writes that “it is difficult not to consider [the *livello*] as the legal expression of the new economic and social relationships that develop inside the *castrum* between the masters of the soil and their tenant farmers.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the *livello* put into writing the new social structure developed during *incastellamento* between the landed lord and the workers of the soil. Indeed, the castral system institutionalized an extreme stratification of society between lords and peasants and strengthened this differentiation through the long-term contracts. However, with the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the *livello* becomes less common, and more diversified types of contracts become more widespread.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1356.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 519. “[I]l est difficile de ne pas la considérer comme l’expression juridique des nouveaux rapports économiques et sociaux que se sont noués à l’intérieur du *castrum* entre les maîtres du sol et leurs *tenanciers*.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 520.



Although the language Toubert uses to describe *incastellamento* – that of landowning lords and peasants working the land – implies the influence of feudalism, Toubert posits that the “movement of *incastellamento* was entirely accomplished outside of all recourse to feudal or vassal institutions.”<sup>55</sup> At first glance, this claim may seem contradictory; however, the castral system lacks elements that, to Toubert, are essential to feudalism. Although Toubert does not ever clearly delineate his working definition of feudalism, he does give a short description of what he views as its components: the “form and content of vassal engagements” and the “status of feudal property,”<sup>56</sup> putting a particular emphasis on the institution of vassalage.

At the time of publication, the two dominating definitions of feudalism were that of Marc Bloch and that of F.L. Ganshof, both French historians. Richard Abels describes Bloch’s understanding of feudalism as “a general term that embraces the key aspects of the prevailing medieval, social, political, and economic arrangements” rather than a concrete definition.<sup>57</sup> Bloch emphasizes several aspects of the system, including a peasantry bound to a lord (rather than to the land itself), the exchange of land (the fief) in return for certain services (particular military service), and the preponderance of ties of obedience between men.<sup>58</sup> However, Bloch’s definition lacks a certain concreteness that Toubert embraces, as Bloch’s view of feudalism is slightly more nebulous – and contains

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1096. “*le grand mouvement d’incastellamento s’est entièrement accompli en dehors de tout recours aux institutions féodo-vassaliques.*”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1090. “*forme et contenu des engagements vassaliques*”; “*statut des biens féodaux.*”

<sup>57</sup> Richard Abels, “The Historiography of a Construct: ‘Feudalism’ and the Medieval Historian,” *History Compass* 7, no. 3 (May 2009): 1012.

<sup>58</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2014).

more nuance – than does Toubert’s understanding. Ganshof’s definition, on the other hand, is more concrete:

“[Feudalism is a] body of institutions creating and regulating the obligations of obedience and service – mainly military service – on the part of the free man (the vassal) towards another free man (the lord), and the obligations of protection and maintenance on the part of the lord with regard to his vassal. The obligation of maintenance had usually as one of its effects the grant by the lord to his vassal a unit of real property known as the fief.”<sup>59</sup>

Echoes of Ganshof’s emphasis on the vassal relationship, centering on military service, and on the fief are prevalent in Toubert’s concise list of feudalism’s components.

Therefore, Toubert seems to be ascribing to Ganshof’s definition.

Working off of this understanding of feudalism, the society in Lazio during *incastellamento* that Toubert outlines lacks the very features that, for him, define feudalism. These features are: the full transfer of land between the lord and the man serving him (the fief) and the vassal relationship itself. Toubert’s analysis of feudalism centers around the *beneficium*, which describes the transfer of ownership from the landowning lord to the servant for the extent of the oath (which typically endures until the death of one of the parties).<sup>60</sup> Simply, the *beneficium* is a fief. In feudal relationships, this land is granted as part of the lord’s duty of maintenance, which acts as a sort of payment for the servant’s duty of service to the lord (particularly military service).<sup>61</sup> However, this grant of the fief, this transfer of land ownership, is not present during *incastellamento*. In the *livello* contracts that drove castle-building, the lord retained ownership of the land, and the worker was essentially leasing the land through

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<sup>59</sup> F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson (London, New York: Longmans, Green, 1952), xvi.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

the payments outlined in the contract.<sup>62</sup> Toubert's preoccupation with this lack of land transfer is evident in his insistence that the *beneficium* was not widespread until after *incastellamento* had been fully established. It is also manifest in his claim that in the societal organization that preceded feudalism (including at least the start of the castral organization), "the attributions of property were done in full ownership,"<sup>63</sup> once again highlighting the lack of the transfer of land ownership that is one characteristic that distinguishes castral from feudal society.

As for the institution of vassalage, Toubert points out that the relationships created by *incastellamento*, though similar to those of feudalism, did not contain the bonds or oaths that characterize the lord and vassal relationship that are, according to Ganshof, feudalism's "most essential feature."<sup>64</sup> Toubert does admit that *incastellamento* sometimes brought an upper and lower lord into contact, writing that "certain contracts of *incastellamento* connect an ecclesiastical lord, who offers the site to build and the earth to cultivate, with an entrepreneur of colonization, a secular lord responsible for the concrete realization of the operation."<sup>65</sup> However, as the relationship formed still lacks the bonds of loyalty and duties (particularly military duty) that tie together a lord and a vassal, this relationship created by *incastellamento* is *not* feudal. Toubert also finds this disparity in the written record, as he notes that "nothing in the local texts, neither on the side of

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<sup>62</sup> van Bavel, "Markets in Medieval City-States: The Centre and North of Italy, 1000-1500," 105.

<sup>63</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 1091. "*les attributions de biens-fonds étaient faites en pleine propriété.*"

<sup>64</sup> Ganshof, *Feudalism*, 63.

<sup>65</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 323. "*certaines contrats d'incastellamento lient un seigneur ecclésiastique, qui offre le site à bâtir et les terres à cultiver, avec un entrepreneur de colonisation, seigneur laïc qui se charge de la réalisation concrète de l'opération.*"

personal engagements nor that of real status, evokes precisely the vassal relations or the *beneficium* such that they existed in the Frankish world [where feudalism was born] in the same era.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, because of the lack of the transfer of land and the vassal institution, *incastellamento*’s establishment is made independent of the development of feudalism.

As *incastellamento*’s institutions were not feudal according to the definition Toubert uses, it follows that feudalism did not fully develop in Lazio until after *incastellamento* was already completed. By the time fiefdom began to extend across Lazio, the *castrum* of *incastellamento* had already been firmly established as a keystone of the economic and social structure.<sup>67</sup> The feudal institution began to spread throughout the region beginning in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, just when *incastellamento* started slowing down, and gained its first foothold in the Lazio region, Toubert claims, near the abbey of Farfa.<sup>68</sup> Feudalism therefore developed first in north eastern Lazio before spreading slowly to the south. It does seem rather convenient that these feudal institutions happened to arise near the site of Toubert’s foremost and most heavily relied upon source. He recognizes this by stipulating that naming Sabina or Farfa abbey as the entry points for feudalism would be dubious,<sup>69</sup> although it still seems to remain his suggestion. Toubert, in fact, acknowledges the nascent feudal structures had been developing in the society for centuries, calling it an “underground ripening that preceded the appearance in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1091. “Rien dans les textes locaux, ni du côté des engagements personnels ni de celui des statuts réels, n’évoque précisément les relations vassaliques ou le bénéfice tels qu’ils existaient dans le monde franc [où la féodalité est née] à la même époque.”

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 1160.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1106.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 1095.

the 11<sup>th</sup> century of gestures, of vocabulary, and of concepts of feudalism.”<sup>70</sup> Toubert thus recognizes *incastellamento*’s role in the development of feudalism, noting that the *castrum* acted as an essential structure from which feudalism was able to develop roots.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Toubert states that regarding the transition between *castra* and fiefdoms, “the differences... are in degree, not in nature.”<sup>72</sup>

The castral relationships born of *incastellamento* began to transform into feudal relationships once abbeys started to employ the concession *per fegum* (by grant of a previous abbot) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> The transformation culminated in the rapid spread of the *beneficium* that followed the concession *per fegum*. The *beneficium* uses the fief as the “mode of remuneration of military service due to the abbey by its vassals on horseback.”<sup>74</sup> The *per fegum* concession itself, the start of the transition to feudal institutions, develops out of the economic growth of *incastellamento*, which in turn created an “environment of disequilibrium of the forces of production” that drove lords to seek military servants who were loyal only to them to protect them from threats to their property,<sup>75</sup> leading to the vassal and the *beneficium*. The development from *castra*, to concessions *per fegum*, to the *beneficium* is thus what lead to the full establishment of feudal institutions and the beginning of the feudal period in Lazio. It is in this

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1098. “... *mûrissement souterrain qui a précédé l’apparition au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle des gestes, du vocabulaire et des concepts de la féodalité.*”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1161.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. “*Les différences... sont de degré et non de nature.*”

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1105.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 1106. “*mode courant de retribution du service militaire dû à l’abbaye par ses vassaux à cheval.*”

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1107. “*ce climat nouveau de déséquilibre des forces de production.*”

framework, then, that society acquires the two characteristics that for Toubert define feudalism. It is important, however, to note that Toubert's analysis of feudalism in Lazio relies almost exclusively on ecclesiastical sites, giving particular attention to concessions *per fegum* and the *beneficium* within the religious sphere and largely ignoring any corresponding secular relationship.

Compared to other regions, feudalism developed slowly in Lazio due to the region's "very particular character."<sup>76</sup> Feudalism took so long to develop in Lazio because of several unique features, one of which is its location: close to the Papacy and therefore somewhat insulated from outside influence. Northern Italy, without this degree of separation, resembled French feudalism more quickly and more closely than Lazio.<sup>77</sup> This insulation had other effects as well, such as the fact that it was not heavily affected by the fall of the Carolingian Empire,<sup>78</sup> and that it was for the most part "preserved from the influence of the new kings of Italy and their followers."<sup>79</sup> This perhaps explains Lazio's sluggishness to shirk off Roman traditions.

One such vestige of Roman rule is the most important particularity of Lazio that most directly affected its delayed transition to feudalism: its enduring retention of the Roman concept of property, which it retained much longer than did other regions.<sup>80</sup> The longstanding *livello* contracts are one manifestation of Roman property law, which

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 1089. "*le caractère très particulier.*"

<sup>77</sup> Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 188.

<sup>78</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 1091.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1095. "*mieux préservé de l'influence des nouveaux rois d'Italie et de leurs fidèles.*"

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 1098; Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 119.

includes as a key pillar an understanding of a fixed ownership of land.<sup>81</sup> Eventually, the concession *per fegum* replaces the *livello* contract, and its transfer of land allows for the start of the development of feudal relationships in a way that the *livello* contract, with its static ownership, could not.<sup>82</sup> The *per fegum* concession, in turn, evolves into the *beneficium*, which Toubert identifies as distinctly feudal. Toubert writes that “[t]he originality of this region holds less ... to the results than to the means employed to get there: the old emphyteutic *censive* [ground rent, based off of Roman law] offered a formal frame that could adapt without trouble to the fragmentation and alienation of the public power to the benefit of the local aristocracy.”<sup>83</sup> This idea is key: he is analyzing the difference between emphyteutic land – which is essentially the rented tenure prevalent during *incastellamento* that lacks vassal ties and is founded on the Roman understanding of property – and feudalism, with the essential difference being the transfer of land and the presence of a vassal relationship. In other words, this distinction between the Roman understanding of property that prevailed through the *livello* of *incastellamento* and feudal institutions lies in exactly what Toubert lists as essential feudal qualities.

