

From this area one has access to the first level of the tower that has only one room (5).

This room gets illuminated by two battle openings “strombate” respectively placed on the East and North-East walls and it is covered by a gothic vault matching an irregular conch.

Returning to the central large hall one can access two other areas (6, 7). These connect one to the other and both are covered with sharp barrel-vaults. The first (6) receives light from an opening placed along the South wall and presents another small room in the intern of the thick wall of the North side, which in turn gets illuminated by its own battle opening on a wall. In the second hall (7) we find: an oblique window obtained high in the East wall; a door that takes us to the South terrace; an empty space surrounded by almost parallel strips, obtained in the thickness of the North wall, that gets light through a battle opening.

Returning to the main entrance (3) one finds a stone stairway added to the to the West wall, in the adorned in style of a following epoch. This allows entrance to the covering terrace of the building and allows access to the second and third level of the tower. These two floors constitute two large areas one over the other with stone vaults and connected by an internal wooden stairway.

From the covering terrace the panorama the tower dominates is majestic and extends in all directions: to the South at the horizon you can see the sea; to the East the nearby center of Chiusa Sclafani; to the North the town of Giuliana with the main church in axis with the pentagonal nexus.

Returning to the main entrance, a door on the West wall allows access to other two spaces (8,9) with coverings in semicircular vaults: the first (8) is characterized on the East wall by the presence of a fireplace and an original entrance arch, partially obscured by the stairway annexed to the wall; the second room (9) presents yet another small area in the thickness of the North wall. To the South of the structure a terrace (10) leans well beyond the perpendicular rocky wall facing precipitously the

valley of the Sosio river. Since the Aragonese period in fact the castle mutated its original military function to a residential one.

The structure maintained itself more or less integral until the beginning of the 900 when, to avoid its collapse, the higher part of the tower and its surrounding walls were demolished, without however, any remedial action to the progressive decay of the preceding ages. Only recently the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Palermo, a public administration overseeing cultural preservation, has provided to the consolidation of the various parts of the castle, permitting access and preservation of the castle, its tower and the areas above the tower.

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COMUNE DI GIULIANA (PROVINCIA DI PALERMO)

THE CASTLE OF FEDERICO II (XIII Century)



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Regarding the construction of the castle, given the lack of historical documentation, there are two predominant theories: the first attributes the origins of the architectural elements typically from Svevia, to Federico II of Svevia; the second, gives credit to Federico III, king of the Aragonese Dynasty, given his lengthy permanence in Giuliana during 1332.

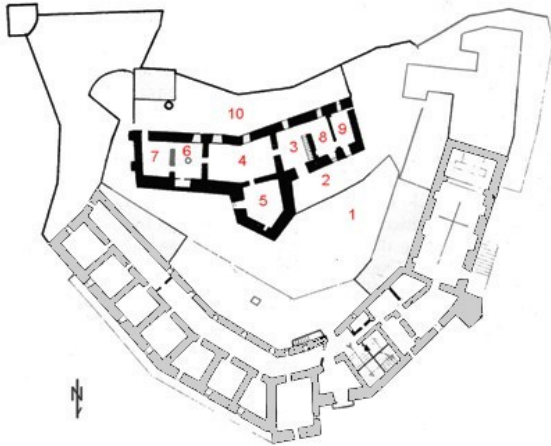


Illustration 1

The phases of constructions identifiable in the complex of the castle are several: to the main structural nexus of pentagonal shape, were anchored two rectangular buildings of a slight later epoch and in the first half of the XVII century, on the semicircle walls of the castle that surround and protected the fortress, was built a monastery. This was possible thanks to a donation in 1648 from the now marquisate of Giuliana of Isabella Gioeni and her husband Marco Antonio Colonna, to the monks of Oliveto di Santa Maria del Bosco of Calatamauro. This monastery became the Institute of Boccone del Povero (Mouthful of the Poor) in 1902 and in 1991 Opera Pia Buttafuoco-Tomasini.

The fortress of Giuliana held for long time quite a relevant and strategic role, because it emerges on the direct road of Corleone-Sciacca: it was connected to the West with the castle of Zabut (Sambuca di Sicilia), which in turn, by way of the castle of Menfi connected with the castle of Salemi; to the South with the castle of Caltabellotta; to the East with that of Prizzi, which by way of Vicari connected with the famous castle of Caccamo; the Nord connections were secured by the Arabic castles of Calatamauro, Patellaro and Calatrasi.

The castle of Giuliana is erected at an altitude of 736 meters above sea level: one side looks out to the ample and prosperous valley of the river Sosio; the other side with the tower faces toward the town, in axis with the road that connects the castle with the main church, Chiesa Madre. The Federician fortress of Giuliana presents the form of an irregular trapezoid and it is constituted by two rectangular structures that come together at an obtuse angle reinforced by a low pentagonal tower. The design of this pentagonal tower is almost an “unicum” in Sicily and it has a similar only in the Federician Castle of Augusta.

By way of a large door, at the entrance we find ourselves in an ample courtyard (1) among the buildings of the ex-convent and the central nucleus of the castle.



This can be reached via a slight ascending ramp (2). At the center of the establishment is erected the pentagonal shaped tower (5) which encloses the architectural composition of the building, and was most probably deemed the original nucleus of the construction, to which a bit later, were annexed the two rectangular wings. The tower has three elevations and a planimetric form of a regular pentagon. It has an altitude of 18.80 meters and at its sides is 7.20 meters.



The walls of a thickness of 2 meters were built double sided with square plaster stones placed within a given regularity and a central filling of rocks and mortar.

The ends of the pentagonal structure are refined with designs of cemented sand, and the slender battle openings (feritoie) and window frames with tufaceous designs (irregular rocks of volcanic origins and cement), forming an ornamental motif. On the West wall, near the arched entrance, a battle opening and an archery cavity are well visible. Going through a low arch one arrives at a small courtyard (3) from which we have access to a central area (4). This is covered by a barrel-vault, of gothic style, which presents a sharp arch situated on a corbel, shaped as an inverted pyramid, typical in the architecture of Svevia.