

= Chlemoutsi =

Chlemoutsi (Greek : ????????? or ?????????) is a medieval castle in the northwest of the Elis regional unit in the Peloponnese peninsula of southern Greece , in the Kastro @-@ Kyllini municipality .

It was built in the early 1220s by the Crusader rulers of the Principality of Achaea as their main stronghold , and is perhaps the finest fortification of the early period of Frankish rule in Greece preserved in the country today . The castle is located on a small plateau 226 metres (741 ft) above sea level , and comprises a central hexagonal keep , built around an inner courtyard and containing two @-@ storeyed halls along its entire length , and complemented by an outer wall enclosing an outer yard on its western side . The castle is largely preserved in its original 13th @-@ century state , with only minor later modifications for the installation of artillery .

Located near the Principality 's capital of Andravida and the chief port of Glarentza , Chlemoutsi played a central role in the Principality 's history , but was never actually besieged . After coming under Byzantine rule in 1427 , it was captured in 1460 by the Ottoman Empire , along with the rest of the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea . In Ottoman times , minor additions were made to provide platforms for artillery , but the castle progressively lost its significance and was completely deserted by the late 18th century . In 1825 , during the Greek War of Independence , part of its outer wall was demolished to prevent the Greek rebels from using it . Today it is a preserved monument open to the public .

= = History = =

The castle was built between 1220 and 1223 , during the rule of the Prince of Achaea Geoffrey I of Villehardouin , as a result of a dispute between the Prince and the clergy of the Principality . Geoffrey had asked the clergy , which owned almost a third of the Principality 's lands but was not obliged to render military service , for additional donations to help defend the realm . When the clergy refused , claiming that they owed allegiance only to the Pope , Geoffrey confiscated Church property , and began construction of Chlemoutsi with the new funds . The fortress was set on a new foundation , with no previous structure identifiable on this site . Its French name , Clairmont or Clermont , most probably gave rise to the Greek form of Chlo [u] moutsi , which more recently became Chlemoutsi , although various theories have been proposed as to the name 's origin , with suggestions of Greek , Albanian or Slavic roots pre @-@ dating the Frankish fortress . From the 15th century , Italian sources came to call it Castel Tornese , apparently through a confusion with the seat of the Principality 's mint in nearby Glarentza , which until the middle of the 14th century minted silver tornese coins .

The new fortress was near the princely capital of Andravida , some 13 kilometres (8 mi) away , and ca . 5 kilometres (3 mi) from the Principality 's largest port and town , Glarentza . These three sites were the administrative heart of the Principality and , along with the fortress of Beauvoir or Pontiko at Katakolo further south , served to secure control of the fertile plain of Elis , which formed a major part of the princely domain (along with Corinthia and the Evrotas valley in Laconia) . Despite its importance , however , throughout the history of the Principality of Achaea Chlemoutsi was never the object of major military operations ; rather , its main function seems to have been as a prison for distinguished captives , such as the Byzantine generals taken captive at the Battle of Makryplagi in c . 1263 , one of whom , Alexios Philes , died in captivity there .

When the Prince William II of Villehardouin died in 1278 , the princely domain , as well as the princely title , went to the King of Naples , Charles of Anjou , according to the provisions of the Treaty of Viterbo . Chlemoutsi , however , had been granted by William to his wife , Anna Komnene Doukaina , and she retained it , along with the Villehardouins ' hereditary Barony of Kalamata in Messenia . In 1280 , Anna married the baron Nicholas II of Saint Omer , lord of one half of Thebes . The latter 's acquisition of some of the " most fertile lands and the most powerful fortress in the Morea " , in the words of the French medievalist Antoine Bon , in addition to the wealth he had inherited from his first marriage , worried King Charles . On 25 September 1281 , an agreement was

reached whereby Chlemoutsi and Kalamata were ceded to the princely domain in exchange for half the lands of the recently deceased Leonard of Veroli , comprising estates in both the Morea (in Elis and Messenia) and Italy . In the early 1290s , Thomas Komnenos Doukas , son and successor of the Despot of Epirus Nikephoros I Komnenos Doukas , was held at Chlemoutsi as a hostage for his father 's behaviour .