This is not to say that *incastellamento* was necessary fundamentally incompatible with feudalism. On the contrary, Toubert writes that “[t]he charters of the castral foundation [for example, *livello*],... associating ecclesiastical and secular lords in the same undertaking, would have certainly been able to offer an ideal situation for the

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<sup>81</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 1107.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1096–1097. “L’originalité de notre region tient moins ... aux résultats qu’aux moyens employés pour y parvenir : la vieille censive de type emphythéotique a offert un cadre formel qui a pu s’adapter sans peine au démembrement et à l’aliénation de la puissance publique au profit de l’aristocratie locale.”

establishment of [feudal] relations,”<sup>84</sup> meaning that the organization established by *incastellamento* has the necessary structures to be feudal, but lacked the catalyst to push it into feudalism. In other words, the existing Roman concept of property, manifest in contracts like the *livello*, was sufficiently malleable to adapt to the new social structures brought by *incastellamento* without requiring a shift in the understanding of property or relationships, and the transition to feudalism was thus lengthier than in other regions or countries such as France.<sup>85</sup>

The catalyst needed for the lords to seek out vassal relationships was the threat of property loss. Feudalism is, Toubert writes, “born from war and more precisely... of the need of large monastic seignury, beginning in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, to have an effective cavalry at their disposal.”<sup>86</sup> Feudalism thus offered the structures necessary for lords to establish a small, personal force of vassals to perform such military duties. These vassals were bound to their lord by oaths of fealty granting them a fief in return for service to the lord, particularly military service.<sup>87</sup> They were therefore “the principal defenders of the worldly monasteries that were in danger of the greed of the neighboring grand secular lords.”<sup>88</sup> The vassal contracts include specific clauses prohibiting them from harming the lord or his property, uniting against him in alliances of any kind, and

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 1096. “*Les chartes de fondation castrale, ... associant seigneurs ecclésiastiques et laïcs dans une même entreprise, auraient certes pu offrir une matière idéale à une instauration de relations [de la féodalité].*”

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 1098.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 1143. “*la féodalité est née de la guerre et plus précisément... des nécessités où se sont trouvées les grandes seigneuries monastiques, à partir du milieu du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, de disposer d’une cavalerie efficace.*”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1106.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. “*les principaux défenseurs des temporels monastiques en butte à la convoitise des grands seigneurs laïcs du voisinage.*”



attacking him or his property in any way,<sup>89</sup> revealing the lords' fear of betrayal and of military attack from other lords who control a similar military group. Lords felt vulnerable and sought out vassal relationships to ease their anxieties and protect their property. In times of peace, the vassal is expected simply to manage the land. In return for this agricultural and military duty, the lord owes the vassal "aide, protection, and upkeep."<sup>90</sup> The warriors mobilized by the vassal contracts thus provide the lords with a military force capable of protecting the lord and his property as well as a labor force to keep up regular agricultural production of the land. The military relationship is seen by many medieval scholars, including both Ganshof and Bloch, as the "*raison d'être* of feudalism."<sup>91</sup> However, according to Toubert, these structures did not develop in Lazio until after *incastellamento*.

It is necessary to point out a potential weakness in these understandings of feudalism. Most feudal studies, including that of Ganshof and Bloch, are centered on France, yet their conclusions are presented as applicable and generalizable for Europe as a whole extending far beyond France's borders despite the acknowledgement of the particularities of both Italian structures and Italian feudalism itself.<sup>92</sup> The question remains if these undertakings are helpful in the study of the past or if they simply muddy

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 1143.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1148. "*aide, protection, et entretien*."

<sup>91</sup> Abels, "The Historiography of a Construct," 1012.

<sup>92</sup> Timothy Reuter and Chris Wickham, "The 'Feudal Revolution,'" *Past & Present*, no. 155 (1997): 198; Ganshof, *Feudalism*, 60.

the already convoluted waters by attempting to strictly categorize distinct parts of societies that are nebulous, nuanced, and ever-changing.<sup>93</sup>

Continuing his well-rounded and encompassing picture of Lazio in this time, Toubert moves on to offer a description of settlement patterns in Lazio during and after the decline of *incastellamento*. The most immediately noticeable change is the existence of “phantom habitats” that appear in the written record in the 10<sup>th</sup> century before disappearing from them completely.<sup>94</sup> These are sites of habitation that are initially found in textual sources and classified as new fortified sites but are later never mentioned again. The exceptionally detailed nature of the written record found at the abbeys of Farfa and Subiaco at this time suggest that this disappearance not an oversight on the part of the scribe, but instead represents a larger trend of the abandonment of the sites. According to Toubert, these absences from the texts correspond with the desertion of the sites themselves, a phenomenon that typically occurred in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>95</sup> Toubert presents five potential reasons for the desertion of a site: first, the existence of a disconnect between the agricultural areas in the hinterlands surrounding the habitation site and the centralized settlement site itself; second, the difficulty in establishing fertile, workable, and sustainable agricultural areas around a habitation center; third, the “regression” of the centralized and fortified settlement into the seigneurial *casale* common before the start of *incastellamento*; fourth, the preference for a better-equipped settlement nearby; and fifth, the movement of the site to a nearby location.<sup>96</sup> However,

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<sup>93</sup> For more about this debate, see Abels, “The Historiography of a Construct.”

<sup>94</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 350. “habitats-fantômes.”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 350–2.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 355–363.

Toubert makes a stipulation that this fifth reason seems to be specific to the region of Sabina, not Lazio in general.

Overall, Toubert's research is certainly a prodigious contribution to the study of *incastellamento* and the organizational structures of medieval Italian societies. His work, which spans two volumes and nearly 2,000 pages, certainly covers aspects of medieval Italy that are outside the scope of this paper, including analyses of monetary systems, economic markets, currencies, familial structure, marriage practices, religious reform, the justice system, and even the influence of rulers such as Theophylact and Alberic. As Toubert is the first to study *incastellamento* at length, it seems that he came across its patterns within his sources almost by chance during a macro study of the Lazio region before latching onto and analyzing it in depth. His writing style, as is typical of authors with a French intellectual background, is one that winds and twists around the main point before begrudgingly coming to discuss the argument at hand, and even then using slightly veiled language. Due to this characteristic writing style, Toubert rarely states an argument outright, instead relying upon his readers to synthesize and construct an argument for themselves.

The most common point of critique of this work is in Toubert's uneven distribution of sources. He relies almost entirely on written sources, with much of his evidence coming from one specific location: the abbey of Farfa. This overreliance on textual data is brought up time and time again, particularly by archaeologists who claim Toubert's work contradicts evidence pulled from the material record at archaeological sites in the area.<sup>97</sup> Though Toubert's work remains impactful and an apt starting place

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<sup>97</sup> See Étienne Hubert, "L'incastellamento dans le Latium: Remarques à propos de fouilles récentes," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 55, no. 3 (2000): 583–99; Giovanna Bianchi, "Analyzing the

for the study of *incastellamento* and changing settlement patterns, his work has been challenged in the long term, raising the question of whether Toubert's work should continue to be used as a source for the future study of *incastellamento* or if instead works relying heavily on archaeological evidence should be primarily utilized. In the next chapter, I will analyze these critiques of Toubert's work in detail, focusing primarily on the criticism from archaeologists.

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Fragmentation during the Early Middle Ages: Tuscany's Model and the Countryside of the Centre-North Italy," in *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy Compared. Essays for Riccardo Francovich*, ed. Sauro Gelichi and Richard Hodges, trans. Gavin Williams, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 24 (Belgium: Brepols, 2015); Riccardo Francovich and Richard Hodges, *Villa to Village: The Transformation of the Roman Countryside in Italy, c. 400-1000*, Duckworth Debates in Archaeology. (London: Duckworth, 2003); Reuter and Wickham, "The 'Feudal Revolution.'"

## CHAPTER THREE

### Hubert Strikes Back: The Archaeological Response to Toubert

Toubert's work on *incastellamento*, while monumental, was neither immediately nor unilaterally accepted without critique. The most notable critique came from archaeologists claiming that Toubert's lack of archaeological sources in favor of a nearly complete reliance on written sources leaves his work out of touch with the realities and variances of medieval settlement patterns. Archaeologists also take issue with Toubert's argument about the timing of *incastellamento*, which he argues ranges from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>1</sup> as well as the claims that *incastellamento* was driven primarily by ecclesiastical lords<sup>2</sup> and that it marks a sharp break in the trends of settlement patterns.<sup>3</sup> The opposition from archaeologists contrasts with the general support from historians, creating a divide roughly demarcated along the lines of academic discipline.

One historian who largely supports Toubert's findings is Laurent Feller, who applies Toubert's arguments about Lazio to the region of Abruzzo, which is east of Lazio. His work entitled "L'incastellamento inachevé des Abruzzes" (1989) is, although significantly less detailed and comprehensive, similar to Toubert's in terms of methodology, as Feller also relies primarily on textual sources with a focus on one abbey: Abbey Aligerne.<sup>4</sup> Feller agrees that *incastellamento* begins in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century;

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<sup>1</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, XXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., XXXV.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>4</sup> L. Feller, "L'incastellamento inachevé des Abruzzes," *Archeologia Medievale* 16 (January 1, 1989): 127.

Toubert cites 950 for its genesis in Lazio and Feller marks 980 for its start in Abruzzo.<sup>5</sup> Another point of similarity is his emphasis on *livelli* contracts and their role in shaping the development of *castra* as well as the accent he places on the role of abbeys and other religious centers. This focus on religious institutions may be, like Toubert's focus on ecclesiastical lords, a result of the exclusive reliance on written sources. Also, similar to Toubert, Feller's analysis centers on the domineering role of ecclesiastical institutions in the development of *castra* and the establishment of *incastellamento*. Feller argues that ecclesiastical lords propagate the *livelli* contracts, which are long-term and include a strict form of payment, "only to reorganize the agricultural production in order to pull from it the best profit possible."<sup>6</sup>

However, Feller departs from Toubert when he posits that these contracts, which represent nothing more than the renting of the land, did not precipitate "any modification of land structures and those of the habitat," arguing instead that through them, "no new structure of settlement is instituted; no defense structure is constructed."<sup>7</sup> Instead, *livelli* are rather one development amidst other, more determinative transformations that result in fortified settlements and that were driven by the lords' desire for increased agricultural production and, therefore, increased profit. This contrasts subtly with Toubert's argument. Though the two share the claim that the abbeys' motivation was at least in part to increase profit, Feller's mechanism reduces the role of the *livello* contract in relation to the development of *castra* and describes it as nothing but a result of this drive

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 128. "[L'abbaye] a seulement cherché à réorganiser la production agricole afin d'en tirer le meilleur profit possible." (All translations of this work are my own.)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. "aucune modification des structures foncières et de celles de l'habitat;" "Aucune structure d'encadrement nouvelle n'est instituée; aucune structure de défense n'est construite."

for profit.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, in Toubert's model, the *livello* contract is one component that drives the establishment of *castra*. The strict front-loaded payment structure of the *livelli* contracts allowed for the lords to collect more wealth up front, granting them the revenue required to fund the construction of the *castra*. Additionally, their long-term duration granted a sort of stability that reduced some of the risk of construction by ensuring the extended presence of a peasant population.<sup>9</sup> In these ways, Toubert argues that the *livello* contract granted the lords the opportunity to establish the castral structure from which they gained both profit and influence. As Feller is a historian with similar source materials to Toubert, it is unsurprising that he largely supports Toubert's findings. However, archaeologists find more issue with Toubert's sources as well several of his arguments.

Chris Wickham, also a historian, acts as a sort of intermediary between the fields of history and archaeology, as he relies on both written and archaeological sources in his works. In this way, he straddles the line separating historians and archaeologists in their opinions on the validity of Toubert's arguments. Wickham recognizes the utility of archaeological survey and the material record in supplementing information found in textual sources, writing that "[a]rchaeology may be in a far better position [than history], however, to tell us something about early medieval settlement before the changes in patterns that began in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, known generically as *incastellamento*."<sup>10</sup> His work synthesizes written and archaeological sources in a way that Toubert's could

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 522–523.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society, 400-1000*, 1981, 97–98.

not, since the archaeological record at the time of Toubert's publication was sparse. In areas where Wickham relies on textual evidence, his findings typically endorse Toubert's arguments.

