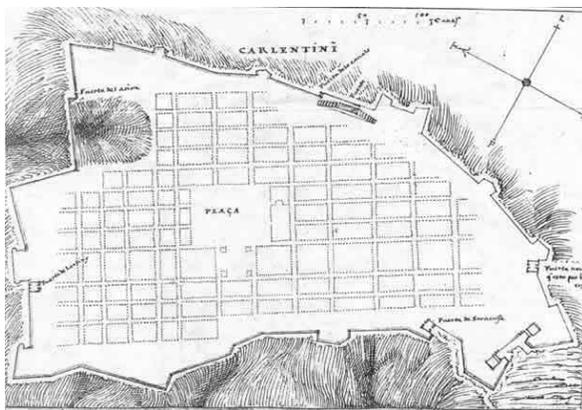


Carlentini

Carlentini (17.000 inh.) on the hill Meta with the beautiful view of the Plain of Catania and the Volcano Etna , was founded in 1551 by the viceroy Giovanni de Vega as a Fortress-Town strengthened against the Turkish raids and was named Carlentini in honor of the Emperor Charles V. Destroyed by the earthquake of 1693, it was rebuilt on the same site with an interesting regular urban chessboard plan.



At page 68 and 69 of his *Travels in the two Sicilies* Vol. IV. published in London in 1780 **Henry Swinburne** writes: "About two miles from Lentini , we passed before Carlentini , a town of three thousand souls , built by Charles the Fifth , and almost ruined by an earthquake. The country behind is very pleasant , and resembles many tracks of forest land in the south of England ; the hills are of moderate elevation , separated by wild , woody dingles , with clear brooks tumbling down the rocks, overshadowed by large and lopped olive - trees .

From the elevation of the country , a variety of exquisite views may be enjoyed on every side, principally towards the north - east, where Ætna , Catania , ..."

Location and History

Location

The **Castrum Vetus** is situated to the north of colle Tirone and to the south of Lentini. Driving from Lentini to Carlentini, the castle is clearly visible on its eastern side. It is a gothic castle with a well preserved hypogeum where prisoners or provisions were probably kept, or it was used as an armery. Frederick II the Swabian ordered the Castrum Vetus to be restored by **Riccardo da Lentini** , an architect at his court.

History

The Medieval Lentini was a big town divided into two parts: the higher part located on the Tirone hill and protected by a fortification, the *hisp* of its Arabic inhabitants, and the low part of the town outside the fortification, a sort of *rabid*. The fortifications on the Castellaccio, on which the **Castrum Vetus** was erected, dominated the area.