In c . 1311 , the sole surviving daughter of William II Villehardouin , Margaret , sought , by virtue of her descent , to claim the Principality , or at least a portion of it including Chlemoutsi and Kalamata , from the Angevin Kings of Naples who had controlled it since 1278 . To this end , in February 1314 she wedded her only daughter , Isabel of Sabran , to Ferdinand of Majorca , and passed her titles and claims to them . She then returned to Achaea , where she was imprisoned by the Angevin bailli at Chlemoutsi , where she died in February or March 1315 . Ferdinand landed at Glarentza in June 1315 , claiming the Principality from the Angevin nominee , Louis of Burgundy . Chlemoutsi and most of Elis fell rapidly under Ferdinand 's control , but he was eventually defeated and killed in the Battle of Manolada in July 1316 . The remaining Majorcan troops ceded the fortresses they held in Elis and set sail for home shortly after .

In 1418 , Glarentza and Chlemoutsi passed into the hands of Carlo I Tocco , who began to expand his territories in the Morea at the expense of Prince Centurione II Zaccaria . After his defeat by the Byzantine navy in the 1427 Battle of the Echinades , however , Tocco was forced to cede his possessions to the Despot of the Morea , Constantine Palaiologos (who would become the last Byzantine emperor) , in the form of a dowry for his daughter Maddalena Tocco . Chlemoutsi now became Constantine 's residence and his base of operations against the last major Latin stronghold , the city of Patras , in 1428 ? 30 . The castle remained in Byzantine hands until it was captured , along with the rest of the Morea , by the Ottoman Empire in 1460 . The bastard son of Centurione II , John Asen Zaccaria , was also imprisoned at Chlemoutsi , but managed to escape in 1453 and lead a rebellion against the Byzantine Despots of the Morea .

With the Ottoman conquest , the castle lost much of its strategic significance , although it was occupied by the Venetians during the Ottoman ? Venetian War of 1463 ? 79 , and attacked by the Knights of Malta in 1620 . During the period of Venetian rule in the Peloponnese (1687 ? 1715) after the Morean War , it served as the seat of a fiscal district . The reports of the Venetian governors at the time , however , dismiss Chlemoutsi as small in size and barely inhabited . In 1701 the provveditore generale Francesco Grimani proposed that it be destroyed , as it was too far from the sea ? a vital concern for the maritime @-@ minded Republic ? and difficult to defend , and recommended that Glarentza , by then abandoned and ruined , be rebuilt instead . In 1715 , the Morea returned to Ottoman control , and by the early 19th century , the fortress had been completely deserted . In 1825 , during the Greek War of Independence , the forces of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt took the castle and dismantled a portion of its walls , so that it could not be used by the Greek rebels .

Today the castle is a preserved landmark , under the 6th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities . It can be visited and is easily accessible by car from nearby Kyllini .

= = Location and architecture = =

Chlemoutsi remains " the most beautiful testimony of the military art in the Frankish principality " , according to A. Bon . Its location , on a small plateau of 226 metres (741 ft) above sea level near the modern village of Kastro @-@ Kyllini , gives it a commanding view of the surrounding countryside , encompassing the coastal plain of Elis and reaching to the Ionian Islands of Zakynthos and Cephalonia and even to the coast of Aetolia @-@ Acarnania on the Greek mainland . The view from this location and the scale and quality of its construction prove , according to A. Bon , that Chlemoutsi was not built as a citadel for Glarentza , but that it fulfilled an independent military role , that of securing control over the wider region .

The castle is located on the top of an irregular plateau , whose southern , eastern and northern slopes are abrupt , with the softer western slope , towards the modern village of Kastro , offering the easiest access . The heart of the fortress consists of a large hexagonal keep , complemented

towards the west , where the terrain is more accessible , by an additional outer wall , likewise of irregular polygonal outline , enclosing a second , much wider courtyard (the outer ward) .

= = = Outer ward = = =

The outer gate of the fortress lies in the northwestern side of the outer ward , originally within a small recess in the outer curtain wall , protected by a portcullis . The recess was later filled by the Turks with a smaller set of walls , so as to preserve unbroken the outer wall 's frontage . The Ottomans also added additional buttresses to the junctions of their wall with the original curtain wall , while the space between the original gate and the new , Ottoman entrance was left unroofed and open to the sky . From the gate , the outer wall continues east and then south , in three distinct stretches of walls , to the keep . The wall is built of limestone masonry , with little evidence of brick or tiles , topped by a small inner parapet and Ottoman @-@ built crenellations , now largely ruined . From the beginning , buildings were built leaning on the outer wall , as evidenced by the remnant of their foundations , side walls joining the curtain wall 's inner face , or the presence of fireplaces and lancet windows in the curtain wall . One of these buildings is largely preserved immediately next to the outer gate . Windows , fireplaces etc. display a uniformity of style that points to their construction at the same time as the fortress itself . At the point where the outer wall joins the keep , a small postern is located , as well as a stairway leading up to the outer wall 's chemin de ronde .