For instance, Wickham supports Toubert's notion that ecclesiastical lords primarily drove *incastellamento*, noting that ecclesiastical institutions "began to build fortified villages, either directly or via leases to nobles."<sup>11</sup> This emphasis on the role of abbeys and ecclesiastical lords mirrors Toubert's insistence on the agency of these forces. However, though both models are – at least structurally – top-down, Wickham's model allows for a much more influential peasantry than does Toubert's. Wickham even argues that in some instances, "peasant groups seem to be the sole owners in *castelli* [synonym of *castra*]."<sup>12</sup> Toubert's argument, in contrast, allows for very little agency on the part of the peasantry, and he grants little time to the analysis of any discretion enjoyed by the lower class. Furthermore, Wickham also affirms Toubert's point about the role of political forces in the development of *castra* in the hinterlands of Rome, as the nobility constructed *castelli* in order to organize and control their property in the countryside.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Wickham's arguments based on the written record at least partially support Toubert's major premises, although in areas where archaeological data is well-developed, his reliance on the material record begins to manifest in disagreement with some of Toubert's ideas.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 165–166.



Driven by a reliance on the material record, Wickham's major departure from Toubert is in the timing of the break in settlement patterns. Toubert argues that the settlement patterns from the Roman period continued uninterrupted until their sharp, definite shift in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in the form of the establishment of *castra* and the onset of *incastellamento*.<sup>14</sup> Wickham's view is more similar to that of archaeologists in this regard, as he finds that the development of *castra* did not constitute an extreme break with past settlement patterns. He writes that the construction of *castra*, which defines *incastellamento*, had "varying effects on preexisting settlement patterns, from the total concentration of previously dispersed settlement to the simple addition of small fortifications, perhaps around preexisting estate-centres (sic), to an otherwise unchanged landscape, whether tendentially concentrated or dispersed in the rest of its habitat."<sup>15</sup> In this way, Wickham uses archaeological sources to argue that *incastellamento* had a less significant impact on previous settlements and population patterns than Toubert's study suggests. In another publication he writes that *incastellamento* sometimes included the fortification of already existing sites, with "no significant change in the general location of the habitats," and that "the change in settlement was much less than initially seems."<sup>16</sup> Wickham even supplements this archaeological argument with evidence from textual sources, such as the *incastellamento* charters of Berengar I.<sup>17</sup> This contrasts sharply with Toubert's claim that *incastellamento* marks a distinct and sharp break with past

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<sup>14</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 1356.

<sup>15</sup> Chris Wickham, "Early Medieval Archaeology in Italy: The Last Twenty Years," *Archeologia Medievale* 26 (January 1, 1999): 18.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Wickham, "Documenti scritti e archeologia per una storia dell'incastellamento: l'esempio della Toscana," *Archeologia Medievale* 16 (January 1, 1989): 87; 99.

<sup>17</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 174.

settlement patterns. Wickham therefore acts as a stepping stone between the camps of historians and archaeologists, supporting Toubert in certain instances but offering critiques of his work in others.

In general, there is little disagreement from archaeologists regarding what *incastellamento* represents or how it is manifest: the concentration of population atop elevated, fortified settlements. However, the mechanics of the phenomenon are less universally accepted. The archaeologist Riccardo Francovich presents one such counterargument. One point of opposition between Toubert's work and that of Francovich is that while monasteries and ecclesiastical lords are the main drivers of *incastellamento* in the former's work, the latter places them in the background, with landed secular lords seeking profit acting as the main actor.<sup>18</sup> Though this mechanism is still top-down, and shares that characteristic with Toubert's process, the religious lords that play such an instrumental role in the foundation of *castra* in Toubert's model cede their position to secular lords in Francovich's, thereby diminishing the influence of the church in the changing organization of settlement as well as the usage of land acquired through pious donations as a center for the establishment of *castra*. In fact, Francovich gives hardly any agency at all to the church and monastic lords. This distinction between Toubert's argument and that of Francovich is, however, based primarily on the former's reliance textual evidence, as the role of ecclesiastical lords is only visible in certain texts and is not easily discernable in material data.

The model presented in Francovich's work based on archaeological evidence has come to be known as the Tuscan model, as his work centers primarily in Tuscany. The

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<sup>18</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 102–103.

Tuscan model focuses on the conclusions that flow from archaeological excavations, primarily the continuity, rather than discontinuity, of settlement patterns in the Middle Ages, the early timing of *incastellamento*, and the presence of wooden fortified villages predating stone castles. After participating in several archaeological excavations in Italy, Francovich found evidence, which is later mirrored in Wickham's work, contradicting Toubert's claim of the discontinuity in settlement patterns in the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. He instead finds that the roots of the type of settlement prevalent in the Middle Ages – and, notably, continuing through the era of *incastellamento* – are found in the post-Roman village.<sup>19</sup> Francovich, in partnership with fellow archaeologist Richard Hodges, frankly states that “it is now apparent that archaeological evidence no longer affirms Toubert's interpretation based on written sources.”<sup>20</sup> Toubert characterized the organization of population in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries as that of scattered and insulated settlements, and he argued that the villages that form the basis of *castra* did not develop until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, along with the beginnings of *incastellamento*.<sup>21</sup> However, this timeline is not supported in the archaeological record. The villages that were so instrumental to *incastellamento* instead began as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the post-Roman world and continued in a relatively stable fashion through the establishment of the *castra* that characterize *incastellamento*.<sup>22</sup> The idea of a 10<sup>th</sup> century rupture is further undermined by both written and archaeological data that further suggests that peasants in the 9<sup>th</sup> century did not unilaterally vacate or depopulate the countryside as

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>21</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 278.

<sup>22</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 12, 21.

Toubert suggests.<sup>23</sup> Francovich's argument, which is again echoed in Wickham's later work, centers on the evidence of pre-castral occupation of the sites, indicating that *incastellamento* did not necessarily involve the movement to a new site but instead generally involved the transformation of an existing, albeit more dispersed, site.<sup>24</sup> Francovich points to the presence of postholes, indicating the prior existence of wooden settlements, as evidence of this prior habitation.<sup>25</sup> Due to this structural continuity in the transition from the dispersed village to the fortified site, Francovich and Hodges posit that the true break in settlement patterns is in the shift from Roman *villa* to post-Roman villages that occurred in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>26</sup> In this way, according to Francovich, the mechanisms of *incastellamento* began not in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries as Toubert argues, but rather in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The archaeological record that developed after Toubert published his work therefore indicates that *incastellamento* not only occurred centuries before Toubert argues, but also that it represented more of a continuation with than a rupture from past settlement patterns.

The perspective of archaeologists and their opposition to Toubert's arguments continues with the work of Giovanna Bianchi, particularly in the work entitled "Analyzing the Fragmentation during the Early Middle Ages."<sup>27</sup> She echoes the archaeological perspective that Toubert incorrectly claims that *castra* were developed at

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>25</sup> Riccardo Francovich, "Scarlino: Un Castello Della Costa Toscana Fra Storia e Archeologia," in *Castelli. Storia e Archeologia*, ed. R Comba and A.A. Settia (Torino, 1984), 149–188.

<sup>26</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 21–22.

<sup>27</sup> Bianchi, "New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology."

sites with no previous habitation. The main archaeological source for this critique comes from the discovery of wooden structures that were built and used before the construction of the castles that typify *incastellamento*.<sup>28</sup> In fact, these posthole finds form the basis not only for the arguments of Bianchi and Francovich,<sup>29</sup> but also for Tim Potter<sup>30</sup> and Étienne Hubert.<sup>31</sup> Bianchi also points to difficulties and gaps within the written record that are revealed by archaeological research, because although historians interpret settlements categorized as “*curtes*” in the written record as scattered settlements that are not *castra*, archaeological research has revealed that many castral sites have their roots in such settlements.<sup>32</sup> In this way, an overreliance on textual sources can, without the input of context granted by archaeological research, lead to the mischaracterization or bypassing of sites due to their categorization in the written record.

Bianchi also offers critiques of Francovich’s Tuscan Model, arguing that it does not hold up as consistently outside of Tuscany due to the increased variability of the landscape and settlements.<sup>33</sup> One such example is the strong role of monasteries in the shaping of the population and settlement patterns in Northern Italy, which contradicts Francovich’s claim that it was secular lords, not monastic institutions, who primarily drove these changes.<sup>34</sup> This argument is more in line with Toubert’s insistence on the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>29</sup> Francovich, “Scarolino: Un Castello Della Costa Toscana Fra Storia e Archeologia.”

<sup>30</sup> Tim W. Potter, “Recenti ricerche in Etruria meridionale: problemi della transizione dal tardo antico all’alto medioevo,” *Archeologia Medievale; Firenze* 2 (January 1, 1975): 235–236.

<sup>31</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 589.

<sup>32</sup> Bianchi, “New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology,” 304.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 308.

primacy of abbeys in the construction of *castra*. *Castra* that were organized by monasteries thus offer an opportunity to synthesize both archaeological and textual sources, as excavation sites offer a material record and monastic archives offer a strong written record. In this way, Bianchi's analysis, much like that of Wickham, acts as an example of the use of both material and written sources to analyze *incastellamento* and settlement patterns. This reliance on both types of sources proves particularly valuable as Bianchi's data includes the examination of fortifications constructed out of perishable materials.<sup>35</sup> This knowledge that the fortifications at these sites are not necessarily the typical stone fortifications shows the difficulty of relying solely on the archaeological record, especially when considering the possibility of multiple phases of occupation at each site. Though the fortification of such perishable materials is difficult to find archaeologically, they may be acknowledged or documented in textual sources. A reliance on both textual and material data thus helps to avoid overlooking sites or examples that apply to the analysis.

Bianchi further breaks from Francovich's claim that the settlement changes in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries mark a sharp and decisive break in the settlement patterns. Instead, Bianchi posits that new data from archaeological excavations indicates that this transformation "cannot be thought of as marking a total break with previous settlement patterns, but as the phase of initial formation, or reoccupation, of upland sites."<sup>36</sup> Emphasizing the variability of the organizational patterns of settlement in medieval Italy, Bianchi acts as an intermediary between the two extremes of Francovich and Toubert, at

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 316.

least in terms of when the break in settlement patterns occurs. While Francovich claims the break occurs in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and Toubert claims the sharp break is found in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Bianchi offers a third, more nuanced option in which the biggest transformation occurs in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, but that even then the transition contains continuities from previous patterns. Bianchi therefore claims there is no sharp break in settlement patterns in this period at all, as the continuity between patterns is stronger than the changes between them.

Furthermore, French archaeologist Étienne Hubert presents another counterargument rooted in the material record. Hubert, joining the voices of many archaeologists, criticizes Toubert for his dependence on purely textual data and argues that archaeological data can be instrumental in further understanding *incastellamento* in its particularities. Centering his work around archaeological excavations done in Sabina, a region in eastern Lazio, Hubert particularly focuses on the distribution of ceramics at the sites.<sup>37</sup> Specifically, Hubert takes issue with Toubert's argument regarding the timing and process of *incastellamento*. According to Toubert, *incastellamento* started around A.D. 950 and proceeded in a relatively uniform fashion, building upon the agency of monastic lords and the added institution of *livelli* contracts that both allowed for the structures necessary for such a concentrated society.<sup>38</sup> Contrarily, Hubert argues that archaeological survey has revealed what textual sources missed: that the birth of the *castra* and sites of *incastellamento* followed one of two patterns, one driven by wealthy secular landowners describing the construction at a new site of which the original

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<sup>37</sup> Hubert, "L'incastellamento Dans Le Latium," 587.

