

THE CASTLE “DELLA VALLE”

The land of Fiumefreddo was conquered by Robert Guiscardo in the eleventh century, who noted that this place was a suitable site for better withstanding a possible siege. For this reason, Fiumefreddo, whose name was Frigidum at the time, was fortified and surrounded by walls and, in a strategic corner of the newborn town, was built, in 1054, a Norman tower, which became “the Castle”, a long time afterwards; in fact, great improvements were carried out to the fortress, by princes, feudatories and other governors, who ruled over the town between the years 1100 and 1807. The castle lies to the south-east of the town. A moat surrounded the castle and a drawbridge prevented or permitted passage across it. The portal has an imposing look.



The castle, 1987.

Many noble families (princes, counts, dukes, barons, knights) lived in this castle and governed Fiumefreddo. In 1059 took possession of the castle (tower) Ruggero Guiscardo, Robert's brother. In 1190 Simon Mamistra settled himself in the princely residence and ruled for many years, as a feudatory. Giovanni Alliata lived for some time in the tower beginning from 1279, Guglielmo Sclavello from 1291 and Pietro Salvacossa, count of Belmonte, ruled from 1337. In 1405 the marshal of the reign, Pier Paolo da Viterbo, took possession of castle (The tower was gradually improving its look) and in 1443 Battista Caracciolo, count of Gerace, replaced the marshal of the reign. In 1457 Ferdinando d'Aragona, duke of Calabria, gave the feud of Fiumefreddo to Luca Sanseverino. Then the castle was residence of the duke of Somma. In 1535, Charles the fifth gave the feud to Fernando De Alarcon, viceroy of Calabria and marquis della Valle (whence the name “Castello della Valle”. In the meantime the tower had become a magnificent castle). His daughter, Isabella, married Pietro Gonzales De Mendoza, famous Spanish captain. Angelica Alarcon y De Mendoza was the last heir of the noble family Alarcon y De Mendoza, who took up her residence in the castle. Today we admire the beautiful windows made of tuff stones with a classic style trabecation. The castle consisted of two flats with narrow tunnels, hiding places, underground passages. There were large rooms and open galleries which faced the sea and the mountains. We also notice the ruins of two circular towers. The decline of the castle began in 1807, as a consequence of the Calabrian antinapoleonic revolution (1806/1807), when general Reynier, who was under Joseph Bonaparte's command, ordered colonel Berthelot, to storm the castle. Berthelot conquered and looted the castle on February 12th, 1807. (The day after, on February 13th, Reynier prohibited the religious services in the Monastery of Fonte Laurato and confiscated it). The castle, later on, passed to the baron Del Giudice of Belmonte and to his heirs and, lately, to the local authority, which has taken care of the castle's restoration and nowadays we can visit and admire the ruins of the castle. Maestro Salvatore Fiume in 1975/76 and, later on, in 1996, frescoed the walls of a large room of the castle with beautiful scenes of everyday life of the feudatory nobility.



The castle, 2010