



The Castle of Moneta

CARRARA

Location: The castle of Madrignano, a hamlet of the municipality of Calice al Cornoviglio, stands on a secondary ridge created by the primary ridge between Liguria and Tuscany, which nowadays is an important hiking path in the Alta Via dei monti liguri, i.e. a path passing through Ligurian mountains.

Type of castle: Castle and residence.

Construction period: The castle already existed in the 11th century. A fortress, the remains of which can still be seen nowadays, was built by the Campofregoso in the 15th century.

First appearance in historical sources: The first document mentioning the castrum de Moneta was a notarial deed of 1035 by Wilielmus, the chamberlain of the Bishop of Luni.

Strategic role: Its geographical position was important for controlling the pass between Liguria and Carrara, an intersection of the ancient passes between Lunigiana and Liguria.

Further use: The castle and the village were abandoned from the 17th-18th centuries, when the inhabitants moved to the neighbouring village of Fossola.





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Current condition: Ruins owned by the municipality.

Viewing: At the present time (2016) the castle cannot be visited, as it is being restored.

History: There is evidence of the ancient military function of Moneta, as the site reminds us of those of the Apuan Ligurians, of the Romans and of the Byzantines. In the Late Middle Ages, it was part of the territories belonging to the Bishop of Luni, contested by the Malaspina, and in the 14th century it belonged to Castruccio Castracani.

The castle was at its most important in the 14th-15th centuries; due to the political and military events in Lunigiana. In 1329 the castle of Moneta passed to Spinetta Malaspina the Great, who strengthened it.

Around 1430 Moneta became a stronghold in the Campofregoso's expansion project, and indirectly depended on Genoa and Milan in Lunigiana, in contrast to the claims of the Malaspina, supported by Florence.

The Campofregoso renewed the whole village, constructing walls and round towers, and the village was overlooked by the new fortress built between 1435 and 1455 on the western side.

The Campofregoso sold Moneta in 1473, together with Carrara and Avenza, to Iacopo

Malaspina di Fosdinovo, and it was annexed to the fief of Massa. From this moment on it started to lose its military function to the fiefs of Massa and Carrara, buffer states between Florence and Genoa in the new political structure of Lunigiana.

Even if it was no longer a military fortress, in the 15th century the castle suffered two assaults: in 1483 by the Genoese mercenaries of Agostino di Campofregoso from Sarzana, and in 1494 by the French troops of King Charles VIII. In 1605 there was a last battle for the ownership of the fortress of Moneta, against the neighbouring Ortonovo. In the 18th century the castle and the fortified village started to decay when they were deserted by the inhabitants, who moved to Fossola.

Structure: The village of Moneta was enclosed by primitive medieval defensive walls, reconstructed in the 15th century by the Campofregoso. Within the enclosure, a cobblestone path led to the top of the hill, where there are still the remains of a bell tower and of a military structure surrounded by a moat. The middle of the architectonical core, constructed and restored by the Genoese, is composed of large quadrangular defensive walls with other walls on the south-eastern side. The main façade is equipped with two protruding semi-towers, like many others strongholds of the 15th century. The last works on the castle date back to 1665, when the tower and the fortress were already abandoned.