<sup>38</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 519.

intention was not the concentration or control of the population, but rather a small, private habitation site for the secular lords that eventually evolved into the castral sites, and the other consisting of the fortification of sites containing the “remains of a [previous] habitat more or less concentrated, under the form of numerous postholes for wooden constructions.”<sup>39</sup>

For the first pattern, Hubert uses evidence found during excavations done in the Turano Valley. Hubert finds that this pattern of *incastellamento* occurs primarily in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and begins with the construction of small *castella* and structures in *villae* by who textual sources identify as wealthy, secular landowners.<sup>40</sup> As the population became more and more concentrated, these small castles, which at their inception must have had “no direct influence neither on the distribution of rural people nor on the organization of the land,” became administrative centers for the settlement that transformed into the concentrated settlement of *incastellamento*, differentiated primarily based on the scale of the site.<sup>41</sup> Many of these settlements lack older occupancy. These findings, which Hubert supports with excavations from Montagliano, the castle of Sant’Agnese, and Rocca Baldesca indicate that the *castra* were not built originally as castral sites but instead evolved out of a smaller, more dispersed settlement. Hubert’s evidence in this area is therefore in agreement with the findings of both Wickham and Francovich, contrasting with Toubert’s argument that the *castra* were built at sites

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<sup>39</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 590–592. “*les vestiges d’un habitat plus ou moins concentré, sous la forme de nombreux trous de poteaux de constructions en bois.*” (All translations of this work are my own.)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 590.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 590–591. “*aucune influence directe sur la distribution du peuplement rural ni sur l’organisation des terroirs.*”



separate from the former dispersed settlements. Toubert may have grouped these nascent sites immediately with *castra* due to the terminology used within the monastic documentation, which may have failed to reflect that the *castra* were initially *villae*. In fact, according to Hubert, the transition from *villa* to *castrum* in the textual record took more than fifty years. The small castle “was not thought of at the moment of its foundation as a center of aggregation of rural people, still largely dispersed in their agricultural farming.”<sup>42</sup> However, Hubert does not clarify the initial motivation for the construction of these small castles, nor does he explain why the peasants eventually concentrated around them, instead focusing on the material evidence itself as drawn from the structures found on archaeological survey.

The eventual centralization of the rural population around the small castles that became the center of administration was not the original intent of the wealthy landowners who constructed the initial structures.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with Toubert’s model, which focuses on the intent and discretion of lords who intentionally organized *castra* to further their own interests and goals, be them monetary or influential. Though Hubert’s model lacks a catalyst for this concentration of peasants around the small castles, Toubert’s argument surrounding the *livello* contract may offer a possible explanation. Additionally, in Toubert’s model, the primary drivers were not secular, wealthy landowners but were instead ecclesiastical lords who utilized their land as an opportunity to aggregate the farming community and intensify the production of agriculture, which in turn increased the wealth and influence of the lords themselves. Toubert’s model does not allow for the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 591. “*n’était donc pas conçu au moment de sa foundation comme un centre d’agrégation du peuplement rural, encore largement dispersé dans les exploitations agricoles.*”

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

widespread development of *castra* at the site of a prior *villa*, as he argues that the *castra* were developed at new sites, not at those of previously existing sites of settlement.

Hubert's second pattern for the development of *castra* focuses on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and involves the fortification of a previously dispersed settlement, citing excavations at Caprigano and Collato as evidence. Analyzing the distribution of ceramics, Hubert finds that at these sites there was a complete dearth of artifacts dating before the ceramics of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, indicating that the grouped habitats do not date before the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> The analysis of the ceramics assemblage is used primarily for dating the site as opposed to describing the habits of the people who lived there. The findings of the excavations also show the presence of postholes for wooden structures that precede *incastellamento* both inside and outside of the fortification wall, showing that "*incastellamento* could have involved sites of grouped but open habitats, of which the written sources attribute the existence under the name of '*villa*.'"<sup>45</sup> It is important to note, however, that wooden fortification could have been present that deteriorated in the time since abandonment, as suggested by his acknowledgement of the presence of other wooden structures. In these cases, *incastellamento* – marked, for Hubert, by fortification construction such as towers and surrounding border walls – occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, later than in the first pattern. This once more directly contrasts with Toubert's arguments regarding the stark separation of sites of dispersed settlement and sites of fortified settlement. However, the castral sites that Hubert refers to are documented in the written record as *villae*, a type of settlement

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. "*l'incastellamento a pu intéresser des sites d'habitats groupés mais ouverts, dont les sources écrites attestent l'existence sous le nom de villa.*"

structurally consistent with the previous dispersed lowland settlement organization, again suggesting potential weaknesses in relying solely on the written record. Hubert's suggestion that these cases of *incastellamento* were overlooked in the written record do to a misrepresentation of the sites as *villae* instead of *castra* might explain why Toubert, with his reliance on this very written data, fails to account for such sites where an open settlement transformed into a centralized and fortified one.

Unlike Toubert, who describes fortification of settlements and the concentration of the rural population as connected in one transformation in *incastellamento*, Hubert instead recognizes that there exists a "dissociation" between the two, at least in Sabina, writing that "the two phenomena of the concentration of settlement and of fortification are neither interlocked nor tied by a unique chronological relationship."<sup>46</sup> In this way, Hubert argues that the concentration of population could have come before the fortification of the site, or *vice versa*, once again allowing for a degree of variability that is lost in Toubert's more monolithic analysis. As Toubert argues that *incastellamento* involves the movement of people from sites of dispersed settlement to (different) sites of concentrated, fortified settlement, his model describes a direct relationship between the concentration of population and fortification of settlement; as one develops, the other does as well. Hubert's claim that the two phenomena can be separated and that one can precede the other is a step away from Toubert's synchronized view. This movement of these two elements together is reflected in the written records and charters, but there is, according to Hubert, no definitive example of this in the archaeological record.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 592. "*les deux phénomènes de concentration du peuplement et de fortification ne sont pas imbriqués entre eux ni liés par un rapport chronologique unique.*"

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 593.

Moreover, contrasting with Toubert's view of the primacy and agency of monastic lords in *incastellamento*, Hubert further argues that there may be several motivations for *incastellamento*. One potential motivation, he argues, is the maintenance of administrative duties, as "the *castrum* is not a center of settlement or even principally a military center made for the defense of a territory but seems to respond primarily to the necessities of control of large landed properties and their administration."<sup>48</sup> Hubert, however, fails to specify the precise evidence from which he draws this conclusion. As this model focuses on the role of the landed elites, it is, in this way, similar to Toubert's and its emphasis on aspects, albeit initially incomplete aspects, of feudal organizational structures. Another option for the drivers of *incastellamento* is that of a large family or a lordly secular group that constructs the fortifications that transfer a site from a *villa* to a *castrum*.<sup>49</sup> This view complements that of Toubert in its emphasis on the role of wealthy elites and its top-down structure. Despite the fact that Toubert thought *incastellamento* did not occur at sites of *villa*, the mechanism and process of this motivation, with the lords acting as the driving force, corroborates Toubert's view.

Generally, Hubert's offers more nuance in the understanding of particular sites and patterns and makes the phenomenon of *incastellamento* less of a monolith, allowing for greater variability in the specifics of each case. An almost complete reliance on just textual data leaves out part of the story as the written record, such as the records at the abbey of Farfa upon which Toubert relies so heavily, in this case tends to apply "a single

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. "le castrum n'est pas à l'origine un centre de peuplement ni même principalement un centre militaire édifié pour la défense du terroire mais paraît répondre davantage aux nécessités de contrôle des grandes propriétés foncière et de leur gestion."

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

word (*castellum* in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries then *castrum* beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries) to diverse realities.”<sup>50</sup> The written record fails to reflect the particularities and variances between different sites, and this weakness is manifest in Toubert’s work and its failure to allow for significant variance in cases, instead holding to one general pattern. Hubert argues here that the umbrella terms of *castellum* and *castrum*, which were widely utilized in the written record, are applied too loosely to settlements that were highly variable, grouping them into one category where instead multiple categories should exist. A heavy reliance on only one type of source thus has the danger of resulting in an oversimplification of a situation that is, in reality, more complicated.

Though Toubert’s work and even some of his key arguments have been challenged, particularly by archaeologists, in the time since publication, Toubert’s analysis remains a useful component of the study of *incastellamento*, and future studies should continue to reference Toubert’s ideas and findings. Toubert’s study is comprehensive in a manner that is heretofore unmatched, and the structures and patterns he lays out regarding the mechanisms and driving forces behind *incastellamento* remain helpful in the analysis of other sites, especially through comparisons with archaeological findings. Even though aspects of Toubert’s arguments that have since been disputed by other scholars, his analysis remains valuable in pinpointing weaknesses in the written record or areas that should be further studied.

Much of the archaeological findings in Italy during this period were discovered after the publication of *Les structures du Latium méviéval* in 1973, explaining why Toubert relied almost completely on the written record. However, in the time since

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 590. “un mot unique (*castellum* aux X<sup>e</sup> et XI<sup>e</sup> siècles puis *castrum* à partir des XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles) des réalités diverses.”

publication, Toubert has responded to critiques of his work on several occasions, building upon his analysis and at times altering the aspects that have since been disproven. He even concedes that “archaeology could show that there was a pre-castral phase of occupation of sites that became castral in the 10<sup>th</sup> century,”<sup>51</sup> addressing a major critique of his arguments and thus suggesting that an analysis of *incastellamento* should include not only textual, but also material, sources. At round tables following the publication of his work, Toubert called for an intensification in archaeological research in order to fill the gaps found within his model,<sup>52</sup> as well as for “a dialogue between those who work in the ‘textual terrain’ and those who work in the ‘archaeological terrain.’”<sup>53</sup> These responses also make the case for Toubert’s continued relevancy in the study of *incastellamento* though its application in conjunction with archaeological sources.

The written record can be slow to reflect changes in reality that were implemented years prior, and basing conclusions for a region as a whole on written sources primarily from one source – as Toubert does with his emphasis on Farfa – forces the analysis to reply on the interpretations of a few scribes on practices only within that general area. Those documenting the records may add a new word to reflect a new practice, but do so later than the practice originated, or, conversely, they can mistakenly add a new term where it is not needed since it is difficult to categorize diverse systems, particularly those as nebulous as settlement patterns. On the one hand, archaeology can enrich the findings in the written record, particularly regarding the organizational planning of a settlement,

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<sup>51</sup> Pierre Toubert, “Conclusion,” *Travaux de la Maison de l’Orient* 4, no. 1 (1983): 210.

<sup>52</sup> Comba, Rinaldo, and A. A. Settia. “Castelli. Storia e archeologia.” *Atti del convegno (Cuneo, December 6-8 1981), Torino* (1984): 407.

<sup>53</sup> Toubert, “Conclusion,” 212.

which can be an important indicator for *incastellamento*.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the written record can provide context and information when faced with a dearth of material sources, particularly when the structures or items are perishable or are difficult to identify archaeologically. One example of this is the role of the *livello* contract in the institution of *incastellamento*. Though it is emphasized in the historical sources,<sup>55</sup> the archaeologists make short – if any – reference to it. Therefore, a complete reliance on archaeological sources can also lead to oversight, such as missing the levels of society that do not often leave a discernible footprint on the ground, such as ecclesiastical lords, perhaps explaining why Francovich gives them so little agency in his model. It is thus most beneficial to use a combination of written and archaeological sources in analyzing the past. In the case of the study of *incastellamento*, the work of both Wickham and Bianchi offer templates on how to synthesize the two types of sources and how to use one type of source to compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

In the next chapter, I will use such a synthesis of sources to analyze the castle atop the San Giuliano Plateau, a castral site, in a comparative context with other excavated castral sites in Lazio. Before this interdisciplinary analysis, however, I will first refine a definition of *incastellamento*, drawing upon the work of both historians and archaeologists, before using that definition to trace how *incastellamento* is identified in the material record. I will use Toubert's model to analyze the site at San Giuliano in order to determine if its structures match the general patterns he puts forth, but I will also compare it with other similar archaeological examples of castral sites.

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<sup>54</sup> Hubert, "L'incastellamento Dans Le Latium," 593.

<sup>55</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 516–33; Feller, "L'incastellamento inachevé des Abruzzes," 128–129.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Incastellamento* and the Artifacts of Life

Having established both Toubert's and archaeologists' major arguments regarding *incastellamento*, I will analyze in this chapter how *incastellamento* is seen through material culture. I will evaluate the ways archaeologists interpret archaeological data in ways that yield conclusions about changes in society and why and when the settlement patterns transform. To do this, I will first formulate a working definition of *incastellamento* that takes into account both the historical and archaeological understanding of the phenomenon. Next, I will view *incastellamento* through previous archaeological excavations held in Italy, then I will apply those principles to the unfinished excavation of a medieval castle at San Giuliano in order to identify the aspects of the castle that are traditionally affiliated with *incastellamento*. I ultimately determine that San Giuliano's castle does satisfy the definitional criteria required to be categorized a *castrum*. However, as I explained in the previous chapter, it is beneficial to maintain an interdisciplinary approach, so I will consider what Toubert's analysis could add to the archaeological conclusions. I will conclude that an approach that encompasses both archaeological and historical methods of analysis is more comprehensive than an approach that focuses on just one, as each approach reconciles some of the weaknesses of the other.