On the other side of the gate , the curtain wall continues in two stretches southwest and south , with a tower ? probably an Ottoman addition ? at their junction , before turning sharply to the east . A terrepleined bastion was built behind this southwestern corner by the Turks as an artillery platform . Along the western wall too there is evidence of buildings erected adjoining the curtain wall . The southern wall shows evidence of later , probably Turkish , repairs , with broken tiles alternating with stone courses . It is in this stretch that the cannons of Ibrahim Pasha effected the breach in the wall in 1825 . Roughly halfway between the southwestern corner and the keep , the wall abruptly turns inwards for about 5 metres (16 ft) around an Ottoman @-@ built tower , before continuing east and then northeast to join the keep . Another postern is located about 10 metres (33 ft) from the junction of the two walls .

= = = Keep = = =

The keep is of an irregular hexagonal shape , measuring some 90 metres (300 ft) from east to west and c . 60 metres (200 ft) from south to north , with its six walls enclosing an inner courtyard of 61 metres by 31 metres (200 ft x 102 ft) . Its walls hold a series of two @-@ storeyed halls , forming a ring of rooms around the central courtyard . The lower storey , separated from the upper by wooden floors ? now mostly collapsed with only the niches for the support of beams testifying to their existence ? has arches opening into the courtyard . The upper storey features large galleries with ovoid barrel vaults " of immaculate poros ashlar " (Andrews) , supported by side walls of limestone blocks and by regularly spaced transverse arches every 7 ? 10 metres (23 ? 33 ft) . These have collapsed except for the pilasters , set into the wall and topped by Byzantine @-@ style chamfered impostes .

The galleries feature mostly a uniform style ? common in 12th @-@ century French architecture ? of double @-@ arched windows set within a vaulted depression in the walls , with banquettes on either side . The galleries also feature niches and fireplaces similar to those of the outer curtain wall and the associated buildings , reinforcing the " stylistic uniformity " (Andrews) of the castle . Chlemoutsi was well suited for a princely residence : its halls , arranged around the inner courtyard , were spacious , comfortable , and well @-@ lit , cool in the summer and provided with several fireplaces for the winter months .

The entrance to the keep was located in an avant @-@ corps on the northern side , with a vaulted passageway between two gates leading from the outer courtyard to the inner rooms of the keep . The keep itself features just two round towers of 5 m diameter with square bases , both located on the western side and within the outer ward . The more southern of the two is almost totally ruined ,

probably as a result of Ibrahim Pasha 's destruction . The more exposed eastern and southern sides featured no towers . According to the historian Kevin Andrews , this is perhaps because they were judged to be adequately protected by the steep terrain .

The roof of the keep appears to have originally been sloping or gable @-@ shaped , with a chemin de ronde and parapet on its outer face , but was latter rebuilt with the outer wall raised and the roof replaced by the current , platform @-@ like terrace . Access to the roof is given via a staircase from the courtyard , immediately next to the main entrance into the keep , and by a spiral staircase , now collapsed , in the western corner . The inner parapet of the new roof survives , but few traces of the outer parapet remain , except for a few Ottoman @-@ era merlons . No provision appears to have been made for the installation of guns here .

= = = Architecture and importance = = =

Judging by the relative uniformity of construction , the castle of Chlemoutsi appears to have been built within a few years , c . 1220 ? 23 . Most of the architectural elements found in the castle are typical of French 12th @-@ century architecture ; as K. Andrews writes , " lacking purely Gothic features , it appears to be more a transition from the Romanesque " . A few native Byzantine elements are also apparent , as in the impost blocks or in the use of local material .

Chlemoutsi remains " one of the most important and best @-@ preserved castles in Greece " (A. Ralli) , and maintains its Frankish character intact . After the Frankish period and the decline of its military importance , occupiers made few additions or alterations ; the Byzantine rule left no traces , and only the Ottomans made some minor repairs and modifications for artillery .