

The Chiaramonte Castle

history

The Chiaramonte Castle of Siculiana, located in the homonymous agricultural and mining center of Agrigento, located at 85 meters above sea level between the capital and Sciacca, is a monument of anonymous and rich castle architecture. Built on the end of the rocky crest of a promontory, perhaps the seat of the ancient city called Cena, it dominated with its crenellated towers the town of the same name and the valley gently lying on the Mediterranean Sea, where a rich wheat emporium was located. For this reason it was an impregnable fortress. Its impregnability was particularly due to its walls, which fell sheer to the edge of the rock. The origin of the fort is Arab. The Muslims had called it, together with the small surrounding hamlet, "Rahl or Kalat Siguliana", and is among the eleven castles that resisted Roger the Norman, but which were destroyed after the surrender of Agrigento, signed on 25 July 1087. After the war of the Vespers, which ended with the peace of Caltabellotta (24 August 1302), Federico Chiaramonte, son of Federico and from Marchisia Prefolio, lady of Caccamo, he received the barony of Siculiana united with that of Favara and Racalmuto from King Federico II of Aragon as a reward for his valor. Chiaramonte had the ancient Arab castle rebuilt, the remains of which lay razed to the ground. The restoration work was carried out so briskly that already in 1310 the fortress of Siculiana had returned to new life. The front of the building, facing south, was equipped with towers and propugnacles. L' the only access route was carved into the hard rock and communicated only with the drawbridge and through an entrance hall, an arch in the center, one arrived in the middle of the vast triangular-shaped parade ground, where a deep cistern was dug to collect and preserve rainwater for the daily use of the castellani, water that became precious in the event of a siege (it still exists today). An authentic hypogeum connected the Castle with a site close to the "Caricatore di Siculiana" (Siculiana seaport) and to an ancient princely seat of Serralunga, in the homonymous district, to allow the Baron a secret escape route in case of need. . The entrance to this hypogeum was located in a room of the

"Quarto nobile" and was voluntarily blocked by the Agnello in 1934. The courtyard was flanked by the large stables, the arms rooms, the quarters of the armigers and staff of the stable, the vast warehouses for the storage of crops and supplies, the prisons and the church of San Lorenzo, the oldest in Siculiana, dating back to the mid-century. XVII, also called the "Madonna degli Angeli", where the first place of worship of the Holy Crucifix took place (it is celebrated in Siculiana every year at the beginning of May). This small church was the seat of an ancient and solid brotherhood. To the south-east there were rooms called the "fourth noble", consisting of two floors, used as the baron's residence and place of receptions. In the internal rooms until the early 1900s the remains of ancient frescoes could be admired. Here, in 1311, it was celebrated, with great pomp of apparatuses, the second marriage between the only daughter of Federico Chiaramonte, Costanza (widow of the Marquis of Savona, Antonino del Carretto), and the Genoese nobleman Brancaleone Doria, governor of Sardinia in 1335. It seems that the choice of the Siculianese Castle was determined, besides that from the enchantment of the place and of the structure, from a belief according to which the pacts concluded in the fortress of Siculiana were blessed by Providence. This belief, mixed between faith and superstition, raised the fortress of Siculiana to a symbol of abundance. This explains the many weddings and noble agreements that were held there. Brancaleone Doria is the character mentioned by Dante Alighieri in the Inferno of the "Divine Comedy" (canto XXXIII, verses 133 to 153). After Frederick's death, which took place in Agrigento towards the end of 1312, the barony and the castle of Siculiana went to Costanza, his universal heir. Costanza loved to surround herself with embroiderers and appreciated the arts in general. He died in Agrigento in March 1350, leaving the title and properties to Antonio del Carretto Chiaramonte, baron of Racalmuto, his first-born son of first bed. The receptions that Antonio held in the Sicilian castle without sparing any splendor were very celebrated. With the death of Antonio del Carretto the lordship of Siculiana passed to the eldest son Gerardo, a convinced supporter of King Martino and his undisputed supporter against the Sicilian barons who revolted against the Aragonese crown in 1398. Gerardo del Carretto retired, however, in Piedmont, leaving the barony and the land of Siculiana to his younger brother Matteo. This possession was confirmed by King Martin in 1401, as a sign of gratitude towards the lineage. On the death of Matteo del