Before the analyzing the ways that *incastellamento* is visible in material data, it is necessary to formulate a working definition of the phenomenon that will be used in this

thesis' analysis, as there is not yet one that is commonly agreed upon within the field. This interpretation, which is based off of both Toubert's research and archaeological findings, will dictate how *incastellamento* is identified on a site-to-site basis. The fundamental aspects of *incastellamento* remain from the analyses described in earlier chapters: *incastellamento* denotes the movement of population from dispersed settlements to hilltop sites centered around a fortified castle. However, the working definition will make departures from the specifics of others in terms of chronology and the type of materials required for a site to be considered as part of the *incastellamento* process.

Starting first with the timing of *incastellamento*, the chronology applied to the term is widely debated, as described in the previous chapter. Toubert argues that *incastellamento* is largely limited to the mid-10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries;<sup>1</sup> Wickham acknowledges this traditional 10<sup>th</sup>-century starting date while tracing the break in settlement patterns centuries earlier;<sup>2</sup> archaeologists such as Francovich hold that the phenomenon begins as early as the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>3</sup> while Hubert finds evidence for castral settlements as late as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the bulk of the construction dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> As the major break in the nature of settlement patterns stems from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, I place *incastellamento* primarily within the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because I find the structures of *incastellamento* to be more relevant than a narrow timeline, this definition is not restricted by a specific span of time within this period, as others such as

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<sup>1</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, XXXIV.

<sup>2</sup> Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 97–98.

<sup>3</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 21–22.

<sup>4</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 591.

Toubert and Hubert have argued, and it is thus inclusive of sites outside of Toubert's traditional time period. The construction of castles are a part of the same organizational trend that began after the significant shift in the settlement patterns in the 6<sup>th</sup> century when the Roman villa system began to decline, regardless of when they were built after this time. The construction of *castra* tends to fall into one of three major models: 1. a state-sponsored Byzantine or Lombard border fort, 2. an enterprise driven by ecclesiastical or secular lords, and 3. an initiative driven by the community itself.<sup>5</sup> Major variations in the timing of the construction of castles within this time period can be one indicator marking the models of *incastellamento*, as the first model is typically chronologically earlier than the latter two, which are difficult to differentiate archaeologically. The differences between the *Ager Faliscus* and *Ager Veientanus* will exemplify this discrepancy in timing.

Next, regarding the materials needed for the site to be considered as a part of *incastellamento*, this definition requires the presence of stone fortifications. Stone fortifications seem to be inextricably tied to *incastellamento* throughout Toubert's analysis, and the presence of stone construction allows for a clear demarcation within the material record that makes *incastellamento* easier to identify archaeologically. Wooden fortifications would therefore not be indicative of an *incastellamento castrum* itself, but rather a precursor to it. In other words, they play a role in the larger trends of *incastellamento*, but they do not represent part of the castral structure itself. Stone fortifications are suggestive of an intensification in the buttressing of a site and marks an increase in the investment, of both money and labor, placed in the protective structures

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<sup>5</sup> Davide Zori, "The 2017 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project," in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2017 Season*, 2017, 26.

compared to a wooden fortification. Additionally, stone walls are more impressive than those made of wood, and there is thus a politico-ideological difference between stone and wooden structures. These distinctions are sufficiently important to warrant a definitional demarcation between wooden and stone fortifications. A site thus does not constitute a *castrum* unless there are stone fortifications present.

Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, I define *incastellamento* as the movement, in the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, from dispersed settlements to elevated hilltop sites centered around a castle with stone fortifications. This definition is fairly broad and encompasses a large chronological period because the term is simply meant to capture the centralization of the population at defensible and fortified hilltop sites. Such a definition still allows for the internal variances of *incastellamento*, most notably manifest in the three castral models of a defensive border fort, an enterprise of an ecclesiastical or secular lord, and an initiative undertaken by the community. The definition is meant to have this flexibility in order to offer a sufficient framework of analysis while also accounting for these different manifestations of the phenomenon.

Even within the region of Lazio, the chronology of the shift to elevated sites varied, and this variance can be measured archaeologically by tracking the different phases of occupation at comparable sites. The Farfa Survey, an archaeological field survey completed in the area surrounding Farfa in Lazio, shows differences in the timing and motivation of the initial move to elevated sites in the ancient *Ager Veientanus* and *Ager Faliscus*. The *Ager Veientanus* refers to “the territories of which Veii was the capital and the natural centre (sic),”<sup>6</sup> therefore covering parts of Southern Etruria. The

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Kahane, Leslie Murray Threipland, and John Ward-Perkins, “The Ager Veientanus, North and East of Veii,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 36 (1968): 2.

ancient *Ager Faliscus* is an area that begins 20 km north of Rome, encapsulating Northeastern Lazio and has as its center the ancient town of Falerii, which today is Civita Castellana.<sup>7</sup> The *Ager Faliscus* is therefore farther north than the *Ager Veientanus* and formed part of the border between the area dominated by the Lombards and the Duchy of Rome, a region controlled by the Byzantines, therefore marking a zone of contention.<sup>8</sup>

The shift from dispersed to concentrated settlement in these two areas “took different forms,”<sup>9</sup> as the movement happened first in the *Ager Faliscus* and only centuries later occurred in the *Ager Veientanus*. The earlier sites of centralized settlement within the *Ager Faliscus* were constructed in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and were likely built with defensive motivations, possibly at the command of Byzantine military commanders, in order to develop “strategic hamlets” to demarcate this contested border area.<sup>10</sup> The field survey found at these sites reveal large amounts of a type of ceramic known as Forum ware (or *ceramica a vetrina pesante*) that helps to date the structures, as this type of pottery dates back as far as A.D. 600.<sup>11</sup> This timeline supports the view that the concentrated settlements within the *Ager Faliscus* were built by the Byzantines in order to satisfy concerns about defense likely brought on by possible incursions by the Lombards. Examples of these sites include Mazzano Romano, Castel Porciano, and Ponte Nepesino, the latter of which will be analyzed in more detail later in the chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy W. Potter, *Roman Italy* (University of California Press, 1987), 216; Gabriël Bakkum, “The Latin Dialect of the Ager Faliscus: 150 Years of Scholarship,” *Mnemosyne* 62, no. 4 (January 1, 2009): 704.

<sup>8</sup> Potter, *Roman Italy*, 216.

<sup>9</sup> David Whitehouse and Timothy Potter, “The Byzantine Frontier in South Etruria,” *Antiquity* 55, no. 215 (November 1, 1981): 209.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Potter, *Roman Italy*, 216–217.

In the *Ager Veientanus*, on the other hand, the shift from dispersed to nucleated settlement came much later. According to the Farfa survey, the *villa* system remained undisturbed in this area until the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the population finally transitioned to concentrated and fortified settlement.<sup>12</sup> The shift between settlement types was therefore more accelerated in the more northern part of Lazio than in the area closer to Rome, a difference most likely explained by the frontier between two powers and the heightened defensive concerns that came with it.

Looking more generally at this transformation, there has been debate among archaeologists as to whether the movement to elevated sites resulted in a considerable depopulation of the rural countryside. Étienne Hubert is one proponent of this view, arguing that this depopulation could be seen in the abandonment of Roman villas beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and their total collapse in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century. The argument itself is based on the lack of medieval ceramics during this time of ‘depopulation,’ including, as the Farfa survey revealed, a disappearance of 86% of the ceramics at villas in the region that dated to this time.<sup>13</sup> Archaeologists also cite evidence indicating the importation of African ceramics, most notably African red slip pottery, at these sites ended in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries after a notable fall in its circulation in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century and that its absence remains until the production of Forum ware at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> This argument has, more recently, been challenged by archaeologists who supplement this data with religious and funerary data as well as textual evidence of

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<sup>12</sup> F. Cameron et al., “Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma,” *Archeologia Medievale; Firenze* 11 (January 1, 1984): 66.

<sup>13</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 588.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; Helen Patterson, Helga di Giuseppe, and Rob Witcher, “Three South Etrurian ‘Crises’: First Results of the Tiber Valley Project,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004): 22.

occupation, all of which indicate that the area was not completely depopulated but instead saw a more continuous settlement than the survey results suggest.<sup>15</sup>

Archaeologists look for several points of material evidence at excavations in order to determine if a settlement was part of the phenomenon of *incastellamento*. One such focus of analysis is on ceramics. Pottery is “one of the most eloquent markers for the analysis of both trade and social complexity.”<sup>16</sup> It is important to note, however, that trade is fueled primarily by the elite, as the peasant demand would not be concentrated or widespread enough to have major impacts on the economic trade market.<sup>17</sup> Pottery has several qualities that make it useful in the study of archaeology. First, it is ubiquitous in nature; second, it has excellent preservation through time; and third, it is datable. For the combination of these reasons, scatters of pottery are the primary target for settlement surveys. Methodologically, this is important for the study of *incastellamento* because the question of chronology is key in identifying *castra* and differentiating between the three models, and the pervasiveness and durability of ceramics allow for archaeologists to establish the date of a site early on in its analysis.

Looking specifically at *incastellamento* and settlement, Forum ware (*ceramica a vetrina pesante*), as mentioned in the above analysis of the *Ager Veientanus* and the *Ager Faliscus*, is particularly important in dating and categorizing sites. Forum ware is “[t]he

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<sup>15</sup> Patterson, di Giuseppe, and Witcher, “Three South Etrurian ‘Crises,’” 21.

<sup>16</sup> Francesca Grassi, “Production, Consumption and Political Complexity: Early Medieval Pottery in Castile and Southern Tuscany (7th-10th Centuries)” (Archaeopress, 2016), 93.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Wickham, “Rethinking the Structure of the Early Medieval Economy.,” in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 19–33.

earliest recognized medieval lead-glazed ceramic from Rome and the Campagna.”<sup>18</sup>

Initially, Forum ware was thought to date to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, the data has since indicated that it may date as early as A.D. 600.<sup>19</sup> This date has important implications for the study of *incastellamento*, because the presence of this type of ceramics at sites gives an indication of the date of occupation. Whitehouse and Potter argue that at potential *incastellamento* sites, the presence of Forum ware indicates that there was a phase of occupation prior to the construction of the *castrum* itself and that “the establishment of these sites has nothing to do with the widespread process of *incastellamento*, much of which occurred in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.”<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, their definition of *incastellamento* is more period specific than the one used in this thesis’ analysis. Therefore, in light of the working definition of *incastellamento* as inclusive of sites within the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the presence of Forum ware *may* indicate pre-castral occupation, but only if it is separate from the castle occupation itself. Otherwise, the presence of Forum ware would simply indicate that the castle dates to the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries. An example of this is the Byzantine castral site of Mazzano Romano, where the fortified structure dates to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, well within the *incastellamento* period, and the excavation revealed “relatively large quantities” of Forum ware.<sup>21</sup>

Although not as central to the study of *incastellamento* as Forum ware, African red slip ware can also help archaeologists draw conclusions about a site, as also indicated

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<sup>18</sup> N. J. Christie, “Forum Ware, the Duchy of Rome, and Incastellamento: Problems in Interpretation,” *Archeologia Medievale; Firenze* 14 (January 1, 1987): 451.

<sup>19</sup> Whitehouse and Potter, “The Byzantine Frontier in South Etruria,” 208.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Potter, “Excavations in the Medieval Centre of Mazzano Romano,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 40 (1972): 145.



in the debate about the depopulation of the countryside. African red slip ware is traditionally tied to Roman occupation and can thus help to identify settlement patterns and trade relationships in the Roman period.<sup>22</sup> African ceramics “tend to show patterns of dispersed settlement arranged according to a visible hierarchy, with villas of varying size and wealth interspersed with numerous smaller farms, whether free cultivators or tenants.”<sup>23</sup> As African ceramics must be imported into Italy, its presence can offer implications as to the commerce of the site in question as well as the surrounding trade routes, helping to reveal the webs of interconnectivity between different regions of the Mediterranean. In this way, although African red slip ware is not generally connected to the castral sites, it can act as a helpful indication of the contrast between the settlement types before and during *incastellamento*.

