



Castle of Mulazzo

MULAZZO

Location: The fortification and the village of Mulazzo are situated atop a hill called Castellaro. The castle stands guard over a narrow point of the valley of the stream Mangiola, right-bank tributary of the river Magra. This stream was an important means of communication with the villages of Suvero and Brugnato in the mid Val di Vara (Vara Valley) and Levanto through the mouth of the stream known as Foce dei Casoni. Like the opposite village of Filattiera, a former Byzantine garrison, Mulazzo was the nearest district at the border with the commune of Pontremoli. This border had been established along the streams Teglia and Caprio at the time of Frederick Barbarossa.

Type of castle: The castle and the tower belonged to the feudal complex of the lords of Mulazzo.

First appearance in historical sources: Mulazzo, formerly Mulazzanum, was first mentioned in a document signed by Frederick Barbarossa in 1164, where it was listed among Obizzo Malaspina's properties. In 1221, Mulazzo became the feudal administrative centre of Corrado Malaspina, known as Corrado l'Antico (Corrado the Old Man).





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Strategic role: Controlling the valley below, where the roads from Liguria cross those from Val di Magra, the Via Francigena (the road that comes from France) and its alternatives.

Further use: The fortified camp belonging to the branch of the family called Signori del Castello (Lords of the Castle), which is located on the west side of the village, was abandoned in the following centuries because of landslides. In the 16th-17th century, the branch Signori del Palazzo (Lords of the Palace) replaced the old castle with a residential building and in the 17th century five-sixths of the tower were destroyed.

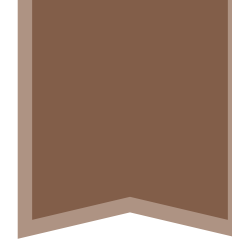
Current condition: Today, only a few traces and the remains of the massive hexagonal tower, recently restored, bear witness of the past existence of the two castles that were built inside the walled village.

Viewing: It can only be seen from the outside

History: Since 1221, Mulazzo had been the feudal administrative centre of the Marquis of Malaspina, of the Spino Secco branch. The estate stretched from the right bank of the river Magra to the sea, including properties in the eastern Riviera of Liguria, between Sestri

Levante and the Apennines. The only village on the left side of the Magra was Villafranca, bridgehead on the main arm of the Via Francigena. From 1266 on, the Spino Secco branch of the family divided further into many sub-branches (mentioned in the pages about the related castles) and the fief of Mulazzo lost some of its territories. After the death of Azzone Malaspina in 1473, his descendants did not divide the estate anymore; they established a sort of consortium instead, alternating in the management of the fief. This system also influenced the structure of the village, where the residences of many sub-branches of the noble family were built. At the beginning of the 16th century, the family consortium gathered around the children of Giovan Paolo and Giovan Cristoforo, afterwards called Signori del Castello (Lords of the Castle) and Signori del Palazzo (Lords of the Palace) respectively. In 1794, the Palazzo branch died out, so that the Castello line strengthened its possession of the fief. After the Congress of Vienna, the estate became part of the Duchy of Modena. Some well-known personalities belonging to the family are worth mentioning, such as Corrado I, founder of the fief and connected to the poet Dante, or the explorer and naturalist Alessandro Malaspina, who sailed throughout the Pacific Ocean and mapped the west coast of the Americas.

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Structure: The first castle of Mulazzo was built on the east side of the hill overlooking the Val di Magra. The main remains are those of a massive hexagonal tower, also known as Torre di Dante (Tower of Dante), which, due to the building technique, could date back to the 13th century. It probably belonged to a larger complex, in part incorporated into the palace with gardens belonging to the Signori del Palazzo, built between the 16th and the 18th century. The tower was still intact in the 18th century, but it was demolished in the mid of the century due to the stubborn will of the Marquis Carlo Morello Malaspina.

The second castle of Mulazzo was built between the 15th and 16th century by the Signori del Castello, on the opposite side of the village, a strategic position to control the road from Liguria. After it had been damaged by landslides, a more modern palace was built, similar to the one belonging to the Signori del Palazzo on the other side of the hill. The remains of the fortification include a segment of curtain wall and a cylindrical tower dating back to the 15th-16th century. The foundation of the tower is a “scarpata”, i.e. it has sloping walls that strengthen the basis of the building and have a defensive function.