Carretto the land of Siculiana passed in 1408 half to Giovanni, his eldest son, and half to Andrea Caro, a nobleman from Licata. In 1427 the Catalan nobleman Gilberto Isfar de Corilles acquired the lordship, the land and the castle of Siculiana, who passed to Sicily in the wake of King Alfonso the Magnanimous who three years later granted him the right to export from the lordship's grain loader, cereal products, as well as portulania rights and the right to appoint vice Portulano. This elergizione constituted the reward of the "valiant" sovereign Gilberto for the meritorious services offered during the conquest of the kingdom of Naples. Gilberto did not disdain gentle sex at all and was also a skilled hunter. In 1437 Giovanni Gaspare, son of Gilberto, was invested with the barony, who with the privilege of King Alfonso on 29 January 1458, obtained to associate the neighboring territory of Monforte with the lordship of Siculiana, which later will host the citizenship of Cattolica. Vincenzo Corilles inherited the land and the castle of Siculiana in 1491 from his father Giovanni Gaspare revenges the barony to Guglielmo Valguarnera. The barony was in any case bought back by Giovanni Isfar de Corilles who invested himself on May 26, 1526. Giovanni was an irascible man, demanding towards the servants. He left architectural marks of Spanish culture in the castle. he had a particular predilection for perfumes. The last of this family was Blasco, husband of Laura Gaetano, who founded Cattolica in 1642, on the bank of the Platani river, which Philip II raised a principality. Di Blasco is said to have been fond of botany, it seems that he directly followed the planting, in the gardens of the Castle, of plant species, which he delighted in selecting. On 1 October 1616 his only daughter Giovanna was invested with the lordship of Siculiana and this city. The "del Bosco" family died out in 1668 with the death of Giuseppe (who had no offspring), son of Francesco del Bosco Isfar. On 12 May 1721, his maternal uncle Francesco Bonanno del Bosco, prince of Roccaffiorita, son of Rosalia del Bosco Sandoval and Filippo Bonanno Marini, invested in the barony. Francesco was a lover of painting and to him we owe a good part of the frescoes once admirable in the "fourth noble" (demolished in the early 1900s by Baron Agnello). After his death in Naples in November 1779, his eldest son and universal heir Giuseppe Bonanno Filangeri succeeded him in the lordship of Siculiana. From these the barony will pass to Francesco Antonio Bonanno Borromei on 24 March 1781 and finally to Giuseppe Bonanno Branciforti on 9 July 1798, his son, killed during the Palermo riots of 1820. The last baron of Siculiana, recognized by

royal decree of 26 December 1899, it was Antonio Bonanno Perez. The latter endowed the Castle with an admirable cellar, he himself was a refined winemaker. When the feudal regime in Sicily ceased, the Castle was used as a "penal bath" (prison). The names of the prisoners are still imprinted on an ancient door of the solitary confinement cell, engraved in their own hand. Until 1924 it was used as a district prison. The property then passed to the heirs of Baron Agnello who demolished the "fourth noble" (year 1934), that is the part of greatest historical and artistic interest to build a sumptuous villa, in neo-Gothic style, which contrasts with the poor houses of the common people erected downstream, an unequivocal indication of a social structure still of feudal traces. Guest of the Knight Agnello, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, a distinguished writer of the 20th century, resided in this last villa from 4 September to 11 October 1955. According to various scholars, here, Tomasi wrote pages of the last part of "Il Gattopardo", a posthumous work. Also in the 1950s, Karlheinz Stokhausen lived in the Agnello palace, also a guest of the Agnello family. The property then passed to the heirs of Baron Agnello who demolished the "fourth noble" (year 1934), that is the part of greatest historical and artistic interest to build a sumptuous villa, in neo-Gothic style, which contrasts with the poor houses of the common people erected downstream, an unequivocal indication of a social structure still of feudal traces. Guest of the Knight Agnello, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, a distinguished writer of the 20th century, resided in this last villa from 4 September to 11 October 1955. According to various scholars, here, Tomasi wrote pages of the last part of "Il Gattopardo", a posthumous work. Also in the 1950s, Karlheinz Stokhausen lived in the Agnello palace, also a guest of the Agnello family. The property then passed to the heirs of Baron Agnello who demolished the "fourth noble" (year 1934), that is the part of greatest historical and artistic interest to build a sumptuous villa, in neo-Gothic style, which contrasts with the poor houses of the common people erected downstream, an unequivocal indication of a social structure still of feudal traces. Guest of the Knight Agnello, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, a distinguished writer of the 20th century, resided in this last villa from 4 September to 11 October 1955. According to various scholars, here, Tomasi wrote pages of the last part of "Il Gattopardo", a posthumous work. Also in the 1950s, Karlheinz Stokhausen lived in the Agnello palace, also a guest of the Agnello family. which contrasts with the poor houses of the commoners

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