Another key type of material evidence that archaeologists use to analyze *incastellamento* is data that suggests the existence of an earlier habitation, particularly evidence that indicates the presence of earlier wooden structures. As *incastellamento* is tied to construction in stone fortifications, evidence for wooden structures is indicative of an earlier, pre-castral period of occupation and suggests that the castral structure was made at the site where there were prior settlements. Even if a wooden fortification dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, under the updated definition of *incastellamento* used in this thesis, it would not be considered to be castral. One key indicator of earlier occupation is postholes that are situated in a manner that is indicative of wooden structures. Hubert and Francovich are particularly known to rely on postholes as evidence of earlier forms

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<sup>22</sup> Wickham, “Early Medieval Archaeology in Italy,” 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

of settlement at castral sites. Such postholes have been found at several excavations, including those at Scarlino, Montarrenti, Poggibonsi, and Mirandolo, which “brought to light the traces of the early medieval occupation of these sites, attesting to the precocious formation of a new nucleated form of settlement on hilltop locations from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>24</sup> Another example is the site of Caprignano, where the presence of postholes suggests a pre-castral settlement made of wood with no fortification.<sup>25</sup> Although Caprignano shows earlier habitation through the existence of postholes, this data must be taken in conjunction with other material evidence, such as the nature of the ceramics found at the site. In this case, the absence of ceramics or artifacts from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries indicates that these grouped settlements cannot date to the High Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> However, prior occupation is not necessarily required for a site to be tied to *incastellamento*, as the sites of Montagliano, the Casale Sant’Agnese, and Rocca Baldesca lack any remnant of a form of older occupation, yet they meet the archaeological and criteria of the working definition of *incastellamento* to be categorized as *castra*.<sup>27</sup>

Archaeologists also analyze the type and nature of the fortifications – if they are present – at the sites in order to look for indicators of *incastellamento*. The material and time of the fortification can suggest whether a settlement is a part of this process, as stone

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<sup>24</sup> Gian Pietro Brogiolo, “Italian Medieval Archaeology: Recent Developments and Contemporary Changes,” in *Reflections: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology, 1957-2007: No. 30: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology, 1957-2007* (Routledge, 2018), 157–158.

<sup>25</sup> Alessandra Molinari, “Siti rurali e poteri signorili nel Lazio (secoli X-XIII),” *Archeologia Medievale* 37 (2010): 140.

<sup>26</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 591.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

fortification dating to the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries would denote castral structure. While the presence of wooden fortifications would be indicative of some of the same pressures and motivations as are present in *castra*, they do not qualify as fully castral structures under the working definition of *incastellamento* because they lack the increase in intensity and investment of both resources and labor that is exemplified in stone fortifications. In addition to stone fortification, which is heavily associated with *incastellamento* throughout Toubert's analysis, a castral site can also be connected with masonry and the use of lime mortar.<sup>28</sup> Archaeologists therefore analyze the date and material of the surrounding fortifications when determining whether a structure is a site of *incastellamento*.

Applying the analytical framework of ceramics, postholes, and fortifications to the examination of a particular excavation, the site of Ponte Nepesino is an example of a settlement that is driven by *incastellamento* and falls into the first model: a Byzantine border fort. Ponte Nepesino lies next to a river and an ancient Roman structure associated with a source of mineral water, which was potentially a factor in the choice of site.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, Toubert posits that availability of water is a condition when choosing where to build the settlement.<sup>30</sup> The analysis of Ponte Nepesino focuses primarily on the presence of Forum ware and concludes that the site enjoyed three periods of occupation. The first period, dominated by the Forum ware that dates as early as 600, ended around 774-776 and included wooden structures and the absolute lack of late imperial ceramics

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 593.

<sup>29</sup> Cameron et al., "Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma," 70.

<sup>30</sup> Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 154–158.

such as *terra sigillata chiara* or imported amphorae.<sup>31</sup> The second period continues until as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, though not later than 1026, and includes “uninterrupted boundary walls, a greater number of wooden structures, [and] *ceramica con invetriatura sparsa*,” a type of pottery following Forum ware that usually dates from the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>32</sup> The third period extends from 1026 to 1328, and although it does contain Forum ware, its presence is considered residual and its use relegated to the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>33</sup> This period includes the first buildings of stone and lacks ceramics from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>34</sup> The amount of Forum ware present at Ponte Nepesino indicates that the beginning of occupation of this site is “well before traditional *incastellamento* of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>35</sup> This is not entirely surprising as Ponte Nepesino is in the *Ager Falisco*, where the move to concentrated settlement occurred much earlier than in the *Ager Veientanus*.

In this way, Ponte Nepesino acts more as a ‘strategic hamlet’ for the Byzantine forces than as a private or village-driven endeavor, much like the case of Mazzano Romano, as well.<sup>36</sup> The location of Ponte Nepesino also lends itself to the characterization of a Byzantine border fort. The site overlooks a Roman road called the *Via Amerina*, allowing it to monitor the movements along the road. Additionally, as

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<sup>31</sup> Cameron et al., “Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma,” 67, 97, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. “*Mura di cinta ininterrotte, un maggior numero di strutture in legno, ceramica con invetriatura sparsa*.” (All translations for this work are my own.)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 67, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>35</sup> Potter, *Roman Italy*, 217.

<sup>36</sup> Cameron et al., “Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma,” 134.

Ponte Nepesino's location is in a known border area, and as "the *Via Amernia* was an indispensable corridor for communication between Rome and Ravenna," it was likely built as a fort that was "subordinate to the [nearby] garrison of Nepi."<sup>37</sup> Its subordinate status is emphasized in the analysis of animal bone and fauna, which suggest that "the inhabitants were not self-sufficient" and likely received support from the outside.<sup>38</sup> The archaeological evidence thus indicates that the site of Ponte Nepesino is an example of a Byzantine border fort or garrison, the first type of *incastellamento castrum*.

Another archaeological site analyzed in relation to *incastellamento* is that of the Casale San Donato. The site shows a total absence of imported Roman fine wares and early Forum ware, which suggests that the first occupation of the site dates to somewhere between the late-6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>39</sup> In fact, "[a]part from some re-used architectural pieces, Roman material culture is entirely absent from the site."<sup>40</sup> Although there is no indication that there was ever a villa at the same location, the Farfa survey suggests that there was one about 100 meters southwest of Casale San Donato.<sup>41</sup> If this villa was occupied during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, that could suggest that the population moved from the nearby villa to the site at Casale San Donato.

The evidence points from the excavation to three phases of occupation at Casale San Donato. In general terms, "the earliest occupation phases are characterized by

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 143. "*la Via Amernia era un corridoio indispensabile pe le comunicazione tra Rome e Ravenna*"; "*subordinato alla guarnigione di Nepi*."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; Potter, *Roman Italy*, 217.

<sup>39</sup> J. Moreland and M. Pluciennik, "Excavation at Casale San Donato, Castel Nuovo Di Farfa (RI) 1990," *Archeologia Medievale* 18 (January 1, 1991): 208.

<sup>40</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 66.

<sup>41</sup> Moreland and Pluciennik, "Excavation at Casale San Donato, Castel Nuovo Di Farfa (RI) 1990," 215.

wooden structures [identified by postholes] that are later replaced by stone buildings.”<sup>42</sup> The first phase dates to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and could possibly correspond to the movement of the Lombards.<sup>43</sup> The second phase is likely connected with the acquisition and expansion of the site by the abbey of Farfa, as San Donato was given to Farfa by the Lombards.<sup>44</sup> The third phase of occupation is presumably that of the fortified village as seen in *incastellamento*, as was indicated by the 1046 textual reference of the site as a *castellum* in medieval documentation.<sup>45</sup> In terms of the fortification of the site, there is evidence of the construction of stone walls around the top of the hill that followed the presence of presumably wooden structures,<sup>46</sup> again indicating that San Donato was a site of *incastellamento*.

However, the prevailing opinions regarding the nature of the Casale San Donato remain split. To Francovich and Hodges, the site’s origins lie in a “proto-village in wood” that would later turn into a *castrum*, while, for Hubert, “this site can in no way be a village.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, Hubert argues that San Donato is an isolated settlement rather than a grouped habitat.<sup>48</sup> Wickham, on the other hand, views it as, in all intents and purposes,

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<sup>42</sup> Patterson, di Giuseppe, and Witcher, “Three South Etrurian ‘Crises,’” 27.

<sup>43</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 589.

<sup>45</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 68; Moreland and Pluciennik, “Excavation at Casale San Donato, Castel Nuovo Di Farfa (RI) 1990,” 210.

<sup>46</sup> Moreland and Pluciennik, “Excavation at Casale San Donato, Castel Nuovo Di Farfa (RI) 1990,” 209–210.

<sup>47</sup> Molinari, “Siti rurali e poteri signorili nel Lazio (secoli X-XIII),” 130. “Per Hubert questo sito non può essere ni nessun modo un villaggio.” (All translations of this work are my own.)

<sup>48</sup> Hubert, “L’incastellamento Dans Le Latium,” 589.

the equivalent of “the early medieval version of a Roman villa.”<sup>49</sup> Francovich and Hodges go on to connect the site to the larger debate regarding the depopulation of the countryside, arguing that the occupation of San Donato in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries “confirms the impression we gain from the (ninth century) documents that the countryside was not abandoned and depopulated.”<sup>50</sup> In any case, whatever the disputed nature of San Donato, it satisfies the definition of a *castrum*, and its dissimilarities with Ponte Nepesino, including its later chronology and lack of strategic positioning, indicates it is not a border fort. However, as is often the case with archaeological study, a bright line rule to differentiate between the last two models of *incastellamento* remains elusive. Many of their characteristics are archaeologically similar and require the supplemental analysis of textual sources.

Using these analyses of two different types of castral sites as a guide, I will now use the same principles to analyze the ongoing medieval excavation at San Giuliano in Lazio. The site is found in Marturanum Regional Park and is near the modern village of Barbarano Romano in the Province of Viterbo. Organized by the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project, the medieval excavation has been ongoing since 2016 and focuses on the remains of a castle found on the east side of the San Giuliano Plateau. This structure is known as La Rocca. There is also a Romanesque church on the plateau, near the center, and it is from this church that the plateau itself derived its name.<sup>51</sup> Near to the excavation site are the remains of a collapsed tower, and the site is bounded on one

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<sup>49</sup> Molinari, “Siti rurali e poteri signorili nel Lazio (secoli X-XIII),” 131. “*la versione altomedievale di una villa romana.*”

<sup>50</sup> Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Zori, “The 2017 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 18.

side by a dry moat that is “augmented by a cut-stone wall on the eastern edge, accentuat[ing] the natural defensibility of the high ground at La Rocca.”<sup>52</sup>

Given the region’s Villanovan and Etruscan history, it comes as no real surprise that there is evidence for several eras of activity prior to the medieval castle at San Giuliano. In fact, “[c]eramic evidence suggests that the earliest activity in this area dates to the 8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.”<sup>53</sup> San Giuliano site is near several Roman roads and there is even a main gate that is likely Etruscan, though it was altered during the medieval age when the tower was constructed near to the gate.<sup>54</sup> It is also possible that La Rocca was occupied during the Archaic and Classical periods.<sup>55</sup> Although Etruscan ceramics were found in the excavation of the medieval site, “there is as of yet no evidence of Etruscan buildings or stone (or wood) in the areas of La Rocca subjected to excavation,” nor is there “clear evidence for a wooden structure dating to the medieval period preceding the primary structure.”<sup>56</sup> This is certainly a break from the clear evidence of early medieval wooden structures found at Ponte Nepesino and Casale San Donato, although it is important to note that plenty other sites do not have such evidence, such as the *castrum* at Montagliano.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, although this lack of postholes to indicate earlier wooden

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<sup>52</sup> Colleen Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2018 Season*, 2018, 37.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Davide Zori, “The 2018 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2018 Season*, 2018, 29.