Content Curator Nuccia Silvana Pirruccello

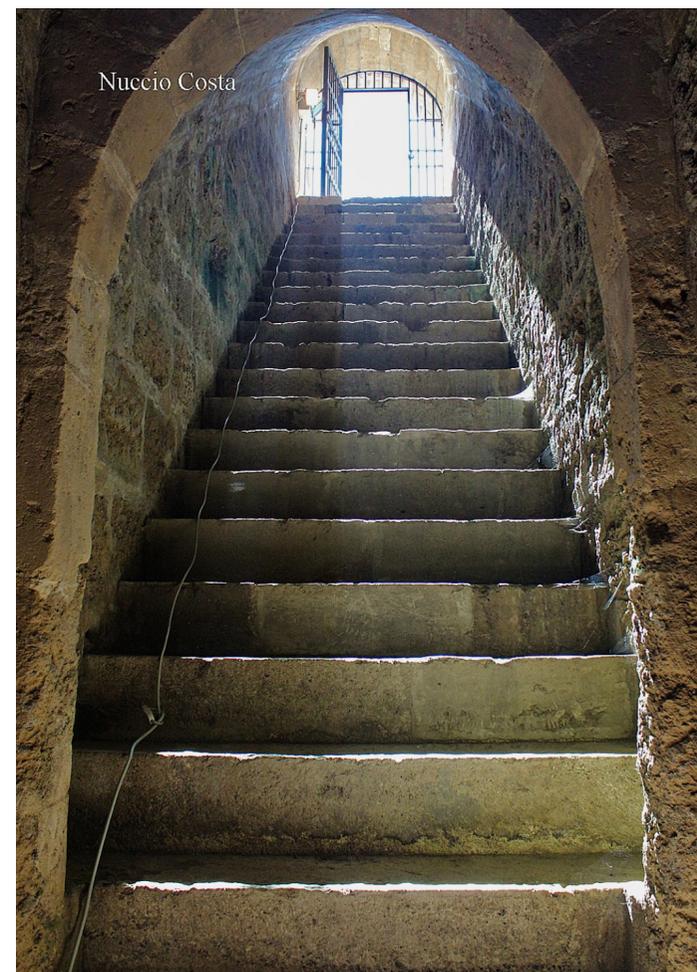
Ph. Nuccio Costa

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Castrum Vetus

The oldest source dates back to 1223 and recalls that Frederick II deported part of the Agrigento rebels to the castles of Syracuse and Lentini. In 1239 Frederick II wrote a letter praising the work of the architect Riccardo da Lentini for the restorations carried out.



Archaeological Finds



1. Amphora, Punta Castelluccio

2. Virgin Mary, a fresco from Crucifix Grotto

3. Basin dating back XIII century, Castellaccio

4. A XIII century Jug, Castellaccio

Middle Ages

The year 878, when Syracuse was invaded by the Muslims, can be considered the starting point of Middle Ages in Sicily.

Castrum Vetus

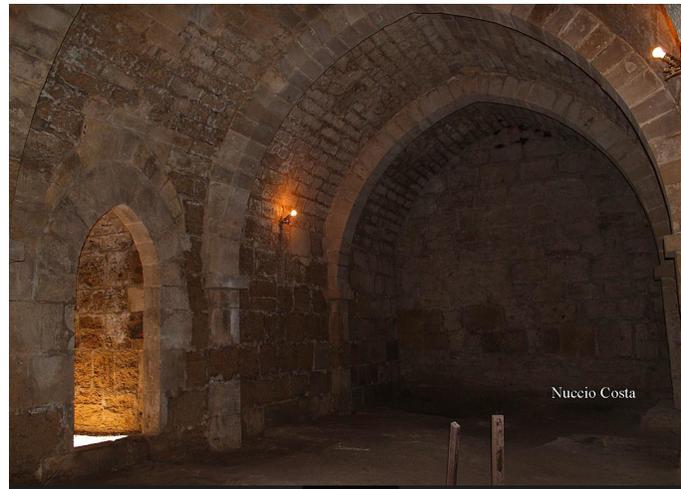
Life on the Castellaccio, probably stopped because of the earthquakes; first in 1542 and then in 1693, however we know from a document dated 1735 that the *Castrum Vetus* got some gunpowder.

The remains

Today you can visit the remains of an extensive building complex, renovated during the first half of the 13th century AD, according to the will of Frederick II.

From the letter of Frederick II to Riccardo da Lentini

The walls of the castle are renewed by means of squared limestone blocks, "incisis cantonibus"; in addition, "tribus turribus" were built, that is, three towers, one of which is the Main Tower.



The moats

In a plan published by Giuseppe Agnello (*L'Architettura Sveva in Sicilia* page 126), the three parts in which the area is subdivided are: **Tirone**, **Castellaccio**, **Lastrichello**. The two moats are clearly indicated: the east moat probably never completed, the western moat might originally have a bridge for a better defence.

The main visible structures are the triquetra arx, a huge sloping wall whose materials and construction techniques are similar to the ones of **Castello Maniace** in Siracusa.

The Hypogeum

Another well preserved structure is the hypogeum on the central part of the Castellaccio plateau. It is rectangular with a rib vault which a gush.

The 'piombatoi', still visible in the western moat, are narrow regular tracks excavated into the rock to crash down heavy material against the attackers.