<sup>55</sup> Veronica-Gaia Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau: Trench 1,” in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2018 Season*, 2017, 98.

<sup>56</sup> Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” 82.

<sup>57</sup> E. Minicis and E. Hubert, “‘Indagine archeologica in Sabina: Montagliano, da Casale a “castrum” (secc. IX-XV)’, con relazioni di E. Bonasera, F. Caillaud, D. De Minicis, E. Hubert, N. Lecuyer, M. Mich, V. Romoli, A. Rovelli,” *Archeologia Medievale; Firenze* 18 (January 1, 1991): 491–587.



structures is different from other sites, it is not determinative of whether that site is a part of the process of *incastellamento*. It is possible that the evidence for earlier occupation of La Rocca itself was either destroyed in the process of the construction of the castle or it may even lie somewhere else on the plateau. Indeed, the presence of *tombe a loggette* on the plateau “suggests a presence on the plateau at the time when the area lay on the Byzantine-Lombard border.”<sup>58</sup> However, at this stage in the excavation there is no evidence of any structure that dates to this period.

Regarding the written record, the first documentary evidence of the Romanesque church seemingly affiliated with the castle at La Rocca does not occur until 1573 from a text describing a bishop’s visit to the church.<sup>59</sup> The archeological evidence, however, indicates that the church is older than the documents suggest.<sup>60</sup> Though there is no clear or specific reference to the medieval settlement at La Rocca in the medieval texts, Barbarano Romano does appear in the records starting in 1188, and it therefore “appears that the two sites [Barbarano Romano and La Rocca] were occupied contemporaneously, rather than sequentially.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, records indicate that in A.D. 1141, “Count Farulfo gave the two castles of San Giuliano and San Angelo to the commune of

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<sup>58</sup> Zori, “The 2017 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 38.

<sup>59</sup> Paola Guerrini, “Primi Risultati Dalla Ricognizione Nel Territorio Di Barbarano Romano: Gli Esempi Del Quarto, San Giuliano e La Macchia,” in *Dalla Tuscia Romana Al Territorio Valvense: Problemi Di Topografia Medievale Alla Luce Delle Recenti Ricerche Archeologiche*, ed. Letizia Ermini Pani (Rome: La Società alla Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 2001), 74.

<sup>60</sup> Zori, “The 2017 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 33.

<sup>61</sup> Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” 82.

Viterbo,” and it is likely that this San Giuliano in the documents corresponds to the castle at La Rocca.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of organized phases of occupation, the data suggests that the first occupation indicated through architectural evidence is that of the primary structure itself, which is “characterized by the uniform block size, high-quality masonry, and significant investment in features such as [a] complex threshold/entryway and the use of architectural support trenches to ensure survival of seismic events.”<sup>63</sup> This could be the start of *incastellamento* at La Rocca, which may have begun around the 9<sup>th</sup> century within the local area,<sup>64</sup> though the start at La Rocca is delayed. This first phase leads to the next, which is seen in the use of a granary and storage pits (which were later used as middens), and is one of the growing wealth of the inhabitants of La Rocca.<sup>65</sup> It is interesting to note that this first phase of occupation begins around the 11<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>66</sup> much later than the other sites analyzed earlier, and continues until the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the probable abandonment of La Rocca dating to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup>

The dating of the castle to the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries is supported by ceramic evidence, much like that of Ponte Nepesino and Casale San Donato. The excavation revealed “the presence of sparse glazed wares in association with the occupation

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<sup>62</sup> Davide Zori, “The 2018 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 34–35, citing Guerrini 2003: 262.

<sup>63</sup> Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” 82.

<sup>64</sup> Guerrini, “Primi Risultati Dalla Ricognizione Nel Territorio Di Barbarano Romano: Gli Esempi Del Quarto, San Giuliano e La Macchia,” 75.

<sup>65</sup> Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” 82.

<sup>66</sup> Zori, “The 2017 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 33.

<sup>67</sup> Zori, “Investigation of La Rocca 2018,” 82.

surface.”<sup>68</sup> The lack of Forum ware is one factor that contributes to the later date of La Rocca than Ponte Nepesino – which had Forum ware – and the sparse glazed wares, which follow Forum ware, supports the dating for the occupation of the site. Regarding postholes, it is possible that “some of the pits of indeterminate function may have been postholes,” although “there were only two subterranean features north of the primary structure that could be identified as postholes with any certainty.”<sup>69</sup> However, as there would be so few postholes and they are not arranged in a way that is indicative of early wooden structures, there remains no solid evidence of pre-castral wooden structures.

The ceramics analysis of La Rocca sheds light onto not only the date of the castle but also the social standing of some of the inhabitants. There is evidence of activity at La Rocca prior to the medieval era, as some of the pits contained ceramics dating to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.<sup>70</sup> However, despite this suggestion of earlier activity, it does not act as an indication for earlier habitation or occupation, as the “highly fragmentary nature of the finds suggests incidental deposition” instead.<sup>71</sup> The main area of the structure was probably an elite domain, as shown through finds such as glass, dice, and fine ware.<sup>72</sup> However, plainwares were the most common type of sherd excavated in 2017, as they consisted of 49% of the total number of diagnostic sherds, and 54% in 2018.<sup>73</sup> However,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>70</sup> Veronica-Gaia Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau, 2018: Trench 1 and Trench 2,” in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2018 Season*, 2018, 90.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>72</sup> Zori, “The 2018 Season of the San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project,” 30.

<sup>73</sup> Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau: Trench 1,” 100; Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau, 2018: Trench 1 and Trench 2,” 93.

“[d]espite the utilitarian nature of the plainware assemblage as a whole, some plainware sherds recovered during the 2017 excavations preserve abstract incised and low-relief decoration on the exterior surfaces,”<sup>74</sup> which acts as an indication that those who owned this plainware were not particularly poor.

In terms of Forum ware, which is so prevalent in the usual archaeological analysis of settlement changes, there was a sherd excavated in 2017 that resembled late Forum ware, though it is “best dated to the transitional period (mid-10<sup>th</sup> to mid-11<sup>th</sup> century AD) between late Forum ware and early sparse glaze ware.”<sup>75</sup> This again acts as a contrast with the site of Ponte Nepesino, which had substantial amounts of Forum ware finds. The shift from Forum ware to sparse glazed ware is indicative of the later date of La Rocca compared to the other sites. In fact, the sparse-glazed ware was “the most readily identifiable ceramic evidence” from the main excavation site, which perhaps “suggests a later, 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century AD date for the primary occupation levels,”<sup>76</sup> which would place it in late-stage *incastellamento*. In this way, the ceramics at La Rocca can act as a measure for the dating of the structure just as it did for the other excavation sites, albeit with a focus on a different type of ceramic and, as a result, on a different time period.

The stone fortifications, elevated nature of the site, and 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century date for the castle atop La Rocca satisfies the archaeological criteria to be qualified as a *castrum* under the working definition of *incastellamento*. However, the type of *castrum* – state-sponsored border fort, private ecclesiastical or secular structure, or community-led

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<sup>74</sup> Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau: Trench 1,” 101.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

<sup>76</sup> Ikeshoji-Orlati, “Ceramics from San Giuliano Plateau, 2018: Trench 1 and Trench 2,” 95.

fortification – remains a question. Looking first at the possibility of the first categorization, La Rocca has distinct dissimilarities with the castle at Ponte Nepesino, which is an example of the specific category of *incastellamento* castle identified as a Byzantine border fort acting as a strategic hamlet for defensive purposes. One of the major defensive advantages of Ponte Nepesino is its location looking out over a major road, the *Via Amerina*.<sup>77</sup> However, La Rocca lacks the same sort of administrative or visual vantage point, as it does not overlook a main road as does Ponte Nepesino. Furthermore, though San Giuliano does stand at a location that was at one point part of the frontier between the Lombards and the Byzantines, its timeline does not line up with the sites such as Ponte Nepesino that have been determined to be Byzantine border forts. For example, Ponte Nepesino was likely constructed at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>78</sup> and in general, the other castles built as forts in the *Ager Faliscus* were constructed primarily in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>79</sup> notably earlier than the traditional timeline of *incastellamento* starting in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In this way, though San Giuliano lies closer to (though not inside) the *Ager Faliscus* than the *Ager Veientanus*, the timeline of construction does not correspond with that of known Byzantine border forts.

Additionally, analysis of the animal bones at Ponte Nepesino indicates that the site needed to be supported by a nearby garrison and was not self-sufficient in its farming of plants or animals.<sup>80</sup> La Rocca, however, has zooarchaeological data that potentially

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<sup>77</sup> Cameron et al., “Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma,” 143.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 143–144.

<sup>79</sup> Whitehouse and Potter, “The Byzantine Frontier in South Etruria,” 209.

<sup>80</sup> Cameron et al., “Il castello di Ponte Nepesino e il confine settentrionale del Ducato di Roma,” 143; Potter, *Roman Italy*, 217.

differs from this. The excavation revealed a significant number of animal bones with cut marks indicative of butchering, and the diet of the residents, as determined through an analysis of the animal bones, was a “typical central Mediterranean inland diet [consisting mostly] of sheep/goat and pig.”<sup>81</sup> Although the investigation at San Giuliano is still ongoing, it seems likely that the animals were locally sourced, which would indicate that La Rocca was a self-sufficient settlement in a way that Ponte Nepesino, a border fort, was not. However, it remains possible that the residents of La Rocca received supplies from the outside in the same way that occurred at Ponte Nepesino. The future testing of the isotopes from faunal bones would provide more evidence in this regard. If the former is the case, it would be unlikely that the castle at La Rocca, unlike Ponte Nepesino, was built with the purpose of being a Byzantine border fort or strategic hamlet along the Byzantine-Lombard border. However, the most definitive evidence separating La Rocca from the categorization of a state-driven border fort is the lack of evidence of structures dating to that time.

La Rocca is therefore more similar archaeologically to the Casale San Donato, which acts as an example of a non-border fort construction, as it is either the construction of an ecclesiastical or secular lord or was built due to a bottom-up push from the community. However, as these two models of *incastellamento* are difficult to differentiate archaeologically and the textual record relating to La Rocca is sparse and gives no further indication hinting at the agents behind its construction, the further categorization of the La Rocca *castrum* is inconclusive. Perhaps as the excavation

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<sup>81</sup> Deirdre Fulton, “San Giuliano Plateau Zooarchaeological Analysis, 2018,” in *San Giuliano Archaeological Research Project: Report for the 2018 Season*, 2018, 192.

continues, more material evidence will come to light that will more concretely reveal the exact nature of the site at La Rocca.

The expansive nature of this archaeological data shown at sites such as Ponte Nepesino, Casale San Donato, and San Giuliano (though the excavation is still ongoing), and the variances between the data at each, show how critical archaeological data is to the study of *incastellamento*. Without it, an overreliance on textual sources could drive the analysis towards conclusions that are not reflected in the reality of the settlement. Toubert, in his major work, certainly falls into this trap. Nevertheless, the further analysis of *incastellamento* and, more broadly, changing settlement patterns in the Middle Ages should not disregard Toubert and his work in its entirety, as his research, though much of it has since been proven to be inaccurate, contains recognition and documentation of trends and patterns that still very much affect the understanding of *incastellamento* sites. Certainly, Toubert's emphasis on ecclesiastical lords and their role in *incastellamento* raises several questions about the exact nature of the relationship between the castle at La Rocca and the San Giuliano church.

Even if the details of Toubert's analysis are not directly applicable, the overall understanding and study that he developed informs the context surrounding a specific site. However, as much of his data has been questioned in the long run, it is better to apply his work conceptually. His study is valuable in its contribution to the larger understanding of *incastellamento* as a whole and how its mechanisms work within the broader context of the region and less so in its practical application to a particular site. For instance, his arguments regarding Lazio's retention of the Roman concept of property and how that contributed to the longer duration of the *livello* contract in the region are

enlightening when considering the big-picture understanding of how this affected *incastellamento* and the establishment of feudalism in the region, but they do not contribute much understanding to the investigation of a particular castle. Toubert's understanding of *incastellamento*, despite its flaws, thus remains a valuable perspective from which to view these changing settlements and developing structures of the Middle Ages. Both using exclusively textual or exclusively material sources leads to an analysis that, in the end, is lacking. The textual records that Toubert analyzes are good *comparanda* for the conclusions made from archaeological excavations, and written sources can confirm suspicions developed through the analysis of material data. Rather than aiming for "the total self-sufficiency of archaeology," historians and archaeologists should rather acknowledge that an approach which bridges the gap between both of them results in an analysis that "can ultimately be immensely richer and more complex."<sup>82</sup>

The phenomenon of *incastellamento* is difficult to pin down both in material culture and in textual sources. However, drawing on research from both historians and archaeologists, I formulated a working definition of *incastellamento* from which to identify potential *castra*: the shift from denucleated settlements to elevated hilltop sites centered around a castle with stone fortifications in the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The chronology of *incastellamento* differs even within Lazio between the *Ager Faliscus*, where it began earlier due to its position on the Byzantine/Lombard frontier, and the *Ager Veientanus*, where the move to concentrated settlement was established more leisurely centuries later. Archaeologists focus on several key types of material data in the study of individual sites to analyze them in relation to *incastellamento* and to which model of

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<sup>82</sup> Molinari, "Siti rurali e poteri signorili nel Lazio (secoli X-XIII)," 140. "*la totale autosufficienza dell'archeologia*"; "*può essere alla fine immensamente più ricco e articolato.*"



*incastellamento* they best relate. In particular, ceramics – especially Forum ware, African red slip ware, and sparse glaze pottery – the presence of postholes indicating earlier wooden structures, and the nature and type of the site’s fortifications are the key features that archaeologists analyze when considering a castle from the perspective of *incastellamento*. Ponte Nepesino, with its Forum ware, postholes, early construction date, and the need for outside resources, represents a Byzantine border fort, whereas the Casale San Donato, also with postholes but with differing fortification and a later date of construction, represents either of the latter two models of *incastellamento*: one driven by a private ecclesiastical or secular lord or one completed by a community. The material evidence found in the excavation at La Rocca on the San Giuliano Plateau more closely aligns with that of the Casale San Donato, and it is likely that La Rocca was built as a *castrum* under either of the latter two models for *incastellamento* rather than a state-sanctioned border fort.

Unfortunately, only three seasons into the excavation, it is too early to tell if the construction of La Rocca was driven by a monastic or secular lord or if it was driven by a broader community need in a bottom-up fashion. Other inquiries into the exact nature of the occupation at La Rocca and the purpose for its construction will continue to be explored in future excavation seasons. Although these questions remain unanswered as the excavation at San Giuliano continues, the analysis of La Rocca can be placed into the larger narrative of changing settlement patterns laid out by Toubert, which I explore in detail in the second chapter. For now, considering La Rocca both within the broader context of the mechanisms of *incastellamento* granted by Toubert’s analysis as well as within the more concrete context of the material data granted by the excavation itself

allows for a understanding of the site as a late-stage *castrum* within the process of *incastellamento*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

Pierre Toubert's monumental work launched the wave of historical and archaeological study of *incastellamento* not only in the Lazio region but also farther afield in other regions of Italy, France, and even Spain. For Toubert, it is Lazio's particularities that makes it the perfect region to study, as it is so variant that it allows for the data to be extrapolated outside of Lazio itself, though whether this is entirely true is up for debate as details such as the chronology of *incastellamento* seem to vary between Lazio and, for example, Tuscany.

Toubert's work relegates *incastellamento* primarily to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries at what is typically a new, previously uninhabited and elevated site. He argues that *incastellamento* marks a distinct break from the previous settlement patterns defined by the Roman villa system, in which dispersed sites reign. The change to concentrated and fortified settlement is to him a drastic enough shift to mark the start of a new pattern of settlement. For Toubert, the major player in the *incastellamento* is the monastic lords, making it a top-down phenomenon. The churches had the intention of imposing order onto the growing peasant population and of increasing the influence of the church, finding that concentrating the settlement made these goals easier.

A key aspect of his analysis centers on different agrarian contracts as revealed in the textual record. The *mezzadria* contracts that preceded the onset of *incastellamento* were not long-term and therefore did not offer the obligations or stability required to fund

the expensive construction of the fortified hilltop sites; the *livello* contracts, on the other hand, were long-term and included an initial payment that allowed for the construction of castles. The *livello* contract embodied the Roman concept of property, in which fixed ownership of land is key, as the land never legally exchanged hands.

The *livello* contract was not, however, associated with feudalism. Rather, Toubert argues that *incastellamento* was completed outside of the institution of feudalism.

Toubert primarily utilizes Ganshof's definition of feudalism, which includes a strong emphasis on the vassal institution, military service, and the transfer of property (the fief). As the castral system established by *incastellamento* lacks both the fief and the vassal relationship, the two main parts of the institution, Toubert concludes that *incastellamento* is not strictly feudal, although aspects of it would later evolve into parts of feudalism.

According to Toubert, feudalism only came about in Lazio when lords felt threatened by other lords and were therefore compelled to get vassals to protect them and their land through an obligation of military duty, one of the key components of feudalism. He argues that feudalism in Lazio begins first with the *per fegum* concession and then spreads most widely with the *beneficium*, in which there is a full transfer of property.

This marks the end of the reign of the Roman concept of property and the establishment of the fiefdom required to be considered feudal for Toubert and Ganshof. Though the *castrum* was not built by feudal institutions, it did act as the structure from which feudalism further developed, as nascent aspects of feudalism existed in *incastellamento*, just not the extent that they could be considered fully feudal.

Though Toubert's study was impactful, it was nonetheless widely criticized for its almost exclusive reliance on textual sources, primarily focusing on the written records

from two sources – the abbeys of Farfa and Subiaco – and his overemphasis on religious institutions and lords at the exclusion of secular lords. From these critiques rise disagreements over some of his key arguments. For the most part, fellow historians agree with the majority of Toubert's arguments. Archaeologists, however, have found areas of contention with many of Toubert's most important statements, particularly about his argument about the timing of *incastellamento* being in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (they argue it was as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries), about monastic lords being the key actors in the change in settlement (they argue that secular lords played more of a role), and about *incastellamento* marking a sharp break from previous settlement patterns (they argue that the break was much earlier – in around the 6<sup>th</sup> century – and that *incastellamento* is therefore a continuation of these patterns).

Chris Wickham, as a historian who also uses archaeological sources, supports Toubert's argument that ecclesiastical agents were the primary movers of *incastellamento*, yet departs from him regarding the timing of the break in settlement patterns, placing it in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries like archaeologists. Riccardo Francovich, an archaeologist whose work centers in Tuscany, argues for the primacy of secular lords, the continuity of settlement patterns in *incastellamento*, and the prior existence of wooden fortified villages that had been previously inhabited, as indicated by the presence of post-holes. Postholes are a key marker for prior habitation and act as an indicator for the evolution of the elevated site itself. Another archaeologist, Étienne Hubert, also emphasizes the importance of postholes, and argues that *incastellamento* sites were constructed either as a result of wealthy secular landowners building a private residence without the original intention of concentrating the population, or as a private habitation

that eventually evolved into the fortified settlement, as indicated by the post-holes from the smaller settlement. He also notes a distinct dissociation between the fortification of settlements and concentration of the population, arguing that the two did not necessarily occur simultaneously, as Toubert's research implies.

Archaeological arguments also have their share of weaknesses, however. It is possible to overlook forces that do not leave strong archaeological footprints. For example, ecclesiastical lords rarely leave much material data, and agreements such as agrarian contracts – which Toubert uses as key evidence in his work – do not appear in any discernable form in the archaeological data. Furthermore, it is possible for archaeologists to have explanations that stretch the limits of what the actual data suggests, running away a bit with the interpretation in a way that is not actually fully supported by the data itself.

Drawing upon the research of both Toubert and archaeologists, I formulated a working definition of *incastellamento* to facilitate the study of the phenomenon: the movement from dispersed settlements to concentrated hilltop sites with stone fortifications in the 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Once a site has been identified as a *castrum*, it can typically be further categorized by the three models of *incastellamento*: 1. a defensive border fort along the Byzantine and Lombard frontier; 2. an enterprise driven by ecclesiastical or secular lords; and 3. a community-driven construction.

Using this definition as a guide, *incastellamento* and changing settlement patterns are identified archaeologically through the presence of several markers. First, ceramics, particularly Forum ware, is one key indicator of the type and date of an archaeological site. At *incastellamento* sites, the presence of Forum ware, as it dates to before the start

of *incastellamento*, indicates a prior phase of occupation before the construction of the castral site itself. This suggests a certain continuity in the habitation of the site. Another important archaeological indicator is the presence of postholes, as they are also evidence for an earlier occupation. They can also, depending on the organization of the holes, suggest the presence of strong fortifications even in wood. The presence of postholes is not, however, a requirement for a site to be castral. The type and nature of fortifications is another archaeological indicator, as stone and mortar fortifications with large blocks are often indicative of *incastellamento* castles.

The site of Ponte Nepesino is an example of a *castrum* of the first model of *incastellamento*: a Byzantine border fort. It satisfies the archaeological requirements put forth by the working definition of *incastellamento*, as it is an elevated site with stone fortifications that dates between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site shows the presence of both Forum ware and postholes, although the date of the site is earlier than the traditional timeline of *incastellamento* and its placement, as well as the fact that it is not self-sufficient nutritionally indicate that Ponte Nepesino was an example of a Byzantine border fort built along the frontier between the Byzantine controlled land and that of the Lombards. On the other hand, the site of Casale San Donato marks an example of an *incastellamento castrum* that is likely either the result of the endeavor of an ecclesiastical or secular lord or of a community-driven fortification of the community, therefore fitting into one of the last two models of *incastellamento*. The site contains plenty of Forum ware and does contain evidence of postholes, which are all indicative of earlier settlement. The chronology and location of the site indicate that it is likely not a defensive border fort like Ponte Nepesino.

Applying this definition and comparative analysis to the site of La Rocca atop the San Giuliano Plateau finds that La Rocca is likely an example of a *castrum* of either of the last two models of *incastellamento*. There is no significant example of Forum ware, and there is no evidence for prior habitation structures, as there are no postholes in a formation indicative of such structures, although there is ceramic evidence of prior occupation. The large block size and presence of mortar and masonry in relation to the prolific stone fortification are all indicative of *incastellamento*, as it is similar to San Donato. Furthermore, its lack of evidence for occupation dating to the Lombard period is an important distinction from the border fort Ponte Nepesino. San Giuliano is therefore a potential example of an *incastellamento* castle of the second or third model, although the archaeological investigation at La Rocca is still ongoing and the designation is neither definite nor certain. Though Toubert's analysis does not help in the investigation of the specifics of the site, as he lacks archaeological evidence, he remains helpful in giving context to the situation, such as his arguments regarding the larger trends and patterns of agrarian contracts and types of property law.

Combining the use of archaeological evidence, which can portray the reality of the structure and occupation of a site under excavation, with textual evidence, which gives hints about the larger forces at play and the agents that may not have necessarily left a large material footprint, results in a valuable compilation of evidence that reveals more information about past societies and their movements and habits. Moving forward, scholars should continue to investigate sites in the Lazio region, as the region is so geographically diverse that there are many variances within it, and it is interesting to uncover how the different parts of Lazio affect the realities of the evidence at the



archaeological sites. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore more about the area around the ancient *Ager Veientanus* and *Ager Faliscus* because the differences in the two areas regarding the building of castles seem to be stark despite the proportionately small geographical distance between them. Both the chronology of castral sites and the understanding of why the castles were built and how they were used is helpful in understanding more about the changes and transitions happening in the society in the Middle Ages. Ultimately, viewing the study of *incastellamento* through the lens of both history and archaeology grants us a more nuanced understanding of these medieval castles, helping to demystify the question of why these castles were built and why previous forms of settlement were abandoned in favor of these castles.

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